

By: Representative Scott

To: Education

## HOUSE BILL NO. 1419

1 AN ACT TO BE KNOWN AS THE "DROPOUT PREVENTION AND STUDENT  
2 RE-ENGAGEMENT ACT"; TO DECLARE THE LEGISLATIVE INTENT TO DECREASE  
3 THE HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT RATE AND INCREASE THE GRADUATION RATE; TO  
4 DEFINE TERMS USED IN THIS ACT; TO AMEND SECTION 37-13-80,  
5 MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO AUTHORIZE THE OFFICE OF DROPOUT  
6 PREVENTION TO USE CERTAIN FUNDING TO IMPLEMENT THIS ACT; TO  
7 REQUIRE THE OFFICE TO COLLABORATE WITH LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES  
8 TO REDUCE THE STATEWIDE AND LOCAL STUDENT DROPOUT RATES AND TO  
9 INCREASE THE STATEWIDE AND LOCAL GRADUATION AND COMPLETION RATES  
10 IN THE STATE; TO REQUIRE THE OFFICE TO TAKE CERTAIN ACTIONS WITH  
11 REGARD TO THE EVALUATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES USED BY  
12 LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN ANALYZING DROPOUT RATES AND  
13 GRADUATION AND COMPLETION RATES; TO REQUIRE THE OFFICE TO IDENTIFY  
14 LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES FAILING TO MEET THEIR ESTABLISHED  
15 GRADUATION AND COMPLETION RATE EXPECTATIONS; TO REQUIRE THE  
16 DEPARTMENT TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN LOCAL  
17 EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES; TO REQUIRE THE OFFICE TO REVIEW THE EXISTING  
18 RESEARCH AND DATA AND COMPILE A REPORT OF EFFECTIVE DROPOUT  
19 PREVENTION AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND RE-ENGAGEMENT POLICIES AND  
20 STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED BY LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES WITHIN THIS  
21 STATE AND IN OTHER STATES; TO AMEND SECTION 37-13-85, MISSISSIPPI  
22 CODE OF 1972, TO REQUIRE THE OFFICE OF COMPULSORY SCHOOL  
23 ATTENDANCE ENFORCEMENT TO ANALYZE DATA COLLECTED BY THE LOCAL  
24 EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES FOR PURPOSES OF COMPILING A REPORT TO BE  
25 SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD AND THE LEGISLATURE; TO REQUIRE HIGH  
26 PRIORITY AND PRIORITY LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES TO CONDUCT A  
27 PRACTICES ASSESSMENT; TO REQUIRE HIGH PRIORITY LOCAL EDUCATIONAL  
28 AGENCIES TO ADOPT A STUDENT GRADUATION AND COMPLETION PLAN AND  
29 PRESCRIBE ITS REQUIRED COMPONENTS; TO REQUIRE LOCAL EDUCATIONAL  
30 AGENCIES TO NOTIFY A STUDENT'S PARENT IF THE STUDENT DROPS OUT OF  
31 SCHOOL; TO ESTABLISH THE STUDENT RE-ENGAGEMENT GRANT PROGRAM FUND  
32 IN THE STATE TREASURY FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING GRANTS TO LOCAL  
33 EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES FOR USE IN PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL SERVICES AND



34 SUPPORTS TO STUDENTS AND TO PROVIDE FOR ITS FUNDING; AND FOR  
35 RELATED PURPOSES.

36 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

37 **SECTION 1.** This act shall be known and may be cited as the  
38 "Dropout Prevention and Student Re-Engagement Act."

39 **SECTION 2.** (1) The Legislature finds and declares that:

40 (a) The State of Mississippi has placed a high priority  
41 on reducing the number of student dropouts in Mississippi,  
42 including establishing the goal of decreasing the high school  
43 dropout rate and increasing the graduation rate for cohort classes  
44 on a systematic basis to eighty-five percent (85%);

45 (b) Serious gaps continue to exist in the graduation  
46 rates among ethnic and economic groups in Mississippi;

47 (c) Students with disabilities also continue to achieve  
48 a significantly lower graduation rate than other student groups;

49 (d) Studies clearly show that a student's level of  
50 education attainment will directly influence the student's level  
51 of achievement and success throughout the rest of his or her life;

52 (e) The National Center for Education Statistics  
53 reports that, in comparing employment rates and levels of  
54 education attainment across the country, the unemployment rate for  
55 persons who drop out of high school is nearly double the overall  
56 average unemployment rate for all education levels; and

57 (f) Studies further show that students who drop out of  
58 school are more likely to be involved in crime or delinquency and



59 to lose lifelong opportunities for personal achievement, resulting  
60 in economic and social costs to the state.

