



ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

NEWS AND ISSUES IN ALABAMA PUBLIC EDUCATION, K-12

JANUARY 2006

WHAT'S INSIDE ...

- School Bus Safety
- Good News
- NBCTs
- Professional Development

ACCESS Bridges The Distance For Alabama Students

Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators, & Students Statewide

DISTANCE LEARNING

In 24 pilot high schools across Alabama, ACCESS has been granted – access to the ability of connecting students, teachers, courses, and technology from across the state with the help of a statewide distance learning initiative called Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators, and Students Statewide (ACCESS).

In November 2005, **Gov. BOB RILEY**, along with the Alabama Department of Education, launched ACCESS Distance Learning as an exciting new method of delivering high-quality courses statewide, including areas where they might not have been available before. This initiative enables students in different parts of the state to participate in the same classroom instruction using tablet computers and videoconferencing equipment. Students will receive real-time instruction from an Alabama certified “E-teacher” who will have an actual class, as well as the “virtual class” made possible through ACCESS Distance Learning technology.

Initially, there will be at least eight E-teachers delivering courses from the 24 pilot sites with facilitators at each of the remote sites. By summer 2006, state funding for ACCESS Distance Learning will allow connectivity for the existing 113

interactive videoconferencing labs across the state. There is potential for 10,000 of the state’s approximately 205,000 high school students to take full advantage of ACCESS Distance Learning technology by the 2006-07 school year, enabling more students the opportunity to take classes not otherwise available on their local campus.

The ACCESS Distance Learning Initiative will help generate enough students interested in a specific subject to fill a class. Traditionally, interest in a particular subject by a certain number of students would be needed to make it feasible to offer the class. With ACCESS Distance Learning technology, there could be a few students in Huntsville interested in a particular foreign language such as Latin, a few more in Mobile, several in Troy, and a couple in Tuscaloosa. Collectively, this could validate a virtual classroom and provide interactive instruction in a subject that would not have been possible in a traditional setting.

Gov. Riley mentioned the ACCESS Distance Learning Initiative in his 2005 State of the State address, saying it would revolutionize the way Alabama teaches its children.

(Continued on Page 2)



The Alabama State Board of Education's
EDUCATIONAL RULER:
 Making & Measuring Progress Grade by Grade



Every Student Should Have:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Safe & Disciplined Schools | + | Character Education/Student Responsibility and Conduct Standards
Parent and Community Involvement |
| Quality Teachers | + | Evaluations/Testing/Accountability
Professional Development
Outstanding Programs Preparing Teachers |
| Challenging Curricula | + | Alabama Reading Initiative
Alabama Math, Science, & Technology Initiative
Comprehensive Courses of Study/Technology Availability
Career/Technical Programs Meeting International Business & Industry Standards |
| Effective School Leaders | + | Emerging Leaders
Principals Leadership Academy
Superintendents Academy |

= Students Prepared for College/Work/Adulthood in the 21st Century

DECEMBER

-  Adopted Amended *Alabama Administrative Code* Rule Pertaining to Regulations Governing Public Schools as a Permanent Rule
-  Adopted New *Alabama Administrative Code* Chapter Pertaining to Career/Technical Education
-  Passed Resolution Honoring Dr. Harold W. Dodge, Mobile County Schools, Alabama's 2006 Superintendent of the Year
-  Passed Resolutions Commending Charles Willis and Stoney Beavers, 2005 Recipients of the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award
-  Passed Resolution Commending Linda McGhee, Thomasville City Schools, Recipient of the 2005 ASBO International Eagle Award
-  Passed Resolution Recognizing the Jefferson County Board of Education Transportation Department
-  Passed Resolution Commending Nancy S. Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools, Maryland State Department of Education, and the Students of Maryland Public Schools
-  Passed Resolution Honoring Judy Jester for Outstanding Service to Public Education
-  Passed Resolution Proclaiming 2005 as The Year of Languages in Alabama
-  Passed Resolution Appointing English Language Arts State Course of Study Committee
-  Authorized Review of Teacher Education Programs at The University of Alabama at Birmingham and University of North Alabama, Florence
-  Extended Approval of Teacher Education Programs to Concordia College, Selma; Auburn University at Montgomery, Montgomery; University of South Alabama, Mobile; Talladega College, Talladega; and Miles College, Birmingham
-  Announced Intent to Adopt and Adopt Emergency Rule Amended *Alabama Administrative Code* Rule Pertaining to Annual Apportionment of Current Units as Permanent

(Continued from Page 1)



“The professional development component of these grants will help enhance and integrate the ACCESS (Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators & Students Statewide) Distance Learning Initiative announced by Governor Riley and the Alabama Department of Education last month.”

