

Understanding school consolidation policy:

A data-driven research-based analysis of school size, school district performance and poverty in Mississippi school districts

A presentation by Southern Echo, Inc. and the Mississippi Delta Catalyst Roundtable

Southern Echo, Inc.

1350 Livingston Lane

Jackson, MS 39213

Phone: 601-982-6400

Email: souecho@bellsouth.net

Website: www.southernecho.org

The Partner organizations of the Mississippi Delta Catalyst Roundtable:

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Activists With A Purpose (Grenada County)

Concerned Citizens for a Better Greenville (Washington County)

Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County

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Southern Echo (statewide)

Youth Innovation Movement Solutions (Lee County)

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Understanding School Consolidation Policy:

A data-driven research-based analysis of school size, school district performance and poverty in Mississippi school districts

by Southern Echo, Inc. and the Mississippi Delta Catalyst Roundtable

Introduction

Governor Haley Barbour created a Commission on Mississippi Educational Structure and charged it with the solution before investigating to determine what remedies may actually be related to the nature of the problem. In his opening charge to the Commission on January 18, 2010, Governor Barbour called for wide-scale school district consolidation that would substantially reduce the total number of districts from 152 to approximately 100 or less. The Governor instructed the Commission to focus consolidation efforts upon failing and underperforming school districts in reducing the total number of school districts and, as a direct consequence, to increase the enrollment size of the remaining districts.

The Governor asserted that this would render substantial cost savings in public education, notwithstanding the numerous studies to the contrary. Dr. Gale Gaines, Vice-President of the Southern Regional Education Board testified at the Legislative Task Force on Underperforming Schools on Nov. 11, 2009 that:

“... educational research does not show a consistent educational benefit from consolidating districts. Even the economic benefits of merger reduce as school-district size increases, Gaines said, so that a merger of two districts with more than 1,500 students each would not save any money in administrative costs.”¹

Under the new state educational accountability assessment system, which has rated all districts and schools for the 2009-2010 school year, 8 school districts are rated as Failing, 53 school districts are rated as At Risk of Failing, and more than 20 percent of the approximately 1,000 local schools are rated as Failing or At Risk of Failing.² The Governor’s prescription is to target these schools for consolidation, thereby sending their students to larger school districts.

All school districts in Mississippi have low-wealth students. In Mississippi 65% of the students – 3 of every five -- come from low-wealth families. Of the 152 school districts 71% -- 108 districts -- have a majority of students who come from low-wealth families. In some districts 100 percent of the students come from low-wealth families. In the district with the lowest percentage of low-wealth students over 22 percent of the students – 1 of every 5 --- come from low-wealth families. The highest concentration of low-wealth students in Mississippi is in the Delta region.³

¹ Ward Schaefer, Jackson Free Press, Dec. 22, 2009.

² To see map of the new accountability assessment ratings by school district use this link to the Southern Echo website: <http://southernecho.org/s/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/acct-status-ratings.pdf> or view Section 4, Map #1 of this Report.

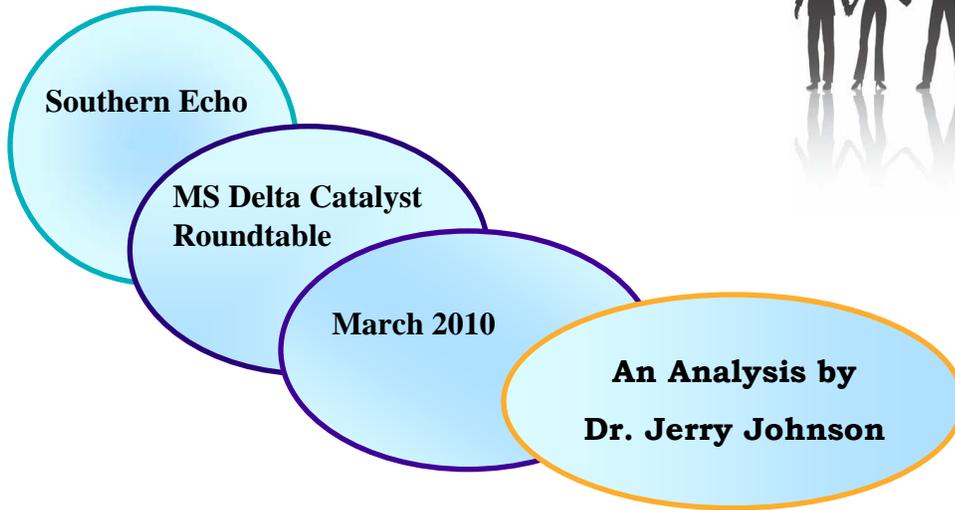
³ To view a map that shows the percentage of students in poverty by school district use this link to the Southern Echo website: http://southernecho.org/s/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/65_percent_students_at-risk.pdf

There is both an extraordinary need to deal with this dilemma of failing and at-risk-of-failing school districts and schools, and intense pressure from among all education stakeholders to develop remedies for this situation. Any proposed policy remedies should be based on research-based evidence. The Commission retained the consulting firm of Augenblick & Palaich to research the data and propose remedies.

At the 2nd meeting of the Commission on February 1, 2010, Augenblick and Silverstein drew a distinction between “objective research” and “advocacy research”, and appeared to suggest that so-called “objective research”, such as their research, is inherently more trustworthy and reliable than “advocacy research”. We think this viewpoint casts an inappropriate shadow on the validity of research done by community-based organizations that advocate for public education using the same data-driven analytical research tools and skills used by the firm of Augenblick and Palaich. It is time to acknowledge that grassroots community organizations have the same validity as other constituencies to be at the policy formation table.

At the 3rd meeting of the Commission on March 8, 2010, John Augenblick and Justin Silverstein presented findings from its data and contended that the Commission ought to use the observed correlation between lower school district size and lower QDI scores as a central basis for evaluating whether to consolidate school districts, and as a way of selecting which school districts to consolidate. Augenblick stated unequivocally that there was [no evidence of causation](#) between school size and QDI scores. Nevertheless, he recommended that the Commission use the correlation findings as the basis for policy formation.

We have done our own independent research of the relevant data. We disagree with the analysis and the recommendations provided by Augenblick and Silverstein. The analysis presented in our paper focuses on the relationship between [the size of schools](#) and [student performance outcomes](#) and will document the following conclusion based on the data-driven research-based evidence: To [increase](#) the [size](#) of student enrollments in school districts -- simply by moving these students out of smaller school districts into larger schools -- will [not](#) serve to [increase](#) the [performance](#) of low-wealth students on standardized assessments. The improvement in student performance, and school district QDI ratings, will only occur if the actual education needs of these students are met. Studies show that the needs of low-wealth students are actually better met in smaller schools rather than in larger schools. In fact, this study shows that [in Mississippi the negative impact of poverty on student achievement is about 26% greater in larger districts than in smaller districts](#).



**Some Questions and Answers related to
the promises of School Consolidation in Mississippi:**

Is larger district size associated with higher student performance?

Does that mean that larger district size *causes* higher student performance?

Does district size have anything to do with student performance?

Does this body of evidence apply in Mississippi as well?

Charts:

Figure 1: Poverty's Power Rating in Smaller versus Larger Mississippi school districts (based on 2008-2009 QDI)

Figure 2: Poverty's Power Rating in Smaller versus Larger Mississippi school districts (based on 2008-2009 MDE Assessments)

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Some Questions and Answers related to the promises of School Consolidation in Mississippi by Dr. Jerry Johnson

Is larger district size associated with higher student performance?

Yes. When we performed a bivariate correlation analysis¹ between district enrollment size and district QDI, the result was a statistically significant positive correlation. This means that as school district enrollment increases, school district performance as measured by the QDI increases.

Does that mean that larger district size *causes* higher student performance?

No. As any responsible statistician will quickly point out, *correlation does not mean causation*. In brief, this statement means that the fact that we observe changes in one characteristic or condition that occur at the same time as changes in another characteristic or condition doesn't mean that one characteristic or condition is *causing* the other to happen. In fact, they may not have anything to do with each other.²

But it's possible that they might have something to do with each other, and so it's worth pursuing the question further. One way to do that is by considering whether other school district characteristics that are associated with enrollment size are also associated with QDI performance.

Poverty is the strongest and most persistent threat to academic achievement. So it makes sense to start there. We began by performing a bivariate correlation analysis between *enrollment size* and *poverty*³. The result was a statistically significant correlation: as school district size *increases*, the level of poverty among the student body *decreases*. So – this raises the question as to whether larger district size really has anything to do with the higher levels of performance. Perhaps it's just the fact that larger school districts serve students with lower rates of poverty – fewer student who are “at risk” -- and, therefore, face fewer challenges in the delivery of education to the students.

We can answer this question by performing a *partial correlation analysis* that measures the relationship between two variables -- *district enrollment size* and *QDI performance* -- while taking into account the influence of a third variable -- *poverty* as defined by percent eligible for

¹ A *bivariate* correlation analysis is limited to two variables and measures the extent to which changes in one are associated with changes in the other.

² For example, one study reported a significant *positive correlation* between *lifespan* and the *number of TVs in the home*. Based on the findings, we could conclude that you can increase lifespan by providing people with additional television sets. But that's absurd. Common sense would tell us that people who have more money to buy more TVs also have more money for healthcare, etc. In a statistical analysis, you could "control" for a third variable -- *the level of household income* -- and the significance or relevance of the correlation between TVs and lifespan would disappear. It's kind of a silly example, but you get the idea, no?

³ Note: for our *poverty* measure, we used the MDE-reported percentage of students eligible for free or reduced meals. All data used in these analyses were obtained directly from MDE.

free or reduced meal rate. The results of this analysis indicate that when you account for the influence of [poverty](#) as a variable, the correlation between [size of enrollment](#) and [school district QDI ratings](#) is reduced to non-significance. In other words, the correlation cannot be considered “real”. There is, in fact, [no](#) meaningful relationship between [size of enrollment](#) and [school district QDI ratings](#).

Does district size have anything to do with student performance?

A sizable and very consistent body of research evidence suggests that the influence of school size and district size on student performance is [indirect](#). In other words, enrollment size doesn't [directly](#) impact performance either positively or negatively. Rather, size impacts performance [indirectly](#) by disrupting the relationship between academic achievement and other characteristics.⁴ Most of these studies investigate whether school and district size influence the impact of poverty on student achievement. These studies consistently find that (1) [smaller district size](#) is associated with weakening the negative influence of poverty and (2) [larger district size](#) is associated with strengthening the negative influence of poverty.

In direct terms, we might interpret the results from these studies—conducted in more than 15 states—to suggest that ***smaller size tends to make things better in terms of achievement gaps related to poverty, and that larger size tends to make things worse.*** Of note: a handful of these studies have also considered the relationship between size and other achievement gaps (race/ethnicity-based and gender-based) and obtained similar results.

Does this body of evidence apply in Mississippi as well?

We performed the same analysis used in the earlier studies by comparing [poverty's “power rating”](#) — its impact on student achievement — in smaller versus larger size categories of Mississippi school districts. [Poverty's negative impact on achievement](#) is well documented. Indeed, results of the correlation analyses we performed indicate that [higher levels of poverty](#) are associated with [lower performance](#) as measured by the [QDI](#) and by [state tests](#) at [all grade levels](#) and in [all subject areas](#).

The issue we need to resolve can be described this way: *Is the negative influence of poverty greater or lesser in smaller districts than in larger ones?* To determine the answer we have to look at the strength, or degree, of the relationship between poverty and achievement test scores and assess whether that relationship can be explained statistically by the level of poverty in smaller versus larger districts. If Mississippi is similar to other states, then we would expect to find that poverty has a greater negative impact on student achievement test scores in larger districts than it has in smaller districts.

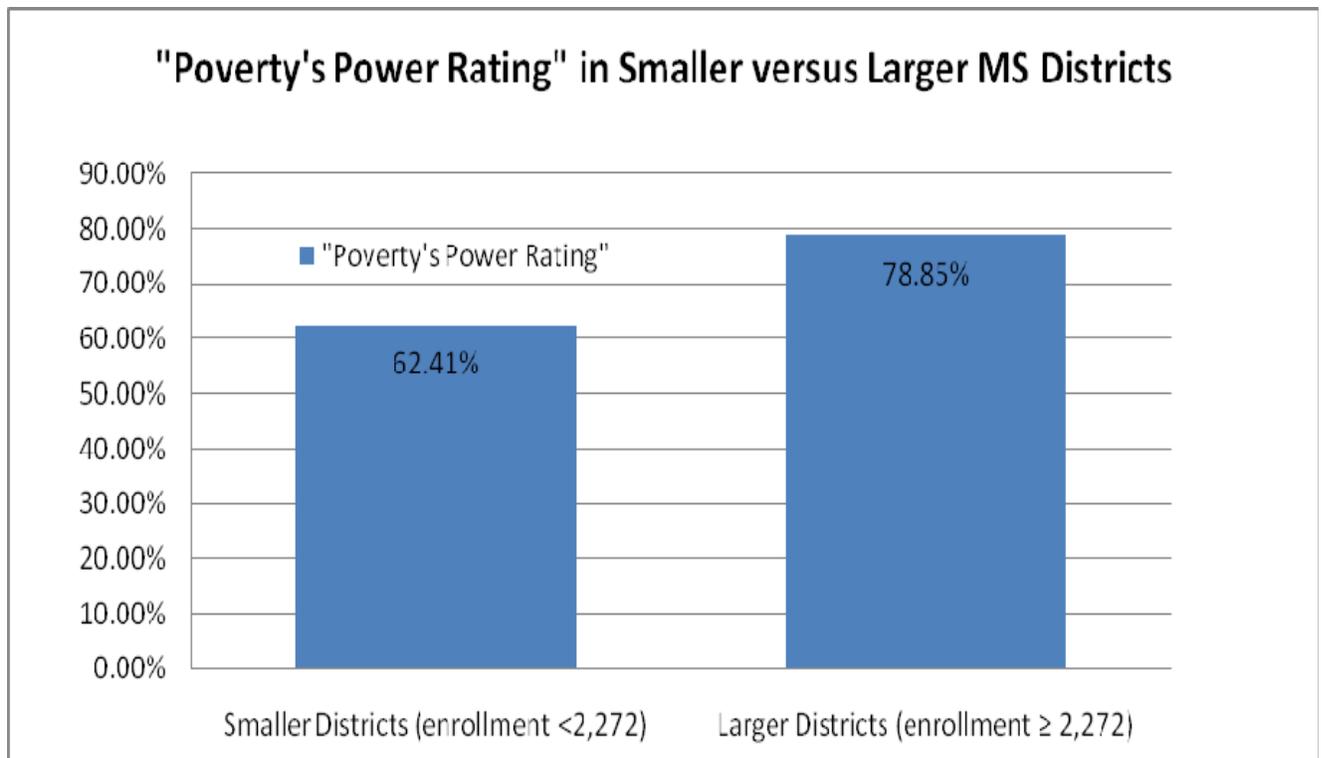
In keeping with some of those earlier reports, we call the strength of the relationship between poverty and achievement outcomes [poverty's “power rating”](#) because it reveals the degree of

⁴ See list of references to studies at end of this document.

negative impact on or influence of poverty over student achievement in a particular group of school districts (in this case, larger versus smaller school districts).

Our analysis of the data shows that Mississippi is similar to other states. In Mississippi the data shows that for school districts as a whole, and at every individual grade level, **poverty's power rating** -- its negative influence or impact -- is *lesser* in smaller school districts than in larger school districts. In *summary*, in Mississippi poverty has a much stronger negative influence or impact on student achievement scores in *larger* school districts than in smaller school districts. See the charts in **Figures 1** and **2** below.

