

TUPELO PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT DROPOUT PREVENTION PLAN



Dr. Rob Picou, Ph.D.
Superintendent

2026-2027

Table of Contents

Section	Page
Verification of Board Presentation and Approval	3
District Team Members	4
District Administrative Team	4
District Data	5
TPSD Graduation Rate Data	6
Needs Assessment Outcomes	7
District Goals and Strategies	8
Reducing Retention Rates	8
Targeting Subgroups & Graduation Requirements	9
Mentoring Model	10
Academic Success Goal	10
Professional Learning Systems	11
Increase Graduation Rate	12
Positive Behavior Supports	12
Personalized Educational Planning	13
Recovery Initiatives	14
PACE Program	14
Transition from Juvenile Detention Centers	15

District Team Members

Name	Role
Dr. Rob Picou	Superintendent
Dr. Brock English	Team Leader
Dr. Melissa Thomas	Team Sponsor
Art Dobbs	Team Sponsor
Genna McAlpin	Team Sponsor
Paul Mize	Dropout Prevention Team Member
Mark Enis	Dropout Prevention Team Member
Jennifer Chandler	Dropout Prevention Team Member
Dr. Heather Cartwright	Dropout Prevention Team Member
Evet Topp	Dropout Prevention Team Member
Ron Roper	Dropout Prevention Team Parent Member
Dr. Beth Blanton	Dropout Prevention Team Teacher Member
Ray Shoemaker	Dropout Prevention Team Community Member

District Administrative Team

Position	Name
Superintendent	Dr. Rob Picou
Deputy Superintendent	Dr. Brock English
Assistant Superintendent	Dr. Melissa Thomas
Assistant Superintendent	Art Dobbs
Director of Curriculum	Dr. Amy Ferguson
Assistant Director of Curriculum	Misty McRae
Director of Technology	T.J. Higgins
Director of Educational Enhancement & Workforce Development	Evet Topp
Director, Structured Day Program	Dr. Tanisha Smith
SPED Director	Genna McAlpin
Principal, Tupelo High School	Mark Enis
Principal, Tupelo Middle School	Dr. Heather Cartwright
Principal, Pierce Street Elementary School	Dr. Anthony Golding
Principal, Carver Elementary School	Dr. April West-McIntosh
Principal, Milam Elementary School	Dr. Terry Harbin
Principal, Thomas Street Elementary School	Christy Carroll
Principal, Joyner Elementary School	Kimberly Foster
Principal, Lawhon Elementary School	Wesley McCullough
Principal, Parkway Elementary School	Carmen Gary
Principal, Lawndale Elementary School	Talina Knight
Principal, ECEC	Katie Coon
Principal, Rankin Elementary School	Dr. Taylor Sparks
CTE Director	Dr. Ryan Curry

District Data

Source: Mississippi Succeeds Report Card, Tupelo Public School District, 2024-2025 school year. Data pulled from MDE/MSRC; page last updated 10/30/2025.

Report Card Item	State	District
Accountability Rating	--	A
Math Proficiency	54.5%	58.6%
Math Growth	67.9%	73.9%
Math Growth - Lowest 25%	55.4%	57.5%
ELA Proficiency	47.6%	50.7%
ELA Growth	62.1%	64.1%
ELA Growth - Lowest 25%	54.8%	52.8%
US History Proficiency	69.8%	71.5%
Science Proficiency	60.7%	67.3%
College & Career Readiness	53.5%	52.3%
Acceleration	71.2%	72.6%
Graduation Rate	89.2%	83.3%
English Learners	23.1%	26.3%
Chronic Absenteeism	27.6%	35.6%
Student Assessment Participation	State	District
Math Participation	99.1%	98.7%
ELA Participation	98.0%	97.4%
Science Participation	98.9%	97.5%
Math Alternate Participation	1.9%	1.5%
ELA Alternate Participation	1.9%	1.4%
Science Alternate Participation	1.9%	0.9%

Prior teacher, expenditure, discipline, and post-secondary data graphics from the older plan were removed from this current-data page unless the district chooses to verify and add those measures separately.

TPSD Graduation Rate Data

Source: Mississippi Succeeds Report Card, Tupelo Public School District, 2025-2026 school year.

Group	District	State
All	88.4%	90.8%
Non-Migrant	83.3%	89.2%
Non-Homeless	90.1%	90.9%
Students with Disabilities	78.6%	71.1%
Students without Disabilities	89.7%	93.3%
Non-English Learners	89.5%	89.5%

Note: Only current report-card graduation groups available in the public MDE/MSRC detail view were included here. Small groups may be suppressed to protect student privacy.

Needs Assessment Outcomes

Reasons for Dropping Out

School factors that may contribute

- Suspension as a punishment
- Parents unaware of absences
- Teachers not understanding diverse student needs
- Unidentified special needs
- School retentions
- Neglect homework/fail tests
- Failure to earn Carnegie units
- Poor relationships with other students
- Sarcasm from teachers, "Why are you here?"
- Feeling like they can't catch up

Home / community factors that may contribute

- Financial
- Neglect
- Teen pregnancy/parent
- Parent alcoholism or drug abuse
- Negative role models
- Parent/guardians do not value education
- Juvenile delinquency

Personal factors that may contribute

- Poor academic performance resulting in poor self-esteem
- Unmet mental health needs
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Lack of vision as means to achieve goals
- Caring for siblings
- Work
- Students feeling alone, overwhelmed, invisible

District Goals and Strategies

Reducing Retention Rates

Attendance Goal

- District Purpose or Goal
 - Reduce the number of unexcused absences in grades K-12.
 - Reduce the number of absences in grades 7-12.
- Dropout Prevention Strategy Addressed
 - The Attendance Officers will work with students and families to reduce the number of absences in grades 7-12.
 - Students absent more than five times without an excuse will be referred to support personnel within the school to include administration, counselors, and the MTSS Team.
 - In grades K-6, family school coordinators, counselors, and principals will work to reduce the number of unexcused absences by working with students and families.
 - The District will advance family engagement by incorporating home visits, parent academies, attendance contracts, family resource referrals, and parent support workshops.
 - There will be an expansion of partnerships with mental health providers, healthcare organizations, food assistance programs, transportation services, housing agencies, and substance abuse counseling providers to address barriers beyond the classroom.
 - A districtwide attendance campaign will be developed that includes incentives, recognition programs, parent communication and education, attendance competitions, transportation support, and early intervention after repeated absences.
- Who Is Involved?
 - Building Administrators
 - Teachers
 - Attendance Officers
 - Counselors
 - Family School Coordinators
 - SEL Counselors
 - Coordinator of Student Support Services
- Expected Outcomes for Students
 - Increase ADA by 2% overall.

Reducing Retention in Grades K-2

- District Purpose or Goal
 - Provide early literacy instruction in language, phonemic awareness, and phonics skills.
 - Provide regular guided oral reading with a focus on fluency.
 - Provide direct teaching of comprehension strategies.
 - Provide early interventions to struggling readers using multi-sensory methods, Early Prevention of School Failure, and instructional technology.
- Who Is Involved?
 - Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, Principals
 - Curriculum Directors, Federal Programs Director, Director of Special Education
 - District Administrators

- SPED Director
- Curriculum Directors
- Counselors
- Interventionists
- 504 Coordinators
- Instructional Coaches
- Dropout Prevention Strategy Addressed
 - Early Literacy
 - Early Childhood Education
- Expected Outcomes for Students
 - At least 55% of elementary students will score proficient or above in Reading and Language as measured by MAAP.
 - Reduce the number of retentions in grades K-12 by 5%. Improve the GPA in core subjects.

Targeted Subgroups & Graduation Requirements

Prioritized List of Targeted Students

- Students who fail state exams
- Students who are one or more years behind their peers
- Students who are truant
- Students with children
- Students considered homeless
- Students with history of emotional and/or behavioral issues
- Students with learning disabilities
- Students who are academically gifted and need challenging opportunities
- Students with incarcerated parents or grandparents
- Students experiencing neglect in the home
- Students who are victims of bullying or cyberbullying

Critical Academic Supports

- District Purpose or Goal
 - Implement an early warning system that tracks attendance, behavior, and academics.
 - Establish student success teams.
 - Develop subject-area test preparation classes.
 - Instruction of MS Frameworks and CCSS.
 - Instructional strategies based on student learning.
 - Provide in-school and after-school tutoring for students.
 - Develop appropriate academic supports for EL students, SPED students, dyslexic students, and low-achieving students.
 - Develop district-level MTSS Team to monitor building-level teams to ensure that process and timelines are being followed.
 - Collect data such as benchmark scores and nine weeks grades to determine student progress.
 - Provide Edmentum credit opportunities and EdOptions.
 - Provide career counseling at THS.
 - Provide sheltered classes at each building so that EL and Dyslexic students can have specially trained teachers teaching content.
 - Include academic recovery labs that offer before- and after-school tutoring, Saturday academies, summer bridge programs, credit recovery, ACT preparation, and literacy/math interventions.

- Strengthen career exploration opportunities through job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships, industry tours, college visits, military pathways, career and technical education, and entrepreneurship.
- Who Is Involved?
 - Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent TMS and THS Principals, Alternative School Principal, TCTC Principal
 - Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Assistant Superintendents
 - Director of SPED, EL Coordinator
 - Social workers, truancy officers, parents
- Dropout Prevention Strategy Addressed
 - After-school Opportunities, Career/Technical Education, Alternative Schooling (P.A.C.E.)
- Expected Outcomes for Students
 - 80% of students will be at or above grade level as measured by district curriculum assessments and MAAP(Level 3 or Above).

Mentoring Model

- District Purpose or Goal
 - Using the Mentoring Model, twenty-three counselors and social emotional therapists in grades K-12 and four family school coordinators will serve as mentors.
 - Mentors must be persistent, believe that all children have abilities, work closely with families using a non-blaming approach, advocate for the student, document the intervention, and work well in different settings.
 - Each mentor must establish trust with students and families, check on attendance and academic performance, connect families to the school system, and listen to students throughout the year.
 - The mentor checks on engagement using indicators such as attendance, social/behavior performance, and academic performance.
 - An intensive intervention is triggered by early warning signs such as attendance, academic performance, or behavior.
 - A community mentoring network will be utilized using local churches.
- Who Is Involved?
 - Mentors for grades 6-12, Family School Coordinators, SEL Therapists
 - Principals, Teachers, Parents
 - Divine 9 organizations, veterans, business leaders, retired educators, law enforcement, college students, community volunteers
- Dropout Prevention Strategy Addressed
 - Mentoring/Tutoring
- Expected Outcomes for Students
 - 95% students in grades 9-12 will pass the subject area tests.
 - Students will attend school regularly and participate in extra-curricular and curricular activities.

Academic Success Goal

Student Learning

- District Purpose or Goal

- Assist all students in passing the state subject-area exams.
- Who Is Involved?
 - District Administrators
 - Building Administrators
 - Counselors
 - Career Coaches
 - Teachers
 - Interventionists
- Dropout Prevention Strategy Addressed
 - Using unit assessments to identify students who are functioning below grade level, students will be offered placement in subject-area preparation classes.
 - Teachers who have received training in curriculum adaptation, classroom management, and special instructional strategies will teach these classes.
 - THS students will have the opportunity for dual enrollment and Middle College with a partnership with ICC and Delta State University.
 - Courses consist of integrated assessments, including exemptive pretests that allow learners to forgo content they have already mastered and focus on concepts that need additional work.
- Expected Outcomes for Students
 - 95% of students in grades 9-12 will pass or be proficient on the subject-area tests.

Professional Learning Systems

- District Purpose or Goal
 - Provide teachers with research-based, ongoing professional development tied to the needs of the students.
 - Develop professional learning communities to allow teachers regular opportunities to meet in subject-area grade-level and interdisciplinary teams.
 - Provide principals and district administrators professional training and support in instructional coaching, dropout prevention strategies, and identifying and meeting the needs of special populations.
 - Provide opportunities for teachers to work with academic coaches as the coaches model new strategies, observe teachers regularly, provide feedback, increase professional dialogue, build PLCs, and train staff.
- Training Areas
 - Curriculum Adaptation
 - Depth of Knowledge
 - Framework for Understanding Poverty
 - Working with Discipline
 - Study Skills
 - Adult Reading and Basic Education
 - Academic and Behavior Interventions
 - Utilizing Data to Inform Instructional Decisions
 - Transforming School Counseling
 - Reading to Learn
 - Positive Behavior Supports
 - Teaching Content to EL Students
- Who Is Involved?

- Professional Development Trainers, Principals, Counselors, Academic Coaches, All instructional staff
- Dropout Prevention Strategy Addressed
 - Professional Development
- Expected Outcomes for Students
 - 60% of TPSD grades 3-8 will score Proficient or Advanced on assessments required by the Mississippi Assessment Program (MAAP).

Increase Graduation Rate

- District Purpose of Goal
 - Increase Graduation Rate to 90%, Decrease Dropout Rate to < 5%.
 - Reduce chronic absenteeism rate to 20%, ensure school connectedness.
- Who Is Involved?
 - District Administrators
 - Building Administrators
 - Counselors
 - Career Coaches
 - Teachers
 - Churches
 - Local organizations
 - Law enforcement
 - Businesses
- Dropout Prevention Strategy Addressed
 - The data collected and review of the research indicated that students need to be engaged at school to prevent truancy and dropping out.
 - Disseminate supports and incentives/rewards for good attendance, and develop consequences for poor attendance.
 - Reduce teacher absenteeism rate.
 - Establish a Community Dropout Prevention Coalition.
 - Increase MTSS monitoring of performance interventions.
 - Ensure Professional Development focuses on instructional strategies, classroom management, PBIS, and special populations.
 - Ensure a safe and healthy educational environment.
 - Promote community knowledge of, involvement in, and support for TPSD pursuit of excellence.
 - Implement and sustain comprehensive programs that address the needs of all students.
 - Support quality teaching that inspires students to achieve at their highest potential.
 - Recommendations for future needs assessments.
- Expected Outcomes for Students
 - Increase Graduation Rate to 90%, Decrease Dropout Rate to < 5%.

Positive Behavior Supports

- District Purpose or Goal
 - Develop an infrastructure of positive behavior supports.

- Increase consistency among community, staff, and students regarding behavior expectations, rules, consequences, and rewards.
- Increase attendance through incentives and behavior supports.
- Foster respectful relationships among youth and adults.
- Develop school cultures that are caring and have common rules and expectations that are positively reinforced.
- Build communication lines with families and the community.
- Implement strategies that promote academic success, decrease inappropriate behavior, and increase student engagement.
- Develop and implement a Tier I behavior curriculum pre-K-12.
- Implement proven researched based Tier II and Tier III behavior interventions.
- Who Is Involved?
 - District PBIS, School-Based Teams, All Employees, Parents
 - Students PreK-12
- Dropout Prevention Strategy Addressed
 - Safe Learning Environment
- Expected Outcomes for Students
 - The number of students referred for disciplinary action will be reduced by half as reported by SAM7.
 - Students will be rewarded and/or acknowledged for appropriate behavior.
 - Students will receive needed and timely interventions to support positive behavior in school.

Personalized Educational Planning

- District Purpose or Goal
 - Develop comprehensive TPSD curriculum assessments for all grade levels and subject areas.
 - Develop benchmark assessments designed to determine level of mastery and monitor progress.
 - Design personalized curriculum for at-risk students utilizing data from aptitude testing, benchmark assessments, curriculum assessments, and Career Inventories.
 - Use assessment data to design personal education plans for every at-risk student: EL, Dyslexia, Low-achieving (one or more years behind).
- Who Is Involved?
 - Deputy Superintendent
 - Assistant Superintendent
 - Director of Student Assessment
 - Curriculum Team
 - Assessment Team
 - Principals
 - Teachers
 - Counselors
 - Parents
- Dropout Prevention Strategy Addressed
 - Individualized Instruction
- Expected Outcomes for Students

- 95% of students will be promoted annually. Increase graduation rate to 90%.

Recovery Initiatives

EdOptions Academy and Edmentum

- District Purpose or Goal
 - To deliver rigorous, researched-based, and pedagogically sound curriculum.
- Who Is Involved?
 - District Administrators
 - Secondary Administrators
 - Alternative School Administrator
 - Counselors
- Dropout Prevention Addressed
 - EdOptions Academy and Edmentum will partner with the district to deliver rigorous, researched-based, and pedagogically sound curriculum.
 - EdOptions Academy provides extensive and effective learning solutions to IEP students.
 - The fully accredited virtual school solution allows our district to enhance, expand and extend our program offerings.
 - Edmentum provides courses in a wide range of core subjects, electives, world languages, honors, and Advanced Placement offerings.
- Expected Outcomes for Students
 - Students can obtain a high school diploma through EdOptions who cannot meet the requirements for the traditional high school diploma.

PACE Program

- District Purpose or Goal
 - To meet the academic needs of Milam Elementary and Tupelo Middle School students who are two or more years behind their peers.
- Who Is Involved?
 - District Administrators
 - Building Administrators
 - Counselors
 - Alternative School Administrator
- Dropout Prevention Strategy Addressed
 - Positive Alternatives for Continuing Education (PACE) was developed as an alternative learning program geared to meet the academic needs of Milam and Tupelo Middle School students who are two or more years behind their peers.
 - Edmentum, a digital curriculum that provides blended and virtual learning, will be utilized to meet the district learning needs of students.

- The aim of PACE is to offer relevant courses/credits to help students transition to Tupelo Middle School from Milam upon completion of all assignments and Tupelo High School from Tupelo Middle School at the end of the school year.
- Structured Day learning center is being renovated to create a mini-high school learning environment.
- A certified teacher who has specialized skills in reaching at-risk students will use research-based instructional methods and best practices to meet learning needs.
- Wraparound services such as individual/group counseling, tutoring, motivational speakers, and short-term and long-term rewards will be utilized to inspire students to achieve individual and class learning goals.
- Expected Outcomes for Students
 - The aim of PACE is to offer relevant courses/credits to help students transition to Tupelo Middle School from Milam upon completion of all assignments and Tupelo High School from Tupelo Middle School after first semester or at the end of the school year.

Transition from Juvenile Detention Centers

- District Purpose or Goal
 - Assist students to successfully return to their home school following placement at the Juvenile Detention Center.
- Who Is Involved?
 - District Administrators
 - Secondary Administrators
 - Alternative School Principal
 - Counselors
- Dropout Prevention Addressed
 - Students will report to the Alternative School for the specified time (See Policy).
 - Meet with counselors to determine a plan to return to Tupelo High School.
 - The students will be provided wrap around services to help them transition back into the general academic environment.
- Expected Outcomes for Students
 - Students successfully return to their home school following a placement at the Juvenile Detention Center.

Verification of Board Presentation and Approval

On behalf of the Tupelo Public School District, I hereby submit a local Dropout Prevention Plan to provide goals, activities, and services necessary to meet the overarching goals of the state dropout prevention plan: 1) Reducing retention rate; 2) Targeting Subgroups & Graduation Requirement; 3) Academic Success; 4) Recovery Initiatives; and 5) Transitions from Juvenile Detention Centers.

I hereby certify that the information contained in this plan follows 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 considered relevant, scientifically based research, strategies, and best practices indicating services most effective in preventing dropouts if we focused on students in the earliest grades.

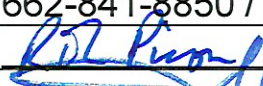
I hereby certify that our school district will prepare and submit an annual progress report on increasing the graduation rate, reducing the dropout rate, and reducing the truancy rate.

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.

Item	Information
Dropout Prevention Team Leader	Dr. Brock English
Title	Deputy Superintendent
Mailing Address	72 South Green Street, Tupelo, MS 38804
Telephone / Fax	662-841-8850 / 662-841-8887
District Superintendent	
School Board Member	