61 (2) The Legislature concludes that:

62 (a) It is imperative that the State Department of  
63 Education's Office of Dropout Prevention provide focus,  
64 coordination, research and leadership to assist local educational  
65 agencies in implementing coordinated efforts to reduce the high  
66 school dropout rate and increase the high school graduation and  
67 completion rates and the levels of student engagement and  
68 re-engagement; and

69 (b) In order to significantly reduce the statewide  
70 dropout rate and increase the rates of student engagement and  
71 re-engagement, the Office of Dropout Prevention must additionally  
72 provide leadership in creating and facilitating systemic  
73 approaches that involve intersystem collaboration between local  
74 educational agencies and the Mississippi Department of Human  
75 Services, state institutions of higher learning, career and  
76 technical education providers, providers of adult basic education,  
77 providers of general educational development (GED) programs,  
78 offices of workforce development, school-based student support  
79 personnel and family education programs.

80 **SECTION 3.** As used in this act, the following words and  
81 phrases have the meanings ascribed in this section unless the  
82 context clearly requires otherwise:



83           (a) "Completion" means a student graduates from high  
84 school or receives a certificate or other designation of high  
85 school completion, such as a general educational development  
86 certificate.

87           (b) "Department" means the State Department of  
88 Education.

89           (c) "Dropout prevention" means school and  
90 community-based initiatives to promote positive social, emotional,  
91 familial, and educational factors that maintain and strengthen  
92 student engagement and address barriers and conditions that may  
93 lead a student to drop out of school.

94           (d) "Expanded learning opportunity programs" means  
95 programs that provide kindergarten through twelfth grade  
96 supervised learning activities that may include, but need not be  
97 limited to, after-school programs, before-school programs, summer  
98 school programs, weekend programs, and extended-day and  
99 extended-year programs.

100           (e) "Graduation" means a student meets the locally  
101 defined requirements for a high school diploma.

102           (f) "Grant program" means the student re-engagement  
103 grant program established in Section 10 of this act.

104           (g) "High priority local educational agency" means a  
105 local education provider that the office identifies pursuant to  
106 Section 37-13-80(11) as being most in need of technical assistance  
107 and support.



108           (h) "Local educational agency" means a school district,  
109 board of cooperative services or the State Department of  
110 Education.

111           (i) "Office" means the Office of Dropout Prevention  
112 created within the State Department of Education under Section  
113 37-13-80.

114           (j) "Parent" means the father or mother to whom a child  
115 has been born, or the father or mother to whom the child has been  
116 legally adopted, or the student's legal guardian or legal  
117 custodian.

118           (k) "Priority local educational agency" means a local  
119 educational agency that the office identifies as being in  
120 significant need of technical assistance and support.

121           (l) "Board" means the State Board of Education.

122           (m) "Student engagement" means a student's sense of  
123 belonging, safety and involvement in school which leads to  
124 academic achievement, regular school attendance and graduation.  
125 Elements of promoting student engagement include providing  
126 rigorous and relevant instruction, creating positive relationships  
127 with teachers and counselors, providing social and emotional  
128 support services for students and their families, creating  
129 partnerships with community organizations and families which  
130 foster learning outside of the classroom, and cultivating regular  
131 school attendance.



132 (n) "Student graduation and completion plan" means a  
133 local educational agency's plan for reducing the student dropout  
134 rate and increasing the rates of student engagement,  
135 re-engagement, graduation and completion.

136 (o) "Student re-engagement" means that a student  
137 reenrolls in high school after dropping out before completion.  
138 Student re-engagement usually results from a local education  
139 agency's use of evidence or research based strategies to reach out  
140 to students who have dropped out of school and to assist those  
141 students in transitioning back into school and obtaining their  
142 high school diplomas or otherwise completing high school.

143 (p) "Student support personnel" means a licensed or  
144 certified school counselor, school psychologist, school social  
145 worker, school nurse or other licensed or certified mental health  
146 professional qualified under state law to provide support services  
147 to children and adolescents.

148 **SECTION 4.** Section 37-13-80, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
149 amended as follows:

150 37-13-80. (1) There is created the Office of Dropout  
151 Prevention within the State Department of Education. The office  
152 shall be responsible for the administration of a statewide dropout  
153 prevention program.

154 (2) The State Superintendent of Public Education shall  
155 appoint a director for the Office of Dropout Prevention, who shall  
156 meet all qualifications established by the State Superintendent of



157 Public Education and the State Personnel Board. The director  
158 shall be responsible for the proper administration of the Office  
159 of Dropout Prevention and any other regulations or policies that  
160 may be adopted by the State Board of Education. However, if for  
161 any reason within the two-year period beginning July 1, 2014, a  
162 new director for the Office of Dropout Prevention is employed by  
163 the department, the employment of such individual shall not be  
164 subject to the rules and regulations of the State Personnel Board,  
165 except as otherwise provided in Section 25-9-127(4).

166 (3) Each school district shall implement a dropout  
167 prevention program approved by the Office of Dropout Prevention of  
168 the State Department of Education by the 2012-2013, and annually  
169 thereafter, school year.

