



MAPE

Partners

Mississippi Association of Partners in Education Newsletter

June 2009

Hardwick Shares Six Steps to Start a Partnership



Phil Hardwick

My involvement with the Mississippi Association of Partners in Education began about seven years ago when I asked myself this question: If I could change only one thing about my city, what would it be?

My immediate response was that my city would be known as a place with good public schools. Maybe I could have some positive influence on one school. Perhaps, more realistically, I could have an influence on one class, or possibly one student. I decided that I would give it a try. But where to begin?

That question was answered the following Sunday when a newspaper published a ranking of all schools in the state and their test scores by grade. The worst scores in Jackson were those by the fourth grade at Poindexter Elementary School, only two blocks from my office. Suddenly, it seemed almost providential.

The following day I visited the school and met with Dr. Rosie Payton, the principal. I asked her about her views on community organizations getting involved in local schools, and she embraced the concept.

The next step was the Leadership Jackson Alumni Association, of which I am a member. I figured if this group couldn't make an impact, then none could. Thus began a three-year service project.

The idea was that we volunteers would spend three consecutive years with the same students and find out if this type of community involvement really made a difference in test scores when second graders reached fourth grade.

- See Six Steps, p. 3



GREENVILLE PARTNERSHIP WINS GOVERNOR'S AWARD. Students and faculty of Stern Enhancement School and St. Joseph High School were recognized for their successful partnership during the Governor's Awards in Jackson March 30. Presenting awards were Hank Bounds, Superintendent of Education (back row, center) and Cheryl Comans, MAPE president (third from right). See inside pages for details and additional photos.

Cathy Grace to Receive Winter-Reed Award



Cathy Grace

Cathy Grace, founding director of Mississippi State University's Early Childhood Institute, has been named the 2009 recipient of the Winter-Reed Partnership Award.

MAPE will announce the date and location of the tribute ceremony soon. Ticket information and event details will be available at www.mapie.org.

"Cathy's legacy of support for public education is well known in Mississippi, and we are thrilled that she will accept this honor," said Cheryl Comans, president of Mississippi Association of Partners in Education. "Her drive and dedication through the years have made a remarkable difference in the lives of so many children in Mississippi, and we are certain that many of her friends, admirers, students and colleagues will want to be a part of this very special event."

"I am so very honored to even be considered for such a prestigious award," said Dr. Grace. "All of the individuals previously honored have been my heroes throughout the years, and to even be mentioned in the same sentence is unbelievable.

"I am truly humbled and appreciative of this recognition of work I have done over the years with hundreds of people committed to young children in our state," she said.

Dr. Grace began her career in early childhood education in 1972 in eastern Arkansas, teaching first grade at Wedlock Elementary School in West Memphis.

Having had her own first child at the age of 17, she already knew a lot about rural life, poverty, and at-risk children. After earning a bachelor's degree at the University of Arkansas, she came home to teach so that her parents could help care for her son, and entered graduate school at Arkansas State University.

- See Grace, p. 3

Governor's Awards

March 30, 2009 - Jackson Hilton



**Jackson Public School District and
Ask for More Arts**



**Pascagoula School District and
Backpack Buddies**

Partnership Excellence Awards



**Hattiesburg Public School District and
Hattiesburg Housing Authority**

Governor's Honor Roll



Northrop Grumman

Distinguished Service Award



**West Primary School (Natchez) and
Multiple Community Partners**



**Rebecca Starling, Director
JPS Partners in Education Program**



**Hattiesburg Public Schools
Dropout Prevention Summit**

Governor's Award Spotlight: Stern Enhancement & St. Joseph

The goal of the St. Joseph High School partnership with Stern Enhancement School in Greenville was to foster community development through a reading and mentoring program to improve reading skills of at-risk children and enhance the interpersonal and communication skills of all participants.

The partnership began with the establishment of a Book Buddies program in 2002. Training sessions are conducted by Stern's Partners in Education coordinators using the Barksdale reading modules. The sessions focus not only on enhancing literacy but also the emotional stability of the elementary student.

Kindergarten through fourth grade students are selected by their teachers for inclusion in the program with the written consent of parents or guardians. These children were matched with St. Joseph students according to need, personality and teacher referral information.



**Highland Elementary (Ridgeland) and
Mississippi Department of Transportation**

- See Spotlight, p. 4

Grace (cont. from p. 1)

In the three decades since, Dr. Grace has taught at the university level, been executive director of a regional professional development association for early childhood educators, and created and directed a comprehensive family support agency for Lee County.

When Mississippi became the last state in the country to require school districts to offer kindergarten in 1985, Dr. Grace led the kindergarten implementation as early childhood coordinator for the state Department of Education.

At Mississippi State University, Dr. Grace is a professor in the Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Special Education of the College of Education and director of its Early Childhood Institute.

Since joining MSU in 1999, she has obtained millions of dollars from private, local, state, and federal sources to conduct and evaluate a variety of technical assistance models for child care programs, preschool and elementary programs, community colleges, and four-year universities in Mississippi.

When MSU obtained an additional grant of \$2.1 million from the U.S. Department of Education in 2004, it appointed Dr. Grace to direct the National Center for Rural Early Childhood Learning Initiatives within the MSU Early Childhood Institute.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, Dr. Grace spearheaded a multi-million dollar effort to rebuild and equip damaged and destroyed early childhood programs in Mississippi.