Figure 1. Poverty's Power Rating in Smaller versus Larger Mississippi School Districts (based on 2008-09 QDI)



As we said above, the *power poverty rating* compares the smaller school districts with the larger school districts to explain the extent to which the level of poverty impacts student performance on standardized tests.

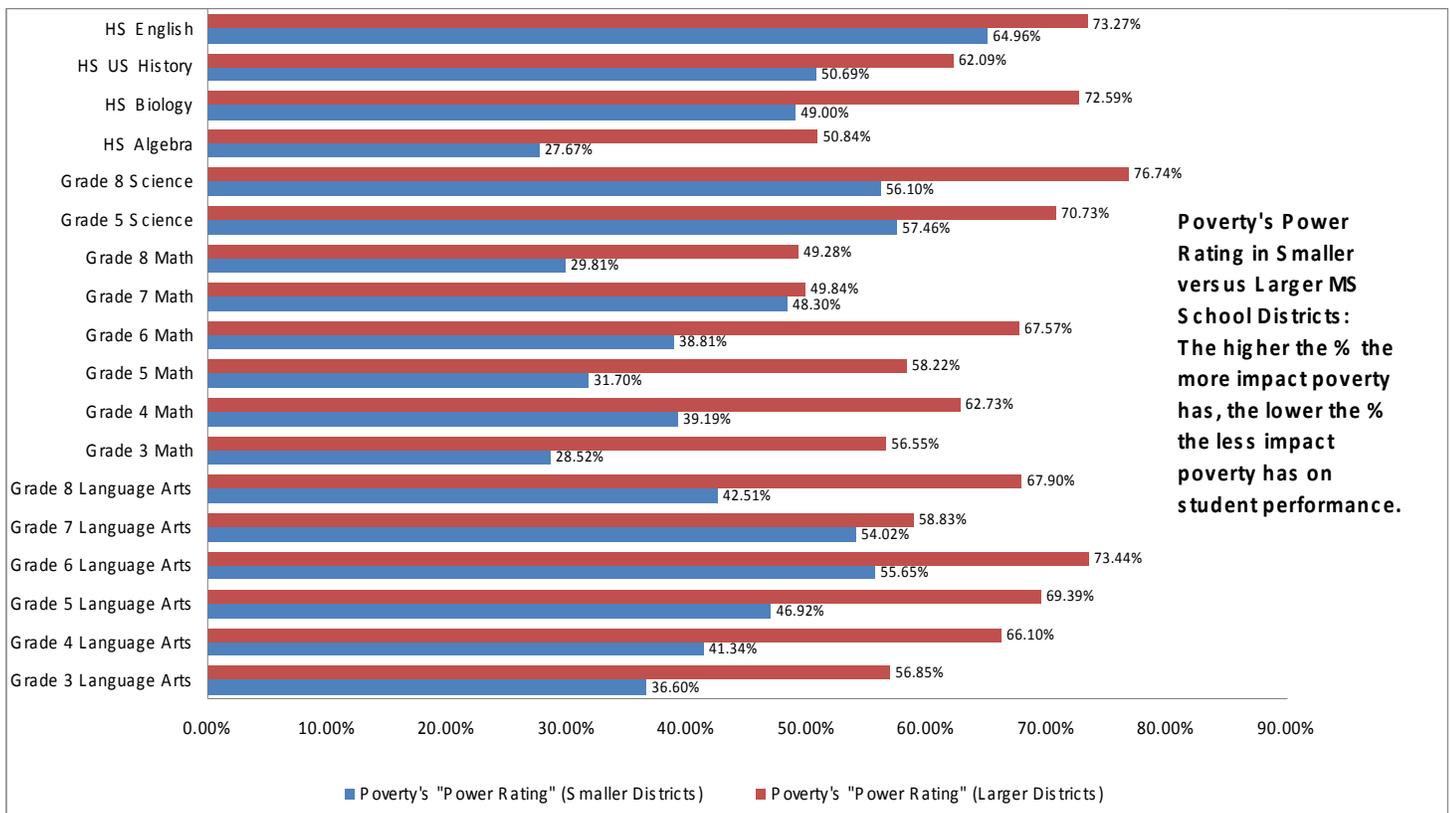
The *percentages* shown in Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the “percent of *variance*” in achievement that is explained by the level of poverty among the school districts. The “percent of *variance*” refers to the degree to which changes in the level of student performance on standardized tests in the school districts are accounted for by changes in the level of student poverty in the school districts.

The larger the “percent of *variance*” the more severe the negative impact of poverty on student performance or achievement.

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate that the “percent of *variance*”, or the negative impact of *poverty (it’s power rating)*, is **greater** in **larger** school districts, and **lesser** in **smaller** districts.

We performed this same analyses using achievement scores from individual grade levels and subject areas (18 assessments in all), and produced the same results. See [Figure 2](#) below.

Figure 2. Poverty’s Power Rating in Smaller versus Larger Mississippi School Districts (based on 2008-09 MDE Assessments)



Bio of Dr. Jerry Johnson

Dr. Jerry Johnson is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Studies at Ohio University, where he teaches courses in educational administration, directs the doctoral program in educational leadership, and serves as co-director of the Institute for Democracy in Education.

A former K-12 educator, Johnson served 8 years as a high school teacher and principal and has taught in principal and superintendent preparation programs for 9 years. Dr. Johnson has published more than 40 research articles, policy papers, and book chapters on rural education, educational equity and achievement gap issues, the effects of school and district size on student achievement, and organizational leadership.

Formerly the research director for the Rural School and Community Trust, a national non-profit organization addressing the crucial relationship between good schools and thriving communities, Dr. Johnson's research has been cited in state school finance litigation and legislation, and he has testified before state legislative committees and presented research briefings on Capitol Hill.

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March 11, 2010, 7:15 pm

Does the Size of a School Matter?

By [THE EDITORS](#)

The Ideal Size



Valerie E. Lee is a [professor of education](#) at the University of Michigan. She is a leading researcher on learning, school organization and size.

In my research using data from a nationally representative sample of U.S. high schools and controlling for prior academic ability as well as other characteristics like social background, we found that there is an ideal size for high schools — ideal in terms of students learning more in mathematics over the four years of high school.

The most effective high schools have 600 to 900 students.

Students learned more in schools enrolling 600 to 900 students, and less in either larger or smaller schools. The relationship between school size and student learning is, thus, not linear.

We felt that high schools with 600 to 900 students were large enough to offer a full and solid curriculum, but small enough so students were known well by their teachers and didn't get lost in the cracks. Our sample included both public and private schools.

We also found that the effect of school size on learning is even more important for less advantaged students (either those with lower-socioeconomic status or minority students). These findings should be a consideration for districts that consolidate schools for budget reasons, particularly because the expected savings of operating fewer schools in many cases (given higher transportation costs, and the need for a denser administrative staff in the large school, for example) may not fully materialize.

The major cost of operating schools is staff. Consolidating two schools into one, if they serve the same number of students, would probably not result in staff reductions.

Think Small and Local



Leonie Haimson, a New York City public school parent, is the executive director of Class Size Matters, a citywide advocacy group.

Kansas City's plan to close nearly half of its public schools will have damaging effects on the children — but not because of school size but because the number of students in each class will increase.

Kansas City should keep classes small and work to improve neighborhood public schools.

Research shows that what's most important is what happens in the classroom, and thus it's critical to keep classes as small as possible to ensure that students receive the attention they need to succeed. Very little of the research on school size has controlled for the factor of class size, and the [few studies](#) that do [control for both factors](#) have found that to boost student achievement and engagement, class size is more important.

Shutting these schools would force students to commute long distances, often resulting in [lower attendance](#), which in turn leads to higher dropout rates. In Chicago, the closing of many neighborhood schools caused an [an increase in gang violence](#). Instead, Kansas City administrators would be wise to do everything they can to keep classes small and work to improve neighborhood public schools, which are often the anchors of their communities, particularly in poor neighborhoods.

[Twenty-six charter schools](#) have opened in Kansas City in recent years. These schools have siphoned off the better students and contributed to declining enrollment at neighborhood schools. Recent studies show that charters enroll [fewer poor and immigrant students](#) than the communities in which they sit, and have caused [increasing segregation](#) nationwide.

New York City has also seen the rapid growth of charter schools, which are now threatening the stability and survival of our public school system. Everyone who cares about preserving our public schools should take heed of what has happened in Kansas City, before it's too late.

Smaller Schools, Better Performance



Herbert J. Walberg is a University Scholar at the University of Illinois at Chicago and is a [Distinguished Visiting Fellow](#) at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. His latest book is “Advancing Student Achievement.”

A huge amount of research, including my own, in more than 25 states shows that other things being equal, smaller schools produce higher academic achievement than larger schools.

Bigger schools tend to be impersonal, departmentalized and bureaucratic.

The “small school effect” was discovered in the 1960s, and the “Canadian effect” refers to small schools in less crowded states near the Northern border that tend to do well even discounting the effects of socioeconomic status and other demographic factors.

Why did American schools become ever larger? James Conant, a president of Harvard University in the 1930s and 1940s, argued that large schools allow more diversity of courses such as Latin, Greek, and vocational preparation. In supporting large schools, economists argued that consolidation of schools would avoid duplication of principals and other school leaders. These arguments led to the large-scale consolidation of both small schools and small school districts.

What education leaders failed to recognize is that large institutions tend to be impersonal, departmentalized and bureaucratic. They tend to treat their staff and those they serve as numbers rather than distinctive individuals with unique needs.

High schools, which tend to be larger, face these problems most acutely. But the rise of middle schools took on some of these problems since they became departmentalized by subject matter, and students may have as many as six teachers, none of whom know them well. Schools, particularly elementary schools, begin the transition from the family to larger adult institutions such as colleges and businesses that serve people from larger geographic areas.

In elementary school, children are more likely to be with other children they know from their neighborhoods. They have the same teacher for much of the day and who is likely to know the child’s parents, siblings, and neighbors.

But elementary schools have grown in size, and families are more mobile than in the past. Thus, elementary schools have become increasingly impersonal despite younger children’s need to be treated as individuals rather than members of categories.

Many Factors Beyond Size



[Rudy Crew](#) served as chancellor of New York City Schools from 1995 to 1999 and superintendent of Miami-Dade County Schools from 2004 to 2008. He is a professor at the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education and president of [Global Partnership Schools](#).

In my judgment school size is much less a determinant value than instruction. Focusing on school size is simply looking at a big picture through a very small lens and missing the real opportunity to address the larger shifts needed in our public education system to recognize, accept, and respond to the challenges of declining revenues and student enrollment.

Large schools can add value because of the ability to offer a wide range of program options.

The value and emphasis should be placed on the way schools are organized and with effective teachers who have content knowledge. We need to deliver instruction in exciting, compelling and diverse ways.

In New York City and Miami-Dade, I looked beyond traditional constraints and moved past the tried-and-true perspectives in creating the Chancellor's District and the School Improvement Zone. These initiatives were achieved without the acquisition of new resources, but with the re-alignment and re-deployment of existing human and financial resources.

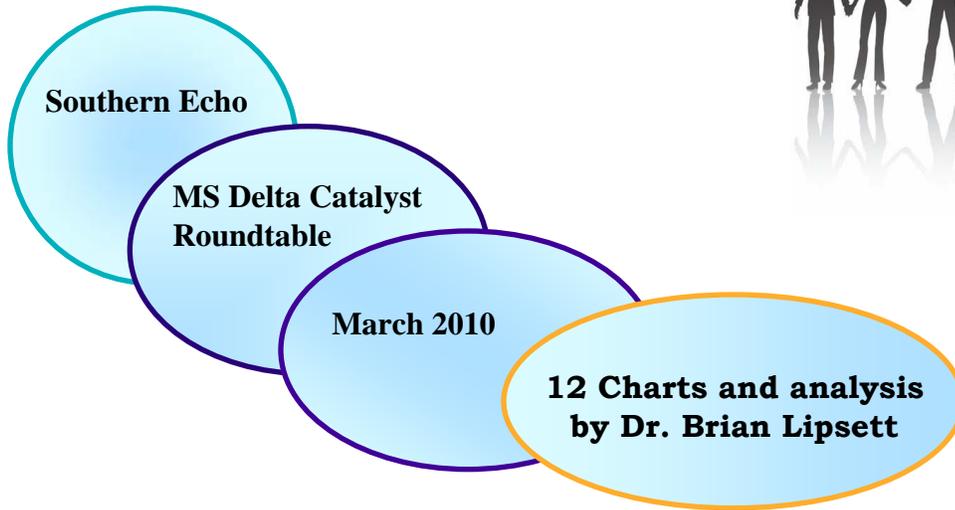
In both cases, I collaborated with community and business leaders, elected officials, school administrators, teachers, parents, and unions to leverage innovation, promote effective models, and provide cover for new approaches that would inevitably need time to prove themselves worthy or not.

Advancing teaching and learning through instructional strategies, including utilization of the arts, is at the core. It's fast becoming the approach of U.S.C.'s Greater Crenshaw Education Partnership and is a tipping point issue for competitive federal grants.

All of these tactics matter so much more than school size, and these remain true across socio-economic, ethnic, and language boundaries. The largest of schools can be broken down into academies to provide the needed relationship between teachers and their students.

In fact, they can actually add value because of the economies of scale and the ability to offer a wide range of program options.

In the quest for higher performing schools, there are so many factors that outrank school size. We must remain focused on efficiency and effectiveness and ensure that decisions serve the bigger picture and make it brighter for all students.



These 12 charts and analysis by Dr. Brian Lipsett illustrate the demographics, poverty, and school districts status under the new state accountability assessment system.

Dr. Lipsett is an expert in Geographic Information Systems database development for research, documentation, and statistical analysis. Dr. Lipsett has a PhD in Administration of Justice from the Pennsylvania State University in State College, PA.

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Chart 1: Nationwide Public School Funding Sources

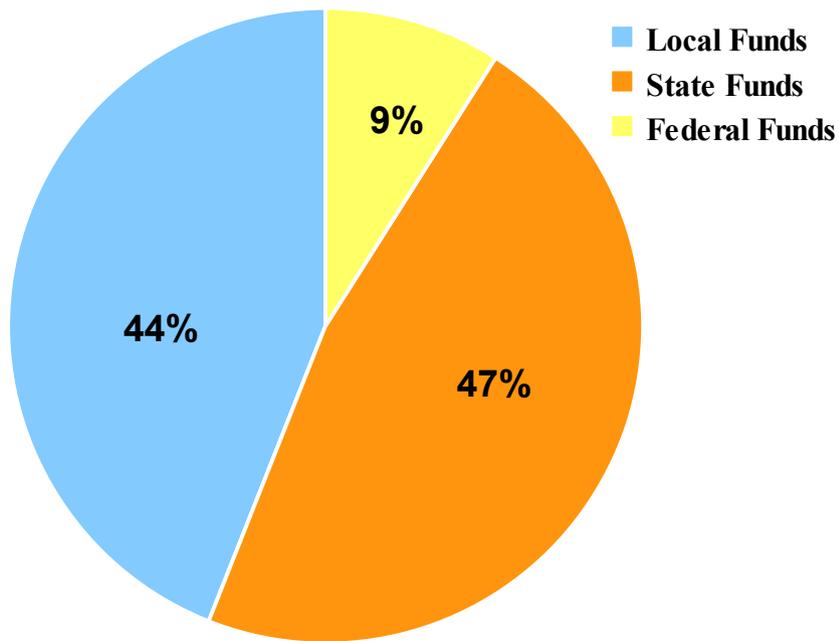


Chart 1: Most school districts in the nation rely on state, local and federal funding. In 2007, on average nationwide, public school districts received 47 % of their revenues from state governments, 44 % from local governments, and 9 % from the federal government. State governments generate revenues primarily from income, sales, excise and real estate taxes, and from fees; local governments primarily from real estate, fees, excise taxes and where permitted, local income taxes; and the federal government from income and estate taxes, and fees.

