

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CANTON PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT'S DROPOUT
PREVENTION PLAN AND EFFORTS TO RETAIN STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

With a graduation rate of 29.7% and a dropout rate of 59.8% reported in 2005, the Canton Public School District qualified as one of the most low-performing school districts in the United States. Recently, though, the district has experienced significant improvement in these areas, reporting a graduation rate of 72.2% and a dropout rate of 17.8% in 2013. In this thesis, I analyze Canton, Mississippi's dropout prevention methods and conclude that their success is attributed to the combination of a community-wide effort and desire to be worthy of honor and respect alongside Canton Public School District's extensive Dropout Prevention Plan. In order to arrive at this conclusion, I present a literature review which contains information regarding the current state of educational inequality, the role of honor and shame in society, causes of dropping out, methods of dropout prevention, and Mississippi's Dropout Prevention Plan. Furthermore, I present an analysis of Canton, Mississippi's history, the district's Dropout Prevention Plan and Action Plan, the dropout prevention methods implemented in the Canton Public School District, and the role that honor and respect had in Canton, Mississippi.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2005, Mississippi's Canton Public School District (CPSD) reported a graduation rate of 29.7% and a dropout rate of 59.8%, placing the district among the worst in the United States.¹ Just one year later, their graduation rate had risen to 41.8% and their dropout rate had fallen to 42.7%, and eight years later the district reported a graduation rate of 72.2% and a dropout rate of 17.8%.² Such large and rapid improvements are likely to be due to many factors, including the implementation of the state's and the district's 2008-2009 Dropout Prevention Plans (DPP) as well as cultural motivation due to the attention that CPSD received after the Associated Press's "Dropout Factory" study. In the present thesis, I present a study of CPSD's reported improvement to determine from whence Canton's enhanced performance resulted. Phenomenal results in Atlanta were attributed to a scandal, where teachers changed students' answers on state achievement tests to raise test scores.³ Such stories threaten trust in schools' reports of

¹ "Graduation Rates," Kids Count Data Center, accessed April 19, 2016, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/7549-graduation-rates?loc=26&loct=2#detailed/10/7461-7612/false/868,867,133,38,35/any/14680>; "Dropout Rates," Kids Count Data Center, accessed April 19, 2016, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/7576-dropout-rates?loc=26&loct=2#detailed/10/7461-7612/false/868,867,133,38,35/any/14722>.

² Ibid.

³ Richard Fausset, "Trial Opens in Atlanta School Cheating Scandal," *The New York Times*, September 29, 2014, accessed March 23, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/30/us/racketeering-trial-opens-in-altanta-schools-cheating-scandal.html?_r=0.

improvement, but I argue that Canton's progress is honest and the result of a community-wide effort to be worthy of honor and respect that motivated the district to implement research-based dropout prevention strategies.

I argue this because I have a positive belief in teachers, despite the occasional scandal, and believe that the teachers and administrators in the Canton Public School District worked hard to create sustainable change. Along the same lines, I have a positive belief in the district, and I approached my research presuming that CPSD was innocent and had achieved honest and sustainable success unless I was shown reason to believe this was not the case. Furthermore, Canton's publication of the Dropout Prevention Plan, created specifically to address dropout and graduation rates, bolstered the belief that their improvement was attributed to an honest, virtuous process.

On a more analytical level, though, I argue this conclusion because of my research. When I inquired about Canton's Dropout Prevention Plan, most community members had never heard of the document. In contrast, many community members at School Board meetings I attended were eager to discuss the ways in which their district had improved and was now worthy of recognition and respect. This innate desire to be honorable motivated Canton to implement research-based dropout prevention methods, and this desire also sustained the dropout prevention efforts. Without the community's appeal to honor, Canton Public School District would not have garnered the same level of improvement. In this way, the dropout prevention initiatives put in place in CPSD are replicable, but they will not be met with the same success unless other districts rally their communities behind the cause of honor and respect.

My Motivation

Growing up, I had the privilege of attending Hutchison School, an academically rigorous private school in Memphis, Tennessee. As a young student, I assumed that all schools were comparable: that they had teachers who were challenging but kind, that they were housed in nice facilities, and that they fostered and believed in each student's potential for success. It was not until I was in the seventh grade that I realized how erroneous were my thoughts. Just across the street from Hutchison is Ridgeway High School, a larger public high school in Memphis. Although I passed Ridgeway everyday on my way to school, I did not enter the facilities until I took the SAT for the Duke TIP Program as a seventh grader.

This experience was the first of many that opened up my eyes to educational inequality. As I walked into the building, I immediately noticed that the posters surrounding me relayed more warnings than encouraging words. As I wandered through the halls and entered the classroom, I observed that the teachers' faces were stern and authoritative as opposed to the upbeat and friendly faces I interacted with everyday. As I was taking the SAT, my proctor never smiled. Although she was a small, older woman, her powerful and authoritative demeanor never wavered. It was my first time in such a strict environment, and I quickly realized I did not have the right to speak up. What really shocked me, though, were the bathrooms. As I walked into the women's restroom on a break, the first thing I noticed was that the stall doors barely reached my chest. As I entered the stall, though, I saw that the toilet paper was padlocked to the wall. As I got into my mom's car at the end of the test, questions and concerns erupted out of me.

Our discussion on the way home opened my eyes to a side of public education that I had only heard abouts. She explained that the teacher probably did come across as mean, but her demeanor should not be a reflection of her character. Instead, this woman probably felt that authority and sternness were the only tools she could utilize to manage her large classes. Furthermore, she explained that the bathroom doors had to be short for accountability reasons; at a glance, teachers could pop into the restrooms to ensure that no illegal activities or bullying were occurring outside the classroom. What has stuck with me though, was when Mom explained that the toilet paper most likely had to be chained to the walls because students were stealing it, for a multitude of reasons, but it was happening so frequently that the school simply could not afford to restock the toilet paper.

It saddens me that, although Hutchison School and Ridgeway High School are just across the street from each other, it took me until the seventh grade to realize the significant differences in the educations received at these schools. As I continued to grow up and explore Memphis and its culture, this became the first of many experiences that opened up my eyes to the state of educational inequality. This spurred me to become involved with local tutoring centers and to direct my volunteer hours toward educational organizations, and the second most impactful experience with educational inequality occurred as a result of this through my church's youth group. Booker T. Washington High School is one of the lower performing public schools in Memphis, and during my sophomore year, a large group from their football team started attending my church. I became close with several of them, but one in particular, whom I will refer to as Mark, was particularly charismatic. Mark's home life is similar to one you have heard a

thousand times – his dad was never around, his uncle was abusive, and his mother was unable to provide for their family – but Mark tested well and had a lot of potential for academic success. After a football game one night, Mark got into a neighborhood fight over his shoes. The police were called because some students began a local chant that signified a neighborhood fight, and Mark was arrested. Reports of the fight were ranged widely, but one observer mentioned that it could have been a gang related incident. Because of this report, Mark was expelled from school. Unfortunately, due to an obscure policy, he was then not allowed back into school, and Mark became a high school drop out in the eleventh grade. Since dropping out of high school, Mark has been in and out of jail and has become affiliated with a gang, although sometimes he seeks to get out. I think about Mark often. Who am I to say that if he had stayed in school that his life would be drastically different, but who am I not to?

Mark's experience is not unique. Some have personal experiences similar to Mark's, more have friends and acquaintances who have experienced educational inequality, and almost everyone has heard these stories on the news or through friends. Since education is one of the most pressing issues of our time, stories of educational inequality, high dropout rates, and low graduation rates flood the news, but these stories are often meant to sway our thoughts one way or another in regard to different educational policies. We often become numb to these accounts and we forget the fact that at the heart of it all, these policies are affecting individual's futures, and that behind every statistic is someone like Mark. Our policymakers have the power to shape students' futures with the decisions they make, and we are currently failing to best prepare our students to succeed in the face of seemingly insurmountable hardships. It is

each of our responsibilities to do all we can to ensure that children in Mississippi receive the best possible education, and it is our charge to ensure that we are actively working to ensure that all children have access to this opportunity. This is why I was motivated to pursue this thesis topic.

Contents

To begin the present study, I present a literature review that broadly covers the nature and characteristics of severely at-risk schools, or “Dropout Factories.” I first take a detailed look at our current state of inequality, and then I discuss how our innate desire for honor drives our decisions. Furthermore, I describe specific causes of dropping out as well as research-based methods of dropout prevention, and finally, I discuss how Mississippi used that information to create a state-wide Dropout Prevention Plan.

Next, I present the analysis portion of the thesis. I first describe the history and culture of Canton, Mississippi and Canton Public Schools in order to understand how and why their school reform was successful. Next, I examine literature produced by CPSD that explains and gives insight into the changing culture of the school over the last ten years. Specifically, I analyze the Canton Public School District Dropout Prevention Plan from 2009 and their Action Plan for School Improvement for the 2015-16 school year. I next take the proposed initiatives from these documents and evaluate which research-based dropout prevention techniques were implemented in Canton Public Schools. Finally, I analyze the role that Canton’s desire to be worthy of honor and respect played into their improvement. Analyzing each of these areas allowed me to better understand

which changes in CPSD were the result of policy and which changes were motivated by cultural forces or other factors, specifically the district's desire for honor.

With this knowledge, I argue that Canton's improvement was spurred by the community's wish to be a place worthy of respect and honor and is the result of the district's implementation of research-based dropout prevention methods. Therefore, Canton's success is caused by the combination of these two factors; alone, either factor would not be enough to lead Canton to improvement. For this reason, Canton's improvement is replicable, and I conclude by proposing reforms for districts facing similar conditions that can be drawn from CPSD's experience by listing the key insights and policies that are most effective and most likely to be transferable.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to evaluate Canton's marked improvement, I read a myriad of literature regarding the current state of educational inequality, known dropout factors and preventative methods, and Mississippi's efforts to decrease dropout rates in public schools. In this literature review, I first explain the current state of educational inequality drawing primarily from Jonathan Kozol's book *Savage Inequalities*.⁴ Next, I illuminate the power that honor and shame have over society and culture as argued by Kwame Anthony Appiah in his book *The Honor Code: Moral Revolutions and How They Happen*.⁵ Following this section, I discuss specific causes of dropping out as well as methods of dropout prevention. This information comes primarily from Russell W. Rumberger's *Dropping Out* as well as the 2008 study, "Dropout Prevention," conducted by the National Center for Educational Evaluation and Regional Assistance in collaboration with the Department of Education.⁶ To conclude the literature review, I introduce and summarize Mississippi's Dropout Prevention Plan, an effort of the Mississippi Department of Education's Office of Dropout Prevention to combat the high

⁴ Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1991)

⁵ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen*, reprint ed. (n.p.: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011)

⁶ Russell W. Rumberger, *Dropping Out: Why Students Drop Out of High School and What Can Be Done About It* (n.p.: Harvard University Press, 2011), [Page 143]; U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Prevention*, by Mark Dynarski, et al., IES Practice Guide (n.p.: Institute of Education Sciences, 2008).

dropout rates plaguing the state.⁷ The knowledge gained in this literature review allowed me to evaluate and analyze Canton Public School District's improvement.

State of Inequality

Educational inequality is one of the defining social issues of our time, and although many individuals have experienced this inequality first-hand, Jonathan Kozol describes his personal and heart wrenching experience with this broken system in his book *Savage Inequalities*.⁸ According to Kozol, many believe financial inequality is the most detrimental to schooling, but this is false. There is also inequality of instruction and teachers, of the school's physical conditions, and of family and community life. We are erroneous to believe that students do not recognize these inequalities or to think that they do not affect student achievement, and in this section of the literature review, I will elaborate on the inequality of finances, instruction and teachers, the school's physical condition, and of family and community life that students experience.

Severe financial differences largely contribute to school inequality. A large portion of school funding comes from collected property taxes. This may seem to be a fair system of financing schools, but often wealthier districts are able to tax themselves at lower rates than poorer districts but still able to collect more revenue. As Kozol explains, "In the United States, very poor communities place high priority education, and they often tax themselves at higher rates than do the very affluent communities. But, even if they tax themselves at several times the rate of an extremely wealthy district, they are

⁷ Mississippi Department of Education, State Dropout Prevention Plan 2007-2019, (Miss. 2007).

⁸ Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1991)

likely to end up with far less money for each child in their schools.”⁹ Poorer neighborhoods therefore begin at a disadvantage. In addition to having less revenue, poorer districts often have more, different, and more pressing costs than richer districts.

Kozol again explains:

Overly large portions of their limited tax revenues must be diverted to meet non-school costs that wealthy suburbs do not face, or only on a far more modest scale. Police expenditures are higher in crime-ridden cities than in most suburban towns. Fire department costs are also higher where dilapidated housing, often with substandard wiring, and arson-for-profit are familiar problems. Public health expenditures are also higher where poor people cannot pay for private hospitals. All of these expenditures compete with those for public schools. So the districts that face the toughest challenges are also likely to be those that have the fewest funds to meet their children’s needs.¹⁰

Poorer districts are starting with a severe handicap because of their lack of funding and their obligation to spend their limited funds on non-school costs. This disadvantage results in poor schools having even less resources to pour into quality facilities, innovative teachers, and experienced faculty and administration. A disparity in finances is at the foundation of the other inequalities that plague public schools.

Since poorer districts are forced to spend their restricted funds on non-school costs, many schools simply do not have the finances to hire quality teachers. This severely affects the level and quality of instruction that students receive. In today’s culture, better teachers, administrators, and students are drawn to the higher achieving

⁹ Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1991), [67].

¹⁰ Kozol, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's*, [68].

public and private schools as well as the innovative charter and magnet schools. As a result, poorer public schools “must settle for the rest”.¹¹ Kozol explains the affect that poorer instruction has on students:

Reading levels are the lowest in the poorest schools. In a survey of the 18 high schools with the highest rates of poverty within their student populations, Designs for Change, a research center in Chicago, notes that only 3.5 percent of students graduate and also read up to the national norm. Some 6,700 children enter ninth grade in these 18 schools each year. Only 300 of these students, says Don Moore, director of Designs for Change, ‘both graduate and read at or above the national average.’ Those very few who graduate and go to college rarely read well enough to handle college-level courses.¹²

Due to a lack of resources and funding that hinders suffering schools from hiring high achieving teachers, student success suffers.

Perhaps the greatest injustice of inequality, though, lies in the difference in school cultures between the richest and the poorest schools. While high achieving and wealthy schools create a culture of achievement, support, and success for their students, poor schools do the very opposite according to Kozol and students he interviewed. Because the ratio of students to faculty is incredibly disproportional in poorer schools, students can easily go through school without a faculty member ever knowing them by name. Kozol discovered that he “heard an awful note of anonymity” from students who dropped out.¹³ One remarked, “‘I hated the school...I never knew who my counselor was,’ a

¹¹ Kozol, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's*, [77].

¹² Kozol, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's*, [71-72].

¹³ Kozol, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's*, [137].

former New York City student says...‘We have children,’ says one grade-school principal, ‘who just disappear from the face of the earth.’ This information strikes me as astonishing. How does a child simply ‘disappear’ in New York City?’¹⁴ What incentive do students have to stay in a school where no one knows their name? One student, David, explained that “When people talk this way, they are saying, actually – ’ He stops and starts again: ‘They’re saying that black kids will never learn. Even if you spend more in New York. Even if you bring them here to Rye. So what it means is – you are writing people off. You’re just dismissing them’.¹⁵ This is how students interpret severe educational inequality: that the public school system does not care about students in poorer schools because they are not worth caring about. One principal explains clearly:

So they know this other world exists, and, when you tell them that the government can’t find the money to provide them with a decent place to go to school, they don’t believe it and they know that it’s a *choice* that has been made – a choice about how much they matter to society. They see it as a message: ‘This is to tell you that you don’t much matter. You are ugly to us so we crowd you into ugly places. You are dirty so it will not hurt to pack you into dirty places.’ My son said this: ‘By doing this to you, we teach you how much you are hated.’ I like to listen to the things my children say. They’re not sophisticated so they speak out of their hearts.¹⁶

The inequality present in our schools is robbing children of their right and confidence to learn as well as their ability to cultivate their potential for academic achievement.

¹⁴ Kozol, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's*, [137].

¹⁵ Kozol, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's*, [158].

¹⁶ Kozol, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's*, [215-216].

Family life and opportunities can help students overcome the inequalities they experience at school, but unfortunately family opportunity is a large area of inequality among students. Many parents who have students in poorer districts work at least two jobs in order to provide for their family, but this often means that they are unable to show up for academic obligations. Furthermore, many of these adults themselves have not been educated on how to help their children succeed academically as a parent. For example, preschool attendance is one of the greatest examples of family disparity, for whether or not a student is enrolled in preschool rests largely on the initiative and knowledge of the parent.¹⁷ Kozol explains, “The poorest parents, often the products of inferior education, lack the information access and the skills of navigation in an often hostile and intimidating situation to channel their children to better schools, obtain the applications, and (perhaps a little more important) help them to get ready for the tests and then persuade their elementary schools to recommend them”.¹⁸ Here, it is again important to remember that this lack of initiative is oftentimes not due to a lack of parents’ care but instead due to a lack of parent education regarding early childhood education. Families oftentimes do not have the education to know how to break the cycle of poverty and low achievement, and therefore oftentimes their children unknowingly receive the same support, or lack thereof.

Our culture surrounding public education is complex and unequal, yet students are called to learn despite the inequalities they face. Although students’ financial backgrounds vary widely, students’ are also facing inequalities of instruction and

¹⁷ Kozol, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's*, [73].

¹⁸ Ibid.

teachers, of their facilities' physical conditions, and of family and community life. This is the state of the inequality rampant in our public education today.

