
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR RONNIE MUSGROVE
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: GOVERNOR
FROM: RILEY
SUBJECT: 4:00 MEETING WITH EDUCATION ORGANIZATIONS TO DISCUSS FUNDING
DATE 5/30/01
CC: FILE

The following are scheduled to be at today's 4:00 meeting to discuss education funding:

David Sheppard, MS Association of School Superintendents
John Hartman, MS School Boards Association
Michael Marks and Beverly Sanders (Incoming President), MAE
Dr. Mel Buckley, MPE
Maryann Graczyk, AFT
Susan Womack, Parents for Public Schools
Blake Wilson, MEC

David Watkins and I met Friday for me to review the "white paper" that he was to have been working on. Watkins did not have a formal paper, but had the three points discussed below. Watkins said that, based upon his conversations with school board members and superintendents, there is not a lot of enthusiasm for a "call to funding" because there hasn't been a crisis yet (i.e., no layoffs or strikes) to make those involved believe there is a crisis. Teachers and administrators are going to their local legislators who are telling them that it is all nonsense and "we took care of you this year and we're going to take care of you next year." Excuse my language, but Watkins said that the funding crisis is only seen as a pissing match between the Governor and the Legislature.

The superintendents feel that there are more important issues that need to be addressed. Watkins said that local personnel feel the biggest problem is over regulation by MDE. He also is concerned that superintendents are so bogged down in paperwork and administrative matters, that they don't have time to think creatively and there are very limited "leaders" within the ranks. Thus, the superintendents act reactively to a crisis, rather than proactively to prevent a crisis. We discussed his 3R's:

1. RETURN the power to the people
 1. Flexibility for local schools; eliminate bureaucracy
 2. Creativity - give local districts maximum autonomy to allow creativity
 3. Moratorium on new and repeal of old "top down" state mandates and governance

2. REQUIRE accountability
 1. Hold local school leaders accountable for results
 2. Hold Legislature accountable for funding

3. RESTORE stability
 1. Provide long-term, stable funding and resources
 2. Enhance or supplement MAEP with significant new components to be phased in
 1. Annual technology funding line item of \$20 million/year (begin at \$4 million in FY2004, phase in over 5 years)
 2. Annual building/facilities line item \$20 million/year (begin at \$4 million, phase in over 5 years)
 3. Teacher salary adjustments - provide phased-in funding for future salary adjustments indexed to S/E average

Watkins also said that he has heard rumblings that the Lieutenant Governor is working on some type of education agenda to announce after the 2002 Session in an attempt to set her up for a run for Governor in 2003. He had suggested that you invite Dale Sullivan and Jayne Sargent to today's meeting, but called back later and said that it would be better for you to meet with a small group of superintendents independently, because the superintendents are hesitant to speak openly in front of others for fear of it getting back to the Lieutenant Governor.

As a means of testing what Watkins is saying, I would suggest that you give those at today's meeting the opportunity to share any concerns with you first, before you start talking about the funding crisis and the need to heighten the awareness of the situation we are in. You could ask them what they see as the largest inhibitor of public education or what would they do if they were "king for a day" and could fix anything they wanted to. Then you could start talking about funding. Their comments might identify other areas that we need to consider.