

Questions and Answers – Chip Mabry, March 21, 2003

Computers in the Classroom Initiative:

1. What were the greatest obstacles in achieving this?

Time. In February 2000, we launched a very ambitious initiative to place a computer in every public k12 classroom in Mississippi by the end of 2002. With the support of superintendents, teachers, business leaders, community leaders, I knew we could accomplish this goal.

In early 2000, Mississippi had 30,033 classrooms; today, we have more than 32,350 classrooms. Responding to a moving target was an early issue but one we expected and factored in the equation. At the end December 2002, Mississippi's 32,354 public classrooms were wired and had at least one Internet--accessible computer.

2. What does this "first" mean for Mississippi?

This is a great achievement for Mississippi. For a state that has consistently remained 48th, 49th and 50th, our initiatives are improving the quality of life for every Mississippian. The success of this initiative provides better learning opportunities for our children and better prepares them for tomorrow's jobs. Schools are the centers of our communities. By improving our schools, we are building better communities which in turn bring better jobs for all Mississippians.

3. What do you see the benefits of this program being in 10-20 years?

Mississippi children will be better prepared for college, higher tech jobs, and be more successful than ever before. Mississippi will see a substantial growth in better jobs and opportunities for all citizens through the success of this initiative. With the success of this public/private partnership, we look forward to continuing our work with more businesses and communities inside and outside our state's borders.

Without the help of all our partners pulling together, this initiative would have only been partially successful. But thanks to the Public Education Forum, Maddox

Foundation, Pittman Family Foundation, Jim and Sally Barksdale, Entergy, Mississippi Power, Bancorp South, and so many others we have made this institutive a reality.

4. How would you or your interests benefited from this initiative if it were available? CM: I can see that # 4 is unclear. I am asking how this might have helped the Gov. if it were available while he was in elementary or high school. Goofy question, but there is a paragraph that it would help.

Students in kindergarten, elementary, middle and high school will have access to a dynamic tool through the use of the Internet. Lynn Houston, a teacher in Hattiesburg High School, uses her computer to broaden her students understanding of French Culture. Teachers in DeSoto and Rankin Counties use these computers with an Accelerated Reader program that allows elementary students to read and comprehend at their own pace. Internet-accessible computers permit students in all Mississippi public schools to learn about society, culture, sciences, government, business, etc. By providing access to all of Mississippi's schoolchildren, we are better preparing them for the future.

5. Was there a significant moment when you realized that the effort was to be a success?

From the start, I knew with the support of community leaders, senators, representatives, foundations, business leaders, teachers, parents, and the students, themselves, we would be the first to accomplish this goal.