

**OFFICE OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT, OVERSIGHT AND RECOVERY**  
**Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Items**  
**February 20-21, 2014**

**OFFICE OF CONSERVATORSHIP**

05.A. Report from the Commission on Starkville Consolidated School District Structure

The Commission on Starkville Consolidated School District Structure has completed the report as required in HB 716 and delivered the report to the Governor, Lt. Governor, Speaker of the House, Senate Education Chair, and the House Education Chair on January 28, 2014.

No Action: Discussion Only

Back-up material attached

By: Representative Barker

To: Education

HOUSE BILL NO. 716  
(As Sent to Governor)

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A COMMISSION ON STARKVILLE CONSOLIDATED  
2 SCHOOL DISTRICT STRUCTURE TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE 2014  
3 REGULAR SESSION OF THE LEGISLATURE REGARDING THE METHOD FOR  
4 CONSOLIDATING THE COUNTY INTO ONE SCHOOL DISTRICT WITH ONE LOCAL  
5 SCHOOL BOARD; TO PROVIDE THAT IN OKTIBBEHA COUNTY THERE SHALL BE  
6 AN ADMINISTRATIVE CONSOLIDATION INTO ONE SCHOOL DISTRICT TO BE  
7 DESIGNATED AS STARKVILLE CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT, WHICH SHALL  
8 BE A COUNTYWIDE MUNICIPAL SEPARATE SCHOOL DISTRICT EFFECTIVE JULY  
9 1, 2015; TO PROVIDE THAT UNTIL SUCH TIME CONSOLIDATION BECOMES  
10 EFFECTIVE, THE OKTIBBEHA COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT SHALL REMAIN UNDER  
11 CONSERVATORSHIP OF THE MISSISSIPPI RECOVERY SCHOOL DISTRICT; TO  
12 PROVIDE FOR THE COMPOSITION OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE NEW  
13 STARKVILLE CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT; TO DIRECT THE STATE BOARD  
14 OF EDUCATION TO ADMINISTRATIVELY CONSOLIDATE ANY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
15 WHICH DOES NOT VOLUNTARILY FOLLOW THE CONSOLIDATION ORDER; TO  
16 ABOLISH THE FORMER SCHOOL DISTRICT FOLLOWING THE ADMINISTRATIVE  
17 CONSOLIDATION AND PROVIDE FOR THE TRANSFER OF SCHOOL DISTRICT  
18 ASSETS AND LIABILITIES; TO PROVIDE FOR EXECUTION OF TEACHER AND  
19 SCHOOL DISTRICT EMPLOYEE CONTRACTS AND THE PREPARATION OF A SCHOOL  
20 DISTRICT BUDGET IN THE NEW SCHOOL DISTRICT; TO DIRECT THE STATE  
21 BOARD OF EDUCATION TO PROMULGATE REGULATIONS TO IMPLEMENT SUCH  
22 ADMINISTRATIVE CONSOLIDATION; TO PROVIDE A TWO-YEAR WAIVER FROM  
23 ACCOUNTABILITY AND STATE ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR THE NEW  
24 STUDENT POPULATION; TO AMEND SECTION 37-7-103, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF  
25 1972, IN CONFORMITY; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

26 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

27 **SECTION 1.** (1) There is hereby created and established an  
28 advisory council to be known as the Commission on Starkville  
29 Consolidated School District Structure. It shall be the



30 responsibility of the Commission on Starkville Consolidated School  
31 District Structure to review the current structure of the school  
32 districts and schools in Starkville, Mississippi, and in Oktibbeha  
33 County, Mississippi, and make recommendations on future actions of  
34 the provision and transition of service of the newly consolidated  
35 school district in order to improve both the quality of education  
36 and the efficiency with which it is delivered. The commission  
37 shall not decide the issue of whether or not the districts shall  
38 be consolidated. The commission shall be composed of seven (7)  
39 members as follows:

40 (a) The State Superintendent of Education, or his  
41 designee, who shall serve as Chairman of the Commission;

42 (b) Three (3) representatives of the Starkville School  
43 District appointed by the Board of Trustees of the Starkville  
44 School District and who may be members of the board or the  
45 Superintendent of Schools;

46 (c) One (1) resident of the former Oktibbeha County  
47 School District to be appointed by the State Superintendent of  
48 Education;

49 (d) The Conservator for the Oktibbeha County School  
50 District appointed by the State Board of Education; and

51 (e) One (1) representative of Mississippi State  
52 University appointed by the President of Mississippi State  
53 University.



54           The Commission on Starkville Consolidated School District  
55 Structure shall meet within thirty (30) days of passage of this  
56 act upon the call of the State Superintendent of Education and  
57 shall hold hearings and meet as necessary and develop a report to  
58 the Legislature, the Governor and the State Board of Education on  
59 or before March 1, 2014, with recommendations to accomplish the  
60 following:

61           (a) Review the current structure of school districts  
62 and the location of schools in Starkville, Mississippi, and  
63 Oktibbeha County, Mississippi, and recommend how they can be  
64 consolidated into one (1) school district in order to improve both  
65 the quality of education and the efficiency at which it is  
66 delivered.