Chart 2: Mississippi Public School Funding Sources

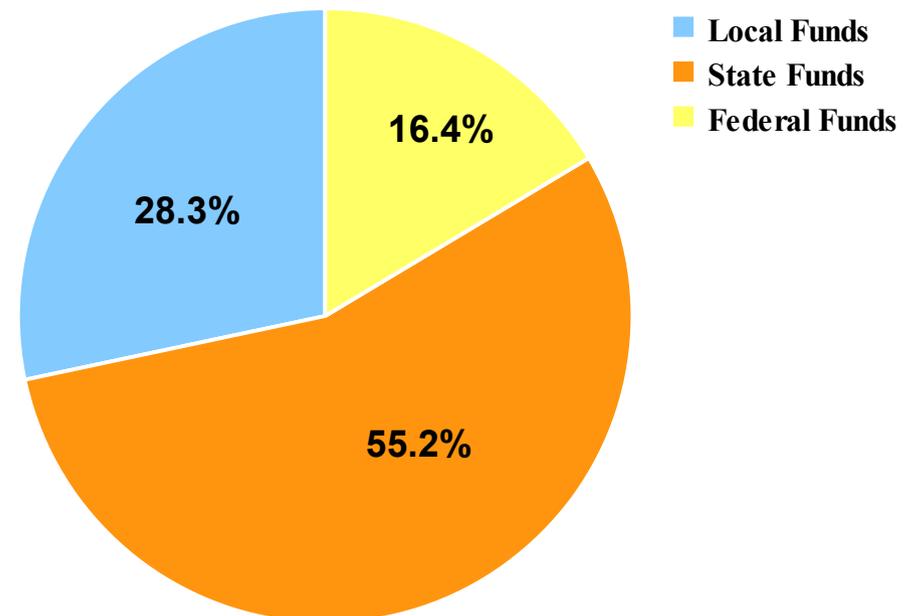


Chart 2: In Mississippi the state generates revenue primarily through sales and excise taxes. School districts and county governments generate revenues primarily through real estate and excise taxes and fees. Mississippi is the poorest state in the nation, and also one of the most rural. With less wealth and a smaller tax base, Mississippi school districts generate less revenue locally. Therefore, Mississippi districts are more dependent on state and federal funding than the national average.

Chart 3: Percent of Total Students in Lower Achieving and Higher Achieving School Districts

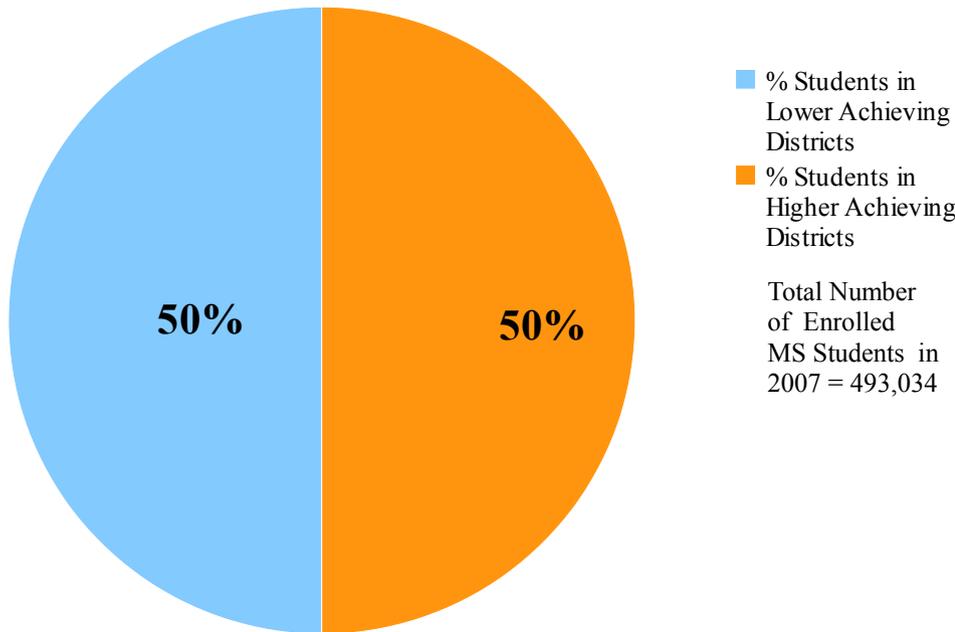


Chart 3, above, refers to the entire MS student population. The chart to the right refers to African American students. Overall, approximately half of all students are in higher performing school districts and approximately half are in lower performing districts. **Chart 4**, at right, shows that almost 3 of every 4 black students are in lower achieving school districts, and approximately 1 of every 4 black students is in a higher achieving school district.

Mississippi's new education accountability program assesses school district and school performance. There are six assessment categories: The three highest ratings are Star, High Performing and Successful, which are represented in Orange in these charts. The three lowest ratings are Academic Watch, At Risk of Failing, and Failing, which are represented in Blue. In these charts the Assessment ratings are from the 2009-2010 school year and the student population data is from the 2007-2008 school year; the most recent available.

Chart 4: Percent of Total African American Students in Lower Achieving and Higher Achieving Districts

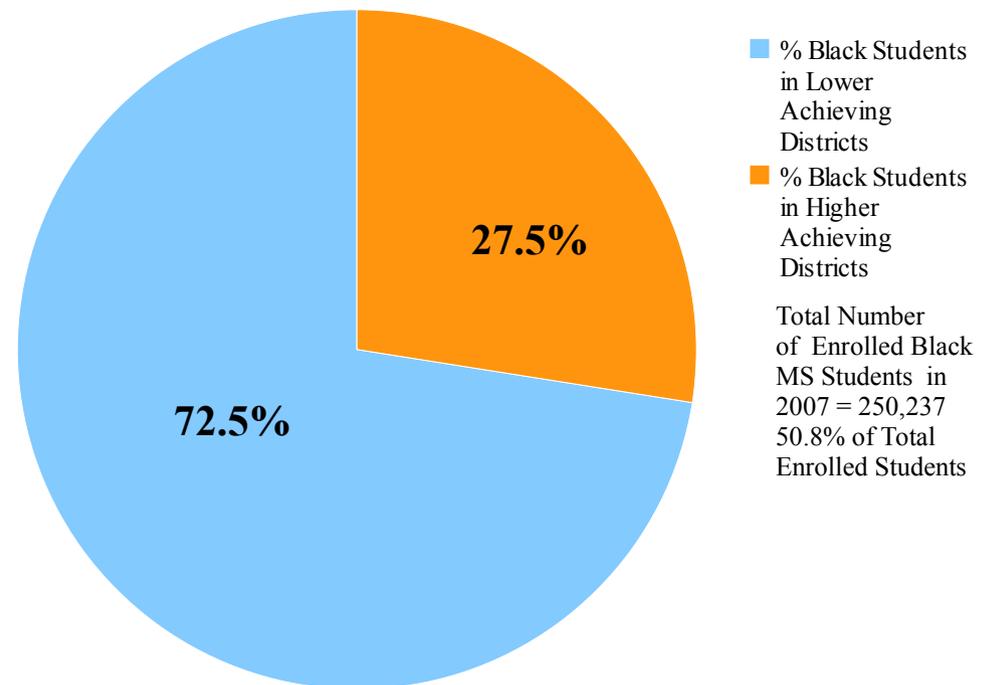


Chart 5: Percent of Students at Risk in Lower Achieving and Higher Achieving School Districts

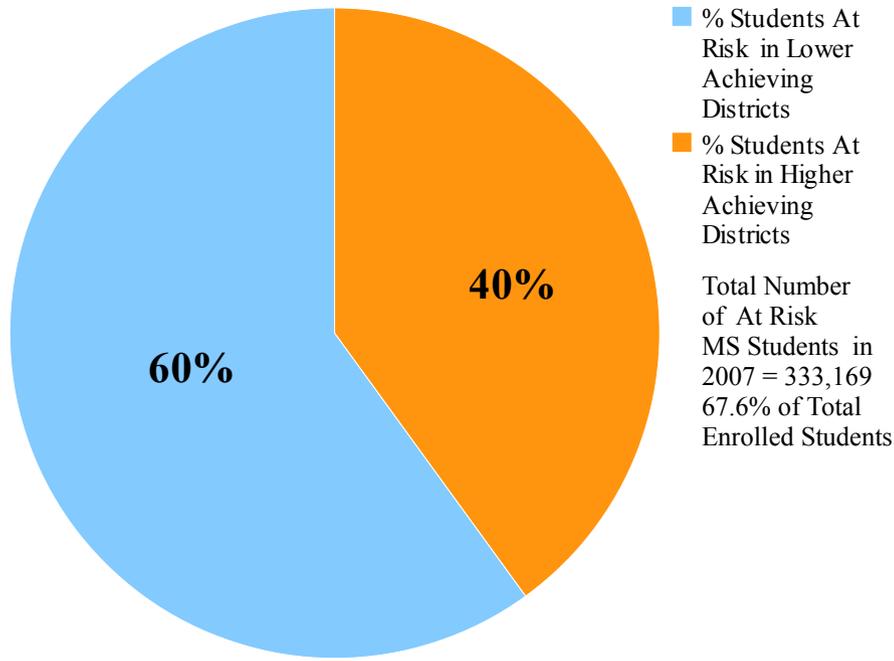


Chart 5, at left, represents the total number of students in MS who are defined “At Risk” because they are eligible under federal law for free or reduced lunch. Blue represent the percentage of students At Risk in lower achieving school districts (i.e. Failing, At Risk of Failing or Academic Watch). Orange represents the percentage of student in higher achieving districts (i.e. Successful, High Performing or Star).

Chart 6: Percent of Minority Students in Lower Achieving and Higher Achieving School Districts

Chart 6 represents the total number of all minority students in MS. Blue represents the percentage of all minority students in lower achieving school districts (Failing, At Risk of Failing or Academic Watch). Orange represents the percentage of all minority students in higher achieving school districts (i.e. Successful, High Performing or Star).

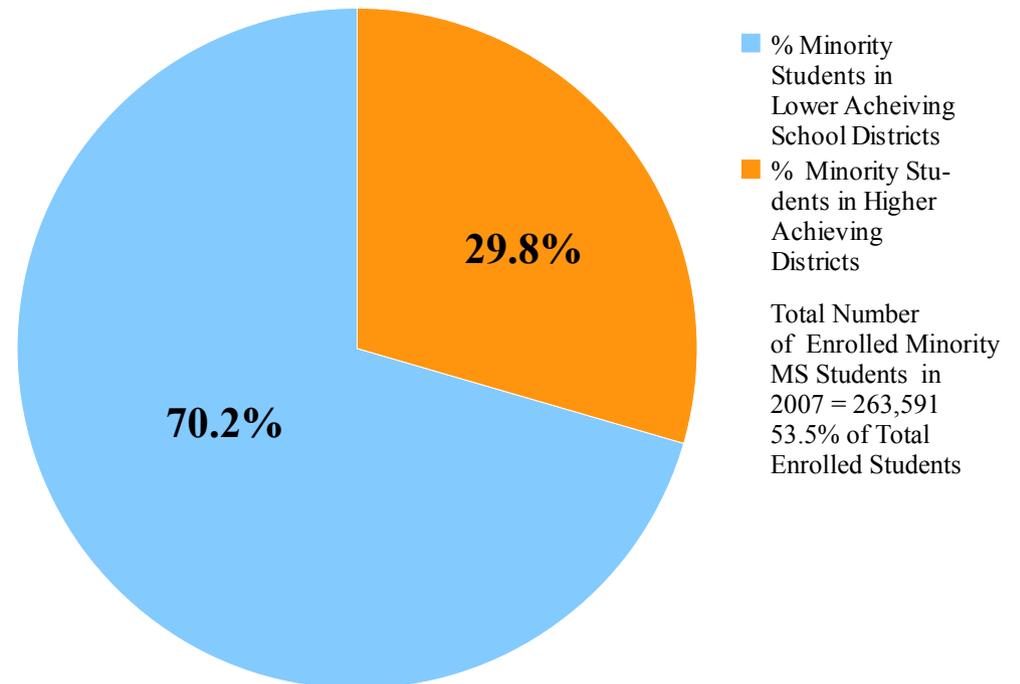


Chart 7: Percent of Total Student Population in each School District Accountability Category

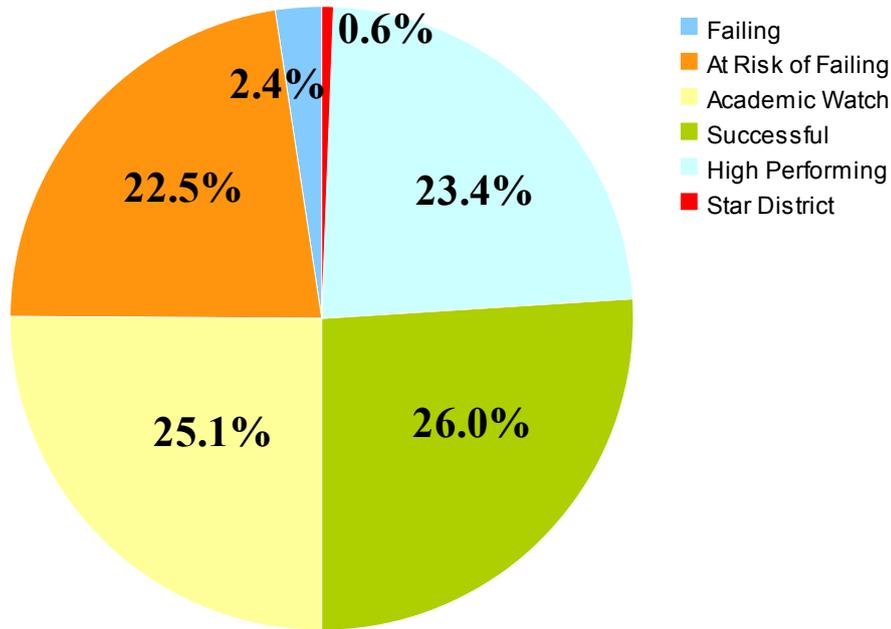


Chart 7, at left, shows the percent of all students in each MS Accountability category. 2.4% of the entire student population are in districts that are Failing, 22.5% are in districts that are At Risk of Failing, 25.1% are in districts that are on Academic Watch, 26% are in schools that are Successful, 23.4% are in schools that are High Performing and 0.6 % are in are Star Districts.

Chart 8, on the right, shows the percentage of all African American students in each MS Accountability Category. 4.5 % of all black students are in Failing districts; 36.3 % in At Risk of Failing districts; 31.7 % in Academic Watch districts; 15.1 % in Successful districts; 12.1 % in High Performing districts, and 0.3 % in Star districts. As a result 72.5 % of all black students are in lower achieving districts and 27.5 % are in higher achieving districts.

