



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Ensuring a bright future for every child

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NEWS RELEASE

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MDE Cites Record-Low Dropout Rate in Response to State Auditor's Performance Audit for Office of Dropout Prevention

JACKSON, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) held up its sustained record of improved student achievement over the past six years – particularly the state's record-low dropout rate – in response to the Office of the State Auditor's (OSA) performance audit for the MDE Office of Dropout Prevention. State law established the office in 2006, though no specific state funds are targeted for the office.



The OSA report made no mention of the MDE's broader, updated strategy to improve student achievement and how it successfully raised student outcomes.

"This audit completely ignores the progress made in performance by schools, districts, and students across Mississippi," said Dr. Carey Wright, state superintendent of education. "This project was described as a performance audit, but there are no performance metrics included in the report."



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The OSA audit cited the MDE for not adhering to the 2006 law because it no longer operates a stand-alone dropout prevention office, disregarding the fact that the MDE's Office of Secondary Education leads agency-wide dropout prevention efforts. Those efforts are embedded throughout the Mississippi State Board of Education (SBE) Strategic Plan.

Since the Strategic Plan was adopted in 2014, the MDE has spearheaded initiatives that pushed the state's graduation rate to an all-time high of 85%, up from 74.5% in 2014; reduced the state's dropout rate to an historic low of 9.7%, a decrease from 13.9% in 2014; and significantly improved student achievement from pre-K through grade 12.

The audit also erroneously cites the MDE for using inapplicable graduation rate data when reporting to SBE and the public. The MDE calculates the four-year graduation rate in accordance with the definition established in Section 8101(25) of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

"Given the tremendous progress Mississippi students, teachers and schools have made over the past six years, it is disheartening to read a report that focuses on outdated procedures that have not been effective," Wright said. "The State Board of Education Strategic Plan has modernized the state's approach to education, which has resulted in historic and sustained student achievement across Mississippi. The nation now considers Mississippi a leader in education because our students are making faster progress than nearly every other state."

Read the [MDE's complete response to the OSA audit](#).

Read the [2018-19 Superintendent's Annual Report](#) for details about student achievement reaching an all-time high.

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