



Advanced Placement Classes Prepare Students for College

Students today need every advantage available to them to compete and succeed in a globally competitive world. One of the most accessible advantages available to many students is Advanced Placement (AP) classes. AP classes are designed, in collaboration with colleges and universities, to include a curriculum that introduces high school students to college-level learning. AP classes have high standards and academic intensity that better prepares students who take them for the rigor of college instruction – often times, high school students earn college credit hours.

A total of 37 AP classes, including such subjects as U.S. History, English, Language Arts, Literature and Composition, Biology, and Calculus are available in some Alabama schools. State funding for AP courses has increased in recent years, allowing more of such courses to become available in more schools throughout the state. Last year's education budget received \$1 million in funding to encourage districts to put in new AP courses and support existing courses. **CAROL CRAWFORD**, section coordinator of middle and high school initiatives for the State Department of Education (SDE), said despite the \$1 million designated for AP courses last year, the SDE received funding requests for almost \$2.5 million. "Even with \$1 million budgeted, we were only able to fund less than half of what was requested," Crawford said. In this year's budget request, that number has been increased to \$3 million. This funding goes toward training teachers, administrators and counselors; buying instructional materials; and offsetting the cost of the AP exam for students.

This is a cost the student's family incurs in systems where no state or federal funding assistance is available. **PHYLLIS RASE**, AP coordinator for the SDE, said certain school systems have traditionally done well in both participation and availability of AP classes. Rase said systems like Hoover City,



Gov. Bob Riley and Dr. Joe Morton, State Superintendent of Education, discuss AP classes at a recent press conference.

The SDE and the College Board are working to make AP courses more readily available to students who traditionally have been left out.

Monetary limitations can serve as a hurdle for school systems when trying to establish or maintain AP courses. The cost per student to take the AP exam is \$83 per subject.

Mountain Brook City, Jefferson County, Huntsville City, and several others are examples of systems that are doing a really excellent job. *continued on next page ...*

Although the number of students taking AP courses in Alabama is increasing, a disproportionality exists between the volume of students who take AP courses in more affluent school systems and those in rural and inner

city systems. Crawford said the SDE did not have AP courses is ACCESS Distance Learning – virtual classrooms that bring AP opportunities in English Literature, English Language, Macro Economics, U.S. Government, U.S. History, Calculus, Art History, Foreign

Language, and Biology via the Internet. That would save even more money by not having to pay for that college course,” Montgomery said. She said the reduced fee program has had a significant impact over the last several years as more people realize their

In Alabama, there are **168 high schools** in 94 school systems that offer AP courses, and approximately **200 high schools** that do not offer any AP courses.

city systems. Crawford said the SDE and the College Board are working to help close the gap in AP participation between these groups. “The department, in conjunction with the College Board, has been working on the concept of equity and access. We’re trying to make these courses more readily available to students who traditionally have been left out,” Crawford said. “This includes everything from working at the school level to get students ready and sending

potential and begin to take AP courses. Another measure used to ensure this important opportunity is available to all who are scholastically able to succeed is the Advanced Placement Reduced Fee Payment Program. For students who receive free and/or reduced lunch – an indicator of poverty – fees associated with taking the AP exam and classes are paid. **GINGER MONTGOMERY**, coordinator of the Advanced Placement Reduced Fee

Payment Program, said the program opens up the opportunity for all who quality. “All over the state of Alabama, any student who is on free or reduced lunch can take AP exams without cost. The school system will pay for the exam up front when it orders the exam from the College Board, but we reimburse the school’s money,” (see graph) Montgomery said. She said students on free and reduced

lunch can take as many AP courses per year as they can with no cost. “We have students now who are very capable of taking AP courses and they may want to take three AP courses in one year. That’s three times \$83 that they’re saving. Of course, if they make a certain score on their AP exam, they can use that grade as a college course.

That encouragement should not begin in high schools, she said. Pre-AP courses are available for students in lower grades (6th, 7th, and 8th). Parents and students should start realizing some are going to be able to take AP courses when they get in high school. “It has to begin in the lower grades. It can’t wait until the student gets in the 11th Grade and he/she hasn’t had the success that they could’ve had all along had they been encouraged earlier,” Montgomery said. For more

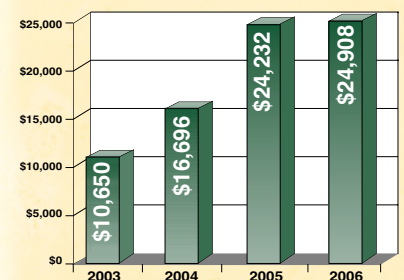



Gov. Riley visits a classroom to voice his support for expanding Advanced Placement classes throughout the state.

information home to parents about the potential their student might have to be successful [in AP courses] to general encouragement about AP courses. We need people to know that it’s not just the top 10 percent – we have a wide range of students involved in AP.”

