

February 12, 2003

Dear Fellow Governors:

It is my pleasure to introduce you to *Birth to School*, a collaborative partnership formed by the public television networks of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana and Mississippi to share the best practice in early childhood development with parents, caregivers and teachers. Dr. Craig Ramey will discuss these materials during the opening plenary of the NGA Winter Meeting on Sunday, February 23, at 9:00 a.m.

Birth to School grew out of the success of *Right from Birth*. Funded by \$1.7 million from the Mississippi Department of Human Services' Office for Children and Youth, the *Right from Birth* curriculum provided 90,000 Mississippi childcare providers and parents with practical advice on how adults can prepare children for a lifetime of learning from the day they are born. In 1999, Mississippi Educational Television worked with Drs. Craig and Sharon Ramey and The Early Childhood Institute at Mississippi State University to adapt *Right from Birth* into a 12-part television series, a Caregiver Guide, a Facilitator's Guide, and a flexible workshop design. *Right from Birth* has aired on 127 PBS stations nationally.

To build on this success, the above-mentioned five public television state networks formed the Five Star Alliance for Children in 2002 to help break the cycle of at-risk children entering school educationally and developmentally disadvantaged. *Birth to School* will reach out across five states to parents, unlicensed childcare providers, and teachers who care for at-risk children, 0-8 years of age. Using a proven early childhood development curriculum, trained facilitators will instruct and empower adult caregivers to adopt specific behaviors that will increase the intellectual, emotional and social growth of infants. *Birth to School* is seeking additional funding for expansion of its resources. Materials are available from the Mississippi Authority for Educational Television.

Effective early childhood development is critical to narrowing the achievement gap of our early learners and preparing them for lifelong learning. I trust you will find the enclosed materials and Dr. Ramey's insights as valuable as I did.

Very truly yours,



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