March 30, 2016

Dr. Suzanne K. Freeman, Superintendent
Pike Road City Schools
500 Avenue of Learning
Pike Road, AL 36064

Dear Dr. Freeman:

Upon careful review of Pike Road City Schools Innovation/Flexibility Zone application, I am happy to approve your request made in your Innovation Zone plan. This approval will provide flexibility to Pike Road City Schools to allow the school to emphasize a healthy lifestyle and physical education standards using multiple methodologies in line with the Pike Road City Schools mission.

Your continued commitment to innovation in education will provide exceptional opportunities to meet the needs of each of your students and prepare each for college and/or career in the 21st century. It is evident that the Pike Road City Schools plan for innovation ensures increased learning opportunities for accelerating students on a trajectory that will lead to success.

Please remain in communication with us to share your successes, challenges, and lessons learned that will be valuable to moving our state forward and to providing helpful guidance to other districts as they develop innovative plans.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Thomas R. Bice
State Superintendent of Education

TRB:KWP:DK

cc: Mrs. Sherrill W. Parris
    Dr. Jeff Langham
    Mrs. Shanthia Washington
    Mrs. Robin Nelson
    Mrs. Nancy Ray
    Mrs. Karen Porter
INNOVATION ZONE

Provide greater flexibility in meeting the educational needs of a diverse student population

Improve educational performance through greater school autonomy and managerial flexibility to administer programs and budgetary matters

Provide greater control to local decision making

Leverage new methods and tools to improve outcomes and solve persistent problems

Challenge to make important choices

Enable an entirely new way of thinking
An Innovative School System

Pursuant to the *Alabama Accountability Act* 2013-64, to be considered as an innovative school system, a local school system shall successfully comply with the requirements and procedures set forth by the State Department of Education regarding school flexibility contracts.

**Innovative School System Components**

**Flexibility Contract:** "A flexibility contract between the local school system and the State Board of Education wherein a local school system may apply for programmatic flexibility or budgetary flexibility, or both, from state laws, regulations, and policies, including regulations and policies promulgated by the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education."

**Innovation Plan:** "The request of a local school system for flexibility and plan for annual accountability measures and five-year targets for all participating schools within the school system."

The **Flexibility Contract** and the **Innovation Plan** - The Flexibility Contract sets forth the local school system’s request for relief from specific mandates in state law, regulations, and policies. In exchange for the requested flexibility, the local school system proposes an Innovation Plan to meet annual accountability benchmarks and its five-year targets.

**Flexibility Contract and Innovation Plan Requirements**

**Contract Requirements:**

The proposed Innovative School System shall:

1. Submit to the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) a letter of intent to pursue a flexibility contract.
2. Submit to the ALSDE a Resolution adopted by the local board supporting the intent to pursue a Flexibility Contract, the proposal, and the anticipated timeline of the local school system.
   (The submitted resolution indicates that an opportunity for full discussion and public input, including a public hearing, was provided before submitting a Flexibility Contract proposal to the ALSDE.)
3. Submit to the ALSDE a document of assurance stating the local board shall provide consistency in leadership and a commitment to the state standards, assessments, and academic rigor.
Innovation Plan Requirements:
The proposed Innovative School System shall:
1. Submit to the ALSDE the school year that the local school system expects the Flexibility Contract to begin.
2. Submit to the ALSDE the list of state laws, regulations, and policies that the local school system is seeking to waive in its Flexibility Contract.
3. Submit a list of schools included in the innovation plan of the local school system.
4. Submit to the ALSDE the final Innovation Plan, as recommended by the local superintendent of education and approved by the local board of education.

Upon receipt of the Innovation Plan/Flexibility Contract by the ALSDE, a letter of confirmation of receipt will be sent to the local superintendent and the process for review will begin. Within 60 days, the innovation plan will be placed on an Alabama State Board of Education work session and regular meeting agenda for discussion and final determination. The school system will receive written notification of approval or non-approval. Should the innovation/flexibility plan be denied, an outline of procedures and necessary steps to amend and resubmit will be communicated to the local superintendent.

