



MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Superintendent's Annual Report 2019-20

MISSISSIPPI SUCCEEDS

Rising to the Challenge

CONTENTS

- 3 Mississippi State Board of Education
- 4 Mississippi State Board of Education Strategic Plan
- 5 Message from the State Superintendent of Education
- 7 Timeline

ONLINE REPORTS

View financial and other statistical data at mdek12.org/superintendent2020.





Superintendent's Annual Report 2019-20

MISSISSIPPI SUCCEEDS

Rising to the Challenge

Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.

State Superintendent of Education



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DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

mdek12.org

MISSISSIPPI STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Mississippi State Board of Education's vision is to create a world-class educational system that gives students the knowledge and skills to be successful in college and the workforce, and to flourish as parents and citizens. The Board sets policies and standards that advance public education in Mississippi.

This past year, we welcomed new board members and said farewell to valued members who made enduring contributions to advancing public education in Mississippi.

Current Members

Jason S. Dean, Ph.D., Chair
At-Large Representative

Rosemary G. Aultman
At-Large Representative

Angela Bass, Ph.D.*
Central Supreme Court District
Representative

Glen East*
Administrator Representative

Karen Elam, Ph.D.
3rd Supreme Court District
Representative

Ronnie McGehee, Ph.D.*
At-Large Representative

Omar Jamil
Senior Student Representative

Amy Zhang
Junior Student Representative

Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

Outgoing Members

John R. Kelly, Ph.D.
2nd Supreme Court District
Representative
2011-2020

Buddy Bailey
Administrator
Representative
2015-2020

Sean Suggs
At-Large Representative
2017-2020

Brittney Rye
Teacher Representative
2018-2020

Shelby Dean
Senior Student
Representative
2019-2020

*Pending Mississippi Senate confirmation in 2021 Legislative Session

1

ALL
Students Proficient and Showing Growth in All Assessed Areas



2

EVERY
Student Graduates from High School and is Ready for College and Career



3

EVERY
Child Has Access to a High-Quality Early Childhood Program



4

EVERY
School Has Effective Teachers and Leaders



5

EVERY
Community Effectively Uses a World-Class Data System to Improve Student Outcomes



6

EVERY
School and District is Rated "C" or Higher



3

The **Mississippi State Board of Education Strategic Plan** sets the roadmap for continually improving public education in Mississippi. The plan describes the objectives and strategies the Mississippi Department of Education employs to help local school districts achieve the Board's vision and goals. The Board's goals were created in 2014 and expanded in 2016.

MESSAGE FROM THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

Mississippi students, teachers and school leaders started the 2019-20 school year in a position of strength. Our state was No. 1 in the nation for gains on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), students in every grade had made significant, annual gains on statewide English Language Arts and mathematics assessments, and our graduation rate hit an all-time high of 85%, on par with the national average. Quality Counts now ranks Mississippi No. 2 in the nation for improvement in education.

For most of the 2019-20 school year, great teaching and learning continued in Mississippi schools, with students poised for more record gains. As we approached the final months of the academic year, the COVID-19 pandemic caused the sudden closure of school buildings and forced educators to move learning from classrooms to students' homes – within a matter of days.

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) and the Mississippi State Board of Education acted quickly to provide resources and remove obstacles to help districts adapt to distance learning. We gave districts flexibilities to teach students in innovative ways and helped them provide the millions of meals students depended upon.

Mississippi teachers and school leaders used all available tools to connect with their students – from laptops to phone calls to encouraging notes tucked into learning packets delivered by school bus. Students showed tremendous resilience, particularly graduating seniors. Forced to isolate from each other, they marked the completion of their school years with graduation ceremonies held in cars or by walking the stage to accept their diplomas with only their families to witness.

After overcoming our immediate challenges, Mississippi worked aggressively to provide technology to the roughly one-third of Mississippi students who did not have a computer or adequate internet access to take part in distance learning. The MDE asked the Legislature for \$200 million to fund the initiative, called Mississippi Connects. Thanks

to their swift action, every public-school student in Mississippi now has a computer device to learn.

Though the cancellation of state and national assessments in 2020 means we do not have new achievement data for the 2019-20 school year, our record of significant, sustained improvement has been historic. Here are some points to remember from 2019:

- Mississippi 4th graders achieved the No. 1 spot in the nation for gains on NAEP in reading and math, with 4th graders scoring higher than the nation's public-school average in math and tying the nation in reading.
- 8th graders outpaced the nation for growth in math and held steady in reading; nationally, scores for most NAEP subjects dropped or remained flat.
- Black, white and Hispanic students from low-income homes in Mississippi achieved higher scores than their counterparts nationally in all four NAEP subjects.
- Mississippi raised the passing score for the 3rd grade reading test, and 85.6% of students met the most challenging standard ever required under the Literacy-Based Promotion Act.
- Students built upon their steady gains on the Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP). When the tests were first administered in 2016, one-third of students scored on or above grade level in English Language Arts and Math. In 2019, closer to half reached those levels.



**WHEN WE PUT
STUDENTS
FIRST,
MISSISSIPPI
SUCCEEDS.**

This annual report shows how Mississippi students, educators and families persisted in their pursuit of higher academic achievement under the most challenging circumstances our state has faced. I am optimistic about the future of education in Mississippi because we have already proven what can happen when there is a singular focus on changing student outcomes. When we put students first, Mississippi succeeds.

Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

FACTS & FIGURES

2019-20 School Year

Mississippi public schools start the 2019-20 school year equipped to build upon their historic record of academic gains.

STUDENTS

465,433

student daily membership

434,362

average daily attendance (ADA)

\$10,655

average expenditure per pupil based on ADA

TEACHERS

31,601

teachers

\$46,843

average teacher salary

SCHOOLS & DISTRICTS

146

public school districts (includes 6 charter schools)

638

elementary/middle schools

158

traditional high schools (grades 9-12 only)

82

combined grades (K-12 attendance centers & high schools with grades below 9)

6

charter schools

LITERACY COACHES

74

literacy coaches

74

districts served by literacy coaches

171

schools served by literacy coaches



Read more about Mississippi's historic record of academic achievement in the 2020 *Mississippi State Board of Education Strategic Plan Status Report*.





2,476
teachers trained

Educators Prepare for Year through Professional Development

Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) provides free professional development opportunities through scheduled sessions and direct support to districts and schools that need additional support in the areas of English Language Arts, mathematics, special education and science. In the first two months of the year, 2,476 teachers take part in 99 professional development sessions.

AUGUST

2019

SEPTEMBER



OCTOBER



Dr. Carey Wright Named to National Assessment Governing Board

Dr. Carey Wright, state superintendent of education, is one of seven national leaders selected to serve on the National Assessment Governing Board. The appointees help set policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), known as the Nation's Report Card. NAEP offers to the public and to education policymakers at the national, state and local levels, objective data on student performance in nearly a dozen subjects.

English Learner Progress Award

MDE is awarded \$2.4 million to lead multistate effort to better measure progress of English learners. Partners include national experts and six other states including Arizona, Arkansas, Michigan, Ohio, Washington and Wisconsin. The improved methods will be shared with researchers and educators in all states. Partners include the Council of Chief State School Officers, the California State University Northridge, the Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing at the University of California Los Angeles, and Com-Link, LLC.

\$2.4
million awarded



NOVEMBER

Seal of Biliteracy

Mississippi State Board of Education approves Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy for students who achieve proficiency in one or more world languages and English. The Seal of Biliteracy demonstrates attainment of biliteracy for students, employers, and postsecondary institutions, and signals a student's readiness for college and career and for engagement as a global citizen.



DECEMBER

2019

2020

JANUARY

Celebration of Excellence Tour Concludes After Visits to 31 Districts

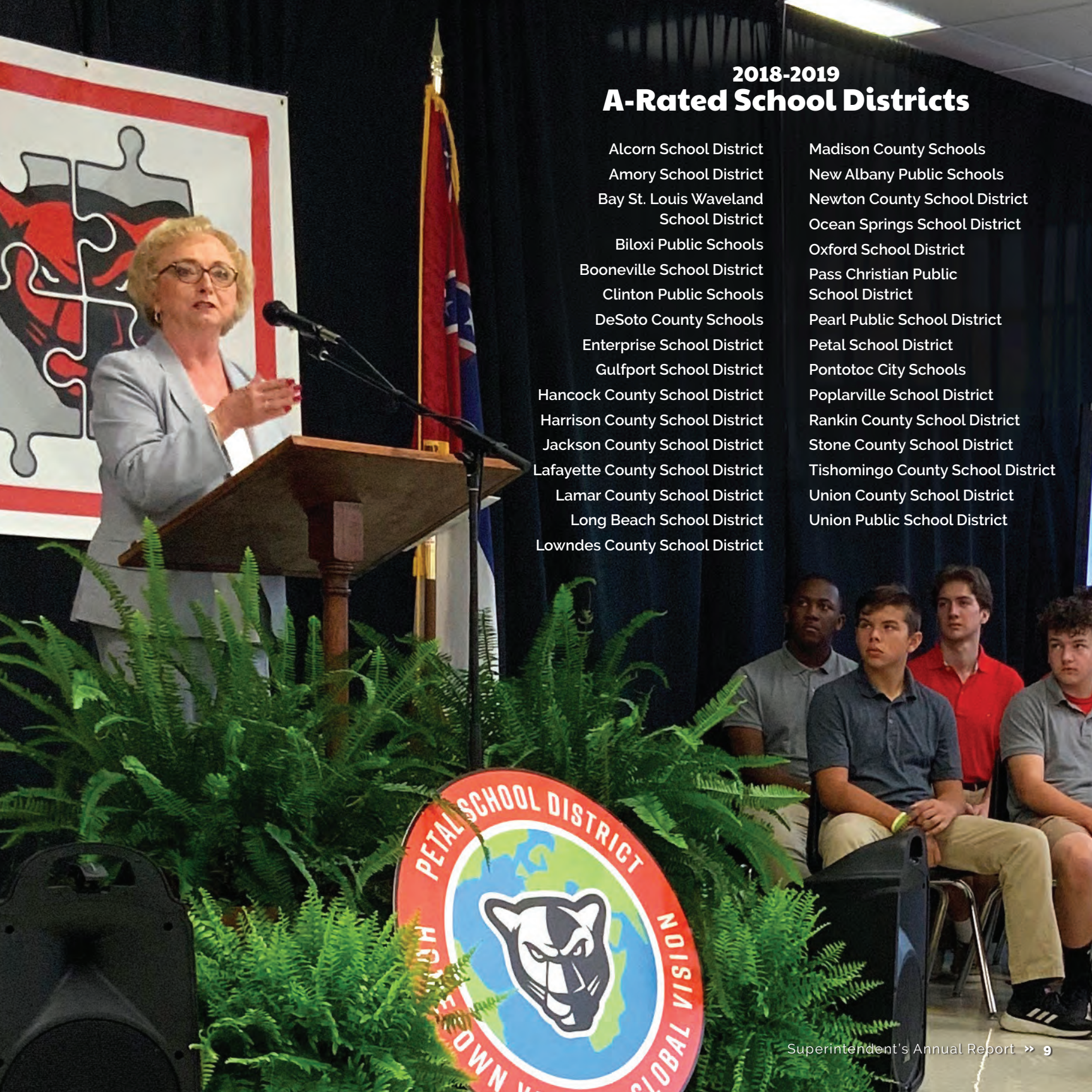
Dr. Carey Wright concludes her annual Celebration of Excellence tour of all A-rated districts. For the 2018-19 accountability year, the number of schools and districts earning an A more than doubles compared to the previous year, with A-rated schools jumping from 88 to 196, and A-rated districts increasing from 14 to 31. Statewide, schools and districts have made significant improvements since 2016, with the percentage of districts earning a C or higher rising from 62% to 70% in 2019, and schools earning a C or higher jumping from 62% to 74% in 2019.

