ITEM #11.3

# Calhoun County School District

# DROPOUT PREVENTION PLAN

## 2026-2027

Dr. Timothy M. Cook, Superintendent

Approved
OCT 26 2026
Board Meeting

**Table of Contents**

**Section I: Local Dropout Prevention Team Members**

**Section II: Statement of Assurance**

**Section III: Data**

**Section IV: Needs Assessment Outcomes**

**Section V: Current District Initiatives and Proposed Initiatives**

**Section VI: 15 Effective Strategies**

**Appendix A: Roadmap To Success: A Framework for District Dropout Prevention Plans**

**Appendix B: Mississippi Succeeds Report Cards**

**Appendix C: National Dropout Prevention Center's 15 Strategies for Dropout Prevention**

## Section I: Local Dropout Prevention Team Members

**School District**: Calhoun County School District Phone: 662-412-3152

**Mailing Address**: 119 W. Main Street. Fax: 662-412-3157
Pittsboro, MS 38951

**Calhoun County Schools:** Bruce Elementary School
Bruce High School
Calhoun City Elementary
Calhoun City High School
Vardaman Attendance Center

**Superintendent's Email Address**: tcook@calhounk12.com

| Name | Position |
|---|---|
| Timothy Cook | Superintendent |
| Heather Nix | Chief Academic Officer |
| Emily Snellings | Federal Programs Director |
| Michael Gillespie | Testing Coordinator |
| Katie Hill | SPED Director |
| Rebecca King | Bruce High School Principal |
| Suzanne Oakley | Bruce High School Counselor |
| Lillie Gillespie | Calhoun City High School Principal |
| Caitlyn Doles | Calhoun City High School Counselor |
| Lucas Ferguson | Vardaman Attendance Center |
| Tonia Easley | Vardaman Attendance Center |
| Willie Mays, Jr. | Director of Career & Technical Education |
| Laura Brower | Career & Technical Counselor |

| | |
|---|---|
| Tonya Tunnell | Bruce Elementary Principal |
| Kountess Welch | Calhoun City Elementary Principal |
| Guy Owen | Attendance Office |
| Adam Brown | Community Member |
| Charlsie Lucius | Parent |

## Section II: Statement of Assurance

On behalf of the **Calhoun County School District**, I hereby submit a local Dropout Prevention Plan to provide goals, activities, and services necessary to meet the two overarching goals of the state dropout prevention plan:

(1) Increasing the graduation rate to 90% or above by 2027-2028;
(2) Reducing the dropout rate by 25% by 2027-2028.

- I hereby certify that the information contained in this plan is in compliance with the appropriate federal and state laws and regulations.
- I hereby certify that our school district will cooperate in carrying out any evaluation conducted by or for the Mississippi Department of Education.
- I hereby certify that our school district will submit reports as requested by the Mississippi Department of Education.
- I hereby certify that our school district has consulted with parents, community partners, business partners, teachers, school staff, building administrators, and others in the development of this local dropout prevention plan.
- I hereby certify that our school district has taken into account relevant, scientifically based research, strategies, and best practices indicating services most effective in preventing dropouts if we focused on students in the earliest grades.
- I hereby certify that our school district will prepare and submit an annual progress report on increasing the graduate rate, reducing the dropout rate and reducing the truancy rate.
- I hereby certify that our school district will endorse and implement the Fifteen (15) Effective Strategies to promote a reduction in the dropout rate.
- I hereby certify that our school district has based the dropout prevention plan on scientifically based research, best practices and all laws in determining strategies to reduce the dropout rate for students with disabilities under IDEA.
- I hereby certify that our school district will evaluate our district dropout prevention plan on an annual basis to determine appropriate changes needed for future school years.
- I hereby certify that our District School Board has reviewed and approved this plan for submission to the Mississippi Department of Education.

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**Dropout Prevention Team Leader:**

Name: Michael Gillespie

Mailing Address: 119 W. Main Street, Pittsboro, MS 38951 Telephone-662-412-3152

Dr. Timothy M. Cook, Superintendent

Colby Bollinger, School Board President

## Section III: Data

MDE Accountability Data[1]

Graduation Rate Trends

| Location | 18-19 | 19-20 | 20-21 | 21-22 | 22-23 | 23-24 | 24-25 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Calhoun County School District | 86.5 | 91.6 | 93.3 | 88.5 | 86.9 | 89.0 | 89.4 |
| Bruce High | 83.7 | 95.4 | 94.4 | 93 | 80.6 | 92.9 | 93.7 |
| Calhoun City High | 85.1 | 86.4 | 90.8 | 85.7 | 91.1 | 88.5 | 86.3 |
| Vardaman High | 89.8 | 93.8 | 95.8 | 86.4 | 90.0 | 85.1 | 88.9 |

2025 District and School-Level Graduation and Dropout Rates

| Location | Count | Graduation Rate | Dropout Rate |
|---|---|---|---|
| Calhoun County School District | 151 | 90.7 | 5.96 |
| Bruce High School | 58 | 94.8 | 5.17 |
| Calhoun City High School | 49 | 83.67 | 10.2 |
| Vardaman Attendance Center | 37 | 94.59 | 0 |

[1] Accountability
https://msrc.mdek12.org/

2024-2025 Report Card Data

| | BES | BHS | CCES | CCHS | VAC | CCSD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grade | A | B | A | D | B | B |
| Math Proficiency | 56.5 | 49.2 | 52 | 29.9 | 55.1 | 47.2 |
| English Proficiency | 55.6 | 45.7 | 42.7 | 34 | 45.0 | 43.4 |
| US History Proficiency | | 75.5 | | 57.6 | 86.5 | 71 |
| Science Proficiency | | 66.9 | | 51 | 64.7 | 60.6 |
| College & Career Readiness | | 56.1 | | 50 | 59.3 | 55.2 |
| Acceleration | | 70.6 | | 69.8 | 73.4 | 70.9 |
| Graduation | | 93.7 | | 86.3 | 88.9 | 89.4 |
| Chronic Absenteeism | 17.0 | 29.5 | 17.9 | 21.8 | 11.2 | 19 |
| Advanced Course Participation | | 48.9 | | 36.7 | 76.0 | 45.1 |
| Enrollment | 318 | 438 | 226 | 362 | 648 | |

## Section IV: Needs Assessment Outcomes

In this section, please describe major outcomes from your district needs assessment, as they address the following areas. Note: Based on the outcomes of your district needs assessment, you may wish to divide this area into various sub-sections (e.g., student-based, staff-based, school- based, project-oriented, etc.)

| Needs Assessment Areas | Descriptions |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| **Target Group Identified** | • Students not reading on grade level<br>• Students retained two times or more in grades K-10th<br>• Students with excessive discipline referrals<br>• Students with chronic absenteeism<br>• Students with emotional and/or family problems (counselor referrals),<br>• Students failing one or more end of course assessments<br>• Students failing one or more core courses<br>• Students not involved in extracurricular clubs, activities, etc. |
| **Data Collection Method Used** | • Review of attendance, grades, counselor referrals, graduation rates, and disciplinary reports<br>• Survey responses: Students, staff, parents, community<br>• Review of test score data: MAAP, ACT, PSAT, MAAP-A<br>• Case 21 benchmark assessments in English/language arts, science, and mathematics<br>• Early Warning System data review |
| **Prioritized List of Needs** | • Provide safe and engaging school and classroom environments<br>• Conduct data analyses, including retention rates, discipline data, attendance data, survey data, student performance data, teacher observation data, student outcomes data (by teacher and school), etc., and use data to inform instruction<br>• Provide effective professional learning opportunities focused on evidence-based practices including, but not limited to, professional learning in the following areas: explicit instruction, differentiated instruction, classroom management, student/teacher engagement, maximizing instructional time, and dropout prevention strategies |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Short Term Goals** | • Provide additional counseling/mental health supports for students exhibiting social, emotional, or behavioral issues<br>• Include social emotional learning strategies and culturally and linguistically responsive teaching into daily instructional practice |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Long Term Goals** | • Establish and support school & classroom climates that promote success for all students<br>• Improve instructional and delivery methods to make lessons more engaging and relevant<br>• Continue to decrease percentage of chronically absent students |
| **Recommendations for future needs** | • Continue to refine the Early Warning System at each building.<br>• Response to Interventions/Tier spreadsheet reviews (academic/behavior)<br>• Continue weekly focus on data analysis collected throughout the district<br>• Increase capacity of school transition teams |

## Section V: Current District Initiatives and Proposed Initiatives

To address the needs of our students, Calhoun County Schools will work to provide tutorial services after school and throughout the instructional day. The school will continue to monitor progress by utilizing the RTI process and the MTSS system to quickly address the needs of students who struggle academically and behaviorally. We will continue to work with the school community to address the academic and social needs of the students we serve. The district is committed to searching only for teachers who are highly effective and training them to use research-based programs and strategies that focus on teaching and learning.

Programs such as STAR and Mastery Connect have been helpful in allowing educators to assist students with the 21st century skills that are necessary to be college and career ready. Reaching these goals will require best practices in all subjects at every grade level.

The school will utilize STAR, Mastery Connect, and the Kindergarten Readiness program to:

- Integrate technology that is focused on teaching and learning to enhance the educational experience;
- Conduct professional development that is geared toward improving academic achievement and providing educators and parents with opportunities to add value to a data-rich process;
- Extend the school day to maximize instructional time so that students may focus on learning;
- Mentor new teachers and help them build capacity within the district;
- Research and share teacher resources and identify common misconceptions that students experience with various instructional techniques;
- Utilize Mastery Connect to analyze the existence or absence of quality instruction and interventions that will close the achievement gap in all core subject areas.

Calhoun County School District will continue to:

- Provide subject area and ACT prep opportunities for students;
- Provide tutoring for students who are at-risk of failing;
- Provide a career counselor and job shadowing program to assist students in being college and career ready;
- Provide professional development opportunities that teachers, parents, students, and administrators may better understand their roles in improving the academic experience for all students.

## Section VI: 15 Effective Strategies

The National Dropout Prevention Center (NDPC) has identified fifteen effective strategies determined to have the most impact on dropout prevention. The district's current and proposed initiatives for reducing the dropout rate address each of the NDPC's fifteen effective strategies. *(*Appendix C)

District -wide Initiatives

School and Community Perspective Systemic Renewal
*Student Administration Manager (SAMS):* SAM is the district-wide monitoring information system used to track student attendance, grades, and discipline records. This monitoring system provides an effective means by which to support the Mississippi Department of Education performance-based accreditation model; support educational funding; provide timely and accurate reporting of educational data to meet state and federal requirements; allow for student tracking to determine student mobility and assist in the reduction of the dropout rate within the state. SAM provides information to school officials that enable them to make appropriate referrals and to intervene when warning signs occur.

School Community Collaboration
*Communicare:* Communicare works with the Calhoun County Schools and provides mental health and behavior modifications for students with social and emotional challenges.

Safe Learning Environment
*School Nurses:* The Calhoun County School District provides a nurse on each campus full time.
*School Resource Officers:* Each city has a dedicated SRO that works in partnership with the Calhoun County Sheriff's office. SROs are on campus when students are present and work additional hours to cover games and school events.

Early Intervention:
*Interventionist:* The Calhoun County School District provides interventionist units for each school in the district to identify and intervene with students one on one.

Family Engagement
A*ctive Parent:* Active Parent Online is a software program that allows parents in the Calhoun County parents to review their children's grades, attendance, discipline, and other school news weekly. After parents register online, they are given a secure record of username and password. The account is then activated by the SAMS MSIS Manager. Parents can log on at the Calhoun County Schools' website to log in and use the program. Once registered the passwords and username remain the same each year.

*SchoolStatus:* SchoolStatus is a communication platform that allows Calhoun County staff members to communicate with parents and stakeholders. Communication options include, text message, voice call, and email.

*Title I Updates:* This Office of Federal Programs will provide to parents by way of their webpage Title I community information to keep them informed of what is going on in the school community.

*Title I Advisory Meeting:* Title I Advisory meetings will be held at least twice a year to meet with stakeholders and provide them with resources regarding Title I Funds and Allocations within the district.

*Annual Title I Parent Meeting*: Title I schools hold parent meetings to keep parents informed of all Title I initiatives, school improvement efforts, and overall student progress. Meetings are held throughout the year and at various times to accommodate parents. The Office of Federal Programs places updates on its website to keep the parents informed of information about Title I schools in the district.

*PTO/PTA:* Parent organizations provide an avenue to parents to get involved with the school experience.

Mentoring & Tutoring

*English Language Learners (ELL):* The district-wide ELL program serves ELL students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels through a pull-out process. Certified teachers and paraprofessionals provide mentoring and tutoring to help ELL students learn the English language and to acquire subject-area content proficiency.

*Counseling Program:* Counselors provide assistance to developing discipline plans for students who have multiple office referrals, arranging parent-teacher conferences, and providing drug-awareness and character education sessions and activities.

*New Teacher Mentoring Program:* The district conducts a mentoring program for first year teachers and teachers new to the district. The program is coordinated by the Personnel Director. Teachers attend a mandatory day of professional development prior to the start of school and several afternoon sessions are planned and carried out throughout the school year.

High School

*Credit Recovery*: Provides students with the option to recover or make up a course or recover a credit while taking regular courses. Beginning in July 2022, the CCSD has implemented a formal credit recovery and fast-track program for students who are at risk of dropout. To date, the participants have enjoyed great success.

*Dual Enrollment:* Students at all high schools have the opportunity to participate in this program through a partnership with Northwest Community College.

Maximize Resources

*Professional Development Funds:* District professional development (PD) funds are used to train teachers on curriculum trends that will better prepare them to improve academic achievement with innovative teaching strategies that increase the graduation rate and decrease the dropout rate.

*Title I Funds:* In addition to other PD funds, all Title I schools will utilize a large portion of funds to build capacity with a focus placed on teaching and learning.

*Title II Professional Development Funds:* A majority of these funds are set-aside to provide high quality job embedded PD district-wide and support the salary of one class-size reduction teacher.

Active Learning

*School Wellness Policy:* The district affirms its commitment to providing a healthy environment for all students and staff. The wellness policy is developed with the involvement of the district's Health and Fit School Advisory Committee as required by Section 204 of Public Law 108-265.

Educational Technology:

The overall goal is to provide the school community with access to the technology that is needed to compete in a global society.

*Measures of Academic Progress (MAAP):* MAAP is an easy to read web-based application that allows Educators in Elementary through High School to access and monitor student performance in Mathematic, Language and Reading. With the use of Education Leadership Solutions (ELS) and MAPS teachers are able to see a comprehensive view of student ability levels.

*Case 21/ Mastery Connect:* Case 21 allows teachers to administer district benchmark assessments and access student scores within 48 hours. Teachers can then chart the students' progress and adjust to meet the individualized needs of the student.

Career and Technical Education

*Job Shadowing Program:* This program is designed to allow students to work up to 40 hours a week with local businesses and within the school district to get real life and work experience while earning wages.

## Appendix A: Roadmap To Success: A Framework for District Dropout Prevention Plans

Requirement

Following the completion of the needs assessment, the district dropout prevention plan will detail the implementation of the current district-level initiatives related to K-12 dropout prevention, in addition to proposed initiatives. The plan shall include the following components:

1. A District Dropout Prevention Plan cover sheet and Dropout Prevention Team sign-off sheet, containing the following information:
    - The local contact person's name, position, title, address, telephone number, and fax number
    - The district name and a list of the schools (elementary, middle, and high) within the district
    - The names and signatures of district dropout prevention team members

2. A Statement of Assurance, containing the following information:
    - The district dropout prevention team leader's name, title, address, telephone number, and fax number
    - The approval signature of the district superintendent and school board chair

3. Outcomes of the needs assessment
    - Identification of students in need of targeted assistance
    - Identification of potential risk factors
    - Needs statements
    - Prioritization of needs

4. Details of current district initiatives
    - Addressing the MDE's Five Strategic Initiatives
    - Addressing the National Dropout Prevention Center's (NDPC) 15 Strategies for Dropout Prevention
    - Highlighting school level impact (elementary, middle, high school)

5. Proposed initiatives with prioritized actions. Both current and proposed initiative should include:
    - District goals that describe the overall end result the district wishes to achieve to address dropout prevention. (Note: Local districts may require school level plans based on individual school needs and variations in dropout rates.) The goals should be:
        - Derived from the prioritized needs of the school
        - Stated in terms of student outcomes
        - Measurable
        - Specific and clear

    - Ambitious
    - Achievable
    - Long-term (three to five years)
    - Based on established start date and completion dates
- Benchmarks to serve as implementation checkpoints, to allow a district to assess how well it is progressing towards its goal
- A description of the persons who will be responsible for the implementation of the goal
- An evaluation component that provides evidence of the achievement of the objective. The evaluation component should:
    - Be measurable
    - Be directly related to the objective
    - Include evaluation data collected along the way (when possible)

## Appendix C: National Dropout Prevention Center's 15 Strategies for Dropout Prevention

# 15 Effective Strategies for Dropout Prevention

Since 1986, the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (NDPC/N) has conducted and analyzed research; sponsored workshops and national conferences; and collaborated with researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to further the mission of reducing America's dropout rate by meeting the needs of youth in at-risk situations, including students with disabilities.

Students report a variety of reasons for dropping out of school; therefore, the solutions are multi-dimensional. The NDPC/N has identified 15 Effective Strategies that have the most positive impact on reducing school dropout. These strategies appear to be independent, but actually work well together and frequently overlap. Although they can be implemented as stand-alone strategies, positive outcomes will result when school districts or other agencies develop program improvement plans that encompass most or all of these strategies. These strategies have been successful at all school levels from PK-12 and in rural, suburban, and urban settings. The strategies are grouped into four general categories: Foundational strategies (school-community perspective), early interventions, basic core strategies, and managing and improving instruction.

**Foundational Strategies**

- ★ Systemic Approach
- ★ School-Community Collaboration
- ★ Safe Learning Environments

**Early Interventions**

- ★ Family Engagement
- ★ Early Childhood Education
- ★ Early Literacy Development

**Basic Core Strategies**

- ★ Mentoring/Tutoring
- ★ Service-Learning
- ★ Alternative Schooling
- ★ Afterschool/Out-of-School Opportunities

**Managing and Improving Instruction**

- ★ Professional Development
- ★ Active Learning
- ★ Educational Technology
- ★ Individualized Instruction
- ★ Career and Technical Education (CTE)

NATIONAL DROPOUT PREVENTION CENTER/NETWORK

National Dropout Prevention Center/Network
Clemson University, 209 Martin Street
Clemson, SC 29631-1555
P: 864-656-2599 F: 864-656-0136
ndpc@clemson.edu www.dropoutprevention.org

# Effective Strategies Defined

★ **Systemic Approach**—This strategy calls for a systemic approach and process for ongoing and continuous improvement across all grade levels and among all stakeholders, through a shared and widely communicated vision and focus, tightly focused goals and objectives, selection of targeted research-based strategies and interventions, ongoing monitoring and feedback, and data-based decision making. It also requires the alignment of school policies, procedures, practices, and organizational structures and continuous monitoring of effectiveness.

★ **School-Community Collaboration**—This strategy focuses on the power of an engaged and responsive community where everyone in the community is accountable for the quality of education, resulting in a caring and collaborative environment where youth can thrive and achieve. Critical elements of this type of collaboration rely on effective, ongoing, and multi-dimensional communication so that dropout prevention is a communitywide and ongoing effort.

★ **Safe Learning Environments**—Safe, orderly, nurturing, inclusive, and inviting learning environments help students realize potential as individuals and as engaged members of society. All students need to be safe, physically and emotionally; to be expected to achieve; to be recognized and celebrated equitably for accomplishments; and to feel genuinely welcomed and supported. A safe and orderly learning environment provides both physical and emotional security as well as daily experiences, at all grade levels, that enhance positive social attitudes and effective interpersonal skills. A comprehensive discipline plan and violence prevention plan should include conflict resolution strategies and should deal with potential violence as well as crisis management. A safe, nurturing, and responsive learning environment supports all students, teachers, cultures, and subgroups; honors and supports diversity and social justice; treats students equitably; and recognizes the need for feedback, innovation, and second chances.

★ **Family Engagement**—Research consistently finds that family engagement has a direct, positive effect on youth's achievement and is one of the most accurate predictors of a student's success in school. Critical elements of this type of collaboration rely on effective, ongoing, and multi-dimensional, two-way communication as well as ongoing needs assessments and responsive family supports and interventions.

★ **Early Childhood Education**—Birth-to-five interventions demonstrate that providing a child additional enrichment can enhance brain development. The most effective way to reduce the number of children who will ultimately drop out is to provide the best possible classroom instruction from the beginning of school through the primary grades.

★ **Early Literacy Development**—Early literacy interventions to help low-achieving students improve their reading and writing skills establish the necessary foundation for effective learning in all subjects. Literacy development focus should continue P-12.

★ **Mentoring/Tutoring**—Mentoring is typically a one-to-one caring, supportive relationship between a mentor and a mentee that is based on trust. Mentoring offers a significant support structure for high-risk students. Tutoring, also typically a one-to-one activity, focuses on academic support and is an effective practice when addressing specific needs in collaboration with the student's base teacher.

★ **Service-Learning**—Service-learning connects meaningful community service experiences with academic learning. This teaching/learning method promotes personal and social growth, career development, and civic responsibility and can be a powerful vehicle for effective school reform at all grade levels.

★ **Alternative Schooling**—Alternative or non-traditional schooling and delivery model options (e.g., alternative times and environments, blended learning, virtual learning, competency-based credit opportunities) provide alternative avenues to credit earning and graduation, with programs paying special attention to the student's individual and social needs, career goals, and academic requirements for obtaining a high school diploma and transitioning successfully to life beyond graduation.

★ **Afterschool/Out-of-School Opportunities**—Many schools provide afterschool, before-school, and/or summer academic/enhancement/enrichment opportunities (e.g., tutoring, credit recovery, acceleration, homework support, etc.) that provide students with opportunities for assistance and recovery as well as high-interest options for discovery and learning. These opportunities often decrease information loss and can inspire interest in arenas otherwise inaccessible. Such experiences are especially important for at-risk students because out-of-school "gap time" is filled with constructive and engaging activities and/or needed academic support.

★ **Professional Development**—Adults who work with youth at risk of dropping out need to be provided ongoing professional learning opportunities, support, and feedback. The professional learning should align with the agreed upon vision and focus for the school/agency, the agreed upon instructional framework of high leverage research-based practices and strategies, and the identified needs of the population served. The professional learning opportunities provided should be frequently monitored to determine the fidelity of implementation and need for additional support and feedback.

★ **Active Learning**—Active learning and student engagement strategies engage and involve students in meaningful ways as partners in their own learning. These strategies include student voice and choice; effective feedback, peer assessment, and goal setting; cooperative learning; thinking critically, creatively, and reflectively; and micro-teaching, discussion, and two-way communication. To be most effective, teachers must provide students with tools and strategies to organize themselves and any new material; techniques to use while reading, writing, and doing math; and systematic steps to follow when working through a task or reflecting upon their own learning.

★ **Educational Technology**—Instructional Technology can effectively support teaching and learning while engaging students in meaningful, current, and authentic efforts; addressing multiple intelligences; and adapting to students' learning styles. Educational technology can effectively be used in individualized instruction and can not only help prepare students for the workforce, but can empower students who struggle with self-esteem. Effective use of technologies depends upon the timely response to and application of the rapidly expanding choices and matches to identified student needs.

★ **Individualized Instruction**— Learning experiences can be individualized, differentiated, or personalized (combining paced and tailored learning with flexibility in content or theme to fit the interests, preferences, and prior experiences of each learner). In an environment that is fully personalized, the learning objectives and content as well as the method and pace may all vary (so personalization encompasses differentiation and individualization).

★ **Career and Technical Education (CTE)**—Quality CTE programs and related career pathways and guidance programs with P-20W orientation are essential for all students. Youth need workplace skills as well as awareness and focus to increase not only the likelihood that they will be prepared for their careers, but also that school will be relevant to what is next.