One method of bringing AP curriculum into schools that previously

AP CLASS REIMBURSEMENTS





information about the Advanced Placement Reduced Fee Payment Program, contact Ginger Montgomery at (334) 242-8059 or [email here](#).

Recently, **GOVERNOR BOB RILEY** voiced his support for increasing Advanced Placement courses throughout the state, with a particular interest toward giving more rural and inner-city students the same range of courses offered in Alabama's more affluent school systems. In Alabama, there are 168 high schools in 94 school systems that offer AP courses. Of those schools, 83 offer two or more courses and there are approximately 200 high schools that do not offer AP courses at all.

To make sure the level of instruction in the classroom meets the meticulous standards of the College Board, beginning this year any class deemed AP must meet specific guidelines to further ensure a smooth transition from high

school class to college credit for the students who have passed the course-specific AP test.

"The College Board is certifying those courses that are indeed able to transfer into college credit. It's called a Course Audit process by which schools must be certified by the College Board to use the name AP for a class. This certification will ensure students that they are taking a class that will transfer over into college credit," Crawford said.

She said it's important that schools pay attention to this Course Audit because after Fall 2007, if a course has not gone through this audit it will not be allowed to use the name AP. There will be a listing of all courses that have been approved for that designation.

"If a student goes to college with an AP course on his/her transcript that is not listed on this register he/she is not likely to get credit for it," Crawford said. 🍎

Will Performance Pay Work? Vote now!

GOVERNOR BOB RILEY is leading the charge for performance-based bonuses for educators in the current legislative session. The idea of bonuses to reward classroom teachers is not a new one. What might seem to be a basic program has worked in some school systems and failed in others.

In Douglas County, Colorado, one of the most affluent counties in the nation, the pay-for-performance program is a success. The nine-year-old program has a \$2 million budget. Other systems are struggling with merit pay raises due to lack of funds. In Cincinnati the program failed due to lack of trust among teachers in the assessment process and funding.

The proposed program in Alabama was developed by the Commission on Quality Teaching, which is comprised of education and business leaders. If the budget request is approved, a pilot grant program for local school districts where at least 50 percent of students receive free or reduced lunch will be implemented. Those districts will be able to apply for funds to design a program of teacher bonuses based on yearly achievement goals. Teachers will be heavily involved in the design of each program to ensure that the bonuses are fair and also function as an incentive to increase student achievement. 🍎



Do you think performance-based pay is appropriate for Alabama teachers? [Click Here](#) to participate in an online poll. Results can be viewed online, and will be published in a future edition of *Alabama Education News*.



Assignment America Host Steve Hartman talks with Becky Guinn in her art classroom at Valley High School

Valley High School Teacher Featured on CBS News *Assignment America*



CBS Evening News with Katie Couric

featured Valley High School art teacher **BECKY GUINN** in the *Assignment America* segment on March 23. *Assignment America* host **STEVE HARTMAN** and a camera crew shot video of Guinn teaching an art class and afterward interviewed five high school students. Guinn's story was chosen by online voters on the CBS Web site. A communitywide "get out the vote" effort and her inspiring story led to Guinn being featured on CBS News.

Four years ago, Guinn had a medical allergic reaction that resulted in the amputations of both her hands and legs. Remarkably, she completed her master's degree and returned to full-time work as a high school art teacher seven months after the amputations.

That same year, when students were asked to write a paper about their favorite hero in an English class, 60 percent picked Mrs. Guinn. "She's convinced that she needs to pour her life into these students," said Guinn's husband David.

Her hard work and determination helped Guinn regain the quality of life she had before, including painting, driving, spoiling her four grandchildren, and traveling. Guinn's daughter, **AMY MCDOW**, said that her mother's dedication to reclaim her life serves as a constant inspiration to everyone around her. "She is truly an amazing woman with a story worthy of the nation's attention," said McDow.

[Click Here](#) to view Guinn's story that aired on CBS.

*State Board of Education Member: Betty Peters – District 2
Chambers County Schools Superintendent: Leonard Riley
Principal: Leon Clark*

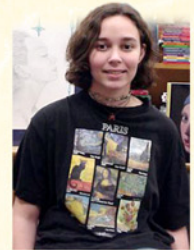
Guntersville High School Student Wins National Book Contest



High School Senior MERCEDES JONES

will share her talents with the country after being named the winner of the Books-A-Million Creative Writing contest. Jones' book, *Everybody Daydreams*, will be published and on display at stores across the nation.

