

SPARK Mississippi Partners

Hollandale School District

Cleveland School District

Pearl School District

North Bolivar School District

Mound Bayou School District

Washington County Opportunities

Friends of Children of Mississippi, Inc.

Bolivar County Community Action Agency, Inc.

MS Low Income Child Care Initiative

MSU Early Childhood Institute

MSU Extension Service

BRIDGES

MS Delta Even Start Consortium

MS Department of Education

MS Department of Health

Delta Council

JSU Early Childhood Center

USM Institute for Disability Studies

Families First Resource Center

DSU Center for Community Development

Professional Associates

MSU Stennis Institute of Government

DSU Early Childhood Center

JSU Dept. of Elementary and Early Childhood Education

University of MS – North MS Education Consortium

EXCEL by 5 – Chevron Texaco

MS Public Broadcasting System



SPARK Mississippi

SPARK Mississippi is an early education initiative that brings together parents, schools, child care and early education providers, child advocacy groups, Head Start providers, state and local government agencies and businesses for the purpose of ensuring school readiness and academic success for Mississippi children ages 3 to 8. SPARK MS currently serves students residing in the catchment areas of 10 Mississippi school districts – Cleveland, Hollandale, North Bolivar, Pearl, Mound Bayou, West Bolivar, West Tallahatchie, Humphreys County, East Jasper and Clarksdale.

SPARK MS seeks to help children master the skills and receive the cognitive, physical, family, and community supports necessary for school success. SPARK MS strategies for supporting ready kids and ready schools include: Early Education Classroom Improvement Plans, Individual Learning Plans, Early Education/School Curriculum Alignment, Support for Basic and Special Needs, Learning Advocates, Local Children's Partnerships, and Parent Education.

To contact a Local Children's Partnership or to learn more about SPARK MS, call:

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Children's Defense Fund



SUPPORTING PARTNERSHIPS TO ASSURE READY KIDS



What is SPARK?

The SPARK initiative of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation seeks to create a seamless transition into school for vulnerable children ages 3 to 8. Standing for "Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids," SPARK will support partnerships of selected communities, schools, state agencies, and families to ensure that they work together effectively for children's early learning. With the initiative serving as a catalyst or "spark," the goal is to ensure that vulnerable children are ready for schools and schools are ready for children.

Of the four million American children who start school each year, as many as one-third enter school behind. Many never catch up. The reasons for this are complex, but clearly the multitude of systems – from family to schools to government – that should be supporting young children are failing to do so. SPARK seeks to permanently improve systems that affect children's learning. The SPARK strategy is based upon the belief that the stronger and more effective the alignment among various partners, the greater the learning outcomes for children.

SPARK grantees include partnerships of communities, parents, schools, state agencies, and child advocacy groups in Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, and Washington, D.C. In addition to local and statewide activities, the SPARK initiative includes national strategies in evaluation, communications, and policy designed to gauge the impact of SPARK on children, share lessons and successes, and sustain and replicate best practices.



SPARK helps young children make smooth transitions to school by supporting partnerships between parents, schools, early childhood education providers, and communities.

SPARK MISSISSIPPI: Ensuring successful transitions to school for children ages 3 to 8



PARENTS

- ▶ ■ supporting their children's learning at home
- linking with opportunities for early screening and affordable health care
- gaining access to affordable, quality early childhood care and education

Each SPARK MS student receives two years of high quality early education and care in a Head Start Center, child care support Pre-K program, or family day care home. Parents of SPARK MS students complete skill-building workshops designed to equip them for the role of first teachers.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

- ▶ ■ incorporating research-based curricula, instructional strategies and materials
- equipping parents to share in the teaching role
- providing individualized instruction and support to each child

Participating child care centers, Head Start Centers, family day care homes, and public Pre-K programs receive professional development, learning advocates, and resources to improve instruction and connect learning in home and school.

SCHOOLS

- ▶ ■ preparing early elementary teachers to meet the academic needs of all children
- assisting parents and children with the transition to school
- creating developmentally sound classroom environments

SPARK MS provides participating school districts with resources to assess and improve early elementary classroom environments. Teachers also participate in professional development to support early literacy, individualized instruction, and usage of MS Department of Education instructional benchmarks and objectives.

COMMUNITIES

- ▶ ■ developing local plans to support ready kids and ready schools
- providing resources for local children, caretakers, and schools
- supporting developmentally sound education policies

In all SPARK MS districts, Local Children's Partnerships – businesses, nonprofit and faith-based organizations, and government agencies – coordinate activities and leverage additional resources to support ready kids and ready schools.