TO: GOVERNOR

FROM: RILEY

SUBJECT: JUST FOR THE KIDS SCHOOL REPORT CARD SOFTWARE SYSTEM

DATE: 11/14/01

CC: RENICK

Brad Duggan, Executive Director of Just for the Kids out of the University of Texas at Austin, made a presentation at the recent Governors Education Policy Advisors Institute that I attended. Just for the Kids was founded in Texas as a nonprofit organization by civic leader and public education advocate, Tom Luce, in 1995. He believed that when understandable school data was made available to an entire school community, the community could measure school improvement, identify educational best practices, and help show schools how to use this information to improve through training and tutorials. Just for the Kids is basically an online report card for each school and can compare proficiency of schools with similar demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Just for the Kids is reportedly the first school reporting system that links student-level longitudinal data over multiple years. It controls for proficiency of students entering the middle and high schools. It also compares schools to others with equal or harder-to-educate populations (benchmarking). On site research and review of school's best practices and curriculums also identifies successful tools for lower performing schools to utilize.

Just for the Kids has been totally funded by private foundations and corporations in all 7 states (TX, AR, FL, MN, OH, TN, WA) where it is currently implemented or under development. Mississippi was cited by Just for the Kids as possibly being implemented in the Fall of 2002. I approached Brad Duggan after his presentation and inquired as to Mississippi's "possible for Fall of 2002" and asked who he had spoken to in our state. Duggan said that the Barksdales are interested in funding Just for the Kids in Mississippi. Sally Barksdale serves on a board with Tom Luce and has been interested in bringing it to Mississippi for several years. Duggan said that the State Department of Education has not been very supportive of the idea.

I emailed Duggan when I got back home and inquired as to MDE's concerns. He said that Steve Hebbler in MDE's Office of Research and Statistics had the following concerns regarding implementing the program in Mississippi:

- Mississippi began collecting fall student-level enrollment data (critical to determining continuous enrollment) in the fall of 2000. If those data are of good quality, Just for the Kids charts could be developed for Mississippi beginning with the spring 2002 test results and two years of continuous enrollment information. However, Dr. Hebbler indicated that the fall 2000 data were not of good quality and no efforts were planned to get local districts to resubmit or otherwise clean up their data. He expected the quality of the enrollment data to be better by fall 2001. This problem with the fall 2000 data, if uncorrected, could delay the implementation of the full program in Mississippi until spring 2003.

- Dr. Hebbler indicated that the permission of individual school districts might be required in order to release the data. If that is the case, then school districts by withholding permission could block the development of the JFTK model in Mississippi, which is based on statewide comparison pools of schools.

Just for the Kids has identified several options for addressing the above and implementing the program here.

I was impressed with the program's capability. It would provide an online report card for each school and the capability for online comparisons of schools and districts.

Mr. Duggan expressed an interest in setting up a meeting here to demonstrate the program to you and/or the Barksdales and MDE. Would you be interested in my setting up such a meeting? I also have a handout from the Institute that I can provide you.

Set up demo _____   No demo _____

Invite Barksdales & MDE _____   Don't invite Barksdales & MDE _____

Send me handout _____   No handout _____