ITAWAMBA COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

DROPOUT PREVENTION PLAN

2019-2020

**Trae Wiygul**

**Superintendent of Education**

# Itawamba County Schools

**Dropout Prevention Plan Cover Sheet**

**Members:**

**Trae Wiygul**

**Superintendent**

**Rick Mitchell**

**Principal-Itawamba Agricultural High School**

**Terry Harbin**

**Principal-Itawamba Attendance Center**

**Dawn Rogers**

**Principal-Tremont Attendance Center**

**Benjie Ewing**

**Principal-Fairview Attendance Center**

**Carrie Grubbs**

**Principal- Career and Technical**

**Carson Cook**

**Principal-Dorsey Attendance Center**

**Regina Scribner**

**Principal- Mantachie Attendance Center**

**Millie Wood**

**Principal-Mantachie Junior and High School**

**Local Members**

**Trae Wiygul**

**Superintendent-School Staff**

**Brandy Cook**

**Dropout Interventionist-School Staff**

**Sheryl Ewing**

**ICSD Curriculum/Parent Coordinator-School Staff**

**Pattie Thrash**

**Federal Programs Coordinator-School Staff**

**LeAnne Robinson**

**Special Education Director-School Staff**

**Mick Taylor**

**Team Parent-Community Representative**

**Brittany Martin**

**ICVC counselor**

**2018/2019 District Data**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Enrollment by Grade**  | **Enrollment by Subgroup** |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Grade** | **Number Enrolled** |
| Special Education Pre-K | 16 |
| Kindergarten | 287 |
| Elementary Special Education | 27 |
| Grade 1 | 267 |
| Grade 2 | 254 |
| Grade 3 | 276 |
| Grade 4 | 285 |
| Grade 5 | 284 |
| Grade 6 | 290 |
| Grade 7 | 280 |
| Grade 8 | 275 |
| Grade 9 | 267 |
| Grade 10 | 239 |
| Grade 11 | 222 |
| Grade 12 | 207 |
| Secondary Special Education | 24 |
| Total Enrollment | 3500 |

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|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Group Name** | **Group Number** | **Group Percent (%)** |
| Female | 1640 | 46.86% |
| Male | 1860 | 53.14% |
| Asian | \* | \* |
| African American | 245 | 7.00% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 32 | 0.91% |
| White | 3142 | 89.77% |
| Two or More Races | 65 | 1.86% |
| Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander | \* | \* |

 |

Note: \* Represents suppressed data to prevent the identification of individuals in small cells or with unique characteristics

**Dorsey Attendance Center**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Enrollment by Grade** | **Enrollment by Subgroup** |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Grade** | **Number Enrolled** |
| Kindergarten | 38 |
| Elementary Special Education | \* |
| Grade 1 | 34 |
| Grade 2 | 32 |
| Grade 3 | 34 |
| Grade 4 | 37 |
| Grade 5 | 36 |
| Grade 6 | 40 |
| Grade 7 | 40 |
| Grade 8 | \* |
| Total Enrollment | 319 |

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|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Group Name** | **Group Number** | **Group Percent (%)** |
| Female | 163 | 51.10% |
| Male | 156 | 48.90% |
| African American | 71 | 22.26% |
| Hispanic or Latino | \* | \* |
| White | 234 | 73.35% |
| Two or More Races | \* | \* |

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| Note: \* Represents suppressed data to prevent the identification of individuals in small cells or with unique characteristics |

**Fairview Attendance Center**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Enrollment by Grade** | **Enrollment by Subgroup** |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Grade** | **Number Enrolled** |
| Kindergarten | 23 |
| Grade 1 | 26 |
| Grade 2 | 17 |
| Grade 3 | 20 |
| Grade 4 | 26 |
| Grade 5 | 20 |
| Grade 6 | 22 |
| Grade 7 | 23 |
| Grade 8 | 20 |
| Total Enrollment | 197 |

 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Group Name** | **Group Number** | **Group Percent (%)** |
| Female | 103 | 52.28% |
| Male | 94 | 47.72% |
| Hispanic or Latino | \* | \* |
| White | 194 | 98.48% |
| Two or More Races | \* | \* |

 |  |

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| --- |
| Note: \* Represents suppressed data to prevent the identification of individuals in small cells or with unique characteristics |

