



**LEGISLATIVE BRIEF**

# **2016 Education Landscape Analysis Part Four**

- School District Consolidation
- Regional Super School Districts
- School District Reorganization

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Public Policy Consultancy & Progress Mississippi

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*“Most human affairs come down to depending on whose ox is gored” Martin Luther, 1521*

## Introduction:

This is *Part Four* of our attempt to organize the 2016 Legislature’s bills into a coherent picture of the Republican strategy while racing against the legislative timeline. In *Part Four* we will review 12 bills regarding three categories:

- **School District Consolidation (10 bills)**
- **Regional Super School Districts (1 bill)**
- **School District Reorganization (1 bill)**

## Overview:

- Power is the capacity to make things happen or not to happen. School districts and schools have the capacity to make things happen or not to happen. Consolidations of school districts are a fundamental re-distribution of power.
- In 2010 Republican Governor Haley Barbour created a Commission on Educational Structure (read *school district consolidation*) comprised of legislators, educators and business leaders. In the august setting of the old Supreme Court chamber on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Capitol on the Senate side, the Governor charged the Commission with the mission to consolidate school districts rooted in the highly questionable theory that it would result in reducing substantial costs of education administration.
- During his charge Gov. Barbour was specific that he wanted the Commission to focus its efforts on consolidating low-wealth under-performing school districts, which virtually anyone paying attention understood to mean that he was targeting majority-black districts.
- The Commission met in public sessions throughout 2010. The Commission received substantial support for consolidation from the Commission’s renowned educational consulting firm, Augenblick & Associates, which included specific recommendations about which districts to merge. But the Commission also received substantial opposition research data and analysis from nationally recognized regional education specialists and Mississippi grassroots community groups.
- At the end of the year the Commission voted *not* to recommend any consolidation of local school districts.
- Since this unanticipated defeat for the Governor, the Republican legislative leadership has pursued the commitment to consolidation of low-wealth under-performing majority-black districts, first trying to do them all at once (unsuccessful) and later just a few at a time divided into numerous separate bills (successes in Bolivar, Sunflower, Clay and Oktibbeha counties).
- 10 bills submitted in the 2016 session focus on 7 consolidations, involving 17 school districts, 16 of which are majority-low wealth, 10 of which are majority-black and 8 of which are underperforming:
  - a. Holmes/Durant
  - b. Leflore/Greenwood
  - c. Montgomery/Winona/Carroll

- d. Hollandale/Leland
- e. Chickasaw/Houston/Okolona
- f. Perry/Richton
- g. Lumberton/Lamar/Poplarville

This table summarizes certain facts about each district to be consolidated and the new districts that would be created under these bills.

<b>DISTRICT NAME *</b>	<b>2014-15 GRADE RANK**</b>	<b>STUDENT BODY SIZE**</b>	<b>BLACK STUDENT %**</b>	<b>STUDENT POVERTY %**</b>
<b>HOLMES</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>2,898</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>97.4</b>
<b>DURANT</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>531</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>98.5</b>
<b>HOLMES COUNTY</b>		<b>3,429</b>	<b>99</b>	
<b>LEFLORE</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>2,405</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>99.2</b>
<b>GREENWOOD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>2,846</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>94.4</b>
<b>GREENWOOD-LEFLORE</b>		<b>5,251</b>	<b>93</b>	
<b>MONTGOMERY</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>93.2</b>
<b>WINONA</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>1,123</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>68.1</b>
<b>CARROLL</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>1,035</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>90.0</b>
<b>CARROLL-MONTGOMERY</b>		<b>2,431</b>	<b>61</b>	
<b>HOLLANDALE</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>97.8</b>
<b>LELAND</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>92.2</b>
<b>HOLLANDALE-LELAND</b>		<b>1,471</b>	<b>94</b>	
<b>CHICKASAW</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>512</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>77.2</b>
<b>HOUSTON</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>1,781</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>70.8</b>
<b>OKOLONA</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>690</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>93.1</b>
<b>CHICKASAW COUNTY</b>		<b>2,983</b>	<b>55</b>	
<b>PERRY</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>1,160</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>77.5</b>
<b>RICHTON</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>67.6</b>
<b>PERRY</b>		<b>1,871</b>	<b>25</b>	

