

*Remarks for the  
Early Childhood Task Force  
March 6, 2003*

- Strong investment in education
  - Accountability, teacher pay, computers, full funding first
  
- Research shows we all learn from the day we are born
  - Early childhood care and education are critical to future learning ability of our children

- Leadership Summit on Higher Education identified early childhood education as 1 of 6 priorities for education
  - Steering Committee: All Mississippi's children should enter school ready to interact with their peers and teachers, eager to read and able to begin working with numbers
  
- I am committed to ensuring a quality education for all of our children
  - Thrilled the Department of Human Services and the Barksdale Reading Initiative entered into a partnership to make this initiative possible.

- Thank Claiborne Barksdale, Dr. Cathy Grace and Edna Watts (DHS) for their work
  
- Recognize and thank the “Financing Universal Early Care and Education” team
  - Dr. Richard Brandon, University of Washington (**Co-Director** with Dr. Sharon Lynn Kagan)
  - Dr. Sharon Lynn Kagan, Columbia University (formerly of Yale) (**Co-Director** with Dr. Brandon)
  - Dr. Erin Maher, University of Washington
  - Susan Ochshorn, Columbia University

- Privileged to have these national experts lead our work for the next 18 months
  - They'll be heading an early childhood needs assessment to identify what's needed to improve childcare in our state, what such improvements would cost, and what internal and external resources exist to help pay for those improvements
  
- It is expected that this assessment will be integral to development of legislation and policy in the near future

- Thank the task force members for their willingness to serve
  - Task force comprised of providers, parents, Head Start, state agencies, academics, private sector, legislators
  
- Had the pleasure of hearing Dr. Craig Ramey's presentation to NGA at Winter Meeting
  - Recognized MS's Right from Birth series and our new expanded Birth to School initiative
  
- We are committed to investing in our future, rather than shortchanging our future