

Canton, Mississippi
March 2, 1964

Negro School Patrons of the Canton Schools:

Monday, March 2, we had present in our negro schools 915 students and absent 2625. Those students who attended school got the benefit of a day's learning, and those who remained out learned nothing, and will receive zeros in their work if they are unable to present excused absences. Now ask yourselves one question and try to come up with an honest answer-- Who actually got hurt by this day's absence from school? The answer is "Nobody, absolutely nobody except your boys and girls, who should be trying to get an education, and the teachers of your schools." For every thirty students in average daily attendance during the year, the state provides for each school one teacher. When there are many students absent, naturally, the average daily attendance will be lowered and the teacher supply furnished by the state will be less. There is no compulsory school law in Mississippi, so there are none who can actually make children attend school except those who should be most interested in their welfare -- namely, their parents. Schools will go right on operating tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, and those who wish to learn may attend and profit, and those who wish to stay at home and pass up educational opportunities may so do. No one is going to try to force your children to attend school -- that responsibility is yours. To those who wish to go to school no harm is going to be done, for the principals and teachers will see that all students are properly looked after.

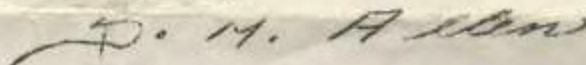
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In the past few years, about three-fourths of a million dollars has been spent for buildings and equipment. The schools have come a tremendously long way from the little 1, 2, and 3-teacher schools to the buildings which we have today -- some of the most adequate buildings in the state. Great improvements have been made in every area of school activity and will continue to be made with your support.

There is something else that all parents should know, and that is, if students once report to school they shall not leave the campus of their own accord without a written permit from their principal. This is a written policy established by the School Board, and applies to all students, negro and white. To fail to abide by this school board policy will bring immediate suspension. Once your children report to school, they are under the jurisdiction of your teachers and principals. When they are out of school, they are under your jurisdiction.

To those parents who saw fit to see that your children were in school Monday, we commend you, to those parents who didn't know whether your children were in school, we say, "You should have known," and to those who wilfully kept them out, we say, "Your child has suffered, and your teachers as well." I sincerely believe that most of you want your children in school, and that is my reason for getting out this letter of explanation. For any further information, you may call the principal of the Attendance Centers where your children are enrolled.

Sincerely,



D. M. Allen, Superintendent
Canton Public Schools

To be signed by parents and returned to homeroom teacher by student who was absent Monday, March 2.

My child was absent from school because _____

SIGNED _____

Parent's signature