



## Tornado Destroys – Enterprise Rebuilds



*Photo by Robin Cooper, Governor's office.*



**ON** the 1st day of March 2007, tornados barreled through Enterprise, Alabama, destroying Enterprise High School, severely damaging Hillcrest Elementary School, and taking the lives of eight Enterprise City School System children. Despite valiant efforts and every possible precaution on the part of administration and staff to protect every student from the fury of the oncoming storm, the unavoidable and unpredictable forces of nature ripped the community both physically and emotionally. Since then, an outpouring of support, both financial and emotional, from around the state, country, and world has helped the Enterprise City School System summon the resolve to pull the pieces of this broken

community together as it recovers and rebuilds from this devastating blow. **DR. JOE MORTON**, State Superintendent of Education, along with the Alabama State Board of Education, expresses their sincere condolences to the entire Enterprise community. They pledge their support, encouragement and assistance as the Enterprise City School System deals with the immeasurable losses they have suffered and moves forward with the responsibility of reconstructing their schools and providing a quality education to every student in their system. This issue of *Alabama Education News* is dedicated to those who were lost, those who were injured, and those whose fortitude and perseverance will move the city of Enterprise forward.

*To contribute to the Enterprise City Schools Tornado Disaster Relief Fund, please contact:*

Community Bank & Trust (CB&T) · Attn: Derek Bynum · 901 N Boll Weevil Circle · Enterprise, AL 36330 · 334-347-0081



credentials in one central database from which school systems can browse possible candidates. The site also has a statewide job board that lists all teaching vacancies in every school system in Alabama. It opens up a wide range of possibilities for educators in Alabama and abroad, as well as those looking to hire Alabama educators. **DR. MICHAEL DARIA**, executive director of personnel for Tuscaloosa City Schools, said the new application process revolutionizes the hiring process – ultimately to the benefit of the students.

“This new Web site finally gives school systems in Alabama the competitive edge. Now we have the ability to expedite the recruitment, selection, and hiring of quality teachers. We’re excited because this personnel feature allows us to focus on other issues instead of the time-consuming task associated with traditional paper applications,” Daria said. “Once our principals and our school systems become fluent on this system and it gets built into our mainstream work flow,

our principals will have a fast and effective way of finding, interviewing, and selecting the best candidates for their schools. This allows personnel to focus on retention issues and principals to focus on school improvement and student centered issues.” Daria said the implementation of this process took vision and a great deal of work. He applauds the leadership at the state level.

**DEBRA WILLIAMS**, coordinator for Teacher Placement and Recruitment for the State Department of Education, echoes Daria’s comments on how this Web site has positive

# Teach in Alabama

*New Web site brings teachers and employers together*

**ALABAMA** school systems are always looking for the best and brightest teachers available. At the same time, qualified educators are looking for positions in systems where their expertise is needed. Now, **Teach in Alabama**, a new statewide Web site, brings the two together.

The new site allows teachers to apply online to every school district they want in Alabama with one electronic application. Likewise, school systems can look on this site and find teachers seeking positions with specific

[www.alsde.edu/teachinalabama](http://www.alsde.edu/teachinalabama) finally gives school systems in Alabama the competitive edge in recruiting, selecting, and hiring quality teachers

qualifications and individualized criterion to suit their needs.

The site [www.alsde.edu/teachinalabama](http://www.alsde.edu/teachinalabama) allows teachers and prospective teachers to list their application information, resume, certifications, transcripts, and other relevant

implications for student performance. “The implementation of this site enables systems to hire the best possible candidates, thereby positively affecting school performance,” Williams said. “Teacher quality is without question one of



## Governor's Study Group on School Bus Safety Presents Recommendations

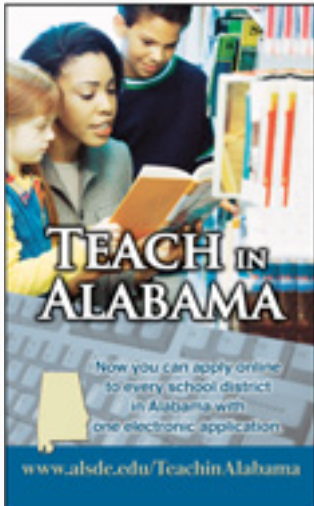


**THE** tragic bus accident that claimed the lives of four Lee High School students on November 20, 2006, in Huntsville prompted **GOV. BOB RILEY** to form a committee to research school bus safety. The seven-member committee recommended that the state fund a \$1.4 million pilot study over three years to determine if seat belts on buses are appropriate.

