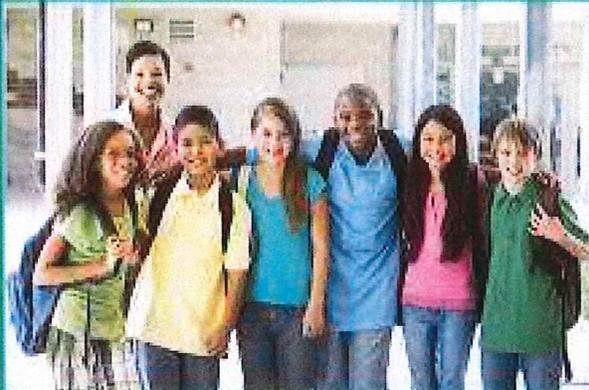




FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
fldoe.org



TOP-1



Turnaround Option Plan – Step 1 (TOP-1)

3-Options

1. Reassignment and Closure
2. Charter School Turnaround Option
3. External Operator/Outside Entity

Pasco County Schools
Gulf Middle School

Due: September 1 for Cycle 1 or November 1 for Cycle 2-4

Turnaround Option Plan—Step 1 (TOP-1) 3-Options

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to guide districts to plan for the implementation of one of the three turnaround options (Reassignment/Closure, Charter School Turnaround Option or External Operator/Outside Entity) to improve the school's grade to a "C" or higher.

Directions

Districts shall complete this Step 1 form for each school that has selected one of the three turnaround options (Reassignment/Closure, Charter School Turnaround Option or External Operator/Outside Entity). This plan must be submitted by the district to the Regional Executive Director (RED) for review and feedback before submitting it to BSI. The local school board must approve the plan. This completed form must be signed by the superintendent or authorized representative and emailed to the RED and BSI@fldoe.org, no later than September 1 if one of these three options is Cycle 1 or November 1 if Cycle 2-4. The subject line of the email must include the district name, school name and TOP-1.

School

In the box below, identify the name and MSID number of the school that will be supported through the turnaround option plan.

School Name/ MSID Number
Gulf Middle School/0261

Stakeholder Engagement

In the box below, describe the district's efforts to engage and involve stakeholders, including the Community Assessment Team (CAT), to determine causes for low performance and make recommendations for school improvement. Include a list of names and affiliations of CAT members. The RED or their designee shall be a member of the CAT. Include a list of meetings that were held regarding the development of the turnaround option plan, as well as scheduled meetings that will be held during implementation of the plan.

Names and affiliation of CAT members:

Gulf Middle School Principal – Joel DiVincent
Gulf Middle School Assistant Principal-Katelyn Overbeck
Gulf Middle School Assistant Principal-Michelle Jacobsen
Gulf Middle School Assistant Principal-Monique Garrison-Saylor
Parent-Dorothy Naclerio
Community Member-Chris Fitch, New Port Richey Fire Chief
Community Member-Debbie Manns, New Port Richey City Manager
Community Member/Staff-Bartell Butler III, New Port Richey City Commissioner
Community Member-Andrea Monge, Director of PFAC
Community Member-Angel Avila, Director of Rap House
Community Member-Matt Roza, New Port Richey Recreation Center Coordinator
Community Member-Andi Figart, New Port Richey Library Director

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Community Member-Jennifer Thompson
Instructional Staff-Sandra Malcolm, School Counselor
Instructional Staff-Stephanie Griffin, School Counselor
Instructional Staff-Christina Morrison
Instructional Staff-Charity Schrader
Support Staff-Liz Kuhns, Parent Involvement Coordinator
Support Staff-Cassie Gaskins
District Staff-Erin Phelps, Assistant Superintendent of Middle Schools
District Staff- Diana Valdez, Middle School Support Team
District Staff- Iravonia Abiola, Supervisor, School Improvement and Accountability
State RED/BSI-Dr. Lucinda Thompson
State Regional Assistant Director/BSI-Rosetta Bailey
State School Improvement Specialist/BSI-Julie Statton

In addition to district and school stakeholders, Gulf Middle School will be supported by MGT Consulting as an external partner with expertise in school transformation beginning in the 2025-2026 school year. The external partner will collaborate with the district leadership team to accelerate improvement efforts through embedded coaching in leadership development and monitoring, ELA, mathematics, science, Tier 1 instruction and intervention. This partnership mirrors the model utilized successfully at Rodney B. Cox Elementary during the 2024-2025 school year.