170 (4) Each local school district will be held responsible for  
171 reducing and/or eliminating dropouts in the district. The local  
172 school district will be responsible for the implementation of  
173 dropout plans focusing on issues such as, but not limited to:

174 (a) Dropout Prevention initiatives that focus on the  
175 needs of individual local education agencies;

176 (b) Establishing policies and procedures that meet the  
177 needs of the districts;

178 (c) Focusing on the student-centered goals and  
179 objectives that are measurable;

180 (d) Strong emphasis on reducing the retention rates in  
181 grades kindergarten, first and second;



182 (e) Targeting subgroups that need additional assistance  
183 to meet graduation requirements; and

184 (f) Dropout recovery initiatives that focus on students  
185 age seventeen (17) through twenty-one (21), who dropped out of  
186 school.

187 (5) The Office of Dropout Prevention may provide technical  
188 assistance upon written request by the local school district. The  
189 Office of Dropout Prevention will collaborate with program offices  
190 within the \* \* \* State Department of Education to develop and  
191 implement policies and initiatives to reduce the state's dropout  
192 rate.

193 (6) Each school district's dropout prevention plan shall  
194 address how students will transition to the home school district  
195 from the juvenile detention centers.

196 (7) It is the intent of the Legislature that, through the  
197 statewide dropout prevention program and the dropout prevention  
198 programs implemented by each school district, the graduation rate  
199 for cohort classes will be increased to not less than eighty-five  
200 percent (85%) by the 2018-2019 school year. The Office of Dropout  
201 Prevention shall establish graduation rate benchmarks for each  
202 two-year period from the 2008-2009 school year through the  
203 2018-2019 school year, which shall serve as guidelines for  
204 increasing the graduation rate for cohort classes on a systematic  
205 basis to eighty-five percent (85%) by the 2018-2019 school year.





206       (8) The department shall direct any increases in the amount  
207 of federal monies received by the department for programs under  
208 Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of  
209 1965, 20 USCS Section 6301 et seq., programs under the Individuals  
210 with Disabilities Education Act, 20 USCS Section 1400, et seq., or  
211 other federal programs to assist in funding the activities of the  
212 office as specified in this act.

213       (9) The department may solicit, accept and expend gifts,  
214 grants and donations from public or private entities to fund the  
215 operations of the office, including the employment of personnel  
216 for the office and execution of the duties and responsibilities  
217 specified in this act. Notwithstanding any provision of this act  
218 to the contrary, the department is not required to implement the  
219 provisions of this act until such time that the department has  
220 received an amount in gifts, grants and donations from public or  
221 private entities which the department deems sufficient to  
222 adequately fund the operations of the office.

223       (10) The office shall collaborate with local educational  
224 agencies to reduce the statewide and local student dropout rates  
225 and to increase the statewide and local graduation and completion  
226 rates. To accomplish this purpose, the office shall assist local  
227 educational agencies in:

228           (a) Analyzing student data pertaining to student  
229 dropout rates, graduation rates, completion rates, mobility rates,  
230 truancy rates, suspension and expulsion rates, safety or



231 discipline incidences, and student academic growth data at the  
232 state and local levels; and

233 (b) Creating and evaluating student graduation and  
234 completion plans.

235 (11) To accomplish the purposes specified in subsection (10)  
236 of this section, the office also shall:

237 (a) Review state policies and assist local educational  
238 agencies in reviewing their policies pertaining to attendance,  
239 truancy, disciplinary actions under the local educational agency's  
240 code of conduct, behavioral expectations, dropout prevention, and  
241 student engagement and re-engagement to identify effective  
242 strategies for and barriers to reducing the student dropout rates  
243 and increasing student engagement and re-engagement within the  
244 state;

245 (b) Identify and recommend best practices and effective  
246 strategies to reduce student dropout rates and increase student  
247 engagement and re-engagement;

248 (c) Develop interagency agreements and cooperate with  
249 other state and federal agencies and with private, nonprofit  
250 agencies to collect and review student data, and develop and  
251 recommend methods for reducing student dropout rates and  
252 increasing student engagement and re-engagement. To the extent  
253 possible, the office shall collaborate with, at a minimum:

254 (i) Career and technical educational agencies;



255                    (ii) General educational development service  
256 providers;

257                    (iii) The State Department of Health;  
258                    (iv) The Mississippi Department of Human Services;  
259                    (v) The Mississippi Department of Corrections;  
260                    (vi) State institutions of higher education;  
261                    (vii) Offices of workforce development;  
262                    (viii) Expanded learning opportunity and family  
263 education programs;

264                    (ix) Adult basic education and  
265 English-as-a-second-language programs;

266                    (x) Organizations that provide services for  
267 pregnant and parenting teens and students with special health and  
268 education needs; and

269                    (xi) Private, nonprofit organizations that provide  
270 services for homeless families and youth.

