

More Alabama high school students must graduate in four years

Summit Highlights Alabama Efforts in Dropout Prevention

At the Governor's Dropout Prevention Summit on March 5, students who face family and social issues in their lives came together to speak on the importance of staying in school and taking the first steps to making their dreams come true. They spoke of hardships, including drug-addicted parents, dealing with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder, and struggling in school, both socially and academically. Influential people, programs, and mentoring such as Bridges Afterschool Program (Sylacauga/Talladega County) and Big Brothers and Big Sisters (Blount County) allowed the students to feel included and gave needed guidance. These inspiring students brought tears to the eyes of the audience at the summit and also gave hope for teachers and school personnel.

The summit, hosted by the Governor's Office of Faith-Based Initiatives, Alabama Department of Education, and America's Promise Alliance, highlighted the dropout crisis in Alabama's high schools and explored new ideas to keep kids in school. Board Chair for America's Promise Alliance and wife of retired four-star general Colin Powell, **ALMA POWELL**, stated, "The dropout rate is at the heart of our economic crisis." The goal of America's Promise Alliance is to get the dropout issue out front and center, generating solutions to keep students in school. The summit brought together schools and organizations willing to fight the dropout crisis and give extra support to at-risk students in schools.

"We need to share the load," said Powell as she spoke of the need for more reading teachers and financial literacy classes as a vital part in solving the dropout crisis. *continued on next page ...*

5,447
 students dropped out of Alabama schools in 2008



Alma Powell

Gov. Bob Riley

Dr. Shelley Stewart

photo courtesy of Gov.'s office

“We have to inspire students to be leaders and that starts with how we educate a child,” said GOVERNOR BOB

RILEY. The need to

continue programs such as the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI), Alabama

Reading Initiative (ARI),

and Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators, and Students Statewide (ACCESS) are vital to reducing the dropout rate, Riley continued. STATE SUPERINTENDENT JOE MORTON spoke on Alabama’s dropout prevention efforts such as graduation coaches, FIRST CHOICE, and local Credit Recovery programs. “FIRST CHOICE will clearly change the face of high school graduates forever by allowing all students who enter high school to be given the advantage of obtaining an advanced diploma,” said Morton. Programs such as Blount County’s Night School Credit Recovery will help graduate students at a greater rate as well. The Night School Credit Recovery program allows for students to take portions of a class they did not pass, rather than retaking the entire class over again.

Also speaking at the summit, DR. SHELLEY STEWART, Founder and President of the Mattie C. Stewart Foundation, emphasized simple, yet effective ideas, such as “Relationships work.” Stewart told the story of his own

experience with an inspiring mentor and how she instilled in him the desire to learn. President of the Pew Partnership for Civic Change, SUZANNE MORSE, PH.D., spoke of the dropout issue as “a community issue that came to school.” Morse encouraged long-term community change and involvement in schools to reduce the dropout rate.

The Governor’s Dropout Prevention Summit was just the first step in dealing with the dropout crisis. On April 28-29, the Alabama Department of Education will follow up with 30 selected high schools, meeting with graduation coaches and school staff and inviting the community to learn more and create an action plan for reducing the dropout rate in their area.

The follow-up visits will include a new plan –

1.2 million students drop out every year in America

Community Action Linking Leaders (CALL). It is designed to bring public awareness to the dropout crisis in each individual community. Alabama Department of Education Career Technical Education specialists will host classes on how to better communicate with the community. School personnel will be trained on technologies such as video conferencing and webinar hosting.

Groups such as the area’s local Chamber of Commerce, the Alabama Department of Mental Health, Department of Human Resources, law enforcement, and juvenile court staff will be present to learn how dropouts are not only the problem of a school, but of the community as a whole.

An action plan will be developed by the individual schools and communities to work towards a reduction in the number of dropouts. Each plan will be customized for that specific area. The action plans will be showcased on the [Alabama Department of Education’s Web site \(www.alsde.edu\)](http://www.alsde.edu) when completed.

