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

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**TO:** GOVERNOR  
**FROM:** RILEY  
**SUBJECT:** EDUCATION WEEK'S *QUALITY COUNTS 2001*  
**DATE** 1/9/01  
**CC:** MADER

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Education Week will release *Quality Counts 2001*, its fifth annual 50-state report card on education, tomorrow. The report focuses on standards-based initiatives and includes new information on how states are measuring performance, hold students and teachers accountable, and support their efforts to reach higher expectations.

The report found that states have invested enormous energy and political capital over the past decade in raising academic standards and these efforts are paying off in the classroom. Test scores are rising in some states, many teachers report the expectations in their schools are climbing, and educators are slowly changing the curriculum to reflect state standards. The report also found that states must strike a better balance among standards, assessments, and the tools students and schools need to succeed. Without such tools and support, standards-based improvement efforts could stumble and public support could falter.

*Quality Counts 2001* found that state tests are overshadowing the standards that they were designed to measure and could be encouraging undesirable practices in schools (i.e., state tests forcing teachers to concentrate too much on what's tested to the detriment of other topics). Some tests do not adequately reflect the standards or provide a rich enough picture of student learning. Many states may be rushing to hold students and schools accountable for results without providing the essential support. The report shows:

- Mississippi is one of 28 states that do not reward schools or students with money for high or improved test scores.
- Mississippi is one of 5 states that do not have report cards or ratings on schools. (NOTE: This will change with the implementation of the new school accountability program.)
- Mississippi is one of 18 states where students must pass exit exams to graduate.

The report graded states in four areas: standards and accountability, efforts to improve teacher quality, school climate and resources. This year, states average a C- across these categories. Mississippi's scores, as well as those of other SREB states, are attached for your reference.