271                    (d) Solicit public and private gifts, grants and  
272 donations to assist in the implementation of this act; and

273                    (e) Evaluate the effectiveness of local educational  
274 agency's efforts in reducing the statewide student dropout rate  
275 and increasing the statewide graduation and completion rates, and  
276 report progress in implementing the provisions of this act.

277                    (12) (a) The office shall collaborate with other divisions  
278 within the department to identify, annually through the  
279 accreditation process, those local educational agencies that do



280 not meet their established graduation and completion rate  
281 expectations. Of those local educational agencies identified, the  
282 office shall use criteria adopted by rule of the board to  
283 determine the following:

284 (i) Which local educational agencies are most in  
285 need of improvement and assistance, which the office shall  
286 recognize as high priority local educational agencies; and

287 (ii) Which local educational agencies are in  
288 significant need of improvement and assistance, which the office  
289 shall recognize as priority local educational agencies.

290 (b) The office shall provide technical assistance to  
291 each high priority local educational agency and to each priority  
292 local educational agency as provided in this act.

293 (13) In addition to the assistance specified in this  
294 section, the office shall provide technical assistance in the  
295 areas of dropout prevention and student engagement and  
296 re-engagement to the high priority local educational agencies and,  
297 to the extent practicable within existing resources, to priority  
298 local educational agencies. Technical assistance may include, but  
299 need not be limited to, the following:

300 (a) Training in implementing identified, effective,  
301 research-based strategies for dropout prevention and student  
302 engagement and re-engagement;

303 (b) Assistance in estimating the cost of implementing  
304 the identified strategies in the schools operated or approved by



305 the high priority or priority local educational agency and  
306 analyzing the cost-effectiveness of the strategies; and  
307 (c) Identification and recommendation of effective  
308 approaches applied by other Mississippi local educational agencies  
309 which may be situated similarly to the high priority or priority  
310 local educational agency.

311 **SECTION 5.** (1) On or before December 31, 2023, and each  
312 year thereafter, the Office of Dropout Prevention shall review the  
313 existing research and data from this state and other states and  
314 compile a report of effective dropout prevention and student  
315 engagement and re-engagement policies and strategies implemented  
316 by local educational agencies within this state and in other  
317 states. The office may use the findings and recommendations in  
318 the report to provide technical assistance to high priority and  
319 priority local educational agencies, to assist high priority and  
320 priority local educational agencies in creating student graduation  
321 and completion plans, and to recommend to the State Board of  
322 Education and the Legislature state policies concerning dropout  
323 prevention and student engagement and re-engagement. High  
324 priority and priority local education providers may use the report  
325 to review their policies, to formulate new policies and  
326 strategies, and to create and evaluate their student graduation  
327 and completion plans.



328 (2) In preparing the report of effective policies and  
329 strategies, the office, at a minimum, shall consult, share  
330 information, and coordinate efforts with:

331 (a) The Governor's office;

332 (b) Local educational agencies within Mississippi which  
333 have maintained low student dropout rates and high rates of  
334 student engagement and re-engagement in previous years;

335 (c) State and national experts in dropout rate  
336 reduction and student engagement and re-engagement strategies who  
337 are knowledgeable about successful policies and practices from  
338 other states and local governments in other states; and

339 (d) Federal government officials who administer dropout  
340 rate reduction and student engagement and re-engagement  
341 initiatives and programs.

342 (3) The office periodically shall review and revise the  
343 report of effective policies and strategies as necessary to  
344 maintain the report's relevance and applicability. The office  
345 shall post the initial report of effective strategies and later  
346 revisions on the department's website.

347 **SECTION 6.** Section 37-13-85, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
348 amended as follows:

349 37-13-85. The Office of Compulsory School Attendance  
350 Enforcement shall have the following powers and duties, in  
351 addition to all others imposed or granted by law:



352 (a) To establish any policies or guidelines concerning  
353 the employment of school attendance officers which serve to  
354 effectuate a uniform system of enforcement under the Mississippi  
355 Compulsory School Attendance Law throughout the state, and to  
356 designate the number of school attendance officers which shall be  
357 employed to serve in each school district area;

358 (b) To supervise and assist school attendance officer  
359 supervisors in the performance of their duties;

360 (c) To establish minimum standards for enrollment and  
361 attendance for the state and each individual school district, and  
362 to monitor the success of the state and districts in achieving the  
363 required levels of performance;

364 (d) To provide to school districts failing to meet the  
365 established standards for enrollment and attendance assistance in  
366 reducing absenteeism or the dropout rates in those districts;

367 (e) To establish any qualifications, in addition to  
368 those required under Section 37-13-89, for school attendance  
369 officers as the office deems necessary to further the purposes of  
370 the Mississippi Compulsory School Attendance Law;

371 (f) To develop and implement a system under which  
372 school districts are required to maintain accurate records that  
373 document enrollment and attendance in such a manner that the  
374 records reflect all changes in enrollment and attendance, and to  
375 require school attendance officers to submit information



