



# 83% of Alabama Schools Make AYP

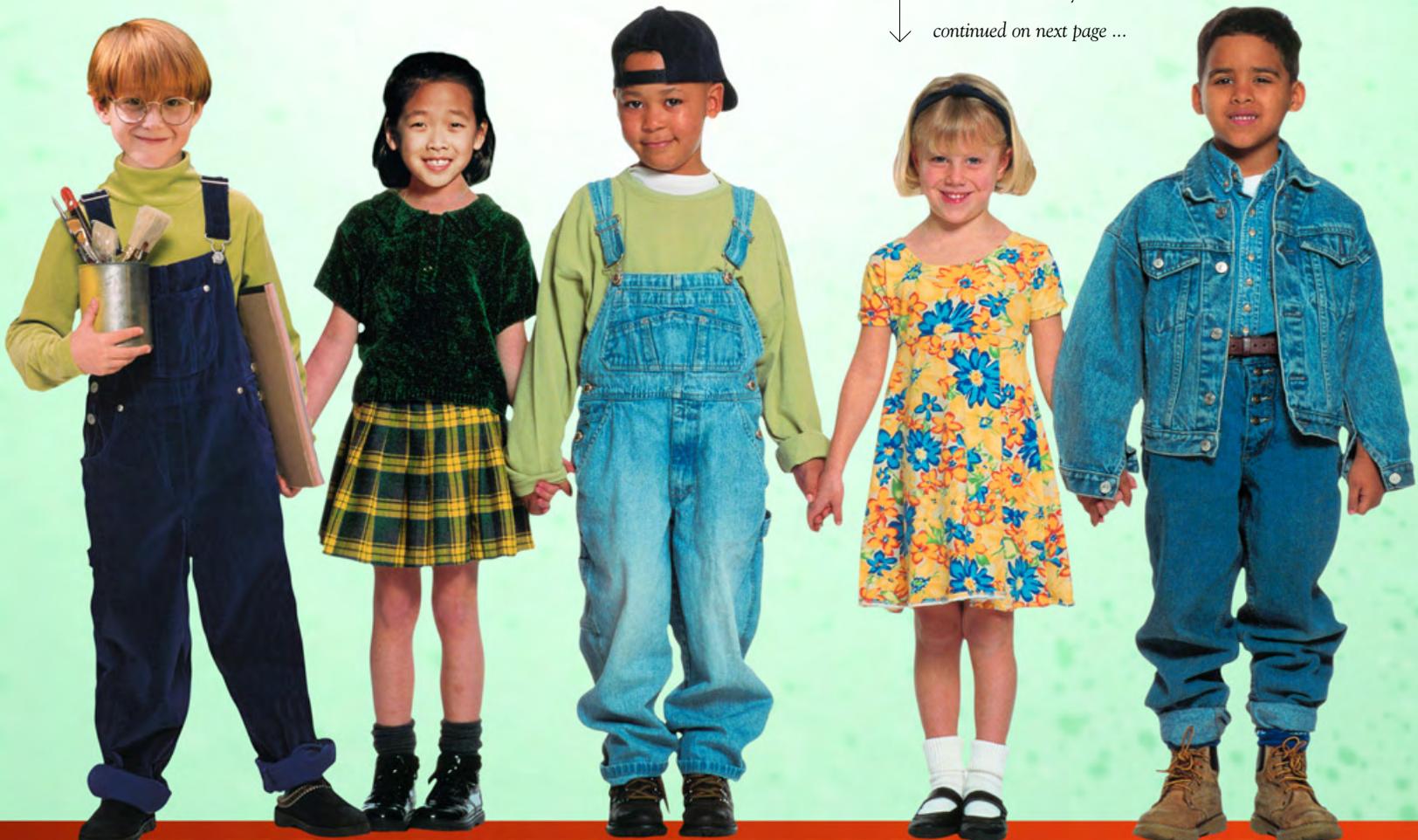
*State experiences 18 percent decrease in high-poverty schools needing improvement.*

**THE ACHIEVEMENT REQUIREMENTS** continue to rise and Alabama’s public schools respond to the challenge. In its fifth year of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) implementation, most Alabama schools continue to increase student performance and move toward reaching the ultimate goal of 100 percent student proficiency as identified by the federal *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) law.

This year, 1,140 (or 83.4 percent) of Alabama’s 1,367 schools met 100 percent of their goals to achieve AYP. The news is good for Alabama’s Title I schools (high-poverty schools that receive federal funding) as well. Alabama experienced an 18 percent reduction in the number of Title I schools identified as needing “school improvement.”

Overall findings are encouraging because the percentage of students required to meet the proficiency rate was raised even higher in 2008. These rates are known as “annual measurable objectives” and Alabama’s percentages within its proficiency goals will continue to be raised each year. The national target determined by NCLB is for all students to be proficient in reading and mathematics by 2014.

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Gov. Bob Riley said, "Alabama's schools have made tremendous progress during the past few years. Just four years ago, only 23

percent of schools met all their yearly progress goals. This year, we've raised the bar again and saw a decrease in the number of schools designated as needing

**2007-2008 AYP SUMMARY**

	PERCENT OF GOALS MET	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS		PERCENT MEETING GOALS	
		2007-08	2006-07*	2007-08	2006-07*
<b>A=93.19%</b>	100 Percent	1,140	1,117	83.39	82.25
<b>B=3.95%</b>	90 to 99.99	134	175	9.80	12.89
<b>C/D=2.12%</b>	80 to 89.99	54	42	3.95	3.09
	70 to 79.99	17	8	1.24	0.59
<b>Not Passing=0.73%</b>	60 to 69.99	12	9	0.88	0.66
	Less than 60 Percent	10	7	0.73	0.52
	<b>TOTAL SCHOOLS</b>	<b>1,367</b>	<b>1,358</b>	<b>100%</b>	

'school improvement.' If we continue to expand proven programs like the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI), Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI), and ACCESS Distance Learning, we'll increase the quality of teaching and learning across this state."

Of the 227 schools that did not make

AYP, 134 schools achieved 90-99.99 percent of their individual goals, 54 made 80-89.99 percent, 17 made 70-79.99 percent, 12 made 60-69.99 percent, and only 10 schools statewide achieved less than 60 percent.

**STATE AYP STATUS REPORT**  
**READING**

SCHOOL YEAR	Participation Goal = 85%			Met Participation Goal			Met Proficiency Goal		
	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
All Students	99	99	99	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Special Education	99	98	98	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Amer. Indian/Alaskan Native	99	99	100	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Asian/Pacific Islander	99	98	99	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Black	99	99	99	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Hispanic	99	99	99	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
White	99	99	99	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Limited-English Proficient	99	99	99	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Free/Reduced Meals	99	99	99	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

**STATE AYP STATUS REPORT**  
**MATHEMATICS**

SCHOOL YEAR	Participation Goal = 95%			Met Participation Goal			Met Proficiency Goal		
	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
All Students	99	99	99	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Special Education	99	98	98	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Amer. Indian/Alaskan Native	99	99	99	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Asian/Pacific Islander	99	99	99	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Black	99	99	98	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Hispanic	99	99	99	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
White	99	99	99	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Limited-English Proficient	99	99	98	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Free/Reduced Meals	99	99	99	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

### Determining AYP status

AYP designations for Alabama schools and school systems include student achievement and participation rates for reading and mathematics on the Alabama Reading and

Mathematics Test (ARMT) – Grades 3-8, the Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE) – Grade 11, and the Alabama Alternate Assessment (AAA) – Grades 3-8 and 11.

The AYP status of schools and school systems is based on achievement on assessments of the state's academic content standards, participation rates on these assessments, and meeting the Additional Academic Indicators (AAI) based on attendance rates for elementary and middle schools and graduation rates for high schools. Schools and systems are required to achieve 100 percent of their AYP goals

Each school and system is measured based on the performance of a variety of groups in their respective student populations. NCLB requires schools and systems to meet annual goals in the academic achievement of the overall student population and by student groups, including economic background, race/ethnicity, limited-English proficiency, and special education. Depending on the student composition, a school can have from five (minimum) up to as many as 37 goals.

Under NCLB, schools and systems must meet 100 percent of their respective annual goals in all student groups to achieve AYP. Missing just one goal prevents a school or system from making AYP.

State Superintendent of Education Joe Morton pointed out that approximately 66 percent, or 150 schools, missed making AYP by only one goal. "The state Board of Education and I have offered suggestions for improvement to the *No Child Left Behind* law," said Dr. Morton. "As the U.S. Congress considers reauthorizing the law, one change we hope is made will be to consider different consequences for schools based on the degree to which they miss AYP. That way, if a school misses AYP in just one area, it is not treated the same as a school that misses it across the board." Morton noted that over 97 percent of Alabama's schools would score an "A" or "B." Under a traditional grading scale 90-100 equals an A and 80-89 equals a B.

## SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

	2008	2007	Decrease
Number of schools identified	137	153	10%
Title I	73	89	18%
Non-Title I	64	64	0%

AYP 2008 - ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

### School Improvement

There is a 10 percent decrease in the overall number of schools identified for School Improvement when compared to last year (153 in 2007 vs. 137 in 2008). The total number of schools identified as needing improvement also continues to drop.

If a school does not make AYP for two consecutive years in the same component (reading, mathematics, or AAI), the school enters School Improvement status. Schools missing AYP for at least two consecutive years will receive specific training and technical assistance through the state Support Team, which will help schools analyze their assessment data and develop a Continuous Improvement Plan.

### Fewer Title I Schools Identified for School Improvement

Alabama evaluated 1,367 public schools, including 857 Title I schools, for the 2008-09 AYP status (based on 2007-08 data). Statewide, 137 schools have been identified for School Improvement. This year, 73 are Title I schools (compared to 89 last year) identified for School Improvement – an 18 percent decrease over last year.

### School Choice

NCLB requires Title I schools identified for School Improvement to offer School Choice to all students. This year, schools identified for School Improvement Year One may take advantage of an approved waiver request from the U.S. Department of Education for the 2008-09 school year. This waiver allows select

systems the flexibility to offer students School Choice, supplemental educational services (SES), or both. Title I schools designated for School Improvement Year Two and beyond are required to continue the School Choice option for all students and offer students eligible for free/reduced meals access to free after-school tutoring or SES. Non-Title I schools may, but are not required to, offer the same interventions.

NCLB requires local school systems to notify parents, in writing, that their child's school has been designated for "School Improvement Status." School systems must give first priority to the lowest-achieving/low-income students. Parents may contact their local school system's central office for assistance.

### Statewide Initiatives

"We still have work to do, but our statewide programs and initiatives are making a difference in Alabama's public schools," said Morton. "The Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI); Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI); and ACCESS (Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators, and Students Statewide) Distance Learning have proven track records in school improvement and student success. Graduation Coaches are in place in 24 pilot systems, and 38 local school systems are piloting Preparing Alabama Students for Success (PASS)," continued Dr. Morton. "Recently adopted programs such as FIRST CHOICE, Credit Recovery, Credit Advancement, On-Line Learning, and Credit-Based Endorsement will further support schools, teachers, and students in Alabama." ●

Accountability results, assessment results, and a listing of all schools, including their respective AYP and School Improvement status, can be found by [CLICKING HERE](#) and then under "Accountability Reporting."

### AYP By the Numbers ...

# 1,367

Number of Alabama schools evaluated for AYP status

# 1,140

Number of Alabama schools that made 100% of their AYP goals

# 227

Number of Alabama schools that did not make their AYP goals

# 150

Number of Alabama schools that missed making AYP by only one goal

# 137

Number of Alabama schools identified for School Improvement

# 10

Number of Alabama schools that achieved less than 60% of their AYP goals

# “FIRST CHOICE” Gives Alabama’s Graduates an Edge

Advanced Academic Endorsement challenges students to reach their fullest potential



ON MAY 8, 2008, the Alabama State Board of Education approved one of the most significant education reforms in many years. With a unanimous decision, the board adopted FIRST CHOICE as the standard by which Alabama students enter into high school and graduate – better prepared than any previous population of students.

FIRST CHOICE and its supporting programs were designed as a method of extracting each student’s greatest potential, while strengthening the overall curriculum, and providing safeguards to assist those who struggle academically. One of Alabama’s greatest hurdles is increasing the number of students who successfully graduate from high school and become productive members of society. The dominate purpose of public education is to prepare students for college, the workforce, and adulthood in general in the 21st Century.

In finding more effective ways to achieve this goal, FIRST CHOICE was created to increase the level of expectation for Alabama high school students; provide assistance for those students who, after completing all of their curriculum requirements, are unable to pass all five sections of the Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE); and ultimately improve the high school graduation rate and decrease the amount of high school dropouts in Alabama.

Here’s how it works. All students entering high school beginning with the 9th Grade class in 2009-2010 will be automatically enrolled to pursue the Advanced Academic Endorsement diploma. This challenges students to reach their fullest potential. It is strongly believed that far more students have the innate ability to achieve the advanced diploma than have previously enrolled. Before, students had to request to opt-in to an advanced

diploma track. Under FIRST CHOICE, they are enrolled automatically, but are given the option to opt out at the end of any year or course. This simply puts students in a position to strive for a higher standard right from the start of high school.

State Superintendent of Education Joe Morton said Alabama’s standards of education must keep pace with increased global competition.

“As the world becomes increasingly more competitive, it is important that our students not simply meet standards of the past but set their sights on higher goals. We must provide Alabama students with the tools they need to reach and exceed our expectations – and ultimately, even their own,” Morton said. “The proposed changes regarding high school graduation puts into action these increased expectations with the belief that more students can successfully complete the rigor of the Advanced Academic Endorsement than currently are attempting to. I firmly believe what we expect from students has a profound impact on what they expect from themselves.”

Along with FIRST CHOICE, new academic tools are being implemented to help guide students through their high school process with the most efficient use of time and ability.

- **CREDIT RECOVERY** allows students to prove they are knowledgeable on a segment of a course and receive course credit or earn promotion without retaking the entire course.
- **CREDIT ADVANCEMENT** allows students in-school and out-of-school educational opportunities to meet course requirements in nontraditional ways.
- **GRADUATION COACHES** serve as counselors for “at-risk” students, advising them on course work and other issues to keep them on task and increasing their odds for graduation.
- **PREPARING ALABAMA STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS (PASS)** is a comprehensive and broad-based initiative geared toward students in Grades 6-12 who are at risk of failure in school.

For more information about FIRST CHOICE, [CLICK HERE](#).

# New Deputy Superintendent's Plan for Instruction

**"Is it right for the kid in the chair?"**

**AEN STAFF RECENTLY CHATTED** with Dr. Tommy Bice, the new Deputy State Superintendent of Education.

Front and center in the office of the new Deputy Superintendent is a child's chair that is inscribed: "Thank you Dr. Bice from the children of Alexander City." For Dr. Bice, that chair symbolizes his education philosophy and the instructional focus for the Alabama Department of Education. He takes the chair to speaking engagements and starts every meeting by pointing to it. Dr. Bice's passion and commitment are evident, "It's about the children sitting in those chairs and desks," explained Bice. "If we always remember what's best for the child in the chair, how can we make wrong decisions?"



*What's it like to come from a small school system like Alexander City to a large state agency like the Department of Education?*

Exciting. The people have been wonderful and are totally committed to the profession. I did have concerns that perhaps I was moving one more step away from the children, but I have come to realize that through our work we can touch thousands of children across the state. I have been blown away by how committed they are to supporting local school systems and how hard they work.

I've approached this position as if the department is a big school system. The leadership skills, management, and planning are the same just on a grander scale.

*You have a varied background in the field of education, including special education and career and technical education.*

*How does this experience help you as an administrator?*

Each step along the way has helped me to grow as an educator and administrator. It helps me see the total picture and how all the components work together. There's a common core that's the same for all of us - serving the students of Alabama. My job is to shepherd everyone toward a central instructional focus of doing what's best for the students.

*Do you plan any big, immediate changes?*

No. There will be some minor staff reorganization and maybe moving some sections so that placements all make instructional sense. It's all about reorganizing and narrowing our focus on instruction, and pulling all the components together to serve students.

*We have statewide initiatives already in place such as ARI, AMSTI, and ACCESS that are proven success stories. How do you plan to build on that track record and keep the momentum going?*

I've met with all the sections. I have to say the people doing all this work are amazing and so passionate about what they do. There's still that common core, but each staff member brings his or her individual expertise. The results of these programs show that they're working. We need to continue to win support for them with the public and with legislators.

*What else can we do? Where do we go from here?*

With the adoption of First Choice, the opportunities for true reform in education can now become reality. I look forward to the day when learning becomes the constant and time the variable in the equation of education and we truly focus on the individual needs of all children

*Any last thoughts or comments?*

The people who work here are my greatest asset. I've been having brown bag lunches every Friday with six to eight instructional staff members. It's a chance for me to get to know them and for them to know each other. I hope this actively opens up communication among staff and break down some of the isolation we sometimes feel in a big, busy workplace. It's my job to support the staff in their work and remind them we serve one group. That's the students. The chair is a visual reminder of why we're here - to serve students. ●

# Math and Science Program Completes its Statewide Expansion

## AMSTI Meets Its Goal of Establishing 11 Sites Throughout Alabama

All AMSTI schools receive:

- Summer Institute training
- Equipment, materials, and supplies needed to conduct AMSTI classroom activities and investigations
- Regular mentoring assistance throughout the year from AMSTI math and science specialists.

### TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

in hundreds of schools across the state will now be able to take advantage of one of the most successful education initiatives in Alabama – the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI). In July, a site awarded to Athens State University by the Alabama Department of Education, became the 11th in-service region with 13 new schools joining AMSTI, making a total of 573 AMSTI schools statewide. With this addition, AMSTI meets its goal of establishing 11 sites throughout Alabama. The program has experienced incredible growth since the first pilot site was established in north Alabama in 2002.



McWane Science Center in Birmingham, and Carolina Biological Supply Company of Burlington, NC, will pilot AMSTI as the first Pre-K program in the state that places a strong emphasis on the math and science content areas.

**Dr. Mary Jane Caylor**, State Board Member, District 8, said the growth of the AMSTI program is evidence that Alabama is progressive in efforts to provide teachers with quality professional development in the key areas of math and science. “In today’s work force, having strong math and science skills are essential. AMSTI provides teachers with real, tangible, classroom experiments and a well-

rounded learning opportunity,” Caylor said. “AMSTI allows teachers to make learning fun and interactive for students. It makes it possible for students to enjoy participating in and understand math and science in new and exciting ways. We are fortunate that **Gov. Riley** and the Alabama Legislature had the vision to see the value in investing in Alabama’s students through their support of AMSTI.”

During AMSTI Summer Institutes, teachers learn how to involve students in real-life investigations and experiments. In AMSTI settings, students have more opportunities to actually participate in scientific experiments. All AMSTI schools receive three major benefits:

- 1) Summer Institute training,
- 2) The equipment, materials, and supplies needed to conduct AMSTI activities and investigations in the classroom,
- 3) Regular mentoring assistance throughout the year from AMSTI math and science specialists. State and federal funding provides these services at no cost to participating schools.



Not only has this expansion made AMSTI available in 40 percent of all schools in Alabama, but preschools will now have the benefit of experiencing this hands-on, educational program. This fall, partnerships between the Department of Children’s Affairs,



The AMSTI Pre-K Pilot trained approximately 50 teachers from across the state who currently serve students in local public schools, Jefferson County Committee for Economic Opportunity (JCCEO) Head Start, YWCA, and LaPetite Pre-School Academy. Early childhood instructors from Athens State University, The University of Alabama, University of West Alabama, University of Montevallo, and the McWane Center also participated in this training and serve as resources for program improvements.

During the initial, two-day training, teachers learned how to involve students in real-life investigations. Through AMSTI, Pre-K students will also participate in scientific experiments. Instead of teachers just reading to their students about simple

machines, students will actually build them – using pulleys, levers, wheels, and axles – and see how machines can be used to make work easier.

AMSTI Director Steve Ricks said more than 8,500 teachers attended AMSTI trainings statewide this summer. “This summer was by far the largest training AMSTI has delivered. The unique, hands-on approach to learning impacted teachers from 387 schools that attended one of the 11 AMSTI sites,” Ricks said.

A list of AMSTI schools can be found [HERE](#). For more information, contact Alabama Department of Education AMSTI Director Steve Ricks at 334-353-9151 or [CLICK HERE](#).

## All Alabama High Schools Get Granted ACCESS

### \$11 Million Provides Virtual Classrooms Statewide

#### MANY TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

returning to school this fall will be part of the first of three waves to implement the Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators, and Students Statewide (ACCESS) Distance Learning program in every Alabama high school. Gov. Bob Riley and State Superintendent of Education Joe Morton (along with the State Board of Education) have announced a plan to use \$11 million from the 2007 Education Bond Issue for statewide expansion of the ACCESS program allowing students across the state to engage in coursework, including Advanced Placement (AP), electives, and other courses, which they may not otherwise have had access to.

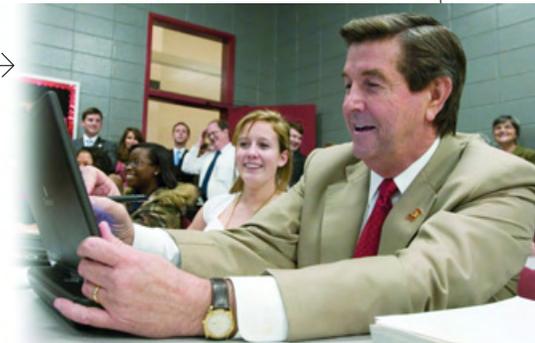


ACCESS, the on-line and interactive video conferencing (IVC) answer to geographic educational boundaries, allows

students from any part of the state to learn in a virtual classroom environment. Gov. Riley has been an advocate of eliminating boundaries and limitations in education. “ACCESS distance learning gives students all across the state learning opportunities they otherwise would never have. Alabama is blessed with some of the best teachers in the country. Our students deserve the benefit of being able to learn from these teachers whether they are in a larger, metropolitan school system or a small, rural school system,” Riley said. “This is an investment not only in technology; this is an investment in our children.”

“The support of Gov. Riley, his administration, and the legislature are absolutely vital to the educational goals we have set forth for this state. The completion of ACCESS labs throughout the state means high school students in Alabama will have opportunities not imaginable 10 years ago. They are no longer deprived of certain coursework because they happen to live in a rural area or because there are not enough students in a particular school to make up a class,” Morton said.

There are 190 high schools being added to the completed list of 371 total high schools (100 percent of schools serving Grades 10, 11, and 12) in Alabama. Currently in Alabama, 181 schools already have full ACCESS grants or IVC labs paid for by other funds. All 371 high schools will start school in August 2009 with the most up-to-date, technology-rich, learning capabilities available anywhere. ●



# Good News in Alabama Schools



## Trussville Student Knows How to Find Success

**CONGRATULATIONS ARE IN ORDER** for Hunter Bledsoe of Hewitt-Trussville Middle School in the Trussville City School System. Hunter came in 2nd place at the National Geography Bee in Washington, D.C., this summer. Hunter received a \$15,000 scholarship. Hewitt-Trussville Middle School principal **Phyllis Faust** said, "We are extremely proud of Hunter and his tremendous success in the National Geography Bee. He has represented his school and state with pride and integrity. Hunter is an outstanding young man."

Hunter's geography teacher, **Kay Ryan**, said, "Hunter is just a very special young man - when he gets interested in something or curious about something, he focuses on it until he conquers it. I think he has proven that geography is a great love. I don't think anyone here was surprised that he did so well. Hunter has been an excellent student in all his academics."

Trussville City Schools' Superintendent Dr. Suzanne Freeman said, "To place second in the National Geography Bee is spectacular! This is a great day for Hunter and Trussville City Schools! We are so proud of Hunter and his accomplishment!"

The bee aired nationally on the National Geography Channel. Photos by Rebecca Hale ©2008 National Geographic.

State Board Member: David F. Byers - District 6  
Superintendent: Dr. Suzanne Freeman · Principal: Mrs. Phyllis Faust



## US News & World Report Taps L.A.M.P as One of the Top 100 in the Nation

**U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT**, one of the nation's leading sources of news analysis and service journalism, recently gave Loveless Academic Magnet Program (LAMP) High School of Montgomery County a Gold Award and named the school one of the top 100 schools in America. U.S. News & World Report released its updated list of America's Best High Schools, which included a total of 31 Alabama high schools, that met key criteria and fall into three categories of distinction: gold, silver, and bronze.



The methodology for determining

"Best High Schools" is one that succeeds at the following: attaining performance levels that exceed statistical expectations given the school's relative level of student poverty, as measured by state accountability test scores for all the school's students in the core subjects of reading and math; schools that achieve proficiency rates on state tests for their least advantaged student groups that exceed state averages; and schools that prepare its students for college, as measured by student participation in and performance on Advanced Placement (AP) tests, which are administered by the College Board. Four Alabama schools, Bob Jones High School (Madison); Homewood High School (Homewood); Vestavia Hills High School (Birmingham); and Virgil Grissom High School (Huntsville), all received Silver, and 26 others received Bronze.

For a complete list of America's Best High Schools, [CLICK HERE](#). To learn more about a specific school or to compare schools side by side, [CLICK HERE](#).

State Board Member: Ella B. Bell - District 5  
Superintendent: Mr. John L. Dilworth  
Principal: Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Norman



## Alabama Teen Swings for Excellence

**THIS YEAR, AN ALABAMA TEEN** is proving she is 'above par' by becoming a semi-finalist for Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) Achiever of the Year Award. Recognized with a resolution by the Alabama State Board of Education, 16-year-old **Shaneadra (Shay) Graham**, a rising junior at B.B. Comer High School in the Talladega County School System and representative of The First Tee Chapter of Pursell Farms in Sylacauga, is one of ten semifinalists nationwide in the RBS Awards.

The First Tee in Sylacauga is an excellent example of community partnerships fostered by the Sylacauga Alliance for Family Enhancement (SAFE), local school systems, local governments, and local businesses and industries. The RBS Achievers of the Year Awards recognize outstanding participants for succeeding in school and their daily lives as a result of their experience with The First Tee.

Participants are selected for exemplifying one or more of The First Tee Nine Core Values by demonstrating leadership, community service, teamwork; overcoming obstacles; and improving school grades and attitude. The First Tee Nine Core Values are honesty, integrity, sportsmanship, respect, confidence, responsibility, perseverance, courtesy, and judgment. The RBS Achievers of the Year Awards were presented at the PGA Championship in Detroit, Michigan, on August 7. Shay's designation as a semi-finalist earned her a \$1,500 college scholarship.

*State Board Member: Stephanie W. Bell - District 3*

*Superintendent: Dr. Suzanne Lacey · Principal: Mrs. Linda Mcadam*

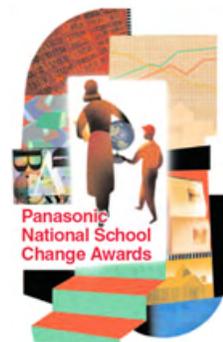
## George Hall Elementary One of Only Six Schools in America to Receive National School Change Award

**THERE ARE MORE THAN** 100,000 public schools in the United States of America. Only six were selected for the rare honor of receiving the 9th Annual National School Change Award. George Hall Elementary School, in the Mobile County School System, is one of only six schools in the nation and the only school in Alabama to earn the distinguished award – the only award of its kind.

The Panasonic Corporation of North America and the Fordham University Graduate School of Education sponsor the National School Change Awards to recognize schools that have significantly changed for the better. George Hall Elementary School's National School Change Award includes a school ceremony, a \$5,000 grant, national recognition and media coverage, subsidized participation of the school's principal in the Eleventh Annual National Principals Leadership Institute at

Fordham University, an awards presentation by the U.S. Department of Education at a special ceremony in New York City, and participation in a major national research project focusing on school change.

Amazingly, at the end of the 2003-04 school year, George Hall Elementary School was labeled a "Failing" school by the Alabama Department of Education. Since that time, a steady climb in student achievement has culminated in George Hall Elementary School making Adequate Yearly Progress the last four years; being named one of nine high-poverty, high-performing Torchbearer Schools in the state; and being one of five Alabama schools nominated for *No Child Left Behind*-Blue Ribbon Schools status.



*State Board Member: Randy McKinney - District 1 · Superintendent: Dr. Roy D. Nichols, Jr. · Principal: Mrs. Agnes Therese Tomlinson*

# Alabama Moving Forward

**ACT/ SAT scores, AYP Scores, National Assessments, Graduation Rates, all heading in the same direction – UP.**



**THERE IS A CONSISTENT THEME** that has emerged when it comes to education in Alabama – constant movement in the right direction. Some of this movement has occurred ahead of schedule, like the pending implementation of ACCESS Distance Learning in every Alabama high school, or Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI) sites being established in all 11 regional in-service centers across the state. On the other hand, some movement has been more incremental as more and more schools make AYP despite increasing levels of difficulty. In a gradual manner, graduation rates are moving in a positive direction, ACT and SAT scores are improving, and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading scores are phenomenal in Alabama.

The ACT and SAT are standardized tests that attempt to measure a student’s readiness for college-level coursework. Historically, Alabama students overall have stayed within a percentage point of the national average. This year, the ACT English/Writing combined test results show Alabama with a score of 22.3, compared to the nation’s 20.9. One of the most significant points of progress for ACT takers in Alabama is evident once the demographics are disaggregated.

Among minorities in Alabama, each group (African-American, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian-American/Pacific Islander) exceeded the national average in overall ACT scores. This

ALABAMA COMPOSITE ACT SCORES		
2006	2007	2008
20.2	20.3	20.4

accomplishment is even more notable when taking into consideration the fact that record numbers of minorities in Alabama are taking the exam and the numbers still exceed the national average. Recently released ACT data show that a record 35,590 Alabama students took the ACT last year. African-American students comprise 26 percent (9,349 up from 8,801 last year) of the test takers in Alabama. The African-American state average score of 17.2 edged out the

national average for African-American students of 16.9. Hispanic students in Alabama earned an average score of 20.3 over the national average for Hispanic students of 18.7. Both American Indian/Alaskan Natives and Asian American/Pacific Islanders earned state averages of 20.5 and 23.0 compared to the national average of 19.0 and 22.9 respectively. White students came in just shy of the national average at 21.5 percent compared to the national average of 22.1.

## ALABAMA STUDENTS EXCEL ON 2008 SAT

Alabama’s public high school students scored above the national average for the 17th consecutive year on the 2008 SAT Reasoning Test. Results released by The College Board show that SAT scores for public school students in Alabama are up from 2007 scores by 3 points in reading and 2 points in math. The College Board praised the Governor, State Superintendent, and State Board of Education for their emphasis on advanced academics for Alabama’s high school students.

2008 ALABAMA SAT SCORES		Reading	Math	Writing	of 562 compared to the national mean of
		Alabama	562	558	
	U.S.	497	510	488	

492; a math score of 558 compared to 510 nationally, and a writing score of 551 compared to the nation’s 488. Alabama’s public school students also scored above the national average on the 2008 SAT in all minority groups, including American Indian, Asian, African-American, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and other Hispanic.

“The College Board data shows Alabama is moving forward,” said **State Superintendent of Education Dr. Joe Morton**. “Our students’ scores reflect that Alabama has a plan to educate all students and that the plan is working.”

Other promising news is the number of Alabama public school students taking Advanced Placement (AP) exams increased by 24.3 percent in 2008, compared to the national increase of 8.6 percent. The number of AP test-takers who achieved a score of 3-5 on AP exams increased by 7.8 percent; again exceeding the national increase of 5.7 percent.

Morton and Alabama Gov. **Bob Riley**, have been strong advocates of promoting AP classes – both in the student population that has traditionally utilized them, as well as rural and minority students who, historically, have not taken advantage of AP courses to the same degree. The Advanced Placement Program offers high school students the opportunity to take college-level courses, and perhaps earn college credit.

For more information, [CLICK HERE](#).



RANDY MCKINNEY

## McKinney Elected as Board Vice President Board Votes for Caylor as President Pro Tem

ON JULY 8, THE ALABAMA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION elected a new vice president and president pro tem – Randy McKinney and Dr. Mary Jane Caylor, respectively.

Vice President McKinney, who represents District 1, previously served as President Pro Tem. McKinney was first appointed to the Board by Gov. Bob Riley in September of 2003 and was elected to his first full term in 2004. He completed his B.S. at the University of South Alabama, graduated

from The New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary with a Master of Religious Education degree, and earned his J.D. from Birmingham School of Law. The Orange Beach realtor is a member, deacon, and trustee of First Baptist Church of Gulf Shores.

“Mr. McKinney’s leadership on this board has been outstanding,” said State Superintendent of Education Dr. Joe Morton, who serves as Board Secretary. “He brings a calm, level-headed demeanor as well as his commitment to improving education for Alabama’s schoolchildren. We are fortunate to have board members who truly care about public education and do their best to ensure educational needs are met.”



DR. MARY JANE CAYLOR

President Pro Tem Caylor, who represents District 8, is serving her fourth term. The former superintendent of the Huntsville City Schools earned her bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees from The University of Alabama. She is a charter member and past board member of Leadership Alabama Inc., and an alumna of the first class of Leadership Alabama. Caylor established the Huntsville City Schools Foundation, was selected Superintendent of the Year by the Alabama Council of PTAs, and was selected Alabama finalist for Superintendent of the Year by the American Association of School Administrators. She holds an Alabama PTA Honorary Life Membership and is a member of Church of Nativity in Huntsville. ●

## Awards, Opportunities, and Professional Development

Interested parties committed to improving the teaching and learning of math are encouraged to attend [National Math Panel Forum](#), October 6-7, Washington, D.C., hosted by the U.S. Department of Education and Conference Board of Mathematical Sciences. Forum will focus on learning processes, instructional materials, teachers and teacher education, and research policies and mechanisms. **REGISTRATION DEADLINE: August 29**

[The Mind Trust](#) is accepting applications for its fellowship program to develop and launch initiatives to transform public education. Fellows receive an annual salary of \$90,000 for two years, benefits, and customized training. Fellowships will be awarded by December 1. **DEADLINE: September 5**

[2009 Outdoor Alabama Photo Contest](#) is open to students ages 6-18. Winning entries will be published in February 2009 issue of Outdoor Alabama magazine. Call 1-800-262-3151 for information or [CLICK HERE](#). Send entries to: Photo Contest, Outdoor Alabama, 64 N. Union St., Suite 106, Montgomery, AL 36130. **DEADLINE: October 31**

**Sylvan Resource Grants** are free, one-year site licenses (value \$599) providing unlimited access to all 35 (soon to be 45) Sylvan Dell eBooks, featuring flip viewer technology with selectable English and Spanish text and audio. The license can be used on all school computers and may be placed on secure school Web sites, enabling students and their families to login and have access from their homes. Contact [GrantCoordinator@SylvanDellPublishing.com](mailto:GrantCoordinator@SylvanDellPublishing.com) or call 877-958-2600 (toll free).

[Teacher-to-Teacher digital workshop](#) is specifically geared to techniques and practices for students in elementary grades. The digital workshop is designed as a visual complement to the much more extensive materials online at Doing What Works [www.dww.ed.gov], a new site sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and dedicated to helping educators identify and make use of effective teaching practices for teaching English Language Learners.

## SEPTEMBER

School Success Month · Library Card Sign Up Month  
Children's Good Manners Month · Food Education Safety Month

September 1 – Labor Day  
September 11 – State Board Meeting  
September 17 – U.S. Constitution Day  
September 25 – State Board Work Session

## OCTOBER

Statewide Parental Involvement Month  
Child Mental Health Month · Computer Learning Month

October 9 – State Board Meeting  
October 13 – Columbus Day / American Indian Heritage Day  
October 23 – State Board Work Session

## J.F. Drake Middle School Principal Is Recognized By Alfa

For Forrest Gump, life was like a box of chocolates. But to Debra S. Beebe, principal of J.F. Drake Middle School in Auburn, it's more like a box of Cracker Jack.



"The word 'education' is limitless," said Beebe, the Alfa Teacher of the Month recipient for July. "True educators know how to recognize the gifts in every child. Some of the gifts are more difficult to find in some children, and it is our job to keep digging. I once heard the comparison to a box of Cracker Jack: Some come with the prizes on top and are easy to find, some you have to dig a little, and some you have to dump the box to find the prize. My belief is that we all have gifts, and we have to dig to

find the gift in each child while connecting to the kids to help them be successful in a school setting and daily life."

It is a philosophy that has served Beebe well as the principal of J.F. Drake Middle School for the past 10 years and as assistant principal for four years before that. As the second principal to be so honored in Alfa's Teacher of the Month program this year, Beebe will receive \$1,000 from Alfa Insurance, and her school will receive a matching award from the Alabama Farmers Federation.

Beebe, who holds a master's degree in physical education from Chicago State University and a bachelor's degree in physical education from Eastern Illinois University, said she loves her job because there is never a "normal" day at J.F. Drake, which has 850 students.

"Children come to us from a wide variety of backgrounds, support systems, family structures, financial situations and some without their basic needs being met," said Beebe. "It is my job as the school leader to encourage my staff to connect with each child that enters the doors. Connections build trust and comfort. If a child's basic needs are not being met, then we meet them or find someone who can."

"Every decision is based on what it will do for the success of the students – every one of them," said Drake teacher Montaigne Ray Mathison. "The faculty is encouraged to plan, create and implement a teaching setting that makes students excited to get to Drake. If there is a better way, it will become the Drake Way."

During 2008, Alfa Insurance and the Alabama Farmers Federation honored one outstanding teacher from each of Alabama's eight state school board districts, as well as two principals and two private school teachers.

Application information is available under Alfa Teacher of the Month in the Ag Links section of [AlfaFarmers.org](http://AlfaFarmers.org).



### AEN EDITORIAL STAFF

**Managing Editor**  
Mitch Edwards

**Editor**  
Michael O. Sibley

**Contributing Editors**  
Ed Crenshaw | Anne P. Graham

**Graphic Artists**  
Mary Nell Shaw | Charles V. Creel

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

E-mail comments and story ideas to: [aen@alsde.edu](mailto:aen@alsde.edu)

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**District 8** | Mary Jane Caylor, President Pro Tem, Huntsville

**State Superintendent of Education and Secretary and Executive Officer of the Alabama Board of Education** | Joseph B. Morton

### AUGUST BOARD BRIEFS

- Resolution Commending Horseshoe Bend High School, Tallapoosa County School System, Family and Consumer Sciences Education Program, as the Outstanding Program of the Year for 2007-2008
- Resolution Commending Scottsboro High School, Scottsboro City School System, Jobs for Alabama's Graduates (JAG), as the Outstanding Program of the Year for 2007-2008
- Authorize Review of Teacher Education Programs, Troy University, Troy, Alabama

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

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