

■ Recognize:

- Reggie Barnes (Supt. Cleveland)
- Rep. George Flaggs
- Sen. Mike Chaney
- Dr. David Sheppard
- Dale Sullivan

■ honor to be here today in a room full of my people who care as much about education as I do

■ one of the best parts of my job / meeting with people who influence our children / ultimately, all of our futures for generations to come

- here today / because we have a passion for education / we know what a good education can do for our children

- Public schools are the cornerstones of our communities
 - the key to a successful economy

- Good schools / lead to good jobs / good jobs lead to better communities / good communities lead to an even better Mississippi

- H.W. Lewis said, “Those who are unwilling to invest in the future haven’t earned one.”

- Mississippi isn't afraid to invest in its future

- And, we are already reaping some of the rewards

- Without dedicated superintendents / teachers / parents / and business partnerships / would not be enjoying some of our successes in education
 - Historic action of fully funding education first
 - Franklin D. Roosevelt recognized this when he said, “the school is the last expenditure upon which America should be willing to economize”

- That is the way it should always be
- Test scores are improving
 - 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
 - NCLB score: Alabama – 33%, Delaware – 43%, Tennessee – 53%, and Florida 13%

- Mississippi has its priorities straight
 - Educating and investing in our children today for dividends tomorrow

- Children in this state are our most valuable resource
 - They may only be 1/3 of our population, but they 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 (first made education a priority), Lt. Governor and now Governor

- It is vital that our children know that they have people behind them, supporting them, and people who are willing to go to bat for them and their futures
 - They see that when the entire community becomes involved in their education process

- Business partnerships with schools are also significant because
 - Demonstrates the direct link between good schools and strong businesses, which lead to good communities and a better Mississippi
 - Shows businesses commitment to the children who will be their future employees

- We've accomplished a lot, and it hasn't been easy

- Mississippi has refused to follow other states when they have cut their school weeks and cut funding for schools

- Together we have refused to compromise on our children's future

- Mississippi is now recognized as a leader in education
 - Teacher pay / 49th to 19th / when fully implemented
 - Computers in the Classroom
 - 6th in the nation in National Board Certified Teachers
 - Princeton Review: Mississippi has 12th best testing system in nation

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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 our children every advantage we can / so they can compete on the national level / and so one day they can proudly lead Mississippi

- The recent successes we have had in education would not have been possible without the cooperation and input of everyone here today

- But, we cannot slack up / we cannot turn back now

- It is up to everyone here today to continue to carry the torch- you all have to fight for education / our children / and their futures

- They are counting on you/ their parents are counting on you/ and I am counting on you

- I will still be here to help in the fight for education in whatever role I can, but ultimately it up to **YOU**

- I want to thank you all for the Outstanding Service Award you gave me in July of this year
 - It meant a lot to me to receive an award for my passion and what I have worked so hard for since becoming a public servant

- Let's keep up the good work

- Together we can make Mississippi even better