376 concerning public school attendance on a monthly basis to the  
377 office;

378 (g) To prepare the form of the certificate of  
379 enrollment required under the Mississippi Compulsory School  
380 Attendance Law and to furnish a sufficient number of the  
381 certificates of enrollment to each school attendance officer in  
382 the state;

383 (h) To provide to the State Board of Education  
384 statistical information concerning absenteeism, dropouts and other  
385 attendance-related problems as requested by the State Board of  
386 Education;

387 (i) To provide for the certification of school  
388 attendance officers;

389 (j) To provide for a course of training and education  
390 for school attendance officers, and to require successful  
391 completion of the course as a prerequisite to certification by the  
392 office as school attendance officers;

393 (k) To adopt any guidelines or policies the office  
394 deems necessary to effectuate an orderly transition from the  
395 supervision of school attendance officers by district attorneys to  
396 the supervision by the school attendance officer supervisors;

397 (l) Beginning on July 1, 1998, to require school  
398 attendance officer supervisors to employ persons employed by  
399 district attorneys before July 1, 1998, as school attendance  
400 officers without requiring such persons to submit an application





401 or interview for employment with the State Department of  
402 Education;

403 (m) To adopt policies or guidelines linking the duties  
404 of school attendance officers to the appropriate courts, law  
405 enforcement agencies and community service providers; \* \* \*

406 (n) To adopt any other policies or guidelines that the  
407 office deems necessary for the enforcement of the Mississippi  
408 Compulsory School Attendance Law; however, the policies or  
409 guidelines shall not add to or contradict with the requirements of  
410 Section 37-13-91 \* \* \*; and

411 (p) To annually analyze data collected by the  
412 department from local educational agencies throughout the state  
413 concerning student attendance and the implementation of school  
414 attendance policies and practices, and to assess the overall  
415 incidence, causes and effects of student dropout, engagement and  
416 re-engagement in Mississippi. Before February 15, 2024, and each  
417 year thereafter, the office shall provide local educational  
418 agencies, the State Board of Education, the Education Committees  
419 of the Mississippi Senate and the House of Representatives or any  
420 successor committees, and the Governor's office with the  
421 assessment and any recommended strategies to address student  
422 dropout, engagement and re-engagement in Mississippi. The Office  
423 of Compulsory School Attendance Enforcement may combine this  
424 assessment and recommendation with the report required by the  
425 Office of Dropout Prevention under Section 37-13-80.



426           **SECTION 7.** (1) (a) Each high priority and priority local  
427 educational agency shall conduct a practices assessment as  
428 described in subsection (2) of this section. Each high priority  
429 and priority local educational agency's practices assessment must  
430 consider community partnerships with state and local government  
431 agencies and community-based organizations and current practices  
432 and policies as they relate to different types of dropout students  
433 or students at risk of dropping out.

434           (b) Each high priority local educational agency shall  
435 complete its initial practices assessment no later than June 30,  
436 2024. Each priority local educational agency shall complete its  
437 Initial practices assessment no later than June 30, 2025.  
438 Following completion of the initial practices assessment, each  
439 high priority and priority local educational agency shall review  
440 and update the practices assessment in accordance with timelines  
441 adopted by rule of the State Board of Education.

442           (c) Each local educational agency that is not a high  
443 priority or priority local educational agency may conduct a  
444 practices assessment and periodically review and update the  
445 practices assessment. A local educational agency that chooses to  
446 conduct a practices assessment under this paragraph must comply  
447 with the provisions of subsection (4) of this section.

448           (2) Each practices assessment, at a minimum, must address  
449 the high priority or priority local educational agency's:



450 (a) Attendance and truancy reporting and enforcement  
451 policies and definitions;

452 (b) Risk factors and remedies applicable to students  
453 who are failing one or more courses, have experienced traumatic  
454 life events, or have lost academic interest or motivation, as well  
455 as students whose presence or actions are perceived to be  
456 detrimental to other students;

457 (c) Interaction with the judicial system in enforcing  
458 the Mississippi Compulsory School Attendance Law;

459 (d) Interaction with the juvenile justice system in:

460 (i) Assisting in administering juvenile diversion  
461 programs and coordinating supports for all students transitioning  
462 out of the juvenile justice system to aid in the continuation of  
463 those students' education, especially for those students involved  
464 in the juvenile justice system as a result of school-related  
465 violations of the local educational agency's code of conduct or  
466 crimes committed on school property; and

467 (ii) Coordinating with juvenile probation officers  
468 regarding school-related conditions of probation;

469 (e) Coordination with the Mississippi Department of  
470 Human Services and other youth services providers;

471 (f) Grading policies;

472 (g) Policies for grade repetition and remediation;

473 (h) Course completion requirements and policies; and

474 (i) Policies and practices relating to:



475 (i) The use of individual career and academic  
476 plans;

477 (ii) Ethnicity, language and cultural barriers  
478 between students' homes and school;