67           (b) Review the capital facility needs of both school  
68 districts and recommend methods of financing necessary  
69 improvements, including the possibility of pledging Mississippi  
70 Adequate Education Program funds for capital improvement purposes.

71           (c) Detail in the report how best to implement  
72 consolidation and make any other recommendations on how to  
73 maximize education quality in Starkville and Oktibbeha County  
74 while eliminating duplicative and wasteful administrative  
75 spending.

76           (d) The commission shall also be authorized to  
77 recommend that portions of the Oktibbeha County School District be  
78 merged into districts in adjoining counties.





79           The commission shall have the authority to raise and to  
80    expend nonstate funds. The State Department of Education shall  
81    provide staff and such other support as the commission deems  
82    appropriate. After submitting its report on or before March 1,  
83    2014, the commission shall be dissolved.

84           SECTION 2. (1) In Oktibbeha County, Mississippi, in which  
85    are located, as of January 1, 2013, two (2) school districts,  
86    there shall be an administrative consolidation of all of those  
87    school districts in the county into one (1) new countywide  
88    municipal separate school district to be designated as Starkville  
89    Consolidated School District which shall consist of the territory  
90    of the former Oktibbeha County School District and the Starkville  
91    School District, effective on July 1, 2015. Until June 30, 2015,  
92    preceding the effective date of the required administrative  
93    consolidation of school districts in the county, the Oktibbeha  
94    County School District shall remain in conservatorship, under the  
95    authority and control of the Mississippi Recovery School District  
96    of the State Department of Education. At such time that the  
97    administrative consolidation becomes effective, the central  
98    administrative office of the Starkville Consolidated School  
99    District shall be located in Starkville, Mississippi.

100           (2) On or before July 1, 2014, the State Board of Education  
101    shall serve the local school board of the Starkville School  
102    District with notice and instructions regarding the timetable for  
103    action to be taken to comply with the administrative consolidation



104 required in this section. In the new consolidated school district  
105 there shall be a countywide municipal separate school district  
106 board of trustees, which shall consist of the existing members of  
107 the Board of Trustees of the Starkville School District serving as  
108 a member on July 1, 2015. However, upon the first occurrence of a  
109 vacancy on the board as a result of an expired term of an  
110 appointed board member, that vacancy shall become an elected  
111 position and shall be filled by the election of a board member by  
112 the county board of supervisors in the manner prescribed in  
113 Section 37-7-203(1) for the election of a member who resides  
114 outside of the incorporated municipal limits. The Board of  
115 Supervisors of Oktibbeha County shall thereafter publish the same  
116 in some newspaper of general circulation in the county for at  
117 least three (3) consecutive weeks and after having given notice of  
118 publication and recording the same upon the minutes of the school  
119 boards of each school district in the county. Any school district  
120 affected by the required administrative consolidation in the  
121 county that does not voluntarily consolidate as ordered by the  
122 State Board of Education shall be administratively consolidated by  
123 the State Board of Education, to be effective immediately upon  
124 action of the State Board of Education. The State Board of  
125 Education shall promptly move on its own motion to  
126 administratively consolidate a school district which does not  
127 voluntarily consolidate in order to enable the affected school  
128 districts to reasonably accomplish the resulting administrative



129 consolidation into one (1) consolidated school district by July 1  
130 following the motion to consolidate. The affected school  
131 districts shall comply with any consolidation order issued by the  
132 State Board of Education.

133 (3) On July 1, 2015, following the motion of State Board of  
134 Education to consolidate school districts in Oktibbeha County, the  
135 Oktibbeha County School District shall be abolished. All real and  
136 personal property which is owned or titled in the name of the  
137 school district located in such former school district shall be  
138 transferred to the Starkville Consolidated School District. The  
139 Board of Trustees of the Starkville Consolidated School District  
140 shall be responsible for establishing the contracts for teachers,  
141 principals, clerical and administrative staff personnel for the  
142 2015-2016 school year and thereafter and shall consult with the  
143 conservator for the establishment of contracts for teachers,  
144 principals, clerical and administrative staff personnel located in  
145 the former Oktibbeha County School District for the 2015-2016  
146 school year. The superintendent and assistant superintendent(s)  
147 of schools of the former Starkville School District shall continue  
148 to serve in like administrative capacities of the Starkville  
149 Consolidated School District, but in no instance shall the  
150 administrative leadership of the Starkville Consolidated School  
151 District exceed three (3) assistant superintendents to be  
152 appointed by the superintendent of the former Starkville School  
153 District. No superintendent serving in the former school district



154 located in the county designated as an under-performing school  
155 district or placed under conservatorship shall be eligible for  
156 appointment as a superintendent or assistant superintendent in the  
157 Starkville Consolidated School District. Likewise, no trustee  
158 serving in the former school district located in the county  
159 designated as an under-performing school district or placed under  
160 conservatorship shall be eligible for election to the new Board of  
161 Trustees of the Starkville Consolidated School District. It shall  
162 be the responsibility of the board of trustees to prepare and  
163 approve the budget of the respective new reorganized district, and  
164 the board of trustees may use staff from the former school  
165 district to prepare the budget. Any proposed order of the State  
166 Board of Education directing the transfer of the assets, real or  
167 personal property of an affected school district in the county,  
168 shall be final and conclusive for the purposes of the transfer of  
169 property required by such administrative consolidation.