**Itawamba Attendance Center**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Enrollment by Grade** | **Enrollment by Subgroup** |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Grade** | **Number Enrolled** |
| Special Education Pre-K | \* |
| Kindergarten | 111 |
| Elementary Special Education | \* |
| Grade 1 | 118 |
| Grade 2 | 108 |
| Grade 3 | 117 |
| Grade 4 | 119 |
| Grade 5 | 115 |
| Grade 6 | 113 |
| Grade 7 | 107 |
| Grade 8 | 114 |
| Total Enrollment | 1046 |

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|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Group Name** | **Group Number** | **Group Percent (%)** |
| Female | 495 | 47.32% |
| Male | 551 | 52.68% |
| Asian | \* | \* |
| African American | 90 | 8.60% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 11 | 1.05% |
| White | 899 | 85.95% |
| Two or More Races | 39 | 3.73% |
| Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander | \* | \* |

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| Note: \* Represents suppressed data to prevent the identification of individuals in small cells or with unique characteristics |

**Mantachie Attendance Center**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Enrollment by Grade** | **Enrollment by Subgroup** |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Grade** | **Number Enrolled** |
| Special Education Pre-K | \* |
| Kindergarten | 94 |
| Elementary Special Education | \* |
| Grade 1 | 72 |
| Grade 2 | 79 |
| Grade 3 | 95 |
| Grade 4 | 80 |
| Grade 5 | 90 |
| Grade 6 | 97 |
| Grade 7 | 84 |
| Grade 8 | 92 |
| Grade 9 | 73 |
| Grade 10 | 67 |
| Grade 11 | 66 |
| Grade 12 | 56 |
| Secondary Special Education | \* |
| Total Enrollment | 1067 |

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|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Group Name** | **Group Number** | **Group Percent (%)** |
| Female | 481 | 45.08% |
| Male | 586 | 54.92% |
| Asian | \* | \* |
| African American | \* | \* |
| Hispanic or Latino | \* | \* |
| White | 1052 | 98.59% |
| Two or More Races | \* | \* |

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| Note: \* Represents suppressed data to prevent the identification of individuals in small cells or with unique characteristics |

**Tremont Attendance Center**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Enrollment by Grade** | **Enrollment by Subgroup** |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Grade** | **Number Enrolled** |
| Kindergarten | 21 |
| Grade 1 | 17 |
| Grade 2 | 18 |
| Grade 3 | \* |
| Grade 4 | 23 |
| Grade 5 | 23 |
| Grade 6 | 18 |
| Grade 7 | 26 |
| Grade 8 | 25 |
| Grade 9 | 38 |
| Grade 10 | 28 |
| Grade 11 | 36 |
| Grade 12 | 38 |
| Secondary Special Education | \* |
| Total Enrollment | 324 |

 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Group Name** | **Group Number** | **Group Percent (%)** |
| Female | 153 | 47.22% |
| Male | 171 | 52.78% |
| African American | \* | \* |
| Hispanic or Latino | \* | \* |
| White | 317 | 97.84% |
| Two or More Races | \* | \* |

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| Note: \* Represents suppressed data to prevent the identification of individuals in small cells or with unique characteristics |

**Itawamba Agricultural High School**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Enrollment by Grade** | **Enrollment by Subgroup** |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Grade** | **Number Enrolled** |
| Grade 9 | 156 |
| Grade 10 | 144 |
| Grade 11 | 120 |
| Grade 12 | 113 |
| Secondary Special Education | 14 |
| Total Enrollment | 547 |

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|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Group Name** | **Group Number** | **Group Percent (%)** |
| Female | 245 | 44.79% |
| Male | 302 | 55.21% |
| Asian | \* | \* |
| African American | 77 | 14.08% |
| Hispanic or Latino | \* | \* |
| White | 446 | 81.54% |
| Two or More Races | 12 | 2.19% |

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| Note: \* Represents suppressed data to prevent the identification of individuals in small cells or with unique characteristics |

