

Talking Points

- With the start of the school year here, I am reminded of my own school experience growing up in Tocowa, Mississippi.

(first grade story)

- It is because of my own positive experience that I am so excited about our development of a Governor's Statewide Mentoring Initiative.
- This Statewide Mentoring Initiative is a positive and important way to influence the lives of Mississippi's children by fostering positive educational and life goals.
- Research shows that students involved in a mentoring program are less likely to start using drugs, less physically violent, more interested in their school work, achieve better grades and develop positive relationships with their peers and parents.

- We are working closely with the National Mentoring Partnership to formalize our alliance, which when finalized will make Mississippi the 14<sup>th</sup> State Partner to the National Partnership.
- We looked to the National Mentoring Partnership Program along with other states as we developed this initiative.
- Our first step has been to create a Governor's Leadership Council on Mentoring, which I have done through an Executive Order.
- The Leadership Council will create a plan for the State of Mississippi to encourage volunteering, recruit mentors, support state and local efforts and develop training programs to support and expand the Statewide Mentoring Initiative.
- The Council consists of people representing business, education, religion, students, military and law enforcement, civic leaders and local and state government.
- I will announce the members of the Council on, or before, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2000.

- I can assure you that each one of them will have the best interest of Mississippi's children at heart.
- Our mentoring initiative will focus on developing structured, one-on-one relationships that focus on the needs of the student.
- Our success – the future success of Mississippi's children – depends on the number of dedicated mentors that choose to make a difference in the lives of our children.
- That is my challenge today to the men and women across the State of Mississippi – we need you to step forward and volunteer to serve the children of your community – of your city – of your county.
- The best way to strengthen Mississippi's future is to invest in our students.
- And we are creating a program that will help our young people grow, prosper and reach their full potential.

- We are excited about what this program can do for our children and the future of the State of Mississippi.