



**Statement From Memphis-Shelby County Schools Board of Education  
Chair Joyce Dorse Coleman on Call for Forensic Audit  
Monday, February 10, 2025**

As the Chair of the Memphis-Shelby County Schools Board of Education, I want to address the recent call for a forensic audit and the concerns raised about handling district funds.

Let me begin by affirming our unwavering commitment to transparency, accountability and the trust placed in us by the community. Memphis-Shelby County Schools has consistently demonstrated responsible stewardship of public resources, and the facts support the district's strong fiscal management and impactful investments in student outcomes.

Our district has demonstrated responsible financial practices and accountability:

- We have received clean external audits every year under the previous administration. Federal funds are monitored annually and MSCS undergoes comprehensive audits from September to December each year by Watkins Uiberall—the same firm that audits Shelby County.
- Memphis-Shelby County Schools has been awarded the prestigious Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting and the Association of School Business Officials (ASBO) Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting annually, further validating our commitment to fiscal integrity.

The district's financial practices have earned recognition at both the state and national levels, including:

- Designation as a "Best for All District" by the Tennessee Department of Education for strategic use of ESSER funds.

- Being named an "ARP Star" by the U.S. Department of Education for effectively leveraging federal COVID-19 relief funding.
- Spotlight features in the Council of the Great City Schools' *Urban Educator* newsletter for innovative, research-driven investments addressing learning gaps and equity.

These distinctions affirm our commitment to using public funds responsibly and effectively.

Our financial strategies have directly contributed to transformative outcomes for students and the community:

- \$776 million in COVID-19 relief funds were strategically invested in tutoring, technology, classroom support and other research-backed initiatives, leading to academic growth.
- Investments in smaller class sizes, academic interventions and teacher support strengthened our efforts to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes districtwide.
- Over 95,000 devices were distributed to bridge the digital divide, ensuring students could continue learning during the pandemic.

Today, we are proud to share that Memphis-Shelby County Schools has achieved Level 5 status—the highest distinction based on TVAAS composite scores under the previous administrations prior to this current administration. This demonstrates significant student growth and highlights the effectiveness of our strategic investments in academic success, even in the face of extraordinary challenges.

We are aware that the request for a forensic audit by the Shelby County Commission has passed. Transparency and accountability are critical for everyone entrusted with public resources, and the same level of scrutiny should apply universally.

At Memphis-Shelby County Schools, we welcome accountability and oversight.

As stewards of public funds, we will continue to prioritize transparency in all we do. However, it's important to remember the progress we've made and the positive impact of these investments on our students and community.

The evidence speaks for itself: Memphis-Shelby County Schools is moving in the right direction, and we remain committed to building on this momentum for the benefit of our students, families, and educators.

Joyce Dorse Coleman

Chair, Memphis-Shelby County Schools Board of Education