
**OFFICE OF GOVERNOR RONNIE MUSGROVE
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM**

TO: FIRST LADY MUSGROVE
FROM: KELLY RILEY
SUBJECT: MPE ARTICLE
DATE: JULY 19, 2000
CC: MAXEY
MADER
SIMMONS
FILE

The draft of the First Lady's Mississippi Professional Educators article is attached. Please review it and make any changes you would like. The article is due this Friday, July 21, so I would appreciate receiving your comments ASAP. Thanks!

Thank you for your service and commitment to our state's educational system and to our state's future. MPE provides invaluable resources to our students and to our state. Thank you, also, for this opportunity to share my thoughts with you.

Governor Musgrove is committed to setting unprecedented goals and achieving unparalleled progress in Mississippi's public education system. I will also be focusing on education as a component of my initiatives as First Lady, with special emphasis on reading among 4th through 6th graders. I often refer to this period of reading for students in these grades as "the lost years." As educators, we place great emphasis on the development of students' reading skills in K-3. As parents, we often set aside special time to read to our K-3 children and to have them read to us. Students begin to be exposed to classical literature in the junior high years. We often lose our reading focus with our 4th through 6th grade students.

These years are a critical time of development in students' reading skills. I believe students' rate and fluency have the potential to increase and fully develop during the 4th through 6th grade. This time period provides the opportunity for students to build upon the basic skills they have developed in K-3. It is pivotal in making reading fun for students so that they will recognize the important role that it plays in their daily lives. The 5th and 6th grades are often a time of struggle for students' reading comprehension skills. As educators, we should all strive to identify ways to minimize this struggle for students.

As a 5th and 6th grade reading teacher, I found chapter books quite effective in developing reading skills as well as reinforcing students' curriculum from other classes. My students loved to read historical fiction books on subjects that they were studying in their social studies or history classes at the time. One of my favorite books is Katherine Paterson's Bridge to Terabithia, which contains wonderful similes, metaphors and figurative language. I found that The Last Silk Dress brought the Civil War to life for my students and World War II became real for them through Snow Treasure. These books all dealt with children of comparable age to my students who found that they could relate to the characters and their lives. Our reading always culminated with activities such as making our own hot air balloons at the conclusion of The Last Silk Dress.

You as Mississippi educators have discovered a wealth of activities and means of presenting your reading curriculum that has been effective for your students. I encourage you to share your ideas, as well as your stories of success and failure, with your peers. We must all work together to ensure that Mississippi provides an effective education for our children that will stimulate them, require them to learn, and prepare them for the future.

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Here is the second draft of the article reflecting your changes to the first draft. Marilyn did not think that we needed the comma in the fourth paragraph. I did change the first sentence of the fourth paragraph to read "As a 5th and 6th grade reading teacher, I found chapter books quite effective in developing reading skills as well as reinforcing students' curriculum from other classes." The first draft read "...as well as reinforcing their curriculum from other classes," but "their" did not tie back to "students" anywhere in the sentence.

As with the first draft, please feel free to call me (359-2528) with any changes you would like to have made. THANKS!