

By: Representative Scott

To: Education

HOUSE BILL NO. 375

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



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

(2) The Legislature concludes that:

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

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

SECTION 3. As used in this act, the following words and phrases have the meanings ascribed in this section unless the 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.



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

(i) Career and technical educational agencies;



(ii) General educational development service providers;

(iii) The State Department of Health;

(iv) The Mississippi Department of Human Services;

(v) The Mississippi Department of Corrections;

(vi) State institutions of higher education;

(vii) Offices of workforce development;

(viii) Expanded learning opportunity and family education programs;

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



the high priority or priority local educational agency and
analyzing the cost-effectiveness of the strategies; and

(c) Identification and recommendation of effective
approaches applied by other Mississippi local educational agencies
which may be situated similarly to the high priority or priority
local educational agency.

SECTION 5. (1) On or before December 31, 2025, and each
year thereafter, the Office of Dropout Prevention shall review the
existing research and data from this state and other states and
compile a report of effective dropout prevention and student
engagement and re-engagement policies and strategies implemented
by local educational agencies within this state and in other
states. The office may use the findings and recommendations in
the report to provide technical assistance to high priority and
priority local educational agencies, to assist high priority and
priority local educational agencies in creating student graduation
and completion plans, and to recommend to the State Board of
Education and the Legislature state policies concerning dropout
prevention and student engagement and re-engagement. High
priority and priority local education providers may use the report
to review their policies, to formulate new policies and
strategies, and to create and evaluate their student graduation
and completion plans.



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

(a) The Governor's office;

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

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

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

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

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

37-13-85. The Office of Compulsory School Attendance Enforcement shall have the following powers and duties, in 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



or interview for employment with the State Department of
Education;

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

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

(p) To annually analyze data collected by the
department from local educational agencies throughout the state
concerning student attendance and the implementation of school
attendance policies and practices, and to assess the overall
incidence, causes and effects of student dropout, engagement and
re-engagement in Mississippi. Before February 15, 2026, and each
year thereafter, the office shall provide local educational
agencies, the State Board of Education, the Education Committees
of the Mississippi Senate and the House of Representatives or any
successor committees, and the Governor's office with the
assessment and any recommended strategies to address student
dropout, engagement and re-engagement in Mississippi. The Office
of Compulsory School Attendance Enforcement may combine this
assessment and recommendation with the report required by the
Office of Dropout Prevention under Section 37-13-80.



SECTION 7.

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

(b) Each high priority local educational agency shall complete its initial practices assessment no later than June 30, 2026. Each priority local educational agency shall complete its Initial practices assessment no later than June 30, 2027. Following completion of the initial practices assessment, each high priority and priority local educational agency shall review and update the practices assessment in accordance with timelines adopted by rule of the State Board of Education.

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

(2) Each practices assessment, at a minimum, must address 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 2026. 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



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

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

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

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

(b) The percentage by which the high priority or priority local educational agency anticipates increasing the student attendance, graduation and completion rates and the 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 2026-2027 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



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

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

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

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



649 shall award student re-engagement grants to local educational
650 agencies 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
666 educational 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, 2026, 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



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

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

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

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

(i) The student dropout rate;

(ii) The graduation rate;

(iii) The completion rate;

(iv) The student re-engagement rate;

(v) The truancy rate;

(vi) The student mobility rate;

(vii) The student suspension rate; and

(viii) The student expulsion rate.

(2) To the extent that the board, as of July 1, 2025, has already promulgated any of the rules and regulations specified in subsection (1) of this section, the board shall review the rules and regulations and determine whether they should be revised based on this act.

SECTION 12. (1) On or before February 15, 2026, and each year thereafter, the Office of Dropout Prevention shall submit to the State Board of Education, the Education Committees of the Mississippi Senate and House of Representatives, or any successor



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

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

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

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

(2) Beginning with the report submitted under this section, the office shall add to the report a summary of the actions taken by local educational agencies statewide to reduce the student dropout rate and increase the graduation and completion rates and the progress made in achieving these goals. The summary must 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, 2025.