**STATE SUPERINTENDENT DR. JOE MORTON** and the committee asked Gov. Riley to lead the charge urging the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to act faster regarding bus safety. The NHTSA submitted a congressional report in 2002 on school bus safety but the new regulations aren't scheduled to be implemented until 2013. "We think that's too long to wait for improved guidelines for school safety," said Dr. Morton.

The pilot program will include 10 new buses outfitted with lap-shoulder seat belts. The buses would be used in various school systems across the state. An Alabama university will be chosen to create and oversee the program.

"I believe the study group worked well together and did an excellent job dealing with a difficult topic that has been under debate for many years," said **DIRECTOR OF PUPIL TRANSPORTATION JOE LIGHTSEY**. "I have no doubt that each member of the group approached the governor's assignment with an open mind and a solid commitment to ensuring that Alabama school buses continue to be the safest way to transport our students." 🍏



the primary factors in the continuous growth and achievement of children." Williams, who worked with SeachSoft Solutions Company to design the Web site, said the ease of use, technical support, and pricing met the department's criteria. "They're a proven software developer in the K-12 market and they will ensure that our educational mission is fulfilled with this sophisticated, yet intuitive Internet-based software," Williams said.

Daria said he expects an increase in the number of applicants from inside and outside the state now that they have this mainstream approach to applying to systems of interest. **TRINECIA POWERS** of Starksville, Mississippi, is a senior and early childhood education major at Alabama State University. She has visited the site and says it's intuitive and the one-stop application process is efficient.


"It really helps to be able to fill out one application. It cuts out the hassle of having to hunt people down, having to go here and there – pick up this and pick up that from several places," Powers said. "You just fill it out once. There's no need to have to gather all the information again; you already have at the tip of your fingers." Powers also said it's cost effective as it alleviates the cost of having to order numerous sets of transcripts.

"The instructions on the site are very helpful; they basically tell you what to do – it's just very convenient. When you log out the site will tell you what you need to go back and do if you missed something and it saves your changes automatically if you have to log out unexpectedly," Powers said.

School systems have already received training on how to use the site and more than 500 applicants have already uploaded their information to the site. 🍏



## High School and College: Two for One in Selma City Schools

 **SELMA** Early College High School (SECHS) is a unique program that allows students to take college courses in high school and receive credit for two years of college and a high school diploma at the same time. Students can enroll in SECHS as early as 10th Grade, at no cost to their families.

This year marks the third year of SECHS, and freshmen who originally enrolled in the program are now juniors and will be the first class to graduate in 2008.

Selma City Schools, in partnership with Wallace Community College Selma, Tuskegee University, and Alabama State University, received \$400,000 over a four-year period to develop and implement the program. It is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, The Carnegie Corporation, and the Ford Foundation.


Now located on the campus of Wallace Community College Selma, the SECHS is home to 168 students. The school focuses on science careers, particularly in agriculture, with exciting hands-on curriculum and a summer curriculum provided by Tuskegee University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and other partners.

An evaluation of SECHS indicates that students are on track for obtaining their high school diploma along with two years of college.

*State Board of Education Member: Ella B. Bell – District 5  
Selma City Schools Superintendent: Dr. James H. Carter, Sr.  
Principal: Roosevelt Wilson*



## Television Production Program Sweeps State Journalism Awards

 **THE** Television Production program at the Tuscaloosa Center for Technology (TCT) was the top broadcast award recipient at the annual Alabama Scholastic Press Association (ASPA)

Convention on Friday, February 16. TV Production students won 24 of 35 broadcast awards given (the most in the program's history), including the ASPA's top journalism honor, All Alabama.

In a written overall critique of the Television Production program's weekly television show, the judges wrote: "Very professional ... didn't feel like I was watching a student newscast the entire time."

The Television Production students attend TCT from the three city high schools: Paul W. Bryant,



Central, and Northridge. The students produce a weekly television broadcast – BCN-TV presents "Common Ground" on WVUA-TV, Fridays at 8 a.m. **MARK RAINES** teaches Television Production and Advanced Television Production courses. Introduction to Television Production is taught by **VALENCIA WINSTON**.

*State Board of Education Member: Sandra Ray – District 7  
Tuscaloosa City Schools Superintendent: Dr. Joyce Levey  
Principal: James Adkins*



# Students Transition into Work-Life

*Students with Disabilities Transitioning from High School into Postsecondary Education, Workforce, and Adulthood*



Photos by Kathleen McGehee, ADRS.

**BEING** a kindergarten teacher isn't such an unusual job for most adults, but 23-year-old teacher **JENNIFER THOMAS** isn't most adults.

Thomas, a first-year teacher at Floyd Elementary School in Montgomery, and not much taller than her young students, was born with a limb malformation known as "radial club hands."

Thomas has never been one to allow her disability to deter her from her goals and has high expectations for her kindergarten students. "I've always wanted to be able to do for myself, and to be able to do as well as others, if not better," she said.

Her earliest memories are not of learning to ride a bike or taking swimming lessons, but of frequent trips to the Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS) clinic in Montgomery for occupational and physical therapy. She endured seven CRS-sponsored surgeries to relieve pain and improve dexterity. Over time, she has learned to adapt to her limitations. "I've learned to use my feet and toes to perform some tasks," she explained.

Thomas attended Montgomery's Robert E. Lee High School and Alabama State University. While studying at Alabama State, Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS) assisted her with tuition and books. She praises the transition services that have helped her and thousands of other people with disabilities become more independent. "These are programs that affect people's lives in a positive way," she said. "And those services shouldn't be overlooked because they are so important and have such an impact on people's lives."

Having faced and overcome her own challenges, this young teacher, who describes

herself as stubborn and independent, is well-equipped to help her young students meet the challenges of learning – how to read, count, and spell – many for the first time.

Jennifer Thomas is just one of many successful transition stories in Alabama. Alabama has a very high rate of employment of students with disabilities while they are still in high school and receiving services from VRS – 33 percent compared with the nationwide average of 24 percent, said **LINDA HAMES**, Transition Coordinator for the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS), which houses CRS and VRS.

*Young Adults in Transition* is a statewide group serving as an advisory panel to policymakers. **DAN ROTH** with Special Education Services in the Alabama Department of Education says the group's mission is "Young adults helping other young adults transition to the real world."

The Alabama Department of Education, ADRS, and local school systems all work together to serve students with disabilities. The Alabama conference, hosted by the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute, is one of the longest-standing transition conferences in the nation. In March, students, teachers, counselors, parents, and employers attended the 17th Annual Alabama Conference.

Keynote speaker **JOHN HAGER**, Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education and head of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, highlighted Alabama programs that enhance opportunities in academics, employment, and independence for secondary students with disabilities. Hager, who uses a wheelchair due to polio, has a

special interest in improving the chances for youth with disabilities to lead productive and independent adult lives.

Contact **DR. MABREY WHEISTONE**, Director of Special Education Services, Alabama Department of Education, for more information about Alabama's Transition Programs for Students with Disabilities at 334-242-8114 or **LINDA HAMES**, ADRS, at 334-613-2281.

For success stories about transition students with disabilities, contact **KATHLEEN MCGEHEE**, Public Information Manager, ADRS, at 334-613-3514. 🍏



Alabama has an outstanding national reputation for a progressive approach to transition for students with disabilities, ages 16-25, and has collected post-school outcome information from former students with disabilities for 11 years. A sample of these findings indicates:

**School Completion** - From 1999 to 2006, the percentage of students with disabilities exiting high school with a graduation certificate, occupational diploma, or regular diploma increased from 72 percent to 92 percent. The dropout rate decreased from 28 percent to 5 percent.

**Postsecondary Education** - Between 1996 and 2006, the percentage of students with disabilities engaged in postsecondary education (technical school, two-year college, four-year college, military training) has remained stable around 25 percent.

**Employment** - Between 1996 and 2006, the percentage of students with disabilities who were employed one year after exiting high school has remained stable at about 70 percent. Around 60 percent maintained full-time employment.

(Source: George Hall, Research Coordinator, Auburn Transition Leadership Institute, Department of Rehabilitation & Special Education, Auburn University)



# Are you prepared if Pandemic Flu strikes?

**THE** year of 1918 is known as the beginning of one of the most destructive outbreaks of flu pandemic in history. Some 50 million to 100 million people died worldwide. In the U.S. approximately 28 percent of the population suffered and more than 500,000 died. Research shows that another flu pandemic will happen again. It's a matter of when and where. Are we prepared?

Ensuring that students are safe is the first priority.

A survey from the American Public Health Association indicates that 91 percent of school administrators are preparing for a public health emergency. In recognition of National Public Health Week, Thursday, April 5, is set aside for the unique needs of schools K-12. **DR. DONALD E. WILLIAMSON**,

State Health Officer, and **STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION DR. JOE MORTON**, are presenting a Web seminar on Pandemic Flu Monday, April 2, 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

This Web seminar will allow administrators and teachers to ask questions about an outbreak and their role in a health crisis. It would be helpful to view the four CDs that were sent to each school system on pandemic flu before the Web seminar. There are several different factors to consider on how school systems will deal with an outbreak.