Honor and Shame

In his book *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen*, Kwame Anthony Appiah discusses the influence of shame on civilizations, and oftentimes, shame and its opposite, honor, are prime motivators for societal change. For the purposes of this thesis, it is incredibly important to understand individuals' and societies' innate desire to be found honorable, for therein lies honor's power to motivate societies to transform. To better understand, we will first discuss the definitions of and relationships between honor, respect, and shame. Then, we will understand what this means for societies as a whole, and finally, we will see how honor and shame serve as societal motivators.

Recently, researchers have focused on the fact that humans have an innate need for recognition. This most often manifests itself in a deep desire and “concern with status and respect.”¹⁹ As humans today define “the good life,” there is always an aspect of recognition and respect for their moral, intellectual, and physical accomplishments and attributes, but when these desires are refined and distilled, it is clear that are simply symptoms of each individual's ultimate desire for honor and respect. Appiah explains in depth that there is a deep and complex connection between respect and honor, for “at the heart of honor...is this simple idea: having honor means being entitled to respect.”²⁰ There are two types of respect that individuals seek and that are essential to honor:

¹⁹ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen*, reprint ed. (n.p.: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), [Page 2]

²⁰ Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral*, [Page 65].

esteem and recognition respect. Esteem “involves having a positive regard for someone because of their success in meeting certain standards,” while recognition respect does not derive from success in a particular area but instead from individuals living up to their expected codes of honor.²¹ Individuals care deeply for these types of respect and protect them at all costs. Appiah explains that, “to care for your honor is to want to be worthy of respect. If you realize you have done something that makes you unworthy, you feel shame whether or not anyone is watching.”²² Humans recoil at the feeling of shame, for it is the opposite of the honor and respect that they so deeply desire.

The innate desire for respect and honor are integral to the ways that societies operate and change. According to Appiah and the ways he views human nature, the individuals that comprise societies are constantly consciously and unconsciously seeking respect and honor in their actions. Therefore, societies take on this requirement for honor and respect, and this results in the creation of “honor codes.” For a society to operate based on an honor code, societies must assign rights to respect both esteem and recognition respect.²³ Just like the individuals that comprise them, societies as a whole recoil from shame and do their best to cease any shameful behavior.

Appiah explains that often, shameful behavior is not at first obvious or evident. Oftentimes, the behavior and practices were once esteemed that are later thought shameful. The key to society’s thoughts shifting lies in how the practice affects individuals’ honor. Appiah explains:

²¹ Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral*, [Page 65].

²² *Ibid.*, 4

²³ *Ibid.*, 65

One day, people will find themselves thinking not just that an old practice was wrong and a new one right, but that there was something shameful old ways. In the course of the transition, many will change what they do because they are shamed out of an old way of doing things.²⁴

Shame is a powerful motivator for societal change because shame affects each individual uniquely, and it attacks each individual's innate need for respect and honor. Appiah further explains that "collective identities shape individual honor because respect and contempt for individuals is molded by the ways we think of them as belonging to various social kinds."²⁵ Understanding this concept is crucial to understanding the true motivator for societal change. Oftentimes, the moral arguments for ending shameful behaviors are laid out long before any societal change takes place, and it is because the moral arguments often have no power to make individuals feel societal change. It is only when society members uniquely feel that their personal honor and respect is being attacked that societal change occurs. In an article discussing the book, author Simon Blackburn explains that "a shift had to occur in which people began to feel that their honor was compromised by the practice. Reformers had to mobilize contempt and shame, the sense of being dishonored even by belonging to a society in which such things took place."²⁶ The role that both individual and collective honor and shame play in societal change is crucial to understand.

This idea is particularly interesting when considering Mississippi's culture, for the state is often the subject of immense shame. For example, Mississippi has consistently

²⁴ Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral*, [Page 4].

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 25

²⁶ Simon Blackburn, "The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen by Kwame Anthony Appiah - review," *The Guardian*, October 29, 2010, [Page #], accessed October 19, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/oct/30/simon-blackburn-honor-code-review>.

ranked last in America's Health Rankings survey on national health as well as last on Education Week's survey of educational performance.²⁷ As a result of this shame, Mississippi has developed mechanisms for honor and pride. Some of these responses are more wrongheaded than well-guided, but they serve as a clear example of Appiah's argument that individuals and societies alike are driven by a desire to be honorable.

Causes of Dropping Out and Methods of Dropout Prevention

In order to study Canton's dropout prevention success, it is first necessary to have an in-depth knowledge of the causes of dropping out as well as an in-depth knowledge of dropout prevention methods. In this section, I draw heavily upon Russell W. Rumberger's book *Dropping Out* to provide an extensive knowledge of these subjects.²⁸

Causes of Dropping Out

Russell W. Rumberger described it best in his book, *Dropping Out*: "Identifying the causes of dropping out is extremely difficult. Like other forms of educational achievement, such as test scores and grades, dropping out of school is likely influenced by an array of factors, some immediately preceding departure from high school and others occurring years earlier in middle and even elementary school."²⁹ Despite the difficulty, many educators and researchers have attempted to come up with a concrete list of factors that influence students to drop out. Most academics agree that these predictors

²⁷ "Mississippi," America's Health Rankings, accessed April 21, 2016, <http://www.americashealthrankings.org/MS>; *Quality Counts Marks 20 Years Report Explores New Directions in Accountability* (n.p.: Education Week, 2016), accessed April 21, 2016, http://www.edweek.org/media/qualitycounts2016_release.pdf.

²⁸ Russell W. Rumberger, *Dropping Out: Why Students Drop Out of High School and What Can Be Done About It* (n.p.: Harvard University Press, 2011).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 143

can be divided into two categories: individual predictors and institutional predictors. Individual predictors of dropping out include educational performance, behaviors, attitude, background, or any combination of these factors while institutional predictors include families, schools, and communities.³⁰

Individual Factors

One of the biggest factors that affect dropout rates is educational performance. This factor is influenced by failed courses, retention, academic achievement, and student mobility. Failing just one class can lessen a student's chance of graduating, but studies show that those who fail in ninth grade have particularly higher chances of dropping out in the future, thus the transition from middle school to high school is a pivotal time for students.³¹ Also, retention is a key element in educational performance. Those who are required to repeat a grade have much higher chances of dropping out of high school. Rumberger explains, "In high school, students who fail to earn enough credits during the academic year are typically retained in their grade level...and the research literature finds that retention is a consistent predictor of whether students graduate".³² Academic achievement is also a factor of dropping out. Studies show that "two indicators of academic achievement – test scores and grades – have been shown to predict whether students drop out or graduate from high school".³³ Lastly, student mobility plays a large role in students dropping out. While most students remain at one high school throughout their career, some students attend more than one, and "research literature shows that

³⁰ Rumberger, *Dropping Out: Why Students*, [Page 160,188].

³¹ Rumberger, *Dropping Out: Why Students*, [Page 161].

³² Rumberger, *Dropping Out: Why Students*, [Page 162].

³³ Rumberger, *Dropping Out: Why Students*, [Page 165].

student mobility, at least during middle and high school, affects school dropout and graduation”.³⁴ All of these factors affect educational performance, an indicator of dropping out.

Behaviors also influence the likelihood of a student dropping out. This factor is influenced by engagement, course-taking, deviance, peers, employment, attitudes, goals, and self-perceptions.³⁵ Engagement is key predictor of behavior, for “students who are engaged in school, whether in the academic arena or the social arena, are more likely to attend, to learn, and eventually to finish high school; students who are disengaged are not”.³⁶ One of the easiest ways to measure engagement is attendance; if a student fails to attend school, he or she is at a heightened risk of dropping out. The rigor of students’ courses as well as the quality of their teachers also play a large part in their behavior.³⁷ Several research studies have analyzed the impact that being on an academic or college track has on a student, and eight out of thirteen analyses “found that students in an academic track were less likely to drop out and more likely to graduate.”³⁸ In-class behavior is not the only type important for educators to note, for students who participate in deviant behaviors both inside and outside the classroom are at a much greater risk of dropping out than those who do not.³⁹ Many of these behaviors are influenced by peers, who “exert a powerful influence over adolescents” and can either encourage each other to attain high academic achievement or to become involved in negative behaviors.⁴⁰ Finally, there is a correlation between students who drop out and students who work

³⁴ Rumberger, *Dropping Out: Why Students*, [Page 168].

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 169

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 171

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 172

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 176

more than twenty hours a week, but causation has not yet been established.⁴¹ It is important to note that while this is a factor of dropping out, this correlation primarily displays the economic need that many students who drop out are facing.

Attitude is another individual factor that affects dropping out, and goals and self-perceptions are foundational to this factor. As Rumberger plainly states, “students must value school to succeed in school”.⁴² Most students and parents believe that education is the doorway to freedom and economic stability, especially for at-risk students. In today’s economy, though, an education is a necessity but not a guarantee that one will receive a job. This has given many students a negative attitude toward school, which places them at a greater risk of dropping out. Furthermore, students’ perceptions about themselves are a strong indicator of dropping out. In order to succeed, students must “believe they are capable of achieving success. Students’ perceptions of themselves and their abilities are a key component of achievement motivation and an important precursor of student engagement”.⁴³

Finally, a student’s background, especially his or her demographics and health, plays a huge role in whether or not he or she will remain in school. As far as demographics, “dropout and graduation rates vary widely by a number of demographic characteristics of students”.⁴⁴ For example, females have lower dropout rates than males, and Asians and whites have lower dropout rates than blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans.⁴⁵ Also, if students are in poor mental or physical health, it places them at a greater risk of dropping out than healthy students.

⁴¹ Ibid., 178

⁴² Ibid., 179

⁴³ Ibid., 180

⁴⁴ Ibid., 181

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Educational performance, behaviors, attitude, and background are incredibly influential individual factors to success, and if not attended to, are strong predictors of dropping out.

Institutional Predictors of Dropping Out

Institutional predictors also play a large part in determining whether or not students will drop out. One of the largest factors is a student's family, family structure, family resources, and family practices. Family structure "affects the physical, social, and cognitive development of children through its relationship to other features of families, particularly its resources and parenting practices".⁴⁶ Most research shows that students who lived with both parents "had lower dropout rates and higher graduation rates, compared to students in other family living arrangements".⁴⁷ Also, families with lower incomes are oftentimes required to move more, and a majority of studies "found that residential mobility is associated with an increased risk of dropping out of school".⁴⁸ Family resources, not just financial resources, are an important factor for predicting dropout rates. Human resources in the form of parents are equally as important.⁴⁹ Parents and family support are crucial to student success in addition to financial stability, for these two resources are essential in supporting the "emotional, social, and cognitive development of children".⁵⁰ These resources' influence can be largely diminished with the practices with which parents choose to raise their children, for that largely influences the way students learn. As Rumberger states, "fiscal and human resources simply

⁴⁶ Ibid., 188

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 190

⁵⁰ Ibid.

represent the means or the capacity to improve the development and educational outcomes of children. This capacity is realized through the actual practices and behaviors that parents engage in”.⁵¹ Monetary and familial resources, time that parents spend with their students, the methods with which they choose to parent them, and the expectations they set for them are influential in determining whether a student will drop out of school or not.

It is no surprise that schools themselves hugely influence student achievement, but it is difficult to say exactly in which ways. According to Rumberger, four specific characteristics of schools have been shown to most profoundly affect students: “student composition or characteristics of the student body, resources, structural characteristics, and processes and practices”.⁵² Not only the student composition, but the social composition of the school, has been found to affect student achievement in two different ways. First, social composition is made up of “the average socioeconomic status of the students attending the school, the proportion of at-risk students, the proportion of racial or linguistic minorities, the proportion of students who had changed schools or residences, and the proportion of students from nontraditional families”.⁵³ Social composition may “serve as a proxy for other characteristics of the schools, to the extent that those characteristics are correlated with social composition”.⁵⁴ For example, schools with a high-poverty and high-minority populations often have high teacher turnover and more inexperienced teachers.⁵⁵ Social composition may also affect student achievement

⁵¹ Ibid., 191

⁵² Ibid., 193

⁵³ Ibid., 194

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

directly through “peer learning, motivation, or social behavior.”⁵⁶ As far as school structure, several characteristics affect student achievement: school location, school size, and type of school.⁵⁷ School resources also make a difference, although scholars debate how much influence resources have. Many agree that teachers and other material resources make a difference in student achievement, but there is disagreement regarding the influence that financial resources have. Finally, school performance is a huge factor in student drop out rates. Schools have little control over the factors previously discussed, but schools do have control over their policies and procedures. Policies and practices often lead to students disengaging and both voluntarily and involuntarily withdrawing from school.⁵⁸

Finally, a student’s community strongly influences whether or not he or she will drop out. According to Rumberger, “neighborhoods influence children and youth through three primary mechanisms: access to institutional resources (e.g. child care, medical facilities, employment opportunities); parental relationships that can provide access to family and friends as well as social connections with the neighborhood; and social relationships (or social capital) that arise out of mutual trust and shared values that can help to supervise and monitor the activities of residents, particularly youth.⁵⁹ These mechanisms are important to note when looking at factors that influence dropout rates.

Suggested Preventative Measures

⁵⁶ Ibid., 194

⁵⁷ Ibid., 195

⁵⁸ Ibid., 197

⁵⁹ Ibid., 199-200

In September 2008, the National Center for Educational Evaluation and Regional Assistance in collaboration with the Department of Education produced the study “Dropout Prevention.” This study proposed six recommendations to prevent students from dropping out, and the “process for deriving the recommendations began by collecting and examining research studies that have evaluated the impacts of dropout prevention programs.”⁶⁰ The research evaluated came from studies that met What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) evidence standards, and they were then rated as having either “strong,” “moderate,” or “low” levels of evidence based upon evidence, argument, and the finally the opinion and experience of the authors. Based upon these studies and their evidence level, the authors formulated six recommendations for dropout prevention. Each of these recommendations has been assigned a level of evidence. The first recommendation is diagnostic, the next three are targeted interventions, and the final two are school wide interventions.⁶¹

First, the report recommends that schools “utilize data systems that support a realistic diagnosis of the number of students who drop out and that help identify individual students at high risk of dropping out”.⁶² There is a low level of evidence for this recommendation, but the study asserts “regularly analyzing student data is the critical first step both for determining the scope of the dropout problem and for identifying the specific students who are at risk of dropping out”.⁶³ This data should be used to determine accurate graduation and dropout rates and to “identify incoming students with

⁶⁰ U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Prevention*, by Mark Dynarski, et al., IES Practice Guide (n.p.: Institute of Education Sciences, 2008), [Page 1].

⁶¹ Ibid., 6

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 12

histories of academic problems, truancy, behavioral problems, and retention”.⁶⁴

Furthermore, the data should be used to monitor academic and social performance as well as students’ sense of engagement.⁶⁵ The problem with this recommendation arises because of funding and technology. For the most part, school districts do not have the funds readily available to update the systems and procedures needed to collect accurate and thorough data.⁶⁶ Moreover, coming up with a data collection system that takes into account the complexities and nuances of the school and community cultures is almost impossible.

Second, the report suggests that schools “assign adult advocates to students at risk of dropping out”.⁶⁷ There is a moderate level of evidence for this recommendation, and “research suggests that students who have ongoing relationships with adults feel a greater sense of school membership, attachment, and involvement”.⁶⁸ To carry out this recommendation, the study suggests that schools “choose adults who are committed to investing in the student’s personal and academic success, keep caseloads low, and purposefully match students with adult advocates”.⁶⁹ Also, it is important to “establish a regular time in the school day or week for students to meet with the adult” and for schools to “communicate with adult advocates about the various obstacles students may encounter and provide them with guidance and training about how to work with students, parents, or school staff to address problems.”⁷⁰ Several barriers exist to this recommendation. Many school infrastructures and schedules do not allow for discussions

⁶⁴ Ibid., 6

⁶⁵ Ibid., 14

⁶⁶ Ibid., 15

⁶⁷ Ibid., 6

⁶⁸ Ibid., 17

⁶⁹ Ibid., 10

⁷⁰ Ibid.

pertaining to topics outside of academics, and even if time did allow, many potential adult advocates are not willing or available to volunteer more time to the students.⁷¹ Many schools do not have the funds to pay the staff for the volunteer hours or to hire new advocates, and some teachers actually think that students already receive enough adult advocacy. Oftentimes “staff perceptions that students at risk of dropping out are receiving special treatment despite poor academic performance, absenteeism, or other negative behavior” can be a hindrance to this recommendation.⁷² Lastly, students may not be willing to meet with an adult advocate. These are all roadblocks that administrators may face in implementing this recommendation.

The third recommendation is that schools “provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance”.⁷³ There is a moderate amount of evidence for this suggestion, and the study suggest that schools “provide individual or small group support in test-taking skills, study skills, or targeted subject areas such as reading, writing, or math.”⁷⁴ The study also suggests that schools “provide extra study time and opportunities for credit recovery and accumulation through after school, Saturday school, or summer enrichment programs.”⁷⁵ There are only three major obstacles that administrators may face in implementing this recommendation. First, the school day is already incredibly busy and time constraints may not allow for another academic program.⁷⁶ Furthermore, students most likely will not participate in voluntary tutoring sessions, and it finally may be difficult to find tutors to teach these courses.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Ibid., 20

⁷² Ibid., 21

⁷³ Ibid., 6

⁷⁴ Ibid., 10

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 24

⁷⁷ Ibid.

