

This past weekend, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards met here in Jackson. The board is an independent, non-profit organization, and focuses on putting quality teachers in every classroom.

I'm proud to serve as a member of the board, and I was proud to have the other members here to hear the progress we're making in education.

One of the programs offered by the Board for Professional Teaching Standards is National Board Certification, a demanding process by which teachers are tested and ranked by their peers around the country.

Mississippi had 321 new National Board Certified Teachers in 2002, ranking 7<sup>th</sup> in the nation. Overall, we rank 6<sup>th</sup> in the nation with nearly 1,500 certified teachers.

And, we were one of the first states to offer a financial incentive package for teachers to achieve certification.

Our investment in National Board Certified Teachers is critical to education in Mississippi. We must ensure that our children have a qualified teacher leading their classroom.

These are tough economic times, but our investment in education is an investment in our future – and we're not going to shortchange our future.

I'm Ronnie Musgrove, and this has been the Mississippi Minute. Thanks for listening.