HOUSE BILL NO. 989

AN ACT TO CREATE A SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT AT THE WALNUT GROVE YOUTH CORRECTIONAL FACILITY; TO DESCRIBE THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM THAT MUST BE MADE AVAILABLE THROUGH THE SCHOOL DISTRICT; TO PROVIDE THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT SHALL BE THE WALNUT GROVE CORRECTIONAL AUTHORITY; TO REQUIRE THE SCHOOL BOARD TO APPOINT A SUPERINTENDENT FOR THE SCHOOL DISTRICT; TO REQUIRE THE SCHOOL BOARD AND THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO ESTABLISH A FUNDING METHODOLOGY FOR THE SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT WHICH REFLECTS THE UNIQUE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS WITHIN THE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY; TO PROVIDE FOR THE EMPLOYMENT AND COMPENSATION OF TEACHERS EMPLOYED BY THE DISTRICT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

SECTION 1. There is created a special school district to be located on the campus of the Walnut Grove Youth Correctional Facility operated under contract with the Mississippi Department of Corrections. The purpose of the school district is to meet the educational needs of the juvenile offenders housed in the facility by providing each student with an opportunity to develop educational, vocational and living skills.

SECTION 2. (1) The program of education at the special school district must be designed to meet each student's individual educational needs, regardless of the student's grade level. The school district shall prepare a written Individual Education Program (IEP) for each student.

(2) The special school district must meet appropriate State Department of Education accreditation standards, as determined by the State Board of Education. The district shall offer the same curriculum for Kindergarten through Grade 12 and special education classes as required by the State Board of Education for other local school districts. In addition, training in the following
areas must be included in the school district's curriculum:

(3) The school district shall provide a program of general educational development (GED) preparatory instruction, which program must be administered in compliance with the rules and regulations established for such programs under Sections 37-35-1 through 37-35-11 and by the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges. The school district may administer the General Educational Development (GED) Testing Program under the policies and guidelines of the GED Testing Service of the American Council on Education. Upon a determination by the school district that it is in a student's best interest for that student to receive GED preparatory instruction, the school district shall assign the student to the GED program.

(4) The school district, in its discretion, may authorize postsecondary academic or vocational courses, or both, to be offered to students in the correctional facility who have been awarded a high school diploma or GED equivalent. However, no state funds may be expended to provide such course offerings unless the educational programs for Kindergarten through Grade 12 have been fully funded.

SECTION 3. The school board of the special school district shall be the Walnut Grove Correctional Authority. The relationship between the correctional authority, as school board of the school district, and the State Board of Education shall be the same as that between other local school boards in the state and the State Board of Education. The school board shall exercise the same powers, duties and responsibilities prescribed under Title 37, Mississippi Code of 1972, and by rules and regulations of the State Board of Education for all local school boards.

SECTION 4. (1) There is established the position of superintendent of the special school district, which position must
be filled by the appointment of the Walnut Grove Correctional
Authority, as school board of the school district. The school
district superintendent shall be directly responsible to, and
shall serve at the will and pleasure of, the school board. The
superintendent must possess the qualifications required of all
school district superintendents under Section 37-9-13 and any
other qualifications that may be specified by the school board or
State Board of Education.

(2) The relationship between the school district
superintendent and correctional authority, as school board of the
school district, and the State Board of Education shall be the
same as that between other appointed school district
superintendents and their respective school boards and the State
Board of Education. The superintendent shall exercise the same
powers, duties and responsibilities prescribed under Title 37,
Mississippi Code of 1972, and by rules and regulations of the
State Board of Education for all school district superintendents.

(3) The school district superintendent shall have the
general responsibility for administering and supervising the
educational programs of the special school district. In addition,
the superintendent shall have the specific duty of submitting the
school district's annual educational budget recommendations, as
adopted in final form by the school board, to the State Board of
Education. The budget must be based on any funds available to the
school district for educational purposes.

SECTION 5. The school board and the State Board of Education
shall establish jointly a funding methodology for the special
school district which reflects the unique educational needs of the
students housed in the correctional facility. The funding must be
sufficient to employ at least one (1) licensed teacher for each
fifteen (15) students in the special school district. Funding for
the educational programs shall be by appropriation of the
Legislature specifically for the educational programs at the
SECTION 6. The school board and superintendent shall establish a salary schedule for teachers employed by the special school district, with consideration given to the unique educational environment of the school district within a correctional facility. All teachers employed by the district must possess a license to teach issued by the State Department of Education. Teachers and other licensed personnel employed by the district shall be eligible to participate in the State and School Employees Life and Health Insurance Plan and the Public Employees’ Retirement System.

SECTION 7. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2001.