
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR RONNIE MUSGROVE
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: GOVERNOR
FROM: RILEY
SUBJECT: BLAKE WILSON: NEW EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS
DATE: 9/26/2001
CC: RENICK

This memo is for informational purposes.

You will remember that the Education Excellence Partnership (EEP) awarded the Mississippi Department of Education communications assistance to help build strong statewide support for standards-based education reform. The EEP is a consortium of several organizations including NGA and the Business Roundtable. Mississippi is serving as a three pilot state, along with Virginia and Illinois, for using communications effectively to 1) counter and surpass the opposition to the standards, assessment and accountability movement; and, 2) build support for the extra effort required to meet higher standards. You spoke to representatives of the three pilot states last January at the Edison Walthall.

Mississippi's partnership team, of which I am a member on behalf of this office, hosted a luncheon last week for the media to distribute media kits that were developed by the Ad Council for the Education Excellence Partnership. Leslie Graitcer of the BellSouth Foundation, which funded Mississippi's participation in this initiative, gave a few comments on standards-based reform. I gave closing comments at the luncheon, thanking Leslie for BellSouth's support and noting the partnership of Mississippi organizations (this office, MDE, PTA, MAE, MPE, AFT, Public Education Forum/MEC, and Superintendents' Association) in this effort.

Blake Wilson was invited to the luncheon. He phoned me later that afternoon to offer a heads up to you that there is strong resentment in the state as to "central authority" and wants you to be careful in this area. He said that there are a lot of Level 5 districts that are concerned that some of their level 1 or 2 schools will be identified under the new accountability system. (He referred to it as "their crazy uncles are going to be let out of the closet.") He said that he's afraid that Dr. Thompson is going to be made a sacrificial lamb. The MEC is bringing in a PR firm to work on the initiative and with Dr. Thompson. Blake also cautioned that "accountability" is not the word to use. He said that Georgia teachers boycotted Governor Barnes' higher accountability initiative.