News Release

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**MPB Kick Starts the Ready to Learn® Initiative
with a Back to School Bash August 9***Free family event promotes school readiness for elementary students and parents*

**JACKSON, MS**– Mississippi Public Broadcasting (MPB) announced today that it will expand school readiness projects across Mississippi with support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and PBS Kids®. MPB is one of 21 public television stations across the nation to receive funding as part of the CPB, PBS Kids® and Ready to Learn® Initiative. MPB is embracing the theme *Learning Anytime, Anywhere* for its Ready to Learn® projects.

“At MPB, we are committed to using the power of media to enhance early childhood education so that all Mississippi children are prepared to succeed in school,” said Nikki McCelleis, MPB Deputy Executive Director for Education. “As part of the Ready to Learn® Initiative, *Learning Anytime, Anywhere* will focus on engaging the community in a conversation about the importance of school readiness and making sure children are ready to go back to school.”

Early childhood education encompasses learning from the time of birth through age 8—a crucial time period for cognitive development. During those early years, hands-on activities and educational games are an effective way to foster creative and critical thinking. And that is just the type of interactive experience MPB will provide at the Back To School Bash.

Maggie Stevenson, MPB Director of Early Childhood Education, referred to the *Learning Anytime, Anywhere* Back To School Bash as an “edutainment event.” She expanded by adding the event will provide hands-on activities for kids that are “focused on education but are also entertaining, engaging and interactive. The kids will learn by playing and having fun. Everything we have planned for the Back To School Bash has a learning goal.”

The [*Learning Anytime, Anywhere* Back To School Bash](http://www.mpbonline.org/readytolearn) will feature a variety of activities coordinated by MPB and community partners such as the Jackson Zoo, the Mississippi Children’s Museum and Natural Science Museum.

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“The activities are designed to facilitate learning in topics spanning from science and math to literacy. We want to help children develop a love of reading and learning so they can take that attitude with them as they head back to school or go for the first time,” Stevenson said.

Although the activities are for young children, parents who attend the event will also walk away with new knowledge.

“Parents who attend will hopefully take away creative tips and ideas on how to better assist their children academically,” McCelleis said. “MPB will provide parents with strategies for reinforcing and expanding upon what their children are learning in the classroom while they are at home. Children can and will do better when the adults in their lives are involved in their daily learning.”

The *Learning Anytime, Anywhere* Back To School Bash will also feature a performance by the Southern Komfort Brass Band and appearances by Deuce McAlister and a crew of PBS characters. At 10 a.m., the band will perform and all of the special guests will put on a show.

As a part of the Ready to Learn®Initiative, MPB will host educational engagement events throughout the year.

A number of those events will be held in the Jackson neighborhood that feeds into Lanier High School, which has high poverty, unemployment and dropout rates. MPB has partnered with Dawson Elementary, which feeds into Lanier High School, and nearby apartment complexes to engage children, families and teachers with educational support for time spent in school, after school and at home.

The Aug. 9 *Learning Anytime, Anywhere* Back to School Bash serves as a launch pad for the Ready to Learn® activities MPB will undertake this year, extending the learning experience from the television screen into communities around the state.

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**Mississippi Public Broadcasting (MPB)** provides instructional and public affairs programming to Mississippians through its statewide television and radio network.  MPB enhances the work of educators, students, parents and learners of all ages by providing informative programming and educational resources.  MPB’s locally-produced programming focuses on the people, resources and attractions that reflect Mississippi’s unique culture and diverse heritage. Children’s television programs constitute a major portion of the daytime and weekend morning schedules.  MPB provides a valuable resource to Mississippians in disseminating information as part of the state’s emergency preparedness and response system. Since 1970, MPB has won over 400 national, regional and statewide awards, including Emmy®, Edward R. Murrow and Parents’ Choice® Awards. For more information on MPB, its programs, mission or educational resources, please visit [www.mpbonline.org](http://www.mpbonline.org).

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The [**Corporation for Public Broadcasting**](http://www.cpb.org) (CPB), a private, nonprofit corporation created by Congress in 1967, is the steward of the federal government's investment in public broadcasting. It helps support the operations of more than 1,400 locally-owned and -operated public television and radio stations nationwide, and is the largest single source of funding for research, technology, and program development for public radio, television and related online services.

**PBS Kids®**, the number one educational media brand for kids, offers all children the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television, online, mobile and community-based programs. Kidscreen- and Webby-award winning pbskids.org provides engaging interactive content, including the PBS KIDS video player, now offering free streaming video accessible on computer- and mobile-device-based browsers. For more information on specific PBS KIDS content supporting literacy, science, math and more, visit [pbs.org/pressroom](http://www.pbs.org/pressroom), or follow PBS KIDS on [Twitter](http://twitter.com/pbskids) and [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/pbskids).

[**Ready to Learn®**](http://pbskids.org/readytolearn/)  Initiative is a cooperative agreement funded and managed by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement. It supports the development of innovative educational television and digital media targeted at preschool and early elementary school children and their families. Its general goal is to promote early learning and school readiness, with a particular interest in reaching low-income children. In addition to creating television and other media products, the program supports activities intended to promote national distribution of the programming, effective educational uses of the programming, community-based outreach, and research on educational effectiveness.

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