

Suggested Opening Remarks Leading to Presentation of the Lamar Plunkett Award
Sunday, June 22, 2003 after dinner on the Mezzanine

Good evening. On behalf of our Texas hosts, I bid you welcome to the Lone Star State and welcome to the 2003 Annual Meeting of the Southern Regional Education Board.

Welcome to the historic Driskill Hotel. I understand that if the walls in this hotel could talk — and thankfully they cannot — much Texas political history would be told. Since what the walls could tell might not match what we teach in our history books, it is just as well that they keep silent.

And of course Texas history is still unfolding. Texas has contributed our president of the United States. It has contributed the model for our new

federal education initiative, which we will discuss tomorrow. And just a few weeks ago, even with all of its history, Texas once again demonstrated that it can think out of the box and create new models to carry interstate cooperation to higher levels.

I have to admit, that in all the years I spent in the state Legislature, it never occurred to me that during the legislative session, we could split up and convene nearly all of the Republicans in the legislature in one state and nearly all of the Democrats across the state line in another state.

[Although I did not think of this idea while in the legislature, as governor, the idea of having half ... or all ... of the legislators meet in another state does have a certain appeal.]

Not only was this innovative and represented a whole new level of interstate cooperation, but it also showed very creative use of facilities. Some of us might have thought that having the Legislature meet in two states would have taken two state capitols, but Texas managed do it with one state capital and one Holiday Inn.

Whether any states adopt the Texas two-state legislative concept or not, we are going to take advantage of the fact that we are in Austin and hear from several Texas government and education leaders. Tomorrow night we will visit the Texas State Capitol and it is a magnificent state capitol.

I bring greetings from Governor Perry tonight. He is not with us because he is, in fact, dealing with the remnants of the 2003 regular legislative session. By midnight tonight, he must have signed or vetoed all of the bills from the 2003 regular session. He is then leaving town to rest up for a few days, and while I don't have this officially, I understand it's being reported that a legislative special session is on the very near horizon.

I think I noticed Governor Huckabee and several Arkansas legislators flinch at the mention of a special session. I know, Governor, that you will have an education finance special session this fall and frankly we are likely to see several special sessions this year in a number of states. West

Virginia is now in special session, for example, and regular sessions are still underway in several states.

I want to applaud Mississippi legislators for the fact that we will not have a special session to pass a budget. We did not have an eleventh hour push to pass our education budget because for the first time in our history, we passed the education budget first and early in the session. We were the first in America to pass our education budget and it included a 6 percent pay raise for teachers.

We'll focus more on budgets and finances Tuesday morning and tomorrow evening when we hear from Lt. Governor Dewhurst. I believe he will have something to say about the Texas school finance issues which were a major part of the 2003 regular

session and are likely to dominate either special sessions or the regular session in 2005.

Our agenda this evening is not budgets, or finance, or assessment, or troublesome gaps in achievement, or drop outs, or getting children ready for school, or a qualified teacher in every classroom. Those are on tomorrow's agenda.

Tonight we are going to pause and honor character and leadership. We are going to do so by using the character and leadership exhibited by Lamar Plunkett and projected on a larger canvas that covers one-third of the nation represented by the Southern Regional Education Board states.

Many persons here tonight knew Lamar Plunkett. Many others know of Lamar Plunkett's legacy because of the award presented by the Southern Regional Education Board over the past ten years.

Lamar Plunkett was the longest serving member of the Southern Regional Education Board in the early 1990s when his family requested that they be allowed to create an endowment and an award to honor Lamar by recognizing in others the spirit of leadership, generosity, and compassion that marked his life.

The Board agreed. The award was created. It was a happy coincidence that last year the Board's committee chose Governor William Winter of Mississippi to receive the Plunkett Award. I was

able to present it to him as he sat in the middle of the room surrounded by many friends from his home state. Many of us here tonight were there a year ago and, I suspect, were moved and challenged by Governor Winter's remarks.

