

Governor Ronnie Musgrove is dedicated to setting unprecedented goals and achieving unparalleled progress in Mississippi's public education system. Our state and our children deserve progress. Mississippi's citizens demand results. Together we can achieve our goals.

During Mississippi's recent legislative session, Governor Musgrove initiated many educational initiatives, including placing computers in every classroom, and raising the average public school teacher's pay to that of the southeastern average.

Taskforce for Classroom Technology

During his gubernatorial campaign, Governor Musgrove dared Mississippians to imagine computers at the fingertips of every Mississippi school child. With the advancements in technology, the world is literally at our fingertips with the use of the Internet. Governor Musgrove knows that we must take the steps necessary to ensure that every schoolchild in Mississippi's public schools has the opportunity to take advantage of and to learn from the resources offered by the Internet. In addition, it is almost required in today's workforce that you have computer skills. To provide a public education to the children of our state which does not provide them with the experience and skills associated with working on computers would be an injustice to them. Governor Musgrove is working hard to ensure that Mississippi provides effective education for our children, education which will stimulate them, which require them to learn and which will prepare them for the future.

Governor Musgrove created the Governor's Task Force for Classroom Technology via Executive Order 831 in order to accomplish his goal of placing an Internet-accessible computer in every public elementary and secondary classroom in

Mississippi by the end of 2002. To date, no other state has accomplished such an endeavor. The task force is comprised of representatives of teachers, school administrators, state agencies, private foundations and interests, and professional associations.

The task force is charged with supporting administrative initiatives to fund the project, raising private sector awareness and financial support of the project, and executing the initiative. Through its planning, the task force must determine the most cost-effective method for providing Internet accessible connections to every classroom, identify financial resources for the project, and complete an inventory of classroom computers. The task force will also be responsible for raising private sector funds to match public dollars appropriated by the Legislature. Members of the task force are currently reviewing proposals submitted by vendors in response to an RFP for the computers.

Teacher Pay

Mississippi cannot be expected to attract and retain qualified teachers to educate our children if we are not willing to pay a competitive salary for such qualified teachers. Mississippi's 1998-1999 classroom teachers' average salary was \$29,500, while the southeastern average was \$35,817.

Governor Musgrove signed HB 1134 into law on May 1. This legislation provides for a \$337.9 million plan to raise Mississippi teacher pay to the Southeastern average by the 2005-2006 school year. Mississippi's teachers will start seeing larger paychecks during the 2001-2002 school year. Mississippi's teacher pay average will go

from the present \$31,900 to the predicted Southeastern average of approximately \$41,000 by the 2005-2006 school year. This is an approximate 30% raise.

HB 1134 provides that teachers only receive these raises each year if the state economy grows by at least five percent a year. Governor Musgrove is opposed to the 5% growth provision and will work with the legislature next year to remove this growth provision to ensure that we provide this raise regardless of the growth of Mississippi's economy. Governor Musgrove is committed to pay raises for our teachers and that, as a state, we are committed to putting education first in Mississippi.

Governor Musgrove believes we must pay our teachers competitive salaries so that we don't lose experienced educators to neighboring states and so that top students are encouraged to go into teaching. We must make the commitment to improving and building upon Mississippi's public education system so that we may develop the workforce that will attract new business and economic growth to our state.

Teacher Quality

The Governor is committed to attracting and retaining qualified teachers. His office recently coordinated Mississippi's state grant application for improving teacher quality. If awarded, the Mississippi Teacher Quality Enhancement Partnership (led by the Governor and leaders of the Department of Education, the Institutions of Higher Learning, the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges, and the Public Education Forum) will build upon existing reforms and initiatives to move towards the overarching goal of an aligned K-16 system that leverages the reciprocal relationships among educational levels and ensures a professional teacher workforce capable of delivering effective instruction to all students.

Recognizing teachers' accomplishments and their qualifications is already paying off for Mississippi teachers and students. Rewarding teachers for meeting National Board Certification standards has resulted in Mississippi ranking third in the nation overall for the number of National Board Certified teachers.

Workforce Development

Governor Musgrove recognizes the impact of our schools in preparing our students to enter the workforce and the importance of workforce development on the economic future of Mississippi. A representative of Governor Musgrove's office is chairing Mississippi's School-to-Careers Initiative. The strategy of this initiative is to form partnerships at the local level – seamless connections among business and industry, communities, schools, and higher education - that will enable Mississippi's citizens to become life-long learners and meet the oncoming challenges of the New Economy. With school-based and work-based learning experiences, and connecting activities between the two, students will gain critical knowledge and skills at key points in their education to make informed decisions about developing a successful career strategy. Mississippi's School-to-Careers Initiative is implemented through 50 local partners throughout the state.

Accountability

Governor Musgrove also signed SB 2488, the 2000 Educational Accountability Bill, which provides for schools to be evaluated based on: 1) students achieving a grade-level proficiency or, 2) students exceeding an annual growth expectation in the number of students not testing at grade-level proficiency, but who are showing improvement. Schools not meeting established growth expectations or grade-level proficiency standards

will be designated Priority Schools. 7-member evaluation teams (appointed by the State Superintendent and approved by the State Board of Education) will be sent to these Priority Schools to identify personnel in need of professional development and to assist in the development and evaluation of improvement plans for the school. Identified personnel will be given two years to improve and may be dismissed after two years if improvement is not made.

In developing his legislative agenda for the 2001 session, Governor Musgrove will be reviewing his campaign initiatives of elementary counselors and smaller class size.

Our teachers and administrators are committed to excellence and Governor Musgrove's administration is committed to supporting public education in Mississippi.