Chart 8: Percent of Black Student Population in each School District Accountability Category

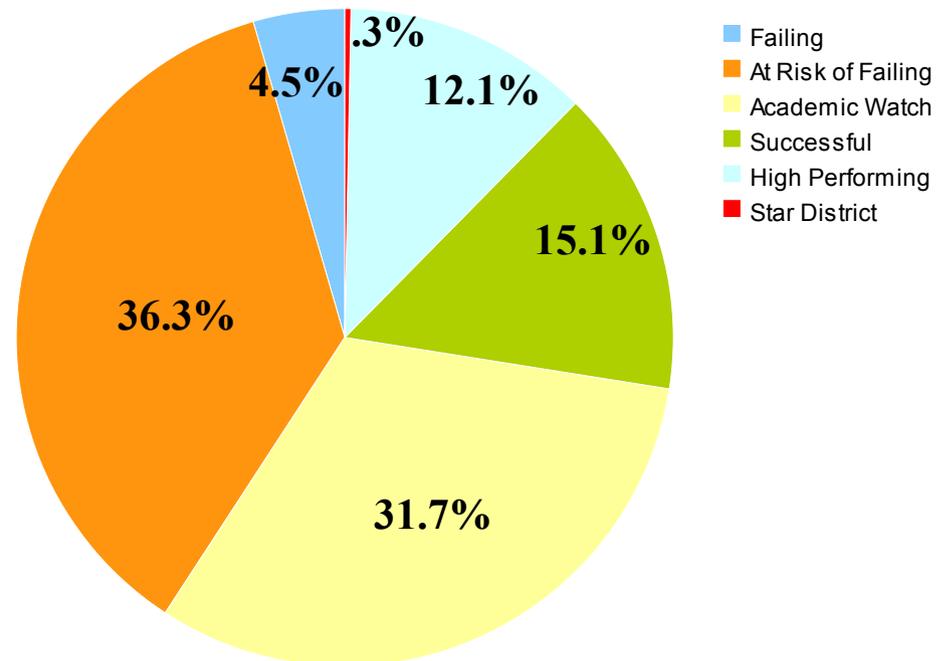


Chart 9: Distribution of At Risk Student Population Among School District Accountability Categories

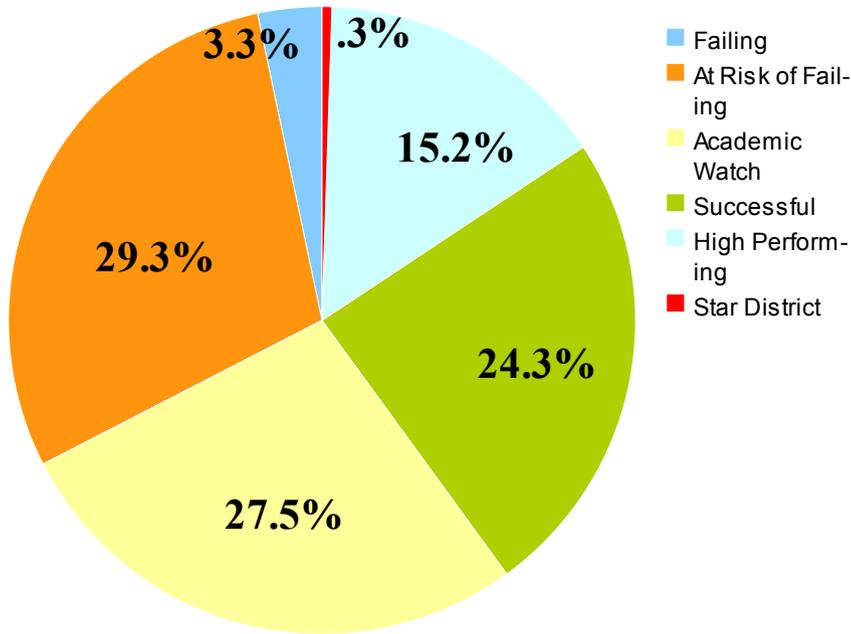


Chart 10, on the right, shows the distribution of all minority students among the School District Accountability Categories. 4.3 % are in Failing districts, 35 % are in At Risk of Failing districts, 30.9 % are in Academic Watch districts, 16 % are in Successful districts, 13.5 % are in High Performing districts, and 0.3 percent are in Star districts. As a result, 70.2 percent of all minority students are in lower achieving districts, and 29.8 percent are in higher achieving districts.

Chart 9, on the left, shows the distribution of all students At Risk (students eligible for free or reduced lunch) among the School District Accountability Categories. 3.3 % are in Failing districts; 29.3 % are in At Risk of Failing districts, 27.5 % are in Academic Watch districts, 24.3 % are in Successful districts, 15.2 % are in High Performing districts, and 0.3 % are in Star districts. As a result, 60.1 percent of all At Risk students are in lower achieving districts, and 39.8 percent are in higher achieving districts.

Chart 10: Distribution of All Minority Students in School District Accountability Categories

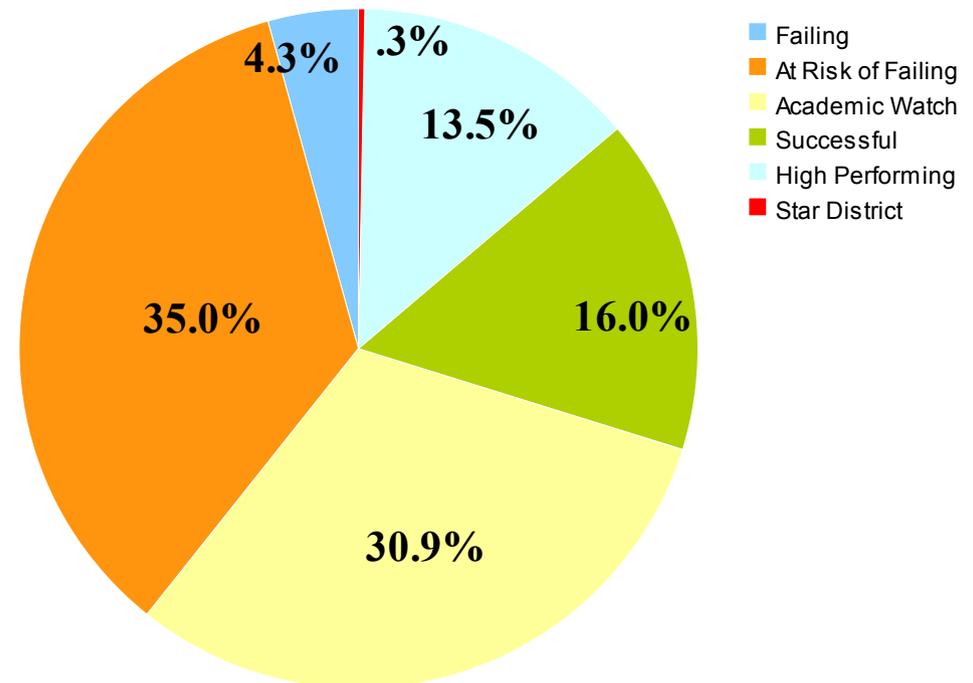


Chart 11: Percent students by race (2007 data) in Lower Achieving and Higher Achieving School Districts (2009-2010 School District Accountability Categories)

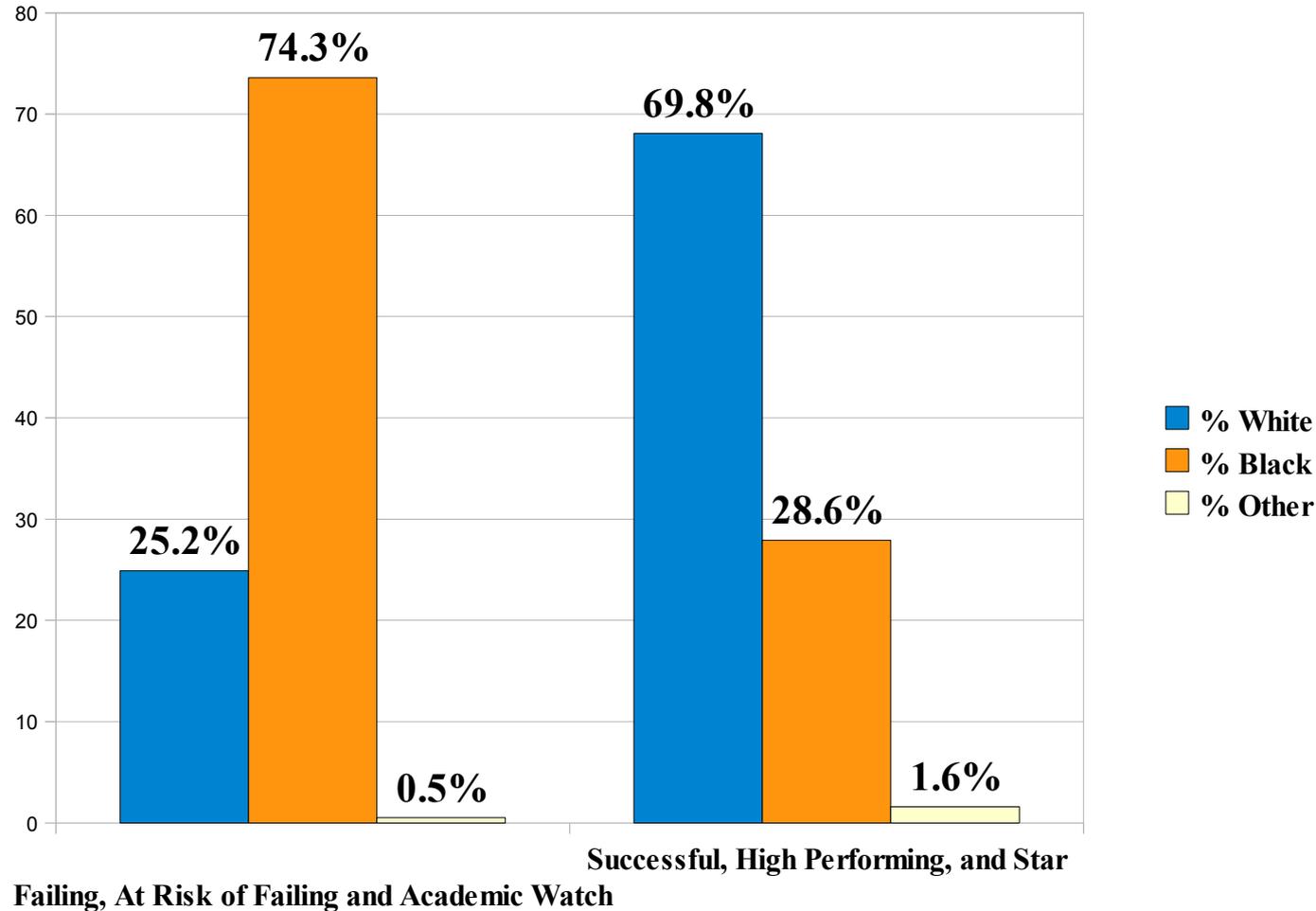


Chart 11 shows the percentage of students, black, white and other, in the lower achieving school districts (Failing, At Risk of Failing and Academic Watch) and in the higher achieving school districts (Successful, High Performing and Star). This chart is different from the earlier charts which focused on the distribution of African American, Minority and At-Risk students among the different school district accountability categories.

Data Sources: MS Dept of Education and New America Foundation

**Chart 12: Percent students Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch (2007 data)
in Lower Achieving and Higher Achieving School Districts (2009-2010 Data)**

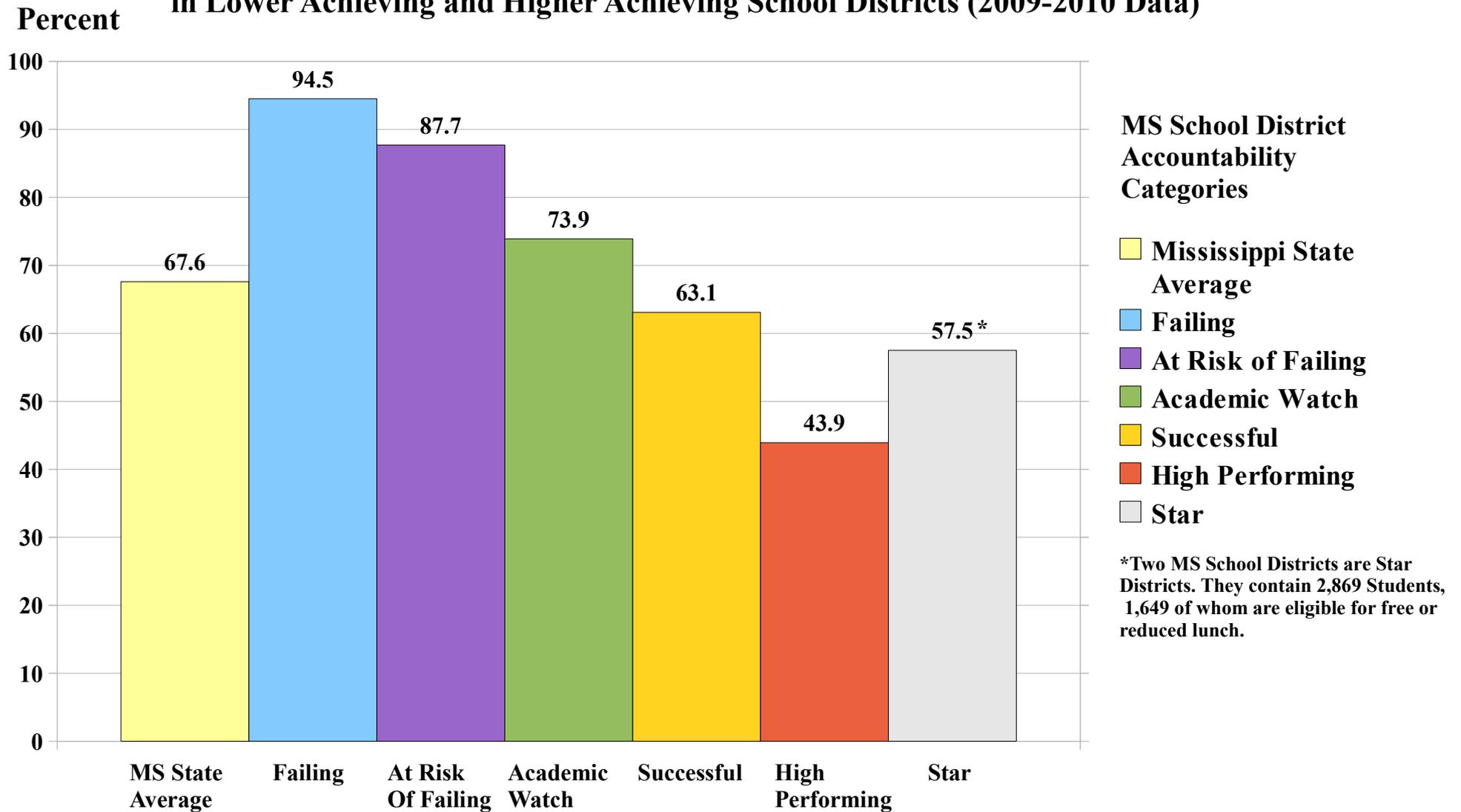
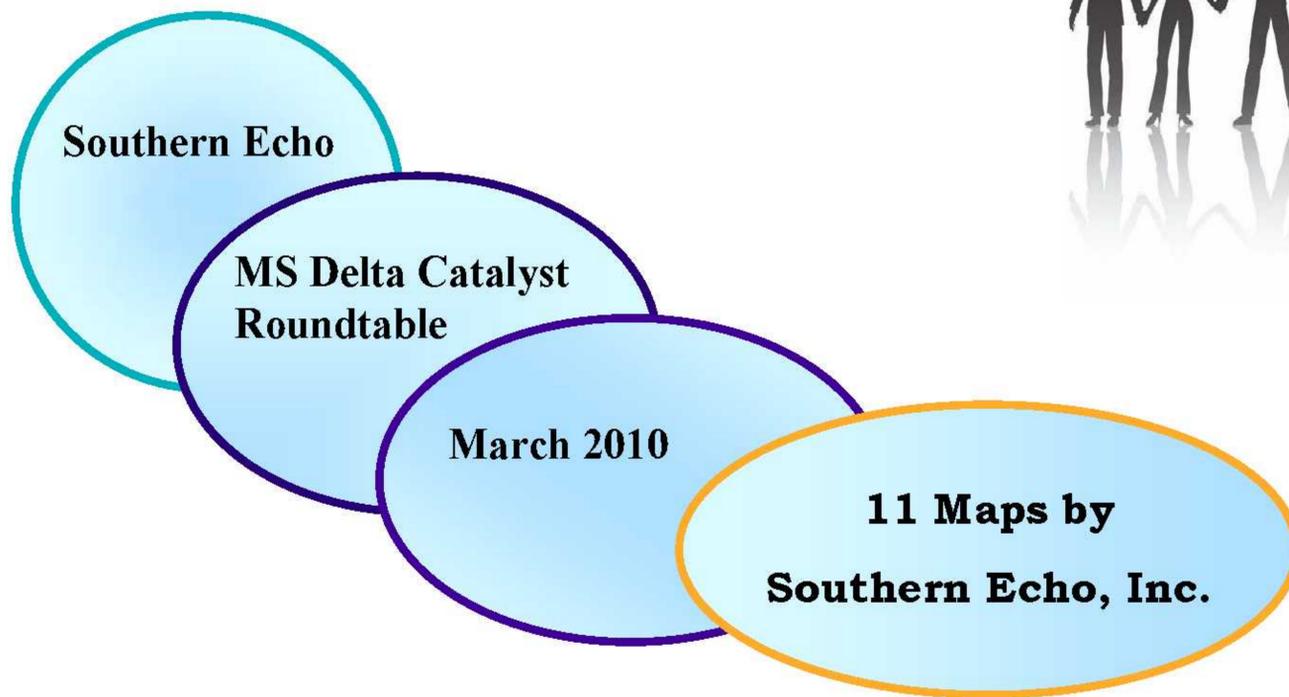