Dates of CAT meetings (held and upcoming meetings):

2024-2025 School Year

- August 26th, 2024, 3:00-4:00 pm
- October 28th, 2024, 3:00-4:00 pm
- January 27th, 2025, 3:00-4:00 pm
- May 19th, 2025, 3:00-4:00 pm

2025-2026 School Year

- September 12th, 2025, 8:30-9:30 am
- November 14th, 2025, 8:30-9:30 am
- February 27th, 2026, 8:30-9:30 am
- May 15th, 2026, 8:30-9:30 am

What school data was analyzed:

- Achievement Data / ESSA (3-Year Historical)
- EWS Academic
- EWS Behavior/Attendance
- Student and Staff Engagement

Identified causes of low performance:

In addition to the previously identified causes for low performance, reflections were completed at the end of the 2024-2025 school year and were used to develop the new School Improvement Plan. These include:

- Implementation of Student Support Plans too late in the school year
- Limited family engagement and limited wraparound services

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- Inconsistent teacher expertise in middle school science, resulting in low proficiency due to repeated teacher attrition
- Lack of support for students enrolled in Algebra 1
- Lack of strong Tier 1 math instruction and insufficient coaching support, leading to a decline in Math Learning Gains for the Lowest 25%
- Misalignment between math instruction and state benchmarks; absence of high-effect-size instructional strategies
- Limited opportunities for student acceleration and absence of industry certification options
- Access to afterschool tutoring

In response to data trends from 2024-2025, the Community Assessment Team (CAT) emphasized that stronger external expertise in instructional practice and coaching support is essential to accelerate change. This feedback directly informed the decision to collaborate with an external partner with expertise in school transformation.

Recommendations for school improvement:

Based on new reflection for causes for low performance, additional recommendations for school improvement were included in the new School Improvement Plan process:

- Strengthen benchmark-aligned planning and disciplinary literacy across all subjects.
- Provide targeted onboarding and mentoring for new science teachers.
- Improve Tier 1 math instruction with effect-size strategies and tiered coaching.
- Expand student acceleration options (Algebra I readiness, certifications).
- Increase student engagement through electives, clubs and mentoring.
- Use student goal setting and data chats to track progress.

Pasco County Schools is adding Partnership-Focused Recommendations:

- Leverage an external partnership for intensive math and science coaching and for strengthening Tier 1 instruction.
- Utilize external partner expertise in building progress monitoring systems that support rapid response to student performance.
- Work jointly with the external partner with expertise in school transformation to provide on-site support during CAT meetings and quarterly BSI walkthroughs.

Other information:

The district requests an extension of the district-managed turnaround plan for Gulf Middle School for another year and rationale is provided in the designated section.

Needs Assessment

The district is responsible for documenting a needs assessment that uses quantitative and qualitative data to identify the needs of the school system, including needs identified by families and the community.

The summary of the needs assessment results must address points of strength and opportunities for growth in the school system (at both the district and school level) in each of these three domains:

1. Transformational Leadership
2. Standards-based Instruction and Learning
3. Positive Learning Environment

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In the box below, describe the methodology used for the needs assessment, including 3-year data trends from the state, district and school levels. Include a review of all strategies to determine which are improving the school and should be reinforced or supplemented, as well as which strategies are not resulting in improvement.

Describe the methodology used for needs assessment, including 3-year data trends from the state, district and school levels.

Reviewed 3 years of state, district and school-level data in achievement, attendance and behavior. Conducted surveys, focus groups and CAT feedback sessions. Focused on 3 areas:

Transformational Leadership- Strengths: Principal with prior middle school success, alignment with the Gulf community and demonstrated leadership competencies. Strong Assistant Principals with turnaround experience and a principal mentor from another turnaround school and another with experience leading an A rated school. Growth Areas: Increase leadership coaching capacity and instructional monitoring.

Standards-Based Instruction- Strengths: New teacher onboarding and tiered coaching support. IB coordinator and embedded Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) strategies. Growth Areas: Strengthen Tier 1 benchmark-aligned instruction, ensure instruction is aligned to benchmarks, expand acceleration.