In 2006, Governor Haley Barbour appointed Dr. Grace to the Mississippi Early Childhood Advisory Council.

This year Dr. Grace will go on sabbatical from MSU to serve as director of Early Childhood Development Policy for the Children's Defense Fund.

MAPE created the Winter-Reed Partnership Award in 2007 in honor of former Gov. William F. Winter and Tupelo businessman Jack Reed Sr., whose support of the Education Reform Act of 1982 helped improve and advance public education for children throughout Mississippi.

In 2008, MAPE honored the late Sen. Grey Ferris with the Winter-Reed Partnership Award, particularly for his role in the passage of the groundbreaking Adequate Education Act during his tenure in the state legislature. The award was presented to his family at a tribute ceremony in Vicksburg on Oct. 14.

Entergy, Wingfield Partner on Scholars Program

Wingfield High School in Jackson and long-time partner Entergy Mississippi, Inc. recently announced the Entergy Scholars program, which will be introduced during the 2009-2010 school year.

Entergy Scholars will provide resources to students beginning in ninth grade, and the program requires strong parental involvement and a commitment to community service for all students. A cohort of 50 students from Wingfield's feeder schools — Whitten Middle School and Peeples Middle School — will be identified for participation.

Entergy volunteers and mentors will play an integral role in the success of the program, which has three primary goals: to increase enrollment in math and science careers, to increase the number of students eligible for induction into the National Honor Society, and to support district efforts to decrease dropout rates.



Entergy recently made a donation to Wingfield to support the Entergy Scholars program. Pictured are (from left) Louis Wright and Patricia Rucker, Entergy; Nadine Gilbert, assistant principal, Wingfield; and Liz Brister and Gloria Johnson.

Six Steps (cont. from p. 1)

Over the course of four years, we learned several things that may be helpful to other businesses in this process.

First, volunteers have diverse needs, talents and resources. Therefore, offer a variety of ways for volunteers to participate, e.g., reading to students, collecting items and delivering them to the school, making financial contributions, or dealing with family issues. Keep all volunteer activities on the school site or on approved, multi-chaperoned field trips.

Second, invite other organizations to join the effort. Several groups and individuals were part of our Poindexter partnership and contributed their own special expertise, including WLBT-TV, the Mayor's Office, the Junior League of Jackson and St. Andrew's Middle School.

Third, expect the unexpected. Little did I know that the biggest cause of fights between students would be related to clothes! Our solution: Work with the principal to change the school to uniform-optional and provide uniforms for students.

Fourth, support the teacher and the principal. One of the little things we did was take the principal and teacher to lunch from time to time. One day the teacher told me that it was one of the things that they cherished most. Likewise, the principal needs your support. We learned that a good principal is the real key to a good school.

Fifth, make it a one-year project.

We started in the second grade, in which there were three classes totaling 43 students. At the end of the fourth grade only 12 of the original second graders remained. Also, the students who attended Poindexter in a previous year had better test scores than those who did not. I did a little research on the neighborhood and, using census data, found that there was an approximate 30 percent annual turnover rate in households.

Sixth, community involvement works. Test scores were up in the class. When they were third graders, the mainstream students had a 100 percent pass rate on the exit exam, one of only two Jackson elementary schools to do so. In the fourth grade, the original group had better test scores than the newer students, and they had better scores than the fourth grade class two years earlier.

Finally, I would be remiss not to give you an update on Poindexter Elementary School. The same elementary school in a rough part of inner-city Jackson that had those bad test scores became a Level Four school in 2007.

MAPE Past President Phil Hardwick is coordinator of Capacity Development at the John C. Stennis Institute of Government, Mississippi State University. To find out more about initiating a partnership, visit www.mapie.org.

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PARTNERS is a publication of the MS Association of Partners in Education. It is distributed as a service to Mississippi schools and their partners. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the official position of the state organization.

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Spotlight: Stern & St. Joseph (cont. from p. 2)

St. Joe's Book Buddies chose to volunteer their time during their lunch periods or study halls and work with their students for approximately 45 minutes, concentrating on building vocabulary and comprehension skills.

"Once they become familiar with their students, mentors develop strong attachments and relationships and start spending more time at Stern," said Judy Long, Stern Enhancement School's parent coordinator. "They also begin to recruit other students to join."

Informational data, both anecdotal and academic, demonstrate the profound effect of the partnership on Stern students. Standardized testing done independently by the school indicates an average increase in reading achievement for the Enrichment Program students by at least one grade level for each class. Approximately 40 percent of 75 second through fourth graders scored at or above grade level.

"These students were either not reading at all when they came to Stern or were reading two or more grade levels below their age-group peers," said Carol Oakes, the district's gifted education teacher.

Another improvement area has been daily attendance. Out of 11 Enrichment Program classes, as many as six per day regularly had perfect attendance, and there were several days during the year when every single child was in attendance. The resulting ADA for the year was 97 percent school-wide.

"Average daily attendance has been astounding, especially considering the fact that many of our students historically have not liked to come to school on a regular basis because they had not been academically successful at their base schools," Oakes said. "The St. Joseph partnership was definitely a contributing factor."

Around 100 Stern students in K-4 grades were positively influenced by the Book Buddies program, which begins in early September and continues through the last week in May. More than 1,000 hours are donated by high-school students.

"Not only does the program benefit elementary students, but it's also a great enrichment tool for mentors, many of whom learned that in addition to being a tutoring program, it's a life-learning experience for all age groups," Long said.