Chart 12 shows the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch in each of the 6 school accountability categories. Students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch are considered “at risk” under federal guidelines of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture.

Data Sources: MS Dept of Education and New America Foundation



These 11 maps by Southern Echo, Inc., with assistance from Dr. Brian Lipsett, illustrate the demographics, poverty, revenue capacity and school districts status under the new state accountability assessment system.

- 1. MDE Accountability Status Ratings 2009-2010 by School District**
- 2. MDE Quality Distribution Index 2009-2010 Cut Points by School District**
- 3. MDE Accountability Model: 2009-2010 Graduation Rates by School District**
- 4. MDE 2009 Accountability Model: Whether Growth Goals Met in 2009-2010 by School District**
- 5. % Student Poverty Rate and MDE School District Accountability Status**
- 6. Black Student % and MDE School District Accountability Status**
- 7. 2007-2008 Assessed Values of All Real Property in each School District**
- 8. 2007-2008 Value of a Single Mill in each School District**
- 9. 2007-2008 Number of Tax Mills Levied for School District to Generate Revenue**
- 10. 2007-2008 Assessed Real Property Values Per Student**
- 11. 2007-2008 Property Tax Dollars Levied Per Student**

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY STATUS RATINGS 2009 - 2010 SCHOOL YEAR BY SCHOOL DISTRICT

WHAT THIS MAP SHOWS:

This map shows the new MS Dept. of Education Accountability Status ratings for each school district that were released November 23, 2009.

The new Accountability Status ratings are based on 3 primary factors:

1. Quality Distribution Index (QDI) cut scores;
2. Whether Growth goals have been met; and
3. Graduation and School Completion rates.

The new standards and benchmarks are being phased in over a 4-year period. This means that the benchmarks and standards will be raised each of the next 3 years until Mississippi ratings are aligned with the ratings of schools across the nation.

The ratings are divided into 6 categories. Below are the number of districts in each category and the percentage of total districts:

- STAR (2 dists = 1.34%)
- HIGH PERFORMING (21 dists = 14.09%)
- SUCCESSFUL (37 dists = 24.83%)
- ACADEMIC WATCH (37 dists = 24.83%)
- AT RISK OF FAILING (44 dists = 29.53%)
- FAILING (8 dists = 5.37%)

Total school dists in dataset, excluding the Agricultural High Schools: 149

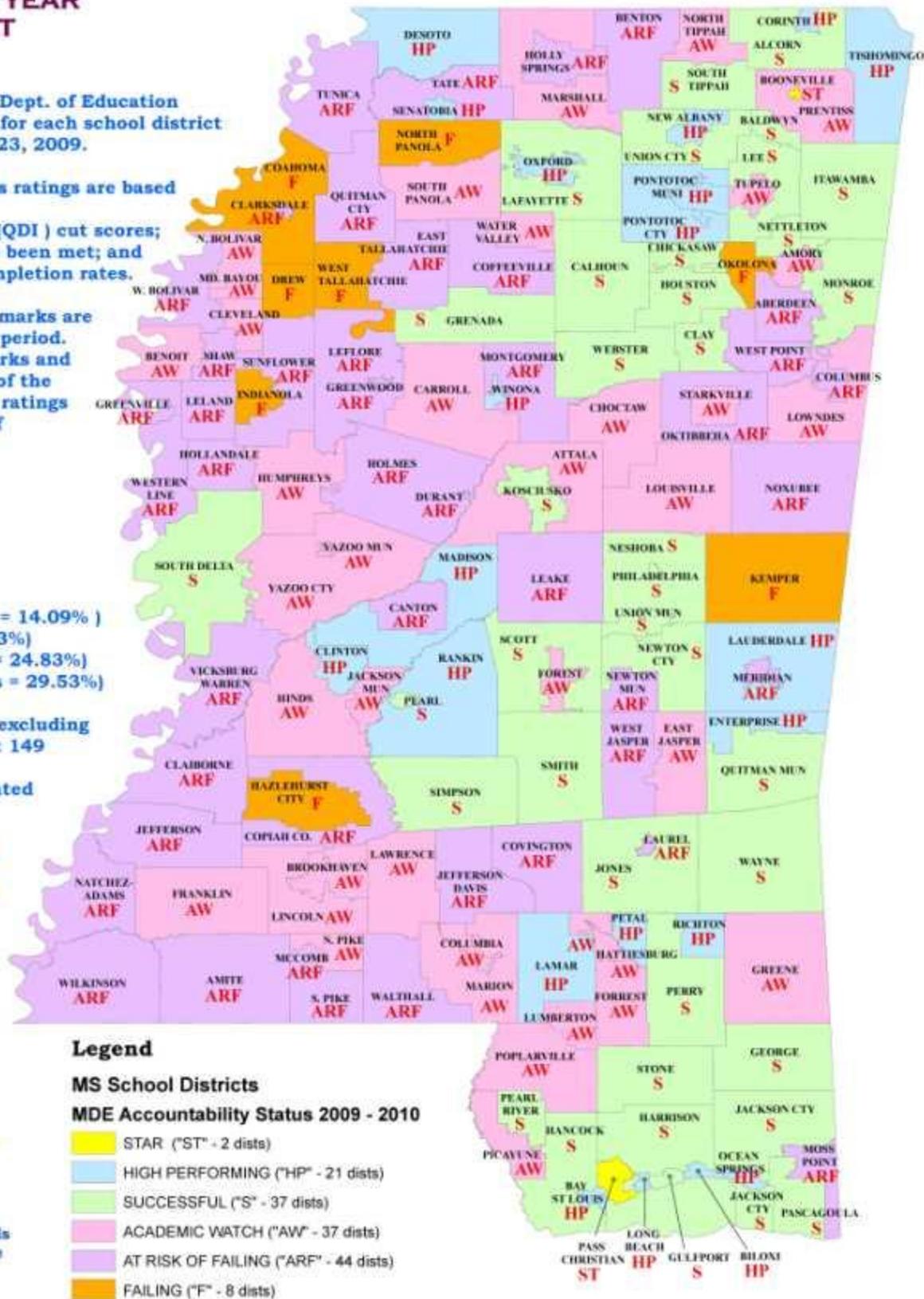
89 districts -- 59.73% -- are rated LESS THAN Successful.

The red abbreviations in each school district identify the accountability rating for that school district.

The abbreviations are:
ST = STAR (highest rating)
HP = HIGH PERFORMING
S = SUCCESSFUL
AW = ACADEMIC WATCH
ARF = AT RISK OF FAILING
F = FAILING (lowest rating)

Agricultural High Schools:
The Agricultural High Schools are not included in the visual map because they do not have discrete physical jurisdictions that school districts have. The ratings for the Ag High Schools are not included in the cumulative numbers set forth in the Legend.

The AHS ratings are:
Coahoma AHS: At Risk of Failing
Forrest AHS: Successful
Hinds AHS: Not Rated



This map prepared 11-23-09

by Southern Echo, Inc.
1350 Livingston Lane, Jackson, MS 39213
phone: 601-982-6400;
fax: 601-982-2636
email: souecho@southernecho.org
website: www.southernecho.org

with technical assistance from
Brian Lipsett, PhD
Movementech, Inc., Naples, ME
phone: 207-749-1606;
email: brian@privey.com

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION QUALITY DISTRIBUTION INDEX (QDI) 2009 - 2010 SCHOOL YEAR CUT POINTS BY SCHOOL DISTRICT

WHAT THIS MAP DOES: This map shows the Quality Distribution Index (QDI) scores for each school district used by MDE to rank the Accountability Status for each school district for the 2009 - 2010 school year.

QDI = Quality Distribution Index. The QDI is one of 3 components the MS Dept. of Education used to rate each school district in the new Accountability system. The other 2 components are whether district Growth goals are met and district Graduation and Completion Rates.

The cut points in the Quality Distribution Index are:

- 0 - 99 = Failing (8 districts)
 - 100 - 132 = At-Risk of Failing (54 districts)
 - 133 - 165 = Academic Watch (54 districts)
 - 166 - 199 = Successful (31 districts)
 - 200 - 300 = High Performing (2 districts).
- Total number of districts: 149.

This index is part of the new state accountability formula used to assess the performance of school districts across the state. The 2009 - 2010 school year is the first year in which the new accountability model is being used.

The black number in each school district represents the QDI score for the 2009 - 2010 school year. The QDI is a composite score that takes into account all of the student testing in one year, including the MCT 2 and SATP results.

Each year for the first 4 years of the new accountability model the cut points will be changed to make the standards tougher. The goal is to make the ratings system for Mississippi school districts comparable to the ratings of school districts across the nation.

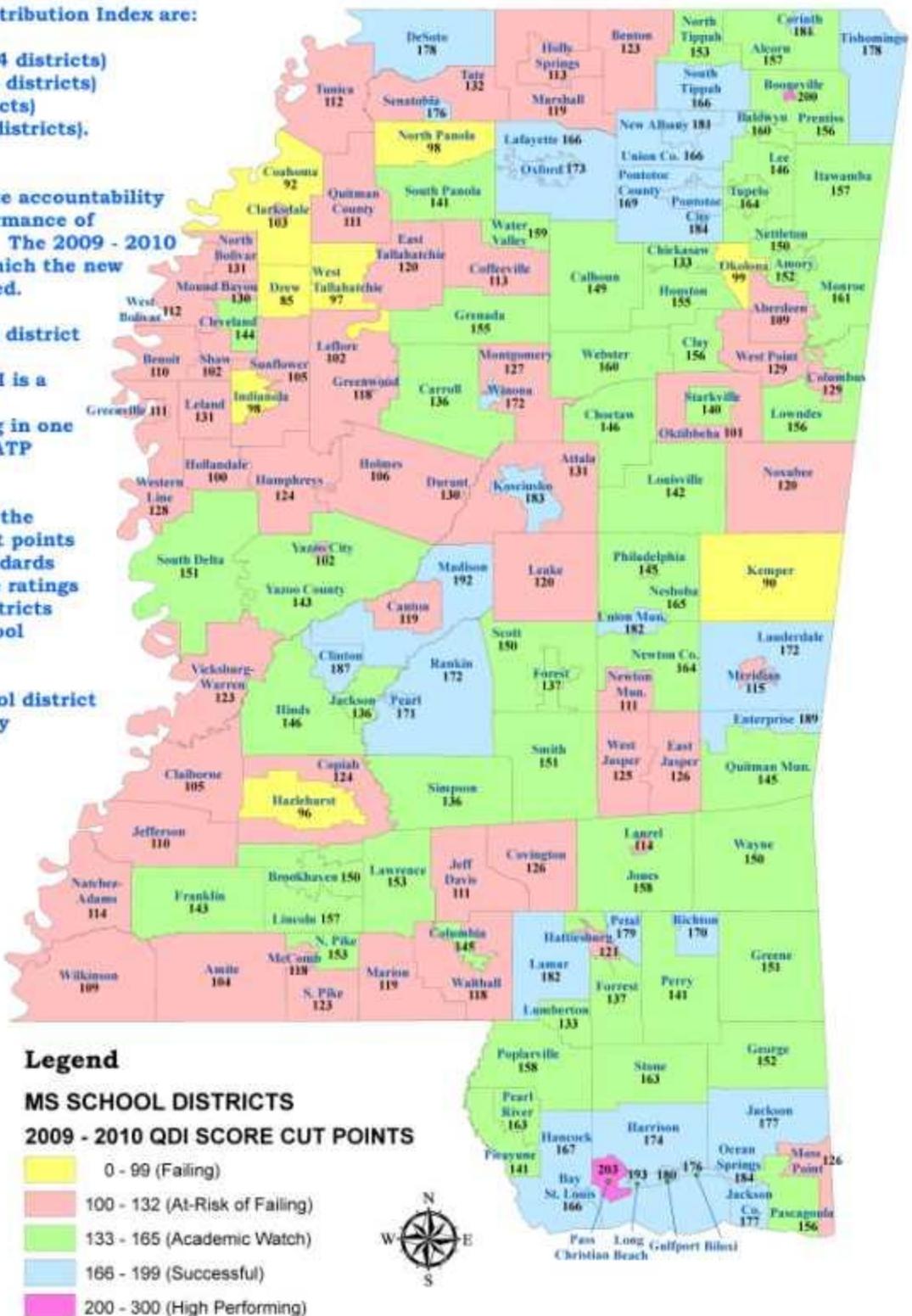
This data is part of the new school district Accountability ratings released by the MS Dept. of Education on November 23, 2009.

Agricultural High Schools:
The Agricultural High Schools are not included in the visual map because they do not have discrete physical jurisdictions that school districts have. The ratings for the Ag High Schools are not included in the cumulative district numbers set forth above.

The QDI cut scores for the AHS are:
Coahoma AHS: 112
Forrest AHS: 170
Hinds AHS: Not Rated

This map prepared 11-24-09
by Southern Echo, Inc.
1350 Livingston Lane, Jackson, MS 39213
phone: 601-982-6400;
fax: 601-982-2636
email: souecho@southernecho.org
website: www.southernecho.org

with technical assistance from
Brian Lipsett, PhD
Movementech, Inc., Naples, ME
phone: 207-749-1606;
email: brian@privey.com



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION 2009 - 2010 ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL: GRADUATION RATES BY SCHOOL DISTRICT



WHAT THIS MAP SHOWS:

This map shows the new MS Dept. of Education Accountability GRADUATION RATES data for each school district. The data was released November 23, 2009.

The new Accountability Status ratings are based on 3 primary factors:

1. Quality Distribution Index (QDI) cut scores;
2. Whether Growth Goals were met; and
3. GRADUATION AND SCHOOL COMPLETION RATES.

The new standards and benchmarks are being phased in over a 4-year period. This means that the benchmarks and standards will be raised each of the next 3 years until Mississippi ratings are aligned with the ratings of schools across the nation.

Total school districts in the dataset, excluding the Agricultural High Schools: 149

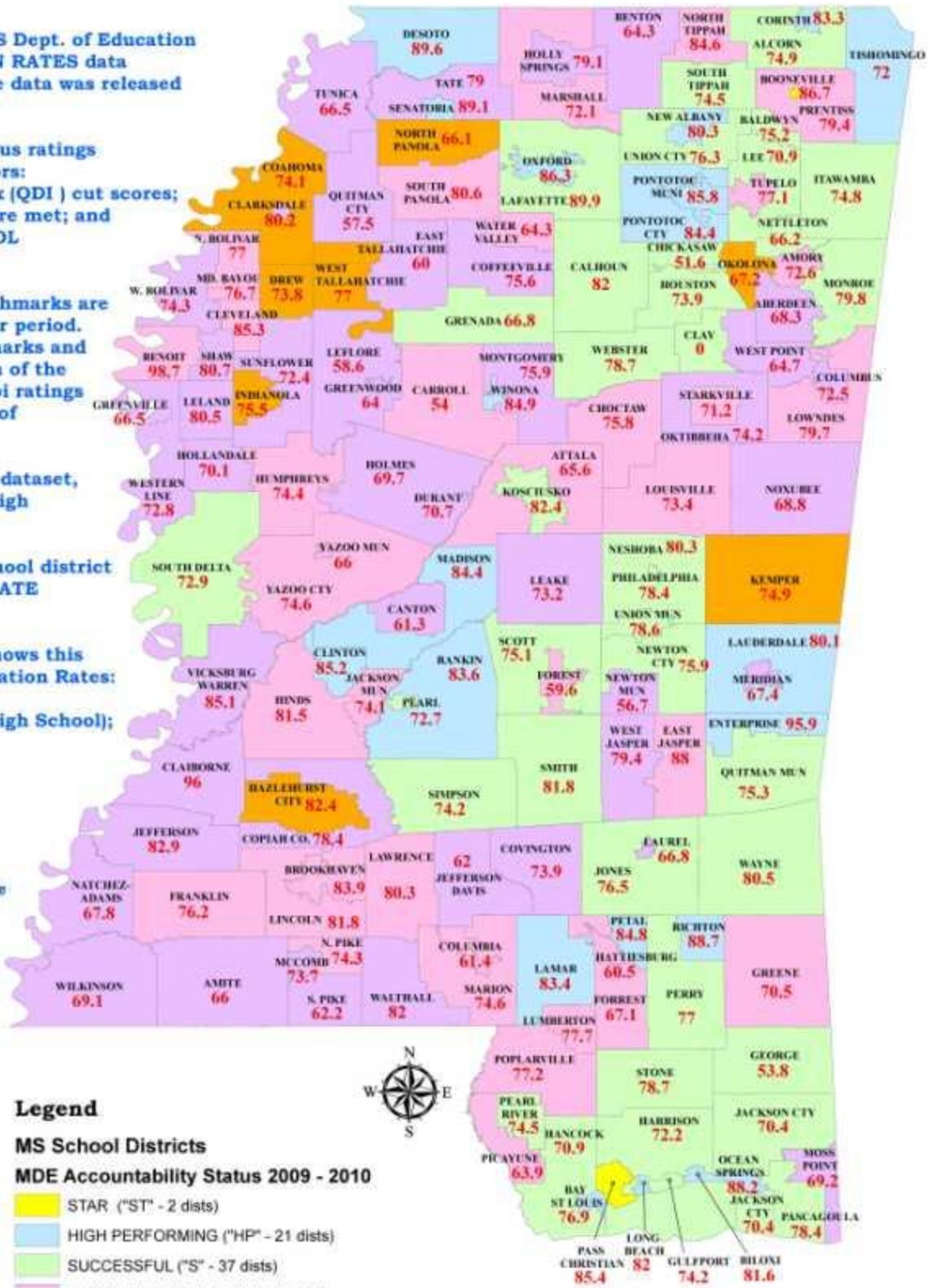
The red numbers in each school district identify the GRADUATION RATE for that school district.

The Graduation Rate data shows this breakdown of District Graduation Rates:

- 0 = 1 District (Clay has no High School);
- 50 - 59 % = 7 Districts;
- 60-69 % = 29 Districts;
- 70 - 79 % = 68 Districts;
- 80 - 89 % = 41 Districts;
- 90+ % = 3 Districts.

Agricultural High Schools:
The Agricultural High Schools are not included in the visual map because they do not have discrete physical jurisdictions that school districts have. The ratings for the Ag High Schools are not included in the cumulative numbers set forth in the Legend.

AHS GRADUATION RATES are:
Coahoma AHS: 63.6 %
Forrest AHS: 64.2 %
Hinds AHS: Not Rated



Legend

MS School Districts

MDE Accountability Status 2009 - 2010

- STAR ("ST" - 2 dists)
- HIGH PERFORMING ("HP" - 21 dists)
- SUCCESSFUL ("S" - 37 dists)
- ACADEMIC WATCH ("AW" - 37 dists)
- AT RISK OF FAILING ("ARF" - 44 dists)
- FAILING ("F" - 8 dists)

This map prepared 11-24-09 by Southern Echo, Inc. 1350 Livingston Lane, Jackson, MS 39213 phone: 601-982-6400; fax: 601-982-2636 email: souecho@southernecho.org website: www.southernecho.org

with technical assistance from Brian Lipsett, PhD Movementech, Inc., Naples, ME phone: 207-749-1606; email: brian@privey.com

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION 2009 ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL: WHETHER GROWTH GOALS WERE MET 2009 - 2010 SCHOOL YEAR BY SCHOOL DISTRICT

WHAT THIS MAP SHOWS:

This map shows the new MS Dept. of Education Accountability ratings for each school district as to whether GROWTH GOALS were met. The data was released November 23, 2009.

The new Accountability Status ratings are based on 3 primary factors:

1. Quality Distribution Index (QDI) cut scores;
2. WHETHER GROWTH GOALS WERE MET;
3. Graduation and School Completion rates.

The new standards and benchmarks are being phased in over a 4-year period. This means that the benchmarks and standards will be raised each of the next 3 years until Mississippi ratings are aligned with the ratings of schools across the nation.

The ratings for Growth Goals are divided into 2 categories:

1. Growth Goals MET;
2. Growth Goals NOT MET.

65 Districts: Growth Goals MET.

84 Districts: Growth Goals NOT MET.

43.62% of Districts: Growth MET.

56.38% of Districts: Growth NOT MET.

Total school dists in dataset, excluding the Agricultural High Schools: 149

The red abbreviations in each school district identify the Growth Goal ratings for that school district.

The abbreviations are:
M = Growth Goals MET
NM = Growth Goals NOT MET.

Agricultural High Schools:
The Agricultural High Schools are not included in the visual map because they do not have discrete physical jurisdictions that school districts have. The ratings for the Ag High Schools are not included in the cumulative numbers set forth in the Legend.

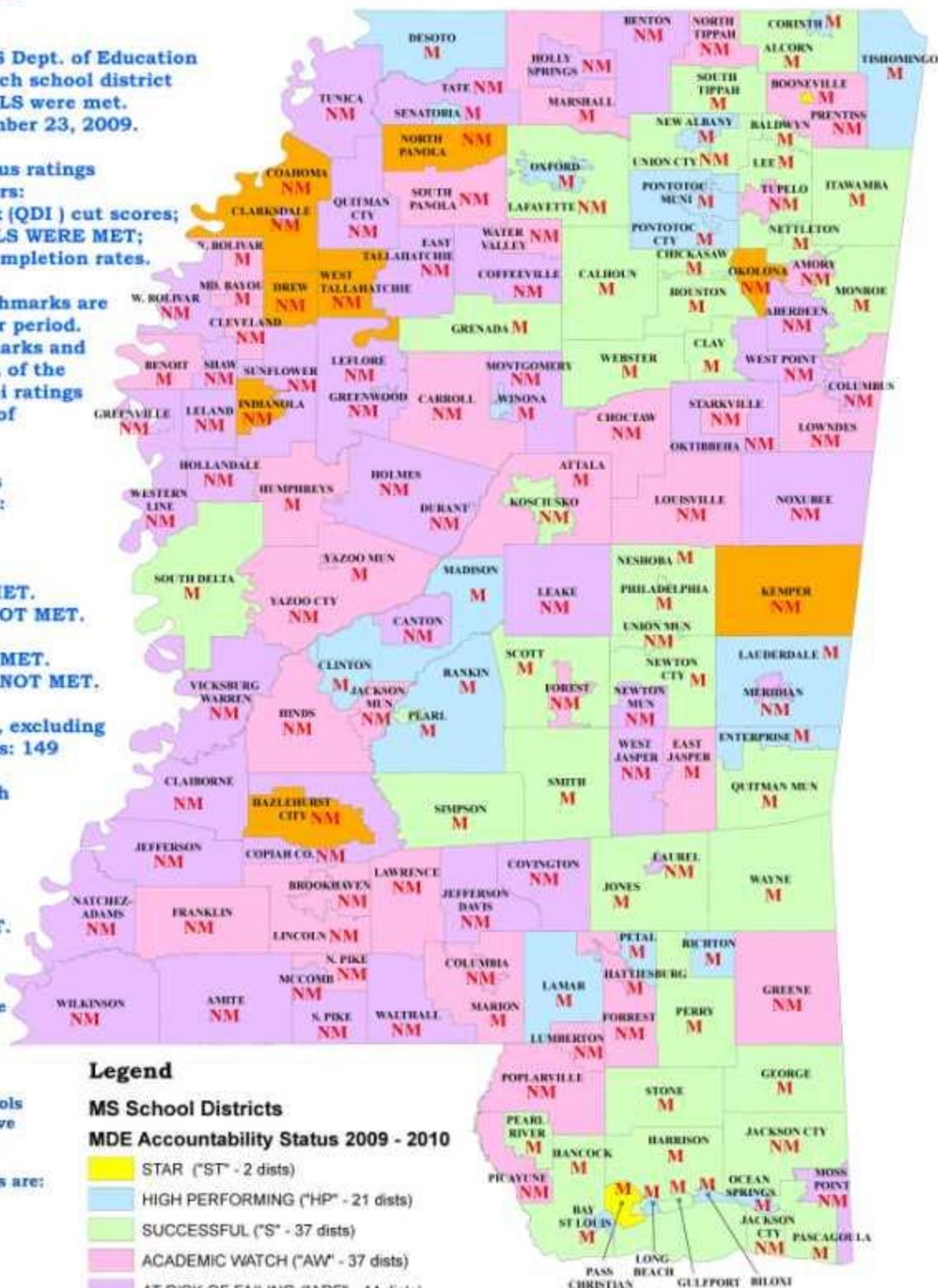
The AHS GROWTH GOALS ratings are:
Coahoma AHS: NOT MET
Forrest AHS: MET
Hinds AHS: Not Rated

Legend

MS School Districts

MDE Accountability Status 2009 - 2010

- STAR ("ST" - 2 dists)
- HIGH PERFORMING ("HP" - 21 dists)
- SUCCESSFUL ("S" - 37 dists)
- ACADEMIC WATCH ("AW" - 37 dists)
- AT RISK OF FAILING ("ARF" - 44 dists)
- FAILING ("F" - 8 dists)



This map prepared 11-24-09

by Southern Echo, Inc.

1350 Livingston Lane, Jackson, MS 39213

phone: 601-982-6400;

fax: 601-982-2636

email: souecho@southernecho.org

website: www.southernecho.org

with technical assistance from

Brian Lipsett, PhD

Movementech, Inc., Naples, ME

phone: 207-749-1606;

email: brian@privey.com



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - PERCENT STUDENT POVERTY RATE (2006) AND SCHOOL DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY STATUS (2009 - 2010)

WHAT THIS MAP SHOWS:

This map shows the new MS Dept. of Education Accountability Status ratings for each school district released November 23, 2009 correlated with the 2006 Percentage Student Poverty Rates by district issued by MDE in January 31, 2007.

The SCHOOL DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY ratings are divided into 6 categories. Below are the number of districts in each category and the percentage of total districts in each category:

- STAR (2 dists = 1.34%)
- HIGH PERFORMING (21 dists = 14.09%)
- SUCCESSFUL (37 dists = 24.83%)
- ACADEMIC WATCH (37 dists = 24.83%)
- RISK OF FAILING (44 dists = 29.53%)
- FAILING (8 dists = 5.37%).

Total school dists in dataset, excluding the Agricultural High Schools: 149

89 districts -- 59.73% -- are rated LESS THAN Successful.

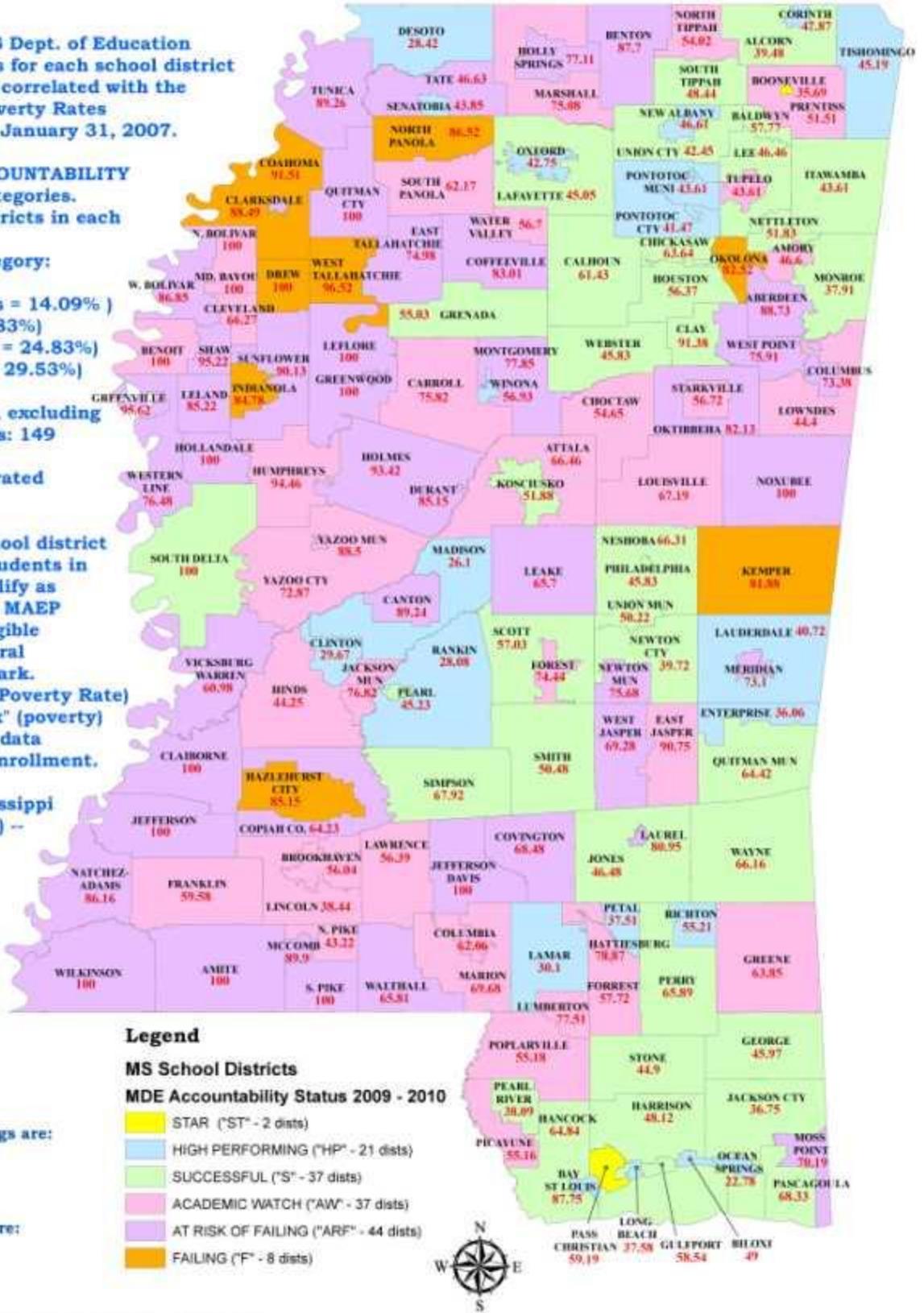
The red numbers in each school district identify the percentage of students in each school district who qualify as "Children At Risk" under the MAEP formula because they are eligible for FREE LUNCH, a key Federal STUDENT POVERTY benchmark. The % of "Children at Risk" (Poverty Rate) increases when other "at risk" (poverty) benchmarks are added. The data uses the Fall 2006 student enrollment.