What educational activities with school should be suspended? Who will inform students and parents of protective procedures to prevent the spread of the flu? Will there be a need, to and at what time do you consider, closing individual schools?



“The Prevention and Support Services and the Comprehensive School Health sections of the State Department of Education are fortunate to have a close working relationship with the Alabama Department of Education and other state and local agencies. This is both appreciated and believed to be imperative to protect all citizens of our state,” said **DR. SUE ADAMS**, director of Prevention and Support Services.

A flu pandemic is a global outbreak of the flu. The disease spreads quickly from person to person, affecting many people in a short period of time. The infection can range from mild to life-threatening and can lead to dangerous complications.

For more information, or to view the archived Pandemic Flu Webcast, [click here](#). 🍏

**Two things you can do** to protect yourself and your students from illness:

### HANDWASHING

- Wash your hands with soap and water and thoroughly scrub your hands together for 20 seconds or say your ABCs.
- Rinse hands with warm water and use a towel to turn off the faucet when you have finished washing.
- Dry hands completely.



### COUGH AND SNEEZE ETIQUETTE

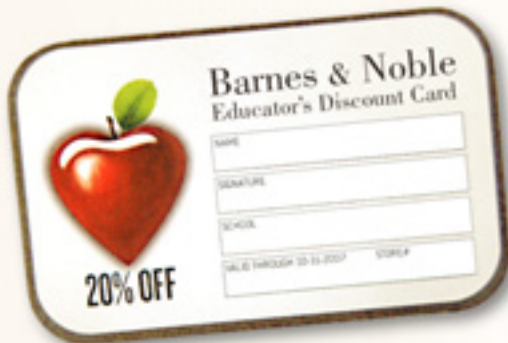
If you are about to cough or sneeze:

- Try to stay at least three feet away from other people.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, then throw the tissue away.
- Use your upper sleeve if you have no tissue (not your hand).
- Always wash your hands right away.





## EDUCATOR APPRECIATION WEEK APRIL 28-MAY 6



### Barnes & Noble Bookstores to host Spring Educator Appreciation Week!

All Pre-K through Grade 12 classroom teachers, media specialists, and supervisors should visit your local Barnes & Noble bookstore during April 28 - May 6 and receive a special 25% discount on classroom and personal book and gift purchases. Also receive a special 10% discount on DVDs and music.\* Get a Barnes & Noble Educator Discount Card at any store location, which entitles you to a 20% discount on purchases for your classroom everyday, and start saving now! [Click here](#) to find stores near you and information about local events.

*\*Certain restrictions do apply and a valid Educator discount card must be presented at the time of purchase. The special discount cannot be added to or combined with any other Barnes & Noble discount program.*

Everyone from the Grammy's to Payless Shoes offers grants and awards for students and educators. The list is endless and is available by [clicking here](#).

**School Superintendents of Alabama Administrator Scholarships -** School Superintendents of Alabama will award four \$1,000 scholarships to enable four current Alabama educators to pursue a graduate degree in school administration. The degree may be at the MS/MA, AA/Ed.S, or Ed.D/Ph.D levels, and recipients may be either a teacher or practicing administrator. Call 334-262-0014 or 1-877-269-0014. **Deadline: April 10**

**School Superintendents of Alabama Student Scholarships -** School Superintendents of Alabama, in conjunction with Benchmark Advisors, will award \$1,000 scholarships to nine high school seniors intending to pursue a bachelor's degree in education. Scholarships are based on a combination of academic performance and financial need. Call 334-262-0014 or 1-877-269-0014. **Deadline: April 10**

### Nominations sought for Alabama History Teacher of the Year -

The History Teacher of the Year award is designed to promote and celebrate the teaching of American history in classrooms across the United States. It honors one exceptional teacher of American history

from each state and U.S. territory. Only K-6 teachers are eligible for nomination this year. State selection criteria include experience in teaching American history for at least three years; a deep career commitment to teaching American history; evidence of creativity and imagination in the classroom; and close attention to documents, artifacts, historic sites, and the other primary materials of history. The state winner receives a \$1,000 honorarium and will compete for National History Teacher of the Year to be selected this fall. The state winner's school library receives a core archive of history books and materials. Contact [Dr. Kay Atchison Warfield](#), Alabama coordinator, at 334-353-5440. **Deadline: April 18**

**2007 Toyota International Teacher Program to the Galapagos Islands -** This ten-day study tour of the Galapagos Islands is a unique study abroad opportunity for U.S. educators. Classroom teachers of all disciplines in Grades 7-12 who teach full time in all 50 states and the District of Columbia may apply online by [clicking here](#). **Deadline: April 23**

**ING Unsung Heroes Program -** Financial services company ING seeks to help K-12 educators and their schools fund innovative classroom projects through its annual Unsung Heroes awards program, which rewards excellence in America's schools. For complete program information, application materials, and details about previous award recipients and their winning projects, [click here](#). **Deadline: April 30**

**2007 All-USA Teacher Team -** Nominations are open for *USA Today's* recognition program for outstanding K-12 teachers. Licensed, full-time teachers with at least four years of K-12 teaching experience are eligible. Each nomination requires a letter of nomination and two letters of recommendation. Up to 20 individuals and instructional teams will be featured in *USA Today* as representatives of all outstanding teachers. Winners and their schools share \$2,500 cash awards. For nomination forms and more information, [click here](#). **Deadline: April 30**



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**EDITORIAL OFFICE: 334-242-9950**

[aen@alsde.edu](mailto:aen@alsde.edu)

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**BOARD BRIEFS**

M A R C H

- Resolution Commending Jessica Farquhar, Booker T. Washington Magnet High School, Montgomery County School System, National PTA Reflections Winner
- Resolution Commending the Communities of Sylacauga, Alabama, Named for the Second Year in a Row as One of the 100 Best Communities for Young People by America's Promise Alliance
- Resolution in Recognition of Public Health Week, April 2-8, 2007
- Resolution to adopt Praxis II Cut Scores as a Condition for Initial Certification
- Approval of Teacher Education Programs, Troy University

For a complete list of agenda items, visit the Alabama Department of Education's Web site [www.alsde.edu](http://www.alsde.edu) under Board of Education.

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Copies available in Braille or other forms upon request.

APRIL	MATHEMATICS EDUCATION MONTH				5	6	7
	CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH						
	8-Easter	9	10	11	12	13	14
	12-Alabama State Board of Education Meeting						
	15	16	NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK		20	21	
22	23-Confederate Memorial Day (State Holiday)				27	28	
	25-Administrative Professionals Day						
	29	26-Alabama State Board of Education Work Session					
MAY	TEACHER APPRECIATION MONTH				4	5	
	8-National Teacher Appreciation Day					12	
	10-Alabama State Board of Education Meeting						
	MENTAL HEALTH MONTH						
	SAFE KIDS MONTH • PHYSICAL FITNESS MONTH						
	24-Alabama State Board of Education Work Session				25	26	
	27	28-Memorial Day (State Holiday)				31	



**OAK MOUNTAIN'S McGOWAN  
 ALFA TEACHER OF MONTH**

**Allen McGowan** believes there's more to education than reading, writing, and arithmetic. In fact, the Oak Mountain Elementary School physical education teacher says students can learn much about life on the playground.

"I believe that students should develop socially and acquire a personal interest in their own health and well-being," he says.

"Students need to be placed in a variety of situations that promote good social behaviors and allow them to interact with their peers in meaningful

learning experiences," says McGowan. "By developing a well-rounded program, I believe students will become aware and have a good understanding of their own personal fitness," he added. "My goal is for each child to want to participate in activities that require them to be physically active."

His is a teaching philosophy that has served McGowan well, and earned him recognition as Alfa's Teacher of the Month for March. As this month's winner, McGowan will receive \$1,000 from Alfa Insurance, and his school will receive a matching award from the Alabama Farmers Federation.

A physical education major, McGowan holds a bachelor's of science degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He earned his National Board Certification in 2006, and was a presenter at a national conference in Birmingham. In 2004, he was Elementary Physical Education Teacher of the Year.

"Allen's calm demeanor, coupled with his high expectations and an almost intuitive sense for scaffolding for success made Oak Mountain the perfect place to include my daughter, Beth — a delightful young lady with Down syndrome," said Kathy Olive, a reading specialist at Oak Mountain Elementary. "Allen sees the potential in every child and proceeds to model, guide and coach that child until he or she reaches beyond the limits other adults may impose."

During 2007, Alfa Insurance and the Alabama Farmers Federation will honor one outstanding teacher from each of Alabama's eight state school board districts, as well as two principals and two private school teachers.