Joe Morton, State Superintendent of Education

The initial 24 pilot sites receive state funding. The state also secured an Appalachian Regional Commission federal grant to help fund 12 of those sites, which include community relationships with organizations helping to make this cutting-edge technology possible for Alabama students. For a listing of the 24 pilot sites, [CLICK HERE](#).

Another facet of the ACCESS Distance Learning Initiative is support for Advanced Placement (AP) courses to schools that otherwise cannot offer college-readiness coursework. **STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOE MORTON** said better access to AP classes is just one convenience this new technology brings. “Many high schools have not been able to provide AP courses such as foreign languages, electives, and precalculus,” Morton said. “The ACCESS Distance Learning approach will help solve that problem by offering curriculum



and teachers to meet course requirement needs.”

To learn more about the ACCESS Distance Learning Initiative, contact **ALABAMA**

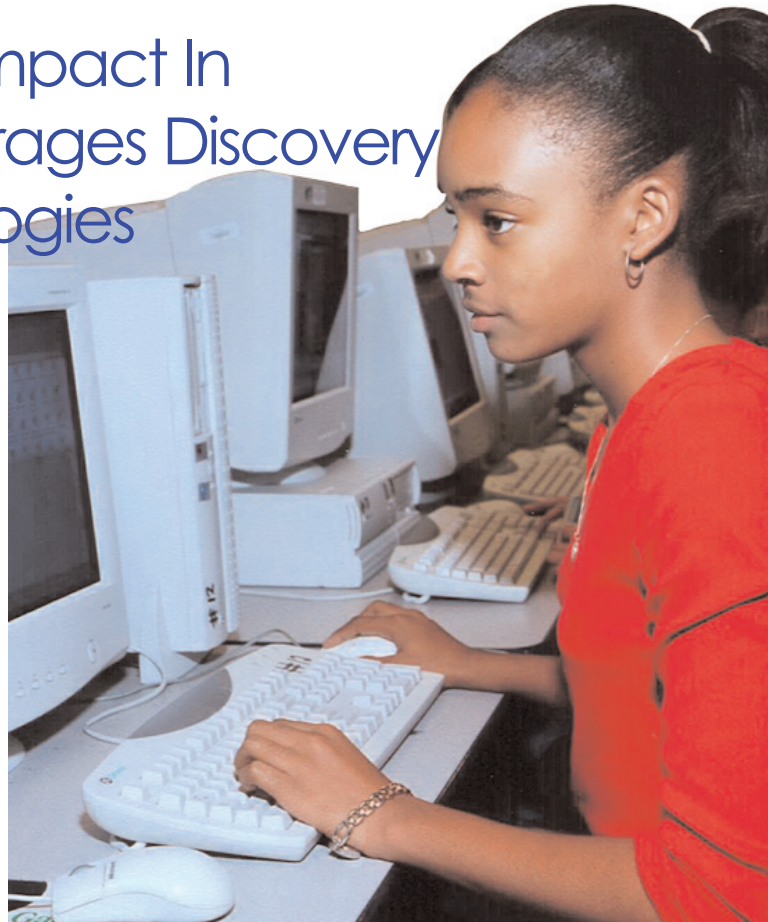
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVES
 DIRECTOR DR. MELINDA MADDOX at 334-242-9594 or [CLICK HERE](#), or [CLICK HERE](#). 🍏

BOARD BRIEFS

Alabama Technology Impact In Education Week Encourages Discovery Of Educational Technologies






The Alabama Board of Education is expected to proclaim the week of Jan. 23-27 as Alabama Technology Impact in Education Week during its monthly K-12 meeting on Jan. 12. **ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVES DIRECTOR MELINDA MADDOX** feels the Board's designation will help educators and the public focus more on the potential that educational technologies bring to the classroom. "By tying into the national initiative, Technology Impact in Education Month sponsored by the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA), we hope to better promote current technology in Alabama's public schools and what we have in store for our schools in the future," said Maddox.