You will remember hearing him recount that he was the first person from his elementary school ever to attend high school and, of course, the first to graduate from college. I suspect several persons in this room join me as being first generation college graduates so you know the power of which Governor Winter spoke.

Not everyone here tonight knows of Lamar Plunkett's life and his accomplishments. Before we present the 2003 Plunkett Award, let's hear a bit

about the life of Lamar Plunkett to remind us all of the symbolism and the significance of the award.

For some insights into Lamar Plunkett's life, I have asked Chancellor Tom Meredith, chancellor of the University System of Georgia, to share comments about Lamar Plunkett. Lamar Plunkett was certainly very important to the University System of Georgia. Chancellor Tom Meredith, welcome.

[Following comments by Chancellor Meredith, Governor Musgrove returns to the podium.]

Thank you Chancellor. Lamar Plunkett was truly an extraordinary person.

The idea in establishing this award was to recognize persons who give unselfishly of their time and

whose lives reflect exemplary values. It is intended to honor the values of service, commitment and dedication. For the past ten years we have honored individuals who have shown service, commitment and dedication.

However, this has been an unusual year. It is a year in which our country has found itself at war. The war was fought far from home in Iraq, but the war on terrorism is being fought at home and abroad.

This year, therefore, the Plunkett Award is a bit different. Instead of honoring a single individual, we will honor the thousands of Americans who have recently and courageously served our nation in the war in Iraq. Their willingness to go in harms way for our country reflects the values of service,

commitment and dedication that were so much a part of Lamar Plunkett's legacy.

I know that Lamar Plunkett would approve of this for he served in the United States Army and rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Many of the young people who enlisted in the armed services and who served in Iraq were drawn to the armed services by dedication to the values of this country and also because it was a way to improve the quality of their lives through the generous educational benefits offered through military service. Many in this room know how the G.I. Bill changed their lives and indeed the "life" of this nation.

Thousands of our service men and women have taken advantage of the military education benefits and have completed college degrees either while enlisted or after their service. SREB and its technology program have been helping some of them earn college degrees through SREB's leadership in the e-ArmyUniversity initiative presently underway.

We all know that serving in the military is not without risk. Our troops put their personal well-being on the line. Many gave their lives or were injured this year.

One of those who was in harm's way was there in part because she wanted to be a teacher. She wanted

to serve in the military, in part to support her earning a college degree so that she could teach.

That young woman captured our nation's attention and touched a chord in our hearts and souls. Her name is Jessica Lynch. A lot more has been said and written about Pvt. Lynch since April 2nd when the nation was thrilled to learn that she was safe.

The world beat a path, or at least the world's media beat a path, down a single-lane gravel road to a white wood frame home and Jessica Lynch's family. Jessica Lynch's journey down that single lane gravel road brought her through Texas, through Fort Bliss on her way to Iraq with the 507th Maintenance Company.

Nine of her colleagues in the 507th Company gave their lives on March 23rd. Jessica Lynch and six others were rescued the following week.

There's a lot we don't know, and maybe won't know, about that March 23rd day and the rescue days later. For us to honor our troops and America's young people, most of the details don't matter.

There are a couple of things that you may not know about Jessica Lynch. She enlisted in the U.S. Army the same day that her older brother enlisted. Her younger sister, who just graduated from high school, is due to begin military service this summer.

The president of West Virginia University said, "We have read about [Jessica Lynch's] reasons for

joining the military, along with her love for her country, she wanted to better her life through a college education.”

Jessica Lynch’s kindergarten teacher said on the day of her rescue that a “miracle has occurred.” The Governor of West Virginia said that day that it was “a miracle in the mountains.”

The Plunkett Award this year may not create a miracle, but we think that it will help in the good old American tradition of rewarding those who work hard and who seek to help themselves.

Jessica Lynch is from Wirt County, West Virginia and Wirt County High School. A member of the Wirt County High School staff said recently, “when

students here get out of school, they can either hang out on the corner or go off to college or the military, and college takes money.”