More than 3 of every 5 Mississippi Public School Students (65%) -- 293,220 of 503,018 -- are Children At Risk under the MAEP formula.

Agricultural High Schools:
The Agricultural High Schools are not included in the visual map because they do not have discrete physical jurisdictions that school districts have. The ratings for the Ag High Schools are not included in the cumulative numbers set forth in the Legend.

The AHS ACCOUNTABILITY ratings are:
Coahoma AHS: At Risk of Failing
Forrest AHS: Successful
Hinds AHS: Not Rated

The AHS Student Poverty rates are:
Coahoma AHS: 93.75%
Forrest AHS: 40.5 %
Hinds AHS: 77.78 %



MS 2006 STUDENT POVERTY RATE SUMMARY:

- 41% (63 districts) have 70%+ children at risk;
- 56% (85 districts) have 60%+ children at risk;
- 71% (108 districts) have 50%+ children at risk;
- 89.5% (136 districts) have 40%+ children at risk;
- 96.7% (147 districts) have 30%+ children at risk;
- The district with fewest children at risk: 22.78%.

This map prepared 11-26-09
by Southern Echo, Inc.
1350 Livingston Lane, Jackson, MS 39213
phone: 601-982-6400;
fax: 601-982-2636
email: souecho@southernecho.org
website: www.southernecho.org

with technical assistance from
Brian Lipsett, PhD
Movementech, Inc., Naples, ME
phone: 207-749-1606;
email: brian@privey.com

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - 2008 - 2009 BLACK STUDENT PERCENTAGE AND 2009 - 2010 SCHOOL DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY STATUS

WHAT THIS MAP SHOWS:

This map shows the new MS Dept. of Education Accountability Status ratings for each school district released November 23, 2009 correlated with the MDE 2008 - 2009 Black Student Percentage enrollment by school district.

The SCHOOL DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY ratings are divided into 6 categories.

Below are the number of districts in each category and the percentage of total districts in each category:

- STAR (2 dists = 1.34%)
- HIGH PERFORMING (21 dists = 14.09%)
- SUCCESSFUL (37 dists = 24.83%)
- ACADEMIC WATCH (37 dists = 24.83%)
- RISK OF FAILING (44 dists = 29.53%)
- FAILING (8 dists = 5.37%).

Total school dists in dataset, excluding the Agricultural High Schools: 149

89 districts -- 59.73% -- are rated LESS THAN Successful.

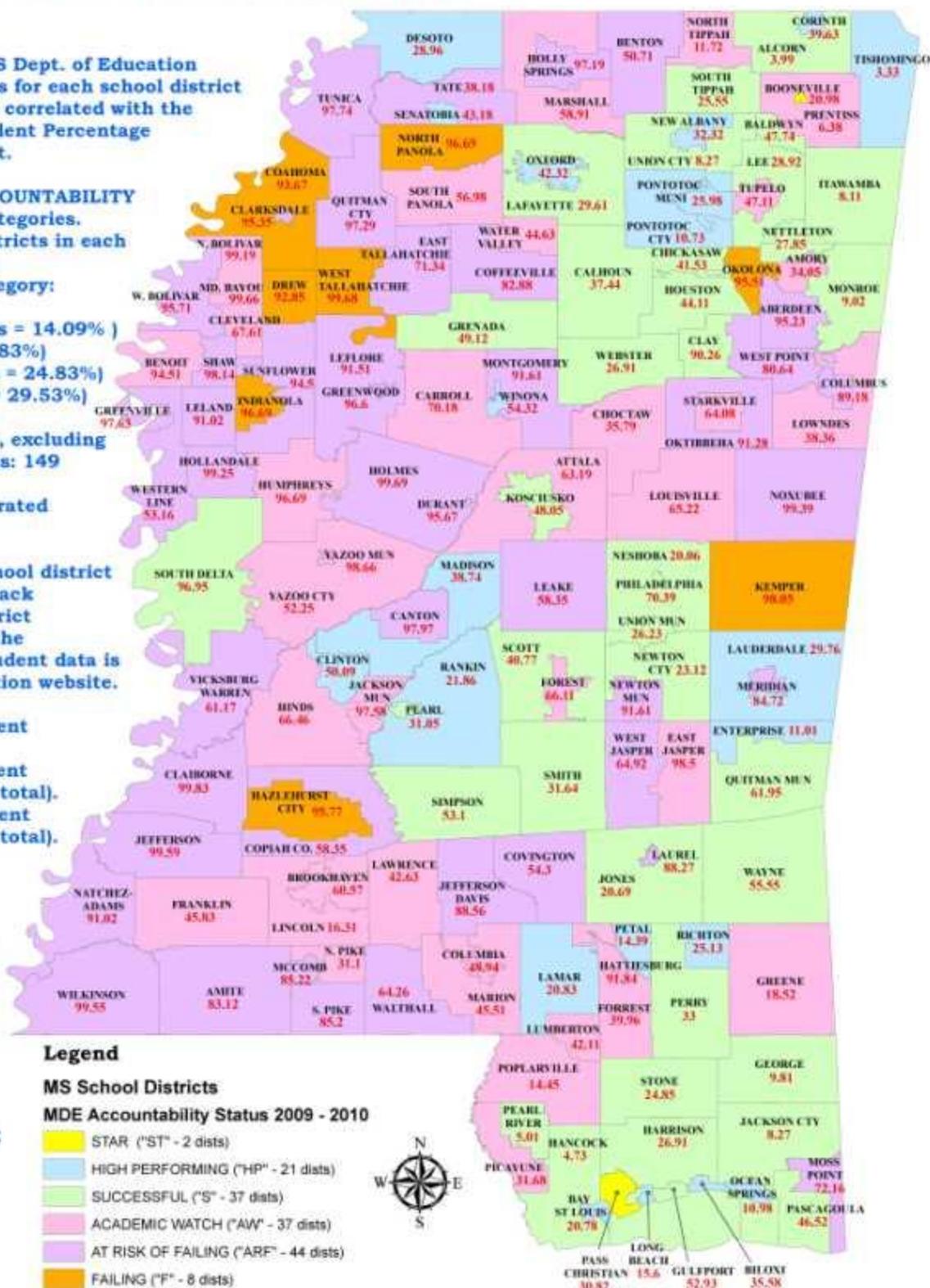
The red numbers in each school district identify the percentage of black students in each school district based on the enrollment in the 2008 - 2009 school year. Student data is from the MS Dept. of Education website.

In 2008-2009 Total MS student enrollment was 491,194.
Total Black student enrollment was 247,960 (50.48% of the total).
Total White student enrollment was 227,379 (46.29% of the total).

Agricultural High Schools:
The Agricultural High Schools are not included in the visual map because they do not have discrete physical jurisdictions that school districts have. The ratings for the Ag High Schools are not included in the cumulative numbers set forth in the Legend.

The AHS ACCOUNTABILITY ratings are:
Coahoma AHS: At Risk of Failing
Forrest AHS: Successful
Hinds AHS: Not Rated

The AHS Black Student Percentages 2008 - 2009 are:
Coahoma AHS: 99.63 %
Forrest AHS: 28.93 %
Hinds AHS: 100 %



SUMMARY: MS 2008 - 2009 BLACK STUDENT PERCENTAGE

- 44 districts (28.95%) have 90 - 100 % black students;
 - 13 districts (8.55%) have 70 - 89 % black students;
 - 24 districts (15.79%) have 50 to 69 % black students;
 - 24 districts (15.79%) have 35 to 49 % black students;
 - 47 districts (30.92%) have 3 - 34 % black students;
 - 81 districts (53.29%) have 50% or more black students.
- The total number of MS school districts is 152.

This map prepared 11-27-09
by Southern Echo, Inc.
1350 Livingston Lane, Jackson, MS 39213
phone: 601-982-6400;
fax: 601-982-2636
email: souecho@southernecho.org
website: www.southernecho.org

with technical assistance from
Brian Lipsett, PhD
Movementech, Inc., Naples, ME
phone: 207-749-1606;
email: brian@privey.com

2007-2008 Assessed Real Property Values Per Student

How this Map Works:

This map shows for each school district the total assessed value for all real estate per student in the school district. We divided the total assessed value for all real estate by the total number of students in the district. We used the average daily attendance (ADA) of students rather than total enrollment. The data comes from the SIS Dept. of Education for 2007-2008 and New America Foundation.

This map presents the school district boundaries in grey. The color gradients show the ranges of total property tax levied on real property divided by the student ADA for the district. Since some school districts cross county lines, we have included county boundary lines presented in a dashed blue line with a white background. Per student tax levies are presented in brown text below the name of the school district. Student Average Daily Attendance is shown in red text.

Where a school district has land in more than one county and a different property valuation in each county, we have added the two assessed values together and divided by the ADA for the entire school district.

School Districts use Real Estate Taxes to Raise "Local Funds"

Public schools in Mississippi are funded through state, federal and local funds. "Local funds" come from real estate taxes assessed by the counties in which the school districts are located. The school districts determine their annual budget needs and how much of that budget needs to be raised with local funds. The amount of local funds that a school district can raise is limited under Mississippi state law. The local funds are actually raised for the school district by the county through the county's power to tax. First, the county government sets its tax rate for each real property by determining (i.e., "assessing") the value of the land, buildings and improvements. Second, the county government then determines the tax rate by establishing a "mill rate" that will apply to all real properties. The "mill rate" is the amount of dollars the county will tax for each one thousand dollars of real property value. Example: If the mill rate is \$10 per one thousand dollars of assessed value, then the tax on a property assessed at \$100,000 = \$1,000. \$100,000 of value divided by 1,000 = 100. 100 x \$10 = \$1,000.

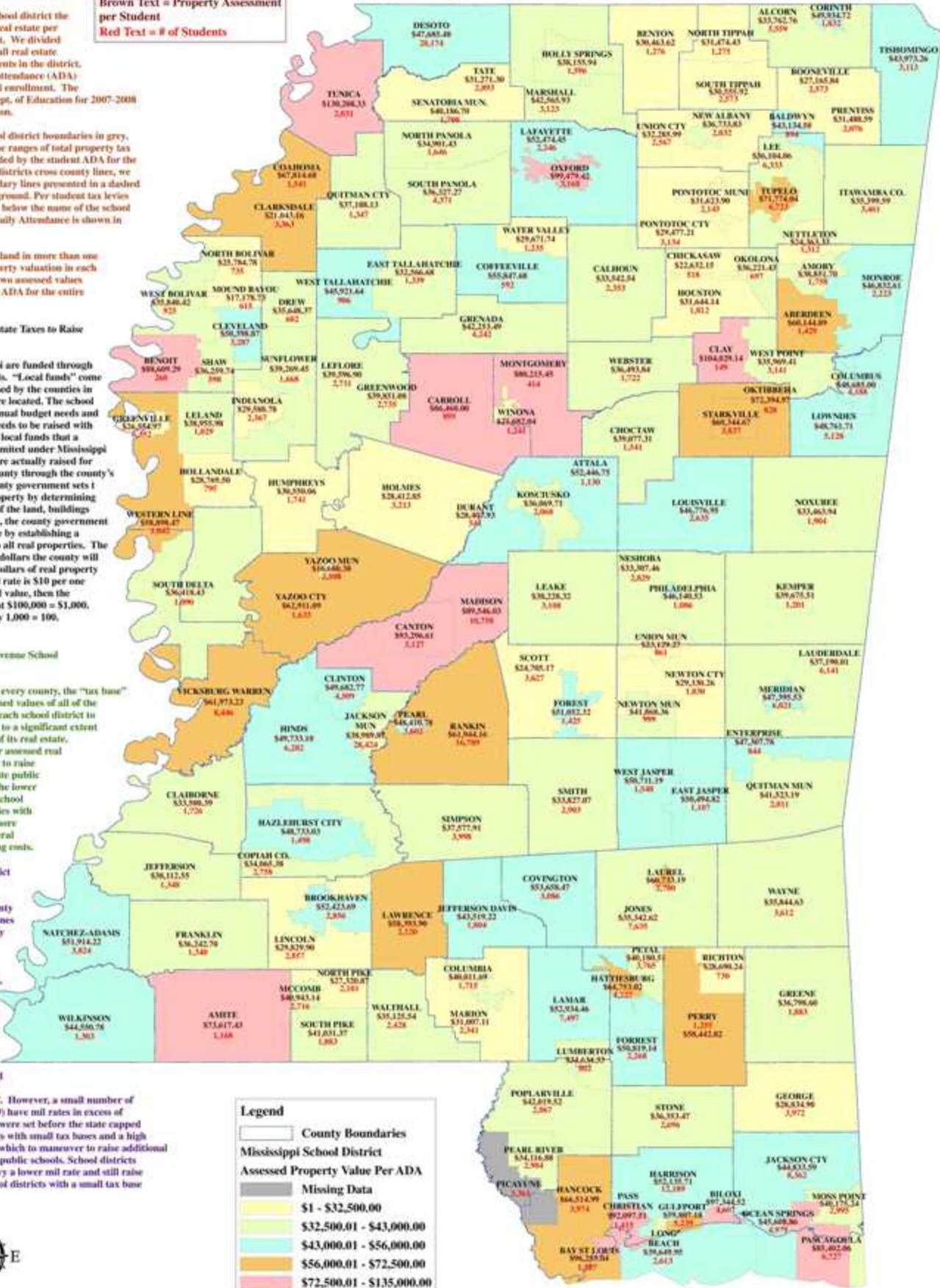
The Tax Base Limits the Revenue School Districts Can Raise

The total assessed value for every county, the "tax base" is the sum of all of the assessed values of all of the real estate. The capacity of each school district to raise "local funds" depends to a significant extent on the total assessed value of its real estate. A school district with higher assessed real property values will be able to raise more "local funds" to operate public schools than districts with the lower assessed property values. School districts which are in counties with lower property values are more dependent on state and federal funds to meet their operating costs.

