



## **Why approving Pathways In Education-Memphis (PIE-Memphis) is in the best interest of the students and community of Memphis.**

With a graduation rate of approximately only 80%, how can Memphis Shelby County claim that there is not a need for an additional option to help more students graduate? High school students in Memphis have limited options on where they can turn if they are over-age, under-credited and trying to balance work and school. Pathways In Education-Memphis will allow more students to graduate and put them on a path to success.

### **Why is a high school diploma so important?**

#### *Avoiding Poverty*

For starters, 90% of high school dropouts will never earn more than \$40,000 a year. The chances of finding employment for a drop-out that makes more than minimum wage is unlikely. With a high school diploma the ability to get a job that provides a higher salary with insurance and benefits is much more likely. According to the latest U.S. Census, 24.2% of Memphians are living at the poverty level.

#### *Opening up Post-Secondary Opportunities*

In order to pursue further education at any type of college (2 year or 4 year) a high school diploma is required. Having this diploma leaves that option open, even if the decision to attend school is not right after high school. The latest U.S. Census reports that only 27.1% of Memphians 25+ years old have a Bachelor's degree or higher.

#### *Gaining Employment*

Data shows that individuals who complete a high school diploma are less likely to be unemployed.

#### *Reducing Crime*

Juvenile crime is a big problem for Memphis and Shelby County. In November 2022, The Memphis Shelby Crime Commission issued a report that found a 42% increase in juvenile arrests. Research shows that high school dropouts are three and one-half times more likely than high school graduates to be arrested and more than eight times as likely to be incarcerated. According to the National Dropout Prevention Center, 82 percent of prisoners in the U.S. are high school dropouts.

In a 2022 news report Rev. Earle Fisher of Abyssinian Missionary Baptist Church in Whitehaven was quoted as "It's much easier for our young people to get access to guns and drugs than it is for them to get access to a job that pays a good, livable wage and access to an equitable and healthy education".

Approving Pathways In Education- Memphis will be one more way to give students another opportunity to earn a high school diploma. In addition to the diploma, the PIE-Memphis staff will also help students create a concrete plan for next steps after high school. This is a win-win for both the students and Memphis community.

**Below is information included in our application that addresses the denial rationale provided by MSCS.**

### **Attendance expectations meet state requirements (MSCS indicated we did not)**

In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-6-3004, PIE-Memphis meets the attendance requirement by requiring students to attend school Monday - Friday for 4 hours of in-person instruction, with an additional Independent Study requirement of an additional 2 ½ hours to be completed in online instruction through Edmentum. Independent Study time in the online Edmentum curriculum is supervised by their teacher through course completion and Daily Learner Usage reports.

Virtual education programs may be established in accordance with T.C.A. §§ 49-16-101 – 49-16-105 and this rule. A “virtual education program” means a course or series of courses offered through the use of technology by an LEA or public charter school to provide students a broader range of educational opportunities.

Providing students a broader range of educational opportunities includes any of the following:

1. Academic remediation or enrichment, or providing students access to a wider range of courses.
2. Continuity of educational service for students who are homebound pursuant to State Board Rule 0520-01-02-.10 or State Board Rule 0520-01-09-.07.
3. Continuity of educational service for students who are quarantined pursuant to State Board Rule 0520-01-13-.01.
4. Continuity of educational service for students enrolled in an alternative school pursuant to State Board Rule 0520-01-02-.09.

### **Uniqueness of program compared to Memphis Virtual School and Excel**

*While there are always program elements that are similar to other alternate educational options within the Memphis area, there are several program elements that are specifically unique to PIE-Memphis:*

- The PIE-Memphis provides a year-round calendar to allow students to recover additional credits or attain additional credits to graduate sooner.
- Independent and online courses are opened and closed at the pace of the student. There is no waiting for a new semester, cohort, or other identified learning period. Direct Instruction (SGI) courses are completed in 15 week cycles
- PIE-Memphis offers a flexible schedule. When students first enroll at PIE-Memphis, students work with their teacher to choose either a morning or afternoon attendance session. However, PIE-Memphis understands the need for many students to have flexibility in their schedule to accommodate their unique needs. Students are able to rearrange their attendance sessions as needed. Whether the rearrangement of attendance sessions is permanent or temporary, students have the flexibility to adjust their attendance sessions to meet their needs.
- The only age requirement for PIE-Memphis to be a high school aged student. The Excel Center and the Memphis Virtual Adult High School have age requirements for enrollment eligibility.
- PIE-Memphis does not utilize any indicators of success for families to determine if the PIE-Memphis would be a good fit for enrollment. Memphis Virtual School utilizes GPA, grade promotion, and graduation cohort as indicators of success.

- The experiential learning program that PIE - Memphis offers has a deep focus of social-emotional learning and an opportunity to explore the nation and the world. PIE-Memphis brings students to where history has happened; from the Capitol steps in Washington D.C., to the beaches of Normandy. Students explore the world around them and understand how they will be global learners and participants.
- The physical location of the PIE-Memphis school site is geographically appealing for the Whitehaven community as it affords students a feasible alternative school within a minimum amount of travel time. The Excel Center is the current alternative ed option that is closest to the PIE-Memphis program, and it is located 13 miles away from the proposed PIE-Memphis school site and is outside of Zone 1 for the MATA Ready! free transportation for students in the Whitehaven area. The 13 mile one-way route on regular MATA bus transportation would take an average of 1 hour 20 minutes.

### **Conflicts of interest with Board and CMO**

The PIE-Memphis Board of Directors selected Pathways Management Group based on program design, experience, resources and past experience. Included in the application is language addressing checks and balances and conflicts of interest.

An example cited by MSCS and responded to in appeals via locator document and actual application. *If PMG holds the lease, what protections will the board have against being evicted should it choose to separate from PMG?*

Based upon clause 5.11 in the CMO Agreement, PMG and PIE-Memphis will enter into a separate lease agreement for PIE-Memphis' learning centers in the event that the board chooses to separate from PMG.

### **Closing Comments**

“Pathways is meant for everyone, the lost, the broken, the hurting, the troublemaker and especially the ones who have lost all hope.” - Destiny Smith (student)

“Memphis needs Pathways. My daughter was 17 in the 9th grade. No one else would take her so she had dropped out. When I found Pathways my daughter didn't want to go at first thinking she was too old. After one day she loved going to school.” - Rozelyn Miller (parent)

“Being an ex-offender myself, I know how hard it can be to avoid some of the temptation for young folks to turn to crime as a way to survive. This is one of the reasons I am so passionate about Pathways In Education. I have seen first hand the work they do to re-engage students and put them on a path to success. By not supporting Pathways, we are sending a message that some of our youth don't deserve another chance.” - DeAndre Brown (Director of Shelby County Office of Re-Entry & PIE-Memphis Board Member.)