

Regional Meeting for the Commission on the Senior Year
Opening Press Conference
Tuesday, February 6, 2001
10:45 a.m.
Central High School

- In June 2000 the U.S. Department of Education, with the support of three private foundations created the National Commission on the High School Senior Year.
- This commission is examining students' experiences in the last year of high school and recommending ways to improve them.
- We are proud that Mississippi could host the first of five regional meetings that will study ways to improve the senior year as a transition to post secondary education and the work force.
- The Commission has invited educators, business leaders, parents and concerned citizens of Mississippi to take part in this national discussion that will help shape a report suggesting ways to improve and enhance our students' senior year.
- It is so important that we help our students realize the educational and career opportunities that await them.
- It is also important that our students begin preparing early to continue their educations or begin their careers.
- Often times students approach their senior year as a time to reflect on their high school experience rather than a time to prepare themselves for the future.
- I am proud to say that Mississippi has already taken steps to help our students plan ahead.
- We know there is a need to change the way we educate our students.
- We have to stay ahead of the curve as we look for new and creative ways to teach our children.
- Our students must have access to the tools and information they need to be successful when they leave school.
- Through the School-to-Careers initiative we are helping Mississippi students prepare for specific careers by giving them the opportunity for first-hand knowledge, on-site experience and at-their-fingertips information.
- In September 2000 we launched the www.fastforwardMS.com website.
- This website allows students – from kindergarten to college age and beyond – realize the world of career opportunities that await them.
- It gives students, parents, educators and counselors information about possible educational and career paths.
- It gives information on financial aid, colleges and even highlights Mississippians and their educational and career choices.
- This past Friday our office participated in the National Job Shadow Day, sponsored by the Schools-to-Careers initiative.

- I was shadowed by two young women, Lenta Bankhead, a senior from West Point High School and Courtney Jones, a senior at Mendenhall High School.
- Both young women were very intelligent, and I believe they learned things that will help them with their education and career choices.
- (You can insert something kinda funny here about how the day went.)
- The Fast Forward Mississippi web site and the job shadowing program are just two examples of what we are doing in Mississippi to give our young people a taste of the working world.
- Today's conference will help us look at other ways to reach our students, and give them the tools they need to successfully continue their education and enter the workforce.
- We welcome the participants in today's conference.
- They share a deep passion for education improvements in Mississippi, and we thank them for their commitment.
- Educating Mississippi's children is our top priority.
- And every child must have the opportunity for a quality education.

Introduce Dr. Thompson