

FACT SHEET: HOUSE BILL 716

During the 2013 Session of the Mississippi Legislature, Representative Toby Barker (R-Hattiesburg) sponsored House Bill (HB) 716 to address the administrative consolidation of the Oktibbeha County School District (OCSD) with the Starkville School District (SSD). After being amended in both the House and Senate, the bill passed both houses of the Mississippi Legislature and was signed into law by Governor Phil Bryant in May 2013.

HB716 CREATED THE **COMMISSION ON STARKVILLE CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL STRUCTURE**

An essential feature of HB716 is the creation of an advisory council, or “the Commission on Starkville Consolidate School District Structure” (the Commission). The legislation charged the Commission with making recommendations to the Legislature to shape the forthcoming consolidation of the OCSD and SSD. Although H.B. 716 included a default framework for consolidating the two school districts, the Commission was established to make recommendations that could reshape the framework established in H.B. 716. The Commission is composed of representatives or appointees of the Mississippi Department of Education (Dr. Larry Drawdey, Chair), the SSD (Dr. Lewis Holloway; Lee Brand, SSD Board member; and Rex Buffington, SSD parent), the OCSD (MDE appointee Orlando Trainer and MDE employee and OCSD conservator Dr. Margie Pulley), and Mississippi State University (Dr. David Shaw).

What You Need to Know:

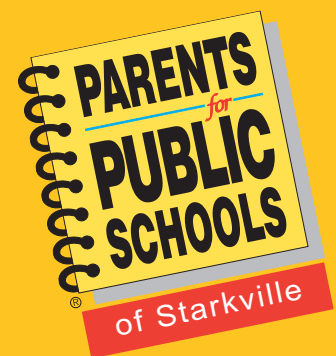
- Among other things, the Commission was charged with **holding hearings and making recommendations to the Legislature** for the 2014 Legislation session to address (1) how consolidation can most effectively and efficiently be accomplished, (2) necessary facility and program improvements, (3) methods for how facility and program improvements can be financed, and (4) whether portions of the OCSD could be merged into districts of adjoining counties.

- In the absence of additional legislation, the OCSD will be abolished and administratively consolidated with the SSD on July 1, 2015. The consolidated district will be a separate municipal school district called the “**Starkville Consolidated School District.**”
- The board of trustees of the consolidated district will consist of the existing members of the current SSD 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. Afterwards, 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.
- All property of the OCSD will become the property of the Starkville Consolidated School District. The superintendent and other administrators of the current SSD will become the administrators of the new consolidated district.
- The legislation **does NOT require** that any current school or school facility in the OCSD or SSD be closed and merged with another school. It also does not interfere with **current attendance zones.**
- The consolidated district will be granted a **3-year waiver of accountability** and state assessment requirements for students coming from the Oktibbeha County School District.
- HB716 charges the Commission with making “recommendations on how to **maximize education quality**” for students living in Oktibbeha County through the new consolidated school district.

Contacting the Commission:

Commission meetings are open to the public to observe and stay informed. The Commission has also established an email address where concerned stakeholders may submit comments on items discussed in the Commission meetings and general feedback on the consolidation effort.

Comments may be submitted via email to starkville_oktibbeha@mde.k12.ms.us



SIGN the PLEDGE TO OUR CHILDREN at ppsstarkville.org