479 (iii) English-language acquisition;

480 (iv) Student acquisition of behavioral, social and  
481 emotional skills;

482 (v) Students' health care needs;

483 (vi) Alternative and flexible educational  
484 strategies;

485 (vii) Family involvement and family support  
486 services;

487 (viii) Expanded learning opportunity programs;

488 (ix) Staff development in implementing  
489 evidence-based strategies;

490 (x) Innovations to address barriers to school  
491 engagement and success;

492 (xi) Outreach services to re-engage students who  
493 drop out of school; and

494 (xii) Review and analysis of data regarding  
495 dropout rates, graduation rates, school completion rates, truancy  
496 rates, the number of students who are habitually truant,  
497 suspension rates and expulsion rates.

498 (3) The Office of Dropout Prevention shall provide technical  
499 assistance to high priority local educational agencies to assist



500 them in completing their practices assessments. The office may  
501 provide technical assistance to priority local educational  
502 agencies as allowable, subject to an appropriation of funds for  
503 the administration of this act. In addition, at the request of a  
504 high priority or priority local educational agency and to the  
505 extent practicable within available resources, the office shall  
506 provide a template, which includes any student data that is  
507 pertinent to the high priority or priority local educational  
508 agency and to which the office has access, to assist the high  
509 priority or priority local educational agency in preparing its  
510 practices assessment.

511 (4) Upon completing its practices assessment or any updates  
512 to the assessment, each high priority and priority local  
513 educational agency shall transmit the assessment to the department  
514 for publication on the Internet.

515 **SECTION 8.** (1) (a) Based on the completed practices  
516 assessment, each high priority local educational agency shall  
517 adopt a student graduation and completion plan for the schools  
518 operated or approved by the high priority local educational  
519 agency. Each priority local educational agency shall adopt a  
520 student graduation and completion plan not later than October 1,  
521 2024. Following adoption of the initial student graduation and  
522 completion plan, each high priority and priority local education  
523 provider shall review and update the student graduation and  
524 completion plan in accordance with timelines adopted by rule of



525 the State Board of Education. In setting the dates for adoption  
526 of the initial student graduation and completion plans and the  
527 timelines for reviewing and updating the student graduation and  
528 completion plans, the board shall ensure that the dates are  
529 consistent with the dates by which each local educational agency  
530 is required to adopt the plan required by its accreditation  
531 category or its annual performance review.

532 (b) Each local educational agency that is not a high  
533 priority or priority local educational agency may adopt a student  
534 graduation and completion plan and periodically  
535 review and update the plan. A local educational agency that  
536 chooses to adopt a student graduation and completion plan under  
537 this paragraph (b) must comply with the provisions of subsection  
538 (6) of this section.

539 (2) Each high priority and priority local educational  
540 agency's student graduation and completion plan shall include, at  
541 a minimum, the following:

542 (a) The percentage by which the high priority or  
543 priority local educational agency anticipates reducing the student  
544 truancy rate and dropout rate and the timeline for achieving the  
545 reductions;

546 (b) The percentage by which the high priority or  
547 priority local educational agency anticipates increasing the  
548 student attendance, graduation and completion rates and the  
549 timeline for achieving the increases;



550 (c) Other objectives that the high priority or priority  
551 local educational agency identifies that are designed to result in  
552 improved dropout prevention, improved student attendance, and  
553 improved student engagement and re-engagement within the schools  
554 operated or approved by the high priority or priority local  
555 educational agency;

556 (d) The manner in which the high priority or priority  
557 local educational agency measures success in achieving the goals  
558 and objectives of the student graduation and completion plan;

559 (e) The manner in which school staff and parents will  
560 work together to address the risk factors and remedies for  
561 students; and

562 (f) A description of the supports that the high  
563 priority or priority local educational agency will provide to a  
564 student who leaves a public school before graduation or  
565 completion, which, at a minimum, must include an explanation of  
566 the educational alternatives available to the student to assist  
567 him or her in re-engaging in school and other information to  
568 assist with his or her transition into other educational settings,  
569 including, but not limited to, an adult basic education, general  
570 educational development or English-as-a-second-language program,  
571 or the workforce development or job training.

572 (3) In designing its student graduation and completion plan,  
573 each high priority or priority local educational agency is  
574 encouraged to:



575 (a) Include a variety of innovative dropout reduction  
576 efforts in the plan, including new schools and programs that  
577 provide educational environments that are specifically designed to  
578 promote student re-engagement, including policies and programs  
579 that create alternative pathways to high school graduation; and

580 (b) Review existing supports and resources that the  
581 high priority or priority local educational agency may leverage to  
582 support implementation of the plan, including, but not limited to,  
583 any federal monies available under the Safe and Drug-free Schools  
584 and Communities Act, 20 USCS Section 7101 et seq.