31
districts

2018-2019 A-Rated School Districts

Alcorn School District
Amory School District
Bay St. Louis Waveland
School District
Biloxi Public Schools
Booneville School District
Clinton Public Schools
DeSoto County Schools
Enterprise School District
Gulfport School District
Hancock County School District
Harrison County School District
Jackson County School District
Lafayette County School District
Lamar County School District
Long Beach School District
Lowndes County School District

Madison County Schools
New Albany Public Schools
Newton County School District
Ocean Springs School District
Oxford School District
Pass Christian Public
School District
Pearl Public School District
Petal School District
Pontotoc City Schools
Poplarville School District
Rankin County School District
Stone County School District
Tishomingo County School District
Union County School District
Union Public School District





“Celebration of Excellence” Tour to Recognize District Achievements





Student Advisory Council Meets with State Superintendent

More than 80 students who make up the inaugural State Superintendent’s Student Advisory Council meet with Dr. Carey Wright to share their opinions and offer advice about educational opportunities and policy in Mississippi. The council includes high school juniors and seniors and college freshmen who act as liaisons between MDE and public-school students across the state.

FEBRUARY

2020



Quality Counts Names Mississippi Top Five Most Improved States

For the second time in two years, Mississippi earns recognition as one of five most improved states in the Quality Counts report that examines achievement in school systems from pre-K through grade 12 and socioeconomic factors leading to success in adulthood. Mississippi gains 6.2 points in the Chance-for-Success index, improving its grade from a D+ in 2008 to a C in 2020. The report says key advances in family income, parental education levels, parental employment, 4th grade reading and 8th grade math contributed to the state’s success.



34%
pass rate

Class of 2019 Increases Advanced Placement Participation and Performance

Close to 23% (5,801) of Mississippi public-school students in the graduating class of 2019 take a total of 13,178 Advanced Placement (AP) exams during high school, a slight increase (+0.4%) from the class of 2018. Student performance also improves, with 32.5% earning qualifying scores. Overall, the number of Mississippi students taking AP courses and passing AP exams have both nearly doubled since 2013. The AP exam pass rate for students in all grades in 2018-19 was 34%.



COVID-19

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mississippi School Buildings Close Abruptly Due to COVID-19

As most students are ending their Spring Break, the COVID-19 pandemic forces schools to abruptly close their doors and immediately shift to distance learning. Facing an uncertain future, education and state leaders act swiftly to help districts manage the immediate crisis in their schools and communities.



State Board of Education relieves districts of the requirement of a 180-day school year, suspends federal and state assessments, and asks the U.S. Department of Education for an exemption from required tests and federal accountability.

2020

MARCH

Within hours of Gov. Tate Reeves' school closure order on Saturday, March 14, MDE child nutrition staff simplify the normally time-consuming process for districts to convert their federal school lunch programs to the more flexible summer food service program. This work enables districts to serve more than 6.5 million meals, from March 16 through May 31, to children who rely on school breakfast and lunch programs for nutritious meals.



MDE issues guidance to school districts on a broad range of issues including implementing distance learning, serving students with disabilities, ensuring the health and safety of staff and students, renewing educator licenses, paying staff, and helping students complete dual credit and Advanced Placement courses and exams online.

MDE creates an online information hub to provide school districts and families with up-to-date information about how the pandemic is affecting all aspects of public education.



MDE provides numerous webinars for school and district leaders to understand policy actions.



Most importantly, throughout this period and beyond, Dr. Carey Wright collaborates with Mississippi's state health officer Dr. Thomas Dobbs, who provides life-saving information to school and district leaders that protect the health of their students, staff and families.