"When I was a kid, what inspired me to make art were the books and pictures that went with the stories," said Jones. That inspiration paid off. Along with the upcoming publication of her book she also received a \$5,000 scholarship. Her artwork has represented Guntersville City Schools three times in the State Superintendent's Exhibit.



Jones serves as president of the National Art Honor Society and is vice-president of Junior Civitans. The talented author and artist plans to pursue a degree in fine arts illustration. "She is an outstanding student as well as a very gifted artist," said art teacher **VAL JONES**.

*State Board of Education Member: David F. Byers, Jr. - District 6
Guntersville City Schools Superintendent: Andrew N. Lee
Principal: Bill Wharton*

National Middle School Physical Educator of the Year Named



EMILY PHAREZ, of

J. Larry Newton Middle School, was named National Middle School Physical Educator of the year by the

National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) for 2007. Pharez's ability to motivate students was awarded with the association's top honor in March.

"I love my job. The more enjoyable the physical education experience the more likely my students will find enjoyment in activity," said Pharez. "A positive experience in physical education is a stepping stone toward a more active and healthy lifestyle for all my students."

SUELLEN BRAZIL, principal at J. Larry Newton, said, "Emily is enthusiastic about getting students actively engaged in physical education. She is full of energy and works daily to meet her students' needs and supports their quest to grow."

*State Board of Education Member: Randy McKinney – District 1
Baldwin County Schools Superintendent: Dr. Faron Hollinger
Principal: Suellen Brazil*



Two Alabama Schools Cited for Good Character



The Character Education Partnership

(CEP) named Shades Cahaba Elementary, a Homewood City school, as one of 10 National Schools of Character. The school refers to its six rules for living and learning as the “Shades Cahaba Way.” The six rules are so ingrained in community culture now that merchants can easily recite them. Many kindergarteners arrive at school already knowing the six rules, which were cited for excellence in promoting core ethical values. The program was also cited for its measurable results.

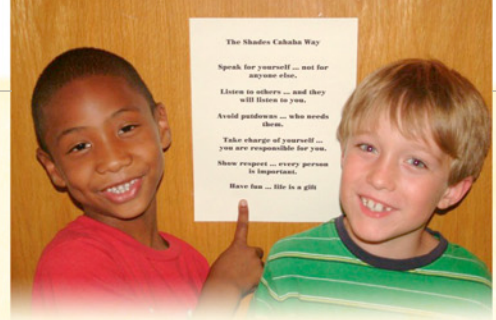
CEP also honored Chestnut Grove Elementary in the Promising Practice category. The Decatur school created the Chestnut Grove Essentials, which the partnership said are a good way of teaching core values. The Essentials are behaviors (such as saying “ma’am,” “sir,” “please” and “thank you” or



displaying good decision making) that are taught and reinforced constantly in multiple ways. CEP highlighted 126 schools in this category. For more information, and a complete list of winners, [click here](#).

*State Board of Education Member – Dr. Ethel H. Hall - District 4
Homewood City Schools Superintendent: Dr. Jodi Newton
Principal: Sue Grogan*

*State Board of Education Member – David F. Byers, Jr. - District 6
Decatur City Schools Superintendent: Dr. Samuel L. Houston
Principal: Lauretta Teague*



The “Shades Cahaba Way” are rules for living and learning at Shades Cahaba Elementary.



Alabama 2007-2008 Teacher of the Year Program Finalists Announced

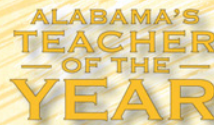
The 2007-2008 nominees for the Alabama Teacher of the Year Program have been narrowed to 16 of the state’s most exceptional educators. State Superintendent of Education **JOSEPH B. MORTON** said he is continually impressed with the caliber of quality educators in Alabama’s classrooms.

From the 16 finalists, four will be selected for the interview component of the judging process. The state judges will select Alabama’s Teacher of the Year in May. Alabama’s Teacher of the Year spends the majority of the school year being the spokesperson and representative for education and the teaching profession and presenting workshops to various groups. Additionally, Alabama’s Teacher of the Year is a candidate for the National Teacher of the Year.

An elementary and secondary teacher was named from each of the eight state Board of Education districts in mid-March. A member of the state Board of Education, the local board of education, a local superintendent or representative, two business representatives, the current district teachers of the year, and a representative from higher education served as committee members in selecting nominees.