585 (4) Each high priority or priority local educational agency,  
586 in adopting its student graduation and completion plan, also shall  
587 adopt a process to annually review and evaluate the effectiveness  
588 of the plan. Each high priority or priority local educational  
589 agency that is a school district shall include its practices  
590 assessment and its student graduation and completion plan with the  
591 plan the school district is required to adopt based on its  
592 accreditation level.

593 (5) The Office of Dropout Prevention shall provide technical  
594 assistance to high priority local educational agencies to assist  
595 them in completing their student graduation and completion plans.  
596 The office may provide technical assistance to priority local  
597 educational agencies as allowable, subject to the availability of  
598 funds.





599 (6) Upon adopting its student graduation and completion plan  
600 or any updates to the plan, each high priority or priority local  
601 educational agency shall transmit the plan to the department for  
602 publication on the Internet.

603 (7) (a) Beginning in the 2024-2025 academic year, and each  
604 year thereafter, the office shall evaluate each high priority  
605 local education agency's student graduation and completion plan as  
606 part of the accreditation review process. The office shall  
607 evaluate the components of each student graduation and completion  
608 plan, the high priority local educational agency's implementation  
609 of the plan, and the results achieved. In evaluating the student  
610 graduation and completion plans, the office shall ensure that the  
611 high priority local educational agency applies best practices and  
612 strategies and employs rigorous ongoing program evaluation and  
613 oversight in implementing the plan. On completion of the  
614 evaluation, the office may provide recommendations to the high  
615 priority local educational agency concerning improvements in the  
616 plan design and implementation.

617 (b) The office may evaluate, as described in paragraph  
618 (a) of this subsection, the student graduation and completion  
619 plans of priority local educational agencies, subject to the  
620 availability of funds.

621 **SECTION 9.** (1) Each local educational agency shall adopt  
622 and implement policies and procedures under which the local  
623 educational agency or the public school in which the student was



624 enrolled shall notify a student's parent if the student drops out  
625 of school, even if the student is not subject to the compulsory  
626 attendance requirement specified in Section 37-13-91. The local  
627 educational agency shall develop the policies and procedures with  
628 the goal of encouraging the student to re-enroll in school and of  
629 conveying to the student's parent the long-term ramifications to  
630 the student dropping out of school.

631 (2) The policies and procedures must specify, at a minimum,  
632 the time frames by which the local educational agency or the  
633 public school in which the student was enrolled must notify the  
634 student and his or her parent and must require the personnel at  
635 the public school to attempt to meet in person with the student  
636 and his or her parent.

637 (3) The notice must include, at a minimum, written  
638 notification of the student's dropout status and an explanation of  
639 the educational alternatives available to the student to assist  
640 him or her in re-engaging in school.

641 **SECTION 10.** (1) There is established in the State Treasury  
642 a fund to be known as the "Student Re-engagement Grant Program  
643 Fund" for the purpose of providing grants to local educational  
644 agencies for use in providing educational services and supports to  
645 students to maintain student engagement and support student  
646 re-engagement in high school. The fund will be comprised of funds  
647 appropriated by the Legislature and grants or donations from  
648 private or public sources. The State Board of Education shall



649 award student re-engagement grants to local educational agencies  
650 from funds appropriated to the fund.

651 (b) The office may expend up to three percent (3%) of  
652 the monies annually appropriated to the fund to offset the costs  
653 incurred in administering this section and in evaluating and  
654 providing technical assistance to local educational agencies that  
655 receive grants under this section.

656 (c) Any monies in the fund not expended for the purpose  
657 of this section may be invested by the State Treasurer as provided  
658 by law. All interest and income derived from the investment and  
659 deposit of monies in the fund must be credited to the fund. Any  
660 unexpended and unencumbered monies remaining in the fund at the  
661 end of a fiscal year must remain in the fund and may not lapse  
662 into the State General Fund.

663 (2) The board shall adopt rules for implementing the grant  
664 program, which must include, at a minimum, the following:

665 (a) Timelines and procedures by which a local educational  
666 agency may apply for a grant;

667 (b) The information to be included on grant  
668 applications, including:

669 (i) The local educational agency's plan for  
670 providing educational services, including social and emotional  
671 support services;

672 (ii) A description of the services to be provided;



673 (iii) The estimated cost of providing the  
674 services;  
675 (iv) The criteria the local educational agency  
676 will apply to measure the effectiveness of the services provided;  
677 and

678 (v) A description of the local educational  
679 agency's policies and practices related to:

- 680 1. Course completion and credit recovery;
- 681 2. Attendance and behavior improvements;
- 682 3. Alternative and flexible learning  
683 strategies;
- 684 4. Safe and welcoming school environments;
- 685 5. Student social and emotional supports;
- 686 6. Family engagement and family support  
687 strategies;
- 688 7. Staff development;
- 689 8. Innovations to address barriers to school  
690 engagement and success; and
- 691 9. Transference of student records to and  
692 receipt of student records from other local educational agencies.