The Technology Impact in Education Month's Web site provides lesson plans, activities, and supporting materials for teachers and students to see the impact technology has had in schools and realize the importance technology plays on helping students prepare for the future. Students, teachers, and parents are encouraged to participate in an exercise to analyze the impact technology has had or is having in their education experiences during social studies and language arts classes. Prizes will be awarded randomly to participants who submit their results on or before Jan. 31. [CLICK HERE](#) to participate. 🍏



– JANUARY 23-27 – ALABAMA TECHNOLOGY IMPACT IN EDUCATION WEEK

Suggested School Activities:

-  Host technology usage demonstrations for local community leaders, younger students, and parents.
-  Assign homework for students to do with the assistance of certified teachers. [CLICK HERE](#).
-  Share school's technology and event participation with local media outlets.
-  Have local businesses donate prizes for the best student results within the school.
-  Showcase school's computer labs and outline future expansion plans.

Enhancing Education Through Technology Awards

More technology good news was announced at the Dec. 8 state Board of Education meeting. Forty-six Alabama public school systems received over \$3.4 million to help improve technology use in the classroom.

As part of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, the *Elementary Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) established the Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) Program or ESEA Title II, Part D, Subpart 1. Under the EETT Ed Tech program, the U.S. Department of Education provides grants to state educational agencies based on their proportionate share of funding under Part A of Title I. For fiscal year 2006, the Alabama Department of Education received \$3,440,322 to allocate on a competitive basis to eligible local school systems. Awards range from \$55,000 to \$389,486 for a one-year period.

The primary goal of the EETT Ed Tech program is to improve student academic achievement through the use of technology in elementary and secondary schools.

For a listing of school systems receiving Fiscal Year 2006 EETT grants, [CLICK HERE](#).

For additional information, contact the Alabama Department of Education, **HANNIS ROBERTS**, State EETT Coordinator, Technology Initiatives, at 334-242-9594 or [CLICK HERE](#). 🍏

Good News

in Alabama Schools



District 5 State Board of Education Member Ella Bell congratulates McGhee.

IT ALL “ADDS UP” FOR THOMASVILLE CITY’S CFO

Hearty congratulations go out to **LINDA V. MCGHEE**, Chief Finance Officer and Business Manager for the Thomasville City School System, after receiving the 2005 International Eagle Award. Presented by the Association of School Business Officials (ASBO) during the ASBO International Annual Meeting and Exhibits in Boston on Oct. 22. The International Eagle Award is the highest honor given to school business officials exemplifying leadership in the profession. As the International Eagle Award recipient, McGhee will receive a \$5,000 college scholarship to present to a high school student. She also receives a crystal Eagle Award and will attend the ASBO 2006 Eagle Institute.

*State Board of Education Member: Ella Bell, District 5
Thomasville City Schools Superintendent: Roger Speed*

WEB-BASED SPORTSMANSHIP EDUCATION PROGRAM LAUNCHES IN ALABAMA FIRST

State lawmakers, education leaders, and the Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA) members are promoting the STAR Coaching program to help the state’s high school athletic directors and coaching staffs prevent steroid abuse and promote sportsmanship initiatives in schools.

As the first state in the nation to launch STAR Coaching statewide, the sportsmanship education program for coaches will help Alabama sports players and parents benefit from effective learning tools focusing on positive behavior, health, and fitness both on and off the playing field.

“We are building on the momentum already generated in this state through the STAR Sportsmanship program for fourth-grade students. STAR Coaching is a logical extension of the STAR Sportsmanship initiative we announced in October. It will have a significant impact in setting expectations for coaches and parents while also giving them the necessary tools to build teams of great sportsmen and women,” said **STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOE MORTON**.

STAR Coaching will be available to AHSAA member school coaches in March 2006. [CLICK HERE](#) to view STAR Coaching and STAR Sportsmanship, Elementary Edition, an interactive Web-based computer program developed by Learning Through Sports.

Alabama High School Athletic Association Executive Director: Dan Washburn



Denise Dark

ALABAMA KINDERGARTEN TEACHER TOPS IN NATION

The National Association for Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NAECTE) named Opelika teacher **DENISE DARK** the 2005 Outstanding Early Childhood Practitioner during its annual conference in Washington, D.C., on Dec. 7.