80% of prisoners in America are dropouts

Sources: America’s Promise Alliance and Donald Williamson, M.D., State Health Officer of Alabama Department of Public Health



Every 26 seconds a student drops out in America

Alabama's Plan for STEMulating Education

E DUCATION IS SEEN BY MANY as the great equalizer, leveling the playing field for individuals of varying backgrounds and walks of life. However, in an increasingly competitive and global society, the quality and field of education now pits even the highest qualified candidates against one another. Fortunately, in Alabama, plans are underway to make sure students have ample opportunity to graduate from high school prepared for the challenges of college and/or the workforce.

STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOE MORTON said having a world-class science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education system is paramount to making sure the state stays competitive in the future. "One of the most important reasons to make sure we have a stellar STEM program now is to make sure that there are exceptional STEM teachers for years to come," Morton said. "Our teaching workforce has to be top-notch in order to strengthen math and science course rigor and make sure quality, content-rich instruction is being taught to Alabama students."

DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION TOMMY BICE said the state Department of Education is making plans to ensure Alabama students have the knowledge and skill to compete in STEM-related work environments. In a presentation to the Alabama State Board of Education, Bice outlined how several initiatives being implemented in Alabama classrooms are working together to produce graduates who are strong in STEM competencies.

Programs such as the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI); Alabama Connecting Classrooms Educators and Students Statewide (ACCESS) Distance Learning; the Engineering Academy Initiative for Alabama (EAIA); the Advanced Placement (AP) Initiative; Alabama Teacher Recruitment Incentive Program (ATRIP); and the FIRST CHOICE high school diploma program all work together as a multi-tiered game plan to advance the cause of STEM education. From enhancing current teacher workforce development and providing unfettered educational opportunities across the state to increasing student expectations and recruiting the best and brightest teachers available – Alabama's long-term STEM plan is very defined.

Bice said there is cause for alarm as the state's forecast for STEM graduates is bleak. "In Alabama, the prediction is that there will be an extreme shortage of graduates in the core STEM areas. We're already lacking approximately 200 graduates, so we know the need exists." He said a lack of



Extracting strawberry DNA at Hudson Alpha Institute of Biotechnology are (left to right): Stevenson Middle School student Courtney Wimberly, AMSTI Director Steve Ricks, Congressman Bud Cramer, and Dr. Eric Green.

STEM graduates in key business and industry areas such as biotech, automotive, and aerospace technology would be particularly detrimental since those industries have such a significant presence in Alabama. Bice said AMSTI is an obvious component to the overall STEM plan. "It is more than rhetorical philosophy about what could happen ... AMSTI works. In fact, 100% of schools that are AMSTI-trained score higher than schools that are not. The effectiveness of AMSTI is validated by numerous national organizations and businesses as well."

The Alabama Mathematics, Science, and Technology Education Coalition (AMSTEC) also has been a strong advocate for STEM reform, helping advance AMSTI and engineering academies across the state. The component necessary to bring the STEM plan full circle is filling the great need for STEM teachers in Alabama. None of the aforementioned is possible with the recruitment and retention of qualified STEM teachers. In 2008, the Alabama Department of Education, the State Board of Education, and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) developed a scholarship opportunity called the Alabama Teacher Recruitment Incentive Plan (ATRIP). The Alabama Legislature provided up to \$20,000 to undergraduate students who would go into the areas of special education, math, science, or English. ATRIP also awards scholarships to those who already work in any of these fields who decide to go back and use their real-world experience to teach through the Alternative Class A certification.

