



**EMBARGOES UNTIL**  
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**RESEARCH POINTS OUT WEAKNESS IN STATE'S CURRICULUM**  
**New KIDS COUNT Mississippi Report Calls for Public Conversation on Curriculum Quality**

**Jackson...**It's time to talk about the quality of Mississippi's public schools curriculum, according to a new KIDS COUNT Mississippi Report, *Curriculum Quality Counts...Just Not in Accountability Systems*, which compiles research findings on the quality of the State's curriculum into an eyebrow raising report.

"Questions about the quality and rigor of the State's curriculum, however, are what we raise in the report – questions we think should be answered in a public conversation followed by meaningful change," said Jane Boykin, President of the Forum on Children and Families and Project Director of KIDS COUNT Mississippi.

The report draws research from Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and the American Federation of Teachers. "It's the striking similarity of findings in the research of these two very different organizations that provides compelling evidence of the urgent need for a public conversation on the quality of the academic experience available to the children enrolled in Mississippi's public schools," Boykin said.

The Fordham Foundation has published research on the quality of curriculum standards in the states since 1997 and reports its findings as letter grades. The Foundation's most recent research, released in 2005, gave Mississippi a "B" on the State's English curriculum and a "D" on the math curriculum. Earlier curriculum quality research conducted by the Foundation gave Mississippi an "F" on history, a "D" on geography and another "F" on science.

"The grades are disappointing," Boykin said, "but it was the realization that the State only provides districts with curriculum frameworks and the state tests that measure student achievement that simply floored me. Every school district either makes its own decision about the content of the curriculum taught in the classroom or leaves that decision to the classroom teacher," she continued. "When you consider the possibility of that many variations on the questionable quality of the State's curriculum frameworks, there's little need to wonder about the results."

According to the report, one of those results is the nation's largest gap between the state and national fourth grade reading scores at the proficient and above level in 2003, the last year the fourth grade took both tests. While eighty-seven percent (87%) of the State's fourth grade scored at or above proficient on the state test, only 18 percent scored at this level on the national test.

"The size of this gap sent us looking for answers", Boykin says, "and the answers we found, unfortunately, point to the curriculum of the State's public schools." She said the

public conversation recommended in the KIDS COUNT report needs to be about a system that provides districts with a complete curriculum based on rigorous academic standards.

A full copy of the report and the KIDS COUNT trend data on school district test scores is available at [www.mfcf.org/qualitycounts/](http://www.mfcf.org/qualitycounts/). The report also provides the website addresses for the source documents used to research the quality and rigor of Mississippi's curriculum in the core academic subjects.

KIDS COUNT Mississippi is directed by the Mississippi Forum on Children and Families and is one of the fifty state projects of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's national KIDS COUNT Initiative. The Forum is a Jackson-based non-profit organization providing community resource development through information, education and training. For more information, call 601-355-4911 or visit [www.mfcf.org](http://www.mfcf.org).