The 2007-2008 Alabama Teacher of the Year will be announced and honored along with district finalists at a reception in Montgomery on May 9, 2007.

Listed at right are the names of the 16 Alabama Teacher of the Year finalists for 2007-2008.



ELEMENTARY

- District I - **CHRISTINE M. SEALY**
J. Larry Newton School · Baldwin County
- District II - **SUSANNE K. MOAR**
Ogletree Elementary School · Auburn City
- District III - **DIANA M. DURHAM**
Saks Middle School · Calhoun County
- District IV - **RHONDA F. ROBERTS**
Pleasant Grove Elementary School · Jefferson County
- District V - **NORMAN J. WILLIAMS, JR.**
George Washington Carver Elementary School · Macon County
- District VI - **ANITA H. THOMPSON**
Fairview Elementary School · Cullman County
- District VII - **MARION J. YARBER**
Hibbett Middle School · Florence City
- District VIII - **DEBBIE ELMORE**
Athens Intermediate School · Athens City

SECONDARY

- District I - **JANE E. DENMARK**
Baldwin County High School · Baldwin County
- District II - **JOHN PENNISI**
Auburn High School · Auburn City
- District III - **STEVE A. BISHOP**
Cedar Bluff High School · Cherokee County
- District IV - **JOSEPH F. SMITH, III**
L. M. Smith Middle School · Birmingham City
- District V - **W. S. GODWIN**
Greenville Middle School · Butler County
- District VI - **PAMELA HARMAN**
Spain Park High School · Hoover City
- District VII - **MINDA T. PAXTON**
Tuscaloosa Middle School · Tuscaloosa City
- District VIII - **CLARISSA N. DANIELS**
Lee High School · Huntsville City



Floating a Bond Issue Keeps Schools Above Water

Many schools throughout Alabama are in dire need of capital improvements.

Because of this, **GOV. BOB RILEY** and the Alabama Legislature are proposing a bond issue that would authorize the issuance of bonds for public education (and higher education) in amounts ranging from \$850 million to \$1 billion. A bond issue is simply an obligation in writing to pay a specified sum of money at a future date for funds today. Bonds are issued by the Alabama Public School and College Authority, a public corporation created by the Alabama Legislature in 1965, and are repaid from the future receipts of designated taxes.

This surge in financial support for schools would allow public schools to address many of the maintenance issues that the existing tax base and other local revenues cannot pay for. Building construction, major maintenance and repairs of facilities, and other capital outlays will be the

a current updated list of needs in every school and every school system. That is a requirement for school systems to do," Morton said. "We know that right now the needs that are listed total over \$4.3 billion statewide. Of that, systems know where they can obtain about \$2.4 billion. But there is still about \$2 billion worth of needs that have no identified funding whatsoever. This bond issue would really help. We haven't had a bond issue in nine years – it is certainly most welcomed news." The last significant state bond issue for capital improvements in K-12 public schools was in 1998.

The total amount of the bond is not designated for K-12 public schools, as higher education proponents jockey for greater percentages of the bond for their needs also. **DENNIS HEARD**, school finance specialist with the State Department of Education, said the split of the bond proceeds between K-12 and higher education has been requested at 85 percent for K-12 schools by SDE officials. Officials at the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) have

higher education. I know higher education institutions have their needs as well. It is important to keep in mind though that K-12 doesn't have tuition increases and endowments to help. Some of the rural schools, in particular, don't have any capability at the local level," Morton said. "I think it's more incumbent that K-12 receives a high percentage from state bond issues because they don't have, in many cases, the means to help themselves. Our needs are extremely well documented." Morton said he's hopeful that all of the efforts of Gov. Riley and all of the members of the legislature will come together and culminate in a significant bond issue with K-12 receiving at the least 75% of the total of bonds sold. 🍎

Bonds are issued by the **Alabama Public School and College Authority**, a public corporation created by the Alabama legislature in 1965.

focus if the proposed bond issue is signed into law by the Governor.

DR. JOE MORTON, State Superintendent of Education, said he thinks the time is right for a bond issue and schools already know what they need to do with the money.

"I think I speak for everyone in K-12 when I say that we're thrilled at the possibility of bonds being issued. We know what our needs are. We keep

suggested public schools get 60 percent. Morton said K-12 schools have limited alternatives for funding. Although there is no predetermined split between how much will go to higher education and how much goes to K-12, Morton said there are important differences to keep in mind.

