



## Year Three Report Highlights September 19, 2012

**Mississippi Building Blocks** (MBB) is entering its fourth year of working in

licensed early-childhood centers across Mississippi. MBB is a four-year, \$7-million project, privately financed (except for a \$500,000 federal grant) by leading Mississippi businesses and philanthropies. It has widespread support from the business community, including the strong support of the Mississippi Economic Council.

### The Goal

MBB's goal is to increase the school readiness of children in participating centers, to increase the financial stability of the centers, and to produce a scalable, affordable, and sustainable model that can be used widely throughout the state.

### By the Numbers

In 2011-2012, MBB worked in 45 centers and 100 classrooms

Approximately 1,000 predominantly low-income children participated

Mean age of children was 4 years-3 months

Per-child cost was \$2,000

### The MBB Model

In-classroom mentoring by an early-childhood expert, working to implement best practices, including extensive utilization of the Mississippi-based *Between the Lions* language and pre-literacy programming and curriculum

Business advice to the center director to improve financial and operational practices of the center and ensure long-term viability

Provision of \$3,000 to each class in customized materials based on the needs of the particular room

Scholarships and stipends for completion of Child Development Associate degrees by the center teachers

Parent education and involvement

## Third-Party Evaluation

The assessment of MBB's effectiveness, led by Dr. Kathy Thornburg at the Center for Family Policy & Research at the University of Missouri, showed the following impact by MBB on participating children and classrooms:

**MBB had a significant impact on cognitive skills.** Using the School Readiness Assessment (SRA), administered by third-party assessors retained by the University of Missouri team, the children in the MBB classrooms improved significantly in areas of fine-motor skills, counting and numbers, upper-case alphabet, gross-motor skills, and print concepts.

**Social and emotional skills of the children were strengthened.** MBB children were deemed by their teachers to have matured at a significantly greater degree than were the children in the control classrooms. The social/emotional assessment evaluates self-control, initiative and attachment and is a widely recognized predictor of a child's future ability to withstand the stress of school, resiliency to respond well to adversity, and general maturation.

**The classroom environments improved significantly.** The MBB classes showed significantly greater improvement than did the control classrooms with which MBB did not work. This evaluation, which used a nationally-utilized assessment – Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) – showed strong growth particularly in the MBB classrooms' work on language and reasoning, activities, and child-teacher interactions. MBB attributes this significant ECERS growth to the emphasis placed on instructional practices, use of rich vocabulary, immersion in language, and emphasis on the language/vocabulary curriculum contained in *Between the Lions*.

## Changes for Year Four

Heading into its fourth year, MBB's staff continues to work to improve its model. Among other programmatic changes, in its fourth year MBB is:

Increasing the intensity of the work by its mentors with the children – providing on-average 360 hours of direct instruction per classroom over the course of the entire year. MBB anticipates that this more direct work with the children will increase the impact of the program on language, pre-literacy and pre-math skills and that the children will be even better prepared when they walk into kindergarten the following year.

Partnering closely with the kindergarten teachers in the schools into which the children will be enrolled in the following year in order to coordinate curricular and other activities and to improve the transition from pre-k to school.