Upon accepting the role of superintendent of the Jackson Public School District, I pledged to ensure that every JPS student receives an excellent education.

I plan to make good on that pledge.

Over the past six months, I’ve visited each school, met with thousands of teachers, students, parents, district staff and community leaders, and I’ve carefully analyzed district data and reports from the Council of the Great City Schools, the Better Together Commission and One Voice.

As the new leader of our district and being new to the community, these perspectives have been invaluable to me in gaining deeper context and developing our plan.

Based on my analysis, I’ve begun to see the district more clearly — assets and challenges alike. I’ve determined that our central office duties and responsibilities require major transformation in order to ensure high quality teaching and learning throughout the district and to ensure that we provide excellent support to our schools and service to the community.
As we begin the transformation of the school district, we must reorganize the leadership structure by consolidating overlapping administrative positions and creating greater coherence of the various departments and functions.

This is consistent with the Better Together Commission’s finding in their Ready to Rise: Our Students, Our Future, Our Time report, which states, “The transformation of central office structure, roles, function and effectiveness is an important priority in supporting schools as they seek to improve teaching, learning and achievement.”

With the unanimous support of our Board of Trustees, each of whom has demonstrated great leadership and courage, we have initiated major changes in central office operations that will not only provide a cost savings of nearly $1 million to the district but will also create the necessary structures and capacity to lead the work that is critical to our success.

Though we know we have a long way to go to reach the level of excellence that our community deserves, some of the exciting changes for the 2019-2020 school year include:

- Developing shared values that will inform our behaviors and decision making over time, and order our steps throughout the district transformation effort; Launching a district-wide leadership focus on culture and building our collective capacity to support strong team building and collaboration;

- Merging the Curriculum and Professional Development Departments into the Office of Teaching and Learning to create greater coherence between the two functions;

- Shifting and expanding the functions of the Data and Accountability Office to ensure that the district maintains a focus on continuous improvement as we drive toward excellence;

- Updating position descriptions and responsibilities of executive level team members to focus more on improved outcomes, superior service and building organizational effectiveness; and

- Taking a more deliberate approach to understand our staffing challenges and implementing smart strategies to recruit teachers and support them through the licensure process.
We believe that these systemic shifts in teaching and learning will cause immediate improvements; and still, the district-wide transformation that we’re driving towards will take time to become fully realized.

We have worked aggressively to address citations from our partners at the Mississippi Department of Education, and those improvements serve as foundational supports to our broader innovations to accelerate student achievement.

In other words, it is not enough to simply improve the district: we must make radical shifts in the ways that we serve our students and families.

I am confident that these are the appropriate initial moves to create the sustainable change that the Jackson community deserves.

As we work to transform lives through excellent education, we know that we have to make difficult decisions. I humbly urge the entire Jackson community to support our strategic efforts. I assure you that we are prioritizing the needs of our children in each and every decision that we make.

Amazing things are destined for Jackson Public Schools, and I am humbled by the opportunity to serve.

Errick L. Greene is superintendent of Jackson Public Schools.