State Board of Education gives districts flexibilities to manage the conclusion of the school year, including allowing 3rd graders to be promoted without taking a reading test, high school students to complete credit requirements and graduate, and aspiring teachers to be admitted to educator preparation programs and complete student-teaching requirements.



MDE publishes a host of learning-at-home resources for students in pre-K through grade 12, including students with visual or hearing impairments, to support student learning during extended school closures. Resources are designed to help students practice the skills and strategies taught by their teachers and to help parents and caregivers engage students in continued education.



Educators rush to figure out how to continue teaching students from their dining room tables while balancing the demands of family life. Students and families struggle to adapt to the sudden disruption to their lives.

MDE Promotes 2020 Census

MDE promotes the 2020 Census and reminds schools about the vital role they play in the lives of children. Schools are urged to spread the message about the importance of the census and given new tools to help students bring census data to life and learn more about their community, state, and country.



APRIL

2020

National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) Names Mississippi One of Only Four States Meeting All 10 Quality Standards for Pre-K

NIEER's State of Preschool 2019 report recognizes Mississippi's Early Learning Collaborative program for meeting all 10 of NIEER's new quality standards for early childhood education. The report tracks state-funded preschool access, resources and quality. Early Learning Collaborative students start kindergarten more prepared than students in Mississippi's other public pre-K programs.

 **10**
standards



MAY

Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science (MSMS) Senior Named U.S. Presidential Scholar

MSMS senior Vayd Sai Ramkumar of Starkville is named a 2020 U.S. Presidential Scholar, which recognizes 161 high school seniors for their accomplishments in academics, the arts, and career and technical education. Sacred Heart High School senior Abigail Wiest of Hattiesburg is also named a 2020 U.S. Presidential Scholar. MSMS is a public high school serving academically gifted and talented students across the state.



MDE and State Health Officer Issue Graduation Ceremony Guidance

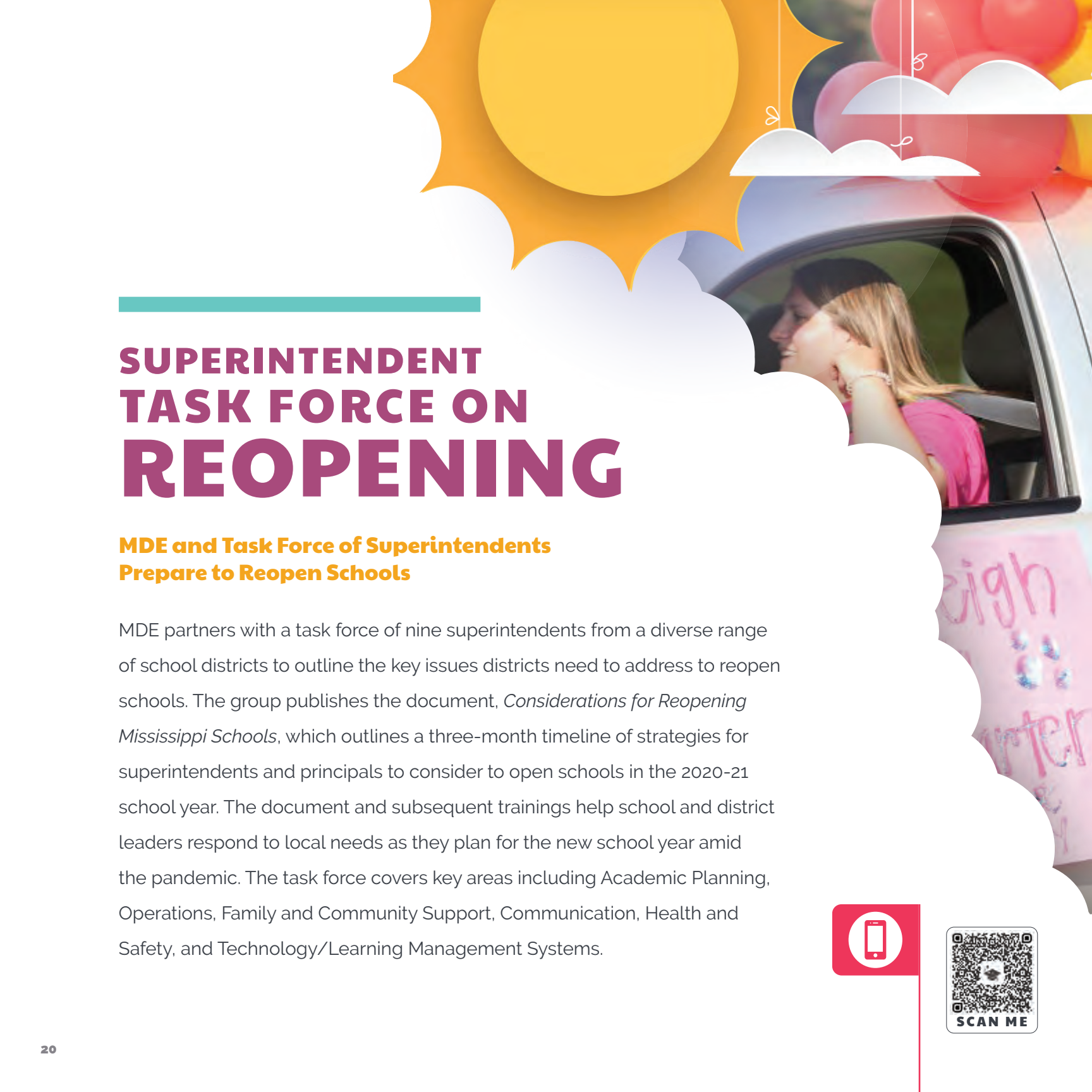
MDE and the Mississippi State Department of Health urge school districts to be thoughtful and careful in choosing the best way to celebrate graduation for the Class of 2020. Districts are provided with several options to ensure the safety of all including a virtual ceremony, drive-through event, single family in-person graduation, or a structured and controlled in-person ceremony following CDC guidelines. Districts find many creative solutions to make this milestone event memorable for students and families.