Dark, who has taught kindergarten at Jeter Primary School two years, has been in the classroom a total of 24 years.

The NAECTE/Delmar Publishers Outstanding Early Childhood Practitioner award recognizes teaching excellence, leadership, and professionalism through contributions made as a classroom practitioner to preservice and/or inservice early childhood education. For further information, [CLICK HERE](#).

*State Board of Education Member: Betty Peters, District 2
Opelika City Schools Superintendent: Dr. Phil Raley
Jeter Primary School Principal: William James*

STORYBOOK CHARACTERS COME TO LIFE TO PROMOTE READING

Lookout Tinkerbell, Captain Hook is after you! But have no fear. Peter Pan will come to your rescue.

Once upon a time there was a group of innovative and creative fairies (educators) whose only wish was to help their young students learn to read successfully. By weaving their magic spell, these fairies persuaded their 1,012 Paine Primary School students to participate in the “Kingdom of Reading” program. During the month of November, students were encouraged to keep a log of how many books they read. The school set a goal of reading a total of 20,000 and surpassed that goal by reading over 58,000 books!

The 23rd annual reading emphasis program was kicked off with Storybook Character Dress-Up Day, in which students and teachers dressed as characters from fairy tales and fables and read their favorite books depicting their dress-up characters. Students spent the day engaged in a meaningful learning time as their classmates shared book reports about each character, helping to make the characters literally come to life.

Test scores at Paine Primary have improved as well. Scores on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessment have steadily risen over the past two years. The Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) school moved from 12th in the state for K-2 schools in the spring of 2004 to 6th in the state in the spring of 2005. Staff fairies are anxious to see what the 2006 spring release of DIBELS data will bring to continue making the “Kingdom of Reading” program a royal success. THE END!

State Board of Education Member: David Byers, Jr., District 6
Trussville City Schools Superintendent: Dr. Suzanne Freeman
Paine Primary School Principal: Betsy Schmitt



GADSDEN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TAKE THE BULL BY THE HORNS

Buying, selling, trading, investing, and making/losing money are all in a day’s work for Gadsden High School students in the Competitive Academics class who are playing the Stock Market Game™. The 18 students, taught by **MARCIA FREDERICK**, are learning about economic and financial concepts, teamwork, core academic concepts, and skills that can help them succeed in the classroom and in life.

Starting with a virtual cash account of \$100,000, students strive to create the best-performing portfolio using a live trading simulation. They work together in teams, practicing leadership, organization, negotiation, and cooperation as they compete for the top spot.

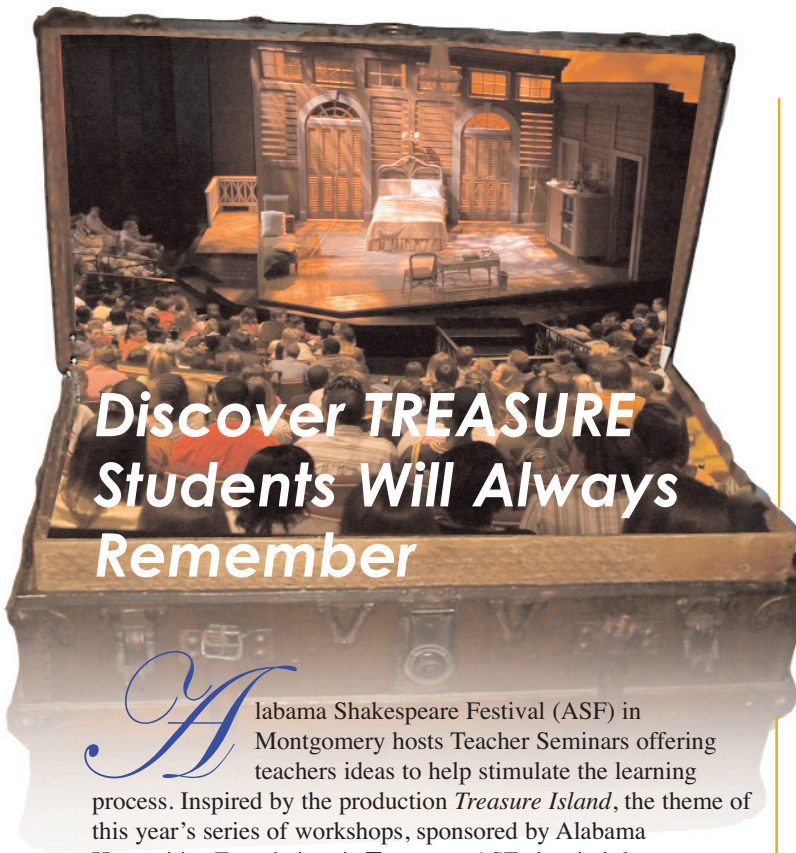
According to the game’s Web site, teachers have discovered the Stock Market Game program actually boosts attendance and reduces dropout rates. Students participating in the program gain confidence, build self-esteem, have fun, and learn more effectively as they see how their classroom lessons apply to the real world.