170 (4) Nothing in this section shall be construed to require  
171 the closing of any school or school facility, unless the facility  
172 is an unneeded administrative office located within a school  
173 district which has been abolished under the provisions of this  
174 section. All administrative consolidations under this section  
175 shall be accomplished so as not to delay or in any manner  
176 negatively affect the desegregation of another school district in  
177 the county pursuant to court order.



178 (5) The State Board of Education shall promulgate rules and  
179 regulations to facilitate the administrative consolidation of the  
180 school districts in Oktibbeha County pursuant to this section.  
181 The consolidated districts shall make an election within one (1)  
182 year of consolidation concerning the group term life insurance  
183 described in Section 25-15-9(7).

184 (6) For the initial three (3) years following the  
185 administrative consolidation required by this section, the State  
186 Department of Education shall grant a waiver of accountability and  
187 state assessment requirements to the Starkville Consolidated  
188 School District for the student population enrolled therein from  
189 the former Oktibbeha County School District when determining the  
190 new consolidated school district accreditation level on the  
191 performance and accountability rating model.

192 (7) The governing school board and superintendent of schools  
193 of the Starkville Public School District shall collaborate with  
194 the State Department of Education and the appointed conservator of  
195 the Oktibbeha County School District, as soon as practicable after  
196 the effective date of this act, for the planning and transition of  
197 programs, services and alignment of curriculum for the  
198 administratively consolidated school districts.

199 **SECTION 3.** Section 37-7-103, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
200 amended as follows:

201 37-7-103. From and after July 1, 1987, the school board of  
202 any school district shall have full jurisdiction, power and



203 authority, at any regular meeting thereof or at any special  
204 meeting called for that purpose, to abolish such existing  
205 district, or to reorganize, change or alter the boundaries of any  
206 such district. In addition thereto, with the consent of the  
207 school board of the school district involved, the school board may  
208 add to such school district any part of the school district  
209 adjoining same, and with the consent of the school board of the  
210 school district involved, may detach territory from such school  
211 district and annex same to an adjoining district. Provided,  
212 however, that the consent of the school board of the school  
213 districts involved in implementing the provisions of Section  
214 37-7-104 \* \* \*, ~~Mississippi Code of 1972,~~ or Section 2 of this act  
215 shall not be required for the administrative consolidation of such  
216 school districts pursuant to the order of the State Board of  
217 Education.

218       **SECTION 4.** The Attorney General of the State of Mississippi  
219 shall submit this act, immediately upon approval by the Governor,  
220 or upon approval by the Legislature subsequent to a veto, to the  
221 Attorney General of the United States or to the United States  
222 District Court for the District of Columbia in accordance with the  
223 provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended and  
224 extended.

225       **SECTION 5.** Sections 2 through 5 of this act shall take  
226 effect and be in force from and after the date it is effectuated



227 under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended and  
228 extended.

229         **SECTION 6.** Section 1 of this act shall take effect and be in  
230 force from and after its passage.



**REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR OF MISSISSIPPI,  
THE MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE, AND  
MISSISSIPPI BOARD OF EDUCATION  
BY THE COMMISSION ON STARKVILLE  
CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT STRUCTURE**

**January 24, 2014**



**REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR OF MISSISSIPPI, THE MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE,  
AND MISSISSIPPI BOARD OF EDUCATION BY THE COMMISSION ON  
STARKVILLE CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT STRUCTURE**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

In the 2013 Legislative Session, the Legislature passed and the Governor approved House Bill 716 consolidating Starkville School District and Oktibbeha County School District with the consolidation becoming effective on July 1, 2015. House Bill 716 also established the Commission on Starkville Consolidated School District Structure ("Commission"). The Commission is composed of seven (7) members representing the Starkville School District, Oktibbeha County School District, Mississippi State University, and the Mississippi Department of Education. The members are:

Dr. Larry Drawdy, Chairman, designee of Dr. Lynn J. House, former Interim State Superintendent of Education;

Dr. Bill Welch, Alternate, designee of Dr. Lynn J. House, former Interim State Superintendent of Education;

Dr. David Shaw, representative of Mississippi State University appointed by the President of Mississippi State University;

Three (3) representatives of the Starkville School District appointed by the Board of Trustees of the Starkville School District and who may be members of the board or the Superintendent of Schools -

Dr. Lewis Holloway, Superintendent,

Mr. Rex Buffington, Parent and

Dr. Lee Brand, Board Member;

Two (2) representatives of the Oktibbeha County School District, one of which is the school district conservator and the other a member appointed by the State Superintendent.

Dr. Margie Pulley, Conservator, Oktibbeha County School District; and

Mr. Orlando Trainer, a resident of the Oktibbeha County School District appointed by the former Interim State Superintendent of Education.