<b>LUMBERTON</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>90.1</b>
<b>LAMAR</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>9,996</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>44.8</b>
<b>POPLARVILLE</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>1,927</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>69.4</b>
<b>*** (See Note below)</b>		<b>Insufficient data</b>	<b>Insufficient data</b>	

**NOTE:**

\* Existing districts in **BLUE**. New Consolidated Districts in **RED**

\*\* a. Grade Rank is *without waiver* for the 2014-2015 school year;

b. Student data for existing districts is for the 2015-2106 school year;

c. Data for new consolidated districts is a composite of data for existing districts

d. Source for grade ranks and data: MS Dept. of Education

e. Student poverty percentage based on % students eligible for federal free or reduced price lunch program (FRPL). Percentage student poverty is average of 6 years of FRPL data from 2006-2011. Source of data: New America Foundation.

\*\*\* Lumberton would be abolished and its student body divided between Lamar and Poplarville school districts. No new district would be created. No data available to account for distribution of students to Lamar and Poplarville.

*How people feel about these consolidations may well depend on whose ox is being gored.*

# Here are the bills that attempt to set in motion these 7 consolidations:

## School District Consolidation

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HB: 926; 987; 991

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SB: 2494; 2495; 2496; 2497; 2498; 2499; 2500

**HB 926 (Committee Substitute): Consolidate Holmes County and Durant school districts effective July 1, 2017 (Education/Barker) – passed House Education Committee and sent to House floor**

HB 926 provides:

- Merged districts into one countywide district would be called **Holmes County Consolidated School District**
- Accountability and assessment requirements for the new district would be waived for 2 years
- New central office would be located in Lexington, MS, which is the county seat
- State Board of Education would provide to both districts timeline and instructions for consolidation by Sept. 1, 2016
- The Board of Supervisors would have to create 5 single-member election districts for the new county-wide school district that are the same as the supervisor election districts
- The new county school board would be elected in the regular general election on **November 8, 2016** at the same time and manner as the presidential election
- All members of the new board will serve **4-year terms**, with the election every four years at the same time as the presidential election
- All members of the new board will take office on the first Monday of January following the date of their election (i.e. **January 2, 2017**)
- The new board members would appoint a new superintendent for the new district, which shall remain an appointed position
- The new superintendent would be able to appoint one assistant superintendent; the new district cannot have more than one
- The new board members would be responsible for all employment contracts for all personnel for the 2017-2018 school year and each year thereafter
- The new board members must prepare the budget of the new district and can use staff from the former Holmes and Durant districts to assist them
- Consolidation would be effective **July 1, 2017** and at that time the two Holmes and Durant school boards and the two superintendent offices would be abolished
- All real and personal property of the former Holmes and Durant districts would be transferred to the new district

**HB 987 (Committee Substitute): Consolidate Leflore County and Greenwood school districts effective July 1, 2017 (Education/Barker) – passed House Education Committee and sent to House floor**

HB 987 provides:

- Merged districts into one countywide district would be called **Greenwood-Leflore Consolidated School District**
- New central office would be located at the current central office facility located in Greenwood, MS, which is the county seat
- State Board of Education would provide to conservator of Leflore district and school board of Greenwood district timeline and instructions for consolidation by Sept. 1, 2016
- Consolidation would be effective **July 1, 2017** and at that time the two Leflore and Greenwood school boards and the two superintendent offices would be abolished
- Accountability and assessment requirements for the new district would be waived for 2 years
- The new school board would have 5 members selected as follows:
  - a. The **Mayor and City Council of Greenwood** would appoint **2 members**, each for a **6-year term**
  - b. The **Leflore County Board of Supervisors** would appoint **2 members**, each for a **4-year term**
  - c. The **Mayor, City Council and Board of Supervisors** would jointly appoint **1 member** for a **2-year term**
  - d. **All subsequent members** would be appointed by this same division of authority for **4-year terms**, taking office on the first Monday of January following the date of appointment
- The new board members would appoint a new superintendent for the new district, which shall remain an appointed position
- The new superintendent would be able to appoint two assistant superintendents; the new district cannot have more than two
- The new board members would be responsible for all employment contracts for all personnel for the 2017-2018 school year and each year thereafter
- The new board members must prepare the budget of the new district and can use staff from the former Leflore and Greenwood districts to assist them
- All real and personal property of the former Leflore and Greenwood districts would be transferred to the new district
- Every school board member of the district under conservatorship (i.e. Leflore) is barred from selection to serve on the new school board

**HB 991: Consolidate Chickasaw County, Houston and Okolona school districts effective July 1, 2017 (Education/Barker)**

See discussion below of [SB 2497](#), which has passed the Senate Education Committee and has been sent to the Senate floor

**SB 2494 (Committee Substitute): Consolidate Holmes County and Durant school districts effective July 1, 2017 (Education/Tollison) – passed Senate Education Committee and sent to Senate floor**

**Note: SB 2494 is *substantially different* than HB 926, discussed above, which consolidates the same districts.**

SB 2494 provides:

- The consolidated districts of Holmes County and Durant would be called **Holmes County School District**
- **July 1, 2017** would be the effective date of the consolidation
- Accountability and assessment requirements for the new district would be waived for 2 years
- **July 1, 2016** the State Board of Education must notify Holmes and Durant school boards as to instructions and timetable for consolidation
- The new school board would be elected in a **November 2016** special election to be called by the Governor
- The new school board would be elected for 4-year terms as residents within election districts that are the same as the county supervisor election districts
- Any school board member of the former districts is eligible for election to the new school board
- The new school board would appoint a new superintendent, which position must remain an appointive position, and employ central office staff for the new district, all no later than **July 1, 2017**, except that no superintendent is eligible for appointment who was in office when a former district was taken over by the state and placed in conservatorship
- The new district may not employ more than 3 assistant superintendents
- The new central office of the new district would be located in Lexington, MS
- After **July 1, 2016** the State Board of Education “*may* appoint an *interim trustee* to manage the transition for the consolidation ...”
- The SBE shall determine the interim trustee’s compensation, half to be paid by the state and half by funds from the local districts
- The SBE may either assign an interim trustee OR contract with a “... private entity with experience in academic, finance and other operational functions of schools and school districts.”
- The interim trustee “*shall* be responsible for the administration, management and operation of the school district from **July 1, 2016 until July 1, 2018**, including, but not limited to, the following activities:”
  - a. merging existing budgets with new district budget
  - b. discretion to nonrenew central office staff
  - c. create new salary scale for licensed and nonlicensed employees
  - d. determine supplemental duties of school district employees
  - e. assist local officials with school tax assessment
  - f. assist with search for new superintendent
  - g. veto authority of decisions of both former school boards until new school board is in office



- After July 1, 2017 all real and personal property, debts and assets of the former districts would transfer to the new district

**SB 2495 (Committee Substitute): Consolidate Carroll, Montgomery and Winona school districts effective July 1, 2017 (Education/Tollison) – passed Senate Education Committee and sent to Senate floor**

SB 2495 provides:

- The new district that results from the line consolidation of the 3 districts of Carroll County, Montgomery County and Winona Municipal Separate School District would be called the **Carroll-Montgomery Consolidated School District**
- The consolidation would be effective **July 1, 2017**
- Accountability and assessment requirements for the new district would be waived for 2 years
- The new administrative office of the new district would be located in Winona, MS
- **July 1, 2016** the State Board of Education must notify the school boards of the 3 districts as to instructions and timetable for consolidation
- The SBE, with the assistance of the Joint Legislative Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER) would apportion the territory of the new district into 5 board of trustee election districts
- The districts must be reapportioned after the 2020 census and every decennial census thereafter
- The new school board would be elected from the 5 newly apportioned districts in a **November 2016** special election to be called by the Governor
- Any school board member of the former districts is eligible for election to the new school board
- Terms of office: the State Board of Education shall designate the term of office for the original board of trustees election districts as follows:
  - a. one member to serve 1 year
  - b. one member to serve 2 years
  - c. one member to serve 3 years
  - d. one member to serve 4 years
  - e. one member to serve 5 years
  - f. thereafter, each member shall be elected for a term of 5 years
- The new school board would appoint a new superintendent, which position must remain an appointive position, and employ central office staff for the new district, all no later than **July 1, 2017**, except that no superintendent is eligible for appointment who was in office when a former district was taken over by the state and placed in conservatorship
- The new district may not employ more than 3 assistant superintendents
- After **July 1, 2016** the State Board of Education “*may* appoint an *interim trustee* to manage the transition for the consolidation ...”
- The SBE shall determine the interim trustee’s compensation, half to be paid by the state and half by funds from the local districts
- The SBE may either assign an interim trustee OR contract with a “... private entity with experience in academic, finance and other operational functions of schools and school districts.”

- The interim trustee “*shall* be responsible for the administration, management and operation of the school district from **July 1, 2016 until July 1, 2018**, including, but not limited to, the following activities:”
  - a. merging existing budgets with new district budget
  - b. discretion to nonrenew central office staff
  - c. create new salary scale for licensed and nonlicensed employees
  - d. determine supplemental duties of school district employees
  - e. assist local officials with school tax assessment
  - f. assist with search for new superintendent
  - g. veto authority of decisions of both former school boards until new school board is in office
- After July 1, 2017 all real and personal property, debts and assets of the former districts would transfer to the new district

**SB 2496: Consolidation of Leflore County and Greenwood school districts effective July 1, 2017 (Education/Tollison)**

**Note: SB 2496 is *substantially different* than HB 987, discussed above, which consolidates the same districts.**

SB 2496 provides:

- The consolidated districts of Leflore County and Greenwood would be called **Greenwood-Leflore County School District**
- **July 1, 2017** would be the effective date of the consolidation
- The administrative central office of the new district would be located in Greenwood, MS
- Accountability and assessment requirements for the new district would be waived for 2 years
- **July 1, 2016**: the State Board of Education must notify Leflore County and Greenwood school boards as to instructions and timetable for consolidation
- The new school board would be elected in a **November 8, 2016** special election
- The new school board would be elected as follows:
  - a. new board members from Supervisor Districts 1 and 2: term of 4 years
  - b. new board members from Supervisor Districts 3 and 4: term of 6 years
  - c. new board member from Supervisor District 5: term of 2 years
  - d. thereafter each board member would be elected for a term of 6 years
  - e. all members would take office on the first Monday of January following the date of their election
- Any school board member of the former districts is eligible for election to the new school board
- The new school board would appoint a new superintendent, which position must remain an appointive position, and employ central office staff for the new district, all no later than **July 1, 2017**, except that no superintendent is eligible for appointment who was in office when a former district was taken over by the state and placed in conservatorship
- The new district may not employ more than 3 assistant superintendents
- After **July 1, 2016** the State Board of Education “*may* appoint an *interim trustee* to manage the transition for the consolidation ...”