Positive Learning Environment- Strengths: PBIS implementation with behavior systems and structures, behavior coach and graduation enhancement support. Growth Areas: Increase student academic engagement. Reduce absenteeism, increase family engagement, expand student clubs/mentorship.

Identify strategies that have evidence of improvement at the school and how they will be reinforced or supplemented.

Student-led data meetings and goal setting. Facilitated planning of and monitoring of on-grade level, benchmark aligned instruction. Addition of support from an external partner to coach and strengthen Tiered instruction and benchmark aligned interventions. Use of strategic interventions targeting support for individual student needs. Incentivizing students to engage with supplemental resources and improve behavior.

Identify strategies that have not resulted in improvement. What will be done differently?

Tiered support of teachers and development of coaching plans resulting in improved instructional practices, strategic student scheduling for success. Lesson rehearsal and feedback. Modeling of best instructional practices in classrooms by coaches and mentors. Sustained attendance at extended, facilitated planning time with coaches and administrators. Monitoring of instruction and intervention groups with actionable feedback and next steps for improvement. Strategic data analysis with targeted goal setting. Strategic use of supplemental personnel for student support.

Select One Turnaround Option

Check the box to indicate the turnaround option selected by the district to implement the following school year if the school does not improve to a C or higher.

- Closure (RC):** Close the school and reassign students to another school and monitor the progress of each reassigned student.

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Charter School Turnaround Option: Close the school and reopen the school as one or more charter schools, each with a governing board that has a demonstrated record of effectiveness.

External Operator/Outside Entity (EO): Contract with an outside entity that has demonstrated a record of effectiveness to provide turnaround services or operate the school. Check applicable options (may include one or a combination):

District-managed charter school or high-performing charter school network; or

Contractual agreement that allows for a charter school network or any of its affiliated subsidiaries to provide individualized consultancy services.

If the district requests additional time to fully implement its current Turnaround Option Plan (TOP), it must complete the “Request for Extension of Turnaround Plan, Criteria and Due Date” section on the final page of this form. In the box below, the district must provide the rationale for its request for an extension rather than implementing the selected option in the following year.

Gulf Middle School has shown progress in English Language Arts (ELA), attendance and behavior but requires intensified instructional coaching and systems development to reach a school grade of “B.” An External Partner with proven turnaround success will embed coaches in leadership, ELA, math and science, build monitoring systems and expand student engagement opportunities. This model mirrors the successful approach utilized by Pasco County Schools at Rodney B. Cox Elementary School (RBCES) during the 2024-2025 school year.

Selected Turnaround Option: External Operator/Outside Entity

In the box below, describe the district’s efforts to engage and involve stakeholders, CAT and the school leadership team in the selection of one of the three turnaround options. Provide the rationale for the selected turnaround option.

Stakeholders (families, staff, CAT with RED) met quarterly, reviewed 3-year trends and identified needs: stronger Tier 1 in math/science, science onboarding, rapid progress-monitoring, Algebra 1 readiness and student engagement/acceleration. After comparing Closure and Charter to the External Operator option (keeps governance/community; adds embedded expertise), the External Operator option was chosen. The EO will embed leadership/content coaching, co-build data systems tied to FAST/formative trends and expand acceleration. Contract terms will include clear indicators (achievement, subgroup gains, attendance/behavior) and a deferred 33% payment tied to outcomes, enabling modification/non-renewal if off track.

Complete only the section for the selected turnaround option.

The district must agree to ALL of the assurances for the selected turnaround option by checking the corresponding boxes.

Reassignment and Closure (RC)

Assurance 1: Close and Reassign Students

The district shall close the school and reassign students to higher-performing schools with a “C” or higher in the district. *A new school does not qualify since it does not have a record of performance.*

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The district shall ensure that students from the closed school are not assigned to instructional personnel with VAM ratings or district evaluations that are below effective.

Assurance 2: Monitoring Reassigned Students

The district shall monitor the reassigned students and report their progress to the Department for three years on a quarterly basis with the first-year students from the closed school are reassigned. Reports shall include student attendance, grades and progress monitoring data aligned to Florida’s State Academic Standards, the type of intervention and instruction provided to students to address deficiencies, as well as all instructional personnel assigned to students and their VAM rating. The district shall provide quarterly reports to the RED.

Assurance 3: Reassignment of Instructional Personnel and Administrators

The district shall ensure, for the upcoming school year, instructional personnel from the closed school with VAM ratings that are below effective are not reassigned to other School Improvement (SI) schools within the district.

