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OFFICE OF GOVERNOR RONNIE MUSGROVE  
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** KINNEY  
**FROM:** RILEY  
**SUBJECT:** KINDERGARTEN PLUS  
**DATE:** 12/16/02  
**CC:** BOYD

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Sandra Feldman, AFT's national president, introduced Kindergarten-Plus at AFT's 2002 national convention. Kindergarten-Plus would provide an extended-year, full-day kindergarten to disadvantaged children by enabling them to begin kindergarten the summer before they would ordinarily enter and to continue through the summer after kindergarten, right before entering first grade.

Research has found that disadvantaged children, on average lag substantially behind other children in literacy, numeracy and social skills even before formal schooling begins. However, once they are in school, they progress at least as rapidly as other children do. By the end of the kindergarten year, the basic skills gap between disadvantaged and other children has virtually disappeared. But, because advantaged children start out ahead in basic skills before kindergarten, they are more ready than disadvantaged children are to develop more complex skills during kindergarten.

A study of youngsters who attended extended-year kindergarten found that they outperformed children from their regular kindergarten program the next year in math, reading and general knowledge. Kindergarten-Plus would give disadvantaged children the chance to catch up earlier on basic skills (the summer before regular kindergarten entry) so they would be developmentally more ready to acquire higher skills during the regular kindergarten period. And if there were more time for reinforcement (the summer after kindergarten), the evidence suggests that the higher-skills gap that exists between advantaged and disadvantaged children at the end of the regular kindergarten year would narrow.

Kindergarten-Plus is not a substitute for universal early childhood education. However, the nation's progress towards this has been sluggish. Kindergarten-Plus is doable and affordable now. .

AFT estimates that four extra months of kindergarten would cost about \$2,000 per child. Approximately 26,000 poor children in Mississippi would qualify (i.e., they are not being served by a Head Start summer educational program). The cost of Kindergarten-Plus assumes providing young children with the same supports available to elementary students, including meals, transportation, school nurses, special education, counseling

and other services as required. Teachers would be certified and receive professional development to the same extent as other teachers. Music, art and other specialists would be available on the same basis as in the rest of elementary school. The summer-before-kindergarten part of Kindergarten-Plus could work by expanding and improving Head Start.

Kindergarten-Plus could reduce the need for remediation and special education, lower dropout rates, increase the supply of productive citizens, and ultimately save the state millions. Education remains the best hope for lifting children out of poverty.