693 (3) Each local educational agency that seeks to receive a  
694 grant under the provisions of this section shall submit an  
695 application to the department in accordance with the rules adopted  
696 by the board. The department shall review the grant applications  
697 received and recommend grant recipients and grant amounts to the



698 state board. The board shall annually award grants through the  
699 grant program based on the department's recommendations.

700 (4) (a) On or before February 15, 2024, and each year  
701 thereafter, the department shall evaluate the student  
702 re-engagement services provided by each local educational agency  
703 that received a grant under the provisions of this section in the  
704 preceding fiscal year; however, the department need not provide an  
705 evaluation for any fiscal year in which grants were not awarded.

706 The department shall review:

707 (i) The outcomes and effectiveness of the services  
708 provided, as measured by the demonstrated degree of student  
709 re-engagement;

710 (ii) The academic growth of students who received  
711 services as a result of the grant, to the extent the information  
712 is available;

713 (iii) The reduction in the dropout rate; and

714 (iv) The increase in the graduation and completion  
715 rates for the grant recipients' schools.

716 (b) The department shall report the evaluation results  
717 to the Education Committees of the Mississippi Senate and House of  
718 Representatives, or any successor committees, in conjunction with  
719 the reports submitted under Sections 37-13-80 and 37-13-85.

720 **SECTION 11.** (1) The State Board of Education shall  
721 promulgate any rules and regulations as may be deemed necessary to



722 implement the provisions of this act. The rules of the board  
723 shall address the following:

724 (a) The rules required under Section 37-13-80 to  
725 establish criteria for identifying high priority and priority  
726 local educational agencies;

727 (b) The rules required under Section 10 of this act for  
728 the Student Re-engagement Grant Program; and

729 (c) Rules to define and calculate the following rates:

730 (i) The student dropout rate;

731 (ii) The graduation rate;

732 (iii) The completion rate;

733 (iv) The student re-engagement rate;

734 (v) The truancy rate;

735 (vi) The student mobility rate;

736 (vii) The student suspension rate; and

737 (viii) The student expulsion rate.

738 (2) To the extent that the board, as of July 1, 2023, has  
739 already promulgated any of the rules and regulations specified in  
740 subsection (1) of this section, the board shall review the rules  
741 and regulations and determine whether they should be revised based  
742 on this act.

743 **SECTION 12.** (1) On or before February 15, 2024, and each  
744 year thereafter, the Office of Dropout Prevention shall submit to  
745 the State Board of Education, the Education Committees of the  
746 Mississippi Senate and House of Representatives, or any successor



747 committees, and to the Governor, a report making state policy  
748 findings and recommendations to reduce the student dropout rate  
749 and increase the student graduation and completion rates. In  
750 preparing the findings and recommendations, the office  
751 shall:

752 (a) Consider which state statutes and rules may be  
753 amended to provide incentives and support for and remove barriers  
754 to reducing the student dropout rate and increasing the student  
755 graduation and completion rates, including, but not limited to,  
756 statutes and rules pertaining to funding for local educational  
757 agencies' operating costs, funding for categorical programs, and  
758 truancy;

759 (b) Consider research-based dropout prevention and  
760 student engagement and re-engagement strategies; and

761 (c) Determine the amount of state monies spent on  
762 reducing the dropout rates in schools operated or approved by  
763 local educational agencies in the preceding fiscal year and  
764 determine the effects of those expenditures.

765 (2) Beginning with the report submitted under this section,  
766 the office shall add to the report a summary of the actions taken  
767 by local educational agencies statewide to reduce the student  
768 dropout rate and increase the graduation and completion rates and  
769 the progress made in achieving these goals. The summary must  
770 include:



771 (a) A summary and evaluation of the student graduation  
772 and completion plans adopted by the local educational agencies;

773 (b) A list of the local educational agencies whose  
774 schools have experienced the greatest decrease in student dropout  
775 rates and the greatest increase in student graduation and  
776 completion rates in the state in the preceding academic year;

777 (c) An identification of local educational agencies and  
778 public schools that are achieving the goals and objectives  
779 specified in their student graduation and completion plans and  
780 those that are not achieving their goals and objectives;

781 (d) An explanation of the actions taken and strategies  
782 implemented by the local educational agencies with the highest  
783 student dropout rates to reduce those rates and by the local  
784 educational agencies with the lowest student graduation and  
785 completion rates to increase those rates;

786 (e) An identification of the local educational agencies  
787 that have demonstrated the greatest improvement in reducing their  
788 student dropout rates and increasing their student graduation and  
789 completion rates and descriptions of the actions taken and  
790 strategies implemented by the local educational agencies operating  
791 or approving these schools to achieve these improvements; and

792 (f) An evaluation of the overall progress across the  
793 state in meeting the goals specified in Section 1 of this act for  
794 reducing the student dropout rate and increasing the student  
795 graduation and completion rates.





796           **SECTION 13.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
797 and after July 1, 2023.