The program is made possible by the support of more than 600 securities firms, combined with essential grassroots support in schools and communities in all 50 states and is the only stock market simulation supported by the New York Stock Exchange and the NASDAQ®.

The Stock Market Game™ is a trademark of the Foundation for Investor Education, a nonprofit organization dedicated to developing and providing learning resources for investors of all ages, raising the level of investor awareness in the U.S., supporting research programs, and advocating the advancement of investor education. For further information, [CLICK HERE](#).

State Board of Education Member: Dr. Mary Jane Caylor, District 8
Gadsden City Schools Superintendent: Bobby Russell
Gadsden High School Principal: Peter Rowe





Discover TREASURE Students Will Always Remember

Alabama Shakespeare Festival (ASF) in Montgomery hosts Teacher Seminars offering teachers ideas to help stimulate the learning process. Inspired by the production *Treasure Island*, the theme of this year's series of workshops, sponsored by Alabama Humanities Foundation, is **Treasure**. ASF, the sixth largest Shakespeare theatre in the world, is a **treasure** as a learning resource and as a professional classic theatre just as Alabama's talented teachers and students are **treasures**.

The professional development workshops are approved for CEU credit through the University of Alabama. Different seminars will be held Jan. 23, March 31, and Apr. 24, and cost \$30 each.



Participants of a TechFest teacher seminar get a behind-the-scenes look at Alabama Shakespeare Festival's scenery shop.

— Photos by Phil Scarsbrook

All the fun isn't just for teachers. ASF offers an educational **treasure** in the form of SchoolFest with special reduced-price, weekday matinees for school groups. Nearly 30,000 students attend the program, now in its 20th year. This year's productions of *Treasure Island*, *Pure Confidence*, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Man of La Mancha* invite students to discover what really gives life value – money? love? freedom? justice? adventure? Additionally, SchoolFest performances help meet Alabama Arts Education Course of Study Objectives.

Tickets are \$14 per student, per performance. Reservations must be made in advance.

[CLICK HERE](#) to contact Linda Dean, ASF Director of Education or call 1-800-841-4273, or [CLICK HERE](#). 🍏

Alabama Tenth In Nation For Most National Board Certified Teachers

Each year, dedicated teachers go the extra mile to achieve National Board Certification from the National Board for Professional

Teaching Standards (NBPTS), celebrating its 18th anniversary. Becoming a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) is no easy task. It takes hard work, financial commitment, and a lot of time.



In 2005, 147 additional Alabama teachers' hard work paid off when they achieved National Board Certification. Having a record number of teachers in the state holding National Board Certification (930) ranks Alabama 10th in the nation for having the most NBCTs, an achievement utilized in the classroom to improve student learning.

MARGARET PETTY, 2005 Alabama Teacher of the Year, says gaining National Board Certification was not an easy undertaking.

National Board Certification was developed by teachers, with teachers, for teachers. Offered on a voluntary basis, Alabama's financial commitment to the program provides money to pay application fees for the first 100 applicants and a \$5,000 annual salary increase for teachers achieving National Board Certification.

