

*Remarks for the  
Mississippi Institute on School Health, Wellness and Safety  
June 9, 2003*

- Recognize Dr. Pat Cooper (will be introducing you)
  
- Appreciate the opportunity to be here with you today
  - Even more, appreciate the work you do for our children
  - It benefits all Mississippians
  
- Spoke yesterday to Girls State in Hattiesburg and Boys State up in Cleveland
  - Shared the same message with them / message of opportunities

- It's been said that youth is a period of missed opportunities
  - Now more than ever, there are great opportunities here in Mississippi
  - Want them to make the most of those opportunities
  - Want to thank you for what you do to help
  
- Sometimes we spend so much time worrying about what our children will become tomorrow that we forget they are already somebody today
  - Important to focus on those issues that affect them
    - Education
    - Health

- We're beginning that work now in the first few minutes of life
  - This past Friday, held press conference to talk about Mississippi leading the nation in newborn screening
  - No other state in the nation has a screening program more extensive than ours
  
- 40 genetic screening tests will be run on every newborn in Mississippi
  - Five drops of blood drawn from the heel 10 minutes after birth
  - Can recognize health problems before they become problems

- Providing health care for kids as they grow
  - Covering more kids than ever through CHIP
  - From 500 in 2000 to more than 56,000
  - Healthy children go to school ready to learn
  
- Investing in education at earliest ages now through a unique public/private partnership
  - DHS and Barksdale Reading Institute
  - 18-month needs assessment to determine exactly what we need and ways to meet those needs

- The work you do in early childhood education lays the foundation for everything else we do in education
  - Making strong progress
  
- Many think of us as 48<sup>th</sup>, 49<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> in education
  - That's no longer true
  - Education is our first priority
  - Public schools are cornerstones of communities and key to success of our economy

- Mississippi is a recognized leader in education
  - Teacher pay / 49<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> when fully implemented
  - Princeton Review: 12<sup>th</sup> best testing system in nation
  - “No Child Left Behind”
  - Computers in the Classroom
  
- Other states are also watching what we’ve done with our investment in education
  - In my State of the State address, challenged Legislature to invest in education at 62% of budget, and fund it first
  - They rose to the challenge, and I signed legislation within next 3 weeks

- Efforts in education didn't just start this year
  - Have been working on this since I took office
  
- We're proving to the people of Mississippi, and the rest of the nation, that we're serious about education
  - Making the investment now for dividends tomorrow
  
- The investment we make in early childhood education pays strong dividends
  - Sending kids to school ready to learn
  - That's the end result of the work you do and it makes a difference

- Clifton Taulbert / dusty road story
  
- In the end, all our work is focused on the future of Mississippi and one simple question
  - What do we want?
  - Good schools / good jobs / good communities