- The SBE shall determine the interim trustee’s compensation, half to be paid by the state and half by funds from the local districts
- The SBE may either assign an interim trustee OR contract with a “... private entity with experience in academic, finance and other operational functions of schools and school districts.”
- The interim trustee “*shall* be responsible for the administration, management and operation of the school district from **July 1, 2016 until July 1, 2018**, including, but not limited to, the following activities:”
  - a. merging existing budgets with new district budget
  - b. discretion to nonrenew central office staff
  - c. create new salary scale for licensed and nonlicensed employees
  - d. determine supplemental duties of school district employees
  - e. assist local officials with school tax assessment
  - f. assist with search for new superintendent
  - g. veto authority of decisions of both former school boards until new school board is in office
- After July 1, 2017 all real and personal property, debts and assets of the former districts would transfer to the new district

**SB 2497 (Committee Substitute): Consolidate Chickasaw, Houston and Okolona school districts effective July 1, 2017 (Education/Tollison) – passed Senate Education Committee and sent to Senate floor**

SB 2497 provides:

- The 3 school districts in Chickasaw County (Chickasaw County, Houston and Okolona) would be consolidated into a single district to be called **Chickasaw County School District** effective **July 1, 2017**
- Accountability and assessment requirements for the new district would be waived for 3 years
- The new central administrative office of the new district will be located in Houston, MS
- **July 1, 2016**: the State Board of Education must notify Chickasaw County, Houston, and Okolona school boards as to instructions and timetable for consolidation
- The new school board would be elected in a **November 8, 2016** special election
- The new school board would be elected as follows:
  - a. new board members from Supervisor Districts 1 and 2: term of 4 years
  - b. new board members from Supervisor Districts 3 and 4: term of 6 years
  - c. new board member from Supervisor District 5: term of 2 years
  - d. thereafter each board member would be elected for a term of 6 years
  - e. all members would take office on the first Monday of January following the date of their election
- Any school board member of the former districts is eligible for election to the new school board
- The new school board would appoint a new superintendent, which position must remain an appointive position, and employ central office staff for the new district, all no later than **July 1, 2017**

- “No superintendent serving in a school district designated as an underperforming school district or placed under conservatorship shall be eligible for appointment as a superintendent or assistant superintendent of the new” district
- The new district may not employ more than 3 assistant superintendents
- After **July 1, 2016** the State Board of Education “*may* appoint an *interim trustee* to manage the transition for the consolidation ...”
- The SBE shall determine the interim trustee’s compensation, half to be paid by the state and half by funds from the local districts
- The SBE may either assign an interim trustee OR contract with a “... private entity with experience in academic, finance and other operational functions of schools and school districts.”
- The interim trustee “*shall* be responsible for the administration, management and operation of the school district from **July 1, 2016 until July 1, 2018**, including, but not limited to, the following activities:”
  - a. merging existing budgets with new district budget
  - b. discretion to nonrenew central office staff
  - c. create new salary scale for licensed and nonlicensed employees
  - d. determine supplemental duties of school district employees
  - e. assist local officials with school tax assessment
  - f. assist with search for new superintendent
  - g. veto authority of decisions of both former school boards until new school board is in office
- After July 1, 2017 all real and personal property, debts and assets of the former districts would transfer to the new district

**SB 2498: Consolidate Perry and Richton school districts effective July 1, 2017 (Education/Tollison)**

SB 2498 provides:

- The 2 school districts in Perry County (Perry County and Richton) would be consolidated into a single district to be called **Perry County School District** effective **July 1, 2017**
- Accountability and assessment requirements for the new district would be waived for 3 years
- The central administrative office of the new district will be located in New Augusta, MS
- **July 1, 2016:** the State Board of Education must notify Perry County and Richton school boards as to instructions and timetable for consolidation
- The new school board would be elected in a **November 8, 2016** special election
- The new school board would be elected as follows:
  - a. new board members from Supervisor Districts 1 and 2: term of 4 years
  - b. new board members from Supervisor Districts 3 and 4: term of 6 years
  - c. new board member from Supervisor District 5: term of 2 years
  - d. thereafter each board member would be elected for a term of 6 years
  - e. all members would take office on the first Monday of January following the date of their election
- Any school board member of the former districts is eligible for election to the new school board

- The new school board would appoint a new superintendent, which position must remain an appointive position, and employ central office staff for the new district, all no later than **July 1, 2017**
- “No superintendent serving in a school district designated as an underperforming school district or placed under conservatorship shall be eligible for appointment as a superintendent or assistant superintendent of the new” district
- The new district may not employ more than 3 assistant superintendents
- After **July 1, 2016** the State Board of Education “*may* appoint an *interim trustee* to manage the transition for the consolidation ...”
- The SBE shall determine the interim trustee’s compensation, half to be paid by the state and half by funds from the local districts
- The SBE may either assign an interim trustee OR contract with a “... private entity with experience in academic, finance and other operational functions of schools and school districts.”
- The interim trustee “*shall* be responsible for the administration, management and operation of the school district from **July 1, 2016 until July 1, 2018**, including, but not limited to, the following activities:”
  - a. merging existing budgets with new district budget
  - b. discretion to nonrenew central office staff
  - c. create new salary scale for licensed and nonlicensed employees
  - d. determine supplemental duties of school district employees
  - e. assist local officials with school tax assessment
  - f. assist with search for new superintendent
  - g. veto authority of decisions of both former school boards until new school board is in office
- After July 1, 2017 all real and personal property, debts and assets of the former districts would transfer to the new district

**SB 2499: Line Consolidation of Hollandale and Leland school districts effective July 1, 2017 (Education/Tollison)**

SB 2499 provides:

- The new district that results from the line consolidation of 2 districts (Hollandale and Leland) would be called the **Hollandale-Leland Consolidated School District**
- The consolidation would be effective **July 1, 2017**
- Accountability and assessment requirements for the new district would be waived for 3 years
- The new administrative office of the new district would be located in Hollandale, MS
- **July 1, 2016** the State Board of Education must notify the school boards of the 2 districts as to instructions and timetable for consolidation
- The SBE, with the assistance of the Joint Legislative Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER) would apportion the territory of the new district into 5 board of trustee election districts
- The new school board would be elected from the 5 newly apportioned districts in a special election to be called by the Governor for **November 8, 2016**

- Any school board member of the former districts is eligible for election to the new school board
- Terms of office: the State Board of Education shall designate the term of office for the original board of trustees election districts as follows:
  - a. one member to serve 1 year
  - b. one member to serve 2 years
  - c. one member to serve 3 years
  - d. one member to serve 4 years
  - e. one member to serve 5 years
  - f. thereafter, each member shall be elected for a term of 5 years
- The new school board would appoint a new superintendent, which position must remain an appointive position, and employ central office staff for the new district, all no later than **July 1, 2017**.
- “No superintendent serving in a school district designated as an underperforming school district or placed under conservatorship shall be eligible for appointment as a superintendent or assistant superintendent of the new” district
- The new district may not employ more than 3 assistant superintendents
- After **July 1, 2016** the State Board of Education “*may* appoint an *interim trustee* to manage the transition for the consolidation ...”
- The SBE shall determine the interim trustee’s compensation, half to be paid by the state and half by funds from the local districts
- The SBE may either assign an interim trustee OR contract with a “... private entity with experience in academic, finance and other operational functions of schools and school districts.”
- The interim trustee “*shall* be responsible for the administration, management and operation of the school district from **July 1, 2016 until July 1, 2018**, including, but not limited to, the following activities:”
  - a. merging existing budgets with new district budget
  - b. discretion to nonrenew central office staff
  - c. create new salary scale for licensed and nonlicensed employees
  - d. determine supplemental duties of school district employees
  - e. assist local officials with school tax assessment
  - f. assist with search for new superintendent
  - g. veto authority of decisions of both former school boards until new school board is in office
- After July 1, 2017 all real and personal property, debts and assets of the former districts would transfer to the new district

**SB 2500: Consolidation of Lumberton into Lamar and Poplarville Districts (Education/Tollison)**

SB 2500 provides:

- **July 1, 2018** Lumberton Public School District would be abolished
- The territory of Lumberton located in Lamar County would be transferred to Lamar County School District and the territory of Lumberton located in Pearl River County would be transferred to Poplarville Separate School District

- All real and personal property of the Lumberton district would be transferred to either Lamar or Poplarville based on where the property is located
- Students attending Lumberton would be automatically transferred to Lamar or Poplarville school districts based on the residence of the student AND continue to attend the schools which they were attending in the former Lumberton district
- The abolition of the Lumberton district does not require the closing of any Lumberton schools
- A student lawfully attending a Lumberton school on **July 1, 2018** shall have the right to continue to attend school in a former Lumberton school, OR to transfer to another school in the former Lumberton district, and the transferee district shall have the corresponding duty to consent to either request, provided that the student does not have to be transported more than 30 miles from home
- Accountability and assessment requirements for *the students who formerly attended Lumberton* would be waived for 3 years in determining school district accreditation levels for Lamar and Poplarville
- **July 1, 2016:** the State Board of Education must notify the school boards of the 2 districts as to instructions and timetable for consolidation
- Taxes levied in Lamar and Poplarville to support students attending Lumberton would continue in each county
- After **July 1, 2016** the State Board of Education “*may* appoint an *interim trustee* to manage the transition for the consolidation ...”
- The SBE shall determine the interim trustee’s compensation, half to be paid by the state and half by funds from the local districts
- The SBE may either assign an interim trustee OR contract with a “... private entity with experience in academic, finance and other operational functions of schools and school districts.”
- The interim trustee “*shall* be responsible for the administration, management and operation of the school district from **July 1, 2016 until July 1, 2018**, including, but not limited to, the following activities:”
  - a. merging existing budgets with new district budget
  - b. discretion to nonrenew central office staff
  - c. create new salary scale for licensed and nonlicensed employees
  - d. determine supplemental duties of school district employees
  - e. assist local officials with school tax assessment
  - f. assist with search for new superintendent
  - g. veto authority of decisions of both former school boards until new school board is in office
- Lamar County Board of Supervisors must apportion the Lumberton School District territory into the proper election districts for the Lamar County Board of Education
- Lumberton School District territory in Pearl River County must be added to the territory of the Poplarville School District and the residents are entitled to representation on the Poplarville School Board

## Regional Super School District

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HB: 1525

### HB 1525: Authorization of MS Recovery School District to create Regional Super School Districts by Consolidation of Failing School Districts (Education/Gunn)

*"A stinkweed by any other name would smell as foul." E. Kim Reyas, 2016*

This bill attempts to double-down on the nationally and locally discredited, failing strategy of creating conservatorships to sustain improvement in the quality of educational outcomes in under-performing school districts, by authorizing maximum deployment of conservators to take over and then abolish underperforming districts in favor of newly-created Regional Super School Districts.

There is no research-based evidence to support this strategy, which is ironic in light of the new Republican mantra that budgeting ought to be performance-based, and performance-based is achieved through the development of research-based evidence to rationalize, justify and authorize policy. This bill clothes itself in the jacket and tie of educational improvement to disguise the reality that underneath it all it is but a naked re-distribution of power.

HB 1525 provides:

- The State Board of Education would be authorized, upon the recommendation of the MS Recovery District, to create a **regional super school district** by *consolidation of any 2 or more school districts* in the same region that have been classified as failing
- Subsequent to the creation of the new regional district, the State Board of Education would be authorized, upon the recommendation of the MS Recovery District, to add additional districts in the region that have been classified as failing for 2 consecutive years
- If the State Board of Education creates a regional school district, then the MS Recovery School District would appoint a conservator for each of the school districts being consolidated
- The conservator may exercise all powers and perform all duties delegated to conservators
- One conservator can simultaneously govern some or all of the consolidated districts
- The State Board must consider the following factors in making its decision whether to consolidate:
  - a. the proximity of the school districts to each other
  - b. the number of students enrolled in each of the school districts
  - c. the facilities and resources available in each of the school districts
  - d. the location of the campuses and administrative offices in each of the districts
  - e. information received from school administrators and employees, parents and residents of the consolidated districts
  - f. any other factors the State Board of Education deems relevant
- The regional super school district would have an elected school board and appointed superintendent