For a listing of Alabama's 2005 National Board of Certified Teachers and more information on National Board Certification or the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, [CLICK HERE](#) to visit the NBPTS Web site. 🍏



Margaret Petty

“ The process of becoming a NBCT required three intense years of hard work. Yes, I am one of those teachers who did not meet the required score not just once, but twice. Although the process was grueling, I am so glad that I went for it because it has taught me so much. I am now more focused on my instruction and using assessment results to determine what to teach next. ”

Alabama Among First States To Conduct “School Bus Watch Train-the-Trainers”

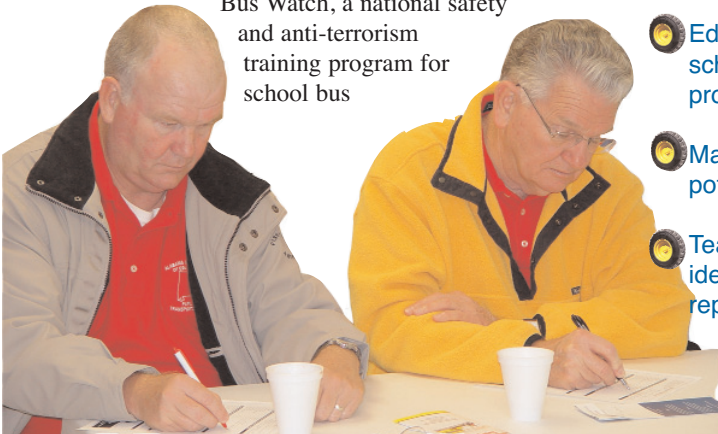


The Hoover Board of Education Transportation Department hosted the first statewide “School Bus Watch Train-the-Trainers” on Nov. 18. It was held for local school system transportation supervisors and for Alabama Department of Education staff from the Pupil Transportation and Prevention and Support sections. School Bus Watch, a national safety and anti-terrorism training program for school bus



Primary purposes of School Bus Watch include:

- Educate the 600,000 U.S. school transportation professionals.
- Make individuals aware of potential terrorist actions.
- Teach participants to identify, evaluate, and report unusual activity.



Transportation Program Administrator for the

professionals, is the offspring of Highway Watch® ([CLICK HERE](#)). It is the nation’s safety and anti-terrorism program used to train transportation and first-responder professionals to observe, assess, and report safety and security incidents.

Alabama is one of the first states in the nation to conduct statewide School Bus Watch training. **CAPT. RAY BROWN**, Senior Associate with TotalSecurity.US, led the “Train-the-Trainers” session in Hoover and could not stress enough the importance such a safety program plays in the lives of students. “Our children (passengers) are irreplaceable,” said Brown. “To ensure students’ safety, you must be alert to any unusual activity and report that activity expediently and accurately.”

There are more than 6,900 school bus drivers in Alabama who transport over 350,000 students some 330,000 miles daily. **JOE LIGHTSEY**, Pupil

Alabama Department of Education, said, “School bus drivers travel the same routes daily, so training them to use their eyes and ears to observe situations that might not look right along the way and how to properly report their observations protects their student passengers and the communities.”

School Bus Watch is provided free to all school bus drivers nationwide. All training materials, driver handouts, and other resources will be provided at no cost as the program is expanded to the nation’s 600,000 school bus driver professionals. Alabama Department of Education staff will conduct training sessions January through November 2006. For more information, [CLICK HERE](#) to contact Joe Lightsey or call 334-242-9730. [CLICK HERE](#) to contact Susanna Stinson, Highway Watch® Coordinator for Alabama Trucking Association or call 334-834-3983, ext. 25. 🍏

LOCAL TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT MAKES “TOP TEN” LIST

The Jefferson County School System Transportation

Department:

10. Serves the community, administrators, teachers, students, parents, and school bus drivers.
9. Makes productivity and safety top priorities.
8. Maintains a fleet of over 429 buses and 35 other system vehicles.
7. Services buses that travel over 3,741,500 miles annually.
6. Transports over 17,936 students daily to 56 schools.
5. Staffs bus drivers who keep things moving in a timely and safe manner.
4. Plans to offer CPR and sign language training to its drivers.
3. Sustains overall efficiency and safety through cost-saving measures that exclude excessive outsourcing.
2. Receives annual school bus inspections with less than one percent major deficiencies.
1. WAS RECOGNIZED AS ONE OF 10 GREAT FLEETS ACROSS AMERICA FOR 2005 BY SCHOOL BUS FLEET MAGAZINE.

