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**OFFICE OF GOVERNOR RONNIE MUSGROVE**  
**INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM**

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**TO:** DANE LINN, NGA  
**FROM:** KELLY RILEY  
**SUBJECT:** STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION PRIORITIES  
**DATE:** 9/8/2000  
**CC:** FILE

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As discussed earlier, Michael Boyd and I have identified the following educational issues that we would like to discuss with you during your November visit to our office: early childhood development, social workers as counselors in elementary schools, expanding our school nurse program to all schools, class size reduction, and after school programs. Below is a brief description of current activities in each of these areas.

Early Childhood

Established by HB 418 (2000 Regular Session) the Early Childhood Services Interagency Coordinating Council is to ensure coordination among the various agencies and programs serving preschool children in order to support school districts' efforts to achieve the goal of readiness to start school. The council is also to facilitate communication, cooperation and maximum use of resources and to promote high standards for all programs serving preschool children and their families in Mississippi. The council is comprised of the the State Superintendent of Education, the Commissioner of Higher Education, and the executive directors of the State Department of Health, Department of Human Services, Department of Mental Health, Division of Medicaid, Department of Rehabilitation Services, State Board for Community and Junior Colleges, and Mississippi Educational Television. HB 418 also established the 26-member Interagency Advisory Committee for Early Childhood Services to develop and make recommendations to the Council. The Advisory Committee is comprised of state agency representatives, parents, early childhood associations, and child care providers.

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) has developed a pre-K curriculum that addresses social, emotional and physical development. MDE also has the "Every Child A Reader," an informational booklet/curriculum for parents to assist them in developing their children's reading skills for kindergarten. Head Start utilizes several of MDE's materials. We also have Even Start, the statewide family literacy program. MDE operates a feeding program for child care facilities and day care homes and provides this service to Head Start Centers and is negotiating to provide to the Department of Human Services (DHS).

Children in licensed centers are required to have age appropriate immunizations. Head Start provides screening to children they serve to determine if health problems exist and secures service providers to address the identified needs. Some childcare providers have participated in providing information to parents with regard to Mississippi Health Benefits, the state insurance program for children. The Department of Health's First Steps Program also works in conjunction with local early childhood providers to address the needs of eligible children.

The State Department of Health conducts EPSDT screening, particularly in those areas where primary care physicians are limited. Health also provides perinatal high risk surveillance for any expectant mother and her child who was Medicaid eligible for at least one month during her pregnancy. The mother and child receive casework for one year after the child's birth. Health also spends approximately \$4 million annually for the "Children's Medical Program," which provides services to families of children with severe physical conditions (congenital diseases, cleft palate, etc.). The services are most often provided at the Blake Clinic. Health also operates the birth defect registry and the universal hearing screening program. Approximately 99% of all live births in Mississippi will receive screenings this year.

The Parent Family Resource Centers throughout the state provide counseling, training and referral services to parents, especially those younger parents. Every family in the state is eligible for these services that are provided to children from birth to four years of age.

As of October 1, 2000, DHS requires evidence of immunization in order for parents to receive child care vouchers and also provides parents with a list of "safety conditions" for their child's day care home.

DHS is attempting to provide scholarships (through block grant funds) for child care workers to obtain the CDA two-year certification.

Mississippi ETV will begin airing its 12-part series "Right From Birth" in December. The series will discuss and educate a number of issues related to newborns/babies/toddlers. DHS is working with ETV to turn this series into training to be provided to child care providers in all 82 counties.

#### Social Workers as Counselors

During the 1998-1999 school year, Mississippi's 197 secondary and 148 combined elementary and secondary schools employed 1,042 guidance counselors and psychologists. Governor Musgrove is interested in placing social workers in our elementary schools to provide counseling services to our younger students.

#### School Nurses

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During the 1998-1999 school year, Mississippi's 1,021 schools employed 188 nurses. Governor Musgrove is interested in each school having a nurse to provide medical care for our students.

#### Class Size Reduction

During the 1998-1999 school year, Mississippi's 152 school districts averaged 15.72 students per classroom teacher. Actual district averages ranged from 11.78 students per teacher to 20.27 students per teacher. Governor Musgrove supports lowering our student/teacher ratio to that of the national average, under 15 students, in all of our districts so that our students get the attention they deserve to flourish into successful students.

