

February 18, 2003

«Sal» «First» «Last»
«Org»
«Address_1»
«City», Mississippi «Zip»

Dear «Sal» «Last»:

As you may be aware, Dr. Sharon Lynn Kagan from Columbia University is heading an early childhood needs assessment to be conducted over the next 18 months. This assessment will identify what is needed in order to improve childcare in our state, what such improvements would cost, and what internal and external resources exist to help pay for those improvements. Among other issues that we hope this assessment will identify will be the need/cost/resources related to improvement of pre-literacy and language development content at licensed childcare centers here in Mississippi. We fully expect that other issues will also be highlighted by the study, including accessibility, identification of children with special needs, and other issues of critical importance to children and parents. It is expected that this assessment will be integral to development of legislation and policy in the near future.

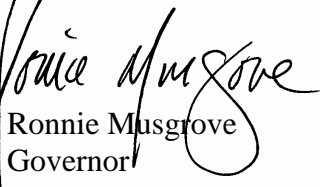
We would appreciate your working with us on this effort. Because of your leadership in the area of childcare, you can add to the quality of the assessment. We need your ideas and your support.


A meeting will be held in Conference Center East on the first floor of the Woolfolk Building located at 501 North West Street in Jackson from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 6. Dr. Kagan will be here along with Dr. Richard Brandon from the University of Washington and Susan Ochshorn, who works with Dr. Kagan at Columbia. This meeting will be vital to the development of the project and we therefore hope that you will agree to participate in the working group and that you will be able to attend the meeting.

Attached to this invitation is a timeline that spells out the various tasks to be performed over the course of the assessment. This should help give you some idea of the significant scope of the project and help prepare you for the meeting.

Finally, we would appreciate your contacting Claiborne Barksdale at the Barksdale Reading Institute (662-236-5600 or barksdac@msreads.org) by February 28 to let us know if you can help with this project and attend the meeting. Mr. Barksdale will also be glad to try to answer any questions that you might have about the assessment.

Thanks for your support for Mississippi's children.


Ronnie Musgrove
Governor


Claiborne Barksdale
Barksdale Reading Institute


Cathy Grace
Early Childhood Institute