The responsibility given to the Commission by the Legislature was to review the current structure of the districts in Starkville, Mississippi and in Oktibbeha County, Mississippi and make recommendations on future actions of the provision and transition of services

of the newly consolidated school district in order to improve both the quality of education and the efficiency with which it is delivered.

## **II. MISSION STATEMENT**

The Commission adopted the following Mission Statement:

To make recommendations to the 2014 regular session of the Legislature as to the best possible plan for expanding the Starkville School District to include students and schools from the Oktibbeha County School District, and thereby to:

- (a) Improve the quality of education by
  - providing the best opportunity for every child in the community to learn and develop with excellence being the goal and
  - identifying and enlisting all partners who can help achieve this goal; and
- (b) Improve efficiency to maximize available resources; and
- (c) Achieve a successful consolidation of districts that can serve as a model for others in Mississippi.

## **III. MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION**

The Commission met on the following dates in 2013: May 15, June 6, July 16, August 22, September 5, September 18, October 3, October 22, October 29, November 6, November 7, November 21, December 10, and December 23. Also, the Commission met on January 14 and January 24, 2014. Copies of the minutes are available upon request made to the Mississippi Department of Education. On August 22, 2013, the Commission held a public hearing where approximately two hundred (200) interested citizens attended. A copy of the transcript is attached to this report as Exhibit "A." A copy of the list of individuals who signed in attendance is attached to this report as Exhibit "B." The comments of the public at the hearing on September 5, 2013 include the following: (1) that the public desired the Commission to proceed with a sense of urgency, (2) that the districts should have been consolidated earlier, (3) that the Oktibbeha County students could be successful, and (4) the public desired consolidation be a model for other consolidations in the state. A twitter town hall was conducted by the Parents for Public Schools on the evening of November 5, 2013 with 28,000 followers. A summary of that transcript is attached to this report as Exhibit "C." A second public hearing was held on November 7, 2013. A summary of that transcript is attached to this report as Exhibit "D." Another twitter town hall meeting was held on December 17, 2013. A summary of that transcript is attached to this report as Exhibit "E." On December 19, 2013, citizens from the Education Association of East Oktibbeha

County Schools met to discuss the consolidation. The President of the Education Association of East Oktibbeha County Schools is Ms. Jacqueline Ellis and the Vice President is Mr. Maurice Robinson. The Commission members present at the meeting were Dr. David Shaw, Mr. Rex Buffington, Mr. Orlando Trainer, and Dr. Margie Pulley. A copy of the recommendations is attached as Exhibit "F."

#### **IV. CHARGE FROM THE MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE**

The Legislature required the Commission to develop a report to the Governor, the Legislature, and the State Board of Education on or before March 1, 2014, with recommendations to accomplish the following:

(a) Review the current structure of school districts and the location of schools in Starkville, Mississippi, and Oktibbeha County, Mississippi, and recommend how they can be consolidated into one (1) school district in order to improve both the quality of education and the efficiency at which it is delivered,

(b) Review the capital facility needs of both school districts and recommend methods of financing necessary improvements, including the possibility of pledging Mississippi Adequate Education Program funds for capital improvement purposes,

(c) Detail in the report how best to implement consolidation and make any other recommendations on how to maximize education quality in Starkville and Oktibbeha County while eliminating duplicative and wasteful administrative spending, and

(d) The Commission shall also be authorized to recommend that portions of the Oktibbeha County School District be merged into districts in adjoining counties.

#### **A. RECOMMEND THE METHOD TO CONSOLIDATE THE SCHOOLS IN STARKVILLE AND OKTIBBEHA COUNTY INTO ONE SCHOOL DISTRICT TO IMPROVE BOTH THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND EFFICIENCY AT WHICH IT IS DELIVERED**

The Legislature charged the Commission with the responsibility of reviewing the current structure of school districts and the location of schools in Starkville, Mississippi, and Oktibbeha County, Mississippi, and recommend how they can be consolidated into one (1) school district in order to improve both the quality of education and the efficiency at which it is delivered. Dr. Holloway and Dr. Pulley reported that several educational services between the districts had already been consolidated, such as Vocational Education classes, Alternative Education, ROTC, and Special Education.

The following charts document statistical data regarding every school in the Oktibbeha County School District and the Starkville School District:

**Oktibbeha County School District  
106 West Main Street  
Starkville, MS 39759**

District/Schools	Grades	Grade Population									Enrollment	QDI	Performance Rating	Growth
District	N/A										856	136	C	Yes
		Pre-K	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	SPED Self-Contained				
East Oktibbeha Elementary	Pre-K – 6	20	51	39	44	45	44	39	32	*	320	138	C	Yes
West Oktibbeha Elementary	Pre-K – 6	20	26	23	33	30	27	13	26		198	173	B	Yes
				7	8	9	10	11	12					
East Oktibbeha High	7 – 12			39	32	45	36	40	22		214	113	D	Yes
West Oktibbeha High	7 – 12			23	14	23	23	19	17	*	124	138	D	Yes