Innovation Plan Assurances

The following are requirements that cannot be waived:
- Those imposed by federal law
- Those related to the health and safety of students or employees
- Those imposed by ethics laws
- Those imposed by open records or open meetings laws
- Those related to financial or academic reporting or transparency
- Those designed to protect the civil rights of students or employees
- Those related to the state retirement system or state health insurance plan
- Those that would compensate an employee at an annual amount that is less than the amount the employee would otherwise be afforded through the State Minimum Salary Schedule
- Those that would involuntarily remove any rights or privileges acquired by any employee under the Students First Act of 2011, Title 16, Chapter 24C, Code of Alabama 1975
- Those that would deny any right or privilege granted to a new employee pursuant to the Students First Act of 2011
- Those that would authorize the formation of a charter school

Certifying Signatures of the Local Superintendent and Local Board President

To be considered as an Innovative School System, we certify that we comply with the requirements of Act 2013-64 and procedures set forth by the Alabama State Department of Education regarding Flexibility Contract requirements and Innovation Plan requirements.

Please sign below:

Local Superintendent (Date)

Local Board President (Date)
Section 1 - Applicant Information

Indicate the intended school year for implementing the Innovation/Flexibility Plan: 2015-2016

Please complete the following information:
School System Applying: Pike Road Schools
School System Superintendent: Dr. Suzanne Freeman
School System Contact's Name & Title (if different than superintendent): 
Contact's Telephone Number: (334) 495-4113
Contact's E-Mail Address: suzannne.freeman@pikeroadschools.org

Please complete the chart below for system leaders responsible for supporting the plan (add rows as needed):

**School System Leadership Team**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Team Member</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Suzanne Freeman</td>
<td>Superintendent/Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela Lang</td>
<td>Asst. Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan Kandall</td>
<td>Technology/Curriculum Coach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please complete the chart below for each school involved/impacted by the plan (add rows as needed):

**Schools Impacted**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of School</th>
<th>Principal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pike Road School</td>
<td>Suzanne Freeman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 2 - Specific Waiver Requests

Indicate the specific type(s) of policy or code that prohibit or constrain the plan from which you wish to request a waiver.

Indicate in the table below the waiver request type(s) that apply:

- **ALSDE Policy Waiver Request** (Specify memorandum, etc., outlining policy)
- **Alabama Administrative Code (AAC) Statute Waiver Request** (Specify AAC Rule No., etc.)
- **Code of Alabama 1975 Waiver Request** (Specify law, etc.)

(Insert additional rows as needed):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waiver Request Type</th>
<th>Flexibility Requested (List specific law, regulation, or policy from which relief is sought.)</th>
<th>Impact of the Waiver (What will the waiver enable the school to do differently, etc.?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Code of Alabama, 1975 Waiver Request</td>
<td>Code of Alabama, 1975, 16-40-1</td>
<td>The waiver will allow the school to emphasize a healthy lifestyle, incorporating physical education standards in a variety of ways, instead of teaching it in isolation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code of Alabama, 1975</td>
<td>Alabama Administrative Code 290-3-2</td>
<td>Allow for teachers to move with their students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section 3 - Vision

Creative Vision for the Plan

Please describe the plan’s vision, goals, and innovative features for student success that will be addressed. Share the purpose and expected outcome for students. Also include the intended impact of the flexibility requested in the innovation plan. Include how the proposal reflects Alabama’s PLAN 2020 and/or the system’s strategic plan. If applicable, share data, best practices, and any community and stakeholder support that support the plan.

The Pike Road Way reflects Dr. Bice's vision for schools to implement innovative practices and do what's best for students. We have created a non-traditional school system in which everything we do revolves around what is best for our learners. We believe that we have the opportunity to create a truly effective school system that is responsive to how students learn and thus we ask for some flexibility as we blaze this trail that could change public education in Alabama and far beyond.

Our Mission: To create a culture of intellectual curiosity where all students have ownership over their learning and are inspired to think, innovate, and create.

Our Vision: Our students are lifelong learners who use their knowledge, skills, and influence to make the world a better place.
We believe intellectual growth occurs when learners are genuinely engaged in their learning, and this happens when students are solving real problems for a real audience, which is why Pike Road Schools has a strong emphasis on project-based learning. Students are researchers, curators, content creators, and publishers. Teachers support students in their learning: they guide as well as help them navigate content and resources. Learning in this manner causes students to retain what they learn and be able to apply their learning to new situations. Learning is structured in a way that allows students to have more ownership of their learning. Having ownership is an essential skill for a lifelong learner. Our learners become resident experts on specific topics and through a variety of mediums (papers, brochures, presentations, documentaries, websites, podcasts, blogs, etc.); they also share their learning with classmates, parents, community members, and in many cases a global audience.