Dr. Carey Wright Presents Statewide Digital Learning Plan to Mississippi Legislature



Dr. Carey Wright testifies before the Mississippi Senate Education Committee to advocate for MDE's plan to provide all Mississippi students with computers and quality internet access so schools can deliver high-quality instruction digitally. Wright describes how the plan would bring equity to education by putting a device in the hands of every student who needs one, expand internet access to students when not in a school building, train teachers how to teach remotely, provide districts with a choice of high-quality options for a digital curriculum and an online system to deliver it, and provide student access to telehealth and teletherapy. The \$200 million initiative later becomes known as Mississippi Connects.



SUPERINTENDENT TASK FORCE ON REOPENING

MDE and Task Force of Superintendents Prepare to Reopen Schools

MDE partners with a task force of nine superintendents from a diverse range of school districts to outline the key issues districts need to address to reopen schools. The group publishes the document, *Considerations for Reopening Mississippi Schools*, which outlines a three-month timeline of strategies for superintendents and principals to consider to open schools in the 2020-21 school year. The document and subsequent trainings help school and district leaders respond to local needs as they plan for the new school year amid the pandemic. The task force covers key areas including Academic Planning, Operations, Family and Community Support, Communication, Health and Safety, and Technology/Learning Management Systems.



Drive through parade in school parking lot





JUNE

2020



Mississippi Wins Southern Regional Education Board's (SREB) 2020 State Leadership Award

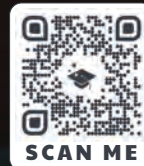
SREB awards MDE its 2020 State Leadership Award for increasing literacy and math achievement and building networked communities focused on school improvement in the middle grades. The award recognizes states with established continuous improvement processes that help schools transform their classroom practices, establish and sustain change and increase student achievement.



Mississippi Education Continues to Climb in Kids Count National Data

Mississippi experiences the greatest improvement in education, moving its ranking to 39th in the country, up from 44th the previous year, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's annual KIDS COUNT® 2020 Data Book. Gains in high school graduation and 4th grade literacy contribute to the rise in achievement.





Website Launches to Help Children Become Strong Readers

MDE releases revamped Strong Readers website, strongreadersms.com, to help families assist their children with building their reading skills. The site provides activities, resources and information to help children from birth through grade 5 become strong readers. Activities are arranged by age and grade level and cover the five components of reading. Also included are tools for families to find books that match their child's grade band and a free, online library. The site earns more than 35,000 views between June and November.





Child Nutrition Program Feeds More than 3 Million Meals During Summer Break

The federal summer food program enables 330 sites to serve 3,044,341 meals to Mississippi children in June and July.





Mississippi Announces 2020 Teacher of the Year, Administrator of the Year

BENJAMIN AUSTIN, 9th and 10th grade Social Studies teacher at Petal High School, is named the 2020 Mississippi Teacher of the Year. **DEBRA HOUGHTON**, principal of Manssdale Upper Elementary in the Madison County School District for six years, is selected as the 2020 Mississippi Administrator of the Year.



Gautier Resident Named 2020 Mississippi Parent of the Year

LISA McCUSKER, a mother of two children in the Pascagoula-Gautier School District, is named the 2020 Mississippi Parent of the Year. The district nominates McCusker for her work on numerous projects, including modernizing the district's parent recruiting and volunteer organization, the creation of the Gautier area's first marching band competition and managing the logistics of caring for and feeding students at every band function.

MISSISSIPPI CONNECTS

Statewide Digital Learning Initiative Launches with \$200 Million State Investment

The Mississippi Legislature allocates \$200 million to bridge the digital learning divide through two laws, the Equity in Distance Learning Act (SB 3044) and the Mississippi Pandemic Response Broadband Availability Act (HB 1788), which provide every public-school student in Mississippi with the technology to learn at school and at home. This initiative, called Mississippi Connects, reimagines the digital learning experience by creating an innovative approach to getting students what they need to learn, whether in a classroom or at home.

Mississippi Connects is more than a device. It's a connection – between students, their classmates and their teachers. It opens a seamless exchange of teaching and learning whether in the classroom or at home. Every child, regardless of where they live, has a right to the resources they need to be successful in school.

Mississippi Connects includes the following components:

- 390,000 computer devices delivered to districts with all software, security and support features pre-loaded and configured for immediate use.
- High-quality instructional materials, learning management systems and other online learning tools.
- Enhanced internet connectivity in areas of the state where students do not have broadband service.
- Professional development and technology support for educators and students to be successful with digital learning.
- Student access to telehealth and teletherapy services for their physical, social and emotional health.

