

*Remarks for the
50th Anniversary of Joiner Elementary
October 21, 2002*

(recognize Mayor Otis, Superintendent McCoy,
Roger Wicker, Glenn McCullough)

It is great to be here with you to help celebrate this anniversary. I began this day with a speech on education, and I'm excited to end it with another one. I'm excited because we are doing great things for education in Mississippi, and we're doing it because of these children here today and the future they represent for our state.

It's been said that children are the living messages we send to a time we'll never see – and I want that message to be strong, to be positive, to be full of the promise and potential we know lies within all our children.

The anniversary we celebrate here today is representative of that promise and potential. 50 years worth of Mississippi's finest have passed through the hallways of this school, and we are the better for it. Now, our work is centered on the next 50 years – and there are so many facets to that work.

We are raising teacher pay, to make sure those who are on the front lines every day are paid as the professionals they are.

We are placing Internet-accessible computers in every public school classroom in the state.

Children from every corner of the state – from the most rural districts to the most urban – will have the same opportunities to learn, to research, to make the most of the information superhighway.

We are one of six states participating in the “Following the Leaders” project funded by the U.S. Department of education, focusing on the connection between parents, classrooms, school districts and state education departments.

I don’t believe in “unattainable goals.” I believe in “unprecedented goals.” I want to see our state, and our region, set the bar high and not be satisfied with where we are.

Creating jobs for the people of this state has become a trademark of my administration, but building a future for the young people of this state through quality education is my personal passion.

Our commitment is focused, but our aim is broad. Education is where we build our success, and we're going to do it.

We have the tools to get this work done. We have the people and the talent and the resources.

And we're going to get this work done. We're going to do it to honor those who have gone through Joiner Elementary over the past 50 years, and for those who will go through over the next 50 years. We're going to do it for all of Mississippi's children.

I appreciate the opportunity to be here with you today. Happy anniversary, Joiner Elementary.