
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR RONNIE MUSGROVE
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: GOVERNOR
FROM: RILEY
SUBJECT: W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION'S SPARK INITIATIVE IN MISSISSIPPI
DATE 7/16/01
CC: RENICK

I received a request about two weeks ago to attend a meeting this past Friday with representatives of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Better Homes Fund to discuss Kellogg's SPARK Initiative. I attended such meeting and was told that Kellogg is ready to work in Mississippi on a 3-phase, 8-year early childhood education initiative. Kellogg is still identifying partners for this initiative, as well as defining the project scope, but the announcement will probably come in November.

According to Kellogg's web site, the foundation will invest \$10 million over the next two years in just the developmental phase of the initiative. SPARK (Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids) will seek to create a seamless transition into school for vulnerable children ages 3 to 6 in selected demonstration communities. The initiative will support partnerships of families, communities, schools, and state agencies to ensure that the partners and caregivers work together effectively for children's early learning. With the initiative serving as a catalyst, the goal is to ensure that vulnerable children are ready for school and schools are ready for the children. Mississippi is one of 10 states selected for this work. (FL, GA, KY, NC are other southeastern states chosen.)

The representatives inquired as to your position on early childhood, the state's policy environment for such an initiative, and the legislative players. I explained that you recognize the importance of early childhood education and the significance of recent research as to the effects of early education, but that the Legislature has not recognized this importance and that there is not a "Goliath" fighting for early childhood, although Rep. Eloise Scott tries. I explained that the Legislature appropriates state funds and that a need for early childhood education programs has not been identified at this time. I mentioned that you sent a team to the Charlotte conference last fall (and that you attended), that we serve on the Early Childhood Advisory Council, and that you have suggested this topic for discussion at the Tupelo summit.

The representatives stated that education of legislators can be incorporated into the planning phase of the initiative. They inquired as to key legislators whose support would be advantageous and I gave them the Lt. Governor; the Speaker; Senators Little, Gordon,

Minor Huggins and Harden; and, Representatives Clarke, Capps, McCoy, Moody and Warren.

The first phase of the initiative will be a 12-15 month planning phase, followed by a 4-5 year grant phase and then a 1-2 year sustainability phase. A monetary amount has not been determined.

Kellogg would like for us to send them a copy of the legislation and the vote on the SB 2503 (extended the repealer on creating task force to study creation of the Office of Children), a list of key newspaper editors and information on our next Delta Summit committee meeting. **Kellogg would like your input as potential sites for this initiative – they have requested an urban site, a site in the Delta and 2-3 other sites throughout the state.**

Unless directed otherwise, I will provide Kellogg with the requested information regarding SB 2503, the newspapers editors, and the date of the next Delta Summit committee meeting. I would like to get together with Boyd, Armerita and Debbie to offer you suggestions as to potential sites.