Dawes Intermediate School Science Teacher CHASITY COLLIER is the 2017-2018 Alabama Teacher of the Year!

Hoover High School Science Teacher Robert Paul McEwan Named Alternate Alabama Teacher of the Year

A Mobile County School System educator who makes it her mission to find strategies to make learning more engaging and relevant to the lives of students is Alabama's 2017-2018 Teacher of the Year. Chasity Collier, who teaches fifth-grade science at Dawes Intermediate School, will serve as the state's ambassador for public education and the teaching profession throughout the upcoming school year. Collier, who served as an Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI) coach from 2008-2015, automatically becomes Alabama's nominee for National Teacher of the Year.

“Teachers of the Year are, in fact, world changers, and we celebrate their commitment to students and to the colleagues who work alongside them each day.”

- State Superintendent of Education Michael Sentance

“This job comes with many responsibilities and opportunities to influence others positively,” Collier said. “Teachers are special people who have a calling in their lives to make all things possible for those with whom they have the opportunity to work. Their significant impact on children defines how their students feel about themselves.”

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and what they think they are capable of achieving.”

Alabama Governor Kay Ivey announced Collier was chosen to serve as the official spokesperson and representative for teachers in Alabama for the next year near the end of a celebration honoring the 12 semi-finalists and 4 finalists who were nominated for the coveted title.

Hoover High School science teacher Robert Paul McEwan was named the Alabama Alternate Teacher of the Year during the ceremony, which is held annually in recognition of these teachers’ dedication to education in Alabama public schools.

A 32-year veteran of the profession, McEwan strives daily to inspire a love of learning in his students. The Asbury University (Wilmore, Kentucky) graduate prides himself on using innovative methods to keep students’ hands and minds engaged in learning. “For many, the decision to teach is a matter of the heart; it certainly was and remains for me,” McEwan said. “When one is called to teach and is well prepared to do so, then the result is a passion-filled vocation that can be sustained for an entire career.”

State Superintendent of Education Michael Sentance said it was an honor to join in the recognition of exemplary educators who not only transform classrooms but also change the world one student at a time on a national and international scale. He said Alabama Teachers of the Year represent great teaching and provide a model for inspiring educators, in addition to those who wish to continue to grow professionally in their practice.

“Teachers of the Year are, in fact, world changers, and we celebrate their commitment to students and to the colleagues who work alongside them each day,” Sentance said. “These educators have shown our students their potential and given them a preview of the endless possibilities that will support them in college and career endeavors.”

Thanks to ALFA Insurance Collier will have the use of a 2017 Chevrolet Traverse for the next school year to travel as a spokesperson for the Alabama State Department of Education!
District Finalists Also Honored at Alabama Teacher of the Year Ceremony

In addition to the announcement of the 2017-2018 Alabama Teacher of the Year, and the Alternate Teacher of the Year, the district finalists were recognized as part of the annual ceremony, that celebrates teachers’ dedication to education in Alabama public schools.

Rounding out the “Final Four” were Charlotte D. Hartley, Montana Street Magnet School, Dothan City School System, District II; and Emily S. Sassano, Benjamin Russell High School, Alexander City School System, District II.

A graduate of Asbury College and Troy University, making a difference in the lives of others has always been at the core of Charlotte Hartley’s instruction. The National Board Certified educator uses technology to connect her students to the world and engages them in service projects that give them an opportunity to help solve problems and develop attitudes of understanding. By the end of their K-12 careers, Hartley hopes her students will be able to dream beyond their neighborhoods, appreciate the world around them, and be productive citizens of the world.

Sassano, who is National Board Certified in adolescence and young adulthood sciences, brings her interest in personal fitness to the classroom. A strong advocate for student differentiated instruction, her students are “movers and doers” as opposed to what she calls “sitters and soakers.” She has a sincere desire to end childhood obesity by directly incorporating movement, music, dancing, and hands-on activities as much as possible in each lesson she teaches. Sassano believes learning happens naturally when students take ownership for learning within the sphere of their individual learning styles and when they are having fun while doing so.