The initial phase of the project, which would normally take up to two years to plan and implement, is completed within three months. MDE and school district superintendents and technology directors meet over several weeks to fine tune technology needs and establish a transparent process for selecting vendors who can meet the tight timelines in the legislation. The vendors supply laptops and tablets.

As a result of the bulk purchasing program allowed by law, Mississippi and its order of 390,000 devices rise to the top of the supply chain, as school districts and states across the country struggle to obtain computers for distance learning because of the high demand globally. Companies transport laptops from across the world into Mississippi warehouses where they are tagged and configured for delivery. The process reduces the burden on school districts.

Executing such a complex statewide technology plan requires coordination from all stakeholders – MDE staff, elected leaders, lawmakers, school and district administrators and vendors. The result is device delivery in the first district by September 30.

Mississippi proves that with the right leadership, public and private partners, and support from schools, there's no challenge it can't overcome.

This is only the beginning. Mississippi is creating a new future for education in collaboration with educators and partners to enhance internet connectivity in rural and urban areas. Ensuring that an initiative of this magnitude is successful takes time. But it can be done. Mississippi has already shown what can happen when there is a singular focus on bringing equity to education. Mississippi's investment in its students will ensure they have the resources they need to excel in a digitally advanced workforce.

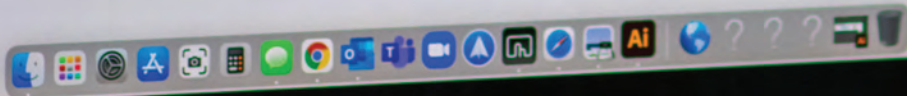


MISSISSIPPI CONNECTS IS MORE THAN A DEVICE.

It's a connection – between students, their classmates and their teachers. It opens a seamless exchange of teaching and learning whether in the classroom or at home.



MISSISSIPPI CONNECTS



Via Cisco Webex

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

GLOBALLY

TOTAL CASES	DEATHS
18,860,908	708,676

IN THE UNITED STATES

TOTAL CASES	DEATHS
4,834,546	158,445

SOURCE: JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

TONIGHT ON CNN

CORONAVIRUS
FACTS AND FEARS

8 P
ET

CNN

9:43 AM PT

NEWSROOM

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

MISSISSIPPI GOV. ON SCHOOL REOPENINGS: "THE SYSTEM IS WORKING"

Carey Wright | State Superintendent of Education for Mississippi

JULY

2020



MDE Provides Professional Development to 11,143 Educators

11,143

teachers trained

MDE continues to provide professional development opportunities to educators throughout the 2019-20 school year, shifting to virtual sessions after the pandemic hit. By the end of the school year, 11,143 teachers take part in 369 professional development sessions.



Literacy Coaches Deploy to Schools

A team of 66 literacy coaches serving 75 districts and 174 schools work with teachers virtually and later in person to build their capacity to effectively teach reading. Coaches continue to work with teachers and schools throughout the school year.



State Board Gives School Districts Three Options for Opening Schools

The State Board of Education gives school districts the flexibility to implement one of three options for operating schools in 2020-21: traditional, virtual or a hybrid of in-person and distance learning. While some districts operate a virtual-only schedule for the early part of the school year, most districts provide a traditional schedule with a virtual learning option for students who need it.





Four Mississippi Schools Receive National Blue Ribbon School Honors

U.S. Department of Education recognizes four Mississippi schools as National Blue Ribbon Schools for 2020. The recognition is based on the schools' overall academic performance or progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups. Mississippi's 2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools are **Center Hill High School (DeSoto County School District)**, **D'Iberville Elementary School (Harrison County School District)**, **Madison Station Elementary School (Madison County School District)**, and **Popp's Ferry Elementary School (Biloxi School District)**.



2020
NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL! ★

Teachers Prepare for School Year Through Virtual Professional Development

Between July and September, MDE provides virtual professional development and coaching support to 8,750 teachers. Educators take part in virtual coaching, online professional development and on-demand sessions.





Free School Meals Extended Throughout 2020-21 School Year

U.S. Department of Agriculture allows schools to continue serving free meals to students throughout the school year. Every school district participates in the program, which provides more than 7.5 million meals per month to Mississippi students.

Quality Counts: Mississippi 2nd Most Improved State in Education

For the third consecutive year, Mississippi earns national recognition for progress in education, climbing to be second among states or jurisdictions with the greatest improvement, according to the 2020 Quality Counts report from Education Week. The report examines achievement in school systems from pre-K through grade 12 and socioeconomic factors leading to success in adulthood. Mississippi earned an overall grade of C-minus, inching closer to the nation's grade of C.

Two Mississippi Science Teachers Earn Presidential Awards for Excellence

Two Mississippi science teachers are among the nation's best as awardees of the 2020 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). The PAEMST program is the nation's highest honor for teachers of mathematics and science. The awardees are **DR. SHANI BOURN**, 7-12 Science teacher, Hancock High School, Hancock County School District, and **LESHUNDRA YOUNG**, 7-12 Science teacher, Germantown High School, Madison County School District.