The fourth recommendation is that schools “implement programs to improve students’ classroom behavior and social skills.”⁷⁸ There is a low level of evidence for this recommendation, but the authors have created four steps to implement this goal. First, schools should utilize “adult advocates or other engaged adults to help students establish attainable academic and behavioral goals with specific benchmarks.”⁷⁹ Schools should also praise students for high academic achievement and other accomplishments as well as incorporate problem-solving and decision-making skills into their curriculum.⁸⁰ Finally, schools need to “establish partnerships with community-based program providers and other agencies such as social services, welfare, mental health, and law enforcement.”⁸¹ There are two main obstacles to this recommendation. First, the resources for new courses may be limited, but an even greater barrier may exist: “teachers and staff may stereotype at-risk students and assume that ‘those kids can’t be helped.’”⁸²

Fifth, the study suggests that schools “personalize the learning environment and instructional process.”⁸³ There is a moderate amount of evidence for this recommendation, and the authors suggest to implement it, schools establish small learning communities and team teaching.⁸⁴ Also, schools should create smaller classes and longer class meetings through a modified school schedule. Finally, schools need to foster student participation in extracurricular activities.⁸⁵ Some obstacles to the

⁷⁸ U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Prevention*, [Page 6].

⁷⁹ U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Prevention*, [Page 10].

⁸⁰ U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Prevention*, [Page 10].

⁸¹ U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Prevention*, [Page 10].

⁸² U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Prevention*, [Page 28-9].

⁸³ U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Prevention*, [Page 6].

⁸⁴ U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Prevention*, [Page 10].

⁸⁵ U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Prevention*, [Page 10].

implementation of this recommendation include staff resistance to a change in the school schedule and structure and the fact that “turnover of staff in key leadership positions can hamper progress,” for new leaders come in with different goals and agendas for the future and often break any continuity that was in place.⁸⁶

Lastly, the study suggests that schools “provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and to serve the students after they leave school.”⁸⁷ There is a moderate amount of evidence for this suggestion, and to implement the recommendation, the authors suggest that schools “provide teachers with ongoing ways to expand their knowledge and improve their skills” while providing “students with extra assistance and information about the demands of college.”⁸⁸ Furthermore, schools need to create a college-bound culture within their schools and “host career days and offer opportunities for work-related experiences and visits to postsecondary campuses.”⁸⁹ This can occur through partnerships with “local businesses to provide opportunities for work-related experience such as internships, simulated job interviews, or long-term employment.”⁹⁰ One obstacle to the implementation of this recommendation is staff resistance to including vocational training in the school curriculum. Furthermore, some students are simply not interested in attending college, or they have been so discouraged by state standards and college admission requirements that they have lost their interest in pursuing higher education.⁹¹

⁸⁶ U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Prevention*, [Page 33].

⁸⁷ U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Prevention*, [Page 6].

⁸⁸ U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Prevention*, [Page 11].

⁸⁹ U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Prevention*, [Page 11].

⁹⁰ U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Prevention*, [Page 11].

⁹¹ U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Prevention*, [Page 38].

This study is incredibly important for this thesis because of its concise way of representing and analyzing a myriad of studies on dropout prevention. Furthermore, this study and these recommendations provide a framework with which to analyze and evaluate dropout prevention methods implemented by different schools.

Mississippi Dropout Prevention Plan

Mississippi Dropout Prevention Plan

In 2007 through Mississippi Code: Title 37 Education S37-13-80, the Mississippi Department of Education created the Office of Dropout Prevention and charged it with the responsibility of administering “Mississippi’s statewide dropout prevention program and any regulations or policies that may be adopted by the State Board of Education pertaining to dropout prevention.”⁹² In 2007, this office created a Mississippi Dropout Prevention Plan for 2007-2019 as well as mandated that each district create a Dropout Prevention Plan of its own.

The Mississippi Dropout Prevention Plan (MDPP) was created to “develop strategies to ensure that an effective support system is in place to support students throughout their academic careers.”⁹³ For the purpose of the MDPP, a “dropout” is defined as any student who “was enrolled at some time during the previous school year, was not enrolled at the beginning of the current school year, has not graduated from high school, and does not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions: transfer to another public school district, private school district, or State/District approved

⁹² Mississippi Department of Education, State Dropout Prevention Plan 2007-2019, (Miss. 2007).

⁹³ Ibid.

educational program, temporary absence due to suspension or school-approved absence, or death.”⁹⁴ It is important to have this term clearly defined as we move forward.

In order to fulfill its mission, the Office of Dropout Prevention set three goals in Mississippi’s Dropout Prevention Plan. First, they planned to “increase graduation rate for 9-12 cohort on a systematic basis to 85% by the 2018-2019 school year.”⁹⁵ When this plan was implemented, the graduation rate was 61.1%, and to ensure that this goal was met, the DPP has six benchmarks in two year increments that the state should meet. The second goal is that “by 2012-2013, initiatives instituted by the Office of Dropout Prevention will reduce the state dropout rate by 50%.”⁹⁶ This required that the state decrease its then dropout rate of 26.6% to at least 13.3%. Again, five benchmarks in yearly increments were outlined to ensure that this goal would be met. Finally, the Dropout Prevention Plan stated the goal that “by 2012-2013, initiatives instituted by the Office of Dropout Prevention will reduce the statewide truancy rate by 50%.”⁹⁷ The rate at the time this report was written was 31.8%, and the Dropout Prevention Plan instituted five yearly benchmarks to ensure that the state was on track to meet its goal.

In order to meet these goals, the Office of Dropout Prevention developed a framework for implementation in conjunction with the strategies created by the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network. These strategies are grounded in four main areas: school and community perspective, early interventions, basic core strategies, and making the most of education. Three strategies pertain to school and community perspective: systematic renewal, school-community collaboration, and safe learning environments.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Mississippi Department of Education, State Dropout Prevention Plan 2007-2019, (Miss. 2007).

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

Their purpose is to ensure ongoing evaluation and correction within individual schools, strengthen schools' relationship with their communities, and provide a safe haven that fosters student learning. Three strategies also relate to Early Interventions: family engagement, early childhood education, and early literacy development.⁹⁹ These strategies are focused on engaging parents, ensuring 0-5 year olds have access to early childhood education, and that students develop reading skills at a young age. These strategies all have extensive evidence bolstering their positive impact on retention rates. There are four basic core strategies, which include mentoring/tutoring, service learning, alternative schooling, and after-school opportunities.¹⁰⁰ These strategies address the most basic and long-standing practices regarding dropout prevention, and they address ways in which schools can aid at-risk students outside the classroom. Lastly, "Making the Most of Education" houses five strategies: professional development, active learning, educational technology, individualized instruction, and career and technical education.¹⁰¹ These strategies address teachers and their teaching methods more specifically and recommend teachers receive professional development continually so that they can utilize the most innovative teaching practices and best address individual students.

When combining the overarching goals along with the strategies for implementation, the Mississippi Dropout Prevention Plan created a timeline for nine implementation goals. For the purpose of this thesis, I will only highlight the most important ones. The first goal is that the "Mississippi Department of Education will provide comparative data on Mississippi's grade 9-12 cohort dropout rate and grade 7-12

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

cohort dropout rate” according to a set timeline.¹⁰² Secondly, “by April 2, 2007, local school districts shall submit to the Mississippi Department of Education a list of areas of responsibility for proposed members of their district-level Dropout Prevention Team”.¹⁰³ This Dropout Prevention Team should serve to identify students at risk of dropping out, developing both preventative and reactionary plans for helping these students, and implementing efforts and staff development training to support the previous efforts.¹⁰⁴ The third goal is that “by May 1, 2007, the Mississippi Department of Education’s Office of Dropout Prevention will make available to local districts the guidelines for a dropout prevention needs assessment.”¹⁰⁵ The purpose of this goal is to “determine the needs of students at risk of dropping out and recent re-enrollees from the juvenile justice system, examine the nature and causes of dropping out, and setting priorities for future action.”¹⁰⁶ The eighth goal of this plan is for individual school boards to “adopt their Local District Dropout Prevention Plan prior to the end of the district’s 2007-2008 academic year” and then submit them to the Office of Dropout Prevention¹⁰⁷. Finally, the Dropout Prevention Plan hoped that individual Dropout Prevention Plans be implemented during the 2008-2009 school year.¹⁰⁸

Throughout this Dropout Prevention Plan, the Office of Dropout Prevention recognizes that there are several critical components that are essential when it comes to dropout prevention. The seven identified are a public relations dropout prevention awareness campaign, an assessment of current initiatives, a school attendance officer

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

(SAO) staff refocusing study, a dropout recovery program, transition plans for dropout prevention, federal program/funding opportunities, and research partnerships.¹⁰⁹

The purpose of the public relations dropout prevention awareness is “to disseminate information on the importance of staying in school, and the state’s dropout prevention efforts.”¹¹⁰ The main targets for this campaign includes parent advocacy groups, churches, and civic and community organizations.¹¹¹ The Office of Dropout Prevention fulfills the second critical component in Mississippi’s Dropout Prevention Plan Appendix A which includes a list of current initiatives. From that compiled list, the office plans to collaborate across the Department of Education to analyze the effectiveness and efficiency of current efforts. Next, the School Attendance Officer (SAO) Staff Refocusing Study is intended to redesign the roles and responsibilities of SAOs to focus on dropout prevention initiatives.¹¹² The fourth critical component listed in Mississippi’s Dropout Prevention Plan is a dropout recovery program. This is intended “for students beyond the compulsory school attendance age” and will be developed in conjunction with the Mississippi State Board for Community and Junior Colleges to allow students who dropout or fail a particular class to earn enough credits to graduate from high school or obtain a GED.¹¹³

Fifth, the Office of Dropout Prevention plans to create transition plans for dropout prevention. These plans will be implemented between pre-kindergarten and kindergarten, third and fourth grades, fifth and sixth grades, eighth and ninth grades, for students who

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

re-enroll after exiting the juvenile justice system, and post-graduation.¹¹⁴ Next, the Office will “explore the availability of federal funding opportunities for dropout prevention and/or federal programs to target dropout prevention,”¹¹⁵ and finally, the Office of Dropout Prevention plans to seek research partnerships “to investigate the ways in which the implementation of dropout prevention plans have impacted local, state, and legislative policies in other states.”¹¹⁶ Specifically, the Office hopes to work with SERVE and other national research organizations.¹¹⁷

The Dropout Prevention Plan also includes “Superintendent’s Strategies” as well as a brief summary of Mississippi’s history of public education. The first of his five strategies is to “increase the rigor of the curriculum and assessment system.”¹¹⁸ Furthermore, he plans to “increase the quality and quantity of teachers” and to “increase the quality and quantity of administrators.”¹¹⁹ The final two strategies are to “increase the quality and quantity of administrators” and to “redesign education for the 21st Century workforce in Mississippi.”¹²⁰

The Mississippi Dropout Prevention Plan is integral to this thesis because it shows that as a state, Mississippi is moving toward evidence-based practices and is attempting to implement these practices state-wide. Furthermore, it gives context for the individual dropout prevention plans that we will study and serve as a model for what the individual plans should look like.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

ANALYSIS

Using the foundational knowledge I gained regarding the present state of educational inequality, contributing factors of dropping out, suggested methods to prevent students from dropping out, and Mississippi's current initiatives to combat statewide high dropout rates, I analyzed the Canton Public School District's marked improvement in their dropout and graduation rates.

In my analysis, I first recount a brief history of Canton, Mississippi. This section will include remarks about Canton's culture, the city's relationship with the Nissan Plant, and the impact of the last three Superintendents of Canton Public Schools. Next, I analyze Canton Public School District's dropout rates, graduation rates, ACT scores, and other Mississippi statewide test scores over the period from 2008-2013. Following this analysis, I summarize and evaluate the Canton Public School District Dropout Prevention Plan from 2009, and I continue by evaluating their Action Plan for School Improvement from 2015-16. Finally, I close the analysis portion by evaluating specifically which dropout prevention techniques were implemented in the Canton Public School District as a result of their dropout prevention plan as well as the role that honor and shame played in CPSD's motivation to progress.

From my analysis, I conclude that Canton's Dropout Prevention Plan did not play the significant role in which I first assumed it would in motivating the district to improve. Instead, I argue that Canton's desire to seek individual and societal honor motivated the district to implement research-based dropout prevention techniques that led to the district improving both their dropout and graduation rates.

History of Canton

Canton's Culture

Canton, Mississippi's recent history is defined by struggle and hardship. In 2008, a Washington Post article offered the following observation of Canton: "In Canton, the lack of connection stems from the hard realities of life that have remained unchanged whether a Democrat or a Republican was in the White House – median incomes of \$24,000, according to the most recent census figures, a low-achieving school system, and few job opportunities."¹²¹ Canton's history is one muddled with racial tension and a poor economy, and these factors only confounded upon Canton's historically low performing schools.

Nissan Plant

In 2003, Nissan decided to open a plant in Canton, but many locals debate how much of a genuine impact this had on their town. In theory, this industry should have brought hundreds of jobs to the community and stimulated its economy, but due to

¹²¹ Krissah Williams Thompson, "In Mississippi, Deep-Rooted Doubt," *Washington Post*, September 28, 2008, accessed March 27, 2016, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/27/AR2008092702308.html>.

company policy, many locals were excluded from the applicant pool. According to an article by the *Washington Post*, “[The plant] employs 3,700, but many residents said they have felt little impact. Nissan donated money and computers to local schools but requires a high school diploma for most jobs, disqualifying many residents in a place where nearly half of high school students drop out.”¹²² While the plant has not done as much for the economy as most hoped, Nissan has been integral in updating and funding Canton Public Schools. In 2013, they chose Canton Public School District as the recipient of a \$500,000 grant to be distributed over five years. The district decided to distribute those funds to enrich student learning for who are lack in reading, language arts, and math skills. According to an article in the *Washington Examiner*, they hired “specialists to work one-on-one or in small groups with students...who lag in the classroom.”¹²³ Although the Nissan Plant did not stimulate the economy as much as expected, their financial contribution has made a significant difference in Canton Public Schools.

Dwight Lockett

Prior to beginning his tenure as Superintendent of Canton Public Schools, Mr. Dwight J. Lockett, Sr. worked as a high school principal in Cleveland, Mississippi. Additionally, he served as one of Canton School District’s School Improvement Coordinators, and eventually became Assistant Superintendent to the district. In 2006, he was hired as the Superintendent, and he fulfilled this role until he retired in 2014. During his time as the Superintendent, Canton Public Schools saw essential growth and

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Associated Press, "Nissan gives \$500K to Canton Schools," *Washington Examiner*, April 26, 2013, accessed April 21, 2016, <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/nissan-gives-500k-to-canton-schools/article/feed/2093166>.

development that raised their district from being categorized as a failing school district to a successful school district, and their graduation rate saw much needed growth¹²⁴.

When Luckett became Superintendent, the district had a dropout rate of 42.7% and a graduation rate of 41.8%.¹²⁵ Luckett worked with the aim of improving these rates and increasing the rigor of each student's academic experience by working alongside the community and implementing research-based dropout prevention strategies. One way that Luckett marked the district's improvement was by moving from an "At Risk of Failing" to a "Successful" rating from the Overall State Accountability Label given each year by the Mississippi Department of Education.¹²⁶ Luckett exclaimed, "Accomplishing this milestone has not been an easy feat, but it clearly evident that when administrators, teachers, parents, and the community work together, it truly works to improve the entire system and propel our students to reach greatness within them. We still have a long way to go to achieve our full potential as a District, but this inspires us to keep striving for excellence."¹²⁷ The district attributed their success to a number of factors, including improved curriculum alignment and newly designed district tests to track student progress.¹²⁸ Furthermore, the district hired new principals and enhanced their intense data-driven coaching and professional development.¹²⁹ The district sought to improve school culture and increase daily average attendance while also increasing parental

¹²⁴ Breck Riley, "KSD Hires Dwight Luckett as Interim Superintendent," BreezyNews.Com, last modified July 15, 2015, accessed April 3, 2016, <http://www.breezynews.com/local/ksd-hires-dwight-luckett-as-interim-superintendent>.

¹²⁵ "The Canton Public School District Makes a Significant Increase in Its Graduation Rate," *Jackson Advocate* (Jackson, MS), September 6, 2012, [16A], accessed April 3, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.umiss.idm.oclc.org/docview/1081983362?accountid=14588>.

¹²⁶ "State Department of Education Rates Canton Public School District Successful," *Jackson Advocate* (Jackson, MS), September 15, 2011, [19A], accessed April 3, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.umiss.idm.oclc.org/docview/896540900?accountid=14588>.

¹²⁷ "State Department of Education," [16A].

¹²⁸ "The Canton Public School," [16A].

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

involvement, provide more mentors to students, and bring in professional speakers to discuss career paths with students. Finally, the district offered additional instruction by providing Saturday schools and longer afterschool tutoring sessions, initiatives in line with the Mississippi Dropout Prevention Plan.¹³⁰ Lockett decided to retire from Superintendent in July 2014, but he still remains an active member of the Canton community.

Ike Haynes

Following Dwight Lockett's retirement, the district hired Ike Haynes on July 1, 2014. Haynes previously served as a teacher, a football coach, a principal for South Delta High School, a member of former Governor Ronnie Musgrove's administration, and a business owner¹³¹. Most recently, Haynes served as the Jefferson Davis County School District Superintendent where his schools faced obstacles similar to those present in Canton.¹³² According to the Mississippi Department of Education Accountability Rankings from 2013-14, Jefferson Davis County School District earned a C and met academic growth standards while Canton earned a D and failed to meet the academic growth standard.¹³³ The districts also had similar four- and five-year graduation rates. Canton's four-year graduation rate was 72.2% ,and their five-year graduation rate was 73.5%, while Jefferson Davis's four-year graduation rate was 70.5%, and their five year-

¹³⁰ "The Canton Public School," [16A].

¹³¹ Terricha Bradley-Phillips, "New Canton Superintendent is Man with a Plan," *The Clarion-Ledger* (Jackson, MS), August 10, 2014, [Page #], accessed March 27, 2016, <http://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/2014/08/10/new-canton-superintendent-man-plan/13880183/>.

