

Education is the primary factor in shaping the future of Mississippi's students and workforce. Mississippi has a quality, skilled workforce, but we must continue to stay on top of training and educating our children. High-tech companies need employees with high-tech skills for the seamless, borderless, global economy of the 21st Century and beyond.

Mississippi is on the way to becoming the first state in the nation to place an Internet-accessible computer in every child's classroom by the end of the 2002. We are more than half way past our goal with the 6,325 computers currently being installed in classrooms across our state. This gives all our children access to technology that will forever be a part of their life.

Knowledge of current technology is essential to their success. This knowledge is mandatory for their future. They must be proficient with current technology and able to adapt and to learn the ever-changing new technology. Our children must have access to remain on top for a successful future.

Technology is no longer an elective in our schools; it is part of the core curriculum. Computers and the Internet can motivate students in new ways. Technology "taps" into their natural curiosity and opens doors to new ways of learning.

We are not just putting a computer in a classroom. We are giving our students, Mississippi's students, the keys to a brighter future. We are giving our teachers better tools with which to teach our students. We are giving them the opportunity to live, to work and to raise their families right here in Mississippi. They do not have to leave our state to look for better opportunities, because the best opportunities are here.

Everyone across our state has the opportunity to invest in the future workforce of Mississippi. We have commitments from Entergy, the Maddox Foundation, Mississippi Power, State Farm, AOL, Jim Barksdale and others to help us meet our goal by 2002. By supporting this effort, you can have a hand in shaping the quality of Mississippi's workforce.

Partnerships, such as this, are helping create more opportunities for our children to excel in life and improve their quality of life. It takes everyone in our state working together to continue to advance. Our children deserve and demand our attention, our efforts and our commitment to their future.

The Computers in the Classroom Initiative is a shining example of the commitment that Mississippians have to our state's future. A future filled with hope - a future full of success and fulfilled dreams. It is exciting to be a part of the great things happening in our state for our children and for education. I challenge you to join us in making a difference.