

The STARKVILLE SPARK is GROWING!

As we welcome the opportunities of the
STARKVILLE CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT

The spark.

*We are on the verge of something amazing for our community and for our children as our two school districts merge to form the **Starkville Consolidated School District** in July 2015. Starkville School District will grow to include some 800 new students from Oktibbeha County, sparking a new flame of educational success. We, along with the Commission on Starkville Consolidated School District Structure, have resolved to make the expanded district a true model for education in Mississippi, and as such, it will provide unprecedented opportunities for our students.*

WHY CONSOLIDATION?

House Bill 716 passed by the Mississippi Legislature in 2013 outlines the administrative consolidation of Starkville School District and Oktibbeha County School District and establishes the **Starkville Consolidated School District**, effective July 2015. Starkville School District has embraced this mandate as the spark for expanding educational opportunities for all children living in Oktibbeha County to new levels of excellence.

WHAT IS THE COMMISSION?

House Bill 716 also established the **Commission on Starkville Consolidated School District Structure**, an advisory group comprised of representatives from Starkville School District, Oktibbeha County, Mississippi State University and the Mississippi Department of Education. The Commission is the first of its kind in the state, and was charged, in part, with making recommendations in order to “improve the quality of education and the efficiency at which it is delivered.”

For the last several months, the Commission has held public hearings and explored many scenarios for how the new district can be structured. In its report to the Mississippi Legislature to be delivered this month, the Commission will present a unique plan for consolidation which the Starkville School Board of Trustees endorsed on January 14, 2014.

LEADERSHIP IN THE NEW DISTRICT

Through HB716, the current superintendent of the Starkville School District (Dr. Lewis Holloway) will become the superintendent of the consolidated district. In addition, the Board of Trustees of the consolidated district will consist of the existing members of the current SSD Board as of July 1, 2015. Upon the first occurrence of a vacancy on the board of the consolidated district due to an expired term of an appointed board member, the vacancy will become an elected position and must be an individual who lives outside the City of Starkville. Thereafter, three members will be appointed by the Starkville Board of Alderman; one will be elected from outside the city limits but within the current SSD district; and one will be elected from the county outside those boundaries.

The plan.

The Commission Report to the Mississippi Legislature includes the following:

PARTNERSHIPS WITH MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

The new Starkville Consolidated School District will be groundbreaking in its partnership with the state’s largest university. Mississippi State University students and faculty are already heavily integrated into SSD classrooms, and we are excited about the unique opportunities for our students through an expanded partnership.

Starkville Consolidated School District and Mississippi State University will construct a **new partnership school for grades 6-7** located on or near the MSU campus. The new school will include facilities and equipment to be used by MSU in preparing students, teachers, and administrators to become change agents in education throughout the state. This partnership school will allow our students to be among the first in Mississippi to experience new and developing best practices in education.

Mississippi State University and the Starkville Consolidated School District will establish and operate a quality **pre-kindergarten program for all four-year-olds** in Oktibbeha County. The pre-K program will be created as a demonstration project and sustained through a unique partnership between MSU and SCSD 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. The expansion of a county-wide pre-K program will provide our students an early spark to educational success in one of the best play-based learning environments in the state.

WHERE STUDENTS WILL ATTEND SCHOOL

Elementary

Students living in the current attendance zones for Sudduth Elementary, Ward Stewart Elementary and Henderson Elementary will continue to attend those schools in the consolidated district.

Students living in the current attendance zones for East Oktibbeha Elementary and West Oktibbeha Elementary will continue to attend those schools in the consolidated district.

Middle School

All 6th - 7th-grade students living in Starkville/Oktibbeha County will attend the new SCSD/MSU 6-7 Partnership School to be constructed on or near the MSU campus.

All 8th - 9th grade students living in Starkville/Oktibbeha County will attend Armstrong Middle School (with necessary upgrades and renovations).

High School

All 10th - 12th grade students living in Starkville/Oktibbeha County will attend Starkville High School (with necessary upgrades and renovations).

Short Term Adjustments beginning in August 2015 (until construction of the new 6-7 school is complete):

6th grade students in the current attendance zones for East Oktibbeha County Elementary and West Oktibbeha County Elementary will continue to attend those schools.

6th grade students in the current attendance zone for Armstrong Middle School will attend Overstreet School.

7th - 8th grade students in the current attendance zones for East Oktibbeha High School and West Oktibbeha High School will attend Armstrong Middle School.

9th - 12th grade students in the current attendance zones for East Oktibbeha High School and West Oktibbeha High School will attend Starkville High School.

Beginning in August 2014, Starkville High School will expand current services to Oktibbeha County School District 9th - 12th grade students during the first block for additional opportunities in Advanced Placement courses, fine arts offerings, and other educational electives.

Only the beginning.

*It begins with a spark. The Starkville Consolidated School District is poised to set a groundbreaking example for how the consolidation process in Mississippi can be more than downsizing paperwork and meeting minimum test-score requirements. It can be **the spark** for providing greater educational opportunities than ever before and achieving a new and greater shared benchmark of excellence.*

***The Starkville spark is growing.** It is getting brighter and brighter as we welcome new students, new partnerships and new opportunities. A **new flame** of success for our community has been ignited, and our work is just beginning. Yet, our commitment to every student in Starkville and Oktibbeha County, every day remains the same...*

Find the spark. And fuel it.

LOCAL FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission Report makes the following recommendations to the Mississippi Legislature for local funding authorizations:

- Authorize Oktibbeha County School District to contribute funds for renovation of current Starkville School District buildings required to accommodate incoming county students.
- Authorize the OCSD Conservator to seek a County reverse bond referendum as a means to provide \$10 million in local funds for school improvements required for achieving a successful consolidation, necessary parity between district facilities, and a more equitable tax burden between citizens in the two districts.
- Direct the OCSD Conservator to issue a 15-year 3-mil note levy to fund repairs to County elementary facilities to bring them to necessary parity with SSD elementary facilities.
- Increase the Oktibbeha County debt limit cap to 20% of countywide assess valuation with the inclusion of the reverse referendum option when pursuing issuance of General Obligation Bonds.
- Direct the Oktibbeha County Board of Supervisors to continue its support of the Starkville Consolidated School District to the extent of no less than what is currently provided - including, but not limited to, maintaining the current level of financial support.
- Confirm that the Oktibbeha County Board of Supervisors provides an office, furnishings, and utilities to serve the Starkville Consolidated School District Office of Superintendent, in accordance with Mississippi Code Section 37-9-70.

STATE FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission Report makes the following recommendations to the Mississippi Legislature for state funding provisions:

- Provide up to \$9 million for construction of the new SCSD/MSU Partnership 6-7 School
- Provide up to \$8 million and \$1 million annually for five years for construction and operation of the SCSD/MSU Partnership Pre-Kindergarten School and program
- Provide necessary funds required for obtaining Department of Justice approval of the consolidated district