

Remarks for  
NASA Explorer School-Florence Middle School  
October 2, 2003

- It's great to be here with you today
  - This is one of the best things about my job
  - Meeting with young people like you
  
- Recognize:
  - Principal Beverly Weathersby
  - Rep. Tom Weathersby
  - students, teachers, and parents
  
- I'd like to congratulate every student here
  - It is a great honor and the opportunity of a lifetime to be selected as one of five schools in the state and one of 50 in the country to be named "NASA Explorer Schools"

- Not only is Florence Middle School recognized as a “NASA Explorer’s School,” but Florence Middle School is rated as a Level 4, exemplary school
  - Under MS Accountability System (made performance goal or exceeded growth expectation)
  - Also met Adequate Yearly Progress under No Child Left Behind- in the areas of math/ reading/ language
  
- You are 1/3 of the population, yet you are **ALL** of our future
  
- My parents always taught us the importance of having a good education
  - It can take you anywhere/ it can open any door
  - With a good education there are no limits to what **YOU** can accomplish

- I'm a living testament to that
  - I'm from a town many of you probably have never heard of (TELL YOUR STORY)
  - Yet, I became a senator, Lt. Governor and now Governor
  
- Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "The school is the last expenditure upon which America should be willing to compromise."
  
- Some other states are willing to compromise- but Mississippi isn't one of them
  
- I believe in you
  - your parents believe in you
  - your teachers, counselors, and NASA believe in you
  
- We're showing our belief in you by keeping sight of our priorities
  - Education and Job Creation
  - What I've focused on the last three years as governor

- Public schools are the cornerstones of our communities and the key to a successful economy
- We've accomplished a lot, but it hasn't been easy
  - Every state impacted by national recession
  - More than \$7 trillion lost in stock market
  - June 2003 Report from Bureau of Labor Statistics: 9.4 million Americans out of work- NAFTA 41,000 to Mexico
  - Alabama, Texas and Florida are raising taxes and Arkansas is cutting services
- Mississippi has refused to follow

- Image of Mississippi in 2003 far different than the image most know
  - Moving faster than anyone else into the 21<sup>st</sup> century
  - Competing and leading in the global marketplace
  - Setting new standards for education and economic development
  
- Mississippi is a recognized leader in education
  - Teacher pay/ 49<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> when fully implemented
  - Computers in the Classroom
  - Accountability
    - Princeton Review: 12<sup>th</sup> best testing system in the nation
    - Leading other states in preparedness for “No Child Left Behind”
    - Our test scores are improving
    - We announced that with our State Accountability system, more than 80% of Mississippi public schools

have achieved a rating of Level 3/  
Successful or higher

- Under the federal NCLB accountability system, 50% of MS schools met the Adequate Yearly Progress requirements for reading/language arts and math
  - NCLB score: Alabama – 33%, Delaware – 43%, Tennessee – 53%, and Florida 13%
  - 6<sup>th</sup> in the nation in National Board Certified Teachers
  - Historic action of funding education first
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- We're proving to the people of Mississippi, and the rest of the nation, that we're serious about education
    - Serious about giving you every advantage we can/ every advantage you deserve to compete on the national level
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- Mississippi has experienced significant growth over the past three years

- We are aggressive about creating good paying, quality jobs for all Mississippians
  - Over 2,200 new and expanded facilities
  - More than 56,000 new jobs
  - Total investment in Mississippi nearly \$15 billion
  
- Your living in an exciting time in Mississippi with unprecedented opportunities
  
- Continue the good work/ it will all pay off
  
- Congratulations again and thank you for letting me be here with you today