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OUR READERS' SURVEY!

RACE TO THE TOP

Alabama public schools are competing in the race of a lifetime – the “Race to the Top”



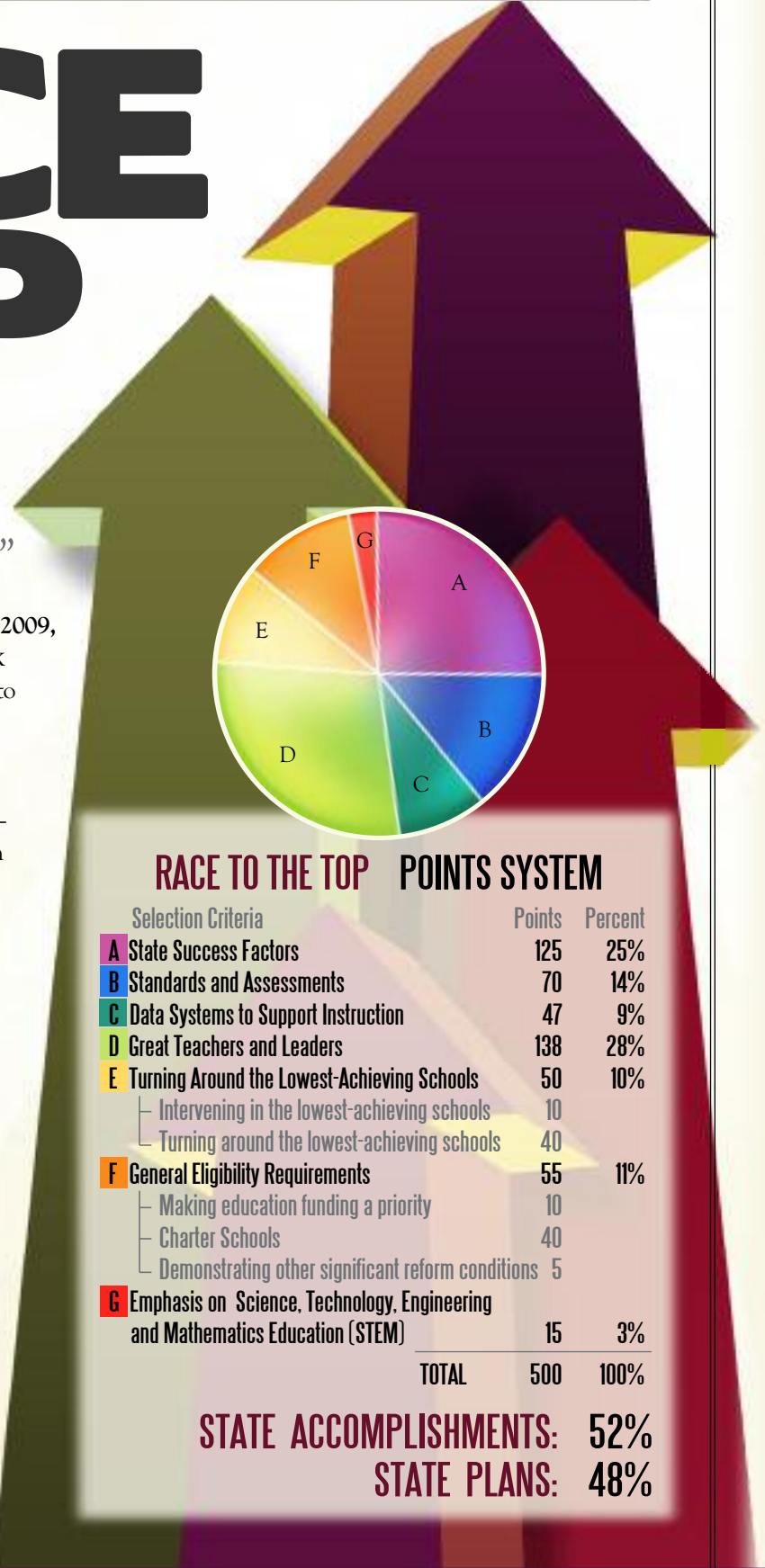
U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and President Obama

On February 17, 2009, President **BARACK OBAMA** signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) – historic legislation designed to

stimulate the economy; support job creation; and invest in critical sectors, including education. The ARRA lays the foundation for education reform by supporting investments in innovative strategies that are most likely to lead to improved results for students, long-term gains in school and school system capacity, and increased productivity and effectiveness.

A portion of the ARRA provides \$4.35 billion for the Race to the Top Fund, a competitive grant program designed to encourage and reward states that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform. These include achieving significant improvement in student outcomes, including making substantial gains in student achievement, closing achievement gaps, improving high school graduation rates, ensuring student preparation for success in college and

continued on next page ...



RACE TO THE TOP POINTS SYSTEM

Selection Criteria	Points	Percent
A State Success Factors	125	25%
B Standards and Assessments	70	14%
C Data Systems to Support Instruction	47	9%
D Great Teachers and Leaders	138	28%
E Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools	50	10%
Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools	10	
Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	
F General Eligibility Requirements	55	11%
Making education funding a priority	10	
Charter Schools	40	
Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	
G Emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Education (STEM)	15	3%
TOTAL	500	100%

STATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS: 52%
STATE PLANS: 48%

Inside this AEN

continued from front ...

careers, and implementing ambitious plans in four core education reform areas:

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy.
- Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction.
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most.
- Turning around our lowest-achieving schools.

Race to the Top will reward states that have demonstrated success in raising student achievement and have the best plans to accelerate their reforms in the future. These states will offer models for others to follow and will spread the best reform ideas across their state and across the country.

States may apply in one of two funding cycles with awards being announced in 2010.

The Alabama Department of Education (SDE) plans to apply for Race to the Top grants in phase one, with a deadline of January 19, 2010. To develop the framework for Alabama's state plan, SDE representatives worked with



consulting partners Booz & Company, based in Houston, Texas. The Gates Foundation is funding the consulting firm. Next, the SDE will involve local school systems in the final development of the state application as 50 percent of the award will be used at the local level to actualize the reform efforts across the state.

“With our state and national economy being in a recession and tax dollars being scarce, this is Alabama’s best and only chance to compete for funds to keep our educational programs on course,” explained **DR. JOE MORTON, STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION**. “If we lose momentum in our classrooms, we could well lose a generation of students and that is totally unacceptable.”

RACE TO THE TOP BUDGET RANGES

The U.S. Department of Education released guidance as to how much each state should apply for based on student population. Out of five categories, Alabama is 1 of 16 states vying for funds in Category 4, with a suggested, but not binding, range of \$60-175 million.



Category 1	➔	\$350-700 million
Category 2	➔	\$200-400 million
Category 3	➔	\$150-250 million
Category 4	➔	\$60-175 million ➔ ALABAMA
Category 5	➔	\$20-75 million

RACE TO THE TOP COMPETITION TIMELINE PHASE 1

November 18, 2009 ➔ Notices published in the Federal Register

January 19, 2010 ➔ Application deadline for Phase 1

April 2010 ➔ Winners announced for Phase 1

Feedback provided to applicants that do not win

PHASE 2


June 1, 2010 ➔ Application deadline for Phase 2

September 2010 ➔ Winners announced for Phase 2



H1N1 UPDATE

The Alabama Department of Education and the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) worked together to kick off the school clinics that began November 30th for most in Alabama, paving the way to the goal of all getting students vaccinated against the H1N1 virus. The clinics began first with the K-3 grades that were administered the nasal flu mist. Permission slips have been sent out to students, both in English and Spanish. School clinics will be held during the school day and on weekends or after school. Local districts will decide on the times and dates. More vaccines are expected in January, allowing vaccinations to begin for all students.

More information concerning the vaccines can be found at the [Alabama Department of Public Health's web site](#). Check out the Frequently Asked Questions area on the ADPH's site for answers to questions you might have or call ADPH at 1-800-ALA-1818.  *Photo by James Gathany, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

STUDENTS + PARENTS + EDUCATORS = ALABAMA SUCCESS

New Resource Will Help Alabama's Students Develop Better College and Career Plans

Across America – in every city, small town, and geographic region – students are working hard to earn their diplomas, parents are searching for better information to help their kids prepare for college, and school counselors are looking for great resources to use in their efforts to help students make wise academic and career choices.

In 2008, Alabama took an innovative step and developed a state-specific career planner for students, which was distributed to more than 65,000 eighth-graders statewide. This February, the second phase of this initiative will begin with the release of a new resource kit designed specifically for high school students

The *Alabama SUCCESS Education and Career Planners* are a series of fun, interactive guides created to assist students with graduation requirements and planning for their lives after high school. Each guide has great information on **career opportunities, salaries, and recommendations for students to use in reaching their career goals.**

“We want Alabama’s students to be fully prepared for their futures,” says ALABAMA TECH PREP COORDINATOR MARY SIMON. “This year we will distribute more than 15,000 SUCCESS Kits, which will contain a School Counselor’s Guide, Student Guide (both an English and Spanish version), 16 different career cluster booklets, a poster, and a DVD.”

Every high school in Alabama will receive 10 Alabama SUCCESS kits; middle schools will get 5 kits; and all elementary schools will receive 3 kits. Each guide, which is about the same size as a small magazine, is

colorful, easy to read, and full of useful facts and information. Each has an interest inventory to help students identify what they may enjoy doing as a career, contains a full description of Alabama’s career clusters, and has directions for creating an individualized “roadmap” for high school success.

The primary purpose of Alabama’s SUCCESS guides is to connect what students are learning in the classroom with realworld careers and postsecondary learning opportunities. Each booklet breaks down career clusters and occupations, which makes them much easier to understand. For example, in the “Business, Management, and Administration” guide, students get a real sense of the daily workload and salaries for a certified accountant, marketing manager, public relations officer, and much more.



Other information found in the Alabama SUCCESS Planners:

- Sample Education Plans
- Types of High School Diplomas Available
- Graduation Requirements
- Reality Check – What It Costs to Live on Your Own
- List of two- and four-year colleges and the programs they offer

To see a copy of the SUCCESS guides, visit the state’s [Tech Prep Web site](#), or the [Alabama Career Information Network \(ACIN\)](#).

Professional development workshops will be held for counselors, teachers, and others interested in this information starting in February 2010. Additional SUCCESS kits and guides will also be available for purchase.

To learn more about *Alabama SUCCESS*, contact [Dr. Philip Cleveland](#), Dean of Workforce Development at Wallace State Community College, or [Dr. Mary Simon](#), Alabama’s Tech Prep Coordinator. ●



Alabama's 16 Career Clusters:

Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources
Arts, Audio/Video Technology, and Communications
Education and Training
Government and Public Administration
Hospitality and Tourism
Information Technology
Manufacturing
Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

Architecture and Construction
Business, Management, and Administration
Finance
Health Science
Human Services
Law, Public Safety, Corrections, and Security
Marketing, Sales, and Service
Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics

Making Middle Grades Work: A Closer Look

Making Middle Grades Work (MMGW) and High Schools That Work (HSTW) are two Alabama Department of Education initiatives that you might not know much about. However, these two initiatives are making a big difference in Alabama schools. This month, Alabama Education News focuses on Making Middle Grades Work. The February issue will showcase High Schools That Work.



Making Middle Grades Work (MMGW) originated with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) in the late 1990's and became a focus of the Alabama Department of Education in 2000 with a pilot of two schools and has achieved much success in Alabama schools since that date. MMGW is built upon a comprehensive improvement framework of 10 key practices that schools address to raise student achievement. The goal for all MMGW schools is to increase the percentages of eighth-graders who perform at the NAEP Proficient level in core academic subjects and enter ninth grade with the skills, knowledge, and work habits to complete college-prep work without remediation. College-preparatory and career readiness are equivalent descriptors for the 21st Century employee.

DR. DOROTHY DOLASKY, Education Specialist with the Curriculum and Instruction Section of the Alabama Department of Education says, "The practicality of using the framework to focus attention in middle grades is one reason the number of schools involved in MMGW has grown dramatically in three years and is still growing. All policies, practices, procedures, people, programs, and instruction become aligned as schools deeply embed the ten key practices. We want the key practices to reach the point that they are institutionalized in the daily fabric of the school day. Often educators look for quick fixes to complex issues, and the result is often labeled as 'random acts of school improvement'."

"Making Middle Grades Work is a *framework*, not a *prescription*. Schools have the flexibility to begin embedding the ten key practices according to the school's needs. MMGW is not a 'one size fits all' philosophy because every school is unique," says Dr. Dolasky.

MMGW schools are serious about implementing the framework and see immediate small successes. Major successes lead to schools like Oak Mountain Middle School in Shelby County (which ended the year with only one student failure out of over 1200 students) and Mae Eanes Middle School in Mobile County (making Adequate Yearly Progress [AYP] the first year of implementation and making CLEAR status after just two years of implementation). In June, 2009, the Southern Regional Education Board recognized Alabama on a national level by awarding three Alabama schools - out of only seven middle schools in the nation - the Gold Award for School Improvement based on the results of the Middle Grades Assessment: Hokes Bluff Middle (Etowah County); Fairview Middle (Cullman County); and Athens Middle (Athens City).

MMGW assists middle grades schools to implement the 10 key practices that support improved academic achievement through developmentally appropriate teaching strategies including those supported by the Alabama Mathematics, Science, and Technology Initiative, and the Alabama Reading Initiative. Schools that use the "Getting Students Ready" for high school series in Algebra I, English, and science align their content and activities so that students exiting the middle grades will be adequately prepared. An on-site development workshop is the first step in getting educators ready for the change in teaching and learning that MMGW will bring. School leaders (including core subject teachers) and administration members attend this one-day professional development session. This school leadership team reviews the key practices and analyzes their data to identify strengths and weaknesses. At the end of the planning session the team completes a customized action plan based on the school's needs that they will take back to the entire staff.

On even-numbered years, MMGW schools give the Middle Grades Assessment. It is administered to eighth-grade students and is used to document and inform school improvement efforts. The assessment includes three subject tests and student and teacher surveys. It provides comprehensive school-level data that disaggregate students' achievement by their perceptions of school and classroom experiences.

Ten key Practices of MMGW:

1. **An academic core that is aligned to what students must know, understand and be able to do to succeed in college preparatory English, mathematics and science**
2. **A belief that all students matter**
3. **High expectations and a system of extra help and time**
4. **Classroom practices that engage students in their learning**
5. **Teachers working together**
6. **Support from parents**
7. **Qualified teachers**
8. **Use of data**
9. **Use of technology for learning**
10. **Strong leadership**

Making Middle Grades Work is managed at the Alabama Department of Education by a team approach that includes education professionals from the Curriculum and Instruction Section specializing in science, math, literacy, and guidance advising. This team approach allows local schools to obtain first-hand information and resources to carry out the goals of MMGW. ●

Making Middle Grades Work: Testimonials

“We have been a part of the MMGW program for the past two years. It provides our school with the framework that we use to guide our instruction and delivery on a daily basis. The research-based instructional strategies that are provided through MMGW are used on a daily basis by our classroom teachers. I honestly and truly believe that MMGW is a key ingredient in the exponential academic success our school has experienced over the past two years.”

– Wade Whitney, Jr. · Grand Bay Middle School

“We have just started implementing some of the program. Teachers and parents have all had positive things to say. Team leaders have taken the POWER OF “I” [high expectations for completing quality work] and changed it to the POWER OF “U,” meaning yoU are responsible for any Unfinished work. We are in our second week, and it seems to be working. We have put up big “Us” all over the school and the students have responded. Of course, it will be a few weeks before we can gather any real data, but so far I LOVE it.”

– Ronald D. Mayes · Sansom Middle School

“We agree with the necessity for engaging instruction. NOT engaging students is NOT an option.”

– Jeannie Solomon · Beverly Middle School

“MMGW has re-energized our school with a focus on student-driven success. The professional development the Southern Regional Education Board provides has allowed our faculty the opportunity to develop lessons and projects that engage students and help them to achieve at a more rigorous standard.”

– Kathy Brotherton · Riverchase Middle School

“Being a part of MMGW has produced so many positives in our school. We have teachers who are working together, students who are motivated and excited about the innovative strategies being used in the classroom, and administrators who hold all accountable for student learning. We are seeing students wanting to improve and taking responsibility in making it happen. Employing the key practice in our school has encouraged students to focus on their education and their future and has helped make our school a more positive, pleasant place to learn.”

– Kim Mullican · Fairview Middle School

New Teacher Education and Certification Web site Saves Time and Provides Vital Information to Teachers

Obtaining information on teacher certificates, employment opportunities, and teacher education just got easier! The Teacher Education and Certification Section of the Alabama Department of Education has unveiled a [new Web site](#) specifically created for teacher education and certification in the state.

The new site allows potential teachers to learn more about programs in the state and gives information for current teachers, in addition to many other functions. Information on Education, Certification, and Employment can be found here as well as a new search function that enables users to search for a teacher’s certificate status. “We are pleased to introduce additional on-line services like the new teacher certificate look-up feature. We hope that these services will be helpful,” said DR. EDDIE JOHNSON, Deputy State Superintendent at the Alabama Department of Education.

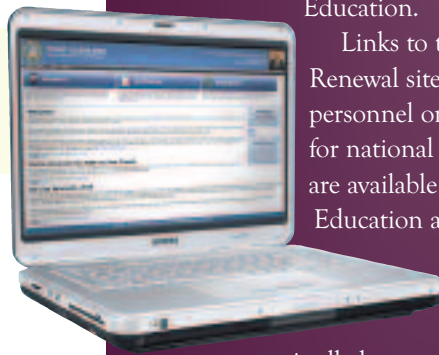
Links to the Online Certificate Renewal site (for designated school personnel only), the Alabama application for national board certification, and more are available now on the new Teacher Education and Certification Web site.

Find out how to teach in Alabama and what the Troops to Teachers program

is all about.

Beginning in January 2010, online renewals for 2010 will be available. In online renewal, the authorized central office staff at local school systems review teachers’ continuing education and other qualifications and approve qualifying teachers for renewal. The teacher is contacted via email and prompted to pay the renewal fee on line. Once this is done, the new certificate is delivered via email. Individuals who hold only a substitute license will be able to register on line and initiate the reissue of their license.

If you have a phone or other mobile device with web capability, this site is mobile-device friendly. For more information or questions, please contact tecinqury@alsde.edu. ●



JOIN THE ADVENTURE!

UAB biologists invite classrooms to be part of the journey to Antarctica

Biologists from the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) are heading to Antarctica in February 2010, and they invite classrooms, educators, and other science enthusiasts from across the country to join them on the trip via the award-winning [UAB in Antarctica Web site](#).



Charles Amsler, Ph.D. (left)
& James McClintock, Ph.D.

CHARLES AMSLER, PH.D., JAMES MCCLINTOCK, PH.D., and research assistant MARGARET AMSLER will lead the UAB team as it spends more than two months at Antarctica's Palmer Station.

"We want to share our experiences in the magical place that is Antarctica with science students," McClintock says.

"Through our UAB in Antarctica Web site, students and others everywhere have a chance to ask our research team questions about living and working on the ice." The team's work focuses on understanding how Antarctica's marine ecosystem works. It investigates the roles of small shrimp-like animals called amphipods and studies the unique characteristics of the marine plant life.

Amsler says the interactive nature of the Web site immerses followers in the Antarctic experience, making it a virtual classroom for anyone interested in learning about one of the world's most remote and unique ecosystems.

"We update the site with educational entries about Antarctica, our research, and other experiences," Amsler says. "We post photos via Flickr and videos through YouTube so that the Web site is constantly engaging our site followers with new educational material."

Educators, bloggers, classrooms, and schools interested in following UAB in Antarctica on the Web from February to May 2010 should contact [Amsler](#) or [McClintock](#) at for further details. Web site updates are scheduled to begin by the first week of February 2010.

WEB: antarctica.uab.edu
VIDEO: www.youtube.com/uabnews
TEXT: www.uab.edu/news
TWEETS: www.twitter.com/uabnews



AMSTI: Nationally Recognized for Leading by Example

The Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI), in collaboration with the Alabama Mathematics, Science, and Technology Education Coalition (AMSTEC), and the University of Alabama at Huntsville, recently hosted the national "Next Steps Institute Science Conference" in Huntsville.



AMSTI staff Nicole Martin, Dr. Carolyn Pistorius, and Leigh Boozer share about the initiative at the Next Steps conference.

Science leaders from across the United States gathered to share ideas of how to enhance district and state initiatives. Alabama was selected for the location of the conference as a result of the growing recognition of AMSTI as a leading model for reform. TRISHA HERMINGHAUS, Association of Science Materials Centers Board Chair and Anchorage Alaska Public Schools Science Support Specialist, commented, "AMSTI provides a model of what can be done when a state is committed to science education reform. The initiative is making a difference for teachers and students across the state. We look forward to learning from your commitment to lead by example."

AMSTI was also recently highlighted as a national model for math and science reform at the Indiana Science Education Symposium, hosted by the National Science Resource Center of the Smithsonian Institution and National Academies of Science. Two groups from Indiana have scheduled visits to Alabama to learn more about the initiative.

George Hall Elementary School "Dispels the Myth" and Receives a Prestigious National Award

Mobile's George Hall Elementary School was one of only four in the nation to be recognized for proving that low-income and minority students can learn at high levels. The school received the Dispelling the Myth Award from The Education Trust, a Washington, D.C., organization that seeks to influence national policy. The awards recognize schools for making significant progress in narrowing gaps in academic achievement among student groups, generating achievement levels that significantly exceed the averages in their states, or improving student performance at a rapid pace.

State Board Member: Mr. Randy McKinney, District 1

Superintendent: Dr. Roy D. Nichols · Principal: Mrs. Agnes Tomlinson

DISPELLING THE MYTH
2009 Award Recipient

State School Board Urges “Idle Free Zones” on School Campuses

Did you know the leading cause of school absenteeism is asthma? Nationally, asthma causes more than 14.7 million missed school days per year. The long-term inflammatory disease affects 13.5% of all children in the United States. Asthma and related symptoms are increased by the emissions from gasoline and diesel-powered vehicles, including greenhouse gases, ozone formation, and fine particulates.

Every day, thousands of non-school vehicles and approximately 7,539 school buses in Alabama transport a total of 692,000 students to and from schools, contributing significantly to the quality of the air.

To decrease asthma-related symptoms in Alabama and to protect the environment, the Alabama Department of Education along with the



Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) and the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) urges school districts to stop the idling of school buses and encourage other drivers to refrain from idling when around students at school. Idling increases emissions of school bus and other vehicle exhaust and increases youth exposure to unhealthy bus and other vehicle emissions.

Another benefit that will come about by urging an end to idling by Alabama's school buses is a savings of over \$135 per bus per year. An average school bus uses one-half gallon of diesel fuel for each hour of idling, and reducing idling by 30 minutes per day would save 45 gallons and \$135 per bus per year (assuming a diesel fuel cost of \$3.00/gal).

The adoption of a no-idling policy will significantly improve public health and air quality, and reduce costs and greenhouse gas emissions. The Alabama State Board of Education encouraged the new policy with an official resolution to initiate the no-idling policy on November 12, 2009. The Alabama Department of Education joins the ADPH and ADEM by urging Alabama school systems to adopt “Idle Free Zones” on school campuses, and urges all Alabamians to reduce idling on school campuses.

AEN Readers' Survey

Take a short, online survey and let us know what you think about *Alabama Education News*. Final results of the survey will be given in the March issue.

[CLICK HERE](#) and take the Readers' Survey!



Awards, Opportunities, and Professional Development

[Toyota TAPESTRY Grants for Science Teachers](#). **DEADLINE: January 18, 2010**

[C-SPAN's StudentCam 2010](#) is a national video documentary competition that encourages students to think seriously about issues that affect our communities and our nation. **DEADLINE: January 20, 2010**

[ExploraVision Awards competition](#) gives students in Grades K-12 the chance to create their own visions of the future by researching a current technology and exploring what it could be like in 20 years. Contact 1-800-EXPLOR9 or ExploraVision@nsta.org.

DEADLINE: February 2, 2010

ANNUAL ENGINEERGIRL ESSAY CONTEST. Every year the National Academy of Engineering sponsors an engineering essay contest on its EngineerGirl Web site for students across the nation. Students in Grades 3-12 can compete for cash prizes in this year's contest, entitled “Survival Design Challenge.” Guidelines and related information about the contest can be found on the [EngineerGirl Web site](#). **DEADLINE: March 1, 2010**

[Where does my food come from?](#) BEEF Educational Materials for Pre K-12 courtesy of Alabama Cattlemen's Association. Call 1-800-622-8833 or 334-265-1867 or contact Selina Knight (sknight@bamabeef.org).

Earn Professional Learning Units (PLUs) Online with professional study courses offered by Edvantia, Inc. and the Alabama Department of Education (Leadership and Evaluation Unit). For complete information and a listing of available courses, [CLICK HERE](#) and click on “ACLD-Approved Professional Studies.”

CALENDAR *of events*

JANUARY

NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARD MONTH

- Jan. 1New Year's Day
- Jan. 14Alabama State Board of Education Meeting
- Jan. 18Martin Luther King, Jr. / Robert E. Lee Birthday
- Jan. 28Alabama State Board of Education Work Session

FEBRUARY

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION MONTH

- Feb. 1-5National School Counseling Week
- Feb. 11Alabama State Board of Education Meeting
- Feb. 15George Washington/Thomas Jefferson Birthday
- Feb. 25Alabama State Board of Education Work Session

BOARD *briefs* THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2009

- Resolution in Honor of Dr. Joyce Levey, Superintendent, Tuscaloosa City Schools, 2010 Alabama/Classworks Superintendent of the Year (Board District VII)
- Resolutions in Recognition of Dilhani M. Uswatte and Stephanie Chase LeGrone as 2009 Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award Recipients.
- Resolution to Approve Teacher Education Programs, University of Montevallo, Montevallo, Alabama

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

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BAY MINETTE'S JOHN HOPE CHOSEN ALFA TEACHER OF MONTH



Teacher, Technology Student Association (TSA) advisor, bus driver, Web wizard, and doctor of philosophy – John Hope believes in being all he can be and learning all he can learn.

That's why faculty and students at Bay Minette Middle School know they can always count on Hope to teach them new ways to learn new things. And that's why Hope has been selected as Alfa's Teacher of the Month for December. As that month's honoree, he will receive \$1,000 from Alfa Insurance and his school will receive \$1,000 from Alabama Farmers Federation.

Hope is now writing his dissertation for a doctor of philosophy in Instructional Design and Development, a discipline that he credits with having helped improve his own teaching ability. "One of the big ideas in IDD is that if a learner doesn't learn, then it's the fault of the instruction, i.e., teacher, materials, delivery system," said Hope.

Hope's appetite for learning has taken him to The University of Alabama where he earned a bachelor's degree in anthropology, to the University of Montevallo where he earned a master's in education, and to the University of South Alabama where he has earned his educational specialist degree and soon a doctorate in IDD.

During 2009, Alfa Insurance and the Alabama Farmers Federation honored one outstanding teacher from 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 www.AlfaFarmers.org.