



2026-2027
OCEAN SPRINGS SCHOOL DISTRICT
DROPOUT PREVENTION PLAN



To Be Approved by OSSD Board of Trustees - July 2026

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DISTRICT CONTACT INFORMATION

Ocean Springs School District

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FOREWORD

The *Dropout Prevention Plan* has been prepared to inform students and parents of the services and supports needed to enhance opportunities to succeed in school and beyond. This plan endorses an early intervention approach focused on providing students counseling and academic support services.

Generally, this plan has the following purposes:

- To identify students with personal/social concerns that may be at-risk for academic failure;
- To provide personal/social counseling and related support services for at-risk students within the school;
- To provide academic support for students at-risk of failure;
- To coordinate with outside area agencies and resources to provide guidance counseling for at-risk students;
- To develop a network and collaborative relationship with parents in support of students with at-risk needs;
- To provide staff development training for teachers and staff in support of students with at-risk needs.

Fundamental beliefs about the services provided through this plan of services include:

- At-risk services should be comprehensive and targeted to the specific needs of the students and limited to only those services the student needs to succeed.
- At-risk services should focus on and support personal/social development, counseling services, developmental guidance, academic support, and staff development.
- Students receiving at-risk services should be provided multiple options that do not disrupt students' engagement in the general education program or displace the student from age-appropriate peers.

DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Ocean Springs School District is to teach our students essential content, skills, and core values to enable them to transfer knowledge between educational accomplishments and more significant life issues and to have a positive impact on society.

CORE BELIEFS

- Each student is valued.
- The best interest of the children is the driving force behind decisions.
- The most important interactions are between the teacher and the student.
- Students learn best when they are actively engaged through differentiated learning opportunities.
- A physically and emotionally safe environment promotes student learning.
- Students, teachers, administrators, staff, parents, school board members, and the community share the responsibility for advancing the District's mission.

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DISTRICT DROPOUT PREVENTION TEAM MEMBERS

Ms. Melissa Wojcik	Assistant Superintendent
Dr. Jacob Dykes	Principal, Ocean Springs High School
Mr. Nicholas Thomas	Principal, Ocean Springs Middle School
Dr. Stewart Smirthwaite	Principal, Oak Park Elementary School
Mrs. Sue Green	Principal, Pecan Park Elementary School
Ms. Leah Puzz	Director, Alternative Education Center
Ms. Linsey Radich	OSHS MTSS/EL/504/Testing
Mrs. Britany Oliphant	OSHS MTSS/EL/504/ Testing
Dr. Jennifer Necaise	Director of Federal Programs
Dr. Molly Pittman	Assistant Principal, OSUE
Dr. Greerlyn Bezue-Tull	Assistant Principal, Ocean Springs High School
Dr. Mallory Arriaga	Assistant Principal, Ocean Springs High School
Mrs. Shannon Pearson	Counselor, Ocean Springs High School
Mrs. Mandie Carter	Counselor, Ocean Springs High School
Mrs. Jillian Green	Teacher, Ocean Springs High School
Mr. Matt Viglianco	Teacher, Alternative Education Center
Ms. Gretchen Brochard	Director of Special Services

DROPOUT PREVENTION PLAN

Ocean Springs School District is the heart of the city of Ocean Springs, MS. This school district's values mirror the community's values: preserving history, protecting the beauty, and inspiring youth to achieve the highest level in academics, arts, and athletics. The beautiful small coastal town charm has evolved into a community that continually encourages the people to challenge the status quo while maintaining a firm hold on the values that distinguish this community.

The Ocean Springs School District has historically excelled in preparing students for graduation, continued education, and workplace success. Maintaining the highest District Status attainable according to the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), the district has continued to meet the criteria established by State and Federal Accountability Standards. District scores on statewide and national assessments are well above the state average and traditionally fall within the top five percent of districts in Mississippi. The outstanding reputation of the Ocean Springs School District and the surrounding community places us in a position to hire quality personnel. Our staff, teachers, and administrators are dedicated, hard-working, professional individuals who strive to maintain the academic, physical, emotional, and social success of the Ocean Springs School District students.

PROGRAM GOALS AND BENEFITS

Teaching and learning is a continuous process built by strong relationships between staff and students, a curriculum of academic guidance, and instructional support meeting the individual student's unique needs. The Ocean Springs School District is dedicated to helping students succeed academically and grow personally. We aim to help all students graduate from high school and be prepared to excel in either college or career pathways. A serious dropout problem exists both nationally and in our communities throughout the state of Mississippi. This problem is not confined to the high school population but also among younger populations. The Ocean Springs School District is concerned about the number of students who choose to leave our schools and is committed to developing ways to help our young people stay in school and provide them with the support they need to succeed.

Over the next five years, our district will maintain a steadfast commitment to decreasing our current dropout rate of 3.3% to 3.0%. Last year our dropout rate was 4.9% and over the last several years, our five year goal was articulated to be 4.0%. Due to the achievement of our goal, we will continue to challenge ourselves to set the target at 3.0%. We also increased from ranked 35th in the state to now being the 28th lowest rating of dropout.

Our plans will be aligned to the goals and structured around the following strategic priorities:

- To meet the personal needs of each student.
- To elevate the importance of great teachers and learning.
- To improve public education, a moral imperative for every citizen and stakeholder.
- To accelerate innovation and transform schools to meet global demands.

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

The *Dropout Prevention Plan* describes coordinated, comprehensive, and interrelated service components. The uniqueness of individual needs makes it impossible to develop and prescribe any single plan of services for all students. Still, the following information provides an overview of the program approach and services offered.

Academic

The academic component includes acquiring skills in decision-making, problem-solving, goal-setting, critical thinking, and applying these to learning. This component provides parents and students with services to ensure academic support for at-risk students.

Personal/Social

The personal/social component supports the development of skills, attitudes, and knowledge necessary for understanding and respecting self and others, effective interpersonal communication, and contributing and functioning in a healthy, caring, productive community. This component provides parents and students with services to ensure personal and social support for at-risk students.

Community Agency Support

Our community agency services offer students and families directory information and assistance accessing community agencies for individuals needing specialized services beyond the capacity and scope of school counseling and health services. This component provides parents and students with a list of community agencies Ocean Springs School District has partnered with to ensure support for at-risk students.

Buildings	Academic	Personal/Social	Community Agency
Oak Park Elementary School Pecan Park Elementary School Magnolia Park Elementary School	Title I Reading and Math services ELPA21 EL Support I-Ready Reading/Math Houghton-Mifflin Into Reading (K-2) Lexia Core 5 Mastery Connect (2nd and 3rd Grade) MTSS Interventionist School Status	Conscious Discipline Guidance Curriculum PBIS services Core Essentials Kindergarten Graduation Initiative Behavioral Interventionist Canopy Services Mentorship with Hope Squad	Head Start Ingalls OSEF Sparklight Pre-K Early Intervention Program Keesler Federal Credit Union - School Supplies In House Truancy Officer
Ocean Springs Upper Elementary School	I-Ready Reading and Math In School Remediation ELPA21 EL Support District Shared Data Notebooks SOAR Mastery Connect PowerUP Summer Learning School Status	PBIS services School Clubs Behavioral Interventionist Counselors visit each homeroom class each quarter with a focus on Character Ed. Canopy Services	OSEF Sparklight Ingalls In House Truancy Officer
Ocean Springs Middle School	Before and After-school tutoring Mastery Connect My Perspectives--ELA Bridge Program District Shared Data Notebooks ELPA21 EL Support Edgenuity	PBIS services Ron Clark's House System School Clubs Athletics Hope Squad Canopy Services	OSEF MDRS Ingalls Chevron In House Truancy Officer

	Interventionist to push into classes (T1 and T2) School Status		
Ocean Springs High School	Mastery Connect Counselor adjustments (Alphabetical, ISP's, etc.) Before/After school tutoring Dual Credit/Enrollment Collegiate Academy AP Capstone Diploma Pre - AP International Baccalaureate Diploma ACT Prep Courses ACT Workkeys Prep Shipbuilding Academy Summer Graduation Edgenuity Credit Recovery District Shared Data Notebooks CTE Work-based Learning CTE Programs Career Center School Site Coordinator MTSS Coordinator ELPA21 EL Support School Status IXL Bridge to Career Course	PBIS services School Clubs Athletics Fine Arts Hope Squad Canopy Services	OSEF Ingalls United Way- Jackson County Career Coaches Jackson County Workforce Development P3 Project Search MDRS In House Truancy Officer Transition Services (Goodwill)

DATA ANALYSIS

After several years of analyzing data and reading current research on dropout prevention, several vital questions emerged that framed our work:

- Which students are most at risk of dropping out?
- When are students dropping out?
- Why are students dropping out?

District Graduation Rates by Subgroup

Our graduation rate is 95.3% with an N-Count of 514. Our graduation rate comprises 93.6% of male students, compared to 97.4% of female students. Our White population of students is graduating at a rate of 95.7% compared to 92.9% of Black students. The graduation rate of Black or African American students has increased from 91.4% to 92.9% (N-Count of 70). The subgroups of students that are identified as A Two or More Races (N-Count of 22) has a graduation rate of 90.9%. Another area of growth is our students identified as Economically Disadvantaged. This rate is 92.2% with an N-Count of 167. The 4-year graduation rate for IDEA Students in OSSD is 75.9% (N-Count of 58). The school's performance exceeds the state average and has shown significant improvement, advancing from 84th to 39th in state rankings.

By answering these questions, the Ocean Springs School District could pinpoint critical pieces of data that could allow personalized programs geared towards this prevention. As required by Miss. Code Ann. § 37-13-80, the plan must highlight our implementation focusing on the following issues:

- Policies and procedures that meet the needs of the districts;
- Focusing on the student-centered goals and objectives that are measurable;
- Strong emphasis on reducing the retention rates in grades kindergarten, first and second;
- Targeting subgroups that need additional assistance to meet graduation requirements; and
- Dropout recovery initiatives that focus on students aged seventeen (17) through twenty-one (21), who dropped out of school.
- Address how students transition to the home school district from the juvenile detention centers.

SY25 - District Graduation Rates by Subgroup (Last year's)

Our graduation rate is 92.6% with an N-Count of 449. Our graduation rate comprises 90.3% of male students, compared to 94.4% of female students. Our White population of students is graduating at a rate of 92.6% compared to 91.4% of Black students.

The graduation rate of Black or African American students has increased from 83.6% to 91.4% (N-Count of 58). The subgroup of students that are identified as Two or More Races (N-Count of 20) has a graduation rate of 80%. Another area of growth is our students identified as Economically Disadvantaged. This rate is 85.2% with an N-Count of 182. The 4-year graduation rate for IDEA Students in OSSD is 59.5% (N-Count of 37), compared to the State Average of 70.0%. We are currently ranked 84th in the state compared to other school districts.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

To address the issues, the *Dropout Prevention Plan* implements the following:

- Addition of a second MTSS coordinator at Ocean Springs High School to support increased identification of at risk students, leading to appropriate interventions for success
- Consistent monitoring and identification of at-risk students through each school's MTSS team.
- The MTSS team will collaborate with PLCs to identify struggling students and use IXL to monitor progress and guide interventions to support student success.
- Establishing a Greyhound Transition Team to ensure a smooth transition to and from each school in OSSD. The planned programming and support will help our Greyhounds to be more confident in their new school environments, develop better connections with others, and ensure the services needed as students progress through our system.
- Provide additional credit recovery opportunities.
- Continuation of the Bridge Program between Ocean Springs Middle School and E.H. Keys Alternative Education Center. This program will identify at-risk students before entering Ocean Springs High School and provide academic support.
- Consideration for referral for a transfer student to MTSS to monitor academic progress.
- Track where incoming transfer students are coming from for additional data points.
- Ten-day transitional period with placement at the E.H. Keys Alternative Education Center for students who transfer from juvenile detention centers.
- Modify and monitor requirements as necessary to participate in various courses and programs.
- Ensure consistent rigor among all grades for an accurate alpha grade distribution.
- Establishment of the Kindergarten Graduation Initiative at all elementary schools.
- Identify 17-year-old students at risk and provide individual support and resources for alternate paths to graduation.
- Establish effective parent communication and partnerships to enhance home-school connections.

Through this process, we also identified key indicators that we reviewed to determine which students are most at risk of not graduating through some early warning indicators:

- Attendance
- Discipline
- Course failures

ATTENDANCE

Frequent absenteeism is a significant predictor of dropping out. It also is the most common indicator of student engagement. Chronically absent or frequently suspended students are disengaged from school's academic and social life. Based on the new 2026 MS Compulsory School Attendance Law - Senate Bill 2286 the district will be working towards a truancy plan that reflects the changes that are currently in effect.

Attendance Predictors

Status	Threshold: Number of Days Absent	
	Each Quarter	Full Year
Off-track (Tier III)	5 days	18 days

Sliding (Tier II)	3-5 days	10-18 days
On track to graduate (Tier I)	2 days or less	9 days

Source: www.kidscount.ssric.msstate.edu

Strategies for addressing attendance

- Work with members of the community and encourage district and school administrators to strive for 100% daily attendance at all schools.
- Create a culture that focuses on daily school attendance.
- Establish procedures that require phone calls the first-day students are absent to parents or guardians.
- Establish incentives for Tier I attendance.
- Communicate with parents and students when students accumulate five unexcused absences.
- Note any professional development needs for teaching staff that might assist in decreasing attendance issues.
- Study data relative to individual students to make intervention decisions.
- Consider interventions when determining how to assist students identified as 'sliding off track' or 'off track' for graduation.
- Student progress in relation to the predictor indicators and Tiered data must be examined at least monthly for groups identified as 'sliding off target' and 'off target' for graduation.

BEHAVIOR

Students who attend school regularly but are frequently removed from the classroom suffer the same disengagement consequences as do students who miss school often. There are many reasons why students misbehave in school/class. The reasons can be related to academic, social, emotional, developmental, or familial concerns. Repeat suspensions take students from the classroom, resulting in lower grades and less enthusiasm for school.

Behavior Predictors Elementary, Middle, and High

Status	Number of Office Referrals		Number of Days Suspended	
	Each Quarter	Full Year	Each Quarter	Full Year
Off-track (Tier III)	2	6	1	2
Sliding (Tier II)	1	3-5	0	0-1
On track to graduate (Tier I)	0	0-2	0	0-1

Source: Johns Hopkins University, 2012

Strategies for addressing behavior

- Behavior interventionists, counselors, administrators, and teachers are involved with developing and maintaining a targeted behavior plan for at-risk students.
- Provide professional development for teachers to promote positive behavior and learning culture in the classroom.

- Utilize Functional Behavioral Assessments, when appropriate, to develop individualized behavior intervention plan.
- Provide academic support to students through Off-Campus Suspension and In School Isolation.
- Be aware of student life events that may harm student engagement.
- Utilize PBIS teams to promote and reward positive behaviors.
- Creating targeted supports to help students improve their behavior.
- Note any professional development needs for teaching staff that might assist in decreasing behavioral issues.
- Study data relative to individual students to make intervention decisions.
- Consider interventions when determining how to assist students identified as ‘sliding off track’ or ‘off track’ for graduation.
- Student progress in relation to the predictor indicators and Tiered data must be examined at least monthly for groups identified as ‘sliding off track’ and ‘off track’

COURSE FAILURE

Like grade retention and chronic absenteeism, failing in school is a significant factor associated with dropping out. Many students fall behind academically in elementary and middle school, and by the time they reach high school, they cannot catch up. Research shows that the most likely dropouts are sixth and ninth graders who fail math and English. Failing a course predicts a student’s dropout probability better than test scores. Even without failing, students who receive Ds or have low GPAs can be at risk of dropping out.

Course Performance Predictors Elementary

Status	Thresholds	
	Math and Language Arts Grades K-5	3rd Grade Reading Test (Literacy-Based Promotion Act)
Off-track (Tier III)	Report card grade of F	Failed 3rd Grade reading test
Sliding (Tier II)	Report card grade of D	Good Cause Promotion Transfer from 3rd to 4th Grade
On track to graduate (Tier I)	Report card grade of A, B, or C	Passed 3rd Grade Reading Test

Source: Johns Hopkins University, 2012

Course Performance Predictors for Middle and High Schools

Status	Thresholds	
	Math and English Grades Middle School 6th–8th	Core Courses* High School 9th-12th
Off-track (Tier III)	Report card grade of F	Report card grade of F
Sliding (Tier II)	Report card grade of D	Report card grade of D
On track to graduate (Tier I)	Report card grade of A, B, or C	Report card grade of A, B, or C

Source: Johns Hopkins University, 2012

Strategies for addressing course performance

- MTSS coordinators, counselors, administrators, and teachers are involved with developing and maintaining a targeted academic plan for at-risk students.
- Reward for the most significant cases (two years behind their cohort) the Principal will collaborate with the AEC Director to identify a specific plan to include but not limited to offering a change of placement to the Alternative Education Center to focus on credit attainment and recovery as applicable
- Increase instruction in reading and mathematics in the daily school schedule.
- Provide struggling students with one-on-one and small group tutoring and supports before, during, or after school.
- Offer credit recovery opportunities throughout the school year and during the summer.
- Conduct a summer graduation ceremony for seniors who completed the required coursework to graduate.
- Conduct the Bridge program between Ocean Springs Middle School and E.H. Keys Alternative Education Center.
- Alignment with Mastery Connect for common assessments grades 2-8.
- Monitoring students' academic progress who transfer into the Ocean Springs School District.
- Note any professional development needs for teaching staff that might assist in decreasing students who failed courses.
- Study data relative to individual students to make intervention decisions.
- Consider interventions when determining how to assist students identified as 'sliding off track' or 'off track' for graduation.
- Student progress in relation to the predictor indicators and Tiered data must be examined at least monthly for groups identified as 'sliding off track' and 'off track'

The Ocean Springs School District will continue refining this plan each year to ensure that we are addressing all our students' needs. By employing these strategies, we should decrease our district's dropout rate.