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NATIONAL
DROPOUT
PREVENTION
CENTER

A division of

SPN

Successful
Practices
Network

Release Date 3/13/2024

MISSISSIPPI IMPLEMENTS STATEWIDE TRUANCY INITIATIVE

BALLSTON SPA, N.Y. - The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) is launching an aggressive campaign to combat the growing student attendance crisis in the state and across the U.S. The “chronically absent” rate, defined as missing 10 percent or more school days, has doubled nationally since the COVID pandemic.

After a competitive process, MDE partnered with the North Mississippi Education Consortium (NMEC) and the National Dropout Prevention Center (NDPC) to plan and deliver a statewide attendance improvement initiative that was launched in January 2024 and will conclude in June 2024. The three-part project began with a two-day training for state leaders; continued with series of 12, two-day training events across the state for district teams; and will conclude in a two-day Chronic Absenteeism and Dropout Prevention Conference. At the Conference, leaders from school districts across the state will learn from national experts and local educators, who will share their most effective practices for improving student attendance.

In NDPC’s experience, schools work hard to improve attendance but efforts often do not succeed because strategies are selected at random, do not address root causes of truancy, and are not research-based. In contrast, Mississippi’s Truancy Initiative guides district and school Attendance Improvement Teams to analyze data, target students at high risk of becoming truant, and then identify and employ action steps most likely to produce better attendance. The project’s goals are to establish Attendance Improvement Teams in every school district, for those teams to train and guide school-site teams, and for every district and school to have solid attendance improvement plans. The June Conference will convene leaders and teams from across the state to share lessons learned. Entering the 2024-25 school year, school teams will receive continued support from the Department of Education, NDPC, and state leaders.

Rather than the traditional approach of directing schools how to combat truancy, Mississippi’s method combines the knowledge of local educators, the expertise of national experts, and state-level support to produce beneficial results that are sustainable.

Dr. Bill Daggett, Executive Chair of NDPC stated, “The Mississippi Department of Education has designed an aggressive and high-impact approach to address this critical issue. It will help schools identify local root causes of truancy, select the best research-based strategies, and apply those strategies with a laser focus.”

About the National Dropout Prevention Center

The National Dropout Prevention Center is a division of the Successful Practices Network (SPN), a not-for-profit organization that is devoted to providing research-based best practices to support the effectiveness of America’s schools. NDPC and SPN may be contacted at 518-723-2063 or at ndpc@dropoutprevention.org.

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