**2018/2019 Itawamba County School District Data**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Elementary School-Middle School | Elementary-High School | High School |
|  | School Data |
| Number of Schools | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Cumulative Enrollment | 1562 | 1391 | 547 |
| Counselor/Student Ratio | 1/411 | 1/496 | 1/237 |
|  | Staff Demographic Data (Teachers/Administrators/Support Staff)  |
|  | Number |  | Percentage |
| Female | 326 |  | 79% |
| Male | 88 |  | 21% |
| Asian | 0 |  | 0 |
| Black | 10 |  | 2% |
| Hispanic | 0 |  | 0 |
| Native American | 0 |  | 0 |
| White | 404 |  | 98% |
|  | Additional District Information |
| Number of GED Options Program Students4 |  | Number of Students Taking the GED Test2 |
| Number of GED Options Program Students Successfully Completing a GED1 |  | Number of Students Passing One or More Sections of the GED Test1 |
|  | Average Length of Time Spent in GED Options Program4 months |
|  | Does your District Currently offer a “Fast Track” Program for High School Students?No |
| Graduation Rate: 83.6%  |  |
|  Dropout Rate: 6.6%  | Chronically Absent Students:18.8% |

|  |
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|  |

**2017/2018 District Data**

Graduation Rate: 83.8%

Accountability Grade: B

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Statewide Assessments |  |
|  | Language Arts | Math | Science | U.S. History |
| Proficiency | 42.5% | 48% | 80% | 57% |
| Growth | 56.1% | 61.5% |  |  |
| Growth of Lowest 25%  | 53.9% | 49.2% |  |  |
| Other Data |
| College and Career Readiness | 52.1% |  | Post Secondary Enrollment  | 71.6% |
| Acceleration | 68.9% |  | Advanced Course Preparation | 40.6% |

**Needs Assessment Outcomes**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Needs Assessment Areas** | **Descriptions** |
| Target Group Identified | * Students meeting the profile of “at-risk” of dropping out of high school
* Parents of at-risk students
* Communities of Itawamba County School children
 |
| Data Collection Methods Used | * Grades: Progress Reports for grades K12; Nine weeks report cards for all grades Title 1 surveys of faculty, parents, and students to determine critical concerns and needs in the school system
* Formal Assessments: MAP in grades 3-8; State science test results in grades 5 and 8; SAT in grades 9-12; STAR math and reading in all grades
* Attendance Reports from MSIS and SAM
* Discipline Reports from MSIS and SAM
 |
| Prioritized List of Needs | * Increase Parental Involvement/Communication through workshops, media, and newsletters
* Reduce Truancy in Itawamba County Schools
* Improve Student Achievement by improving reading scores on the Star and State tests
* ICSD’s goal is to decrease the number of discipline referrals by increasing parental involvement, reducing truancy, and improving student achievement
 |
| Short Term Goals | 1. Increase media coverage of current events at all schools.
2. Take steps to improve student achievement by improving reading skills at the elementary and middle schools through use of STAR programs.
3. Offer more professional development opportunities in core subject areas so that teachers will be more equipped with the knowledge and skills needed in the classroom.
 |
| Long Term Goals | 1. Continue a Credit Recovery Program for grades 9-12.
2. Increase the graduation rate to 85%.
3. Decrease the dropout rate to <10%.
4. Reduce truancy rate to 16%
 |
| Recommendations for future needs assessments | 1. The district will see if a relationship exists between low grades and absenteeism when there are no other deterring variables present by looking at individual student grades as reported in SAM and comparing these to their attendance record. Since students with low grades are serviced through the TST process, the TST team would be responsible for compiling this data.
2. Manufacturing expectations in a global market. ICSD will ask the major manufacturers in our area for a list of job descriptions, expectations, and requirements for entry-level positions so that we may structure our curriculum around career clusters that will prepare graduates for careers in a global economy.
 |