Jessica Lynch’s college costs are taken care of. She has been overwhelmed by the generosity of the nation. She will have the opportunity to fulfill her goal of becoming a teacher. There are other young people in Wirt County, West Virginia who know all too well that “college takes money.” The same can be said for young people in your community and mine.

So tonight, in honor of all of the people who have served and are serving in our armed services — young people like Jessica Lynch — who thankfully are earning benefits to pay for their college

educations, we want to follow a Lamar Plunkett tradition and award a scholarship to help a young person to have the money that it takes to attend college.

We have chosen Wirt County, West Virginia for its symbolism as the home of Jessica Lynch in hopes that this might strike some responsive chords elsewhere; that others might honor our young people in the armed services by reaching out with scholarship help as well.

We continue a tradition that Lamar Plunkett began in 1963 when he established scholarships in his first year as a state senator. To receive the scholarship on behalf of a student to be selected from Wirt County, West Virginia, I want to ask State Superintendent

David Stewart and President Mike Mullen of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission to come forward.

[It is possible that Mike Garrison, chief of staff to Governor Wise, will be present. This is not confirmed as of 6/16/03. If he is present, then he should be invited to the podium as well. We will confirm as soon as possible.]

[Governor Musgrove will make a symbolic presentation of the certificate or envelope.]

[Following any comments by Superintendent Stewart or President Mullen, Governor Musgrove will conclude the evening session.]

Ladies and Gentlemen thank you for being part of a very special evening. Thank you again Chancellor Meredith, thank you Senator Hill and President Adams for helping us continue the Lamar Plunkett tradition.

The Executive Committee meeting, a breakfast meeting, is tomorrow morning at 7:30 a.m.

Members of the Executive Committee, you know who you are, and so do I. We will be looking for you at 7:30 a.m. sharp in the Citadel Room.

Breakfast for all participants will be served in the Mezzanine beginning at 7:30. Our convening session will begin promptly at 8:45 a.m. We have a full day, concluding with a special evening in the state capital. We will start promptly at 8:45. Thank you and good night.

Draft Suggested Outline: SREB Executive Committee
Monday, June, 23, 2003 at 7:30 a.m., Citadel, Mezzanine Level

Breakfast will be served at 7:30 a.m. in the Citadel Room on the Mezzanine level. This will be a plated breakfast that will be served as committee members arrive and are seated.

As soon as Governor Musgrove determines it is feasible, the Executive Committee business session should be called to order. There are four items on the Executive Committee agenda.

Item 1 is the Finance Committee report that includes the proposed budget, the proposed contract fee schedule for 2005-2006 and the proposed state appropriations support for 2005-2006.

- Governor Musgrove will call on the treasurer and chairman of the Finance Committee, Representative Jody Mahony for the Finance Committee report.
- Representative Mahony will present the Finance Committee report and move its adoption with discussion, any amendments, and an Executive Committee vote to follow.

Item 2 pertains to using the *Electronic Campus* to help students graduate in 2004 who may be caught by the budget cuts in class reductions that could threaten their graduation. Lynn Cornett, SREB senior vice president, will briefly lay out the issue and recommendation that is contained in the Executive Committee agenda materials. The proposal is for Committee action to approve a plan for 2003-2004.

Item 3, The Ways In proposal. At the December, 2002 Executive Committee Meeting, the Executive Committee approved a development plan and directed staff to bring to the Board in June, 2003 a proposed agreement. The background on Ways In and the proposed agreement have been sent to all Executive Committee and Board Members.

- Governor Musgrove may call on Bruce Chaloux, director of the *Electronic Campus*, to make the staff comments on this proposal. The proposal calls for Executive Committee action.

Item 4, the SREB president's report. Governor Musgrove calls on Mark Musick for his report.

The Executive Committee ideally will complete its business before 8:30 a.m. The convening session for the Board Meeting is scheduled for 8:45 a.m. on the Mezzanine level in the Driskill Ballroom.

**Suggested Introductory Remarks: Opening Session, 8:45 a.m.
Monday, June, 23, 2003, Driskill Ballroom, Mezzanine Level**

Good morning. Welcome to the convening session of the 2003 Annual Meeting of the Southern Regional Education Board. We have a full day planned in the Texas capital city.