We are using a flexible schedule and shared learning spaces. Lead learners (teachers) in most communities (with the exception of Kindergarten) work with all the learners within their community (grade level). Learners are not assigned to specific classes; rather, the subject are integrated so as to mirror real life. Because students are not assigned to just one teacher, we have received SDE support regarding satisfying LEAPS.

Section 4 - Goals, Evaluation, and Sustainability

Aspirations, Expectations, and Communicating Outcomes

Please specify measureable goals, objectives, activities, and a timeline for meeting the identified outcomes of the plan. Please specify any alternative accountability measures/benchmarks to be put in place as a result of the flexibility requested. Share how the Innovation Plan will be monitored and evaluated, and how results will be reported. Indicate how the impact on increasing student success and/or other stated goals and objectives will be shared within your school system and beyond (e.g., students, teachers, parents, community, MEGA, CLAS). Share how implementation of this Innovation Plan will be sustained by current leadership.

Assessments are individualized for each child based on what standards he/she has mastered. Informal assessments are ongoing and continuous. Lead Learners use a data driven approach of identifying each learner's mastery of each standard. When a child masters certain standards, he/she continues to progress to the next standards. There is no limit on learning at Pike Road Schools. When a child struggles, the lead learners identifies the root cause of the deficit. Learning is then scaffolded beginning with the deficit and the learner works toward mastering the standard.

Parents and learners have 24/7 access to FreshGrade- the digital tool that enables teachers to document students’ mastery of the College and Career Ready Standards. Teachers use a variety of assessments (observations, tasks, conversations, demonstrations, etc.) to determine students’ knowledge and skill. Teachers also upload student work, videos, etc. to illustrate students’ learning in relationship to each standard.

Our emphasis is on learning and not on grades. Therefore, during the 2015-2016 school year, we will talk with colleges and universities in Alabama and beyond to discuss how they utilize grades and
possible alternatives to accommodate our students.

Pike Road Schools is designed to facilitate collaborative and active learning. Hence, many tables are on casters and there is a variety of seating (i.e. not individual student desks). We have received SDE advice on options to ensure our students are able to take the ACT Aspire, and will plan accordingly.

Continuous learning is part of the culture at Pike Road Schools. Because this non-traditional way of teaching, teachers get extensive support. This Spring and Summer, our Lead Learners spent over 11 days learning together. Our emphasis was on building culture The Pike Road Way, Project Based Learning (PBL), using design qualities to engage learners in their work, assessing student learning, etc. In addition, all communities spent days working together to design their first project. Time has been allocated during the school year to allow each community to design, be reflective practitioners, and continue to learn together to improve our effectiveness. Each community will have two to three hours of uninterrupted time two times per month, outside of their regular planning time.

Instructional leaders will provide continuous ongoing feedback and support to all lead learners. Just like our student learners, we recognize that our teachers learn at different paces and have different needs and strengths. In addition, our evaluation system will be based on showing evidence that each Lead Learner is furthering our mission and acting on our beliefs.

We consider the SDE valuable partners in this exciting journey of creating a school system that is truly responsive to how students learn. We invite you to continue partnering with us and learning with us as we push the boundaries of what school could and should be for our learners. Help us in transforming public education for this generation of learners.

Section 5 - Assurances, Documentation, Submission

Flexibility and Innovation Plan Submission Requirements
In order to assure that the application is complete, verify that:

- All assurances, documents, resolutions, and certifying signatures, or any other requirement as specified in the Alabama Accountability Act 2013-64, and any outlined within the application, are included (pages 2 and 3, An Innovative School System).
- Specific waiver requests for relief from rules, policies, code, etc., have been included (page 5, Specific Waiver Requests).
- The innovation plan reflects the vision and goals of Alabama PLAN 2020 and/or the school system strategic plan (page 5, Waiver Summary).
- Any data collected or disseminated does not violate the privacy rights of any student or employee.

Submitting the Innovation Plan:
- It is requested that the Innovation Plan/Flexibility Contract be submitted electronically. The superintendent will receive a letter confirming the date of receipt of the Innovation Plan. Within 60 days, the approval or non-approval status will be communicated to the local superintendent.
- Communication and collaboration during the process is welcomed and encouraged. All questions regarding the Innovation Plan/Flexibility Waiver should be directed to Mrs. Karen Porter (kporter@alsde.edu or 334-242-8154).
Pike Road Schools
Health and Wellness Program

At Pike Road Schools, we strive to establish a culture of Health and Wellness daily, facilitating health and sport education using several methodologies that comply with our Mission: To create a culture of intellectual curiosity where all students have ownership over their learning and are inspired to think, innovate, and create.

**Before and after school activities**
- Interscholastic Athletics: We are a member of AHSAA. Participation starts in 7th grade. We have nine teams and over 100 students participate in interscholastic athletics.
- Morning Movement: 6th and 7th graders sign up to play basketball or soccer in the gym instead of sitting in the bleachers when they are waiting for school to start.
- Intramurals: An after school activity held in February and March for 5th and 6th graders. Participants learn unique strategy and cooperative games, as well as create competitions in the traditional sports.
- Survival of the Fittest: A week long, after school activity for 5th through 8th grade. Participants undergo a series of rigorous fitness tests. The individuals who score the highest on each event and the individual who has the highest average ranking at the end of the week receive certificates.

**Physical Activity Breaks**
- Each grade level goes outside at least once daily.
- Games and activities organized by teachers and paraprofessionals.
- Typical equipment used includes kickballs, hula hoops, jump ropes, and frisbees. All equipment is donated.
- Playground: $80,000 grant used to construct playground. Tutorial of how to use the equipment was filmed and narrated by students. Teachers share a playground schedule to avoid overcrowding. Playground is used by grades Kindergarten through 6th.
- Indoor Brain Breaks: teachers have access to a catalogue of physical activities which can be performed in small spaces. Teachers utilize online dance modules such as GoNoodle.

**Health and Sport Education infused into the curriculum**
Teachers combine health and wellness topics with other subjects to create activities and projects that are authentic and engaging. Some examples include:
- Ball project (Kindergarten): Students discovered the composition of various sports balls by cutting them open, compared their shape, learned how to inflate and deflate balls, tested their buoyancy, measured and weighed them, researched the manufacturing processes, and explored the materials used to construct balls.
Let’s Get Moving project (3rd grade): Students researched different ways to be active and healthy and then created posters and videos that they presented to classmates.

Jesse Owens project (4th grade): Students researched the life of Jesse Owens, an Alabama native, during Black History Month. Students learned about his Olympic accomplishments and created an exhibit highlighting the records he set at Berlin 1936.

Choreography projects (grades 6th, 7th, and 8th): 6th grade had a guest dance instructor teach the whole grade a routine which culminated in a performance in front of other grade levels. 7th and 8th graders frequently choreograph dance routines to meet the requirements of projects.

Leap Day project (2nd grade): On February 29th, students measured how far they can leap (standing broad jump).

Nutrition project (Kindergarten): Students investigated prepackaged and processed foods, as well as the pros and cons of additives. Students took a field trip to Publix.

Cardiovascular Health Project (4th grade): Students learned the anatomy and function of the heart. Students exercised at various intensities to discover how it relates to heart rate and cardiovascular endurance.

Health Expo (7th and 8th grade): Students selected an area of health that they were passionate about and created a booth to inform the public about their chosen topics.

Family Health History project (7th and 8th grade): Students researched their family health history and proposed preventive measures for themselves based on these findings.

**Health and Wellness Class**

- Class directed by certified physical education teachers. K-6 Students attend at least three times per week. Grades 7 & 8 meet daily.
- Students learn fundamental movement skills and sport-specific skills as well as participate in strategy games, cooperative learning, and fitness activities.
- Example units include: flag football, volleyball, soccer, basketball, CrossFit, dance, golf, cup-stacking, and cooperative games.
- Some units are student-led, which requires group leaders to create lessons which progress from fundamentals, to lead-up games, to competitive games. At the end of the unit, group leaders create a league which includes a draft, regular season, and playoffs.
- Bi-annual fitness testing includes the 1-mile run, push-up test, curl-up test, and v-sit and reach. Fitness testing data is submitted to State via InformationNow.