

Mississippi Retired Teachers Association  
Tuesday, March 14, 2000  
10:00 a.m.

\*audience of retired teachers. Remarks for approximately 20 minutes.

Good Morning.

I was delighted to get your invitation asking me to speak with you this morning.

It is always a special pleasure talking with other teachers. First, let me thank you for what you have done for all of the students who you have taught through the years. Your love for education and for the students who have passed through your classrooms has made Mississippi a better place.

Many people have asked me if moving from the

classroom to the Governor's Mansion would lessen my interest in teaching?! That could not be any further from the truth.

I just see that my role in teaching has changed somewhat.

I taught 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading for \_\_\_years at Pope Elementary School in Batesville. I was very attuned to the fact that for many of these students these could be the lost years. These grades are a time for transition in many of these students' lives. In the 1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, students are taught reading fundamentals and have more one-on-one time with their teachers. In junior high and high school,

students should be making great strides in their area of reading are beginning preparations for college level work and testing.

It is in the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades that students sometimes get lost because they are transitioning from one teacher in an individual classroom setting, to several teachers in a departmentalized setting. For some students this transition happens too quickly. For some students less one-on-one teacher time is available to them, they are not being monitored as closely, and they often lose interest in their studies.

(Insert a personal story about one particular student that you worked with. One child that you really made a difference with when it came to reading.)

Taking time to read with students can change their lives. I am really “preaching to the choir” here though. You, as teachers, know how important reading is to our students. You know that spending quality one-on-one time with students to make sure that they understand and learn what is being taught in the classroom is so very important to their future success.

The Governor is committed to improving the education that our students receive. He is diligently working to see that our teachers’ salaries are raised to the Southeastern Average, and just last week, he announced the formation of a Computer Technology Task Force. This task force is charged with the

responsibility of putting an Internet-accessible computer in every elementary and secondary classroom in Mississippi by the end of the year 2002.

Both the Governor and I believe that these improvements for teachers will enhance the education that our children receive. Better salaries mean more qualified teachers staying in Mississippi to teach our students, and computers in every classroom means a better variety of teaching tools for our teachers to use to mentally stimulate and interest our students.

I said earlier that my role as a teacher had changed somewhat. Instead of being in a classroom daily with

my students, I now have the opportunity to reach all Mississippi students by speaking to them as I travel across the state, by talking with organizations such as this one, by talking to literacy volunteers and by appealing to parents to take the time to read to, and with, their children.

I can make a difference, and you can make a difference. I hope that you never see your job as a teacher as being over. I hope that you will always reach out to the young people of this state to teach them the fundamentals that they will need for life.

Thank you for your time this morning. It has been my pleasure to be here.