



ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

NEWS AND ISSUES IN ALABAMA PUBLIC EDUCATION, K-12

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2007



“TAKE 20” FOR BETTER EDUCATION

From January 22 until February 15, 2008, all certified education personnel in Alabama will be asked to “Take 20” – take 20 minutes to participate in a historic, statewide survey – voice their opinions, and make a difference in Alabama education.

In an unprecedented display of solidarity, proponents of education statewide have banded together to find out what teachers’ perceptions are of their teaching and working conditions. Officials from **GOVERNOR BOB RILEY**’s office, the Alabama Department of Education, Alabama Education Association (AEA), A-Plus, Alabama Association of School Boards (AASB), and Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS) have all endorsed the totally anonymous survey dubbed “Take 20: Alabama Teaching and Learning Conditions Survey.”

The effort is being spearheaded by the Teacher Working Conditions subcommittee of Governor Riley’s Commission on Quality Teaching (GCQT). The subcommittee is focused on identifying objective opinions on the strengths and weaknesses teachers face in their work environment. This information will be used to improve working conditions, increase recruitment and retention of quality teachers, and ultimately improve the educational experience for all students.

DR. RHONDA NEAL WALTMAN, retired assistant superintendent of student support services in Mobile and a GCQT member, said a pilot of a similar survey was conducted in Mobile, Hoover, and Talladega in the 2005-06 school year. The survey in Mobile received a hugely significant

Improving working conditions for Alabama teachers will improve learning environments for students.

participation rate of 75 percent and yielded invaluable information about what teachers are thinking.

“If you want to improve the working conditions for teachers, there’s no one better to ask than the teachers. They are the front line and the backbone of our success,” Waltman said. The pilot survey used in *continued on next page ...*

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2005 will not be identical to the Take 20 survey. The 2005 survey included about 4,200 participants in Mobile, Hoover, and Talladega public schools – 3,300 of which were teachers in the Mobile area. Waltman, who performed the internal coordination of Mobile's 2005 survey, said the high participation rate from the pilot survey can be attributed to the fact that teachers knew the survey was completely anonymous, that they could speak openly about their conditions, and that their opinions were valued and acted upon.

As a result of the 2005 survey, **CAROLYN AKERS**, executive director of the Mobile Area Education Foundation, said Mobile County schools as well as the community benefited. "Mobile County Public School System's strategic plan was written and co-owned with the community through the "Yes We Can!" Initiative. Community conversations led to a community agreement that led to the strategic plan with the district," Akers said. "One of the goals of the strategic plan centered on high-quality leadership at all levels ... thus the need for recruiting and retaining high-performing teachers. The big win was the large percentage of teacher participation."

It is obvious that education advocates across the board value teachers' opinions. Despite any political or philosophical differences among agencies, the common denominator is that teachers need to be heard. "Whatever differences the stakeholders in education may have, they put all that aside because they all know that to retain the teachers we have and to recruit people into the profession, we have to ask what it is teachers want and use the information to improve teaching in our schools," Waltman said. "If you improve conditions for teachers, you will improve learning for students."

With recruiting and retaining teachers being a critical issue, in Alabama and nationwide, Waltman applauds the GCQT's efforts to be

proactive and find out what teachers' working conditions are now and identify what is and will be necessary to keep the best educators in the classroom in the future. The idea of surveying teachers is not a new one. Several other states have participated in similar surveys, but the survey itself is just the beginning.

DR. TONY THACKER, project administrator for the commission, said one of the primary concerns of the Governor's Commission is to address the concerns of teachers that are within its control. "Working conditions are one of the variables that

The online survey should not take more than 20 minutes to complete and will consist of several domains including professional development and time management.



have been shown to greatly affect a teacher's decision-making as to whether or not to stay in the profession. We have the ability to control most of those conditions," Thacker said. "However, until we can get objective data on working conditions around the state, we cannot maximize our ability to address those working conditions."

Thacker said that in addition to the statewide study, each school that has a participation rate that meets a soon-to-be-determined threshold will receive an individual report that can be used to address issues at the local level. Non-essential demographic data will not be required for the survey as another way of guaranteeing anonymity.

Thacker said it will be an online survey that shouldn't take more than 20 minutes to complete. The survey will consist of several domains including professional

development and time management. With the results scheduled to be available by May 2008, Thacker said the GCQT will use the survey results to determine which aspects of the working conditions have the greatest impact on the teacher's decision to remain in the profession or leave. Not just a one-time shot, Thacker said the commission has approved a request for funding to conduct this survey in the future. To make needed changes, the committee recognizes the need to have longitudinal data to systematically measure working conditions in the state. ●



Working conditions are one of the variables that have been shown to greatly affect a teacher's decision making as to whether or not he/she will stay in the profession.



Huntsville Teacher wins “Education Oscar”

BONNIE GARRETT was unaware of the real reason behind the schoolwide assembly scheduled on November 7 at Edward White Middle School in Huntsville. She thought the school was receiving recognition for achievement on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) test and for making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Little did she know that **STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOE MORTON** and **SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF MILKEN EDUCATOR AWARDS DR. JANE FOLEY** attended Edward White Middle School to present her with the prestigious Milken Foundation National Educator Award.

“You thought we were here today for recognition of Edward White’s academic performance, however, we are here for another reason – to recognize one of your teachers with the National Milken Educator Award,” said Morton. “Dr. Foley is going to tell you more about the Milken Award and will reveal the name of the teacher who is receiving the award today.”

The crowd of students, teachers, state representatives, and local education officials listened intently as Foley took the stage. She told the crowd that the teacher selected would receive a financial award and an all-expense-paid trip to Los Angeles in March to participate in the annual Milken National Education Conference. Foley then asked several students to take the stage with her to hold up a dollar sign and numbers to reveal a sum of \$25,000 – the amount of money that the teacher receives as



the Milken Educator Award recipient for 2007.

“You have a teacher right here who is about to receive the 2007 Milken Educator Award and her name is ... are you ready? ... Bonnie Garrett,” Foley told the excited crowd. The students stood up and cheered, “We love you Ms. Garrett!”

“I am so surprised and humbled. I don’t know what to say,” commented Garrett.

“We were all surprised, it was a well-kept secret,” said **EDWARD WHITE MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL DR. ANN SAVAGE**. “She’s a born educator,” added Savage.

The truth was finally revealed – Bonnie Garrett was recognized by the nation’s largest teacher recognition program,

The Milken Family Foundation’s National Educator Award – the “Education

Oscar.” Garrett is Alabama’s only 2007 Milken Educator Award recipient and is a science teacher at Edward White Middle School. She teaches 7th and 8th graders science and advanced science, and her students have received awards in robotics competitions. She also works with NASA and the Marshall Space Flight Center in developing the aerospace science program at Edward White.

“Ms. Garrett has exhibited the ability to motivate the ‘difficult to teach’ students. These students experience low self-esteem and an unwillingness to learn. Because of her calm demeanor and caring attitude, all of her students work up to their potential, reaching exceptional gains in their academic performance,” wrote Dr. Savage.

Garrett also becomes a part of the Milken Educator



Network, a nationwide coalition of more than 2,100 top educators who have access to a variety of professional resources to help cultivate and expand innovative programs in

their classrooms, schools, and districts.

Each year, the Milken Family Foundation travels from coast to coast surprising teachers, principals, and specialists who are furthering excellence in education by providing \$25,000 awards during surprise schoolwide assemblies. This year, Milken will award up to \$2 million in cash awards to more than 80 exceptional, secondary educators across the country, marking the 21st anniversary of the National Notifications Tour. Alabama joined the Milken Educator Awards program in 1998 with 24 recipients receiving \$600,000 in awards. Educators are recommended without their knowledge to the Milken Family Foundation by an independent blue-ribbon panel appointed by each state’s department of education. Awards alternate yearly between elementary and secondary educators. In recognizing these outstanding teachers with \$25,000, the Foundation hopes to raise public awareness that high-quality teachers are essential to student achievement. The award was developed to reward, retain, and attract the highest quality K-12 teachers.

For more information on the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Awards, visit www.mff.org or the [Alabama Department of Education’s Web site](#).



Alabama Schools Receive More Than \$5 Million in AYP Reward Monies

Excitement filled the air as school leaders from around the state converged on the Alabama Department of Education to pick up their rewards for Advancing, Exceeding, Addressing, and Meeting the Challenge.

This year, with an increased reward budget of more than \$5 million, 316 schools received between \$5,000 and \$105,000 in reward money that goes directly to the schools to be used for instructional improvement programs and/or materials voted on by the teaching faculty. This year, the education budget provided more than twice the amount it did last year for schools that are showing great progress in closing achievement gaps and increasing student

achievement in historically low-performing populations.

Gov. BOB RILEY, who attended the event and personally congratulated each school representative present, said these rewards should serve as motivation for the recipients as well as others watching and moving in a positive direction.

“These are not only rewards for schools that are making progress, they are incentives that encourage more schools to demand excellence in the classroom,” said Gov. Riley, who first proposed offering financial rewards to improving schools as part of his fiscal year 2007 education budget. “That’s why I hope we will be able to continue increasing the funding for our school rewards initiative.”

STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOE MORTON said the monetary reward is additional compensation for a job well done to schools that have some of the most difficult academic challenges ahead of them. Despite the excitement that the reward announcements brought to the room, Morton said he realizes these rewards are just a small part of the overall picture of improving student achievement and education as a whole in Alabama.

“There is no amount of money that could truly give a good teacher what he or she is worth. The very act of educating a child is invaluable,” Morton said. “However, when it is possible to provide an incentive to a school that goes above and beyond what is already a difficult task we’re delighted to do so.” Morton said unprecedented support from Gov. Riley and the state legislature made it possible to increase reward amounts. The schools were selected based on the 2006-07 assessment data that was released in August and is based on how well schools overcame the four specifically identified challenges.



Mrs. Hattie Alexander, principal of Collins Rhodes Elementary School in Mobile County, accepts \$105,000 in AYP Rewards Money.

Reward recipients received varying amounts, but the largest reward presented was given to **MRS. HATTIE ALEXANDER**, Principal of Collins Rhodes Elementary School in Mobile County, which was rewarded a whopping \$105,000. Alexander said she was surprised by the huge amount given to the school, but was quick to point out that she was “just the recipient” of the reward. She said Collins Rhodes Elementary, Martha Thomas Elementary, and Whistler Elementary Schools recently merged and she gives credit to the principals at the other schools who helped make this achievement possible.

Alexander said being in a new building, she’s already thinking of ways the reward can help her students. “We’ve been in this building for a couple of months and the best equipment for the students takes money,” Alexander said. “I was just thinking, it would be great if our kids had a rolling computer lab and a rolling science lab.”

Ultimately, she said she’s going to get input from her faculty to decide exactly what the school spends the money on, but in the meantime, she’s just “so excited.”

ADVANCING THE CHALLENGE

School where percent of students scoring advanced in reading and math exceeded state percent scoring advanced. *(School must have at least an 80% poverty rate.)*

MEETING THE CHALLENGE

School that met AYP for two consecutive years. *(School must have at least an 80% poverty rate.)*

EXCEEDING THE CHALLENGE

School with subgroup whose percent of students scoring proficient in reading and math exceeded its state counterpart. *(School will receive a monetary reward for each subgroup.)*

ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGE

School with subgroup that closed the achievement gap in percent of students scoring proficient in reading and math by at least 15% when compared to its state counterpart. *(School will receive a monetary reward for each subgroup.)*

Alabama's Top Schools Compete for "Game Day" Championship

Since 2001 a highly motivated group of Alabama teachers, middle and high school students, and business and industry volunteers have worked hard to start a new tradition in Alabama.

This new tradition, called "Game Day," is the state championship of the **Alabama Boosting Engineering, Science, and Technology (BEST)** robotics-building competition. On Saturday, October 20, during a beautiful and clear autumn afternoon, more than 50 different teams from schools all across Alabama met at Auburn University's Lee-Scott Academy Gymnasium to compete for the state's top robotics title and a year's worth of bragging rights.

Each year, the "Game Day" competition challenges students to solve complex engineering questions. All teams receive the same kit of materials with which to build their robots. Teams have a total of six weeks to design, build, and test their robots, which must weigh less than 24 pounds, fit into a 24" cube, and be built only from the materials provided.

"In many ways, the BEST experience is like an education greenhouse; what happens during six weeks of competition would take an entire year in the classroom," says Hoover High School teacher, **MARK CONNER**, who heads the school's Engineering Academy program.

BEST is a national non-profit, all-volunteer organization based in Dallas, Texas. Its overall mission is to inspire students to pursue careers in engineering,

science, and technology. Currently, there are three different BEST competition sites (hubs) in Alabama, which are the Tennessee Valley BEST (Decatur), Alabama BEST (Auburn), and Jubilee BEST (Mobile). In 2008, Blazer BEST will be launched in Birmingham. Collectively, these four hubs will have teams from approximately 100 different schools.

Students do most of the work themselves. Teachers and professional volunteers mentor the students and assist in building robots. There are no entry fees or costs associated with the competition. Each year, corporate sponsors generously partner with the program to provide needed materials.

"I can tell you that BEST is one of the most phenomenal student competitions available," said **ANGEL FINDLATER**, a teacher at Phenix City's South Girard Middle School. "To be able to take materials – literally a load of "stuff" – and watch the students transform it into a workable, tasking robot is something that no textbook alone could teach."

All accredited middle schools and high schools are eligible to participate in the BEST program. During the "Game Day" competition, each student team competes in a series of three-minute, round-robin matches. During each match, four different robots compete, battling for a chance to advance to the next round of the competition. Alabama's winning teams will advance to the South's BEST Regional Robotics

Championship, which will be held on December 7-8. This national competition will have 50 of the top teams from across the Southeast. ●

Schools (*public and private*) that competed in Alabama BEST:

- AUBURN HIGH SCHOOL
- BILLINGSLEY HIGH SCHOOL
- BREWBAKER TECHNOLOGY MAGNET HIGH SCHOOL (MONTGOMERY)
- BRIARWOOD CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL (BIRMINGHAM)
- CALHOUN COUNTY GIFTED PROGRAM
- CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL (PHENIX CITY)
- CHAMBERS ACADEMY (LAFAYETTE)
- CHAMBERS COUNTY CAREER TECHNOLOGY CENTER
- COLUMBUS HIGH SCHOOL (GEORGIA)
- EASTWOOD SCHOOL (MONTGOMERY)
- EPISCOPAL DAY SCHOOL (GADSDEN)
- LEE-SCOTT ACADEMY (AUBURN)
- LOACHAPOKA HIGH SCHOOL
- MINOR HIGH SCHOOL (ADAMSVILLE)
- NORTHSIDE HIGH SCHOOL (COLUMBUS)
- OPELIKA HIGH SCHOOL
- RANDOLPH COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL
- SANFORD MIDDLE SCHOOL (OPELIKA)
- SHADES VALLEY TECHNICAL ACADEMY
- SMITHS STATION HIGH SCHOOL
- SOUTHSIDE MIDDLE SCHOOL (TALLASSEE)
- STANHOPE ELMORE HIGH SCHOOL
- BURNS MIDDLE SCHOOL (VALLEY)
- WETUMPKA HIGH SCHOOL



For more information, visit www.alabamabest.org, www.bestinc.org, or www.southsbest.org.

Three Alabama Public Schools Take The Blue Ribbon

U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings named three Alabama public schools as 2007 *No Child Left Behind* – Blue Ribbon Schools recently:

- **FOREST AVENUE ACADEMIC MAGNET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**, *Montgomery County Schools*
- **K. J. CLARK** (Clark School of Mathematics, Science, and Technology), *Mobile County Schools*
- **VIRGIL I. GRISSOM HIGH SCHOOL**, *Huntsville City Schools*

Less than 300 schools were selected nationwide. The *No Child Left Behind* – Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors public and private elementary, middle, and high schools that are either academically superior or that demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement to high levels.

“These schools are proving that when we raise the bar our children will rise to the challenge,” said Secretary Spellings. “It takes a lot of hard work by teachers and students to become a

Blue Ribbon school, and it’s a privilege to celebrate their great efforts.”

The No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon Schools award, one of the most prestigious education awards in the country, distinguishes and honors schools for helping students achieve at very high levels and for making significant progress in closing the achievement gap. Schools are selected based on one of two criteria:

- 1) Schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that dramatically improve student performance to high levels on state tests
- 2) Schools whose students, regardless of background, achieve in the top 10 percent of their state on state tests

No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon Schools will be honored at an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C., November 12-13.

For a complete list of schools, [CLICK HERE](#), *e-mail Dr. Tony Thacker* or call 334-353-4810.



Gov. Bob Riley congratulates students at Forest Avenue Academic Magnet Elementary School on being selected as a No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon School for 2007.

Dr. Lilli Land Named National Distinguished Principal of the Year

“**M**y foundation for education includes a commitment to young children and a passion for making sure that the curriculum is developmentally appropriate. We want to dream and take students to different heights in ways that may not have been implemented before.”

DR. LILLI LAND, principal since 2000 of the Auburn Early Education Center in the Auburn City School System, is the Alabama recipient of the National Distinguished Principal of the Year Award, which has been sponsored by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) since 1984 in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education. The state selection committee chose Land based on her exemplary leadership abilities in setting the pace, character, and quality of



the early childhood education for the 457 children at Auburn Early Education Center.

In 2005, Land’s school was named a national School of Distinction for Literary Achievement— one of only 20 public and private schools selected nationwide for this honor. The George Lucas Educational Foundation also honored her school with a visit from the senior producer and film crew, which observed model instructional practices at the site.

Land earned a B.S., an M.Ed., and a Ph.D. at Auburn University. She will represent Alabama and is one of only five principals from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Department of Defense, and U.S. territories to be recognized at the National Distinguished Principal’s Program Recognition Ceremony in Washington, D.C., this fall. ●

One of the highlights of the evening was the coverage of Alabama's recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) standings, where Alabama leads the nation in gains made in 4th grade reading.



The State of Our Schools ... Improving

Viewers across Alabama had an opportunity to catch up on what's going on in education as **STATE SUPERINTENDENT JOE MORTON** appeared as the guest on an hour-long, live broadcast of "State of Our Schools" on Alabama Public Television on October 25.

Hosted by news journalist **KEN LASS**, formerly of NBC 13 in Birmingham, the show covered several areas of importance in education from graduation rates, parental involvement, and discipline to advanced placement classes, soaring reading and math test scores, and distance learning. In addition to talking on set with Lass, Morton also fielded questions from callers all over the state. Callers from Mobile, Cullman, Slocomb, Birmingham, and other areas across the state both expressed appreciation for the direction education in Alabama is heading

and mentioned concerns for problems such as high school drop outs, bullying, students with special needs, and school accommodations.

The "State of Our Schools" platform provided an excellent opportunity for Morton to explain to a broad audience where Alabama education stacks up against the rest of the nation, as well as describe many of the initiatives that are either in place or in the process of being administered to address concerns in schools. One of the high points of the evening was the coverage of Alabama's recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) standings. Morton explained how the implementation of programs such as the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) and Alabama Math, Science, Technology Initiative (AMSTI) helped make it possible for Alabama to lead the nation in gains made in 4th grade reading—the largest gain in the history of NAEP assessments.

Initiatives to keep the best teachers in the classroom were discussed. Efforts such as teacher mentoring, the "Take 20" working and learning conditions survey, rewards offered by the state for exceptional progress in AYP assessment, and basic teacher and administrator appreciation are just a few of the initiatives Morton talked about. Although keeping good teachers in the classroom is an important goal, another goal is keeping students in the classroom. During the broadcast, APT showed excerpts from the highly acclaimed documentary **InsideOut**, produced by the Mattie C. Stewart Foundation in Birmingham and narrated by radio and advertising icon **DR. SHELLY STEWART**. The film is a gripping and very real look at prison inmates in Alabama who live with the consequences of dropping out of school. Morton referred to this documentary as a "gift" to the state of Alabama and recommends that every school in the state encourage its students to watch it.

In an effort to both keep the public abreast of what is going on with public schools as well as hear what the public has to say, Morton has agreed to have someone appear on the State of Our Schools program quarterly. Check your local listings for times and dates of the program rebroadcast. ●



Behind the scenes of the hour-long "State of Our Schools" broadcast with host Ken Lass and Dr. Morton.

GOOD NEWS IN ALABAMA SCHOOLS

Alabama Teacher Wins Nationwide Teacher Honor

Of the hundreds of thousands of public schools teachers in America, only 20 were selected to be honored by *USA Today* as exemplary educators recognized as the All-USA Teacher Team. **LINDA JARZYNIECKI**, a math teacher at Greenville High School, Butler County, is one of the chosen few.



Team members were chosen from K-12 teachers nominated nationwide. Judges considered how well teachers identify and address their students' needs and, most important, the impact they have on students and learning. Jarzyniecki, who has been an educator for more than 20 years, teaches Algebra II, pre-calculus, and AP Calculus AB. She said this honor has been one of the most rewarding events in her career. "This award has been a great honor and very humbling. The thought of being one of only 20 teachers in the nation – it's an awesome thought. I was surprised and very appreciative of this honor," Jarzyniecki said.

Jarzyniecki's named was submitted by **BUTLER COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT MIKE LOONEY**, along with letters of recommendation from her peers. Ultimately, Jarzyniecki was recognized for her ability to reach her students – a talent that she says is essential for being an effective educator.

"It's imperative that the teacher be active in the classroom at all times. You must have hands-on learning, board work, and what I call 'chit-chat' in the classroom," Jarzyniecki said. "You must have constant communication ... different activities planned that show the relevance of the work application. Active participation is also critical to keeping students interested and motivated."

All 20 teachers named to the 10th annual All-USA Teacher Team receive trophies and share \$2,500 cash awards with their schools. Jarzyniecki said her school bought a Tilapia fish farm with the award money in which she uses instruments to teach students how to take readings of nitrates, weigh fish, and provide documentation that can be mathematically analyzed.

State Board Member: Mrs. Ella Bell
Superintendent: Mr. Mike Looney
Principal: Dr. Kathy Murphy

Displaced Students to Assess Climate Change Vulnerability of Southeastern U.S.

High School Curriculum on Climate Change Available Nationally

World Wildlife Fund and the Allianz Foundation for North America recently announced a new opportunity for high school students displaced by Hurricane Katrina and now residing in nine U.S. cities to assess the climate change vulnerability of the Southeastern United States.

The project will give college-bound youth an opportunity to learn more about the science of climate change by working closely with scientists, use scientific tools for exploring and explaining regional vulnerability, and address decision makers.

Through this project, 25 students will be chosen from public schools in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Participants will receive a \$1,500 stipend and an HP laptop computer for their college studies. Selected students will also attend Climate Camp in June 2008 as well as a Youth Summit in Washington, D.C., July 7-11 2008.

This fall teachers in these cities can send a letter to seclimatewitness@wwfus.org to nominate students for the program.

Nationally, teachers can use a curriculum on climate change designed for high school students to integrate climate change into their lessons and equip students for future responsibility and leadership. It is now available from [World Wildlife Fund online](#) or *via email* by request.

Alabama Seeking Students For ATRIP

More than \$2.7 million in scholarship loans are available for high school students entering their freshman year of college and graduates seeking an alternative degree through the Alabama Teacher Recruitment Incentive Program (ATRIP). The Alabama Legislature approved the funds to recruit teachers in critical-needs areas. The money will be used to provide scholarship loans to Alabama residents who enroll at Alabama institutions with approved teacher education programs and who seek to earn certification in a critical teaching field.

The ATRIP Scholarship loans will be based on student need and academic success and will be awarded to students by May 1, 2008, for fall semester 2008.

The allocation of funds will be disbursed as follows:

- Freshman scholarship loans (100 @ \$20,000; \$5,000 x 4 years)
- Alternative Class A scholarship loans (68 @ \$6,000; \$2,000 x 3 years)
- Future Teachers of Alabama initiatives (\$272,000)
- Publicity and processing (\$44,500)

The critical needs areas include Mathematics, Special Education, General Science, and English Language Arts.

Details and applications are in the developmental stage and will be made available to high school counselors and financial aid officers at colleges with teacher education programs and will be posted on www.alsde.edu and www.ache.state.al.us Web sites.

Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) Collaborate to Enhance Teacher Preparation

Elizabeth K. Wilson, Ph.D., Kathy Shaver Wetzel, Ed.D., Casey Marler, M.A.

The recently adopted Alabama Quality Teaching Standards (AQTS) presented a new and challenging component for many institutions of higher education in the state.

The AQTS contained six new mathematics literacy standards that are to be integrated into all content areas:

- 1) Knowledge of the role that mathematics plays in everyday life;
- 2) Knowledge of the concepts and relationships in number systems;
- 3) Knowledge of the appropriate use of various types of reasoning, including inductive, deductive, spatial and proportional, and understanding of valid and invalid forms of reasoning;
- 4) Knowledge of both metric and customary measurement and fundamental geometric concepts, including shapes and their properties and relationships;
- 5) Ability to solve problems using different strategies, to verify and interpret results, and to draw conclusions; and
- 6) Ability to communicate with others about mathematical concepts, processes, and symbols.

As faculty in the College of Education at The University of Alabama (UA) prepared for this task, **DR. TONY THOMPSON**, coordinator of Secondary Mathematics Education, suggested that a mathematics literacy computer module be developed for teacher candidates in all certification areas. Upon approval by the department heads, module development began. Stipends were provided to three graduate students in mathematics education by the Dean of the College of Education, **JAMES E. MCLEAN**. Under the supervision of Dr. Thompson and **DR. VIVIAN WRIGHT**, associate professor, **CASEY MARLER**, **KIMBERLY HERNDON**, and **CAROL LIVINGSTON** began the arduous task of meeting the mathematics literacy standards by constructing the module.

The module contains tutorials, lesson plans, worksheets, and application problems. Video tutorials using Camtasia Software and Interwrite School Pad were developed to instruct teacher candidates about plotting points. Teacher candidates have opportunities to practice this concept, as well as others presented in the module. Application problems are included that illustrate how future teachers can integrate mathematics into all content classrooms.

During the review of the standards by the Subject-Area Specialist Team in Montgomery, mathematics literacy standards from the UA were met with ease. Many IHEs had the same concerns as those shared by the UA, especially in the area of presenting knowledge and skills necessary to teach math concepts in the content classroom. **DR. JAYNE MEYER**, State Director of Teacher Education and Certification, suggested that several IHEs contact the Certification Office at the UA for suggestions on meeting the standards.

The UA module was offered to the other institutions in exchange for acknowledgement of the student creators and the university. Recently, all members of the Alabama Council for Teacher Education (ALACTE) were provided with access to the module for incorporation into their own teacher education programs. The availability of the module to all IHEs illustrates the cooperative and collaborative efforts of teacher preparation programs to work together to prepare the state's finest candidates for our public school classrooms.

Alabama Schools Share \$10,000 in Recycling Awards from Weyerhaeuser Company Foundation

Alabama students are expanding school recycling programs and starting new ones, earning a total of \$10,000 as winners of the Weyerhaeuser Company Foundation's 2007 Alabama Excellence in Recycling Awards.

The ten winning schools were recently recognized for recycling newspapers, aluminum cans, boxes, used computers, printer cartridges, plastics, cell phones, and even grass clippings, and for telling the recycling story in their communities.

Each school received a check for \$1,000 from the Foundation, which sponsors the awards in partnership with the Alabama Department of Education and the Alabama Recycling Coalition.

As a part of Weyerhaeuser's partnership to promote recycling in schools, awards are given annually for new and existing recycling programs. Schools use the grant money to fund academic programs, boost existing recycling programs, or to start a recycling project.

Students, principals, and teachers from award-winning schools were recognized at a luncheon on September 13 at RSA Plaza, where the featured speaker was **ARTHUR FERGUSON** of the Southeast Recycling Development Council Inc.

The 2007 recycling award winners for existing programs were:

- Oak Hill School in Tuscaloosa
- Athens Intermediate School in Athens
- Wellborn High School in Anniston
- Paul W. Bryant High School in Cottondale
- Andalusia Elementary School in Andalusia
- Delta Elementary School at Bay Minette
- Smith's Station Elementary School in Lee County
- Baker High School in Mobile

Winners for new programs were:

- Morris Avenue Intermediate School in Opelika
- Smith's Station High School in Lee County

James Earl Jones Reads as SDE and Verizon Join Forces



Legendary actor **JAMES EARL JONES** recently read to Hampton Cove Elementary School children in Huntsville during an event that will launch a statewide partnership between the Verizon Foundation's Thinkfinity.org and the Alabama Department of Education's Alabama Learning Exchange (ALEX). Also on that day, the Department of Education announced receiving a \$79,000 grant from the Verizon Foundation to expand online

educational resources aligned to state standards, available through ALEX. These rich, interactive, engaging resources will be provided free to Alabama teachers by Thinkfinity.org.

This comprehensive program and online portal provides over 55,000 educational resources, including standards-based, grade-specific K-12 lesson plans, and other interactive tools and materials for teachers and students provided in partnership with many of

the nation's leading educational and literacy organizations. In addition to thousands of Web resources, training materials will also be developed to help teachers use ALEX to improve learning in all subject areas, from early childhood through high school, with special materials developed for teacher preparation programs.

"This grant will enable us to expand 21st Century learning tools and training through the ALEX Web portal," said **DR. RUTH ASH**, Deputy Superintendent of Instruction, Alabama Department of Education. "Accessing the right lessons and interactives at the time a teacher, parent, or student needs them is critical toward success in the classroom. Thinkfinity.org and ALEX not only motivate and engage the learner, but we expect evidence of improved learning across all subject areas through this valuable partnership."

For training and resources, contact **DR. SHANNON PARKS**, ALEX/Thinkfinity.org state administrator, Alabama Department of Education, Technology Initiatives, (334) 242-9594, or to locate and request training from a Technology in Motion trainer in your district, [CLICK HERE](#). 🍎

BOARD HAPPENINGS

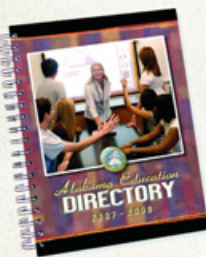
Members of the Alabama State Board of Education extract the DNA from a strawberry during the September Board Meeting at Muscle Shoals High school in Muscle Shoals, Alabama.



NOVEMBER BOARD BRIEFS

- 📄 Resolution to Adopt 2009 Budget Request
- 📄 Resolution Commending Dr. Katherine A. Mitchell for Dedicated Service to Public Education in the State of Alabama
- 📄 Resolutions in Recognition of K. J. Clark (Clark School of Mathematics, Science, and Technology), Mobile County School System; Forest Avenue Academic Magnet Elementary School, Montgomery County School System; and Virgil I. Grissom High School, Huntsville City School System, as 2007 *No Child Left Behind* – Blue Ribbon Schools
- 📄 Resolution in Recognition of Jennifer M. Berry, 2007 Advanced Placement State Scholar, Virgil I. Grissom High School, Huntsville City School System
- 📄 Resolution in Recognition of Johnny H. Hu, 2007 Advanced Placement State Scholar, Virgil I. Grissom High School, Huntsville City School System
- 📄 Resolution Endorsing the Alabama Teacher Recruitment Incentive Program (ATRIP)

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



2007-2008 Alabama Education Directories Now Available

The new 2007-2008 Alabama Education Directory is now available! Printed copies for \$20 are available by calling Claire Hall in the Alabama Department of Education's Purchasing Office at 334-242-9763. The 2007-2008 directory is also available as a FREE download by visiting the "Publications" section of www.alsde.edu. The online version is updated January, April, and July.

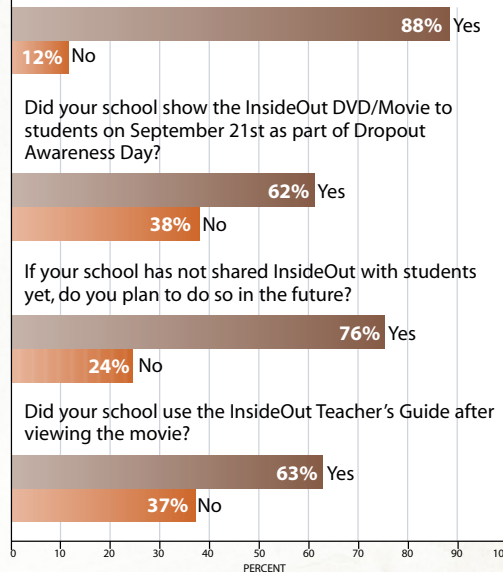
Statewide Billboards Thank Alabama Teachers

In response to Alabama's #1 ranking in 4th grade reading gains on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Governor Bob Riley and State Superintendent of Education Joe Morton chose a very public way to thank the teachers of Alabama. Across the state, billboards have been erected thanking Alabama teachers for their hard work and dedication.



InsideOut Survey Results Show Dropout Awareness Day a Success

An InsideOut DVD/Movie and Teacher's Guide were sent to every principal and counselor in the state of Alabama the week of September 10th, in advance of Dropout Awareness Day (September 21st). Did you receive the InsideOut DVD and Teacher's Guide at your school?



AWARDS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network and National School Boards Association Award recognizes a local school board for outstanding support of the arts in education. The 2008 award includes a cash prize of \$10,000 to use for arts education programs. Contact Susan Butler at sbutler@nsba.org or 703-838-6711 or Adriana Cutler at acutler@Kennedy-Center.org. **DEADLINE: Dec. 3**

The seventh annual **To Kill a Mockingbird Essay Contest** is open to Alabama students in Grades 9-12. The essay's theme should reflect the writer's perception of how life has changed in the South from the time period depicted in the novel. Contact Dr. Lesa Shaul, The Honors College, The University of Alabama, at 205-348-5557 or lshaul@bama.ua.edu. **DEADLINE: Dec. 14** (see next entry)

High School Teachers – Express yourselves! The University of Alabama's Honors College wants your take on reading and/or teaching Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The Honors College invites Alabama high school teachers to share a singular experience or memory of reading and/or teaching Lee's novel. Prose or poetry submissions will be accepted. Contact Dr. Lesa Shaul, The Honors College, The University of Alabama, at 205-348-5557 or lshaul@bama.ua.edu. **DEADLINE: Dec. 14**

The 2008-2009 Alabama Teacher of the Year application is online. For more information, contact Ann Starks at 334-242-9702 or astarks@alsde.edu. **DEADLINE: Jan. 28, 2008**

Become a NASA Explorer School during the 2008-2009 school year. Teams composed of full-time teachers and a school administrator develop and implement a three-year action plan to address local challenges in science, technology, and mathematics education for Grades 4-9. Selected schools are eligible to receive funding during the three-year partnership to purchase technology tools. The project also provides educators and students with content-specific activities that can be used within the curricula to excite students about science, technology, engineering, and math. **DEADLINE: Jan. 31, 2008**

Nominate teachers for the **All-USA Teacher Team**, which honors 20 individuals and instructional teams as representatives of all outstanding educators. Nomination forms are available [online](#). For more information, call 703-854-5890 or e-mail allstars@usatoday.com. **DEADLINE: April 30, 2008**

The National Science Teachers Association Fall Conference takes place in Birmingham - December 6-8. [Online registration](#) ends November 30 at noon. Don't miss this opportunity to attend this professional development event for science educators! For more information and details on these and other conference activities in Birmingham, [CLICK HERE](#).

N O V E M B E R

Child Safety and Protection Month
Native American Heritage Month

November 1 - National Literacy Day
November 8 - State Board Meeting/Work Session
November 12 - Veteran's Day (observed)
November 12-16 - American Education Week
November 22 - Thanksgiving (STATE HOLIDAY)

D E C E M B E R

December is Read a New Book Month

December 1 - Rosa Parks Day (*Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus in 1955*)
December 13 - State Board Meeting/Work Session
December 16 - Boston Tea Party Anniversary (1773)
December 25 - Christmas (STATE HOLIDAY)

FLORALA HIGH'S COLVIN CHOSEN ALFA'S TEACHER OF THE MONTH

Floral High School special education teacher **JOY COLVIN** says she thought she had this teaching thing all figured out upon receiving her bachelor's degree from Troy State University in 1998.

"After graduating from college, my philosophy was generally the same as the other education students – build knowledge in students and prepare them for successful lives," said Colvin.

"My idea of a successful life then was for my students to go to college and have a career. It didn't take long to realize that teaching was not only to prepare my students for college, but also to get them through daily struggles while motivating them to stay in school, and to set goals that in the end would pay off."

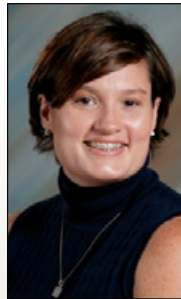
It was that awakening that prompted a change of philosophy and earned Colvin recognition as Alfa's Teacher of the Month for November. As this month's winner, Colvin will receive \$1,000 from Alfa Insurance, and her school will receive a matching award from the Alabama Farmers Federation.

"Students not only look to me to guide them toward future goals and prepare them to attain their goals, they look to me as someone they can confide in, trust, depend on, and as someone who will always be there to pick them up when they are down," says Colvin, who earned her master's from Alabama State University (ASU) in Montgomery in 2003 and is pursuing an education specialist degree and certification in educational administration from ASU.

To help build confidence among her students, Colvin takes them to local colleges as well as career fairs that focus on students with disabilities.

"Instilling a sense of pride and accomplishment in my students is something that I think is very important," she says. "I love being an educator because I can motivate and inspire students of all kinds. I do get discouraged sometimes when students who have such great potential give up on themselves. However, even just one success story makes my job worthwhile and so very rewarding."

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.



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Copies available in Braille or other forms upon request.

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