**Starkville School District  
401 Greensboro Street  
Starkville, MS 39759**

District/Schools	Grades	Grade Population									Enrollment	QDI	Performance Rating	Growth
District	N/A										4285	155	C	Yes
		Pre-K	K	1	2					SPED Self-Contained				
Sudduth Elementary	Pre-K – 2	17	347	376	334					*	1087			
						3	4							
Ward-Stewart Elementary	3 – 4					362	345			*	714	170	B	Yes
								5						
Henderson Intermediate School	5							345		*	351	164	C	Yes
		6	7	8										
Armstrong Middle School	6 – 8	311	346	296						*	963	146	D	No
					9	10	11	12	GED					
Starkville High School	9 – 12				281	346	278	252	*	*	1170	157	C	Yes

\*Numbers are masked to prevent the identification of students.

Note: The enrollment counts were based on the Month 2 net membership report for the 2013-2014 school year in the Mississippi Student Information System (MSIS). The accountability results are based on the 2012-2013 Mississippi Statewide Accountability System.



All schools in the Starkville School District are located within a two-mile radius in the City of Starkville. West Oktibbeha County Elementary School is located in Sturgis, Mississippi (the southwest corner of Oktibbeha County). West Oktibbeha County High School is located in Maben, Mississippi (the northwest corner of Oktibbeha County). East Oktibbeha County Elementary School is located in Starkville, Mississippi (the northeast corner of Oktibbeha County). East Oktibbeha County High School is located in Crawford, Mississippi (the southeast corner of Oktibbeha County). Maps depicting the location of the schools are attached as Exhibit "G." A map depicting the location of the residences of the students enrolled in the two school districts is attached as Exhibit "H."

## **PROPOSED PLAN FOR THE CONSOLIDATION OF STARKVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT AND THE OKTIBBEHA COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

The commission has agreed by consensus to the following plan for the consolidation of Starkville School District and the Oktibbeha School District into one (1) school district in order to improve both the quality of education and the efficiency at which delivered for all students.

### **A. Education of Students in the Starkville/Oktibbeha Consolidated School District (July 1, 2015)**

1. All public school students who reside in the Starkville and Oktibbeha County School Districts will be educated by the Starkville Consolidated School District.

### **B. Structure of Elementary Schools (July 1, 2015)**

2. West Oktibbeha Elementary School will remain a Pre-K through Grade 6 elementary school in the Starkville Consolidated School District. The school zone for West Oktibbeha Elementary School will remain the same.
3. East Oktibbeha Elementary School will remain a Pre-K through Grade 6 elementary school in the Starkville Consolidated School District. The school zone for East Oktibbeha Elementary School will remain the same.
4. The following elementary schools in Starkville will serve the same grades in the Starkville Consolidated School District:
  - Sudduth Elementary (Grades K-2);
  - Ward-Stewart Elementary (Grades 3-4); and
  - Henderson Elementary (Grade 5).

The school zones for Sudduth Elementary, Ward-Stewart Elementary and Henderson Elementary will remain the same.

### **C. Structure of Middle Schools (July 1, 2015)**

5. All 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in Starkville and Oktibbeha County School Districts will attend Armstrong Middle School.
  - Sixth Grade Students in the Starkville School District will attend Overstreet Elementary.
  - The Alternative School located at Overstreet Elementary will move to an alternate site.

### **D. Structure of High School (July 1, 2015)**

6. Students in Grades 9-12 at East Oktibbeha High School and West Oktibbeha High School will attend Starkville High School.

### **E. Long Term Plan**

7. Long Term Plan – (July 1, 2016 or July 1, 2017 or future date, if funding is made available by the State Legislature, local ad valorem taxes or other funds.)

#### Plan A – (July 1, 2017)

- Build a 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade school.
  - Cost approximately \$14M
- Reassign the 9<sup>th</sup> grade from the Starkville High School.
- All 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders in the Starkville Consolidated School District will attend Armstrong Middle School.

#### Plan B – (July 1, 2016)

- Build 16 classrooms at Armstrong Middle School to provide classrooms for all 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in the Starkville Consolidated School District.
- Cost approximately \$3,069,000.00.

(Plan B is not the preferred plan to provide the best educational opportunities for students and should be initiated only if there is a lack of funding for Plan A.)

### **F. Pre-Kindergarten Classrooms**

8. Increase the number of four-year-old Pre-Kindergarten classrooms in the Starkville Consolidated School District. (Currently, Starkville School District has two (2) four-year-old Pre-Kindergarten classes. Currently, Oktibbeha County School District has one (1) four-year-old Pre-Kindergarten class at East Oktibbeha Elementary and one (1) four-year old class at West Oktibbeha Elementary.)

## **B. REVIEW CAPITAL FACILITY NEEDS AND RECOMMEND METHODS OF FINANCING NECESSARY IMPROVEMENTS**

The Mississippi Legislature charged the Commission with reviewing the capital facility needs of both school districts and recommend methods of financing necessary improvements, including the possibility of pledging Mississippi Adequate Education Program funds for capital improvement purposes.

