

**Education Achievement Council Meeting
Thursday, March 25, 2021**

MINUTES

BE IT REMEMBERED that the Education Achievement Council met in the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning Board Room (via Zoom) in Jackson, Mississippi, at 10:00 a.m. on March 25, 2021.

Council Members Present:

Dr. Jay Allen, President, Itawamba Community College
Ms. Rosemary Aultman, Chair, Mississippi Department of Education
Dr. Jerryl Briggs, President, Mississippi Valley State University
Mr. Chris Burgio, Campus Director, Concorde Career College via teleconference
The Honorable Dennis DeBar, Chairman, Mississippi Senate Education Committee
Dr. E. Harold Fisher, Executive Director, Mississippi Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
Dr. Shawn Mackey representing Dr. Andrea Mayfield, Executive Director of the Mississippi Community College Board
Mr. Adam Moore, Mississippi Department of Mental Health
Dr. Felicia Nave, President, Alcorn State University
Mr. John Pigott, Board Chairman, Mississippi Community College Board
Ms. Vickie Powell, representing Mr. Scott Waller, President and Chief Executive Officer, Mississippi Economic Council
Dr. Al Rankins, Commissioner of Higher Education, Institutions of Higher Learning
Ms. Cheryl Thurmond, Board Member, Mississippi Community College Board
Dr. Carey Wright, State Superintendent, Mississippi Department of Education

Council Members Absent:

The Honorable Richard Bennett, Chairman, Mississippi House of Representatives Education Committee
Mr. Tom Duff, Trustee, Institutions of Higher Learning
Dr. Jim Haffey, President, Holmes Community College
Mr. Shane Hooper, Trustee, Institutions of Higher Learning
The Honorable Briggs Hopson, Chairman, Mississippi Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Mac Huddleston, Chairman, Mississippi House of Representatives Universities and Colleges Committee
Dr. Tyrone Jackson, President, Mississippi Delta Community College
Mr. William LaForge, President, Delta State University
The Honorable Rita Parks, Chairman, Mississippi Senate Universities and Colleges Committee
The Honorable John Read, Chairman, Mississippi House of Representatives Appropriations Committee

Guests Present:

Mr. Henry Anderson, Website and Systems Administrator, Institutions of Higher Learning
Mr. Tyler Camp, Special Assistant to the President, Itawamba Community College
Mr. Jimmy Clarke, Senior Director of State Policy, HCM Strategists, LLC

Ms. Wendy Clemons, Executive Director Office of Secondary Education/Dropout Prevention, Mississippi Department of Education
Ms. Audra Love Dean, Assistant Executive Director for Academic and Student Affairs, Mississippi Community College Board
Dr. Rachel DeVaughn, Deputy Executive Director of Programs, Mississippi Community College Board,
Mrs. Marilyn Gardner, Administrative Assistant for Academic and Student Affairs, Institutions of Higher Learning
Ms. Patrice Guilfoyle, Director of Communications, Mississippi Department of Education
Ms. Sandra Kelly, Director of Student Services, Institutions of Higher Learning
Ms. Courtney Lange, Director of Communication and Impact, Woodward Hines Education Foundation
Mr. Jim McHale, President and CEO, Woodward Hines Education Foundation
Ms. Heather Morrison, P-20 Projects Coordinator, Institutions of Higher Learning
Dr. Nathan Oakley, Chief Academic Officer, Mississippi Department of Education
Dr. Angela Payne, Assistant Executive Director for Research and Effectiveness, Mississippi Community College Board
Ms. Lisa Potts, Woodward Hines Education Foundation
Dr. Casey Prestwood, Associate Commissioner for Academic and Student Affairs, Institutions of Higher Learning
Dr. Kim Verneuille, Director of the Commission on Proprietary Schools and College Registration, Mississippi Community College Board
Ms. Shanell Watson, Woodward Hines Education Foundation
Ms. Sophie Wolf, Digital Media Manager, Institutions of Higher Learning

I. Welcome

EAC Chairman Dr. Jay Allen called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

II. Approval of Minutes

Dr. Allen called for approval of the minutes from the October 22, 2020 meeting. Dr. Harold Fisher moved to approve the minutes as presented. Dr. Felicia Nave seconded the motion. The motion carried.

