



STATE OF ALABAMA  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**



Joseph B. Morton  
 State Superintendent  
 of Education

Alabama  
 State Board  
 of Education

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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Governor Bob Riley  
 President

**ACCESS Distance Learning Reaches Every High School**

*\$11 MILLION PROVIDES VIRTUAL CLASSROOMS STATEWIDE*

Randy McKinney  
 District I  
 Vice President

**Montgomery, AL** – In an unprecedented show of support to have every traditional high school in Alabama equipped with the Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators, and Students Statewide (ACCESS) Distance Learning program, Governor Bob Riley, the State Superintendent of Education Joe Morton, along with the State Board of Education announce the use of \$11 million from the 2007 Education Bond Issue for statewide expansion. ACCESS is an education initiative that provides opportunities for Alabama public high school students to engage in coursework, including Advanced Placement (AP), electives, and other courses, which they may not otherwise have had access to, through on-line and interactive video conferencing (IVC). ACCESS allows students from any part of the state to learn in a virtual classroom environment.

Betty Peters  
 District II

Stephanie W. Bell  
 District III

Dr. Ethel H. Hall  
 District IV  
 Vice President  
 Emerita

The implementation of ACCESS labs in schools began in 2006 with a stated goal of having an ACCESS lab in every high school by 2010-2011. The use of the \$11 million allows schools to acquire ACCESS labs ahead of schedule and in time to help implement the First Choice graduation proposal recently adopted by the Alabama State Board of Education. Under First Choice, students are required to take two foreign language classes and at least one Distance Learning class. With some teacher shortages in some fields of study, ACCESS serves as a perfect solution to this issue before it becomes a problem.

Ella B. Bell  
 District V

David F. Byers, Jr.  
 District VI

Gov. Riley has been an advocate of leveling the playing field, eliminating geographical boundaries and limitations in education. “ACCESS distance learning gives students all across the state learning opportunities they otherwise would never have. Alabama is blessed with some of the best teachers in the country. Our students deserve the benefit of being able to learn from these teachers whether they are in a larger, metropolitan school system or a small, rural school system,” Riley said. “This is an investment not only in technology; this is an investment in our children.”

Sandra Ray  
 District VII

Dr. Mary Jane Caylor  
 District VIII  
 President Pro Tem

The \$11 million from the \$1 billion bond issue (Act 2007-415) used to support this expansion specifically states the funds must be used for the purpose of providing technology funds to local school systems based on the recommendation of the State Superintendent of Education. Morton said the use of technology, combined with effective teaching, is what is necessary to keep Alabama students competitive with their counterparts and prepared for life after high school.

Joseph B. Morton  
 Secretary and  
 Executive Officer

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“The support of Gov. Riley, his administration, and the legislature are absolutely vital to the educational goals we have set forth for this state. The completion of ACCESS labs throughout the state means high school students in Alabama will have opportunities not imaginable 10 years ago. They are no longer deprived of certain coursework because they happen to live in a rural area or because there are not enough students in a particular school to make up a class,” Morton said. “ACCESS labs in every high school not only greatly increases educational opportunities, but it also brings students and teachers together from across the state, allowing them to share and expand their horizons beyond their physical surroundings.”

Dr. Melinda Maddox, Director of Technology Initiatives with the Alabama Department of Education, said the implementation of ACCESS will be delivered in three waves beginning immediately. Applauded for their initiative, schools that have already started to develop their own virtual learning centers will be given \$50,000 each to upgrade and meet ACCESS standards. There are 63 schools in Alabama included in this first wave of statewide ACCESS expansion. In the fall of 2008, the second wave will begin as schools will receive \$85,000 to establish ACCESS labs. The third and final wave will begin in the spring of 2009.

There are 127 schools included in waves two and three for a total of 190 high schools being added to the completed list of 371 total high schools (100% of schools serving grades 10, 11, and 12) in Alabama. Currently in Alabama, 181 schools already have full ACCESS grants or IVC labs paid for by other funds. All 371 high schools will start school in August 2009 with the most up-to-date, technology-rich, learning capabilities available anywhere. The Alabama Department of Education will inform system superintendents how many schools they will have funded in each wave; however, the superintendent will determine the order in which schools in their system are connected.

In addition to having ACCESS labs, the Alabama Supercomputer Authority, with funding from ACCESS, is providing every high school with a minimum of 10Mb of bandwidth to ensure that, no matter where any Alabama school is located, Internet connectivity will not be a barrier.

*For a list of schools and school systems that currently have ACCESS grants or will receive an ACCESS grant in the next year [click here](#).*

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