### **1. Facility Needs:**

#### **A. Oktibbeha County School District**

Architect Gary Shafer reviewed facilities for the Oktibbeha County School District and suggested renovations at a minimum of \$1.5 million up to \$5 million to include upgrades on air, heat, plumbing and roof. This amount does not address all issues. (See architect's report as Exhibit "I.")

#### **B. Starkville School District**

During the 2012-2013 school year, the Starkville School District developed a long-range facility plan. A BASYS analysis was done of every building assessing the building on physical condition (50%), educational suitability (30%), technology readiness (10%), and site condition (10%).

The district focused on roofs that were over 25 years old, windows, HVAC, and technology. Ninety-six HVAC units were over 26 years old. Two 20-ton units were over 50 years old.

The district divided these projects into Tiers I through IV. To fund these projects the district passed a 3-mil referendum. The district is currently in Tier II, expecting completion by August 2014. (See architect's report as Exhibit "J.")

### **2. Pledging MAEP funds**

Mr. Todd Ivey, Director of the Office of Educational Accountability at the Mississippi Department of Education, provided his opinion on the issue of pledging Mississippi Adequate Education Program funds for capital improvement purposes in a memorandum dated August 20, 2013. A copy of this memorandum is attached as Exhibit "K." Mr. Ivey provided the following to the Commission:

If the Commission decides to recommend pledging MAEP funds to finance capital improvement projects, it must be pointed out that MAEP funds are provided to local school districts to meet operational needs of the district, e.g., pay salaries of district employees, help offset transportation cost, provide funding to help offset utilities cost, etc. In the event that a portion of MAEP funds are redirected to service debt, it will require the district to search for ways to offset the reduced amount

of MAEP funds available for operations. This will be accomplished through reducing operational expenditures, increasing local ad valorem dollars for operations, or a combination of the two.

The Commission does not recommend the use of MAEP funds for capital improvement purposes.

3. 3-mil note

The Oktibbeha County School District Conservator will issue up to a 15-year 3-mil note levy to fund repairs to the Oktibbeha County School District's two elementary schools. The 3-mil note would raise approximately \$1.5 million. This amount would not be sufficient to totally renovate the facilities.

4. Legislative authority to issue a reverse referendum for a general obligation bond.

Since the \$1.5 million is not sufficient for a total renovation of the facilities at Oktibbeha County School District, the Commission is requesting a legislative change. Issuing bonds through an Oktibbeha County School District reverse referendum is one necessary method of local funding. A reverse referendum is a means in which the governing body (Oktibbeha County) may pass a direct resolution to issue bonds for funding capital improvement projects. The measure allows for a waiting period in which citizens may petition the body for a public referendum. If no petition is filed, the measure may stand without passage of a public referendum. The Mississippi Legislature has precedent for extending authority to execute reverse referendums for specific time periods and purposes.

The Commission recommends that the Legislature extend this authority to Oktibbeha County School District within the 2014 Legislative session, effective July 1, 2014, so that the Oktibbeha County School District may take advantage of this available means of generating local funds for education and begin the process of upgrading County facilities and resources in preparation for consolidation in July 2015.

The Commission also recommends that the Legislature extend this authority to Starkville School District within the 2014 Legislative session, effective July 1, 2014 for a period of 10 years so that the Starkville School District may take advantage of this available means of generating local funds for education and continue the process of upgrading facilities and resources in preparation for consolidation.



**C. BEST METHOD TO IMPLEMENT CONSOLIDATION AND MAKE ANY OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO MAXIMIZE EDUCATION QUALITY**

The Mississippi Legislature charged the Commission to detail in the report how best to implement consolidation and make any other recommendations on how to maximize education quality in Starkville and Oktibbeha County while eliminating duplicative and wasteful administrative spending.

The Transition Plan for the Consolidation for the 2014-2015 School Year will be conducted by the administrations of both school districts.

1. The administrators will consolidate programs, including but not limited to, the following:
  - a. Athletic programs and student organizations
  - b. Bus routes
  - c. Curriculum consistent with Common Core State Standards
  - d. Districts' business offices and financial accounting software
  - e. Federal programs
  - f. Food service
  - g. Safety crisis plan
  - h. Special education programs
2. Oktibbeha County School District students in grades 9-12 will be offered courses in Starkville available during first block on space-available basis or at times agreed upon by the two districts.
3. The consolidated school district will dispose of property not needed for school purposes as allowed by state law (Sections 37-7-451, et seq.) to include Boys and Girls clubs, community centers, Head Starts, etc. Extensive input from the local communities will be sought before a decision is made on the use of buildings not needed for school purposes.