Let me first acknowledge and thank Texas members of the Board, beginning with:

- Representative Kent Grusendorf, the senior Texas Board member and member of the Executive Committee,
- Senator Teel Bivens, former chairman of the Texas Senate Education Committee and now chairman of the Senate Finance Committee,

- Representatives Dianne Delisi, the Board's newest legislative member, and
- Superintendent Shirley Neeley of Galena, Texas, the Board's newest Texas member.

We appreciate the Texas hospitality and assistance, which you will see first hand — especially this evening when we visit the Texas capital and meet with Lieutenant Governor Dewhurst.

You will meet a number of Texas leaders, including one I want to acknowledge given my former days as a state senator. Senator Bill Ratliff, former lieutenant governor and dean of the Texas Senate and former chair of both the Education and Finance

Committees, will be speaking to us later this morning.

Our agenda today is focused, and I suspect that our discussions will be spirited and intensive. Our focus will be on Goals for Education . . . on gaps that hinder and threaten success in our schools and colleges and universities . . . and on No Child Left Behind which is being described as perhaps the most sweeping federal education act since another Texan, Lyndon B. Johnson, was president.

We are going to begin this morning with our focus on educational goals — 21st century educational goals. You have in your meeting materials the SREB Goals Report — Goals for Education, Challenge to Lead.

Board members have seen this report many times before this day. I trust that we all know that opening sentence “SREB states can lead the nation in educational progress.” That’s a rather bold statement, even when we proclaim it here in Texas.

This Texas-sized claim that our states can lead the nation in educational progress is both evolutionary and revolutionary.

The claim that we can lead the nation in educational progress is evolutionary because just three generations ago, our states were labeled as the nation’s number one economic problem. There were two Texans on the National Emergency Council that made that proclamation along with a blue ribbon list

of other southerners. It wasn't some description that other folks came up with, this was a description by our own leaders.

You have heard me say before that SREB's first Goals Commission in 1961 was a watershed for our states because it challenged southern leaders to be measured by national standards. That first SREB Goals Commission challenged us to throw away the double standard and the excuse-making for setting lower expectations for our states.

Some folks complained then, some Governors complained, that our states were poor and that we had to make allowances for being poor and not set our standards too high. Today we can see that setting low standards is a failed strategy, but it

wasn't so clear to many then and SREB took a courageous stand for high standards.

You know that in 1988, SREB took another stand with its Goals for Education. It challenged state leaders with 12 goals for educational improvement with the focus on measuring results. Dick Riley was a former governor then and chaired that Goals Commission before he became Secretary of Education. He emphasized keeping score and SREB has never wavered from its emphasis on accountability. In 1988 we set our sites to reach national averages and important benchmarks.

During 1990s we got benchmark reports from SREB about our progress in reaching goals. Make no mistake about it, we have made progress. We have

made more progress in many areas than any other section of the country. You will hear more today about how the new reading achievement results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress show that our states are setting the pace — that we are leading the nation in progress in reading.

At last year's SREB Board meeting, we endorsed a new set of goals. This new set of goals is a part of the evolution that I mentioned earlier but it's also part of the revolutionary nature of these goals. We have evolved from claiming that we wanted to be measured by national standards. We have moved beyond wanting to reach the national averages. Now our goal is to lead the nation. That is a revolutionary idea in this evolutionary process.

And we do lead the nation in progress on National Assessment achievement scores. We lead in Advanced Placement course enrollments in our high schools. We lead in getting students ready for school through our preschool and prekindergarten programs.

Our goals are pragmatic. We don't apologize for that. We begin with getting children ready for school and reading by the third grade. We have goals for our middle school students to get them ready for high school. We have goals for our high school students to be ready to graduate and ready for more education or a real job with a career goal.

Goals can, of course, be gimmicks. But I would argue that education goals are important to our states

and important to build and keep momentum. We all know there will be bumps in the road. Changes in state leaders can create disconnections. We cannot ignore how economic problems affect every state in this room. Goals can help sustain continuity and momentum when leaders change and revenues pictures change.