New Resources Support Educators as Schools Reopen

MDE releases three key resources for educators: *K-12 Instructional Planning Guides*, *Pre-K through Grade 12 Arts Education Guidance* and *Equipped: Mississippi Booklist for All*. The planning guides help classroom teachers as they develop lessons plans. The arts education guide provides workable programs that balance student health and safety in all art classes. The booklist promotes literacy through a variety of high-quality, rigorous texts across various cultures, genres, and facets of the human experience.

New Website Provides Mississippi Teachers with Access to High-Quality Instructional Materials

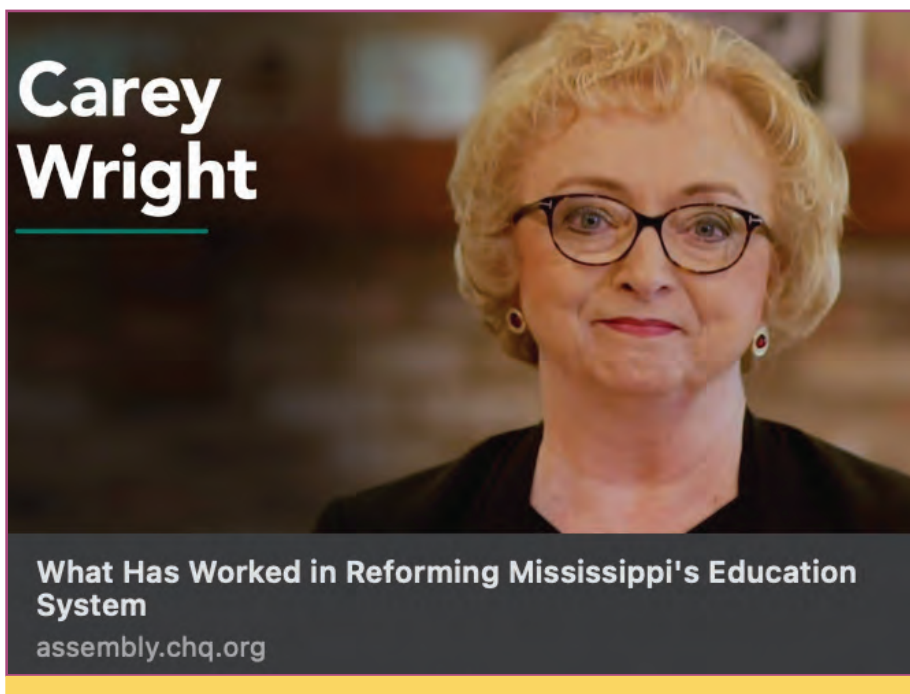
MDE partners with Mississippi First to launch a new website for Mississippi teachers to increase their access to high-quality instructional materials. The site, msinstructionalmaterials.org, offers a central location for math and social studies teachers to review high-quality, standards-aligned materials that have been evaluated and adopted by other Mississippi teachers and school districts. When teachers have access to high-quality instructional materials or curriculum, students succeed at a higher rate. MDE will finalize its high-quality instructional materials list and rubric for English Language Arts (ELA) by the end of 2020. Once adopted, the ELA materials will be added to the site.



Instructional materials matter to Mississippi teachers. With high-quality instructional materials, Mississippi teachers can bring lessons to life and inspire their students to learn and grow.

MATH MATERIALS >





Dr. Carey Wright Delivers Lecture for Historic Chautauqua Institution

Dr. Carey Wright, state superintendent of education, delivers the concluding lecture for the Chautauqua Institution's week on Rebuilding Public Education. Wright speaks about the reforms that have delivered unprecedented academic success and rising student achievement for Mississippi students. The week-long program focuses on understanding how to build more integrated and equitable public schools and best prepare children for careers and as citizens in a rapidly changing world. The week's featured lecturers include education historian and activist Diane Ravitch and former Florida governor Jeb Bush. Wright's lecture is available on the Chautauqua website, assembly.chq.org.

The historic Chautauqua lecture platform is dedicated to civil dialogue on matters that shape our world. Nine U.S. presidents have spoken at Chautauqua including Franklin Delano Roosevelt who delivered his I Hate War speech in 1936. More recent lecturers have included U.S. Supreme Court Justices Anthony Kennedy, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sandra Day O'Connor; human rights activist Elie Wiesel; former U.S. vice president Al Gore; former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton; conservationist and primatologist Jane Goodall; renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma; Jazz at Lincoln Center founder and artistic director Wynton Marsalis; and filmmaker Ken Burns.

Mississippi Leads in K-12 Progress and College Persistence Among Southern States

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) praises Mississippi for its achievements in education its 2020 report on the progress of education in the South. *Mississippi: A Turning Point* details where Mississippi stands in education, highlighting how the effective implementation of education policy has improved student achievement statewide and made Mississippi the leader in the South for college persistence. Mississippi is the only state in region in which the first-year persistence rate of first-time, full time students at public, 4-year colleges and universities increased from 2012 to 2017, indicating that more first-time, full-time college students returned to college for a second year.