**Part VI. Current District Initiatives**

Program/initiatives are located in Appendix A

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **15 Dropout Prevention Strategies** | **School/Grade Level** |
| **District-wide** | **Pre-Kindergarten** | **Elementary School** | **Middle School** | **High School** |
| **Systemic Renewal** | * Smart Track Surveys
* Teacher Surveys
* Parent Surveys
* Student Surveys
* School Improvement Plan
 | * Early Prevention Screening
 | * Early Prevention Screening
* MCT2
 | * MCT2
* Tech Prep Evaluation
 | * SATP
* High School Re-design
* Tech Prep Evaluation
* Project Grad
 |
| **School-Community Collaboration** | * Smart Track Surveys
* Parent Night at local area Head Start Centers
 |  |  | * Craft Committees for Tech Prep
* Career Futures
 | * Career Day
* Craft Committees for Tech Prep
* Itawamba Foundation Scholarship for Graduates of ICSD
 |
| **Safe Learning Environments** | * Crisis Management Plan
* Alternative School
* Character Education Programs
* No Bullying Policy
* Transition Classroom
 | * Crisis Drills
 | * DARE Program
* SRO
 |
| **Family Engagement** | * District Parent Center
* Annual Parent Visitation Night
* Dropout Interventionist
 | * Parent Visitation Night
* PTO
 | * Family Reading Night
* Parent Visitation Night
* Annual Book Fair
* PTO
 | * Parent Visitation Night
* Annual Book Fair
* PTO
 | * Parent Visitation Night
* PTO
 |
| **Mentoring / Tutoring** | * Big Brothers/Big Sisters
* Faith Based Visits
* Credit Recovery Program
* Dropout Interventionist
* Character Education
 |  |  |  |  |
| **Service-Learning** |  |  | DARE Program | * Co-op Programs
* Job Shadowing in Vocational Ed.

High School Redesign |
| **Alternative Schooling** | * Alternative Education
* Transition Program
* TST
* Behavior Intervention
* Credit Recovery Program
* GED
* Counseling
 |  |  |  |  |
| **After-School Opportunities** | * Sports
* Annual County Wide Play
 |  |  |  |  |
| **Professional Development** | * The North Mississippi Education Consortium
* LEA Plan for Highly Qualified Teachers
* Bus Safety
* Gifted Referrals
* Test Security
* Title I
 |  | * TST
* Mississippi Mathematics Curriculum Frameworks
* Newspapers in Education
* Science Workshop
* Cultural Differences
* Behavior Interventions
 | * CPR Certification
* TST
* Mississippi Mathematics Curriculum Frameworks
* Science Workshop
* Cultural Differences
* Behavior Interventions
 | * CPR Certification
* TST
* Cultural Differences
* Behavior Interventions
 |
| **Active Learning** | Three Tier Policy |  |  |  | Recycling |
| **Educational Technology** | * District Website
* Credit Recovery Program
 | * Headsprout
* Reading Eggs
 | * Headsprout
* Star Reading
* Star Math
* Accelerated Math
* Accelerated Reading
* Reading Eggs
 | * Star Reading
* Star Math
* Keyboarding
* Choices
* Accelerated Math
* Accelerated Reading
* Edulastic
 | * Star Reading
* Star Math
* Keyboarding
* Choices
* Mississippi Virtual Public Schools
* SmartBoard
 |
| **Individualized** **Instruction** | * Three Tier Policy
* Instructional Process/Curriculum Delivery
* Teacher Evaluations
* Functional Behavioral Assessments
* Credit Recovery Program
 |  | * Career Discovery
 | * Computer Discovery
 | * Technology Discovery
 |
| **Career and Technical** | * Vocational Center
* High School Career Centers
 |  |  | * Career Futures*/”On-to-High School”* 4 year plan
 | * Individual Instruction Plans for Alternative School students
 |
| **Early Childhood Education** | * Educational partnering with Head Start
* Reading Eggs
* Accelerated Math
* Accelerated English
* District Website/Parenting Resources
* STAR testing
* Study Island
 | * Educational partnering with Head Start
* Reading Eggs
* Speech/Language Programs
* Early Prevention Screening
 | * Reading Eggs
* Accelerated Math
* Accelerated English
* Early Prevention Screening
 | * Accelerated Math
* Accelerated English
 |  |
| **Early Literacy Development** | * District Parent Center
* Educational partnering with Head Start
* Reading Eggs
* Accelerated Math
* Accelerated English
* District Website/Parenting Resources
* TST-Three Tier Process
 | * Educational partnering with Head Start
* Reading Eggs
* Speech/Language Programs
* District Website/Parenting Resources
 | * Accelerated Math
* Accelerated English
* District Website/Parenting Resources
* TST-Three Tier Process
 | * Accelerated Math
* Accelerated English
* District Website/Parenting Resources
* TST-Three Tier Process
 |  |

