



GOVERNOR RONNIE MUSGROVE

Computers in the Classroom

On December 31, 2002, Mississippi became the first state in the nation to have an Internet-accessible computer in every public classroom. Under Governor Ronnie Musgrove's bold leadership and vision, Mississippians have worked together to realize the potential of placing the world's greatest resource at our schoolchildren's fingertips.

At the 1999 Mississippi Economic Council Annual Meeting, Mr. Bob Pittman, former Chief Executive Officer of America Online, challenged business and government to partner and bring an Internet-connected computer to every school desk as another catalyst for maintaining Mississippi's technology momentum. "It's interesting that with only a small shift in resources, it would be possible for Mississippi to put an Internet-connected computer on every desk...What would that do for the students? What would that do for the teachers?"

Moved by Mr. Pittman's challenge, Governor Ronnie Musgrove created the Classroom Technology Task Force to place an Internet-accessible computer in every classroom. During the last three years, business and community leaders across this state have embraced the mission of the Governor's Classroom Technology Task Force to place an Internet-accessible computer in every public classroom.

Thanks to vendors like Howard, Compaq, IBM, Dell, Apple, and Bull Computers, Mississippi received discounted pricing for computers. In addition to purchasing computers directly from manufacturers and resellers, more than 300 Mississippi students built 5,952 computers for this initiative. Through the ExplorNet program, a non-profit corporation, Mississippi teachers trained students to build, troubleshoot, and repair computers in classrooms throughout the state. Many of these students plan to use the skills learned to obtain their *A+ certification* for computer maintenance and repair.

With the help of Jim and Sally Barksdale, Robin Costa of the Maddox Foundation, Bob and Tom Pittman, Carolyn Shanks of Entergy, Dan Knecht of the Public Education Forum, Dave Boliek of ExplorNet and so many others, this initiative has become a success. Thanks to the help of every school superintendent, school technology coordinator, teacher and student, Mississippi's schools are becoming dynamic learning centers to prepare our children for tomorrow's jobs.