New Social Emotional Learning Standards Move Forward for Adoption

State Board of Education gives initial approval to new social and emotional learning (SEL) standards for grades K-12. The standards address the social and emotional needs of all students to ensure success in school and life. Developing SEL skills improves student engagement in academic learning and prepares them to meet college and career readiness standards.

MOVING FORWARD

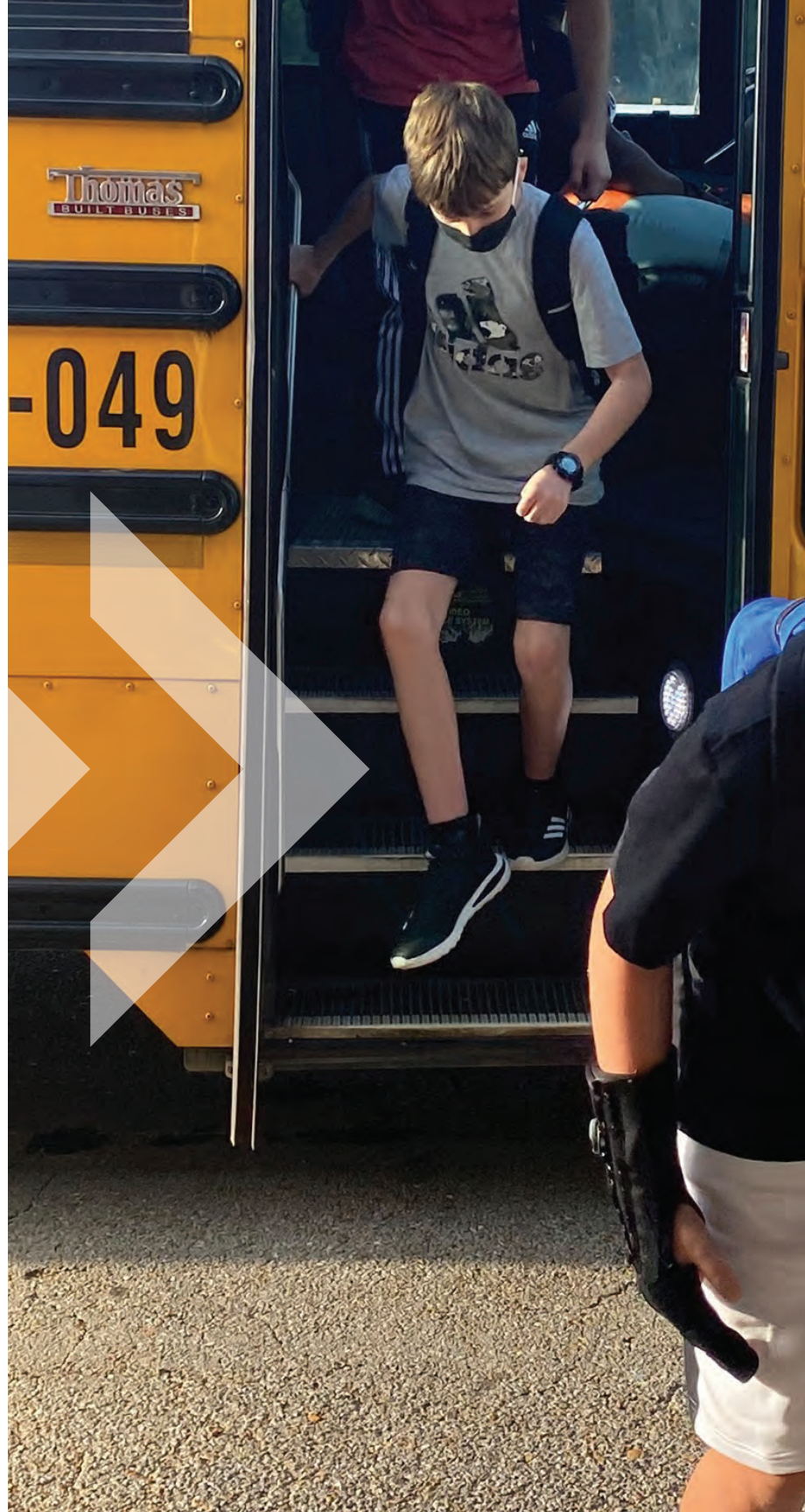
Innovating Education for Mississippi's Future

As Mississippi neared the end of 2020, COVID-19 outbreaks were causing schools to shift back and forth between classroom and virtual learning. The Mississippi Connects digital learning initiative was already transforming teaching and learning throughout the state because every public-school student had been provided with a computer device to continue learning at home.

More than 2,000 Mississippi educators were innovating teaching thanks to customized training provided by Google, Apple and Microsoft. The tech giants partnered with MDE to contribute approximately \$500,000 of training at no cost to Mississippi educators through 2022.

Philanthropic partners helped support Mississippi Connects with a \$200,000 initial investment and a commitment to a long-term partnership with Mississippi public schools to strengthen and sustain the initiative. The collaboration among state leaders, businesses and community partners in support of Mississippi schools showed their deep commitment to the future of our students.

There is new energy for all the possibilities of how instruction can be delivered in every area of the state. Mississippi, once again, is a national model for innovation and building a better future for our children through the power of education.





#StayConnectedMS

Rising to the Challenge



Office of Communications and
Government Relations
601.359.3515



mdek12.org



MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION