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### ***The Canton Public School District Makes a Significant Increase in its Graduation Rate***

***Two years ago when Superintendent Dwight Lockett took the helm of the Canton Public School District he faced a daunting task of lowering the district's dropout rate from 42.7% and raising its graduation rate from 29.7 percent. After months of constantly communicating his vision, restructuring his team, and refocusing the district by raising expectations, the district has experienced significant progress. Superintendent Lockett says while the district still faces many challenges and has not reached its full potential, he is excited about its progress and is encouraged to stay the course until more of the district's students graduate and go on to pursue higher degrees.***

***In the two years since Lockett has been Superintendent, the district's dropout rate went from 42.7% in 2005-'06 school year to 10.8 percent in 2007-'08. That is over 30% more students choosing to stay in school. The graduation rate went from 29.7 percent in 2005-'06 to 65% in 2007-'08. That is 35.3 % more students graduating.***

***What does Lockett attribute to the improvements? "There are a number of factors involved. I believe an increased focus on academic performance, communicating the message of the importance of graduation starting from kindergarten through high school, identifying students who are at risk of failing and dropping out , removing 90% of our over-aged students in middle school and placing them in a fast track program that better caters to their needs are all factors that helped the district improve. We have also done a better job of***

*tracking students in terms of what courses or subject area tests they need and offering more assistance to their specific needs. It has been a district wide effort coupled with better parental involvement. We have raised expectations for students to not only graduate but to go on to college to pursue higher degrees.”*

*Luckett says he also appreciates the efforts of the team of professionals working together to accomplish the goals and mission of the district. “I cannot praise our teachers and administrators enough for their relentless efforts to move our district to a higher level of success. It takes a team effort to reach greater academic performance.” He says the State Department of Education and the district’s School Board of Trustees have also been supportive in the process.*

*Luckett says Dropout prevention starts with making parents and the community aware by placing more emphasis on the needs of students. “We pay close attention to the demographics of the students we serve. We understand the environments they come from and place a greater emphasis on meeting them where they are,” says Luckett. The district also focuses on the needs of students with disabilities so they can graduate or receive certificates of completion.*

*Here are just a few of the changes the district has made to aid in its dropout prevention efforts:*

- *Implemented a speaker series to get professionals to talk to students about career choices*
- *Increased mentors*
- *Offer Saturday school*
- *Offer afterschool tutorial*
- *Improved Curriculum alignment*
- *Developed district test to track students’ progress*
- *Revamped curriculum and state and federal programs offices*
- *Hired new principals*

*Luckett says he is hopeful the district is positioning itself to reach its full potential in the near future and meet the challenges of more rigorous state requirements.*