



Office of Workforce Development
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AccelerateMS Announces \$8 million Investment in Career Coaches for 125 Mississippi High Schools

Jackson, MS – AccelerateMS is happy to announce an \$8M investment in Mississippi high schools to support a significant expansion of the career coach program in Mississippi public high schools.

The program, created through House Bill 1388 and funded through House Bill 1517 of the 2022 Legislative Session, aims to connect and prepare high school students with Mississippi's most in-demand careers. The \$8M project is funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

“Through the work of local leaders in Northeast Mississippi and the Mississippi Gulf Coast, our state has built a career coaching model that is transforming the future for students in our K-12 system,” said Governor Tate Reeves. “This dramatic expansion is a direct investment in the future of thousands of Mississippi students and will impact our state for decades to come.”

As a result of this and other projects, Mississippi's career coach program is increasing by 500% from 25 coaches to approximately 150 coaches throughout the state.

“We believe that access to one-on-one career coaching will open the eyes of Mississippi high school students to the kinds of high-tech, high-skill jobs available, right here, at home,” said AccelerateMS Executive Director Ryan Miller. “We've seen this model create positive impact in communities across the state and believe that – with support from elected officials and members of business and industry – this program will continue to take that impact and grow it exponentially.”

Pending finalization of subgrant agreements and proof of procurement compliance in hiring coaches, money will be awarded to seven grantee organizations, which are slated to hire and deploy career coaches to approximately 125 schools covering 75 school districts in 51 Mississippi counties. Those organizations include:

- * Central Mississippi Planning and Development District
- * Economic Development Authority of Jones County
- * North Central Planning and Development District
- * Simpson County Development Foundation
- * South Delta Planning and Development District
- * South Mississippi Planning and Development District
- * Three Rivers Planning and Development District



The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommends a student-to-counselor ratio of no more than 250 students for every school counselor. During the 2020-2021 academic year, Mississippi's student-to-counselor ratio was 398-to-1. According to the ASCA, lower ratios increase the likelihood of students having conversations with school counselors regarding college and career plans.

School guidance counselors are stretched thin – often managing student assessment, providing mental health support, addressing behavioral issues, and providing counseling services.

“For some students, their high school counselor is the single point of access for conversations around career plans after high school,” said AccelerateMS Program Manager Lori Nail. “Mississippi counselors have extremely full plates and are often unable to provide extensive one-on-one career counseling support as desired. Through this program, we are hoping to increase capacity for the kind of robust career planning supports students need.”

Although AccelerateMS career coaches will be embedded in schools and school districts, they will not be local school or district employees. Career coaches will report to AccelerateMS and will focus solely on interacting with students to improve outcomes in the planning and pursuit of careers. Career Coaches will be in classrooms beginning this Fall, pending hire through the subgrantees

Quotes:

“Economic growth is dependent on educational, industry, and community wide partnerships. Any of these without the other will not produce economic sustainability and prosperity. The Career Coaches are an incredible investment by our state to ensure the success of these relationships, bolster student exposure to industry, and show students the types of opportunities available to them”—Katie McCrary, McCrary-West Construction

“Many students are still considered the first generation in many households. Accelerate MS career coaching opportunities will provide students with a powerful pathway for determining a career path. In contrast, students will have a career coach helping students sort through the maze of reaching the dream of having a productive career.”—Jessie King, Superintendent, Leland School District

“For the three County Area of Northeast Mississippi (Pontotoc, Union and Lee Counties) the Career Coaches have been a real game changer for high school Juniors and Seniors and have led many students to pursue career goals within the region pursuing professions at home here in Mississippi.” – David Rumbarger, President/CEO, Community Development Foundation of Lee County

“Greenville Public Schools is excited to partner with South Delta Planning and Development District in this endeavor to utilize a Career Coach in our schools. The students of GPSD will benefit from the many services and that the Career Coach will provide in helping them decide on their academic and career goals.” – Glenn Dedeaux, Superintendent, Greenville Public School District



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Aberdeen High School	Hernando High School	Okolona High School
Alcorn Central High School	Hickory Flat Attendance Center	Olive Branch High School
Amory High School	Holly Springs High School	Oxford High School
Ashland Middle-High School	Horn Lake High	Pascagoula High School
Bay High School	Houlka Attendance Center	Pass Christian High School
Belmont School	HW Byers	Pine Grove High School
Biggersville High School	Independence High School	Pontotoc High School
Biloxi High School	Itawamba Agricultural High School	Potts Camp High School
Blue Mountain High School	J. Z. George High School	Ridgeland High School
Booneville High School	Jumpertown High School	Ripley High School
Bruce High School	Kemper County High School	Riverside High School
Byhalia High School	Kosciusko High School	Seminary High School
Caledonia High School	Kossuth High School	Senatobia High School
Calhoun City High School	Lafayette High School	Simmons Senior High School
Career Development Center (JPS)	Lake Cormorant High	Smithville High School
Center Hill High School	Laurel High School	South Jones High School
Charleston High School	Leland High School	South Pontotoc High School
Choctaw County High School	Lewisburg High School	Southaven High School
Coahoma County High School	Louisville High School	Southeast Lauderdale High School
Coffeeville High School	Madison Central High School	St. Martin High School
Coldwater High School	Magee High School	Starkville High School
Collins High School	Mantachie Attendance Center	Stone High School
Columbia High School	McAdams High School	Strayhorn High School
Columbus High School	Mendenhall High School	Thomas E. Edwards High School
Desoto Central High School	Meridian High School	Thrasher High School
D'Iberville High School	Moss Point High School	Tishomingo County High School
East Central High School	Mount Olive Attendance Center	Tremont Attendance Center
East Webster High School	Myrtle Attendance Center	Union High School
Ethel High School	Nanih Waiya Attendance Center	Vancleave High School
Eupora High School	Natchez Early College High School	Vardaman High School
Falkner Attendance Center	Natchez High School	Velma Jackson High School
Forest High School	Neshoba Central High School	Vicksburg High School
Gautier High School	New Albany High School	Walnut Attendance Center
Gentry High School	New Hope High School	Warren Central High School
Germantown High School	New Site High School	Water Valley High School
Greenville High School	Newton High School	West Harrison High School
Grenada High School	North Panola High School	West Jones High School
Gulfport High School	North Pontotoc High School	West Lauderdale High School
Hamilton High School	Northeast Jones High School	West Lowndes High School
Hancock High School	Noxapater Attendance Center	West Point High School
Harrison Central High School	Noxubee County High School	West Union Attendance Center
Hatley High School	O'Bannon High School	Wheeler High School
Hattiesburg High School	Ocean Springs High School	Winona-Montgomery Secondary School



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About AccelerateMS

The mission of AccelerateMS is to serve the people and businesses of Mississippi by developing and deploying innovative workforce strategies that meet the needs of industries and individuals. By leveraging resources and partnering with organizations that have complementary missions, AccelerateMS seeks to bring about sustained economic prosperity for individuals, communities, and the State of Mississippi.

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