#### After School Programs

I have not completed my research in this area as to how many of our schools are actually operating after school programs. We recognize the opportunities for children and for communities which are available through such programs and are interested in any initiatives successfully implemented in other states.

#### Maximizing Federal Resources

The following revenue sources funded Mississippi's public schools during the 1998-1999 school year:

State Funds	\$1,396,182,101	(54.47%)
Federal Sources	355,527,451	(13.87%)
Local Revenue	<u>811,457,775</u>	(31.66%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,563,167,327</b>	

I have attached a breakout of the federal revenue by source for your reference. We must ensure that we are maximizing available federal resources.

#### *MDE Priorities*

The Mississippi Department of Education has adopted seven key priorities, discussed below:

1. **READING:** MDE adopted the Mississippi Reading Initiative with the goal that children in grades 1-3 demonstrate a growing reading proficiency that enables them to leave the third grade as proficient readers. MDE has established reading workgroups, comprised of leading teachers, to review guidelines and curriculums. MDE is emphasizing the role of after-school and summer reading programs, as well as reduced class sizes and expanded training for teachers.
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2. **EARLY LITERACY:** Research supports that quality early childhood experiences can have positive results on long-term student achievement, particularly in literacy. MDE is working to provide parents with information (*Every Child a Reader: Getting Ready for Kindergarten* booklet) they need to prepare their children for school. MDE is also working to increase the availability of pre-K programs and is partnering with Head Start agencies and other early childhood education providers to maximize resources.
  3. **STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT:** MDE's new accreditation system shifts emphasis from the district to the school level. Each school will be assigned a "student growth goal," with each school then being expected to contribute a year's worth of academic growth for each year of academic instruction. Students will be tested for accreditation purposes in grades 3-8. The plan also calls for passage of mandatory end-of-course tests for all students in Algebra I, Biology I, U.S. History from 1877, and English II prior to a student's receiving a high school diploma. The Legislature passed the new accountability plan during the 2000 regular session that will ensure that local school boards, administrators and teachers are held accountable for student achievement.
  4. **TEACHERS/TEACHING:** MDE is intensifying its teacher recruitment efforts, working to raise teacher salaries and to provide teachers with relevant professional development. The 1998 Mississippi Critical Teacher Shortage Act established the Critical Needs Scholarship Program and the Mississippi Fellowship Program (provides full scholarship to teachers willing to relocate to a shortage area while pursuing a graduate degree). MDE hired 3 recruiters to promote the teaching profession and Mississippi's public education. The Mississippi Teacher Center also offers the annual Teacher Renewal Institute the Teacher Job Fair.
  5. **LEADERSHIP/PRINCIPALS:** MDE is committed to working to see that principals receive the training and preparation they need to be sound instructional leaders. Through the Mississippi School Administrator Sabbatical Program, eligible teachers interested in becoming school administrators can continue receiving their full salary while they are enrolled full-time in an educational leadership program that leads to a school administrator license. MDE developed four new training modules for administrators during the 1999 school year.
  6. **SAFE, ORDERLY SCHOOLS:** MDE wants to strengthen safety within Mississippi schools and created the Office of Safe and Orderly Schools to handle issues related to school buildings and transportation. The Office provides school safety training sessions to administrators, reviews school safety plans and conducts school safety audits. MDE has established rapid-response teams made up of regional school safety experts to assist districts in crisis prevention and management. MDE also operates *Connections*, a toll-free, statewide safety hotline.
  7. **TECHNOLOGY:** MDE is using technology to advance the department's other six priorities. MDE is committed to providing students, teachers and administrators with
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access to both up-to-date technology and the training needed to make the most of technology. Schools with distance learning sites can take classes offered at other sites. Technology Literacy Grants fund programs that use technology to teach reading and language arts. The Teach NET program provides teachers with extensive technological training. MDE has developed *Plug into RAISE*, a new training module designed to help educators and administrators integrate technology into the reading curriculum and which supplements the objectives of the Mississippi Reading Initiative. The State Superintendent is co-chairing the Governor's Task Force for Classroom Technology.

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