

*Remarks for the
Accelerated Readers Appreciation Night
January 26, 2002*

Thank you, Robin. I'm proud to be here tonight to help honor some very special young people. These kids have a great appreciation for learning, and it is important for us to help recognize their efforts.

Last year, we started the "Computers in the Classroom" initiative. Under this program, we're working to place an Internet-accessible computer in every public school classroom in Mississippi.

We're on track to be the first state in the nation to do this.

(You may want to talk about Robin Costa and the good work she's done on this initiative)

The fundraising is happening, computers are being installed, and children are being exposed to a new and broad learning tool.

It is exciting to know that a child in the most rural area of the state will have access to the same information as a child in our more urban areas.

We are going to make sure our children have access to the technology that will be so prevalent in this new century.

We are going to make sure they have every opportunity to learn this technology, so they can successfully navigate the new economy before us.

We're working hard to give our children and future generations every opportunity, every tool to help them succeed.

We're paying our teachers like the professionals they are. We're investing in the programs and the people we need to succeed, programs like Accelerated Reading.

These children we're honoring tonight have worked hard to improve their reading and learning skills.

They are committed and dedicated to their futures. We have to share that same commitment and dedication. We owe that to our children.

This generation of Mississippians, and those who follow them, will have access to tools and technology we would never have dreamed of while I was growing up; and I'm happy about that.

It is exciting to watch these children get fired up about learning, and to know that one day, they will have that same passion for whatever career they choose.

In the 4th century BC, a Greek philosopher said that education is the foundation of our state. In the 21st century, that statement still holds true.

We're going to put down the strongest foundation we can, and build a strong and prosperous future on that foundation. And, we're going to do with the help of great kids like these we're honoring tonight.

I appreciate the opportunity to be here with you tonight, and to help show our appreciation for some great Mississippi kids.

Thank you.