¹³² Terricha Bradley-Phillips, "Canton Hires New School Superintendent," *The Clarion-Ledger* (Jackson, MS), May 16, 2014, [Page #], accessed March 27, 2016, <http://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/2014/05/16/canton-hires-new-school-superintendent/9198361/>.

¹³³ Bradley-Phillips, "Canton Hires New School,"

graduation rate was 77.2%.¹³⁴ Canton School Board Chair Johnny Brown affirmed that, “He comes from a successful district, he has a track record of a district that meets its potential, and we look forward to being better than we are right now.”¹³⁵ These similarities made Haynes an appealing district, for under his leadership, Jefferson Davis County School District achieved growth and success.

When Haynes began as Superintendent, he maintained that vision, audacity, courage, and change were his four tenets. During his first thirty days in office, he met with community stakeholders, local leaders, and city officials to build trust and open the lines of communication.¹³⁶ Following those meetings, he made an action plan for turning the district around that acknowledged Canton’s need for effective and immediate action. Although he would not originally discuss the state accountability data, he acknowledged to the district that it had “some huge challenges in that regard.”¹³⁷ His effort to get to know and embed himself within the community made an impact on community members, and Canton rallied behind Hayes. One parent, Washington, explained that, “What stood out to me was when he talked about quality instruction...He’s an awesome visionary, very positive, very energetic, and we’re just looking forward to having a great year. Glad to have him here in Canton.”¹³⁸

During Haynes’ tenure, the district saw improvement in many areas. Although Haynes he district’s dropout rates decreased while their graduation rates increased, and the district secured a \$33 million bond that will allow the district to build two new

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Bradley-Phillips, "New Canton Superintendent is Man with,"

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

elementary schools and the Ninth Grade Academy as well as equip students with laptops as part of their initiative to instill technology into the classroom.

Unfortunately, Haynes' tenure was cut short after just a year and a half when the Canton Public School District Board of Trustees decided to terminate his contract. The following statement was released by the Board:

The Canton Public School District Board of Trustees terminated Superintendent Ike Haynes. This is a personal [sic.] matter, therefore, the board is not at liberty to go into detail. However, after reviewing recent test scores, the Trustees decided that in order to advance the district it was necessary to seek a new superintendent. Assistant Superintendent Cassandra Williams has been named as the Interim Superintendent.¹³⁹

Many community members were enraged at the board's decision and are not convinced that the Board was transparent in their reasoning to terminate Haynes. Canton High School Student Body President Jaylen Taylor explained that the decision was, "out of nowhere. He was just at the school with us and then the next day he is fired."¹⁴⁰ Parents are also enraged. Erica Cameron told a reporter, "We want to see the reinstatement of the superintendent immediately, but we also want the school board to work and do the job they're supposed to be doing."¹⁴¹ Another member, Vicky Clanton, explained, "I have never seen a superintendent go to a bus stop in the morning to make sure our kids were safe. Where would Canton be four years from now if Superintendent Haynes has made

¹³⁹ Therese Apel, "Fired superintendent reaches deal with Canton district," *The Clarion-Ledger* (Jackson, MS), December 16, 2015, accessed April 3, 2016, <http://on.thec-l.com/1YIEwJ7>.

¹⁴⁰ Lucy Dieckhaus, "Community Reacts to Canton Public School District's Superintendent Being Fired," WJTV 12: Getting You Answers, last modified November 21, 2015, accessed April 3, 2016, <http://wjtv.com/2015/11/21/community-reacts-to-canton-public-school-districts-superintendent-being-fired/>.

¹⁴¹ Dieckhaus, "Community Reacts to Canton," WJTV 12: Getting You Answers.

that big of an impact in a year and a half?.”¹⁴² To the dismay of these community members, the district and Haynes came to an agreement, but in order to protect the privacy of those involved, Haynes’ attorney Lisa Ross explained, “All I can say is that Mr. Haynes and the district reached an amicable decision.”¹⁴³ Upon his dismissal, Assistant Superintendent Cassandra Williams stepped in as Interim Superintendent.

Cassandra Williams

After serving as Interim Superintendent, Cassandra Williams was hired officially as the Superintendent of Canton Public Schools on January 12, 2016. Mrs. Williams began her career in education as a math teacher, but since, she has served as Director of Secondary Curriculum and Instruction, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Principal, and Assistant Superintendent. She has worked in the Jackson Public School District as well as the Canton Public School District, and she has supervised a myriad of schools while also serving as a trainer for the Mississippi Mathematics Framework, Mississippi Framer Training, Understanding by Design Training, Response to Intervention Training, and many other programs and frameworks.¹⁴⁴

Mrs. Williams has achieved success before in at-risk schools. When he served as principal of Davis Magnet School, “Mrs. Williams led her school from a level 3 status to a level 5 status in just two (2) years. Davis Magnet School was labeled a “Blue Ribbon School” as a result of the academic gains under Mrs. Williams’ leadership.”¹⁴⁵ Williams

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Apel, "Fired superintendent reaches deal,".

¹⁴⁴ "New Superintendent Hired," Canton Public School District, last modified January 12, 2016, accessed March 27, 2016,

<http://www.cantonschools.net/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=4&ModuleInstanceID=132&ViewID=047E6BE3-6D87-4130-8424-D8E4E9ED6C2A&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=1267&PageID=1>.

¹⁴⁵ "New Superintendent Hired," Canton Public School District.

lists five directives that have contributed to her success. First, she explains that she maintains “a clear focus on using data to drive instructional decisions school-wide,” and second, she places a large emphasis upon “ongoing collaboration with staff, parents, and community while promoting strong parental involvement.”¹⁴⁶ Next, she declares the importance of “implementing student intervention practices (academic and behavior) that support struggling learners,” as well as “embracing and implementing best practices such as common planning, common assessment, and extensive lesson planning.”¹⁴⁷ Finally, she attributes success to consistently “securing highly qualified staff that are dedicated to teaching children.”¹⁴⁸ These directives closely align with the district’s goals and leadership styles, and CPSD is hopeful she will be an appropriate fit as superintendent.

Canton’s Rates and Scores

The purpose of this thesis is primarily to study which methods the Canton Public School District employed that were most effective in decreasing their dropout rates and increasing their graduation rates. In this section, I first present Canton’s dropout rates and graduation rates over the period from 2006-2012. Following, I present the district’s ACT scores over the period from 2009-2013, and finally, I exhibit some of Canton’s scores on Mississippi’s statewide tests from the period 2008-2013.

Canton High School Dropout Rates (Percent)

2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
42.7	33.0	10.8	31.1	30.6	22.4	17.8

*Canton High School Graduation Rate (Percent)*¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ "New Superintendent Hired," Canton Public School District.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ "Graduation Rates," Kids Count Data Center, accessed April 19, 2016, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/7549-graduation-rates?loc=26&loct=2#detailed/10/7461-7612/false/868,867,133,38,35/any/14680>.

2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
41.8	55.6	65.0	60.6	54.1	71.6	72.2

It is important to note the way in which these Dropout Rates and Graduation Rates were calculated. According to the Mississippi Department of Education’s document, “Procedures for Calculating Graduation, Completion and Dropout Counts and Rates by Tracking Cohorts of Students in MSIS,” the total number of students considered (referred to as a “full cohort) includes students who entered 9th grade at the beginning of the cohort’s year, students who transferred into ninth grade, students who entered into tenth grade during the second year, students who entered into eleventh grade the third year, and students who entered twelfth grade the fourth year.¹⁵⁰ Dropouts are not removed from the cohort’s total number, and the percentage is determined by the following formula: students who are coded as dropping out divided by the full cohort minus transfers out and deaths.¹⁵¹ The Completion/Graduation Rate is determined by dividing the number of those who graduate by the full cohort minus transfers out, deaths, and special cases of special education students who will take longer to graduate.¹⁵² Canton’s dropout and graduation rates reveal that the school’s efforts to raise their scores has been successful. It’s interesting to note that despite the increase in these scores, the district’s ACT scores have not increased.

*Canton High School ACT Scores*¹⁵³

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Difference
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¹⁵⁰ Mississippi Department of Education, *Procedures for Calculating Graduation, Completion and Dropout Counts and Rates by Tracking Cohorts of Students in MSIS* (n.p.: n.p., 2006), accessed April 21, 2016, <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/docs/dropout-prevention-and-compulsory-school-attendance-library/gcd-apa-revised-03282007.pdf?sfvrsn=2>.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ "ACT Scores For Graduating Seniors," Kids Count Data Center, accessed April 19, 2016, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/3801-act-scores-for-graduating-seniors?loc=26#detailed/10/7461-7612/false/36,868,867,133,38/128,129,130,131,132/10231>.

English	15.7	13.7	14.6	14.5	14.1	-1.6
Math	15.3	14.9	15.4	15.6	15.8	-0.5
Reading	15.4	14.6	15.1	15.4	15.3	-0.1
Science	16.3	15.0	15.5	16.1	16.3	0.0
Composite	15.8	14.7	15.2	15.5	15.5	-0.3

Despite Canton students' failure to improve their performance on the ACT, middle school students did see an increase in their language arts and math scores. Furthermore, fifth and eighth grade students saw a rise in their science scores. Finally, Algebra I and English II scores rose, but Biology and US History scores fell.

Percent of Students Scoring Proficient and Above
Language Arts

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Difference
3 rd Grade	51	40	33	39	-12
4 th Grade	46	35	43	40	-6
5 th Grade	48	44	44	49	+1
6 th Grade	20	35	58	44	+24
7 th Grade	35	52	43	56	+21
8 th Grade	27	39	35	38	+11

Math

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Difference
3 rd Grade	55	46	44	43	-12
4 th Grade	55	47	61	47	-8
5 th Grade	46	40	40	65	+19
6 th Grade	17	40	62	41	+24
7 th Grade	52	73	48	69	+17
8 th Grade	45	60	71	66	+21

Science

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Difference
5 th Grade	28	45	38	51	+23
8 th Grade	18	37	42	51	+33

High School Subjects

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Difference
Algebra I	31	64	48	54	+23
Biology	49	33	27	38	-11
English II	21	28	34	37	+16
US History	81	48	31	39	-42

It is also interesting to note that in Language Arts, Math, and Science, the percent of students scoring proficient on the state test increased.

State Assessment Number Tested and Performance by Level
Language Arts

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Difference
Mean Scale Score	142.7	143.3	145.9	144.9	145.8	-
Percent Scoring Proficient	26	26	38	34	35	+9

Math

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Difference
Mean Scale Score	146.9	147.5	151.1	152.7	151.7	-
Percent Scoring Proficient	39	39	50	62	56	+17

Science

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Difference
Mean Scale Score	838.0	839.0	146.0	147.0	149.8	-
Percent Scoring Proficient	15	17	32	37	40	+25

When analyzing these scores and what they mean for Canton Public School District, it is important to note the difficulty of forming cause-effect relationships between CPSD's efforts and their betterment of scores. These scores could have several explanations which I will now discuss.

It is first notable that when CPSD began implementing research based dropout prevention methods, their graduation and dropout rates improved significantly. After aligning the efforts of the district with dropout prevention strategies, there is strong

evidence for the claim that these efforts led to their success, but it is interesting to note that while Canton is not the only district to create a Dropout Prevention Plan, it is the only district to see such striking development. This leads me to believe that something other than the Dropout Prevention Plan incited the district to progress. Secondly, it is interesting that middle school subjects displayed the most improvement overall and that Algebra I and English II improved the most of the high school subjects. One explanation of middle school test scores is that the school district is focused on improving the base of knowledge that their students have so that they can move into high school with a solid foundation, but with this possibility, one would concurrently expect ACT scores to rise. Furthermore, looking at high school scores, the middle school results could be a possible indicator that the district is focusing on teaching to the test, since math and English are most focused on in state testing.

These observations provide possible answers to Canton Public School District's improvement while simultaneously giving rise to other questions. Since CPSD student scores are increasing on state but not national tests, is school getting easier? Or could a possible explanation be that students who have received the bulk of dropout prevention initiatives are just beginning to take the ACT, as evidenced by the Mississippi scores?

Canton's Dropout Prevention Plan (2008-2009)¹⁵⁴

As mandated by the creation of the Mississippi Office of Dropout Prevention and Mississippi's Dropout Prevention Plan, in 2008-2009, Canton Public School District created a Dropout Prevention Plan (DPP) of their own under the direction of then-

¹⁵⁴ Canton Public School District Dropout Prevention Plan, (Miss. 2008-2009).

Superintendent Dwight J. Luckett. In comparison to other struggling districts, Canton’s Dropout Prevention Plan is by far the most extensive. The plan is created around the following framework. The DPP begins with a cover sheet and a sign-off sheet. Next, the plan contains the Statement of Assurance, followed by school, student, and demographic data. Next, there is a needs assessment that identifies potential risk factors, specific student groups in need of targeted assistance, a statement of needs, and then a prioritization of those needs. Next, the plan outlines current district initiatives, and finally, the DPP outlines proposed district initiatives and lists them in order of priority.

In the Statement of Assurance, Canton Public School District declares that all of their proposed actions and goals are in line with the three overarching goals of the state, as defined in Mississippi’s Dropout Prevention Plan.

Next, the DPP lays out school, student, and demographic data. As a district in 2006-07, the graduation rate was 44.7%, the dropout rate was 31.5%, and no truancy rate was listed. The rest of the data is displayed in the following graphs:

School Data¹⁵⁵

	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Number of Schools	3	1	1
Cumulative Enrollment	1566	802	957
Counselor/Student Ratio	1/522	1/401	1/479

Student Demographic Data

	Elementary School		Middle School		High School	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Female	753	48.1	396	49.37	504	52.6
Male	813	51.9	406	50.6	453	47.33
Asian	3	.001	0	0	0	0
Black	1533	98	796	99.25	953	99.58
Hispanic	19	.01	6	.007	1	.001

¹⁵⁵ Canton Public School District Dropout Prevention Plan, (Miss. 2008-2009).

Native American	0	0	0	0	1	.001
White	11	.007	0	0	2	.002

Staff Demographic Data (Teachers/Administration)

	Elementary School		Middle School		Upper School	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Female	82	90.2	43	76.7	40	60.6
Male	9	9.8	13	23.2	26	39.4
Asian	0	0	0	0	0	0
Black	79	86.8	54	96.4	54	81.8
Hispanic	0	0	0	0	0	0
Native American	0	0	0	0	0	0
White	12	13.1	2	3.5	12	18.2

MCT Data
Proficient or Above

Grade	Reading	Language Arts	Math
2	70.3	67.6	78.5
3	70.5	78	88.3
4	79.4	59.2	58.7
5	69	55.8	49.4
6	51.3	44.2	44.8
7	33	36.6	43.8
8	27.1	43	29.2

High School Subject Test Areas
Percent Proficient or Above

Grade	Algebra	US History	Biology	English II
9	54	-	-	-
10	-	-	28	8
11	-	34	-	-
12	-	-	-	-

Additional Information

Number of Students Who are Two or More Years Behind Grade Level by 9 th Grade 60	Does your district currently offer a “Fast Track” program for high school students? () YES (X) NO
Number of Students with 5 or More Unexcused Absences 133	Number of Students with 12 or More Unexcused Absences 77

Number of Discipline Referrals (Unduplicated) 187	Number of Students Receiving Free/Reduced Meals 3196
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All of this data allowed the Local Dropout Prevention Team to identify a target group and prioritize the list of Canton’s needs. It also allowed them to create short term goals, long term goals, and recommendations for future assessments. The team identified 6th-8th grade middle school students and 9th and 10th grade high school students as their target groups of students. In these grades, the plan dictated that students will be ranked from most at-risk to least at-risk based on attendance data, test scores, discipline, and counselor records. The students who are the most at-risk will be given afterschool activities to increase learning as well as mentors, learning strategies, and additional academic assistance. After looking at the data and the most at-risk students, the Dropout Prevention Team decided that its highest priority needs included absentees, suspensions, student achievement, and parent/community involvement. Based on this information, the team decided on both short-term and long-term goals. For short term goals, they decided that decreasing the dropout and truancy rate while raising the graduation rate was the first priority, for all of the other problems identified in the high-priority needs could not be addressed, they felt, until the graduation, truancy, and dropout rates were addressed. For long-term goals, the team decided that they wanted to increase the value of an education from Canton, MS and better utilize parental and community support to help the school achieve their goals.

At this point in the Dropout Prevention Plan, the Dropout Prevention Team listed the current district initiatives organized under the 15 Dropout Prevention Strategies: systemic renewal, school/community collaboration, safe learning environments, family

engagement, early childhood education, early literacy development, mentoring/tutoring, service learning, alternative schooling, after school opportunities, professional development, active learning, educational technology, individualized instruction, and career and technical education. To take a closer look at a compressed list of notable current initiatives, please see the table in Appendix 1.

The Dropout Prevention Plan next lays out the proposed district initiatives. For each proposed initiative, the plan lists the grade level to be addressed, the purpose or goal of the initiative, who is involved, the proposed cost, the timeline for implementation, the dropout prevention strategy addressed, and the intended outcomes for students. The initiatives proposed mainly address the dropout prevention strategies of systemic renewal and school/community collaboration, and there were no proposed initiatives to address early childhood education or early literacy development. The proposed initiatives include to build a new elementary and middle school, to begin district-wide monitoring, to collaborate with Mississippi Shared Youth Vision, and to participate in a pilot pre-kindergarten program. Furthermore, the DPP declares that they will begin a Ninth Grade Academy, essentially a school within Canton High School specifically for freshman, and that the district will implement “Teacher for a Student” as well as “Everyone Save One” Mentoring Program. The district will also create extensive transition plans for students transitioning into new schools or transferring into the system, and they will strengthen their motivation and incentives programs to stay in school with the help of Nissan North America. The plan declares that the district will develop and implement a Credit Recovery Policy/Program to help students who previously dropped out get back on track with the hope of graduating, and the district plans to strengthen its GED Option program.

Finally, the district wants to become more involved in character education. For the complete table of proposed initiatives present in the Dropout Prevention Plan, please reference the Appendix.

Canton's Dropout Prevention Plan is by far the most extensive of its kind. When comparing sheer content and number of pages, Canton's DPP consists of 55 pages while South Delta School District's DPP is two pages and Carroll County School District's DPP is seventeen pages. Because of the plan's extensive and thorough nature, I assumed that the Dropout Prevention Plan would be an integral part of Canton's recent success, but the first time I attended a Canton School Board meeting, I quickly realized that this was simply a plan put to paper that may have never been looked at again. When I asked several officials about the plan and what role it played, many of them looked confused before they responded, "Oh, the Dropout Prevention Plan?! Huh!" At this point, I realized that while this plan may have provided a framework and strategies for the district to move forward, it was not the plan that spurred the Canton Public School District to make a change. Instead, my studies found that the Canton Public School District DPP gave the the district a framework of definitive steps to take in order to move toward reform, but the district would never have taken the steps outlined in the DPP if the community had not been fueled by a desire to be found worthy of honor and respect.

Canton's Action Plan for School Improvement (2015-2016)

For the 2015-2016 school year, the Canton Public School District produced another document, similar to the Dropout Prevention Plan, entitled "Action Plan for School Improvement." This plan specifies district goals and school-wide goals, and the

document outlines an action plan for achieving these objectives. I point out this document because it shows Canton's progress and determination to move forward.

The Action Plan specifies that its district goals are to “increase student achievement, encourage parent and community engagement, and remain financially stable.”¹⁵⁶ These goals have their roots in the 2008-09 Dropout Prevention Plan's Long Term Goals, which include “increasing the value of education in the community, increasing parent/community participation in PTA through increased membership from year to year,” and ensuring that the curriculum have “rigor and relevance...and differentiation of instruction.”¹⁵⁷

The plan also states six school-wide goals to achieve over the course of the year. First, CPSD plans to “produce a conducive climate and culture in [their] schools that ensures success.”¹⁵⁸ Second, the district is determined to “increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through teaching and learning.”¹⁵⁹ Third, CPSD will “increase graduation rate, decrease dropout rate, and increase average daily attendance (ADA) in an effort to ensure that student receive maximized opportunities for learning.”¹⁶⁰ Fourth, the district plans to “recruit and retain highly qualified teachers and administrators,” and fifth, they plan to “increase parental engagement through parent outreach initiatives.”¹⁶¹ Finally, the district will “utilize district resources efficiently and effectively in an effort to remain financially stable.”¹⁶²

¹⁵⁶ Canton Public School District, *Action Plan for School Improvement 2015-2016*, [Page 15-16], accessed April 21, 2016, <http://www.cantonschools.net/cms/lib8/MS01910483/Centricity/Domain/4/Action%20Plan%20for%202nd%20Semester-Draft.pdf>.

¹⁵⁷ Canton Public School District Dropout Prevention Plan, (Miss. 2008-2009) [p.13].

¹⁵⁸ Canton Public School District, *Action Plan for School*, [Page 15-16].

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

In the specific action items that the district outlines in the Action Plan, thirty-two of the thirty-three tasks pertain to the second goal: “increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through teaching and learning.”¹⁶³ The remaining action pertains to the fifth goal: “increase parental engagement through parent outreach initiatives.”¹⁶⁴ In general, these action items address fundamental and specific areas where achievement is both possible and necessary in order to improve. One of the largest areas addressed is ACT preparation. Under this umbrella falls the task of increasing focus on vocabulary, comprehension, and writing. The action items also specifically address AP tests, summative exams, graduation rates, methods of tracking student achievement, use of technology in the classroom, and accountability at all levels in the district. It is notable that the Action Plan has specific steps to achieve each of these goals; these steps are stated clearly and concisely placed next to each item. For a complete look at each goal and the steps the district will take to achieve it, see Appendix B.

This document is incredibly encouraging because it shows CPSD’s continued effort towards bettering their public schools. At first observation, its format is much cleaner and more professional than the original Dropout Prevention Plan, and on a more substantive level, this plan provides clear and concise steps towards tangible short-term goals whose purpose is clearly designed to achieve the district’s long term goals. Furthermore, it is reassuring to see the content of this document, for it comes from observations of the district’s needs and areas of growth. Sitting in the crowd of the two school board meetings I attended, it was clear to me that there is tension in the

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

community regarding the school's budget and the administration's use of funds. I recall one specific memory regarding use of funds from the second School Board meeting I attended. Former Superintendent Ike Haynes had purchased a vehicle with school funds, and several board members were outwardly irritated at the decision. This conversation served as a catalyst for a deeper discussion regarding district funds, and I gleaned from the conversation that, while handling funds appropriately and efficiently is a goal of the district's, this goal has not always been achieved. It is encouraging that the district hopes to address it this year with the sixth goal: "utilize district resources efficiently and effectively in an effort to remain financially stable."¹⁶⁵ Another goal that is based in observation is the third goal: "Increase graduation rate, decrease dropout rate, and increase average daily attendance (ADA)."¹⁶⁶ At the first meeting I attended, the Board spent a significant amount of time going through each grade level's average daily attendance and found that the numbers were not acceptable: too many students were missing multiple days in a row. It is a sign of growth that Canton is continuing to assess their needs and adjust their actions accordingly, and the plan affirms the fact that Canton is actively implementing research-based, sustainable methods to positively influence their school system.

Dropout Prevention Techniques Utilized

With the Dropout Prevention Plan, Canton Public School District laid out a list of tangible, research-backed steps with the goal of lowering the district's dropout rate and raising their graduation rate. In this section, I will go through each of the six

¹⁶⁵ Canton Public School District, *Action Plan for School*, [Page 15-16].

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

recommendations given by “Dropout Prevention,” a study produced by the National Center for Educational Evaluation and Regional Assistance in collaboration with the Department of Education, and match the efforts of Canton Public School District since the plan’s release with the proposed recommendations.

The first recommendation is to “utilize data systems that support a realistic diagnosis of the number of students who drop out and that help identify individual students at high risk of dropping out.”¹⁶⁷ Canton addressed this recommendation in their 2009 Dropout Prevention Plan by implementing district-wide monitoring through the program “Response to Intervention,” or RTI. This program establishes three layers of monitoring and analysis in order to quickly identify and support students with behavioral and learning needs.¹⁶⁸ The first layer of monitoring, Tier 1, establishes “quality classroom instruction based on Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks and Common Core State Standards.”¹⁶⁹ Tier 2 provides focused supplemental instruction, and Tier 3 provides “intensive interventions specifically designed to meet the individual needs of students.”¹⁷⁰ All students will be monitored in Tier 1, students who require more assistance will enter Tier 2, and students who are most academically and behaviorally challenged will be classified as Tier 3. Students entering Tier 3 are referred to the Teacher Support Team (TST), and this team ensures that the students’ interventions are “designed to address the deficit areas, research based, implemented as designed by the TST, and supported by data regarding the effectiveness of interventions.”¹⁷¹ These plans

¹⁶⁷ U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Prevention*, by Mark Dynarski, et al., IES Practice Guide (n.p.: Institute of Education Sciences, 2008), [Page 6].

¹⁶⁸ “What is RTI?,” RTI Action Network, accessed March 25, 2016, <http://www.rtinetwork.org/learn/what/whatisrti>.

¹⁶⁹ Canton Public School District, *High School Handbook 2015-16* (n.p.: n.p., 2015), [Page 69], accessed April 21, 2016, <http://www.cantonschools.net/domain/193>.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

must be implemented within two weeks of the student’s original referral to the third tier, and after eight weeks, a review of the intervention must be conducted to evaluate effectiveness and success.¹⁷² The RTI system has been well implemented and is one step that the Canton Public School District has taken to prevent students from dropping out.

The second recommendation by the report is to “assign adult advocates to students at risk of dropping out.”¹⁷³ Canton addresses this recommendation in two different ways. First, they implemented the Teacher for a Student program, and secondly, they applied the Everyone Save One Mentoring Program. Teacher for a Student is listed in the Canton Public School District Dropout Prevention Plan with the goal of “decreasing the number of students losing credit and/or failing one or more courses.”¹⁷⁴ In this initiative, specific student-teacher pairs are created in order to ensure that each student has a member of the faculty directly responsible for their academic performance. Everyone Save One Mentoring Program is another proposed initiative outlined in the Canton Public School District Dropout Prevention Plan with the goal of having “at least one mentor in each child’s life” in order to “increase motivation and better develop life skills, improve attendance, decrease behavioral referrals, increase promotion rate, and increase test scores.”¹⁷⁵

The third recommendation by the report is that schools “provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance.”¹⁷⁶ One way in which CPSD has acted upon this recommendation is by creating a pre-kindergarten program. Today, the

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Prevention*, by Mark Dynarski, et al., IES Practice Guide (n.p.: Institute of Education Sciences, 2008), [Page 6].

¹⁷⁴ Canton Public School District Dropout Prevention Plan, (Miss. 2008-2009).

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Prevention*, [Page 6].

Canton Public School District has a Pre-Kindergarten program large enough for sixty students. To enroll, a parent or legal guardian must complete an application for their student, students must be four years old on or before a specified date, and students must have a basic level of paperwork (birth certificate, social security card, immunization certificate, etc.).¹⁷⁷ During the 2016-17 school year, the program will include three classes with a total of sixty students.¹⁷⁸ Secondly, CPSD has acted upon this recommendation with the inception of the Ninth Grade Academy. Ninth grade is a crucial year for high school retention, so Canton has made an extra effort to ensure that these students have the academic support and rigor they need. As a result, the CPSD will build the Canton High School Ninth Grade Academy. This will be a “classroom wing addition to the existing Canton High School...The new addition will include 10 classrooms, 2 STEM rooms, 2 science labs, and miscellaneous support spaces. This is a 2-story wing”¹⁷⁹. On Tuesday, March 31, 2015, Canton residents voted in favor of a \$33 million school bond issue in order to fund this academy as well as two new elementary schools, and on Thursday, December 10, 2015, architects bid against each other to build the school.¹⁸⁰ The auction was completed, but ground has not broken yet on the academy. Both the preschool program and Ninth Grade Academy will enrich student learning and ensure that Canton students receive the time and attention they need.

¹⁷⁷ Canton Public School District, "Return to Headlines Pre-Kindergarten Program," Canton Public School District, accessed April 21, 2016, <http://www.cantonschools.net/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=4&ModuleInstanceID=132&ViewID=047E6BE3-6D87-4130-8424-D8E4E9ED6C2A&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=1269&PageID=1>.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ "Canton High School 9th Grade Academy," Dale Partners: Architecture, Interiors, Planning, accessed March 25, 2016, <http://www.dalepartners.com/bidding/2015/10/30/canton-high-school-9th-grade-academy>.

¹⁸⁰ "Voters approve \$33M Canton school bond issue," *16 WAPT News*, April 1, 2015, [Page #], accessed March 25, 2016, <http://www.wapt.com/news/central-mississippi/canton-voters-go-to-the-polls-tuesday-for-bond-vote/32084270>.

The fourth recommendation is that schools “implement programs to improve students’ classroom behavior and social skills.”¹⁸¹ The CPSD decided that it would benefit students in times of transition to create transition plans and programs to familiarize students with their new surroundings. These programs were created specifically for students entering elementary school, emerging from 6th grade, and emerging from 9th grade. The main goals of these plans are to allow students to become familiar with the environment, administration, and expectations of their new schools. The transition programs for students exiting the sixth grade and exiting the ninth grade include an “orientation on school rules and regulations.”¹⁸² Furthermore, Nissan North America made a generous donation to the Canton Public School District upon the opening of their plant in the area. In the Dropout Prevention Plan, the district specified that these funds will go directly to motivating and creating incentives for students to stay in school. When looking over the last couple of years, it is clear that these funds and the partnership created with Nissan North America have made a significant positive impact on the district. The funds have gone towards funding Career Day and field trips to local businesses, in-school college and career mentoring, Nissan-sponsored recognition, and joint programs for college credit. These funds have helped immensely in aiding students’ morale and esteem.

Finally, Canton has sought to improve their students’ classroom behavior and social skills by investing a lot of time into character education, and it is clear upon stepping foot on their campus that it has made an impact. In the Dropout Prevention Plan, CPSD defined this objective as a “proactive effort to develop good character, high expectations,

¹⁸¹ U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Prevention*, [Page 6].

¹⁸² Canton Public School District Dropout Prevention Plan, (Miss. 2008-2009).

behavior, and a positive school culture.”¹⁸³ One district-wide sign of this effort is through their slogan, “Canton Can.” This mantra has become infused in the district, and in each School Board meeting I attended, every topic was flavored with this belief. Furthermore, students are instilled with the core values in every aspect of their schooling. In the April/May 2011 Newsletter, the district informs the general public that it “focused its counseling efforts on Character Education, Behavior Management, and improving our students’ daily attendance to help lower our dropout rate.”¹⁸⁴ More recently in the 2015-16 Canton High School Handbook, students are encouraged to put their character first, and then Superintendent Ike Haynes reassured students to “remember that your character and attitude are very important to your success in life.”¹⁸⁵ This administrative approach to character education has impacted how classrooms are managed, and individual teachers and classrooms emphasize different characteristics and traits.

Fifth, the study recommends that “schools personalize the learning environment and instructional process.”¹⁸⁶ One way in which CPSD is accomplishing this task is by building two new elementary schools: McNeal Elementary and Canton Elementary. Both of these schools were constructed in the 1950s and in need of major renovations.¹⁸⁷ After Canton residents voted to approve the funding for these schools through the \$33 million bond mentioned above, plans commenced to ensure that these buildings are state of the

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ *Tiger Talk*, April/May 2011

¹⁸⁵ Canton Public School District, *High School Handbook 2015-16* (n.p.: n.p., 2015), [Page 2], accessed April 21, 2016, <http://www.cantonschools.net/domain/193>.

¹⁸⁶ U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Prevention*, [Page 6].

¹⁸⁷ "Groundbreaking Ceremony for Construction of New Schools," Canton Public School District, last modified January 2016, accessed April 21, 2016, <http://www.cantonschools.net/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=4&ModuleInstanceID=132&ViewID=047E6BE3-6D87-4130-8424-D8E4E9ED6C2A&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=1249&PageID=1&GroupByField=&GroupYear=0&GroupMonth=0&Tag=>.

art learning centers. McNeal Elementary School will house kindergarten through fifth grade and will be a two-story building with the capacity for 600 students.¹⁸⁸

Furthermore, the school will be conducive to multiple events with a cafeteria that can be transformed to accommodate large events, and the school will also support technology use with a participatory media center and computer labs. Similarly, McNeal Elementary will place an emphasis on the arts and special education by providing support spaces for these programs.¹⁸⁹ Canton Elementary School will house kindergarten through fifth grade students as well, and as a one-story building, it will house up to 600 students. Like McNeal Elementary, it will have a multi-purpose cafeteria and a large emphasis on technological integration with a participatory media center and computer labs. The district is excited about these new facilities which will provide improved “safety, security, and accessibility by effectively meeting the 21st Century learning needs of [Canton’s] students,” and on January 28, 2016, the district broke ground and began building these schools.¹⁹⁰

Finally, the study suggests that schools “provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and to serve the students after they leave school.”¹⁹¹ One way that CPSD accomplished this task is through Mississippi’s Shared Youth Vision. This program is the result of a collaboration between the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Labor, and others with the goal of ensuring that “the Nation’s neediest youth will acquire the talents, skills, and knowledge necessary to

¹⁸⁸ "Groundbreaking Ceremony for Construction," Canton Public School District.

¹⁸⁹ "Groundbreaking Ceremony for Construction," Canton Public School District.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ U.S. Department of Education, *Dropout Prevention*, [Page 6].

ensure their healthy transition to successful adult roles and responsibilities.”¹⁹²

Mississippi was chosen as one of the sixteen pilot programs established to “promote collaborative approaches to serving youth through outreach and the development of strategies, training, and tools and resources.”¹⁹³ The Canton Public School District has also developed a Credit Recovery Plan, in line with the Mississippi Department of Education’s definition as a “course-specific, skill-based learning opportunity for students who have previously been unsuccessful in mastering content/skills required to receive credit or earn promotion.”¹⁹⁴ To qualify for the Credit Recovery Program, students must have received a 60 or below in the course originally, and they must be recommended for the program by a teacher or counselor and complete an application for entrance to the program. Based on the information online, students may only complete one Credit Recovery term, which occurs in the school-year through APEX, a computer program that students will complete in a lab setting, and in the summer through traditional summer school, but students may take as many credits during that term as deemed acceptable by faculty and staff.¹⁹⁵ Upon completion of the program, the student’s original score will be replaced with a 70 on their transcript. Another step CPSD took toward meeting this recommendation is implementing a GED Program through Canton Educational Services Center. On November 5, 2012, this program officially began with 15 students.¹⁹⁶ In the Dropout Prevention Plan, the district also specifies that it will implement a Pre-GED

¹⁹² "All Shared Youth Vision: Collaboration at All Levels," *Children's Bureau Express* 9, no. 6 (July/August 2008), accessed March 25, 2016,

<https://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/index.cfm?event=website.viewArticles&issueid=96&articleid=2115>.

¹⁹³ "All Shared Youth Vision,"

¹⁹⁴ Canton Public School District, *High School Handbook 2015-16* (n.p.: n.p., 2015), [Page 24-25], accessed April 21, 2016, <http://www.cantonschools.net/domain/193>.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ Canton Public School District, "GED Program Update," *Tiger Talk*, October/November 2012.

program. Although I could find no evidence of such a program, it is plausible that it is conducted everyday in the classroom without outside knowledge. The DPP explained that this program will be implemented in Canton High School, Nichols Middle School, and for at-risk students across the district in order to prepare students to enter the GED Program.

In conclusion, Canton is implementing research-based methods to prevent students from dropping out, and their efforts appear to be contributing to the district's progress. While more steps can be taken, it is clear that the district took steps and actions to decrease their dropout rate, and, as shown from the 2015-16 Action Plan, those steps continue today.

Canton Pride

In the literature review, I discussed Appiah's *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen*. In this section, I will discuss how Appiah's observations and beliefs about the role of honor in society specifically apply to Canton, Mississippi and their school district's push to reform. First, I will explain why and how, fundamentally, the Canton Public School District experienced shame, and why having honor is a fundamental part of our human nature. Secondly, I will discuss why Canton's motivation had to stem from the honorable, not the moral, argument for education reform. Next, I will discuss how respect for the society's sake motivated Canton to reform, and finally, I will elaborate on how respect for the individual's sake motivated Canton to make a change.

Ask anyone with a relative knowledge of Mississippi's public education about Canton public schools, and their answer will most likely be flavored with a strong disapproval and disappointment regarding the district's lack of success. Personally, when I share that I am writing my thesis on their school system, I am met with remarks ranging from, "Oh – good luck studying *that*," to "I would not send any student there if I could help it." My immediate response to these remarks is a need to defend Canton and their schools, yet I am not even a member of the community. When reflecting on the role of honor, I realized how much deeper these remarks affect those from the Canton community, for those schools and their town is a part of their identity. Appiah explains that "identity matters to honor in two different ways. First, a code of honor shapes your options by fixing what they require a person of your identity to do. It determines your set of honor practices. And second, a code allows you to share in honor deriving from the achievements of others whose identity you share."¹⁹⁷ In the case of Canton, Mississippi, the exact opposite was happening: instead of their community sharing in honor, their community was mutually sharing the burden of the low expectations and poor results from their public school system. Appiah clarifies their feelings by explaining that, "if you lose your dignity, as with honor, what you should feel is shame."¹⁹⁸ Canton was experiencing collective shame due to their school system's lack of success.

Canton's mutual shame led the community to seek out honor: in this case, educational reform. It is interesting to note, though, that this push to reform was not spurred by the moral argument but by the honorable one. In the second chapter of the

¹⁹⁷ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen*, reprint ed. (n.p.: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), [Page 61].

¹⁹⁸ Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral*, [Page 50].

book, Appiah studies the fall of foot-binding in the Chinese culture. He explains that the moral argument against foot binding had been around for quite some time before the practice declined, so “what brought foot-binding to an end cannot have been the discovery of arguments against it.”¹⁹⁹ For the solution, Appiah looks to honor: “foot-binding needed to end because it was a source of national shame.”²⁰⁰ In the third chapter, Appiah discusses the movement against slavery. Again, he explains, “What galvanizes the movement against slavery is not the moral argument: the arguments are in place well before the movement begins.”²⁰¹ Just as it was with foot-binding and slavery, so it is with Canton’s push to reform. The moral arguments to better their public education system came well before Canton’s dropout rate and truancy rate began to fall, and, according to Appiah, it is logical to believe that their reform and success came because of the society’s motivation to be honorable.

Canton is seeking societal honor. Appiah explains that to have honor for one’s society does not necessarily mean that one believes it to be the best, but that one believes that there is something distinctive about it.²⁰² For Canton, it makes sense that their push to reform their public education system also served as a journey to find Canton’s attributes and traits that make it distinguished and unique. When looking at Canton’s push to find a societal honor, I believe it is particularly fitting to look at Appiah’s observations regarding the fall of foot-binding in the Chinese culture. Appiah opens the chapter by discussing how China could not keep up with industrialized Western nations because the Western daughters’ feet were not bound. He quotes Kang, an influential

¹⁹⁹ Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral*, [Page 29].

²⁰⁰ Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral*, [Page 33].

²⁰¹ Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral*, [Page 42].

²⁰² Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral*, [Page 38].

Chinese scholar, who wrote, “I look at Europeans and Americans, so strong and vigorous because their mothers did not bind their feet and therefore have strong offspring. Now that we must compete with other nations, to transmit weak offspring is perilous.”²⁰³ China looked around and realized that their country did not exist in isolation and that their sons and daughters must compete with the sons and daughters of other nations. In the same way, Canton realized that their society’s students were not competing against each other but against students from across the state and nation, and their students were not measuring up. As a result, Canton as a society decided to step up and defend their honor, for the burden rested on the society as a whole, not just those intimately involved with the school system. Appiah points out that, “the system of honor could make demands on you even when you had done nothing and nothing had been done to you.”²⁰⁴ In this way, the burden of reforming Canton’s broken school system rested not solely on the students, or the faculty, or the administration, but on each individual that considered themselves a part of the Canton community. As a group, Canton decided to seek societal honor.

In order for Canton to achieve societal honor, each individual associated with the community must have respect for themselves and see themselves as being worthy of honor. Appiah observes that, “What is democratic about our current culture, then, is that we now presuppose all normal human beings, not just those who are especially elevated, to be entitled to respect.”²⁰⁵ Although we believe that all individuals are entitled to respect, that does not mean that all individuals feel respected, for it really does not matter

²⁰³ Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral*, [Page 24].

²⁰⁴ Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral*, [Page 25].

²⁰⁵ Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral*, [Page 50].

if one receives respect from those in a community if one does not respect herself or himself. Appiah points out that, “a person of honor cares first of all not about being respected but about being worthy of respect.”²⁰⁶ He further explains that, “[Dignity] is not something you earn, and the appropriate response to dignity is not pride so much as self-respect; after all, if your humanity entitles you to respect, then it entitles you to respect even from yourself!”²⁰⁷ In order to work towards and receive societal respect, each member of the Canton society had to respect themselves and see themselves as individuals worthy of respect. During the school board meetings I attended, I saw just that. At the first meeting I attended, students who had placed in different Mississippi-wide academic competitions were recognized and given the opportunity to speak. One boy in particular left an impression, for he stood up and, unbeknownst to him, discussed the merits of being a respected member of society. He proudly told of how he strolled past students from other established and well-respected Mississippi public schools to receive his academic award with his held high because he was from Canton, and he was capable of high achievement and worthy of recognition.

In conclusion, Appiah makes some observations about the nature of the honor revolutions he studied. He notices that, “what transpired was not so much a change in moral beliefs as a revolution – in which honor was central – in practices. It wasn’t the moral arguments that were new; it was the willingness to live by them.”²⁰⁸ No observation could better summarize what has transpired in Canton, Mississippi according to what I have studied. Canton’s decision to move toward a better school system was not

²⁰⁶ Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral*, [Page 8].

²⁰⁷ Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral*, [Page 50].

²⁰⁸ Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral*, [Page 61].

spurred by a moral revolution, but instead by a desire to be worthy of honor, respect, and positive recognition. This desire is clear in almost every aspect of what I have studied. Their new motto is, “Canton Can.” In the second school board meeting I attended, members of the community discussed ways in which CPS has successfully elevated their learning styles and incorporated technology into their everyday learning, and the technology team shared a video they created positively promoting CPSD. Furthermore, Canton is in the process of building new facilities for their students, and on January 28, 2016, they held the groundbreaking for the construction of McNeal and Canton Elementary Schools. All of these actions are signs that Canton is growing in their self-respect and are working toward continued success, and this type of achievement demands respect from both inside and outside the community.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to analyze the changes that CPSD made in their district to produce improvement and to then propose reforms for districts facing similar conditions. From my research, I conclude that while CPSD's Dropout Prevention Plan contains important material and well supported ideas, Canton's improvement and success cannot be attributed to this plan alone. Instead, Canton Public Schools and the Canton community as a whole were driven by an innate desire to be found worthy of honor and respect, and this desire paired with the initiatives defined in Canton's Dropout Prevention Plan spurred the district to success.

When I first began my research, I believed that the Dropout Prevention Plan played a significant role in Canton's improvement, but as I studied more, it was clear that this was not the cornerstone of the district's success. The first time I realized this was at the first school board meeting I attended. There, I inquired about the document, but I was only met with blank stares until one individual remembered to what I was referring. This occurrence encouraged me to seek other potential motivators, and a desire to be recognized as worthy of honor and respect became a frontrunner. Canton was, and to

some extent still is, known for their poor academic performance. The community's desire to be a place worthy of honor and recognition influenced the district to take the necessary steps to prevent students from dropping out far more than any document could have.

This motivator also has influenced the way in which Canton has undertaken the task of education reform in their community. Throughout my research, Canton has been difficult to communicate with, especially when I was attempting to ascertain information regarding the district. For example, the first school board meeting that I attended, several individuals took down my information, but very few were willing to share their information with me so that I could inquire further. Additionally, many emails were unreturned until recently when communication became easier. I believe that this lack of transparency, although concerning and an area that requires improvement, actually stems from a desire to protect their district, for history proved to them that the inquiring minds of journalists, reporters, or students generally led to articles that cast Canton Public Schools in a negative light.

Canton Public Schools have nothing to hide, though. While the district still has significant room for improvement, especially in their test scores, they have taken concrete steps to keep students in school and ensure that the schooling they receive is rigorous and challenging; steps propelled and sustained by the community's desire to give their students a school of which to be proud. I recommend that any school district facing circumstances similar to Canton's rally the community behind the cause of their collective identity and use that force to implement researched-based and sustainable dropout prevention methods.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

Current District Initiatives

15 Dropout Prevention Strategies	District-Wide	Pre-Kindergarten	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Systemic Renewal	<p>Administer, analyze, and evaluate surveys from students, parents, faculty and staff for program improvement</p> <p>Strategic/Five Year planning for dropout prevention through superintendent's updates</p> <p>Faculty/Staff Needs Assessments Student Surveys Ongoing Professional Development</p> <p>Pre, Mid, and Post Student Assessments</p> <p>Analysis of student data on test performance</p>	<p>Participation with agencies and committees that govern transitional services for early learners</p> <p>Continue to implement and improve transition activities with feeder schools and early childcare providers</p>	<p>Visionary planning strategies</p> <p>Administer demographic surveys to determine specific needs of the school community</p> <p>Conduct end-of-the-year data analysis for program planning and screening of students in K-5</p> <p>Constantly evaluate and revise goals to meet the individual and collective students' diverse needs with assistance from students</p>	<p>Surveying school instructional needs and budgetary planning</p>	

	Teacher Support Team/Tier Interventions		Early Prevention, Teacher Support Team, English Language Learners, Title I, Hearing and Vision Screaing, Speech Therapist, Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT2)		
School/Community Collaboration	<p>Operation Unlock</p> <p>Superintendent’s Advisory Committee</p> <p>Monthly Council Meeting</p> <p>Partners in Education</p> <p>In His Steps Ministry</p> <p>Adolescence Offenders Program</p> <p>School Adopters</p> <p>School Resource Officers</p> <p>Region 8 Mental Health Agency</p>	<p>Friends of Children Head Start Agency</p> <p>Local Private Day Care Centers</p> <p>Pre-School Class through SPED</p>	<p>Friends of Children Head Start Agency</p> <p>Local/Private Day Care Centers</p> <p>Local Helping Agencies</p> <p>Parent/Teacher Association</p> <p>Folks Gotta Eat Program</p> <p>100 Black Men of Canton, Inc.</p>	<p>School Resource Office (SRO)</p> <p>PTSA</p> <p>School Based Clinic</p> <p>Ministerial Alliance</p> <p>100 Black Men</p> <p>Partners in Education School Adopters</p>	<p>When groups in the community provide the collective support to a school, a strong infrastructure sustains a caring supportive environment where youth can thrive and achieve</p> <p>CECSC’s Community Collaboration of businesses and organizations: “Winners by Choice,” IBIC,</p>

	<p>DARE</p> <p>CPSD DVD Promoting Literacy/Safety/Awareness</p> <p>Partnership with Nissan of North America</p> <p>GA Carmichael Clinic</p> <p>Madison County Medical Center</p> <p>Department of Human Services</p> <p>Fall Parent and Community Involvement Fair</p> <p>District/Community Health Fair</p> <p>Madison County Health Department</p> <p>Office of Compulsory School Attendance</p>		<p>The “Book It” Program – sponsored by local Pizza Hut</p> <p>School Resource Office (SRO)</p> <p>Region 8</p>		<p>Region 8, Barbara Gray, School Partners/Adopters, GED Program – Jackson State University, Parent Center, CPSD, AOP Program, In His Steps Ministry</p> <p>Mayor Advisory Council</p> <p>Jobs for Mississippi Graduates</p>
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	Madison County Youth Court				
Safe Learning Environments	<p>SRO @ NMS and CHS</p> <p>DARE Program in both elementary schools</p> <p>Fast Track Program for at-risk youth</p> <p>Alternative Education</p> <p>Safe and Drug Free Schools</p> <p>School Safety Plans</p> <p>Student Safety Surveys</p> <p>Character Education</p> <p>Collaboration with Canton Police and Fire Department</p> <p>Emergency Management</p>	-	<p>Red Ribbon Week</p> <p>R.A.T. Reject All Tobacco</p> <p>Safety and emergency procedures discussed/drilled</p>	<p>Grade level assemblies on Gang Prevention</p> <p>DARE</p> <p>School Based Clinics</p> <p>School Based Safety Plans</p>	<p>SRO</p> <p>Code of Conduct enforced</p> <p>Safety addressed in cafeteria, etc.</p>
Family Engagement	Title I Parent and Community Involvement Fair	-	<p>Lunch with Moms and Dads</p> <p>Saturday Parent Workshops</p>	Lunch with Moms and Dads	<p>CESC Open Door Policy</p> <p>21st Century – Light on After</p>

	<p>District/Community Health Fair</p> <p>Parent/Teacher Conferences</p> <p>Back to School Night</p> <p>PTSA Meetings</p> <p>Effective Parenting Workshops</p> <p>Parent/Teacher Conferences</p> <p>Title I Compact Agreements</p> <p>Moms and Dads Conference</p> <p>Annual Parent of the Year Banquet</p> <p>Parental Involvement Plan</p> <p>Effective Parenting Workshops</p>		<p>Email Connections</p> <p>Student/Parent Luncheons</p> <p>Collaborations with agencies for ELL, Disabled, and Socioeconomic needs for learners</p> <p>Dr. Seuss Community/Family members read to students</p> <p>Muffins for Moms Donuts for Dads Granolas for Grandparents</p> <p>21st Century – Light on After Dark Learning Centers</p> <p>Read Across America</p> <p>Family Reading Night</p>		<p>Dark Learning Centers</p> <p>Freshman Orientation</p> <p>Senior Night</p>
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	<p>Make and Take It Workshops</p> <p>Luncheons with Parents and Grandparents</p> <p>Family Reading Night</p> <p>Books for Toys Program</p>		<p>Books for Toys Program</p>		
<p>Early Childhood Education</p>	<p>Collaboration with Friends of Children Head Start Program</p> <p>Collaboration with Local Day Care Centers</p> <p>Pre-K Developmentally Delayed services</p> <p>Educational Field Trips</p>	<p>Collaboration with Early Childcare Providers</p>	<p>JSU Continuing Education</p> <p>Local/Private Day Care Centers</p> <p>Title I Program</p> <p>Exceptional Services</p> <p>Transition Day at McNeal Elementary for students entering kindergarten</p> <p>Professional Development for Kindergarten teachers</p> <p>JSU Mobile Reading Unit</p>	<p>Collaborative team building with elementary/middle school teachers</p>	

Early Literacy Development	Parent Center Workshops (Provide parents with interactive books/print-rich materials) Barksdale Reading Institute RIF – Reading is Fundamental Title I Intervention Specialists Kids College (Software) Accelerated Reader (Software) Teacher Support Team (TST) Certified Tutors	Friends of Children Head Start (McNeal Elementary)	Certified Tutors Intervention Specialists Resource Support Staff Paraprofessionals Utilize DIBELS and Read Well Assessments Breakthrough to Literacy Program Pre, Mid, Post Assessment		
Mentoring/Tutoring	100 Black Men Local Fraternities Local Sororities In His Steps Ministries	-	TST Early Intervention Exceptional Services Program JBHM	TST Exceptional Services Program JBHM	TST Exceptional Services Program Operation Unlock

	Adolescent Offender Program (AOP) Ministerial Alliance Region 8 Title 1 – Computer Assisted Labs (Plato)		CHEERS Operation Unlock Folks Gotta Eat, Inc. Capital Area Foster Grandparent Program	CHEERS IBIC Operation Unlock Read 180 (Software) Plato Lab	Read 180 (Software) On-Site Health Care Plato Lab Giant Steps Tutorial Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Gear Up Mississippi
Service Learning	Ministerial Alliance Supplementary Service Providers (After school) NJROTC Beta Club Student Council	-	JBHM 21 st Century Learning Centers Community Day Helpers Read Across America Day Fire Safety Week	JBHM	JBHM 21 st Century Learning Centers Mu Alpha Theta

			Canton Fire Department		
Alternative Schooling	Fast Track Program Alternative Education GED Collaboration with JSU and MOU In School Suspension	-	Alternative School CESC	Fast Track Program (CESC) Alternative School (CESC)	Alternative School (CESC)
After School Opportunities	21 st Century Learning Centers SES Providers – JBHM, CHEERS Extended School Year Boys and Girls Club In His Steps Ministries	-	Title I Program for Primary Learners	ETS – Educational Talent Search – Tougaloo College	Gear Up Mississippi
Professional Development	JBHM Principal’s Academy MDE Summer Conference Barksdale Reading Institute SREB	-	Renaissance Learning Training JSU Continuing Education Classes In Services • Classroom Management	JSU Continuing Education Classes In Services • Classroom Management • Differentiated Instruction • Webb’s Depth of Knowledge • Small Group Instruction • Technology Integration • SPMS Training	

	<p>Educational Improvement Consultants</p> <p>MS Curriculum Frameworks Training and Updates</p> <p>Teacher Support Team Training/Updates</p> <p>CPSD Professional Development Plan</p> <p>CPSD Professional Development Calendar</p> <p>CPSD State/Federal/District Initiatives and Updates</p> <p>MDE Reading Conference</p> <p>Instructional Facilitator</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiated Instruction • Webb's Depth of Knowledge • Small Group Instruction • SPMS Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple Intelligences • Compass Learning • Barksdale Reading Institute 		
Active Learning	<p>Use of Differentiated Instruction</p> <p>Cooperative Learning</p> <p>Use Learning Styles Inventory</p>	-	Utilize Multiple Intelligences		

	Instructional Interventions Small Group Instruction Whole Group Instruction				
Educational Technology	Compass Learning/Odyssey Accelerated Math Accelerated Reader STAR Reading Kid's College United Streaming Plato Lab Read 180 Star Reading Computer Discovery EZ Test Tracker	-	SPMS Test Bank D.I.B.E.L.S. (Barksdale) T.P.R.I. (Barksdale) Breakthrough to Literacy	SPMS Test Bank	SPMS Test Bank
Individualized Instruction	TST Coordinator/TST Exceptional Services	-	Differentiated Instruction	Differentiated Instruction	Differentiated Instruction

	<p>Tutors</p> <p>Computer Assisted Instruction</p> <p>Small Group Instruction</p> <p>Levels of DOK</p>		<p>Instructional Interventionist</p> <p>Teacher Assistants</p> <p>Early Intervention Program</p> <p>Teacher Support Team Interventions</p> <p>After School Primary Intervention Program</p> <p>Compass Learning</p>	<p>Read 180</p> <p>Teacher Support Team Interventions</p> <p>Small Group Instruction</p>	<p>Accelerated Math</p> <p>Accelerated Reading</p> <p>Read 180</p> <p>Plato Lab</p> <p>Teacher Support Team Interventions</p>
Career and Technical Education	<p>Tech Prep</p> <p>Canton Career Center (Vocational)</p> <p>Career Day</p> <p>Field Trips to Nissan</p>		<p>Career Day Activities (Grades 3-5)</p> <p>Community Helpers (K-2)</p> <p>MCT2 Student Planners</p> <p>Community Helpers Day</p> <p>Job Shadowing</p>	<p>Career Discovery</p> <p>Computer Discovery</p> <p>Motivational Speakers</p>	<p>Technology Discovery</p> <p>Career Awareness Day</p> <p>Motivational Speakers</p> <p>Jobs for Mississippi Graduates</p> <p>Gear UP Mississippi</p>

Proposed District Initiatives

Proposed Initiative	Grade Level Assessed (District-wide, Pre-Kindergarten, Elementary, Middle, High)	Purpose or Goal	Who is Involved?	Proposed Cost	Timeline for Implementation	Dropout Prevention Strategy Addressed	Expected Outcomes for Students
Build a new middle school	Grades 6-8	Reduce elementary and middle school teacher/student ratio to 20:1 by 2011	Derek Starling, School Board Chairman	\$20 million	June 2011	NDPC Strategy 1, 2, & 3	Reduced class size
Build a new elementary school	Grades K-5		Dwight J. Luckett, Sr., Superintendent				Increased attendance
District-wide monitoring	District-Wide	Increase accountability and reduce office referrals by ten percent annually beginning with the 2008-09 school year	Superintendent Dwight J. Luckett, Sr., Asst. Superintendent Kaye Patrick, Director of Technology Cleo Brooks	0	June 2008	NDPC Strategy 1 & 2	Reduce referrals Increase attendance Decrease dropout rate

Mississippi Shared Youth Vision	Canton High School	To provide the nation's neediest youth with the talents, skills, and knowledge necessary to ensure their healthy transition to successful adult roles and responsibilities	Holmes Community College, WIN Job Service Center, School Administrators	0	June 2008	NDPC Strategy 2, 7, & 17	Productive citizens Preparedness for the work force
Participate in pilot pre-kindergarten	District-wide	Increase literacy skills/school readiness beginning with the 2008/09 school year (Barksdale – Read Well)	Dr. Pallascene B. Cole, Michael Ellis, Dwight J. Luckett, Sr.	\$120,000	June 2008	NDPC Strategy 1 & 14	Increase student achievement Reduce retention rate
9 th Grade Academy – School within a School	Emerging 9 th graders 2008-09 school year	To address the needs of all incoming freshmen Decrease the retention rate Increase graduation rate by ten percent annually Decrease the drop out rate by ten percent annually	Richard Gray, Principal	0	August 2008 (full implementation August 2009)	NDPC Strategies 1-4 & 7-15	Increase the number of freshman passing to 10 th grade Increase the average GPA of freshman Decrease the number of dropouts between 9 th and 10 th grade

<p>Teacher for a Student</p> <p>Everyone Save One Mentoring Program</p>		<p>Increase the retention and graduation rate by ten percent annually</p> <p>Decrease the dropout rate by ten percent annually</p> <p>To provide the presence of an adult in a child's life to fuel motivation and foster the development of life skills needed to overcome obstacles</p>	<p>Richard Gray, Principal; District/School Administrator District/School Staff; mentors; civic; ministerial; education</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>August 2008-May 2010</p> <p>August 2008-May 2009</p>	<p>NDPC Strategy 1, 7, & 14</p>	<p>Productive lifelong learners capable of entering the workforce and/or college</p> <p>Promote regular school participation and keep education a salient issue for students</p> <p>Students will overcome barriers that have kept them estranged from school and learning</p>
<p>Transition Plan</p>	<p>Elementary K-5</p> <p>CSAS</p> <p>McNeal Elementary</p> <p>Canton Elementary</p>	<p>To provide students with the opportunity to visit the school campus to become familiar with the layout of the environment and the campus</p>	<p>Dr. Pallascene Cole, Michael Ellis, Dorothy Smith</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>March-May 2009</p>	<p>NDPC Strategy 1</p>	<p>Students will overcome barriers that have kept them estranged from school and learning</p>

Transition Plan	Emerging 6 th Grade	6 th grade students will have an opportunity to visit NMS to become familiar with the environment and the campus Orientation on school rules and regulations	Henry Dorsey	0	March-May 2009	NDPC Strategy 1	Students will overcome barriers that have keep them estranged from school and learning
Transition Plan	Emerging 9 th Grade	8 th grade students will have an opportunity to visit CHS and to become familiar with the environment and the campus Orientation on school rules and regulations	Henry Dorsey, Richard Gray	0	March-May 2009	NDPC Strategy 1	Students will overcome barriers that have keep them estranged from school and learning
Motivation/ Incentives Program to stay in school (Nissan North America)	District-Wide (funds will be distributed)	Funds will be used to bring awareness of dropout rate to school/community Funds will be used to provide incentives to motivate students to stay in school	CPSD via grant provided by Nissan North America	\$20,000 (donation)	Ongoing 2008-09	NDPC Strategy 1 & 2	Awareness of consequences of dropping out of school Decrease drop out rate Increase graduation rate
Motivation/ Incentives Program to	CPSD Public Relations	Radio Commercials Radio Show	Beverly Lockett, CPSD	Nissan Donation	Ongoing 2008-09	NDPC Strategy 1 & 2	Awareness/eradicate problem

stay in school (Nissan North America)		Newspaper Advertisements PTA Meeting					Talk about problem/solutions/appeal for community assistance Address problem Inform parents/solicit help
Motivation/Incentives Program to stay in school (Nissan North America)	McNeal Elementary K-2	Provide incentives for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perfect attendance • Good behavior <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic achievement • ADA (Average Daily Attendance) Parent Graduation Night – Informative Sessions on drop out prevention Develop graduation goal folders for 2 nd grade students	Principal, Assistant Principal, Curriculum Specialist, Counselor, Teachers	Nissan Donation	Ongoing 2008-09	NDPC Strategy 1 & 2	Awareness of consequences of dropping out of school Decrease dropout rate Increase graduation rate
Motivation/Incentives Program to stay in	Canton Elementary 3-5	Provide incentives for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perfect attendance • Good behavior 	Principal Asst. Principal	Nissan Donation	Ongoing 2008-09	NDPC Strategy 1, 2, & 15	Increased attendance

<p>school (Nissan North America)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic achievement • ADA – Average Daily Attendance <p>Community Drop Out Awareness Workshop</p> <p>Career Day Field Trips to Local Businesses</p> <p>College Wall of Fame</p> <p>Big Brother Big Sister</p>	<p>Curriculum Specialist</p> <p>Counselor</p> <p>Teachers</p>				<p>Increased motivation for good behavior</p> <p>Increased motivation for academic success</p> <p>High school graduation</p> <p>Desire to attend college</p>
<p>Motivation/ Incentives Program to stay in school (Nissan North America)</p>	<p>Canton School of Arts and Sciences</p>	<p>Provide Incentives for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perfect attendance • ADA – average daily attendance <p>Promote in-school volunteering, mentoring and school promotion program</p> <p>Career Day</p>	<p>Principal, Assistant Principal, Curriculum Specialist, Counselor, and Teachers</p>	<p>Nissan Donation</p>	<p>Ongoing 2008-09</p>	<p>NDPC Strategy 1 & 2</p>	<p>Increased attendance</p> <p>Increased motivation for good behavior</p> <p>Increased motivation for academic success</p> <p>Engage students in setting long term goals for future</p>

							High school graduation
Motivation/ Incentives Program to stay in school (Nissan North America)	Nichols Middle School (6-8)	<p>Provide incentives for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perfect attendance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic achievement • ADA – Average Daily Attendance • Good behavior <p>Parent Forum – provide lunches for parents to express concerns and input about the school</p> <p>Motivational Speakers – to encourage students to achieve success</p> <p>College field trips – exposure to college requirements/campus life</p> <p>Summer enrichment – provide skill books</p>	Principal, Asst. Principal, Curriculum Specialist, Counselor, Teachers	Nissan Donation	Ongoing 2008-2009	NDPC Strategy 1, 2, & 15	<p>Increased attendance</p> <p>Increased motivation for good behavior</p> <p>Increased motivation for academic success</p> <p>Engage students in setting long term goals for future</p> <p>High school graduation</p> <p>Desire to attend college</p>

		<p>ACT/SAT Workshops to assist with college preparation</p> <p>Internships for middle school students to expose them to the real world</p>					
<p>Motivation/ Incentives Program to stay in school (Nissan North America)</p>	<p>Canton High School (9-12)</p>	<p>Career Choice and Planning Activities – field trips to colleges and businesses to facilitate a career choice</p> <p>Combat Absenteeism – provide incentives for homeroom ADA</p> <p>You’ve Obtained Your Goal – provide at-risk youth for obtaining goals established (passing SAT, Grade Recovery)</p>	<p>Principal, Asst. Principal, Curriculum Specialist, Counselor, Teachers</p>	<p>Nissan Donation</p>	<p>Ongoing 2008-2009</p>	<p>NDPC Strategy 1, 2, & 15</p>	<p>Increased attendance</p> <p>Increased motivation for good behavior</p> <p>Increased motivation for academic success</p> <p>Engage students in setting long term goals for future</p> <p>High school graduation</p> <p>Desire to attend college</p>
<p>Motivation/ Incentives Program to</p>	<p>Canton Educational</p>	<p>Provide incentives for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perfect attendance 	<p>Principal, Asst. Principal,</p>	<p>Nissan Donation</p>	<p>Ongoing 2008-09</p>	<p>NDPC Strategy 1, 2, & 15</p>	<p>Increased attendance</p>

<p>stay in school (Nissan North America)</p>	<p>Services Center</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic achievement • ADA – Average Daily Attendance • Good behavior • Student of the Week <p>Provide mentors – motivational support, improved attendance, decreased behavioral referrals</p> <p>Field trips – increase academic achievement, performance on state tests, and encouragement to stay in school</p> <p>Purchase various instructional supplies to address learning styles</p> <p>Display Dropout Prevention Posters/Banners – create awareness</p>	<p>Curriculum Specialist, Counselor, Teachers</p>				<p>Increased motivation for good behavior</p> <p>Increased motivation for academic success</p> <p>Engage students in setting long term goals for future</p> <p>High school graduation</p> <p>Desire to attend college</p>
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		Behavioral Change Initiative					
Develop and Implement Credit Recovery Policy/ Program	Canton High School (9-12)	To allow students to earn credit for a previously failed course	CPSD, MDE	\$25,000	2009-2010	NDPC Strategy 1, 12, 13, 14	Helping students get back on track towards graduation
GED Option Program	Canton High School Nichols Middle School At-Risk Students	To provide students who are at least 16 years of age an opportunity to earn a high school equivalency diploma	CPSD, CESC Principal	\$50,000	2009-10	NDPC Strategy 1, 2, & 9	To obtain a GED to allow college entrance or preparedness to enter the workforce
Pre GED Program	Canton high School Nichols Middle School At-Risk Students	Preparedness/Readiness GED Option Program	CPSD, CESC Principal	\$5,000	2009-10	NDPC Strategy 1, 2, 7, 9, & 14	To prepare students academically for GED Option
Character Education	District-wide (K-12)	A proactive effort to develop good character, high	CPSD, PRYIDE Inc., Character	0	August 2008-May 2009	NDPC Strategy 1, 3, & 9	To become productive and

		expectations, behavior, and a positive social culture	Education Facilitator, Physical Education and Social Studies Teachers				respectful students and citizens
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APPENDIX B

District-Wide Action Plan for Student Improvement 2015-2016

District/School Wide Goals	Area of Concern	Specific Steps to Address Area of Concern	Person Responsible	Targeted Group	Timeline	Evaluation Indicators
<p>Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through effective teaching and learning</p>	<p>ACT Prep</p>	<p>Professional development program for all core class instructors. Review with instructors how to successfully equip core teachers with the tools and practical ideas they need to boost ACT scores without wasting valuable class time or allowing prep to become a distraction. Teachers learn how to motivate their students and integrate score-boosting strategies into their lesson plans.</p> <p>Mastery Prep will provide one full ACT practice test to all (187) Canton High School Juniors.</p> <p>MasteryPrep will provide all printed materials and test documents. Take care of scoring, grading, and report generation. Your staff will receive actionable, full-color reports. Faculty and students will also receive their score reports digitally via PDF. Reports will include access to library of 430</p>	<p>Teachers Principals CCR Staff</p>	<p>9-12 grades</p>	<p>January 3, 2016</p> <p>January 2016 (Date TBD by Canton High School)</p>	<p>Increase in ACT scores</p>

		<p>videos explaining every single test item for both teachers and students.</p> <p>All Canton High School teachers will be provided with access to online ACT Elements Bell Ringer program. This will include English and math bell ringers immediately as well as additional reading and science bell ringers as they become available in January. MasteryPrep will provide sets of ACT Mastery student workbooks (English & math) to junior (187) students participating in the one-semester ACT prep programs.</p> <p>Each teacher leading the instruction in the one- semester ACT prep courses will be provided full sets of ACT Mastery Teacher Manuals (English & math) as well as access to ACT Mastery Digital Teacher Edition, which provides all slide deck content necessary for successfully running the ACT prep course.</p> <p>MasteryPrep will provide 1-day data analysis workshop at Canton High School to help teachers make the most of the practice test data and develop school-wide action plans for</p>			<p>January/February 2016</p> <p>March/ April 2016</p>	
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		<p>systematically increasing ACT scores. This professional development will occur at a minimum of two weeks from the student completion of the practice test.</p> <p>MasteryPrep will provide 1-day speaker led ACT Boot Camp on the date of Canton High School's choosing, before the April 19, 2016 ACT test date. A speaker will guide the 187 juniors through the essentials on pacing, test-taking strategies, and the questions types missed most on the ACT.</p> <p>MasteryPrep will also provide 187 Boot Camp workbooks for each student attending.</p>				
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through effective teaching and learning	Vocabulary, Comprehension, and Writing	<p>Select words that are most important to understanding the lesson. Determine how much "prior knowledge" will students have about this word. Determine if this word is encountered frequently.</p> <p>Determine if this concept is significant and if it requires pre-teaching. Select appropriate strategies that the teacher can employ to help students integrate the concept/related word(s). Determine</p>	<p>Teachers Principal Instructional Specialist Assistant Principal CCR Staff MDE Coaches Science Coaches</p>	K-12 grades	January 2016 – May 2016	<p>Student growth</p> <p>Increase in student mastery/pr oficiency</p>

		<p>how to make repeated exposures to the word so that it becomes part of the student's vocabulary. As evidenced through word wall words and new vocabulary in the students' daily writing, within sourcebook activities, and in conversation.</p> <p>Explore words and meanings through a variety of strategies; read a variety of challenging texts.</p> <p>Define vocabulary list to support academic language</p> <p>Need a focus on content area vocabulary, comprehension, and writing -must define specific district-wide strategies (3- 4) to teach content vocabulary</p> <p>-must provide a comprehensive list of content vocabulary</p> <p>Discuss the purpose of Writers Workshop. Explore the components of Writers Workshop. Identify ways to implement and incorporate Writers</p>				
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		Workshop in the classroom. (Layered Approach-through the writing process) Reading Comprehension-focus on defining strategies				
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through effective teaching and learning	3 rd Grade Summative Assessment	Pull out interventions for 1st time and Retesters in Urgent Interventions In class/small group instruction for 1st time test takers Job-alike sessions for teachers for sharing resources and stronger collaboration	Interventionists Teachers Principal Instructional Specialist Literacy and Early Childhood Director	Third Grade	January 2016- June 2016	Increase in number of students passing the initial test
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through effective teaching and learning	Algebra I Retesters – Questar and Credit Recovery	Enroll students in Khan Academy and students complete assigned lessons Remediate during intervention time USA Test Prep online support for students Increase number of licenses Students will “Crash courses” through Khan Academy at home to prepare for retest	Teachers Principals Math Coordinator	Algebra I Retesters	January 2016-March 2016	Increase in number of students passing the initial test
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at	English II Retesters	Enroll students in Gradpoint, and edX and student complete assigned lessons	Teachers Principals	English II	January 2016-	Increase in number of

the highest level possible through effective teaching and learning	– Questar and Credit Recovery	Remediate during Intervention time USA Test Prep online support for students Increase number of licenses Students will “Crash courses” through Khan Academy at home to prepare for retest	ELA Coordinator	Retesters	March 2016	students passing the initial test
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through effective teaching and learning	Bottom 25% identification and growth	Define a tracking mechanism to identify and monitor the bottom 25% Ensure that lowest of the bottom 25% are receiving interventions	Principal Instructional Specialist Assistant Principals CCR Staff	Bottom 25% of Students	January 2016-	Decrease the number of students in the lower quartile; increase number of students moving from intensive intervention to higher level
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through effective teaching and learning	AP Courses	Meet with AP teachers to inform them of how AP courses now count in the accountability model Contact Millsaps regarding College Board to get support	AP Teachers Assistant Superintendents CCR Staff	AP Students	January 2016	Increase in the number of students passing AP test (score of 3 or higher)

		<p>USA Test Prep online support for students</p> <p>Use Khan Academy AP courses to support student preparation for AP course work and AP Exams</p>				Increase in number of AP students and courses offered
Goal 3: Increase graduation rate, decrease dropout rate and increase average daily attendance (ADA) in an effort to ensure that students receive maximized opportunities for learning	Graduation Rate	<p>Define cohorts as purely as possible</p> <p>Gather documentation on both 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 cohorts</p> <p>Track and document successful completion of graduation requirements.</p>	Counselors CCR Staff	2014-15 Cohort 2015-16 Cohort	January 2016	Increase Graduation Rate
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through effective teaching and learning	Model Reading Classroom	<p>Identify one reading classroom that is at 75%; work with teacher to get her to 90%; then allow teachers to visit to observe quality reading instruction</p> <p>Increase best practices among teachers through student growth and mastery</p>	Literacy and Early Childhood Director	K-3 Grades	January 2016-	Student growth Increase in student mastery/proficiency
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible	RtI/TST Process	Define the RtI and TST process at each school	District Interventionists CCR Staff	TST Teams	January 2016-	Increase growth and proficiency

through effective teaching and learning		<p>Conduct on site reviews of the process of each school and give feedback making sure students have been identified and properly serviced</p> <p>Require schools to service students who have an academic struggle by having a school-wide systematic intervention process</p>				y of students
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through effective teaching and learning	Technology Resource Bank	<p>Create a process by which teachers can submit effective technology resources and compile a districtwide list; Synergetics will build the technology resource bank as part of their services and deliver this bank to the district for teacher use</p> <p>Align assessment data with technology usage to gauge effectiveness</p> <p>Increase in the use of technology (promethean boards, iPads, Macbooks, etc.) continued development</p>	Teachers CCR Staff Synergetics Technology Coaches	Teachers	January 2016- May 2016	Increase growth and proficiency of students
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through effective teaching and learning	Mock State Assessment	<p>Use Questar item sampler for Mock Assessment as 3rd nine weeks district exam</p> <p>Take mock assessments online</p>	CCR staff	State Tested Students	March 2016	Identify areas of strengths and weaknesses Increase in student

						growth as indicated on upcoming MAP
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through effective teaching and learning	Central Office Observations/ Feedback	<p>Report to Mrs. Williams each Friday the number of classroom observation and feedback to teachers</p> <p>Report to principals feedback to teachers, patterns in lesson plans regarding small group instruction and technology integration.</p> <p>Send feedback to teachers wirelessly from CCR staff</p> <p>Increase in best practices among teachers and administrators through student growth and mastery</p>	Assistant Superintendent Literacy and Early Childhood Director	Superintendent Assistant Superintendent Literacy and Early Childhood Director	Weekly January 2016	Increase growth and proficiency of students
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through effective teaching and learning	Building Level Observations/ Feedback	<p>Principals are to conduct a minimum of 20 observations per week and provide feed to teachers.</p> <p>Instructional Specialists and Assistant Principals are to conduct a minimum of 10 observations per week and provide feedback to teachers.</p>	Principals Instructional Specialists Assistant Principals	Teachers	Weekly January 2016	Increase growth and proficiency of students

		<p>Principals and/or his designee are to review and provide feedback weekly on teachers' lesson plans.</p> <p>Increase in best practices among teachers through student growth and mastery</p> <p>Lesson plan checklists will be provided and loaded electronically to give consistent feedback to teachers</p>				
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through effective teaching and learning	Goal Setting	<p>Set short term goals that align with long term goal that you set on MPES; set short term goals in all tested areas including 3rd grade gate and kindergarten readiness, etc.</p> <p>Define quantifiable short term goals; focus on the amount of growth we want to see in all areas in terms of a numerical values; include proficiency</p>	<p>Superintendent Assistant Superintendent Literacy and Early Childhood Director</p>	Principals	<p>January 2016 Elementary, Middle, and High School</p>	Increase student achievement on short term goals
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through effective teaching and learning	Science Instruction	<p>Need PD for 5th and 8th Grade Science Teachers (Inquiry and other weaker areas)</p> <p>Focus on use of test blueprint with heaviest weighted items</p>	<p>Principals Teachers Science Coach CCR Staff</p>	5 th and 8 th grade students	<p>January 2016- April 2016</p>	Increase in the number of students showing growth and the

		<p>Ensure that inquiry is a focus throughout</p> <p>Need a focus on content area vocabulary</p> <p>-must define specific district-wide strategies (3- 4) to teach content vocabulary</p> <p>-must provide a comprehensive list of content vocabulary</p> <p>Use technology for virtual labs and activities and find apps to use</p>				number of students scoring proficient
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through effective teaching and learning	Repacining the Standards and Reprioritizing based on the blueprint	Use results from Mock Assessment that will be administered at the end of the 3rd nine weeks to focus on skills/standards that will allow students to show growth and achievement on the MAP	Principals Teachers CCR Staff	State tested students	March 2016-May 2016	Increase student growth and proficiency on 2016 MAP
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through effective teaching and learning	MDE Coaches	<p>Schedule periodic meetings with Principals and Coaches to update on what the school needs</p> <p>Address specific school needs based on data and principal and teacher input</p> <p>Survey teachers regarding MDE Coaches and how effectiveness of support</p>	CCR Staff Principals	K-5 teachers	January 2016-May 2016	Increase in kindergarten readiness and 3 rd grade reading achievement

		Increased teacher capacity in the areas of literacy K-3				
	Online Testing	Schools will be doing their common assessment online based on schedule times Practice for 2016 MAP	Principals	K-12 Students	December 2015-May 2016	Mastery of standards Increase student growth and proficiency on 2016 MAP
	Typing Software for K-8	Use typing software in labs to prepare students for 2016 MAP and school/district online testing	CCR Staff	K-8 students	January 2016-May 2016	Increase in typing skills among elementary students
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through effective teaching and learning	3 rd -8 th Additional Consultants tutorial to work with students through tiered	Test Prep 1 consultant per building to focus on specific areas of need (ELA, Math, 5th and 8th grade Science)-The focus is on tiered support for students that have been identified as “bubble students”	CCR Staff Principals Teachers	3 rd -8 th grade students	March 2016-May 2016	Increase in student growth and proficiency on 2016 MAP

	support with bubble students					
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through effective teaching and learning	SATP2 Additional Consultants tutorial to work with students through tiered support with bubble students	<p>The Kirkland Group will customize Boot Camp sessions for ELA and Math students and teachers from the goal performance areas of: Train teachers on use of the Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards (MCCRS) and MS State Frameworks through quality professional development;</p> <p>Assist teachers in the development of an intervention plan focused on the use of differentiated instruction and other applicable methodologies to utilize in the classroom and to support students' ability to pass state assessments;</p> <p>Work with teachers and students using available data to help them understand how the data can pinpoint areas of need;</p> <p>Work with student to ensure they understand MCCRS and the MS State Frameworks-how to deconstruct standards and focus on specific</p>	CCR Staff Principals Teachers	ENG II, Alg I, US History, Biology	January 2016-March 2016	<p>Increase student growth and proficiency on 2016 Testing Cycle</p> <p>Increase number of students passing SATP 2 Exams</p>

		<p>objectives from the standards’ deconstruction;</p> <p>Work with students in small groups on test- taking strategies using appropriate sample items from all four subject areas;</p> <p>Work with students are re-testing to increase their capacity to be successful on their re-test</p>				
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through effective teaching and learning	Data Coach	<p>Monitor progress toward short term goals Focus on students in Tiers 2 and 3</p> <p>Repacing and Resetting based on scaffolding and blueprints and short term instructional goals</p> <p>Increase teacher capacity in data analysis</p>	Principals CCR Staff	Teachers	January 2016- May 2016	Increase in student growth and proficiency on 2016 MAP
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible	Canvas	Set up training for teachers Synergetics will provide support with implemlentation	CCR Staff Principals	Teachers	January 12-13, 2016	Pre/Post Survey Data on levels of

through effective teaching and learning		Increase teacher capacity in technology				implementation
	Stages of Level of Technology Implementation	<p>Define a ladder system identifying the levels of technology implementation</p> <p>Conduct PLC/mini PD around the 5 levels of technology implementation and develop an action plan for each teacher</p> <p>Define each level and what it looks like in a classroom through the Substitution Augmentation Modification Redefinition (SAMR) Model</p> <p>More technology integrated lessons and modeling for teachers</p> <p>Baseline data and additional mid-year and end of year data on levels of implementation</p> <p>Require comprehensive school by school monthly reporting due prior to board meetings</p>	Technology Coaches CCR Staff Principals	Teachers	January 2016-May 2016	Pre/Post Survey Data on Levels of implementation

		Increase teacher capacity in technology Increase the effective use of technology integration				
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through effective teaching and learning	MDE Instructional Review	Will be conducted to provide feedback of tested areas for instructional improvement Increase teacher capacity in instruction	MDE Principals CCR Staff	Tested Areas	January 2016	Provide baseline data on percentage of classroom meeting MDE turnaround indicators
	ELL (McNeal, CES, Nichols, Porter)	Current curriculum aligned (for language acquisition) Need updated curriculum that aligns to new ELL assessment	Federal Programs Director Principals	ELL Students	January 2016-March 2016	Increase in language acquisition and reading skills for ELL students
	Read 180 Resource (Porter, Nichols, CHS)	Additional resource to assist students who are more than 2-3 grade level/reading levels behind	Principals Teachers Interventionists CCR Staff	6-8 th students 9 th grade students	January 2016-May 2016	Increase in growth in reading skills

	Professional Learning Communities (PLC's)	PLC's should be scheduled Should occur as part of leadership teams Look for evidence of strong collaboration and implementation as ongoing support for teachers Increased teacher and leadership capacity	Principals Instructional Specialists Assistant Principals Teachers CCR Staff	Teacher	January 2016	Increase in student growth and proficiency on 2016 MAP
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through effective teaching and learning	Lesson Plan Review	Systematic process for reviewing lesson plans to ensure bell to bell instruction is occurring Improve classroom instruction	Principals Instructional Specialists Assistant Principals			
	Instructional School Visits	Principals will visits outside of Canton to see best practices in action Principals will monitoring use of instructional time Principals will conduct Peer/Observations with other administrators in the district Increased leadership capacity				
Goal 5: Increase parental engagement through parent outreach initiatives	Parent/Student Involvement	Work with parent liaison to conduct home visits Communicate district resources to parents Assist and				

		<p>organize the Canvassing the Community project</p> <p>Facilitate small group parent and community meetings around concerns, acquiring resources, additional support and needs</p> <p>Serve on Literacy Council</p> <p>Conduct home visits to provide additional support for parents</p> <p>Work with the Excel by 5 Facilitator to reach 0-5 children</p>				
Goal 2: Increase student achievement and academic performance at the highest level possible through effective teaching and learning	Tutorial Support from retired teachers through tiered support to lower level students	<p>Work with lower level students with severe deficits in basic reading and math skills</p> <p>Provide tiered support to students based on needs identified in data</p> <p>Provide specific resources for the retirees to use with students to ensure consistency in implementation; quality control; alignment to current standards</p>				

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In this article, Simon Blackburn writes a concise and detailed book review of Appiah's "The Honor Code."

Bost, Loujeania Williams, and Paul J. Riccomini. "Effective Instruction: An Inconspicuous Strategy for Dropout Prevention." *ProQuest Education Journals*, September/October 2006, 301-11.

This article proposes that effective instructional design and delivery should be brought to the forefront of dropout prevention efforts, especially for students with disabilities. The article begins by stating five conclusions regarding the nature of dropping out:

1. Students with disabilities drop out of school for a variety of reasons.
2. Dropping out is a multifaceted process with direct links to disengagement from school and not a single impulsive action. Factors associated with dropping out of school are numerous, and some are not amenable to interventions targeted to decrease dropout increase school completion rates. Dropout issues must be considered in the context of other educational reforms (e.g. accountability, high academic standards, school restructuring) and not as an isolated, appended program. Attending to student perspectives about dropping out provides additional information to strengthen programs designed to help students with disabilities stay in school and graduate

Furthermore, they propose three considerations that bolster their claim to increase the importance of effective instructional design and delivery:

1. Foundational models of effective school learning provide a conceptual framework linking effective instruction to dropout prevention.
2. Students with LD and EBD typically have trouble with national measures of academic performance and need effective interventions to improve academic outcomes.
3. The use of research-validated practices as a foundation for effective teaching is essential to the success of the education system in the 21st century.

Finally, they propose 10 principles of effective instruction and school engagement: active engagement, providing the experience of success, content coverage and opportunity to learn, grouping for instruction, scaffolded instruction, addressing forms of knowledge, organizing and activating knowledge, teaching strategically, making instruction explicit, and teaching sameness.

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In her compilation of provocative essays, Lisa Delpit looks at cultural conflicts realistically and honestly. She first examines the power of language and looks specifically at who defines what language and manner of speaking is culturally acceptable or superior. Along the same train of thought, Delpit describes the severe communication gap that takes place between students and teachers from different language and cultural backgrounds. The same sentence said in the exact same way can have two entirely different meanings based on the cultural background of the child receiving the statement. Like other authors, Delpit argues that we need to add life back to our schools; she says, "The purpose of education

is to learn to die satiated with life.' That...is what we need to bring to our schools: experiences that are so full of the wonder of life, so full of connectedness, so embedded in the context of our communication, so brilliant in the insights that we develop and the analyses that we devise, that all of us, teachers and students alike, can learn to live lives that are truly satisfied" (Delpit 104). Delpit ends by suggesting methods for accommodating diversity.

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In his "Savage Inequalities," Kozol describes the horrid inequalities present in society and the public education systems in East St. Louis, IL, North Lawndale and the South Side of Chicago, New York, Camden, NJ, and Washington, DC. The realities that he describes are someone's reality, and that alone is enough to spur someone to action. Throughout his personal experiences, though, Kozol intersperses the history and then-current state of policies and research about what the children were experiencing. He talks in depth about racial tensions and what they look like and their impact today as well as the importance of early childhood literacy rates.

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Rose's "Why School" asks the thoughtful question, "What kind of education benefits a democracy brimming with a diversity of interest, motivations, and abilities?" (Rose 139). He challenges our current concept of intelligence by insisting that we place far too many limitations and expect far too little in regards to critical thinking, fierce life-long learning, and each individual's capacity for the two. He insists that "instead of this intellectual richness, we have developed a language that falsely defines entire economic eras and entire categories of workers by body and hand alone" (Rose 91). We have stripped floor workers down to hands and motions instead of valuing each individual's capacity to be a fierce learner. Because of this, Rose asserts that fixing our public education system requires a comprehensive, long-term, and wholesome approach addressing all aspects of a child's life. We focus far too much on "scores, rankings, and an elaborate technology of calibration and compliance" instead of utilizing testing and accountability programs that include educational enrichment and teacher professional development (Rose 64). Instead of providing children with excellent educations, we prepare them for certain tests to see bumps in test scores (Rose 51). In order to truly transform our schools, we must break our traditional views of public education and allow creativity, freedom, and ferocity to create a new public education system that produces sharp, intelligent thinkers instead of over-tested robots.

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This study is published by the U.S. Department of Education in collaboration with the Institute of Education Sciences: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance and What Works Clearinghouse. The study begins by solidifying its credibility and giving an overview of dropout prevention and then gives six recommendations for dropout prevention. The first recommendation is diagnostic and is to "utilize data systems that support a realistic diagnosis of the number of students who drop out and that help identify individual students at high risk of dropping out." The second through fourth recommendations are targeted interventions and are to "assign adult advocates to students at risk of dropping out," "provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance," and to "implement programs to improve students' classroom behavior and social skills". The last two recommendations are school wide interventions and recommend that the school "personalize the learning environment and instructional process," and "provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and to serve them after they leave school." For each of these recommendations, the authors first provide the strength or level of evidence then provide a brief summary of the evidence to support their recommendation. Next, they give practical ways to carry out the recommendation, and they close by discussing potential roadblocks and suggesting approaches to offset the roadblocks.

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