Goals are about leadership. They are about what we do or what we do not do. That's what determines our fate — the fate of education. It is not some uncontrollable chain of events: its leadership. We can influence the outcomes of education and not leave them to chance.

Is it easy? No. In the final analysis improving student learning and student achievement is the heart

of the SREB goals. In 1988, SREB called for a school-by-school achievement reports. We didn't have those then. We all have those reports today.

In 1988, SREB called for narrowing by one-half the unacceptably large gaps in achievement of students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. SREB called on us to report this information in ways that showed the gaps among students from different economic and geographic backgrounds.

In 1988, virtually no state reported these gaps. I say here in Austin that Texas is to be saluted for helping lead the way in reporting student progress by different groups of students. Under the No Child Left Behind Act all states will report this information.

The SREB states have led the nation in developing accountability and assessment programs. The gains at our National Assessment of Educational Progress scores are impressive. But reducing the gaps is more difficult than you and I have imagined.

It will take more attention and more work by all of us. The SREB goals report claims that “we must aim to reach every student.” That’s a noble and grand declaration but declarations can only go so far. It is our actions that will make the difference.

This morning, Dr. Lynn Cornett, senior vice president of SREB, will highlight where we have made progress from preschool to high school graduation. Lynn is a veteran SREB staff member

who has led the staff efforts on Goals. Lynn Cornett was presenting benchmarks information when I was a member of the Mississippi Senate — helping us focus on our successes and on the areas where we had much more progress to be made.

Our aim is not just making progress, our aim is to lead. Lynn, tell us about some of the progress we've made and what it will take to lead the nation.

[Following Lynn Cornett's comments, Governor Musgrove returns to the podium.]

Thank you, Lynn. Closing the gaps is the right aim. But if you are looking for a place where the cliché “easier said than done” is appropriate, this would be one of those places.

Perhaps it goes without saying, but those of us in politics know that it's dangerous to assume anything — so let me say it. We want to close the gaps while raising achievement for all groups of students.

If we close the gaps by bringing down the achievement of some groups of students, we have really failed. We have to raise achievement across-the-board and accelerate the increases for lower achieving students. I assume we are in 100 percent agreement on that.

We want to focus now on closing the gaps, the progress being made and actions that states are taking. We need to hear from many perspectives. We are going to start with four, but hopefully we will have time to hear from lots more. SREB

President Mark Musick is going to help us focus on gaps, progress and actions. Mark.

[Governor Musgrove will be seated near the podium at a front row seat.

At the conclusion of this session, Mark Musick will draw the discussion to a close and announce a recess while we arrange for the next session.

To begin the next session, Governor Musgrove will come to the podium and call the group to order.]

We are going to shift gears a bit, but we are still going to be focused on closing gaps. Clearly, closing gaps is a centerpiece of the SREB goals and it was the centerpiece of the SREB goals in 1998 as you heard Lynn Cornett say.

Closing the gaps is clearly a centerpiece of No Child Left Behind. No Child Left Behind is going to make

closing the gaps a watch word in every state, not just in southern states.

Our states have led the nation in the development of school accountability programs. (And you can put a period after that sentence.) School accountability was one of the original SREB goals. Many of our states can point to significant progress on both national and state indicators of student achievement.

We have learned several lessons about the development of accountability programs in our states over the past five and ten years. We have learned lessons from one another.

The accountability provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act, in some cases mesh with our state

programs, and in some cases it's less clear how the federal and state programs fit together.

The goals of No Child Left Behind directly reflect those of many of our state programs. As of two weeks ago, all of our states have an approved accountability plan for implementing No Child Left Behind.

One of the most important and essential features of all of our plans is the focus on the disaggregation of data in providing information about various groups of students. You heard Lynn Cornett earlier this morning refer to that provision in the 1988 SREB goals. So the idea is not new to our states, but No Child Left Behind is making it a reality in all states. This is the right thing to do, and it is the first

important step toward closing gaps. We have to have the information. We have to face the information. We have to act on the information.