**Evaluating Effectiveness**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Current/Proposed Initiatives | Performance Indicators / Method of Evaluation | Sources of Data | Baseline Data (%, # or Rate) | Dropout Prevention Strategy Addressed | Goal Met?Yes / No |
| Current:**School Improvement Plan** | Standardized Test Scores | 1. State tests
2. Subject Area Tests
 | 1. 85% of students will be Proficient or above in Reading, LA, and Math
2. 90% of students will pass English II SAT
 | * Systemic Renewal
 |  |
| Current:**Parent Night at local area Head Start Centers**1. **Annual Parent Visitation Night**
2. **District Parent Center**
3. **District Website and E-mail system**
 | 1. Increase in parent participation
2. Increase school-readiness skills in Kindergarten students
3. Increase in student achievement
4. Better communication between parents and teachers
 | 1. PTO membership
2. Sign-in sheets for volunteers
3. Observation
4. State test scores
5. SAT scores
 | 1. Increase PTO and volunteers by 50%
2. 90% of Kindergarten students will be able to identify 25 to 35 initial sounds by mid-year in Kindergarten
3. 100% of Kindergarten students are potty trained and can tie shoes
4. Students scoring below basic will increase and meet AYP.
 | * School-Community Collaboration
* Family Engagement
* Early Childhood Education
* Early Literacy Development
 |  |
| Current:**Crisis Management Plan** | Reduce the number of Discipline Referrals | Number of discipline referrals as recorded in SAM | Decrease the number of discipline referrals by 35% | * Safe Learning Environments
 |  |
| Current:**TST – Three Tier Process** | Improve student achievement and decrease the number of SPED referrals | Number of retentions and number of students referred for SPED services | 1. Decrease the number of retentions in by 20%
 | * Early Literacy
* Active Learning
* Individualized Instruction
 |  |
| Current:**Big Brothers/Big Sisters****Faith Based Visits****GED Program** | Increase community supportImprove student achievementDecrease truancy | 1. Students participating or volunteering for after-school programs
2. Graduation rates
3. Dropout rates
4. Student Organizations
5. Absentee Reports
 | 1. Increase the participants/volunteers in after-school tutoring by 20%
2. Maintain or increase current graduation rate
3. Maintain or decrease the dropout rate percentage
4. Increase enrollment in student organizations by 10%.
5. Decrease the number of unexcused absences by 20%
 | * Mentoring/Tutoring
* Alternative Schooling
* Individualized Instruction
 |  |
| Current:**Credit Recovery Program** | Provide the opportunity for students to recover Carnegie credits lost as a result of failure so that they can graduate with their peers | 1. Graduation rates
2. Dropout rates
 | 1. Maintain or increase current graduation rate
2. Maintain or decrease the dropout rate percentage
 | * Alternative Schooling
* Mentoring/Tutoring
* Individualized Instruction
* Educational Technology
 |  |
| Current/Proposed Initiatives | Performance Indicators / Method of Evaluation | Sources of Data | Baseline Data (%, # or Rate) | Dropout Prevention Strategy Addressed | Goal Met?Yes / No |
| Proposed:**Itawamba Foundation Scholarship for Graduating Seniors** | 1. Increase graduation rates
2. Decrease dropout rates
 | 1. Graduation rates
2. Dropout rates
 | 1. Maintain or increase current graduation rate
2. Maintain or decrease the dropout rate percentage
 | School-Community Collaboration |  |

**Proposed District Initiative**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Proposed Initiative: | **Grade Level Addressed** | **Purpose or Goal** | **Who is Involved?** | **Proposed Cost** | **Timeline for Implementation** | **Dropout Prevention Strategy Addressed** | **Expected Outcomes for Students** |
| Refining Pacing Guides | Elementary School and Middle School | * Increase proficiency in Math and Language Arts
* Give Teachers a tool to track pacing of teaching
 | * Curriculum Coordinator: Sheryl Ewing
* Principals:

Carson Cook Dawn Rogers Millie WoodJamie DillTerry HarbinBenjie Ewing* Counselors:

Susan ScribnerBethany WilemonRebekah HunterJeannine WilemonStaci Kline Noel Vannasselburg   | None | Fall 2019 | * Active Learning
* Professional Development
* Early Childhood Education
* Early Literacy Development
 | Increase Proficiency in Math and Language Arts |
| Instituting grant writers at each school  | all | * Increase funding resources to provide more opportunities for student involvement and success
 | * Superintendent
* Principals
* Designated grant writer at each school.
 | $8000 | Fall 2019 | * Active Learning
* ]Educational technology
 | 1. Increase funding and student involvement
2. Increase graduation rate
 |

**Appendix A- Current District Initiatives**

1. **Systemic Renewal**

ICSD is continually evaluating the goals and objectives of district policies and procedures so that we may positively impact the greatest number of students in the best way possible. The district is working toward whole-school reform by using Title 1 funds to improve student achievement. By improving student achievement, we can increase graduation rates and decrease the dropout rate. ICSD relies heavily upon surveys from our stakeholders in order to gain feedback of current practices and suggestions for improvement. Title 1 funds are used to conduct surveys of parents, students, and teachers to effect changes in the school system as indicated in school improvement plans. Also, as part of the district’s federal Title IV Drug Free program, ICSD annually conducts a Smart Track Survey to gain feedback on what students perceive as deterrents in their lives. Students are asked questions pertaining to school safety, drug, alcohol, and cigarette usage. This information is shared with local officials and incorporated in the school system through changes that make students feel safe, with zero tolerance for drug and alcohol use. The educational process can only excel if students feel safe and important.

Mississippi’s accountability system requires that schools prepare students for post-secondary education and/or to enter the workforce. In order to increase the rigor of the educational process in Itawamba County, schools rely on progress monitoring instruments to give them real time results so that instruction can be individualized and structured to each student’s needs. These programs will also help close the achievement gap between economically disadvantaged students, minority students, and affluent, white students.

Through systemic renewal methods, ICDS strives to meet state and federal guidelines and make sure “no child is left behind”.

1. **School-Community Collaboration**

ICSD has established communication with stakeholders to create an awareness of truancy in our district. We feel awareness is the first step in solving the problem. Through community outreach programs with Head Start, our Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO), and tech-prep craft committees, we are educating the public as to the importance of students being in school. Research has shown that students who are excessively absent tend to have lower grades, which ultimately results in failure. Students who are two or more grade levels behind are twice as likely not to graduate high school. According to the National Dropout Prevention Center, “for students to learn, they must attend school.” Since data has shown a direct correlation between dropout and truancy, we think that by reducing the truancy rate, we can also decrease the dropout rate.

ICSD is working with local Head Start agencies to establish common goals for pre-school students and parents. Two times per year, our local school district meets with Head Start employees and parents to establish a plan of action that will ensure that children are as successful as possible when they begin their formal education. By creating an early awareness of ‘at-risk’ behaviors, parents and schools can intervene at an earlier age and prevent future dropout problems.

1. **Safe Learning Environments**

According to the National Dropout Prevention plan, “The Educational Development Center (1996) found that only half of the children felt safe in school”. “Approximately 160,000 students per day miss school because they fear physical harm (Education Development Center, (1996).” In order for students to learn, they must feel safe in a nurturing, non-threatening environment. ICSD has established several programs to ensure that students are safe and in a climate that builds self-esteem. Teachers and administrators in the district regularly attend training on preventing violence and conflict resolution among students. Each school also has a Crisis Management Plan for dealing with situations that put students in harm’s way. These plans are reviewed annually, and drills are carried out on a regular basis to ensure understanding of the correct procedures should a crisis occur.

ICSD has also addressed the issue of bullying and threatening behavior through our character-education plans. Students are taught to care for and respect one another. Differences are embraced and appreciated in order to create a culture of understanding and acceptance. School officials do not tolerate bullying or threatening behaviors, but rather focus on positive relationships and academic achievement.

