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Subject: Interview Requested/IEEE Computer

Q 1. As I understand, Mississippi has become the first U.S. state to put a computer with Internet access in every public elementary and high school classroom. Is this correct? As I understand, a critical part of making this effort affordable was that students built many of the computers themselves.

Yes, the National Governors' Association has confirmed that Mississippi is the first state in the nation to have Internet-accessible computers in every public k-12 classroom.

Q2. Was the project paid for with \$40 million in equipment and training, including \$6 million from the state and the rest from federal funds and private donations?

The \$40 million figure was reported incorrectly. Mississippi state government put \$3.2 million into the successful completion of this initiative.

Q3. How many computers did Mississippi officials need I read 6,000 somewhere, but is that right? computers to put a PC in every classroom but say they couldn't afford to buy them prebuilt. How did ExplorNet help?

We have 32,354 classrooms with at least one Internet-accessible computer. Many of these computers were purchased directly through the Governor's initiative. Others were purchased through local funds from school districts, PTA/PTOs, grants, and other sources.

Q4. Is it correct that the Mississippi Development Authority bought PC components How much did it spend on the components? and tool kits, and ExplorNet trained students to build the computers. Were students paid to build the PCs? I read that some were paid for work during the summer? What about the other students? Did any of them do the work as part of a class? Will the students also maintain, repair, and upgrade the computers?

The ExplorNet program is an ideal program for students to learn more about technology and its application in both school and the workplace. ExplorNet trained teachers and students to build, troubleshoot, and repair computers.

Q5. How much money did it save to have students build computers, rather than buy already built computers? I read somewhere it cost about half as much. Is this right? What is the figure?

We found that the computers built by students provided approximately 40% discount from education discounted computer equipment.

Q5. I read that Mississippi has 32,354 public school classrooms. How many of the classrooms already had Internet-ready computers before the project began? How many of the additional computers did students build? How many students participated? How many boys, and how many girls? At what grade levels were the students who build the computers? How many schools did they represent? Were the schools from all over the state? When did the students begin building the computers?

The students built 5,952 computers for classrooms around the state. ExplorNet is finalizing the number of students that participated, but we know that its more than 300 students. The students that participated in the ExplorNet program are juniors and seniors in high school. Yes, the schools were from all over the state. ExplorNet began operating programs in Mississippi in 1998. The 5,952 computers built under the Governor's initiative were built during the last half of 2002.

Q6. Did the students actually learn skills they could use to get good jobs in the future by participating in this project?

Absolutely, these students not only learned how to put the computers together but also are trained to troubleshoot and repair them. Many of the students have expressed their desire to obtain their A+ Certification.

Q7. For many years the state of Mississippi has ranked very low on various lists related to education. Is it hoped that this project will change this? How precisely is it hoped this will improve the educational process for the children of Mississippi? That is, beyond providing them with basic job skills by building and repairing the computers? Is the state planning to measure the possible effects in some appreciable way?

This project combined with the Governor's other education initiatives will improve Mississippi's schools. Three years ago, Governor Musgrove fought for a teacher pay raise plan that would raise teacher pay to the Southeastern average. Princeton Review has ranked our accountability system in the top ten state systems. 62% of Mississippi high school students go on to college - that's 10th best in the nation. These are just a few of the recent education successes in Mississippi.

Placing a computer in every classroom is more than just putting a box on a teacher's desk. Every teacher receives training on how to incorporate

Internet websites into their curriculum. In addition, Mississippi has partnered with AOL@School to provide educational resources at the fingertips of teachers and students.

When you respond, please indicate the person to whom the comments are to be attributed. Please put their name, full title, and indicate their gender. This is to ensure the proper pronoun is used on second and subsequent references. Some names are gender neutral. In other words, not all Vals are gals.

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