**D. AUTHORITY TO RECOMMEND THAT PORTIONS OF THE OKTIBBEHA COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT BE MERGED INTO DISTRICTS IN ADJOINING COUNTIES**

In House Bill 716, 2013 Legislative Session, the Legislature authorized the Commission to recommend that portions of the Oktibbeha County School District be merged into districts in adjoining counties. On September 5, 2013, superintendents and/or board members from the districts adjoining Oktibbeha County appeared before the Commission to respond to the following questions:

1. Is your school district interested in absorbing Oktibbeha County School District students K-12 (some or all students)?
2. Does your school district have individual capacity to absorb some or all students of the Oktibbeha County School District?
3. Do you have adequate transportation capacity to absorb some or all students of Oktibbeha County School District?
4. Where are your individual schools located in relationship to Oktibbeha County?
5. Would your district be willing to negotiate a per pupil amount in lieu of ad valorem revenue?

The responses of the school representatives are attached as Exhibit "L."

**At the end of the meeting, it was the consensus of the Commission that students residing in Starkville and Oktibbeha County would be educated by the Starkville Consolidated School District. Therefore, the Commission does not recommend that any portion of the Oktibbeha County School district be merged into districts in adjoining counties.**

#### **V. MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP**

- **It is recommended that the Consolidated District capitalize on its proximity to Mississippi State University (MSU) in developing a Partnership School District.** The Partnership District will rely on three elements:
  1. **Expand MSU collaboration with the Consolidated District in all existing buildings/schools.** Expand existing relationships to strengthen collaboration on teacher education including field experiences; develop and demonstrate new and innovative teaching methods; develop partnerships to test curriculum, examine assessment outcomes, understand student behavior and engagement; support student academic achievement in a variety of disciplines and increasing use of technology; support remediation and tutoring including after-school and summer programs; and continue and develop other projects that build from the strengths of both parties.
  2. **Develop a joint new Middle School for Sixth and Seventh Grade as a new partnership school.** The school will be operated by and integrated with the Consolidated District. This will be a true partnership with the Consolidated District and MSU, with shared responsibility for curriculum, programming, teacher professional development, etc. It will capitalize on a new facility designed specifically for the purpose of a partnership/demonstration school, with observation rooms and research space. It will be located on the MSU campus, but easily accessible to the community and Consolidated District staff, administrators, and students.

3. **Develop a new MSU Research and Outreach Center on Rural Education.** The center will engage in research on teacher education in rural areas, unique issues of rural education, teacher recruitment for rural areas, and using technology to support teaching and learning in rural areas. The College of Education and other colleges and research centers at MSU will participate. STEM education will be a primary focus, specifically looking at effective instruction for low-income/rural/minority students. No such center exists in the southern U.S., and only four exist nationally.
- **It is recommended that funding be provided to MSU and the Consolidated District to develop the Sixth/Seventh Grade Partnership School on the MSU campus.** The school will include with research and professional development spaces and equipment (e.g., observation rooms) and will have a STEM-based curriculum. Total funding estimated for the new facility is \$17M. MSU will take responsibility for raising, through private gifts and grants, a total of \$7M, requiring state funding of \$10M.
  - **It is recommended that the Consolidated District capitalize on the existing strength of on-campus programs in the College of Education and the School of Human Sciences to expand high-quality Pre-K programs to all children in the city and county.** This will involve:
    1. **Expand MSU's Pre-K program.** MSU will partner with the Consolidated District to expand an accredited program for three- and four-year-olds to create an exemplary model pre-K program, including children with disabilities. The year-round program will be based on the Mississippi Early Learning Standards (which prepare children for readiness for a Common Core based Kindergarten program) and will be developed around the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Standards for developmentally appropriate early childhood education. In addition to serving children and families in the county the program will provide field experiences for teacher education students in the College of Education and the School of Human Sciences.
    2. **Expand MSU's Infant and Toddler program.** Similarly, the existing zero- to two-year-old program will be enhanced by increasing capacity for enrollment. The infant and toddler program will be based on NAEYC standards for early childhood programs and the state of Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines that provide guidance for developmentally appropriate, play-based learning and development environment for infants and toddlers. The program will provide field experiences for pre-service teachers in the School of Human Sciences.
    3. **Expand outreach to other centers in the county, and throughout the state.** This program will support pre-K programs throughout Oktibbeha County to help move those programs toward accreditation and increasing implementation of the state's Early Learning Standards. In addition to

supporting existing pre-K programs in the county, the outreach center will also create opportunities for internships, exchanges with centers and Pre-K programs around the state, building on existing outreach programs in our various programs.

4. **Enhance outreach programs to families.** This program will build on programs already underway through MSU and the Consolidated District to reach out to families in Oktibbeha County around early childhood, learning, and parenting. It will collaborate with family studies students in Human Sciences. The focus will be on parenting skills, helping students learn, physical fitness, health and nutrition.
- **It is recommended that funding be provided to MSU to develop the pre-K program on the MSU campus.** Total funding estimated for the new early childhood facility is \$14 million. MSU will take responsibility for raising, through private gifts and grants, a total of \$6M, sufficient to cover costs of the infant and toddler program and research and outreach facilities, requiring state funding of \$8M for the pre-K portion of the facility. Ongoing funding to sustain the program will be provided by a combination of dedicated state funding, tuition, grants, private donations, and university support.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMISSION

Mississippi remains at a critical juncture in providing education for children of our state. There has been a strong emphasis by the Governor, Lt. Governor, members of the State Legislature and the State Board of Education for needed improvements in all aspects of educating children, especially in the areas of early childhood education, Pre-K, K-3 education, and teacher preparation. This plan submitted by the Commission on Starkville Consolidated School District Structure specifically addresses the Oktibbeha County School District and Starkville School District consolidation. However, the plan reaches the entire state with the creation of a demonstration school to increase educator quality and development of early childhood education programs at Mississippi State University that may be utilized and replicated in other universities and school districts throughout the state. The following recommendations can be used as an initial head start to give Mississippi a foothold in meeting these critical needs of the State of Mississippi and to address the economic needs of this state by having a well-educated workforce.