The district shall ensure that administrators from a school closed through selection of this turnaround option are not reassigned to other SI schools within the district for the upcoming school year.

The district shall ensure that, for the upcoming school year, instructional personnel from the closed school who are rated below effective are not assigned to:

1. A high school or middle school student who was taught by a classroom teacher with a VAM rating that is below effective for the previous school year in the same subject area.
2. An elementary student who was taught by a classroom teacher with a VAM rating that is below effective for the previous school year.

Charter School Turnaround Option Plan

Assurance 1: Close and Reopen School

The district shall close the school and reopen it as a charter or multiple charters.

Assurance 2: Contracting with Charter Organization

The district shall enter into a standard charter school turnaround contract with the charter organization following established district policies and procedures for contracting with external providers.

Assurance 3: Selecting a Successful Organization

The district shall select a charter organization that has a record of school improvement in turning around schools that are low performing with students of similar demographics or a charter school with a record of high performance.

Assurance 4: Selecting Leadership

The district shall ensure the principal or school leader has a successful record and the qualifications to support the student population being served.

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Assurance 5: Selecting Instructional Staff

The district shall ensure that the charter school operator has a staffing plan to make certain instructional personnel with VAM ratings or district evaluations that are below Effective pursuant to section 1012.34, F.S., shall not be staffed at the school.

Assurance 6: Enrolling Students

The district shall ensure the charter school operator provides enrollment preference to students who currently attend or who would have otherwise attended or been zoned for the school.

The district shall ensure the charter school operator serves the existing grade levels served by the school at its current enrollment or higher.

Assurance 7: Operating the School

The district shall ensure it continues to operate the school with the same level of resources after selecting the Charter School TOP and executes a standard charter school turnaround contract, a standard facility lease and a mutual management agreement for planning and preparation purposes before the charter school operator assumes full operational control of the school.

Assurance 8: Contracting with a Charter School TOP

The district shall enter into a standard charter school turnaround contract, standard facility lease and mutual management agreement with a charter school operator on May 1 of the school year in which the school district selected the Charter School TOP and must execute it no later than October 1 of the school year following the selection of the Charter School TOP.

External Operator (EO)

Assurance 1: Selecting a Successful EO/Outside Entity

The district shall select an EO/Outside Entity that has a record of school improvement in turning around schools that are low-performing with students of similar demographics.

Assurance 2: District Capacity and Support

The district and the EO/Outside entity ensure the instructional programs align to Florida's state academic standards and provide data to support intervention for students.

The district and the EO/Outside entity ensure the development of an annual professional learning plan that provides ongoing tiered support to increase leadership and educator quality.

Assurance 3: Selecting Leadership

The district and the EO/Outside Entity shall ensure the incoming principal and school leadership team have a successful record in leading turnaround schools and the qualifications to support the population being served.

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Ensure the principal will be replaced upon entry into EO/Outside Entity unless, in collaboration with the Department, it is determined that the principal will have the skillset for turnaround success at the school.

Assurance 4: Selecting Instructional Staff

The district and the EO/Outside Entity must ensure that the percentage of inexperienced teachers, instructional personnel with a VAM rating that is below Effective or out-of-field instructional personnel assigned to the school is at least or at a minimum, not higher than the district average.

If the district establishes a district-managed charter school or a high-performing charter school network, the district shall ensure all instructional personnel are not employees of the school district, but are employees of an independent governing board composed of members who did not participate in the review or approval of the charter.

The district and the EO/Outside Entity shall ensure the review of practices in hiring, recruitment, retention and reassignment of instructional personnel have been reviewed with priority on student performance data.

The district and the EO/Outside entity shall ensure that K-12 reading instruction is provided by teachers with a reading certificate, endorsement or micro-credential.

The district and the EO/Outside entity shall ensure submission of a MOU required by section 1001.42(21), F.S., that relieves the school from any contract restrictions that limit the ability to implement strategies to improve the school's low performance.

The district and the EO/Outside entity will ensure submission of a roster of instructional staff at the school.