“It doesn’t get much better than this. Even David Letterman can’t beat this “top ten” list. All kidding aside, we are extremely pleased and proud that a transportation department in one of our school systems received such high recognition. I am grateful to the Jefferson County staff for their hard work and all of our transportation departments’ commitments to Alabama student safety.”

Joe Morton
State Superintendent of Education

JANUARY *National Staying Healthy Month
School Board Member Recognition Month*

10 LEGISLATIVE SESSION BEGINS
12 STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
16 LEE/KING BIRTHDAYS (STATE HOLIDAY)
23-27 ALABAMA TECHNOLOGY IMPACT IN EDUCATION WEEK
25 NATIONAL SCHOOL NURSE DAY
26 STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION WORK SESSION

FEBRUARY *American History Month • Black History Month
Children's Dental Health Month*

8 ALABAMA PTA LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY DAY
9 STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
12-18 CAREER TECH WEEK
20 WASHINGTON/JEFFERSON BIRTHDAYS (STATE HOLIDAY)
23 STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION WORK SESSION

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCES

[CLICK HERE](#) **The 2006 Legacy Environmental Partnership Conference** will be held in Mobile, March 1-3.

[CLICK HERE](#) **The 16th Annual Alabama Transitional Conference** will be held at the Marriott Grand National Hotel and Conference Center in Auburn, March 13-15.

[CLICK HERE](#) **The 88th Annual Alabama PTA Convention** will be held at the Holiday Inn Select in Huntsville, Apr. 21-22.

[CLICK HERE](#) **The 3rd Annual Alabama Conference on Fatherhood** will be held in Birmingham, May 3-5.

[CLICK HERE](#) **The 2006 Mega Conference** will be held in Mobile, July 10-14. **Early Bird Registration Deadline: March 20**

AWARDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

[CLICK HERE](#) **The Toyota Tapestry Grants for Teachers**, administered by the National Science Teachers Association, are for K-12 science teachers who make science come alive in the classroom. **Deadline: Jan. 19**

Alabama Public Television's Young Heroes Award recognizes students in Grades 9-12 who have excelled in academics, served their community, or who have overcome hardships in their life. For more information, please contact Alabama Public Television at 800-239-5233, ext. 152. **Deadline: Jan. 31**

[CLICK HERE](#) **The Kinder Excellence in Teaching Award** annually recognizes one extraordinary K-12 teacher who inspires students in underserved areas by awarding \$100,000. Submit nominations. **Deadline: Feb. 1**

The 2006 Labor Essay Contest is open to high school seniors planning to attend an accredited college following graduation. For essay guidelines, call 205- 595-1712. **Deadline: Feb. 28**

[CLICK HERE](#) **The National Missing Children's Day Poster Contest** is open to 5th graders nationwide. Students are encouraged to design and create posters reflecting the theme of "Bringing Our Missing Children Home." The winner will be honored at the National Missing Children's Day Ceremonies in Washington, D.C., on May 25, and the poster will represent child safety for the coming year. **Deadline: March 30**

December Teacher Of The Month

Gail Cates, an eighth-grade language arts teacher at Spanish Fort Middle School in the Baldwin County School system, has been named Teacher of the Month for December.

Cates, a National Board Certified Teacher, has participated in numerous professional development programs, including the Alabama Leadership Academy and the Mobile Bay Writing Project. She believes all students given the opportunity can learn, and has worked diligently to provide opportunities for her students in resourceful and innovative ways. "I continually remind myself that I do not teach classes or subjects, I teach people who need different things from me. Some need to be challenged; others need encouragement; some need discipline; and all need to be loved," said Cates.

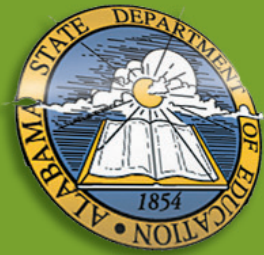
As Teacher of the Month, Cates will receive \$1,000 from Alfa Insurance, and her school will receive a matching award from the Alabama Farmers Federation.

During the 2006 school year, Alfa Insurance and Alabama Farmers Federation will recognize one teacher from each state school board district as well as two private school teachers and two principals.

For further information visit the Alabama Department of Education's Web site at www.alsde.edu.



Gail Cates



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ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

Alabama Board of Education Members

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Copies available in Braille or other forms upon request.