III. Approval of Agenda

Dr. Allen asked if there were any changes to the agenda. Dr. Harold Fisher moved to approve the agenda as presented. Dr. Carey Wright seconded the motion. The motion carried.

IV. MS Connects – Dr. Carey Wright

Dr. Carey Wright presented a PowerPoint presentation on *Mississippi Connects* initiative, established by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE). Mississippi Connects is a comprehensive digital learning program providing computers and teaching and learning support to every public-school student in the state.

As part of the Mississippi Connects initiative, MDE delivered laptops/tablets to all districts. They also provided digital curriculum for teaching and learning, connectivity in areas where

students do not have broadband service, professional development for educators, students and parents, and telehealth and teletherapy services.

MDE recently hosted a Mississippi Connects Virtual Summit on digital learning. More than 2,700 educators registered for the summit. Sessions ranged from student engagement to best practices for hybrid and online instruction and learning.

A copy of the PowerPoint Presentation is included with the minutes.

V. Discussion of Attainment Goal

Dr. Allen and Mr. Jim McHale, President and CEO of Woodward Hines Education Foundation, recognized the members of the Education Attainment Goal Taskforce.

At the last meeting, the EAC members approved the postsecondary attainment goal of 55% by 2030 and 60% by 2035 and endorsed the resolution of that goal.

Mr. McHale stated the Education Attainment Taskforce members continue to meet on a regular basis. The taskforce developed a logo that is published on the Woodward Hines landing page.

The taskforce presented the attainment goal to the Mississippi Economic Development Council and plans on presenting Mississippi's goal to the Alliance of Non-Profits and Film Graphic Organizations.

Last fall, taskforce members met with Governor Tate Reeves and Lt. Governor Delbert Hosemann to talk about the education attainment goal for Mississippi.

The taskforce also met on Wednesday, March 24th. At that meeting, they identified funders to help make that goal possible.

Mr. McHale thanked Dr. Casey Prestwood for sharing a study called "It's Complicated, The Relationship between Postsecondary Attainment and State Finances" with the members. He said he reached out to one of the authors, Dr. Elizabeth Davidson Pisacreta, asking her to do a similar study for the state of Mississippi.

Dr. Allen, Mr. McHale, and Dr. Prestwood met with the Governor and Lt. Governor before the legislative session began. They will continue to educate legislators and key players on the attainment goal.

Dr. Shawn Mackey asked which credentials of value will be counted as a part of the attainment goal metrics for Mississippi.

Dr. Prestwood said each state is still looking at defining "credentials of value" because it varies by state and/or by industry or business. The data that has been collected shows the adult population have credentials that they didn't earn in the postsecondary system but are in the workforce.

Dr. Allen mentioned Florida used a credential that provided a wage at a certain percentage above minimum wage that may not be the best option for Mississippi. There is a need to include all types of credentials earned in the postsecondary setting and a need to be able to track that data.

Ms. Audra Dean said it is important to note that individuals can earn multiple credentials of value, degrees, or certificates; however, only the first credential/degree earned is counted as a part of the education attainment goal.

VI. Adjourn

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT COUNCIL

Mississippi Connects Status Report

Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.

State Superintendent of Education

mdek12.org



MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

March 25, 2021



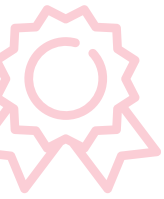
VISION

To create a world-class educational system that gives students the knowledge and skills to be successful in college and the workforce, and to flourish as parents and citizens



MISSION

To provide leadership through the development of policy and accountability systems so that all students are prepared to compete in the global community



1

ALL Students Proficient and Showing Growth in All Assessed Areas



2

EVERY Student Graduates from High School and is Ready for College and Career



3

EVERY Child Has Access to a High-Quality Early Childhood Program

EVERY School Has Effective Teachers and Leaders

4



EVERY Community Effectively Uses a World-Class Data System to Improve Student Outcomes

5



EVERY School and District is Rated “C” or Higher

6





- Advocated to the Mississippi Legislature for funds to equip every public-school student in Mississippi with the technology to learn at school and at home.
- Secured \$200 million from the Legislature through two laws, the [Equity in Distance Learning Act \(SB 3044\)](#) and the [Mississippi Pandemic Response Broadband Availability Act \(HB 1788\)](#).
- Collaborated with Governor, Lt. Governor, House Speaker and State Auditor to ensure compliance with state and federal funding requirements and successful implementation of the laws.
- Established Mississippi Connects initiative, making Mississippi the **only state in the nation** with a comprehensive digital learning program providing computers and teaching and learning support to every public-school student in the state.