- A previous board member of any district subject to the consolidation is *not* eligible to serve on the newly elected board
- The *boards of supervisors* from each county in which all or some part of a school district involved in the consolidation lies, **acting jointly**, must apportion the regional super school district into 5 new single member regional super school board election districts that will be effective for the next November election
- On July 1 following the election of the new school board the former school boards of the consolidated districts would be abolished
- All real and personal property of the consolidated districts would be transferred to the new regional super school district
- The State Board of Education, in consultation with the conservators and the newly elected regional school board, would set the contracts for teachers and principals for the school year following consolidation
- The newly elected school board shall appoint the new superintendent for the regional super school district
- The superintendents of the former districts are not eligible for appointment as the new superintendent
- The new school board, subject to the approval of the conservators and the State Board of Education, would select the assistant superintendent and employees in the central office
- The new school board, subject to the approval of the conservators and the State Board of Education, would prepare the new budget for the regional district
- The State Board of Education must approve any transfer of assets or real or personal property of the consolidated districts

## School Reorganization

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SB 2289

**SB 2289: Reorganize All School Districts into County-wide School Districts effective July 1, 2018** (Education/Blackwell)

SB 2289 provides:

- This act would be cited as the “**MS School District Reorganization Act of 2016**”.
- On **July 1, 2018** each county would constitute a school district known as the \_\_\_\_\_ County School District
- Any county having a population of less than 10,000 people according to the latest federal decennial census **must** combine with an adjoining county to form a two-county school district, the election districts for which combined district shall be **apportioned** into one 5-member district by the joint effort of the two boards of supervisors of the combined two-county school district  
 (Mike’s NOTE: The bill does not require that a county *with more* than 10,000 people must agree to combine with a county *with less* than 10,000 people. Nor does the bill state how a too-small county chooses with which county, larger or smaller, to combine if it adjoins more than one county; nor does it state what happens if none of the adjoining counties

want to combine with a too-small county compelled to combine! As my bubby would have said, “Oy, such a mishegoss!”)

- On **July 1, 2018** every county school district would be governed by elected boards of education and appointed superintendents
- After **June 30, 2018** all other school districts (consolidated, line consolidated, municipal separate or special municipal separate districts) would cease to exist
- After **June 30, 2018** every board of trustees of every consolidated, line consolidated, municipal separate, special municipal separate districts and agricultural high school shall cease to exist
- After **June 30, 2018** every county superintendent and every superintendent of every consolidated, line consolidated, municipal separate, special municipal separate districts and agricultural high school shall cease to exist
- The State Board of Education “*may* appoint an *interim trustee* to manage the transition for the consolidation ...”
- The SBE shall determine the interim trustee’s compensation, half to be paid by the state and half by funds from the local districts
- The SBE may either assign an interim trustee OR contract with a “... private entity with experience in academic, finance and other operational functions of schools and school districts.”
- The interim trustee “*shall* be responsible for the administration, management and operation of the school district from **July 1, 2017 until selection of the new superintendent of schools for the successor school districts**, including, but not limited to, the following activities:”
  - a. merging existing budgets with new district budget
  - b. discretion to nonrenew central office staff
  - c. create new salary scale for licensed and nonlicensed employees
  - d. determine supplemental duties of school district employees
  - e. assist local officials with school tax assessment
  - f. assist with search for new superintendent
  - g. veto authority of decisions of both former school boards until new school board is in office

This “train”, SB 2289, should not leave the station.

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