Our success will depend not only on identifying these students who need help, but doing things to help them. We have to support them through good instruction and additional time. I think we are all in agreement that we have to identify these students early and intervene to help them early.

Our purpose this morning is to focus on the implementation of No Child Left Behind and what it means for closing gaps in our states. What is important that we do in the next several months? The upcoming year? What are the issues facing

states, schools, school districts? The Congress? The U. S. Department of Education?

What are the politics of implementing No Child Left Behind? By that, I don't mean Republican and Democrat politics. I mean the politics of change. One thing our states have clearly learned in implementing accountability programs, is that no state got it right the first time.

We can assume that the Congress and the administration did not get everything right the first time, so how does one make adjustments in a politicized environment?

Again, we want to hear from many perspectives on these issues. We have several persons we have

asked to help “prime the pump” with opening comments and then we want to open a discussion. Mark Musick is going to help us achieve that. So Mark, let’s get started.

[Governor Musgrove will be seated in the staging area in the front of the room with Governor Huckabee. Persons who are going to be making initial comments during this session will be seated in this staging area.]

Following comments by Sandy Kress and Margaret Spellings, Mark Musick will ask Governor Musgrove and Governor Huckabee for their governor’s perspective on implementation of No Child Left Behind in 2003 – 2004. This format will be such that Governor Musgrove should be prepared to make some very concise summary observations about No Child Left Behind and perhaps key off of remarks made by Sandy Kress or Margaret Spellings as appropriate. Following comments by Governor Musgrove and Governor Huckabee, Mark Musick will direct questions to Superintendent Henry Johnson. Following Henry Johnson’s comments, Mark Musick will then invite comments and questions and address specific comments and questions to members of the SREB Board and Legislative Council and/or to panelists.

At about 11:45 a.m., Mark Musick will call on Senator Bill Ratliff, the dean of the Texas Senate and former lieutenant governor and author of Senate Bill 1, the sweeping Education Reform Act in Texas in the mid 1990s.

Following Senator Ratliff's comments and any additional discussion, Mark Musick will make a concluding comment and Governor Musgrove will return to the podium to make any closing observations about the discussion and to announce the next session.

The discussion itself will suggest the Governor's concluding remarks. The announcement for the next session is that the luncheon session will convene at 12:30 on the Mezzanine.

Outline of events

Business Meeting of the Southern Regional Education Board Tuesday, June, 24, 2003 at 8 a.m. in the Driskill Ballroom

Governor Musgrove will call the group to order when he determines that the time is right to begin the business session.

1. The first order of business will be Governor Musgrove calling on President Paul Stanton, SREB vice chairman to present the report of the Executive Committee.
 - President Stanton will present the Executive Committee report including the budget and financial matters and the proposed actions on technology matters.
 - Related to the Executive Committee's technology proposals, President Stanton will call on Bill Thomas, SREB director of Educational Technology. and Bruce Chaloux, director of the *Electronic Campus*, to make comments about SREB educational initiatives that relate to the Executive Committee's proposals.
 - There is not a Board Meeting general session devoted to technology at this meeting so this focused presentation of about 15 minutes will highlight several SREB educational technology developments and proposals.

- President Stanton will ask for a motion to approve each of the actions of the Executive Committee. **Turn the program back to Governor Musgrove for discussion and a vote.**
2. Following the action on the Executive Committee agenda, Governor Musgrove will call on Ed Ford to present the report of the Nominating Committee.
 - Following the acceptance of the Nominating Committee report, it will be **appropriate for Governor Musgrove to make comments.**
 3. Following the Chairman's comments, Governor Musgrove will call on Mark Musick for the president's report.
 4. Following the president's report, Governor Musgrove would ask for any additional comments and ideally adjourn the session by 9:15 a.m.
 - Governor Musgrove would announce that the session on education budgets will convene promptly at 9:30 a.m. in the Driskill Ballroom on the Mezzanine level.