Devices and Services

Laptops or tablets delivered to districts with all software, security and support features pre-loaded and configured for immediate use



Digital Curriculum and Learning Management Systems

High-quality instructional materials and online platforms for teaching and learning



Connectivity

Enhanced internet connectivity in areas of the state where students do not have broadband service



Professional Development

Training and technology support for educators, students and parents to be successful with digital learning



Telehealth and Teletherapy

Student access to telehealth and teletherapy services for their physical, social and emotional health

Devices and Services

- Led competitive process to contract with vendors for devices and learning software.
- Worked with districts to review and approve their detailed digital learning plans to establish SB 3044 funding eligibility and guide their implementation of digital learning programs.

Digital Curriculum and Learning Management Systems

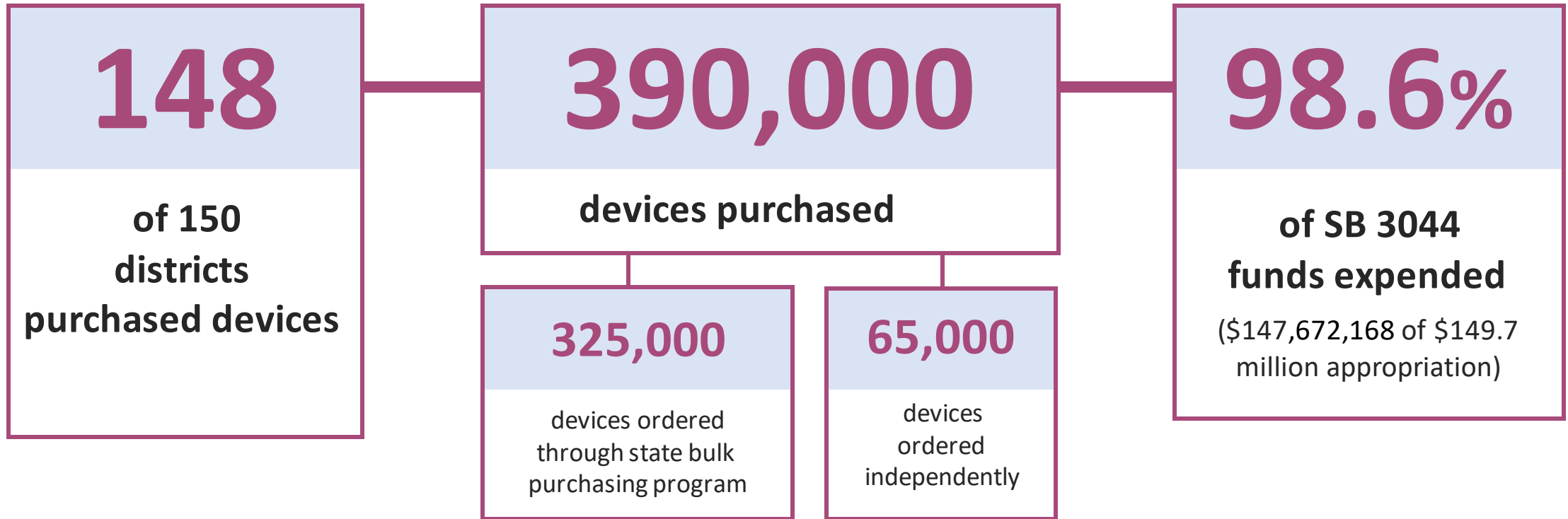
- Negotiated contracts for learning management system (LMS) software including Canvas, Schoology and Google's G-Suite for Education for districts to purchase 214,656 LMS licenses for a total cost of \$1,594,000.

Professional Development

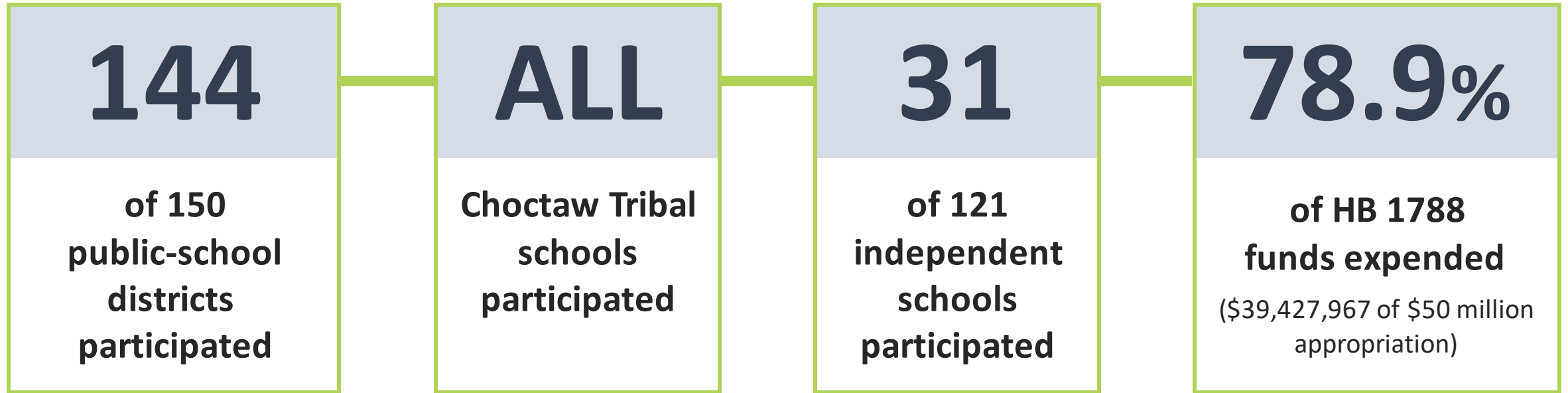
- Delivered customized training to more than 2,000 educators through Mississippi Connects, including meeting with a consultant to understand the district's specific goals and challenges, curating resources personalized for the district and providing individualized support.

Telehealth and Teletherapy

- Collaborated with Mississippi State Medical Association and other medical professionals to develop school-based pilot program set to launch in 2021.



All devices delivered before December 1.
All reimbursement requests fulfilled by the December 15 deadline.



Main purchases included hot spots and equipment including access points, switches and fiber optic cable to strengthen and expand the footprint of a school campus' network infrastructure. A few districts used funds to build new cell towers.

Mississippi Connects Professional Development and Resources Hub

Research-based resources and learning opportunities are available for educators that support online, blended and hybrid models of instruction and learning.



More than 2,700 teachers registered for this week's Mississippi Connects Summit

Sessions range from student engagement to best practices for hybrid and online instruction and learning.



MISSISSIPPI CONNECTS SUMMIT



13

News Releases and Editorials and Numerous Media Interviews

69

Social Media Posts Promoting Mississippi Connects and Announcing Milestones

28

Newsletter Announcements to Educators About Mississippi Connects Progress and Opportunities

32

Webinars for Districts and Independent and Tribal Schools Regarding Implementation of Mississippi Connects Legislation

9

State and National Mississippi Connects Presentations

- Secured **56 news stories** in every local and statewide Mississippi media market and numerous major national news outlets (The New York Times, Education Week, Politico, MSN and Associated Press).
- **Broad and sustained media coverage raised awareness** about Mississippi being a national leader in digital learning and bringing equity to education.

The New York Times



POLITICO



U.S. INTERNATIONAL CANADA ESPAÑOL 中文

The New York Times

As Schools Go Remote, Finding 'Lost' Students Gets Harder



In Los Angeles, the Boys & Girls Club of Hollywood was open for children whose parents must learn home to work. -AP Photo/Associated Press

By Abby Goodnough

Sept. 22, 2020



Even six months into the pandemic, the technology needs among lower-income students cannot be overestimated. In Washington, about 60 percent of the 32,000 families who responded to a survey over the summer said they needed a digital device, and 27 percent said they needed internet access. **In Mississippi — which has the highest child poverty rate in the nation, at about 28 percent — Carey M. Wright, the superintendent of education, said the State Legislature had allotted \$200 million to ensure every student has a device this school year. But because of high national demand, some will not receive it until November.**

U.S. INTERNATIONAL CANADA ESPAÑOL 中文

The New York Times

The Digital Divide Starts With a Laptop Shortage

By Kellen Browning

Oct. 12, 2020



Until recently, Raymond Heller, 13, shared one iPad with his three siblings. Jeremy M. Lange for The New York Times

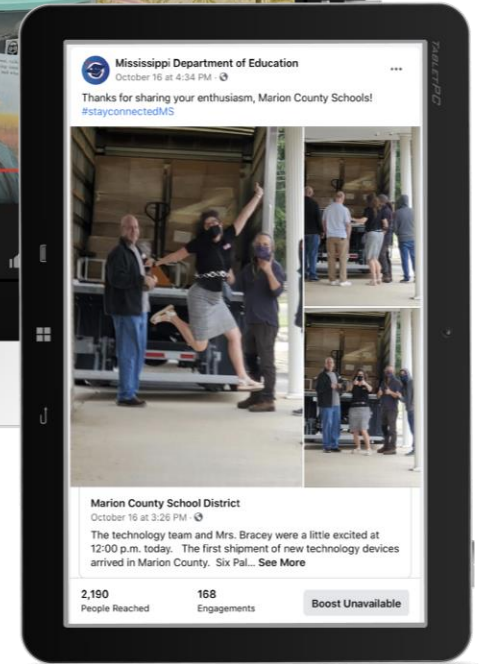
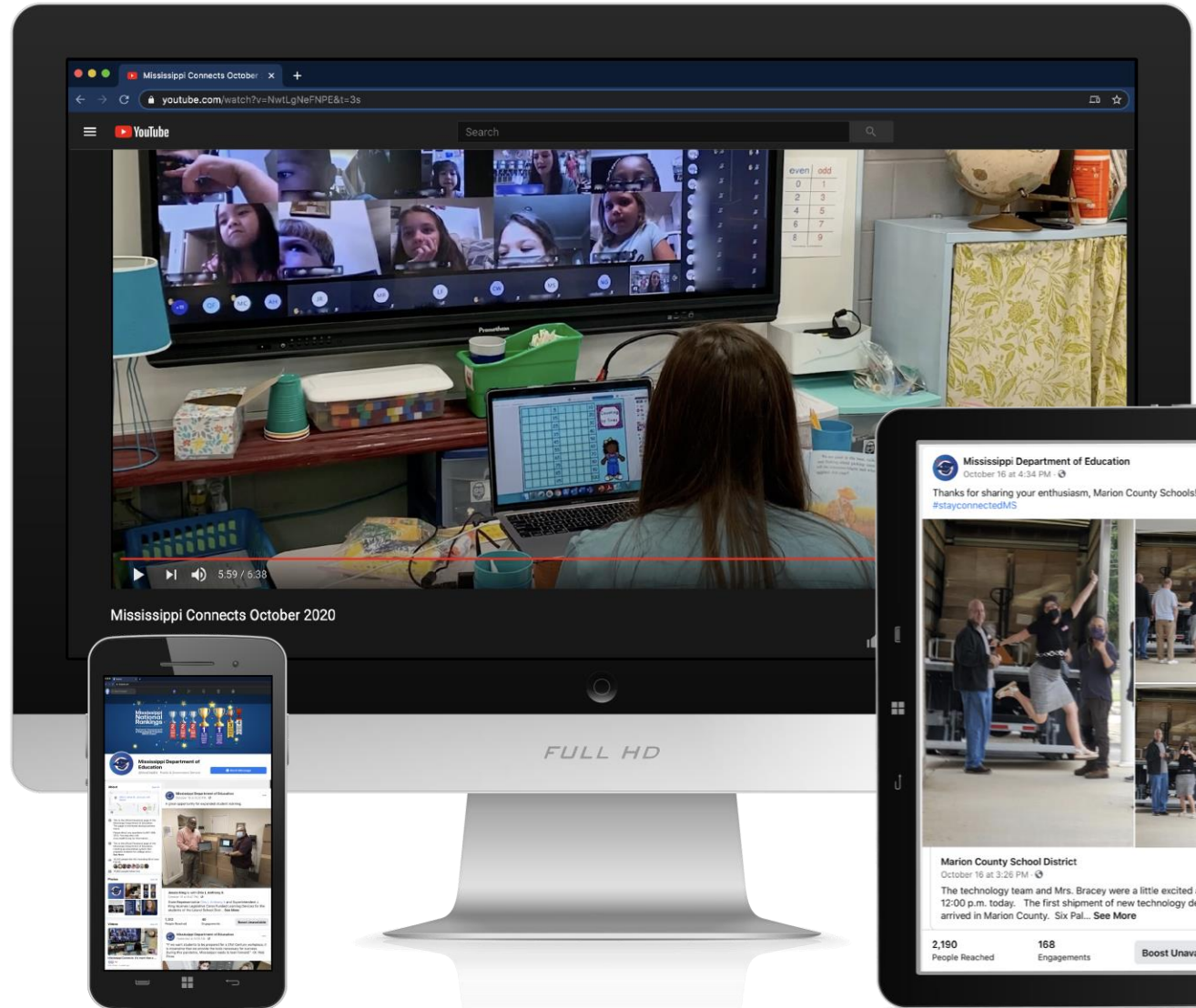
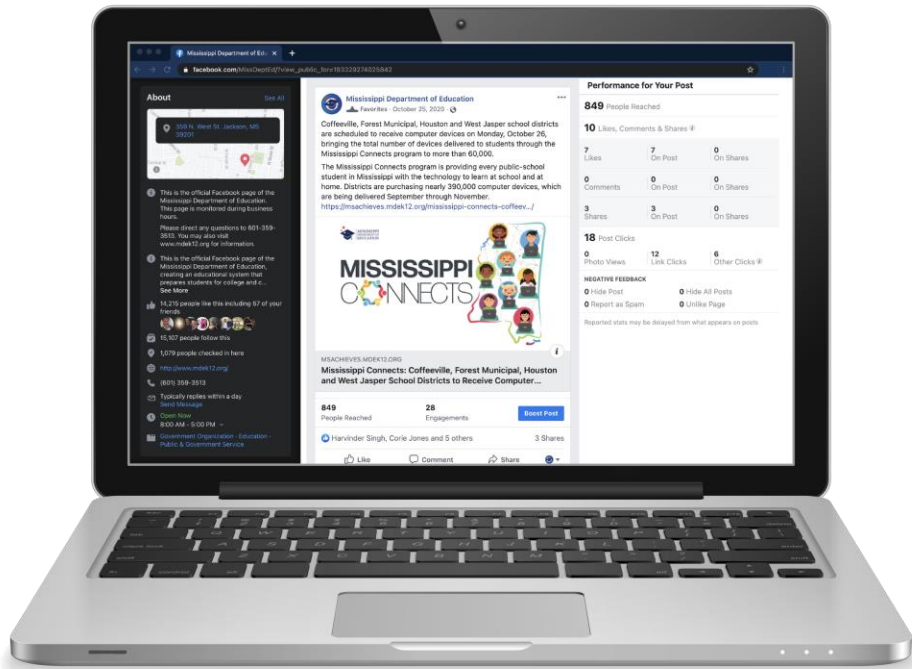
Alabama schools are waiting for more than 160,000 devices, and **Mississippi did not receive the first of the 320,000 computers the state had ordered** until early October. **Staples said** it would receive 140,000 Chromebooks for schools in November and December, 40,000 of which are earmarked for California districts.

- Legislature credited for funding Mississippi Connects.
- Every child in the state being provided with a device.
- Mississippi is receiving devices, despite national shortages.
- New York Times subscribers: 6 million



122,000

Earned Social Media Views





Communication Impact

15

- Ensured **all school districts were informed** about the opportunity and how to participate.
- Showed districts, teachers, students and families Mississippi is addressing their current needs to be successful in digital learning.
- Built state and national partnerships to support and sustain Mississippi Connects, including:
 - **\$200,000 investment from philanthropic partners** and a commitment to a long-term partnership with public schools
 - **\$500,000 in training contributed** from Google, Apple and Microsoft for Mississippi educators through 2022
 - Invitations to future state and national conferences



MISSISSIPPI CONNECTS



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