State law limits school district capacity to raise funds

The "mill rate" is set by county government once it determines how much money the county needs to maintain public schools, streets and roads, water and sewer, police and fire departments, the court system, and all other services to the community, including payment on debt service. Under Mississippi law no school district is supposed to authorize more than 55 mills, or \$55 per thousand dollars of assessed property value, to raise "local funds". However, a small number of school districts (5 out of 149) have mill rates in excess of 55 mills because those rates were set before the state capped the mill rate. School districts with small tax bases and a high mill rate have little room in which to maneuver to raise additional "local funds" to operate the public schools. School districts with a large tax base can levy a lower mill rate and still raise a lot more money than school districts with a small tax base and high mill rate.

Black Text = District Name
Brown Text = Property Assessment per Student
Red Text = # of Students



2007-2008 Value of a Single Mill* in each School District

School Districts Raise Local Funds through Taxation on Real Estate

Each school district raises Local Funds or Revenues to supplement State and Federal Funds provided to operate school districts. A school district raises Local Funds by collecting real estate taxes on all of the Land, Buildings and improvements within the boundaries of that school district. Every parcel of land is assessed and given a value. The total value of all of the land, buildings and improvements in a school district is determined by adding together the assessed value of the land, buildings and improvements for every parcel of land within that school district. The capacity of each school district to raise local funds depends to a significant extent on the value of its real estate. A school district with the highest assessed values for its real estate will be able to raise for more Local Funds to operate their schools than districts with the lowest assessed values.

How the Tax Rate for Each School District is Set

Each year the school district must create a Proposed Operating Budget and determine how what portion of that budget needs to be raised by Local Funds through taxation of real estate. In order to raise the appropriate amount of Local Funds the school district must determine how much each parcel of land will be taxed. To determine how much each parcel will be taxed the school district must set a tax rate for all parcels of land so that every parcel is taxed at the same rate. Since parcels of land have different assessed values the tax rate for each parcel will be the same, but the tax amount for each parcel will be different.

Please Note: Some school districts have land in more than one county. In this situation the school district must set a tax rate for the land in each county, which can be the same rate or a different rate.

The Mill Rate is used to determine the Tax

School districts fix the tax amount on every parcel of land by setting the "Mill Rate", or "Millage Rate". The Mill Rate is the number of dollars in taxes that the owner of the land will have to pay for every thousand dollars of assessed value for that parcel.

Example #1: The school district millage rate is set at "20 mills", or \$20 per thousand dollars of assessed value. One parcel of land is assessed at \$100,000. First, \$100,000 divided by 1,000 = 100. Second, 100 multiplied by \$20 = \$2,000. Third, therefore, the school district tax on that parcel = \$2,000.

Example #2: The school district millage rate set at "35 mills", or \$35 per thousand dollars of assessed value. One parcel of land is assessed at \$75,000. First, \$75,000 divided by 1,000 = 75. Second, 75 multiplied by \$35 = \$2,625. Third, therefore, the school district tax = \$2,625.

* Single Mill Values are calculated by subtracting from the total assessed value of all the real property the total assessed value of all the parcels in the school district that benefit from the homestead exemption and pay no or a reduced amount of real estate taxes. After subtracting the homestead exemption the remaining total assessed value of real property is multiplied by ".001".

Example: In a school district the total assessed value of real property = \$10,750,000. The total value of real property for which no tax is paid because of the homestead exemption = \$650,000. First, subtract \$650,000 (value of properties exempt from taxation) from \$10,750,000 (value of all assessed real property). \$10,750,000 - \$650,000 = \$10,100,000. Then multiply \$10,100,000 by .001. \$10,100,000 x .001 = \$10,100. The value of 1 mill in this instance would be \$10,100.

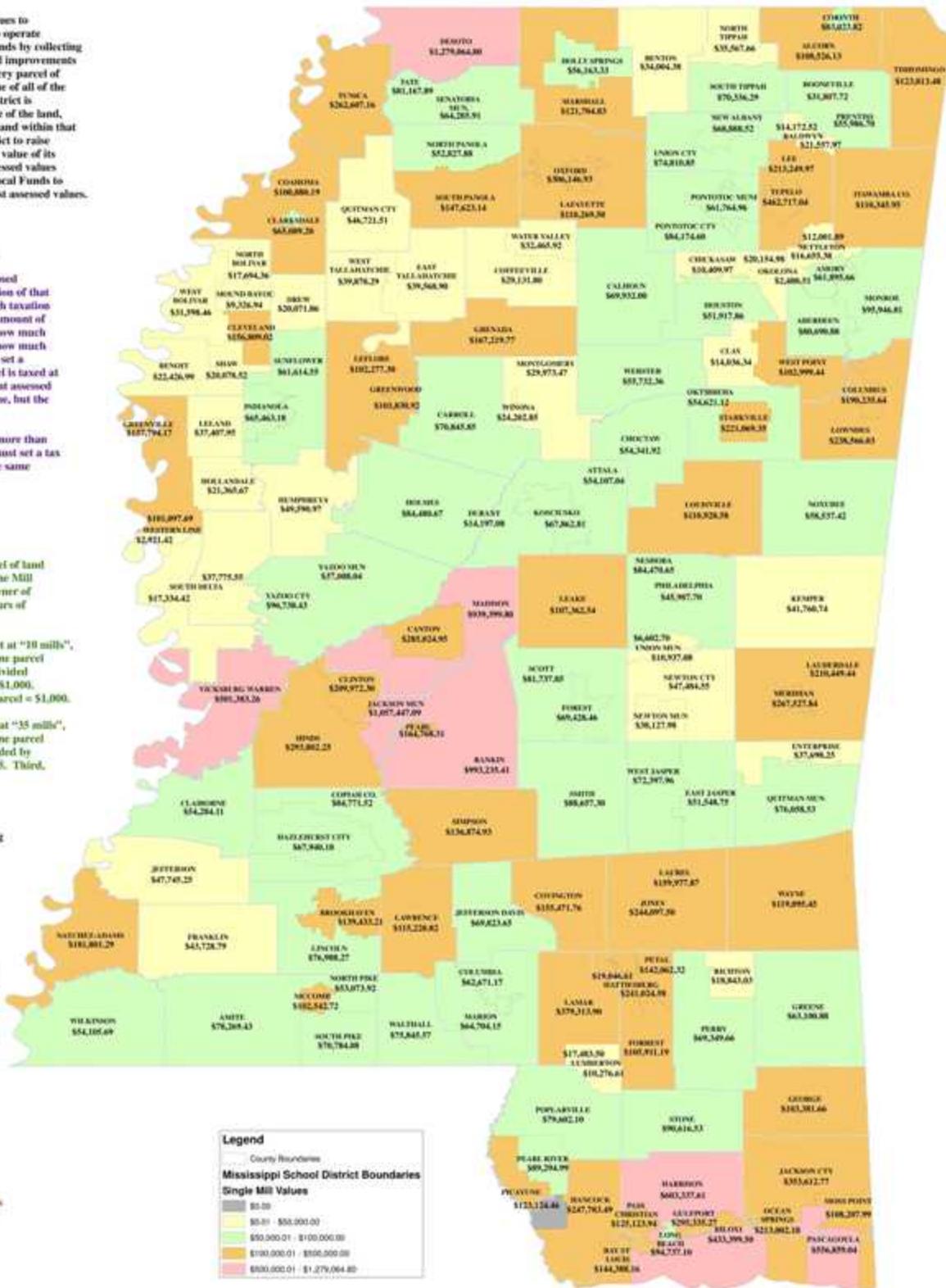
How this Map Works:

This map shows for each school district the value of a single mill. The value of a single mill is worth much more in wealthier school districts than it is in low-wealth school districts. This map presents school district boundaries in grey with color coded fill to show the relative mill values. Because some school districts cross county lines, we've included county boundary lines presented in a dashed blue line with a white background. Where a school district has land in more than one county and has a different mill value in each county, we show that on the map.



This map prepared 1-26-10
by Southern Echo, Inc.
1350 Livingston Lane, Jackson, MS 39213
phone: 601-982-6400
fax: 601-982-2636
email: soeccho@southernecho.org
website: www.southernecho.org

With technical assistance from
Brian Lipsert, PhD
Movementech, Inc., Naples, ME
phone: 207-749-1406;
email: brian@privy.com



2007-2008 Number of Tax Mills Levied for School Districts to Generate School District Revenue

School Districts Raise Local Funds through Taxation on Real Estate

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How the Tax Rate for Each School District is Set

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The Mill Rate is used to determine the Tax

School districts fix the tax amount on every parcel of land by setting the "Mill Rate", or "Millage Rate". The Mill Rate is the number of dollars in taxes that the owner of the land will have to pay for every thousand dollars of assessed value for that parcel.

Example #1: The school district millage rate is set at "10 mills", or \$10 per thousand dollars of assessed value. One parcel of land is assessed at \$100,000. First, \$100,000 divided by 1,000 = 100. Second, 100 multiplied by \$10 = \$1,000. Third, therefore, the school district tax on that parcel = \$1,000.

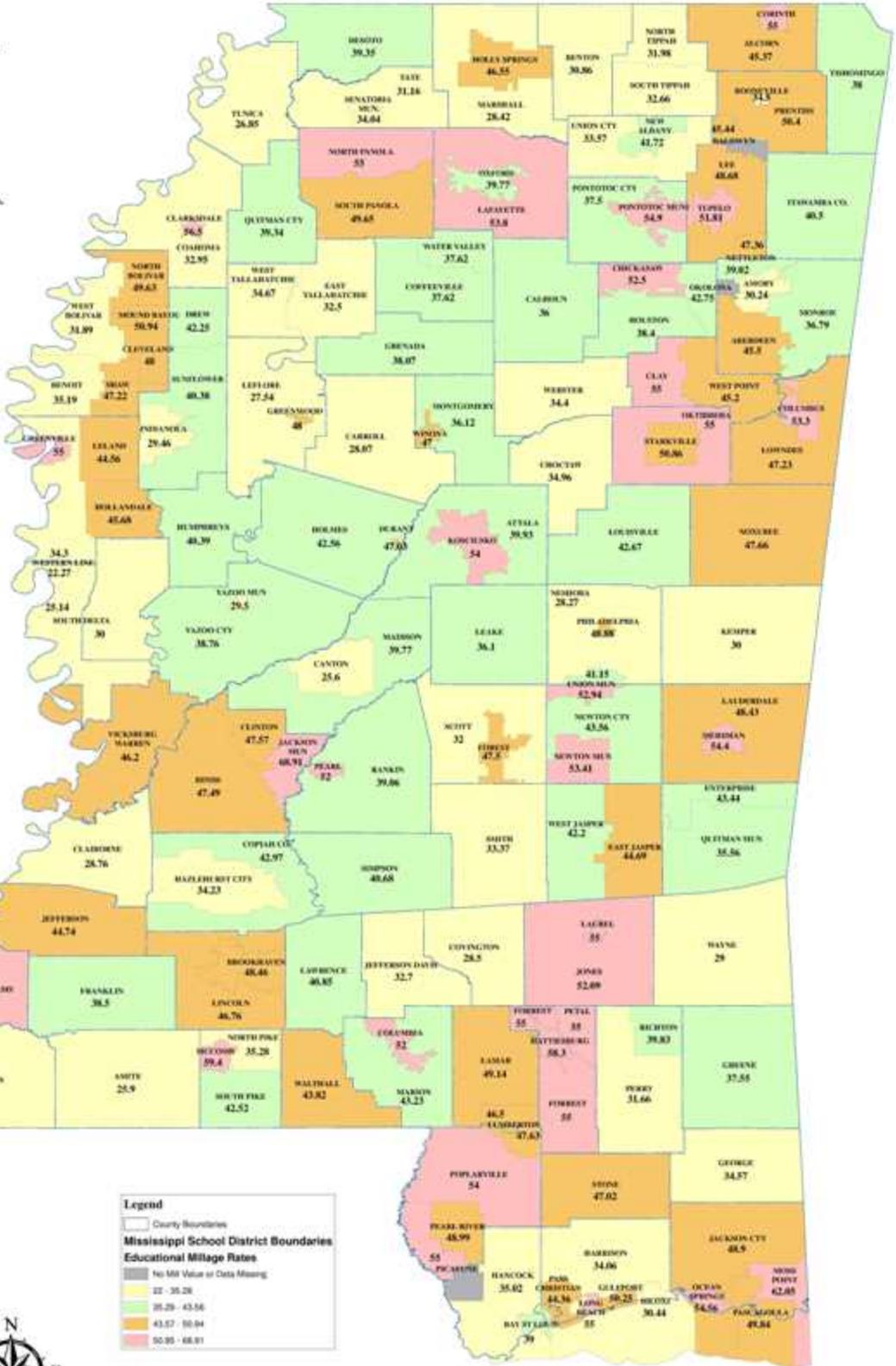
Example #2: The school district millage rate set at "35 mills", or \$35 per thousand dollars of assessed value. One parcel of land is assessed at \$75,000. First, \$75,000 divided by 1,000 = 75. Second, 75 multiplied by \$35 = \$2,625. Third, therefore, the school district tax = \$2,625.

How this Map Works:

This map shows for each school district the Millage Rate set, or the number of dollars in tax to be assessed per thousand dollars of assessed value for each parcel in the district. This map presents school district boundaries in grey with color coded fill to show the relative mill rates. Where a school district has land in more than one county and has set a different mill rate in each county, we show that on the map.

This map prepared 1-26-10 by Southern Echo, Inc. 1350 Livingston Lane, Jackson, MS 39213 phone: 601-982-6400 fax: 601-982-2636 email: soncebo@southernecho.org website: www.southernecho.org

With technical assistance from Brian Lipsitt, PhD Movementech, Inc., Naples, ME phone: 207-749-1606; email: brian@privey.com



2007-2008 Assessed Values of all Real Property in each School District (in dollars)

School Districts Raise Local Funds through Taxation on Real Estate

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How the Tax Rate for Each School District is Set

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The Mill Rate is used to determine the Tax

School districts fix the tax amount on every parcel of land by setting the "Mill Rate", or "Millage Rate". The Mill Rate is the number of dollars in taxes that the owner of the land will have to pay for every thousand dollars of assessed value for that parcel.

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Example #2: The school district millage rate set at "35 mills", or \$35 per thousand dollars of assessed value. One parcel of land is assessed at \$75,000. First, \$75,000 divided by 1,000 = 75. Second, 75 multiplied by \$35 = \$2,625. Third, therefore, the school district tax = \$2,625.

How this Map Works:

This map shows for each school district the total assessed value of the real estate in the school district. This map presents school district boundaries in grey with color gradients showing the total assessed real property values. Because some school districts cross county lines, we have included county boundary lines presented in a dashed red line with a white background. Assessed values are presented in black text in close proximity to the name of the school district also presented in black text. Where a school district has land in more than one county, we show that on the map.

This map prepared 1-26-10 by Southern Echo, Inc. 1250 Livingston Lane, Jackson, MS 39213 phone: 601-982-6400 fax: 601-982-2626 email: souecho@southernecho.org website: www.southernecho.org

With technical assistance from Brian Lipsitt, PhD Movements, Inc., Naples, ME phone: 207-749-1666; email: brian@privey.com