"There is always the issue of how much will go to K-12 and



AWARDS, OPPORTUNITIES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

2007 Alabama-Mississippi Section Engineering Scholarships

The Alabama-Mississippi (AL-MS) Section of The American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) is proud to announce the offering of its sixth annual Engineering Scholarship Program. It is the Section's hope that by providing such a financial incentive, more students will follow an aerospace curriculum with the intent of becoming practicing engineers and scientists. The scholarships are intended to promote careers in the aerospace industry and the pursuit of related engineering or science degrees at a university within the AL-MS Section area.

This program is targeted at graduating high school seniors who are planning to enter an ABET Accredited university in pursuit of an engineering or science degree that would reasonably lead to a career in aeronautics or astronautics and students who have already begun their college education at such an institution. Students will need to apply to the AL-MS Section Scholarship Committee.

Funds will be distributed directly to the applicant's selected university. In 2007, funds will be awarded in both the high school and college groups as follows:
1st place - \$2000, 2nd place - \$1000.

Applications can be found by [clicking here](#).

Note: Applicants must be from the AL-MS Section area and plan on attending, or currently be attending, an ABET-accredited university in the AL-MS Section area.

Deadline for applications: May 7

The Jenice Riley Memorial Scholarship

The 5th Annual Jenice Riley Memorial Scholarship is offered to K-5 elementary teachers each year as a means to enhance their teaching about Alabama and American History and citizenship and help students learn the importance of civic responsibility and citizenship. This scholarship is named and given in honor of the late daughter of **GOVERNOR BOB** and **FIRST LADY PATSY RILEY**, Jenice Riley, whose kind heart and enthusiasm for teaching is a model for all Alabama classrooms. Scholarship recipients will be honored at the Alabama Humanities Awards Luncheon in September 2007. [Click here](#) for complete information, scholarship guidelines, and application.

Deadline for applications: May 18

2007 MEGA Conference

The **Mega Conference** is for all educators from pre-kindergarten through higher education. Approximately 200 professional development sessions, presented by local, state, and nationally known speakers from all facets of the education spectrum, will cover a broad range of topics toward the goal of ensuring success for all students. The conference will begin with a general session on Monday, July 9, in the Mobile Convention Center with featured speaker **DR. PEDRO ANTONIO NOGUERA** from New York University.



[Click here](#) and look under the "Special Links" section for a registration form and preliminary program.

It's Lucky 13 for the Alabama Educational Technology Conference



The Alabama Educational Technology Conference (AETC) began in 1994 at the Birmingham Jefferson Convention Complex. **DRS. REX JONES** and **JONNIE GRIFFIN** served as the original conference coordinators, and 13 years later the conference continues to grow.

AETC was developed to help educators at all levels increase their understanding of technology in education. The required implementation of the Technology Education Course of Study in Grades K-12 has increased the demand for professional development of integrating technology into the curriculum.

This summer, AETC will provide three full days of professional development. Attendees can choose from in-depth, hands-on sessions or a smorgasbord of one-hour concurrent sessions. Each session will be led by nationally known visionaries in the technology field or by Alabama practitioners with classroom-tested strategies across the curriculum.

Mark your calendar for June 12-17 to attend this year's AETC in Birmingham. For more information and registration, [click here](#).



ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

VOL 30 • NO 8

MAY 2007

MAY	TEACHER APPRECIATION MONTH							4	5
	6	8-National Teacher Appreciation Day 10-Alabama State Board of Education Meeting						12	
	MENTAL HEALTH MONTH SAFE KIDS MONTH • PHYSICAL FITNESS MONTH							19	
	24-Alabama State Board of Education Work Session						25	26	
	27	28-Memorial Day (State Holiday)						31	
	JUNE							2	
4-Jefferson Davis Birthday (State Holiday) 14-Alabama State Board of Education Meeting						8	9		
10		11	12	14-Flag Day		15	16		
17		18	19	20	21	22	23		
24		28-Alabama State Board of Education Work Session						30	

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BOARD BRIEFS

A P R I L

- Resolution Honoring Employee of the Quarter for April-June 2007
- Resolution Honoring Maggie Rivers Upon Her Retirement as Director of Federal Programs
- Resolution in Recognition of Mercedes Jones, Guntersville High School, Guntersville City Schools, First-Place Winner of the Books-A-Million Creative Writing Contest
- Resolution Endorsing National Teacher Appreciation Week, May 6-12, 2007
- Resolution Endorsing Public School Week, April 23-27, 2007

[Click here](#) for a complete list of agenda items.

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