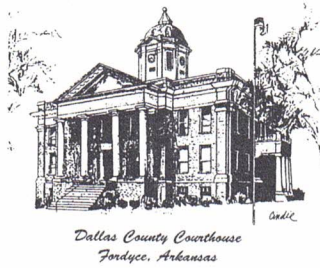


**Clark Brent**  
Judge of Dallas County



206 West 3rd Street  
Fordyce, AR 71742  
870.352.3371  
Fax 870.352.5656

January 30, 2020

Dear Ms. Zook,

It is with a heavy heart that I write you concerning the possible school closure to be addressed at State Board of Education's March board meeting. Sparkman School (in Dallas County), which is part of the Harmony Grove School District (in Ouachita County), will be recommended for closure by Dr. Albert Snow, Harmony Grove's superintendent. The concerned citizens of our county have formed the Save our School committee (SOS) to bring attention to this dire issue and find a solution that benefits our children, parents, and community.

Dallas County needs more than one school! Fordyce is located on the southeast side of the county while Sparkman is isolated in the west central section. Granted, the Harmony Grove School District in Ouachita County is closer to the children of the Sparkman area than Fordyce; but it is still much too far from the Manning-Dalark area for our youngest citizens to travel 4+ hours a day on a bus five days a week. The children from these communities will have to get ready to board the school bus as early as 5:00 am, and that is much too early! In addition to the danger of having to stand at the bus stop before the sun rises, the longer bus trips increase their chances of being involved in accidents, especially on foggy mornings or during inclement weather. Finally, all those long bus rides will take away from the children's time for study and homework as well as their opportunities for family and community activities. This is simply not acceptable.

In addition to the personal hardships this closure is presenting to the people of the Sparkman area, researchers see rural school closures as a threat to the economic, social, political, and cultural vitality of rural areas. The Sparkman Community and Dallas County will suffer. When schools close, there are always unintended consequences: people move away, businesses close, and the tax base of the county suffers. Dallas County does not need for the Sparkman School to close.

Please help the Sparkman SOS committee keep the Sparkman School open for the sake of the Sparkman Community as well as Dallas County itself.

Sincerely,

Clark Brent, Dallas County Judge