Individually, as well as collectively, these initiatives are charting the course for Alabama's graduates. The compilation of these programs is a proactive method of addressing a major issue on the horizon in Alabama education. 🍓



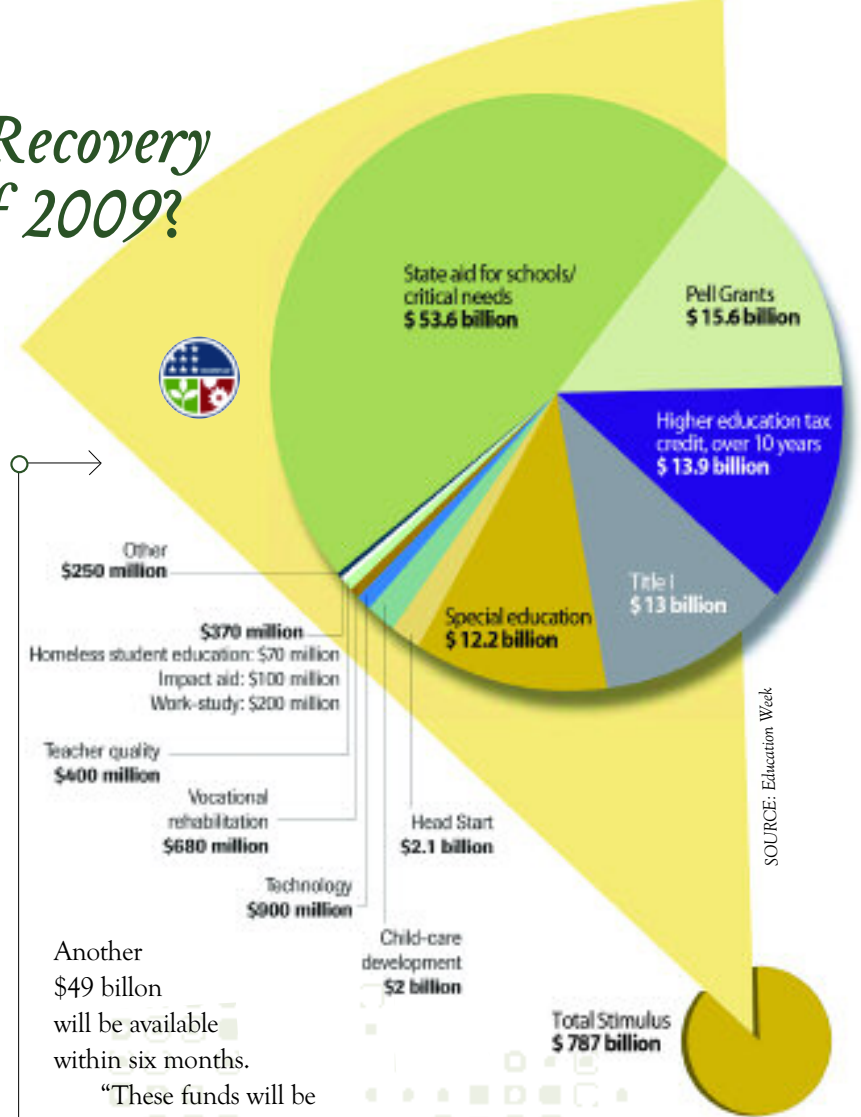
What is *The American Recovery And Reinvestment Act of 2009*?

With the overall state of the economy, anemic tax collections in Alabama, and proration of the education budget, Alabama educators are wondering if, how, and when federal economic stimulus funds will help our state's schools.

STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOE MORTON was one of eight chief state school officers invited to meet with the Obama Transition Team, along with former U.S. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION DICK RILEY on December 1, 2008.

"We stressed the necessity of including K-12 education in any economic stimulus efforts by the President and Congress," said Dr. Morton.

On February 17, PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA signed into law *The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* (ARRA) in a bipartisan effort to jumpstart the nation's economy, create or save jobs, and expand educational opportunities. The ARRA - a \$787 billion economic stimulus package - includes approximately \$115 billion for education to save



Another \$49 billion will be available within six months.

"These funds will be distributed as quickly as possible to save and create jobs and improve education," explained Duncan. "Strict reporting requirements will ensure that Americans know exactly how their money is being spent and how their schools are being improved."

The ARRA establishes a \$5 billion fund for the United States Department of Education (USDE), which includes a \$4.35 billion "Race to the Top" fund to assist states with bold plans to improve student achievement and \$650 million for school districts and nonprofits with strong track records of improving student achievement. State grants will go out in two rounds over the next year, beginning in October 2009. Applications will be available in late Spring.

"A good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity - it is a pre-requisite."

- President Barack Obama

jobs, support states and school districts, and advance reforms and improvements in Pre-K through postsecondary education.

In a recent speech to the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, President Obama unveiled his education plans to provide \$41 billion in grants to local school districts and to send \$79 billion in relief to states to prevent cuts in state aid, and another \$21 billion for school modernization. The stimulus package also provides more than \$35 billion to build schools and train teachers.

ARRA funds must be used to improve student achievement. On March 7, U.S. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION ARNE DUNCAN announced that \$44 billion in stimulus funding would be available to states in 30-45 days.

To receive the **first round** of funding, states must commit to meet ARRA requirements, including making progress on **four** key education reforms:

- 1 Raising standards
- 2 Increasing transparency
- 3 Improving teacher effectiveness
- 4 Supporting effective intervention

To receive the **second round**, states must provide evidence and plans for progress on these assurances.

SAMPLE ESTIMATED EDUCATION ALLOCATIONS TO ALABAMA:

<u>PROGRAM</u>	<u>ALABAMA'S ALLOCATION</u>
Title I Funds	\$211 million
Title II Part D Funds: Education Technology	\$10.5 million
McKinney-Vento Funds	\$1.1 million
IDEA Funds for Special Education	\$188 million

SOURCE: Legislative Fiscal Office

The ARRA also allocated to the USDE \$200 million for a Teacher Incentive Fund and \$100 million for Teacher Quality Enhancement. These funds will be made available beginning in Fall 2009 through a competitive grant process. Duncan cautioned states to invest ARRA funds wisely to minimize ongoing costs after the funding expires. "These are one-time funds, and state and school officials need to find the best way to stretch every dollar," said Duncan.

In addition, an estimated allocation of \$1,727,000 is available to the State Department of Education from the United States Department of Agriculture for School Lunch Equipment Grants.

The State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) for schools and other state services includes a one-time appropriation of \$53.6 billion. The USDE will award approximately \$48.6 billion to governors in exchange for commitments to Pre-K through postsecondary education.

Dr. Morton predicts Alabama's share of the economic stimulus package will save 3,500 teachers' jobs.

"With Alabama K-12 schools scheduled to be cut in state funding in excess of \$500 million starting in October, these federal funds come at just the right time and should help our state continue, instead of lose, our academic momentum that has been gained over the past several years," said Morton.

Alabama's Education Allocation = \$1.1 billion

SOURCE: Wall Street Journal

Periodic stimulus updates will be posted online at:

- www.recovery.gov
- www.ed.gov/recovery
- www.stimulus.alabama.gov
- www.alsde.edu/html/arra2009.asp

AMSTI Gets "An Edge on Education"



The ALABAMA MATH, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVE (AMSTI) will show the world they are a cut above the rest after being selected to star in a *National Education Report* segment, "An Edge on Education."

This program, hosted by renowned anchor and Emmy award winner of TV's 20/20 HUGH DOWNS, will showcase AMSTI's goal to give educators the skills to teach math, science, and technology through activity-based, inquiry approaches consistent with the latest research on effective math and science instruction. "AMSTI's innovative and effective approach towards math and science proves it is on the cutting edge of education" said GARRETT O'ROURKE, TV Producer for *National Education Report*.



Hugh Downs

AMSTI teachers from Grades K-12 attend two summer training sessions for two years, acquiring extensive professional development. When school begins in August, equipment, supplies, and materials are delivered straight to their classrooms, at no cost to the school. At-school support by math and science specialists is provided

as well. AMSTI's mission is to provide all students in Grades K-12 with the knowledge and skills needed for success in the workforce and/or postsecondary studies. "In AMSTI classrooms, math and science often go from the least-liked subjects of students to their most liked," states STEVE RICKS, AMSTI Director. "Creating positive attitudes toward math and science are a necessity if we are to encourage students to pursue careers in these fields and to be prepared for success in the workforce."

AMSTI will be featured in an interspersed segment that could air on top networks such as CNN, MSNBC, FOX, Discovery Channel, and The Learning Channel. A documentary will be hosted on *National Education Report's* Web site and also sent out to educational Web sites, which could be seen by up to 96 million viewers worldwide.

For more information on AMSTI, [CLICK HERE](#). For information on *National Education Report*, visit [CLICK HERE](#).



Jameela Bailey (left) and Madison Shaw, both seventh-graders at Riverchase Middle School, work in the school branch of First Educators Credit Union. Photo by Corey Nolen

First Educators Credit Union Gets Exposure

The Panther Branch of First Educators Credit Union was featured in the *Shelby County Reporter!* The Credit Union is managed and operated by student members of FBLA. Students at the credit union receive hands-on experience on banking and finance skills, gain in-demand soft skills for employability in 21st century business industry, and establish saving habits that will impact their lives and our future economy. It was also featured by Fox6 News in Birmingham for its “What’s Right with Our Schools” segment. [Read the full Shelby County Reporter article here.](#)

Principal · Charles Smith • Superintendent · Randy Fuller
State Board Member · David Byers, Jr., District 06

Madison County Educator Recognized as High-Quality Online Teacher



SHARON JOHNSON of Hollytree, Alabama, was recognized today as Alabama’s outstanding High-Quality Online Teacher for 2008-2009 by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB).

A mathematics teacher with Alabama ACCESS Distance Learning, Johnson was honored with a certificate of commendation and a Board resolution by STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOE MORTON at a recent State Board meeting. Her district school superintendent and her family joined her at the ceremony.

ACCESS Distance Learning nominated Johnson for the online teacher recognition from SREB for her ability to explain math concepts and to motivate her students through a variety of technologies. Certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, Johnson also shares her expertise with other ACCESS teachers through regional support center training sessions.

“SREB created this first-of-its-kind award to recognize the key role of the online teacher in providing top-quality instruction to students across Alabama,” said BILL THOMAS, director of SREB’s Educational Technology Cooperative.

In total, 11 online teachers in the SREB region will receive the award. For more information about the growth of online learning and state virtual schools, [CLICK HERE.](#)

Superintendent: Dr. Terry Davis • Principal: Mr. Garth Garis
State Board Member: Dr. Mary Jane Caylor, District 08

Students Donate Their Time and Talent to Habitat For Humanity

On March 6-8, Shelby County School of Technology and Pelham High School students volunteered their time to help construct two Habitat for Humanity homes in Montevallo.



Shelby County School of Technology students Leroy Hunt and Chase Lauzon.



Pelham High School student Kyle Dunklin.

Principal, Pelham High School · Robert Lavett
Principal, Shelby County School Of Technology · Tim Elliff
Superintendent · Randy Fuller
State Board Member · Stephanie Bell, District 03

New Physical Education Grants



THE ALABAMA SPORTS FESTIVAL (ASF) is offering a new grant program for physical education departments statewide. The ASF has a history of promoting athletics as well as academic excellence. For 27 years, the ASF has put on

Olympic-style State Games for all ages and abilities, while at the same time awarding more than \$182,000 in scholarships for more than 300 Alabama youth.

The new physical education grant program encourages P.E. teachers to let their students know about the opportunities for Olympic-style athletic competition and college scholarships at the Alabama Sports Festival 2009 State Games in Birmingham, June 19-21. The grant program sends a portion of every student's 2009 Alabama Sports Festival entry fee (which varies by sport) back to that student's physical education department. Also, all students who participate in the 2009 State Games are eligible to win one of ten \$1,000 scholarships.

For complete information on the Alabama Sports Festival and its new Physical Education Grant Program, [CLICK HERE](#).

Alabama Stars in Education Awards

THE ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION and ALABAMA PUBLIC TELEVISION join together with Stars in Education, a live, statewide broadcast and award ceremony. The Young Heroes and Teacher of the Year Awards will be presented at the Renaissance Hotel and Convention Center in Montgomery on May 13.

The Alabama Department of Education recognizes excellence in the teaching profession with the Teacher of the Year Award. It is given to a remarkable educator who has gone above and beyond, teaching students at the highest level.

Alabama Public

Television celebrates the great achievements of Alabama's future leaders with the 2009 Alabama Young Heroes

Awards. This award is given to five outstanding young people who have demonstrated courage, determination, volunteerism, and academic excellence.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more information on this live statewide broadcast and event.



Awards, Opportunities, and Professional Development

HATS STEDTRAIN Science & Technology Seed Grants (www.hats.org/STEDTRAIN/stedtr.shtml) for K-12 schools in Jackson, Madison, Marshall, Morgan, and Limestone Counties. **DEADLINE: APRIL 1**

School Breakfast Expansion Grant Program (www.actionforhealthykids.org/whats_new.php#w3) **DEADLINE: APRIL 10**

Alabama Ag in the Classroom Summer Institute 2009 (www.alabamaaitc.org) Marriott at Capitol Hill, Prattville, June 16-18. **DEADLINE: APRIL 15**

Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts Hosts 2009 Alabama Statewide Middle School (Grades 6-8) Art Show, 334-300-3779. **DEADLINE: APRIL 15**

Alabama Book Festival (www.alabamabookcenter.org) April 18, Old Alabama Town, Montgomery, 334-844-4946.



Barnes & Noble Booksellers Educator Appreciation Days (www.bn.com) April 18-26

ING Unsung Heroes® (www.ingusa.com/us/stellent2/groups/dc/documents/companylobinformation/001143.pdf) **DEADLINE: APRIL 30**

Enter to Win a Wireless Lab for Your School (<http://cdwg.discoveryeducation.com/1208/rules.cfm>) **DEADLINE: APRIL 30**

Search for education grants at grants.gov (www07.grants.gov/search) or contact: Michelle Tims, Grants and Projects Director
US Senator Jeff Sessions, 205-731-1500
Michelle_Tims@sessions.senate.gov

The Teaching Artist Research Project (<http://teachingartists.uchicago.edu>)

Best Evidence Encyclopedia (www.bestevidence.org)





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MARCH BOARD BRIEFS

➤ Resolutions Commending State Honorees Olivia Cale, Huffman Middle School, Birmingham City School System, and George Wilson, Northridge High School, Tuscaloosa City School System, 2009 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards

➤ Resolution Proclaiming April 1-30, 2009, as "Alabama TEACH Students to Save and Invest Month"

➤ Resolution in Recognition of Sharon Johnson, ACCESS Distance Learning 2008-2009 Teacher of the Year and Southern Regional Education Board High-Quality Online Teacher

➤ Resolution Commending the Madison City School System for Recognition by the National School Boards Association and the Technology Leadership Network

For a complete list of agenda items, visit the Alabama Department of Education's Web site www.alsde.edu under "Board of Ed."

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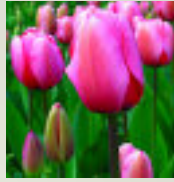
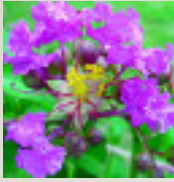
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Copies available in Braille or other forms upon request.

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A P R I L

Child Abuse Prevention Month /Mathematics Education Month

April 9 Alabama State Board of Education Meeting

April 12-18 National Library Week

April 23 Alabama State Board of Education Work Session

April 27 Confederate Memorial Day (state holiday)

M A Y

Teacher Appreciation Month

May 4-8 Teacher Appreciation Week

May 6 Teacher Appreciation Day

May 14 State Board of Education Meeting

May 25 National Memorial Day (federal holiday)

May 28 State Board of Education Work Session

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