Assurance 5: Contracting with the EO

The district shall enter into a contract with an EO/Outside Entity to provide turnaround services or to operate the school, following established district policies and procedures. To ensure the district is well positioned in contract negotiations with an EO for the upcoming school year, the following must be addressed in the contract:

1. Performance indicators and growth metrics that the EO/Outside Entity must meet during the term of the contract showing that the school is on track to earn at least a "C" grade within two years and that ties payment to such improvement;
2. The district's authority to terminate or non-renew the contract for a second year should the EO/Outside Entity fail to meet the performance indicators, growth metrics or fail to meet its contractual obligations;
3. Services and responsibilities for leadership and instructional staffing, curriculum and instruction, assessments, progress monitoring and professional learning;
4. EO/Outside Entity's record of school improvement and its role in recruitment, selection and placement of instructional personnel and the school leadership team;
5. Where the district has an existing contract with the EO/Outside Entity, a detailed provision outlining

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the new or modified services to be provided by the EO/Outside Entity;

6. A detailed budget with conditions of payment based on performance indicators, including a deferred payment of the final installment of 33% of the contracted amount until delivery of agreed upon improvement and outcomes. The contract must include a provision where the final 33% of the contract value may not be paid until and unless the EO/Outside Entity demonstrates that the school has achieved at least a “C” grade or that the school has improved by at least four school grade percentage points overall; and
7. The district’s authority to modify, terminate or non-renew the contract for a second year should the State Board determine the EO/Outside Entity failed to meet the performance indicators, growth metrics or is otherwise not on track to achieve a grade of at least “C” within two years of the release of school grades.

Timelines

This timeline applies if the district selects RC.

- For Cycle 1, if the district selects RC, the district acknowledges that the plan (TOP-2) is due to the Department by October 1.
- For Cycle 2-4, if the district selects RC, the district acknowledges that the plan (TOP-2) is due to the Department by January 31.

This timeline applies if the district selects Charter School TOP.

- For Cycle 1, the district acknowledges that the plan (TOP-2) and the district school board-approved standard charter school turnaround contract are due to the Department by October 1.
- For Cycle 2-4, the district acknowledges that the plan (TOP-2) and proposed standard charter school turnaround contract are due to the Department by January 31 and the district school board-approved standard charter school turnaround-contract, standard facility lease and mutual management agreement are due to the Department by May 1, prior to the plan’s implementation.
- For Cycle 2-4, the district acknowledges that it must execute the district school board-approved and State Board of Education-approved standard charter school turnaround contract, standard facility lease and mutual management agreement no later than October 1 of the school year following the selection of the Charter School TOP.
- For Cycle 2-4, the district acknowledges that it must temporarily continue to operate the school for the remainder of the school year after selecting the Charter School TOP and the following school year until the charter school operator assumes full operational control of the school by July 1.

This timeline applies if the district selects EO/Outside Entity.

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For Cycle 1, the district acknowledges that the plan (TOP-2) and the EO/Outside Entity contract is due to the Department by October 1.

For Cycle 2-4, the district acknowledges that the plan (TOP-2) and proposed EO/Outside Entity contract are due to the Department by January 31 and the district school board-approved EO/Outside Entity contract is due to the Department by May 1.

Request for Extension of Current Turnaround Option Plan, Criteria and Due Date

The district requests additional time to implement its turnaround plan for the following year. The district meets the following conditions and shall provide evidence that the school is likely to improve to a “C” or higher by the end of the following school year.

Upon request from the district, the SBE may grant additional time for the district to implement its current turnaround plan if the following conditions are met:

1. The request, approved by the local school board, is received by the Department on or before November 1 on this form;
2. The request demonstrates that the school has a positive trajectory using the grade components listed in section 1008.34(3)(b), F.S;
3. The request demonstrates that the SI school has no instructional personnel with VAM ratings of Unsatisfactory and that the percentage of instructional personnel with VAM ratings of Needs Improvement is at or below the district percentage where the district has more than five schools, or the state percentage where the district has five or fewer schools;
4. During the remainder of the implementation of the turnaround plan, the district agrees to staff the school with no Unsatisfactory rated instructional personnel and maintain or improve the school’s VAM average, as provided in Rule 6A.1.099811(16)(a)4., F.A.C.
5. The request includes a description of the services that will be implemented to ensure the sustainability of improvement in the next year and beyond.

In the box below, the district must provide evidence that the school met the above conditions. Explain how the school will improve to a grade of at least a “C” during an extended period of implementation of the turnaround plan. Outline any changes in activities and strategies that will occur should the SBE grant additional time.

The district requests an extension of the district-managed turnaround plan for Gulf Middle School for another year based on the following rationale:

- Improved grade trajectory from the 2024-2025 school year with an improvement in 6 out of 9 cells and an overall point increase and percentage of 2%.
- Movement of any teachers with Unsatisfactory VAM scores and overall percentage of teachers with a Highly Effective or Effective VAM at or above the district average.
- Implementation of a collaborative hiring process with Human Resources to ensure no teachers are hired at the school with an Unsatisfactory or Needs Improvement VAM rating.
- Proactive appointment of a highly experienced principal and the addition of one new assistant principal in 2024 and another in 2025 to improve school environment and leadership stability.

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- Indicators from 2024-2025 show increased ELA FAST progress monitoring results, improved attendance and a reduction in behavior referrals.
- The CAT and new community partnerships will provide a stronger foundation for family and community engagement.
- To support the improvement of Gulf Middle School, the district has partnered with MGT as an external partner for the 2025-26 school year. Support includes targeted coaching and systems development designed to accelerate gains. This collaboration will continue during the 2026-2027 school year to ensure sustainability and continuity, regardless of whether the school earns a grade of “C” or higher. Should the school not exit School Improvement, MGT will continue providing support as an external partner during the 2026-2027 school year while the school implements the DMT under an approved extension, pending Board approval.
- We will monitor MGT’s support using explicit indicators, such as FAST PM subgroup growth (ELA/Math), Algebra 1 EOC pass rate/high-school-credit attainment, chronic absenteeism and behavior referrals, with quarterly targets and triggers for plan adjustments.

Monitoring and Accountability

To ensure sustained improvement, the following monitoring structures will be implemented beginning in the 2025-2026 school year:

- Weekly support to administration and coaching team to prioritize needs, monitor action plans and collaboratively problem-solve around barriers.
- Monthly district-led data meetings to review FAST progress monitoring data, ongoing formative assessment review, attendance trends and behavior data.
- At least Quarterly walkthroughs with district leadership, BSI team members and the external partner to review instruction and adjust supports.
- An escalation process within the district leadership for issues requiring immediate collaboration with BSI if data indicates insufficient progress.

Strategies for Improvement

The following strategies, modeled after successful practices at Rodney B. Cox Elementary School (RBCES) during the 2024-2025 school year, will be implemented as part of the external partnership collaboration:

- Tiered ELA, math, science and social studies coaching support using district Senior Instructional Specialists and external partner content experts.
- Strengthened PBIS implementation and behavior data tracking monitored by a district MTSS specialist.
- Student-led data tracking and goal-setting conferences to build ownership of learning.
- Focused professional learning for teachers on understanding the BEST standards and assessment demands.
- Development of community mentoring programs to connect students to postsecondary opportunities.

Staffing Safeguards

Gulf Middle School will not hire or assign instructional staff with a VAM rating below Effective. All proposed hires will be vetted through HR in coordination with district leadership to ensure compliance with turnaround requirements.

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Escalation Process

If review of progress monitoring data reveals insufficient progress with the support of the external partner, the district leadership team, in collaboration with the external partner and the BSI Regional Team, will immediately revise support, redirect resources and implement new actions to accelerate improvement.

Acknowledgment

The district verifies the information in this form and confirms that they have collaborated with the school and the RED.

Name and title of the person responsible for completion and submission of the TOP-1
Dr. Shana H. Rafalski, Assistant Superintendent for Opportunity Schools
Contact information: email, phone number
srafalsk@pasco.k12.fl.us (813)794-2272
Date submitted to the RED and the Bureau of School Improvement
9/9/25
Superintendent Signature (or authorized representative)
<i>Elvira P. Kuba, Deputy Superintendent per authority</i>
Local School Board Chair Signature (or authorized representative)
<i>Dr. John Legi</i>
<i>Cynthia A. Tracy</i>
Date approved by local school board
10/21/25



Pasco County Schools

Dr. John Legg, Superintendent of Schools

7227 Land O' Lakes Boulevard • Land O' Lakes, Florida 34638

To Whom It May Concern:

Elizabeth Kuhn, Deputy Superintendent of Pasco County Schools, is hereby authorized to sign any and all documentation on behalf of the agency head, John Legg, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools.

Sincerely,

John Legg, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools