

BOARD
APPROVED
JUL 29 2026

Canton Public School District's Student Attendance Plan



Prepared in accordance with:

Mississippi Department of Education
Office of Compulsory School Attendance Enforcement and Dropout
Prevention

2026-2027

Dwight J. Lockett, Sr., Superintendent

Canton Public School District

Comprehensive Attendance Improvement Plan

2026–2027 School Year

I. Purpose

The Canton Public School District Attendance Improvement Plan establishes a consistent, districtwide system for promoting regular attendance, identifying attendance concerns early, addressing the root causes of absenteeism, engaging families, and complying with Mississippi’s revised compulsory school attendance requirements.

The district recognizes that every absence—excused, unexcused, or resulting from suspension—represents lost instructional time. Mississippi defines a student as chronically absent when the student misses at least 10% of the days in which the student is enrolled.

The district will move from a primarily reactive truancy process to a **preventive attendance-success model** built around:

- Accurate daily attendance reporting
- Immediate family communication
- Intervention beginning after three absences
- Identification of attendance barriers
- Individual Attendance Success Plans
- Tiered academic, behavioral, and family supports
- Community partnerships
- Consistent documentation and monitoring
- School and district accountability

II. District Attendance Goal

Primary Goal

Reduce chronic absenteeism by 30% districtwide by the end of the 2026–2027 school year.

Supporting Objectives

By June 2027, the district will:

1. Reduce the percentage of students missing 10% or more of enrolled school days.
2. Ensure that 100% of students reaching the district’s intervention thresholds receive documented interventions.
3. Contact the family of every student with an unverified absence by the close of the next business day.

4. Develop an Attendance Success Plan for every student identified as at risk of chronic absenteeism.
5. Increase average daily attendance at every school.
6. Reduce Monday and Friday absences.
7. Reduce attendance disparities among grade levels and student subgroups.
8. Provide multilingual and multichannel attendance communication.
9. report disaggregated attendance data annually to the Board of Trustees.
10. Publish the district attendance policy and any required chronic absenteeism reduction plan on the district website.

III. Legal and Policy Framework

The district will revise its attendance policy and procedures to reflect the requirements presented by MDE and contained in the revised Mississippi compulsory attendance law.

A. Full-Day Attendance

A student must be present for at least **66% of the instructional day** to be counted present for the full day. The State Board of Education's attendance rule similarly requires attendance for at least 66% of instructional time for reporting purposes.

Each school will calculate and publish:

- The latest time a student may arrive and still be counted present
- The earliest time a student may check out and still be counted present
- Procedures for recording partial-day absences
- Procedures for documenting late arrivals and early checkouts

Lunch and scheduled noninstructional breaks will not be included when calculating instructional time.

B. Excused Absences

The MDE presentation identifies the following revised requirements:

- The district must establish written standards for acceptable excuse documentation.
- Beginning with the fourth absence, medical documentation is required for an illness-related absence unless an exception applies.
- Students are generally limited to five excused absences per semester unless extenuating circumstances exist or additional absences are approved by the superintendent or designee.
- An absence without a valid excuse is considered unlawful.
- Disciplinary suspensions are not treated as excused absences for compulsory attendance purposes.

C. Enrollment Requirements

The certificate-of-enrollment deadline is August 15. The superintendent must report a compulsory-school-age student who has not enrolled within 15 days of the beginning of school to the appropriate school attendance officer.

D. Unlawful Absence Reporting

Schools must report an unlawful absence by the close of the next business day, following district verification procedures.

The district will not delay reporting while attempting repeated contacts. Family outreach and intervention will occur simultaneously with legally required reporting.

E. Intervention Before Court Action

The revised framework permits court action at eight unexcused absences but requires the school to demonstrate that attendance interventions were implemented before a petition is filed.

Documentation must include:

- Dates and reasons for absences
- Parent or guardian contacts
- Written notices
- Conferences
- Attendance Success Plans
- Referrals and services offered
- Home visits, when appropriate
- Student response to interventions
- School Attendance Officer involvement
- Evidence that barriers were assessed and addressed

F. Chronic Absenteeism Plans

When chronic absenteeism exceeds 10% within a grade level or student subgroup, the district must adopt and publish a written reduction plan. The district may receive technical assistance from MDE in developing and implementing reduction strategies.

G. Board and Public Accountability

The district will:

- Obtain Board of Trustees approval for attendance policies.
- Post the attendance policy on the district website.
- Review the policy at least once every three years.
- Report attendance data annually to the Board.

- Disaggregate data by school, grade level, race, gender, disability status, English Learner status, economic status, homelessness, foster care status, and other locally relevant categories.
- Maintain evidence of monitoring and implementation.

IV. Attendance Leadership Structure

A. District Attendance Leadership Team

The superintendent will establish a District Attendance Leadership Team.

Membership

- Superintendent or designee
- Assistant Superintendent of Operations
- Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
- Director of Accountability
- Federal Programs Director
- Exceptional Education Director
- English Learner Coordinator
- School principals
- Communications or family engagement representative
- Data or MSIS representative
- School nurse representative
- Mental health or community partner, as appropriate

Responsibilities

The team will:

- Review district attendance data monthly.
- Monitor implementation at each school.
- Identify grade levels and subgroups exceeding 10% chronic absenteeism.
- Review school Attendance Improvement Plans.
- Coordinate district resources.
- Recommend policy revisions.
- Provide staff training.
- Report progress to the superintendent and Board.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.
- Coordinate MDE technical assistance when necessary.

B. School Attendance Success Teams

Every school will establish an Attendance Success Team.

Required Members

- Principal or assistant principal
- Attendance clerk
- Counselor
- Teacher representative
- School Attendance Officer
- Social worker or family engagement representative
- MTSS representative
- Special education representative
- English Learner representative
- School nurse, as needed

Meeting Schedule

- Weekly during the first nine weeks
- At least twice monthly thereafter
- More frequently when attendance data indicates an urgent need

Required Agenda

1. Students with new unverified absences
2. Students reaching intervention thresholds
3. Students approaching chronic absenteeism
4. Students already chronically absent
5. Monday and Friday attendance patterns
6. Students with repeated tardies or early checkouts
7. Family contacts and conferences
8. Root causes and service referrals
9. Attendance Success Plan progress
10. Students being considered for legal referral

V. Tiered Attendance Improvement Framework

Tier I: Universal Prevention

Population

All students and families.

Purpose

Establish clear expectations, create a welcoming environment, develop student belonging, and prevent attendance problems before they occur.

Actions

- Communicate the attendance policy before school begins.
- Include attendance expectations in registration materials and student handbooks.
- Provide information in families' home languages.
- Explain the 66% instructional-day requirement.
- Explain excused and unexcused absence procedures.
- Explain documentation requirements.
- Provide daily automated absence notifications.
- Train teachers to take accurate attendance at required times.
- Create schoolwide attendance campaigns.
- Recognize good and improved attendance.
- Assign every student a caring adult or advisor.
- Increase relevance through career exploration, CTE, dual credit, work-based learning, clubs, athletics, and student leadership.
- Use positive, nonpunitive communication.
- Review attendance during parent orientation and open house.
- Monitor attendance by class period at secondary schools.
- Review attendance data weekly.

Tier II: Early and Targeted Intervention

Population

Students with emerging attendance concerns, including students who have:

- Accumulated three absences
- Missed multiple Mondays or Fridays
- Demonstrated repeated tardiness or early checkout
- Experienced a decline in attendance
- Missed consecutive days
- Reached approximately 5% of enrolled days absent

- Demonstrated academic, behavioral, health, transportation, or family concerns associated with attendance

Required Actions

- Contact the family.
- Conduct a student attendance conference.
- Identify the reason for absences.
- Assign a staff mentor.
- Develop an Attendance Success Plan.
- Establish a short-term attendance goal.
- Review academic performance and missing work.
- Provide tutoring or intervention.
- Address transportation barriers.
- Refer health concerns to the school nurse.
- Refer social-emotional concerns to the counselor.
- Provide family support referrals.
- Monitor attendance weekly for at least 30 school days.
- Document all actions in the student information or case-management system.

Tier III: Intensive Intervention

Population

Students who:

- Are chronically absent
- Continue to miss school after Tier II intervention
- Have accumulated repeated unexcused absences
- Are approaching the legal referral threshold
- Are at risk of dropping out or failing
- Have complex family, health, mental health, housing, transportation, or safety needs

Required Actions

- Convene a formal Attendance Success Team meeting.
- Require a parent or guardian conference.
- Conduct a home visit when appropriate and safe.
- Complete a comprehensive root-cause assessment.
- Revise the Attendance Success Plan.
- Assign a case manager.
- Coordinate with the School Attendance Officer.
- Provide wraparound service referrals.
- Review the student's IEP, Section 504 Plan, Individualized Language Service Plan, or health plan when applicable.
- Consider flexible scheduling or alternative educational arrangements when legally and educationally appropriate.

- Develop a plan to recover missed instruction.
- Monitor attendance at least weekly.
- Document every intervention.
- Consider court referral only after interventions have been implemented and documented.

VI. Attendance Intervention Thresholds

Threshold	Required District or School Response
First absence	Automated family notification; teacher provides missed assignments and welcomes student back
Second absence	Personal contact by teacher, counselor, attendance clerk, or designated staff member
Third absence	Tier II intervention begins; student conference; family contact; root-cause screening; Attendance Success Plan initiated
Fourth absence	Review documentation requirements; verify whether medical documentation is required; monitor plan implementation
Fifth absence	Formal written notice; parent conference; review excused-absence limit and chronic absenteeism risk
Sixth absence	Attendance Success Team review; intensified interventions; possible home visit or agency referral
Seventh unexcused absence	Final intervention review; School Attendance Officer consultation; verify complete documentation
Eighth unexcused absence	Legal referral may be considered only after documented interventions and compliance review
10% of enrolled days missed	Student classified as chronically absent; Tier III case management; subgroup and school data included in improvement monitoring

VII. Root-Cause Assessment

Attendance interventions must respond to the reason a student is absent. Staff will not assume that all attendance problems are caused by a lack of parental concern.

The district's Attendance Barrier Assessment will address:

Area	Examples of Questions
Student engagement	Does the student feel connected to adults, peers, classes, clubs, athletics, CTE, or career goals?
Academic difficulty	Is the student avoiding school because of course failure, reading difficulties, unfinished work, testing anxiety, or embarrassment?
Health	Are there chronic health conditions, dental needs, medication concerns, pregnancy, or unmet health needs?

Area	Examples of Questions
Mental health	Is the student experiencing anxiety, depression, grief, trauma, or school avoidance?
Transportation	Is transportation unreliable? Does the student miss the bus or lack transportation after medical appointments?
Housing	Is the family experiencing homelessness, displacement, overcrowding, or frequent moves?
Family responsibilities	Is the student caring for siblings, children, older adults, or ill relatives?
Employment	Is the student working late or during school hours?
Safety and belonging	Is bullying, conflict, harassment, discipline, or fear affecting attendance?
School climate	Does the student feel welcomed, respected, represented, and supported?
Parent communication	Does the family understand attendance rules and receive messages in an accessible language and format?
Special populations	Are disability, language, foster care, homelessness, juvenile justice, or transition needs being addressed?

VIII. Attendance Success Plan

Each plan will include:

1. Student name, grade, school, and enrollment date
2. Current attendance rate
3. Number and type of absences
4. Tardy and early-checkout patterns
5. Identified root causes
6. Student and family perspectives
7. Attendance goal
8. School interventions
9. Family commitments
10. Student commitments
11. Community or agency referrals
12. Academic recovery plan
13. Staff case manager
14. Monitoring dates
15. Review date
16. Results and revisions
17. Signatures or documentation that participation was offered

Sample Attendance Goal

The student will attend at least 95% of school days during the next 30 instructional days, arrive before the beginning of first period, and avoid unapproved early checkouts.

The plan will support, rather than punish, the student. Discipline will not replace an attendance intervention.

IX. Family and Community Engagement

The district will establish uniform family engagement protocols.

Required Practices

- Provide same-day or next-business-day absence notification.
- Use phone calls, text messages, email, letters, home visits, and parent portals.
- Provide multilingual communication.
- Explain attendance requirements using clear, family-friendly language.
- Avoid blaming or threatening language during initial interventions.
- Offer in-person, telephone, and virtual conferences.
- Provide families with attendance records and an opportunity to correct errors.
- Share the academic effect of missed instructional time.
- Conduct parent workshops on attendance, graduation, literacy, and student success.
- Partner with churches, nonprofit organizations, health providers, housing agencies, youth organizations, law enforcement, courts, and mental health providers.
- Provide families with a community resource directory.
- Train staff in culturally responsive family engagement.

Possible partners may assist with:

- Transportation
- Food access
- Health and dental services
- Mental health counseling
- Housing instability
- Childcare
- Clothing and uniforms
- Mentoring
- Employment and career supports

- Family counseling
- After-school supervision

X. School Climate and Student Engagement

Because students are more likely to attend when they feel connected to school, each school will implement relationship-building strategies.

District Expectations

- Every student will be connected to a designated caring adult.
- Schools will conduct student belonging surveys.
- Administrators will use student focus groups to identify barriers.
- Teachers will welcome students back after absences without embarrassment or public criticism.
- Secondary schools will connect attendance to graduation and career plans.
- Schools will provide clubs, athletics, fine arts, CTE, leadership, and service opportunities.
- Schools will monitor exclusionary discipline because suspensions contribute to missed instructional time and chronic absenteeism.
- Monday and Friday attendance campaigns will be developed where data demonstrates a pattern.

XI. Instructional Recovery

Students returning from absences will receive reasonable opportunities to recover learning.

Schools will:

- Provide timely access to assignments.
- Establish consistent make-up work procedures.
- Provide tutoring and intervention.
- Avoid creating an impossible backlog of assignments.
- Prioritize essential standards and competencies.
- Provide credit recovery when needed.
- Monitor course failures among absent students.
- Coordinate supports for students with disabilities and English Learners.
- Develop transition plans after extended illness, hospitalization, juvenile detention, alternative school placement, or family crisis.

XII. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Board of Trustees	Adopt attendance policy; review annual disaggregated report; provide oversight
Superintendent	Ensure district compliance; approve exceptions when authorized; report non-enrollment; allocate resources
Director of Accountability	Analyze data; monitor school implementation; prepare reports
Principals	Coordinate interventions, training, family support, and legal procedures
School Attendance Officer	Enforce compulsory attendance requirements; support interventions; maintain legal documentation
Principals	Ensure accurate attendance, timely intervention, team meetings, and staff accountability
Attendance Clerks	Enter and verify attendance; process documentation; generate notifications and reports
Teachers	Record attendance accurately; contact families; support returning students; refer emerging concerns
Counselors	Assess barriers; provide counseling; develop Attendance Success Plans
Nurses	Address health-related barriers and coordinate student health plans
Special Education Staff	Review disability-related attendance needs and ensure IDEA and Section 504 compliance
EL Coordinator	Provide language access and culturally responsive family communication
Transportation Department	Investigate and address transportation barriers
Parents and Guardians	Ensure enrollment and attendance; communicate reasons for absences; participate in interventions
Students	Attend regularly; communicate barriers; participate in the Attendance Success Plan

XIII. Professional Development

Before the start of school, the district will train all relevant employees on:

- Revised Mississippi attendance laws
- The 66% instructional-day requirement
- Excused and unlawful absence classifications
- Medical documentation requirements
- The five-excused-absence framework and exception process
- Unlawful absence reporting deadlines
- Chronic absenteeism calculations
- Intervention requirements
- Documentation standards
- Family engagement protocols
- Cultural responsiveness
- Trauma-informed practices
- Attendance coding and data quality
- Legal referral procedures
- Confidentiality
- Supports for students with disabilities, English Learners, homeless students, foster-care students, and students in transition

Attendance clerks, principals, counselors, and School Attendance Officers will receive additional role-specific training.

XIV. Data Monitoring and Accountability

A. Weekly School Dashboard

Each school will monitor:

- Daily attendance rate
- Number of students absent
- Unverified absences
- Students with three or more absences
- Students approaching 10%
- Chronically absent students
- Monday and Friday absences
- Tardies and early checkouts
- Students missing individual class periods
- Interventions initiated

- Parent contacts completed

B. Monthly District Dashboard

The district will review:

- Average daily attendance by school
- Chronic absenteeism by school
- Grade-level rates
- Subgroup rates
- Attendance by month
- Attendance by day of week
- Course failure among chronically absent students
- Discipline-related absences
- Intervention completion
- Home visits
- Legal referrals
- Students showing improvement
- Students requiring escalated support

C. Data Quality Audits

The Director of Accountability or designee will conduct attendance audits at least quarterly.

The audit will examine:

- Teacher attendance submission
- Entry times
- Absence coding
- Excuse documentation
- Partial-day calculations
- Tardy and checkout records
- Unlawful absence reporting
- Intervention documentation
- Attendance Success Plans
- Legal referral files
- Alignment between the student information system and supporting records

XV. Key Performance Indicators

Indicator	2026–2027 Target
District chronic absenteeism	30% reduction from baseline
Average daily attendance	Increase at every school
Students receiving intervention at three absences	100%
Families contacted by next business day	100%
Chronically absent students with Attendance Success Plans	100%
Schools conducting scheduled Attendance Success Team meetings	100%
Students improving after intervention	At least 60%
Required attendance records reviewed quarterly	100%
Attendance policy posted publicly	100%
Annual board report completed	100%
Grade levels or subgroups above 10% with written reduction strategies	100%

XVI. Implementation Timeline

Timeline	Action	Resources Needed	Person(s) Responsible
July 2026	Review SB 2103, State Board Rule 30.2, MDE guidance, and existing district policy	Legislation, MDE guidance, legal counsel	Superintendent, Board Attorney, District Leadership
July 2026	Calculate the 66% instructional-day cutoff for each school and schedule	Bell schedules, instructional-minute calculations	Principals, Accountability Director
July 2026	Revise board policy, handbook language, excuse procedures, and intervention protocols	Policy templates, counsel review	Superintendent, Board, Director of Student Services

Timeline	Action	Resources Needed	Person(s) Responsible
July–August 2026	Establish District and School Attendance Success Teams	Team rosters, meeting calendars	Superintendent, Principals
July–August 2026	Train administrators, teachers, clerks, counselors, and support staff	Training materials, attendance manual	District Leadership Team
Before first student day	Notify families of revised attendance requirements	Website, handbook, letters, text, social media, multilingual materials	Communications and Family Engagement Staff
First 15 days	Verify enrollment and report non-enrolled compulsory-school-age students as required	Enrollment reports, MSIS, contact records	Superintendent, Attendance Officer, Registrars
Daily	Record, verify, and report attendance; contact families regarding unverified absences	Student information system, phone and messaging tools	Teachers, Attendance Clerks
Weekly	Review early-warning attendance reports	Dashboard, student records	School Attendance Success Teams
Beginning at third absence	Initiate tiered intervention and Attendance Success Plan	Intervention forms, barrier assessment	Counselor, Administrator, Case Manager
Monthly	Review school and subgroup attendance data	District dashboard	District Attendance Leadership Team
Quarterly	Conduct attendance data-quality and intervention audits	Audit checklist, documentation	Accountability Department
Each semester	Evaluate trends and revise strategies	Attendance and intervention data	Principals, District Team
Spring 2027	Conduct family, student, and staff attendance surveys	Survey platform	Family Engagement Coordinator
June 2027	Evaluate progress toward 30% reduction	End-of-year data	Superintendent, Accountability Director
Annually	Present disaggregated attendance report to Board and publish required plans	Board report, website	Superintendent

Timeline	Action	Resources Needed	Person(s) Responsible
At least every three years	Complete formal policy review	Updated legislation and MDE guidance	Board, Superintendent, Counsel

XVII. Required District Forms and Documents

The district will develop and use uniform forms for:

1. Attendance excuse submission
2. Medical documentation
3. Superintendent or designee exception request
4. First attendance concern notice
5. Three-absence intervention notice
6. Five-absence conference notice
7. Chronic absenteeism notice
8. Attendance Barrier Assessment
9. Attendance Success Plan
10. Parent conference documentation
11. Home visit record
12. Community referral form
13. Weekly student monitoring log
14. Attendance Success Team minutes
15. School Attendance Officer referral
16. Pre-court compliance checklist
17. Annual school attendance report
18. District chronic absenteeism reduction plan

XVIII. Evaluation

The plan will be evaluated based on both implementation and student outcomes.

Implementation Questions

- Were absences recorded accurately?
- Were families contacted on time?
- Did intervention begin at the required threshold?
- Were Attendance Success Plans individualized?
- Were root causes identified?
- Were interventions documented?

- Did schools use community resources?
- Were legal referrals supported by evidence of prior intervention?
- Did all schools monitor subgroup data?

Outcome Questions

- Did chronic absenteeism decrease?
- Did average daily attendance increase?
- Which schools, grades, and subgroups improved?
- Which interventions were most effective?
- Did course failures and dropout risk decrease?
- Did Monday and Friday attendance improve?
- Did students report stronger relationships and belonging?
- Did parent participation increase?

The district will revise the plan annually based on these findings.