
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR RONNIE MUSGROVE
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: GOVERNOR
FROM: RILEY
SUBJECT: JUNE 11-13 SREB MEETING IN ATLANTA
DATE: 6/11/01
CC: FILE

Your meeting book for the SREB meeting is attached. A points regarding the meeting:

1. Your first event today is the Opening Session at 4:00.
2. The Executive Committee meets at 7:30 a.m. Tuesday morning. You will vote on the following 5 matters (discussion of all 5 is in your Executive Committee binder):
 - 2001-2002 SREB Budget: Total operating budget for all programs is \$24,396,261. Combined with approximately \$13,000,000 in student contract funds, the total fiscal operating budget will be approximately \$37,300,000. The budget includes merit based salary adjustments of 4 to 5 percent for those employees paid by grant and contract funds and Mark Musick will provide the Executive Committee with a merit based proposal for other employees.
 - Algebra I End-of-Course Testing: A review by SREB staff found that Algebra I content standards in the 12 states have more similarities than differences, six states (including MS) have Algebra I tests that are sufficiently developed to enable comparisons and 8 states plan to have an end-of-course test by 2001-2002. SREB staff will brief you on the status of RFPs issued to vendors interested in providing a variety of services (core state assessment/test module, non-secured item bank, secured item bank, professional development, technical assistance) to SREB states.
 - Academic Common Market/Electronic Campus: Staff is recommending that Academic Common Market Guidelines be amended to permanently allow distance-delivered degree programs to be included. SREB staff is also requesting approval of a second pilot program that will permit a state to consider "mode of delivery" in program selection.
 - Learning Connections for SREB States: SREB staff is recommending that the Board support the Learning Connections initiative and encourage participating of all states by 2002. The Learning Connections will basically create an online database/resource center of state academic content standards, lesson plans,

evaluation of instructional materials, teaching/media resources and professional development for SREB teachers and administrators.

- American TelEd Communications Alliance: The Executive Committee is being asked to approve the Letter of Intent to Support the Alliance which will pool telecommunications resources and infrastructures to achieve more efficiency and maximize institutions' telecommunications abilities.
 - SREB Goals: There is general agreement that SREB should continue to focus on the 12 goals set by the Board in 1988 and measure progress towards achieving these goals. Governor Barnes has appointed a Commission to refocus the goals and the Commission will submit its report in June 2002. Governor Barnes has also asked current and former legislative members of the board, including Rep. Capps, to offer comment.
3. **You will join Governors Barnes and Wise in giving your perspectives on accountability and assessment at the 9:00 Tuesday General Session.** An overview of our accountability and assessment system is provided for your reference. You could also point out the importance of fully funding education if we are going to hold our schools accountable.
 4. The 100th doctoral scholar will be recognized at Tuesday's luncheon. Her name is Jennifer Riley (Mark is double checking, but this is what he told me at NAGB this past Friday. I'll have her info written down for you before the luncheon.), she is from Tylertown, and she is an engineering graduate from MSU. **According to Mark, he will ask you to make a few brief comments after Ms. Riley accepts her award at the luncheon.**

Mississippi's Accountability and Assessment System

Accreditation levels will now reflect student performance at the school level instead of the district level. This is exciting because all schools will now have the chance to be successful. We believe this new recognition system will result in many more "high performing" schools.

In addition, Senate Bill 2488, passed during the 2000 legislative session, established new accountability standards which will reward schools based on student performance. The bill also provides for an intensive assistance program for schools not meeting accreditation standards. For the first time, all components of a school will be held accountable for student learning, including the students themselves, educators, administrators, superintendents and school board members.

Overview of the New Assessment System

The Education Reform Act of 1982 required an organized system of assessment and accountability in Mississippi schools. The first measures of accountability dealt with students' mastery of basic skills. Through the years, students have been expected to meet increasingly stringent standards, and school districts have been assigned accreditation levels based on a set of process standards and student performance. This system now moves to a new level of accountability.

The new Mississippi Curriculum Content Assessment System is designed to measure what students are actually learning in Mississippi classrooms. The strength of this new system is the emphasis on criterion-referenced tests, which measure a defined curriculum, such as a fifth grade mathematics. Teachers have taught the material, and students know what to expect on the test.

Norm-referenced tests, on the other hand, are designed to measure a broad spectrum of information and to compare students on a national basis. Students will likely be questioned on some material that they have not been taught because the tests are designed to sample curricula in all states, not just in Mississippi. However, norm-referenced tests play a vital role in ensuring that Mississippi students remain competitive with other students throughout the United States. This new system will ensure students have mastered the Mississippi curriculum and are competitive at a national level.

Teachers have been involved in every phase of the development of the criterion-referenced tests. Using the Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks, teachers identified the areas to be assessed, determined the emphasis on each area, and then developed test blueprints and scoring rubrics. Once test items were located or written to match the test blueprints, teachers examined every item to be sure it matched the curriculum and was free from bias. After tests are administered, teachers will be involved in setting pass/fail scores and in determining the proficiency levels of "advanced," "proficient," "basic," and "minimal."

The teachers involved in the development of the criterion-referenced test were nominated by their district superintendents. They are representative of all areas of the state, all current district accreditation levels, districts of different sizes and the racial and socio-economic composition of the state.

The individual elements of the new assessment system fit together to provide a comprehensive picture of a student's weaknesses and strengths. The three major elements of the system are as follows:

K-2 Diagnostic Assessment

- An informal assessment of reading and mathematics in grades K-2

Grade Level Testing Program

- Published by CTB/McGraw Hill
- A criterion-referenced test in reading, language, and mathematics in grades 2-8
- A writing assessment in grades 4 and 7
- A norm-referenced test in reading, language, and mathematics in grades 5 and 8

Subject Area Testing Program (SATP)

- Published by Harcourt Educational Measurement
- Criterion-referenced, end-of-course tests in Algebra I, Biology I, English II with a writing component, and U.S. History from 1877
- The Functional Literacy Exam (published by National Computer Systems) will remain in place until the SATP tests are required for graduation.

SOURCE: MDE Web site.