The Commission makes the following recommendations:

1. That 2016 expiring term board member remain in place until January 2017. In November of 2016, an election will be held for a board member who resides outside of the incorporated municipal limits in the manner prescribed in Section 37-7-203. The elected board member would take office for a five (5) year term beginning January 1, 2017.

2. To amend Mississippi Code 37-7-104.3 (House Bill 716) as follows: For the initial three (3) years following the administrative consolidation required by this section, the State Department of Education shall grant a waiver of accountability and state assessment requirement to the Starkville Consolidated School District ~~for the student population enrolled therein from the former Oktibbeha County School District when determining the new consolidated school district accreditation level on the performance and accountability-rating model.~~
3. Statutory authority be given to Oktibbeha County School District to contribute funds to improvements of Starkville buildings to accommodate Oktibbeha County School District students, e.g., expansion of Starkville High cafeteria and renovations necessary to permit occupation of Overstreet School.
4. Statutory authority be given to Oktibbeha County School District Conservator to seek a reverse bond referendum to provide Oktibbeha County School District means to finance up to \$10 million to assist in upgrading Oktibbeha County School District buildings and to create more equitable tax burdens between the two school districts.
5. The Oktibbeha County School District Conservator will issue up to a 15-year 3-mil note levy to fund repairs to Oktibbeha County School District's two elementary schools.
6. Designate the Starkville Consolidated School District as a demonstration school district that will, in partnership with Mississippi State University, establish best practices in education that will be shared with other districts throughout the state to strengthen educational achievement of all pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade students in Mississippi. See MS Code Ann. Section 37-131-15 as Exhibit "M."
7. New 6-7 Grade School: Provide up to \$10 million in funding to the Starkville Consolidated School District and Mississippi State University for construction of a new 6-7 grade school to achieve a successful consolidation. The new school will include facilities and equipment that will be used by Mississippi State University to prepare students, teachers and administrators to become change agents in education throughout Mississippi.
8. Pre-Kindergarten Program: Provide up to \$8 million for construction and \$1 million annually in operating costs for five years to Mississippi State University

and the Starkville Consolidated School District for establishment and operation of a quality pre-kindergarten program for all four-year-olds in Oktibbeha County. The pre-kindergarten program will be created as a demonstration project with a goal of expanding pre-kindergarten in other counties throughout the state, ultimately achieving universal availability of quality pre-kindergarten education for all four-year-olds in Mississippi by 2025.

9. Increase debt limit cap to 20% of countywide assess valuation with the inclusion of the reverse referendum option when pursuing issuance of General Obligation Bonds.
10. To fund legal fees for private counsel and/or AG office in assisting the two school districts with desegregation cases.

The above recommendations by the Commission are specific only to the consolidation of Starkville School District and Oktibbeha County School District and do not apply to other districts in the State. This consolidation is a unique situation involving the Starkville School District and the Oktibbeha County School District and provides a distinct partnership with Mississippi State University. This partnership is not found in any public school and university setting in the State of Mississippi. The Legislature may consider some of these recommendations for future consolidations.

## **VII. SUBMISSION OF THE PLAN TO THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI, EASTERN DIVISION**

Section 37-7-104.3 of the Miss. Code (House Bill 716, 2013 Legislature Session) provides that all administrative consolidations under this section shall be accomplished so as not to delay or in any manner negatively affect the desegregation of another school district in the county pursuant to court order.

Both Starkville School District and Oktibbeha County School District are under Consent Decrees in desegregation cases in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Mississippi, Eastern Division. This Report of the Commission on Starkville Consolidated School District Structure will be submitted to the United States District Court for the Northern District of Mississippi, Eastern Division.



APPROVED BY CONSENSUS OF THE COMMISSION ON STARKVILLE  
CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT STRUCTURE:

Larry Drawdy  
Dr. Larry Drawdy

1/24/14  
Date

David Shaw  
Dr. David Shaw

1/24/14  
Date

Lewis Holloway  
Dr. Lewis Holloway

1/24/14  
Date

Margie Pulley  
Dr. Margie Pulley

1/24/14  
Date

Orlando Trainer  
Mr. Orlando Trainer

1/24/14  
Date

Rex Buffington  
Mr. Rex Buffington

1/24/14  
Date

Lee Brand  
Dr. Lee Brand

1/24/14  
Date

Bill Welch  
Dr. Bill Welch, Alternate

1/24/14  
Date