A county-wide No Bullying Policy has been put into place. This policy states that the Itawamba County School District does not condone and will not tolerate bullying or harassing behavior. This policy protects students from feeling that their school is a hostile environment. Procedures for reporting, investigating, and addressing bullying behaviors have been put into place.

A Transition Classroom has been put into place at the Improvement Center. Students who have been discharged from a residential mental health or juvenile correction facility attend the transition classroom before they are placed back into the regular school environment. This helps those students by providing supports to ensure they are emotionally ready to reenter the regular school system. Students are also assessed to better ensure that they are not a threat to the general student body before returning their home school.

Students need to be in school in order to learn, and they are more apt to come to school if they feel safe. If students are at school and learning, they are less likely to dropout and more likely to graduate.

1. **Family Engagement**

ICSD believes that it takes a community to raise a child and we embrace the involvement of the community within our school systems, especially the parents. Through our district parent center, parents are able to check out materials that can help them become better parents and increase the academic achievement of their child. According to National Dropout Prevention statistics, “there is a positive relationship between family engagement and improved academic achievement.” (Henderson and Mapp, 2002) All schools have an open-house night for parents to visit teachers and classrooms. Parents can ask questions about the district policies and procedures, as well as gain knowledge about what they can do to help their child become more successful in the classroom.

Every school has an active Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) that helps raise money for needed supplies, as well as secures volunteers for activities within the school system. Research has shown that regardless of socio-economic background, students with parents who are involved and concerned are less likely to drop out of school and more likely to graduate.

1. **Early Childhood Education**

ICSD places great emphasis on preventative measures at an early age in the educational process. We feel it is very important to identify strengths and weaknesses at an early age so that parents and schools can intervene and promote successful strategies for academic achievement. Through special education services, the district offers pre-school programs for students with speech or language deficits. Students in this program are serviced with speech and language lessons in order to improve their cognitive development and get them ready for kindergarten. The district also partners with Head Start to promote early identification of students with special needs.

Kindergarten through 3rd grade students are progress monitored using several early literacy programs, such as Dynamic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills and STAR. Reading Eggs and Study Island are used to promote student success. Students showing inadequate progress will be targeted through our Teacher Support Team (TST) and given extensive interventions in order to try and prevent them from falling behind.

A district website with parenting resources is available for parents to help their children’s success at home. Also, a Parent Center with resources that parents can use is available for all students and families of Itawamba County School District.

Research has shown that early intervention is a good investment. Retention rates decrease, along with truancy, special education referrals, discipline referrals, and dropout rates. According to statistics from the National Dropout Prevention Center, “…one dollar invested in high-quality early childhood education programs by policymakers results in a return of seven dollars in preventative costs associated with incarceration, truancy, school dropout, and teen pregnancy” (Stegelin, 2004).

1. **Early Literacy Development**

According to surveys, standardized test results, and school improvement plans, reading skills need to be improved in our district. When reading skills are improved, student achievement will increase, along with graduation rates. Students are targeted through progress monitoring instruments such as DIBELS, Aimsweb, and MCT2 as having poor reading abilities. Teacher support teams ensure that students meeting these criteria are being serviced and report on the progress of the interventions. Interventions are adjusted based on success or failure, and special education referrals are made when all options have been exhausted and positive progress cannot be noted. Students must feel successful at some point in order for student achievement to be enhanced and reading is the source for all learning. When reading skills are improved, overall student achievement will improve and students will be more likely to remain in school and graduate.

1. **Mentoring/Tutoring**

ICSD partners with Big Brothers/Big Sisters to promote a positive and supportive relationship between a mentor and a protégé. Many students do not have a caring supportive relationship at home and we feel this connection is vital to keeping students interested in school. By building a trusting relationship between the mentor and mentee, students build social skills that help them become more productive citizens in society.

1. **Service-Learning**

According to the National Dropout Prevention Center, “service-learning is a teaching and learning method that connects meaningful community service experiences with academic learning, personal growth, and civic responsibility.” Through ICSD’s Vocational Programs, students learn from hands-on experiences. They are able to see a meaningful relationship between classroom activities and what goes on in the real world. Many students place a greater value on their education after gaining an understanding of what it takes to make it in the real world. Through the high iCAP, students choose a career cluster based on their interests and abilities. Curriculum planning is based on these career clusters and students gain the skills and knowledge that will better prepare them for a career or post-secondary education. These students are more likely to graduate because they are working toward something they are interested in and have the ability to achieve.

1. **Alternative Schooling**

As an alternative to suspension or expulsion, students in ICSD are often placed in the Itawamba County Improvement Center. Many all of these students are considered “at-risk” of dropping out of school and becoming an economic burden on society. As a means of trying to reach these students and keep them from dropping out of school, student/teacher ratios are lower at the alternative school and counseling services are also available. Students are able to attend the Improvement Center as a transitional assignment after placement in Juvenile Correction Centers and Mental Health Placement. There students are able to receive more individualized instruction and counseling to make their transition to the regular school placement more successful.

1. **After-School Opportunities**

ICSD has many opportunities for students to become involved in after-school activities. Sports are offered at every school in the district. Some examples of sports offered are football, basketball, baseball, cross-country, and golf.

Also, every year IAHS conducts a play in which all students throughout the county are invited to audition for and participate in. These theatrical performances give students in grades Kindergarten through high school a chance to star on stage. Also, these productions pull the community together by offering tickets to the public.

1. **Professional Development**

Teacher quality is of utmost importance in the education of a child. ICSD seeks to hire the brightest and the best teachers available and then maximize their skills by offering a variety of professional development opportunities that complement current curriculum practices. One Tennessee study found that low-achieving students increased their academic achievement by as much as 53% when taught by a highly qualified teacher (Haycock, 1998). Through the North Mississippi Education Consortium and Itawamba Community College’s Tech-Prep division, professional development opportunities can be collaborative and on-going toward district goals as related to the Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks.

Teachers who care about and challenge students, and emanate this enthusiasm, produce lifelong learners who are more likely to share this passion with other students. School climates with positive atmospheres among faculty and students experience fewer dropouts and higher graduation rates.

1. **Active Learning**

Through the three tier process, students are encouraged to learn based on their learning styles in a variety of settings. Research has repeatedly shown that students do not all learn in the same way. Some are auditory, some kinesthetic, and some are visual learners. Learning style inventories are administered by teachers in order to gain a better understanding of a student’s optimum learning curve.

1. **Educational Technology**

To provide for an alternative method of learning in all classrooms, ICSD offers a variety of technology based educational programs designed to enhance student achievement, not to replace the traditional methods. To optimize this experience, all teachers have a minimum of one computer and Internet access in their classroom, as well as access to student computer labs. Through the use of technology, students are provided with flexible learning opportunities in a safe learning environment, as well as gaining technological skills that will help prepare them for the future. Many times, technology is the only way for at-risk students to be successful and we must provide them this opportunity.

1. **Individualized Instruction**

Every student is unique in their mental and physical make-up and we must address this fact in order for optimum academic achievement to occur. Students in Itawamba County, who are targeted as at-risk of failure, are identified in the three tier process and an individualized instruction plan is developed based on their strengths and weaknesses. These plans seek to minimize weaknesses and maximize strengths by finding alternate ways of teaching and assessing students.

Students with repeated behavioral difficulties are addressed through Functional Behavioral Assessments and behavior plans for students that are generated through the combined input of the students, the teachers, and the parents. Each assessment is individualized to target specific behavioral difficulties for the student.

1. **Career and Technical Education**

ICSD offers both academic and vocational classes in order to meet the needs of students and society. According to the National Dropout Prevention Center, “the School-to-Work OSTW) Act of 1994 has had a major impact on career education in schools. The goal of the Act was to improve student learning, keep students in school until they graduated, and to provide relevant experiences that integrate school-based and work-based learning.” Every high school in the district has a career center for students to explore the many careers available and the coursework necessary in preparation for a particular career. Students can then structure their high school classes to meet these needs. According to statistics, workers with a bachelor’s degree can earn 1.9 million over a 40-year period, associate’s degree, approximately 1.4 million over a 40-year period, and only $852,000 for workers without a high school diploma (Dolin, 2001). Students who set goals for the future tend to remain in school and become more productive citizens.