Also celebrated are the remaining 2017-2018 District Teachers of the Year:

Jamie Nicole Minoso
Daphne High School, Baldwin County
District I Secondary Teacher of the Year

Ami Reeves Brooks
Indian Valley Elementary School, Sylacauga City
District III Elementary Teacher of the Year

Dr. Tara Michelle Foster
Brighton Middle School, Jefferson County
District IV Elementary Teacher of the Year

Natalie Ann Roig
Paul W. Bryant High School, Tuscaloosa City
District IV Secondary Teacher of the Year

Jean Renae Allen
Pike Road School, Pike Road City
District V Elementary Teacher of the Year

Monica Felicia Lee Pontoo
Bullock County High School, Bullock County
District V Secondary Teacher of the Year

Erica Rutherford
Cullman City Primary School, Cullman City
District VI Elementary Teacher of the Year

Mickie Wafler Gibbs
Arab Junior High School, Arab City
District VI Secondary Teacher of the Year

Amy Foster Anderson
Crestline Elementary School, Mtn. Brook City
District VII Elementary Teacher of the Year

Malysa Ornett Chandler
Shades Valley High School, Jefferson County
District VII Secondary Teacher of the Year

Mary M. Tate
Mt. Carmel Elementary School, Madison County
District VIII Elementary Teacher of the Year

Thomasena Rose Garner
Liberty Middle School, Madison City
District VIII Secondary Teacher of the Year
Alabama Summer Food Service Program Celebrates Fifth Anniversary of Kickoff Rallies

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) marked its fifth year of bringing greater awareness to a vital initiative that is making a difference in the lives of children in need by providing access to nutritious meals when school is out.

Lincoln Elementary, Talladega County School System, was the host site for the fifth annual Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) “Break for a Plate Rally,” which aims to encourage more organizations to help fill the summer “nutrition gap” in underserved areas in Alabama.

The celebration featured remarks from Alabama Secretary of State John Merrill, Samford University Head Football Coach Chris Hatcher, Talladega Mayor Jerry Cooper, Talladega County School System Superintendent Dr. Suzanne Lacey, and representatives from Talladega College, and the ALSDE. Members of the Lincoln High School Band and cheerleading squad showcased their talents in lively performances throughout the rally.

Earlier this month, Governor Kay Ivey signed a proclamation in recognition of the Break for a Plate program. In it, she urged schools, churches, governmental agencies, college, and universities, and private non-profit organizations to sponsor feeding sites to help ensure that all children in Alabama have access to nutritious meals in the summer.

A joint effort of the Alabama State Department of Education and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Break for a Plate summer food service program provides two nutritious meals every day to all children and teens up to 18 years of age during the summer months, regardless of household income.

Nominations Open for LifeChanger of the Year Award

LifeChanger of the Year is an annual program that recognizes and rewards K-12 education professionals. LifeChangers must be K-12 educators, teachers, administrators, or any member of a school’s staff who makes a positive difference in the lives of students.

Anyone – including administrators – can nominate up to three educators per academic year for LifeChanger of the Year. Students also are welcome to submit nominations but need to have support of an adult if under the age of 18. Nominations for 2016-17 close on December 31, 2017.

The National Grand Prize Winner will receive $10,000 – a $5,000 personal cash award, and a $5,000 donation to their school. Monetary prizes will also be awarded to the National Grand Prize Finalists (4); LifeChanger Awards recipients (10); and the recipient of the LifeChanger Spirit Award, which recognizes the community who shows the most spirit for their LifeChanger and rallies behind them to recognize their positive influence and leadership. Honor Roll recipients (25) will receive a $50 Visa gift card.

Click here to learn more or to nominate.
Alabama Summer Learning Challenge

For Alabama’s students, the months away from school can result in a large loss of knowledge in reading, math, science, and other core subject matter. The Alabama Summer Learning Challenge offered by the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE), Lexile and LTS Education Systems, raises awareness of the summer loss epidemic, shares research on the importance of personalized activities and provides access to a variety of free resources to targeted summer learning.

- The Lexile-based “Find a Book, Alabama” tool offers students over 260,000 books from which to choose. This book-search tool enables individuals to build custom reading lists based on their Lexile range and/or personal interests, and checks the availability of books at the local library. The search tool includes a growing collection of English literary and informational books.

- Children, parents, and educators can also pledge to read using the “Find a Book, Alabama” tool starting May 1. We encourage all students to pledge to read.

- The Alabama Summer Learning Challenge also includes a FREE e-mail-based math skills program for children who have completed 1st through 8th grades. Parents and other summer care-givers can begin registering for the program today. Starting Monday, June 19, parents will begin receiving daily emails with fun activities and resources to help their children retain math skills acquired during the previous school year. After the program ends on Friday, July 28, parents can print an award certificate to celebrate their child's summer accomplishment!

- This summer, Stride by LTS Education Systems is FREE to all students in the state from May 1 to July 30. Prevent "Summer Slide" with a cool blend of online math, reading, language arts, and science skills practice, spectacular video games for every student interest, and peer competitions to pass the lazy summer days. Students may access the Stride learning platform online anytime, 24-7, on tablets, PCs, and Macs. Register and login at www.AlabamaSummerStride.com. LTS will provide a dedicated Parent Support Line for the Summer Learning Challenge. Parents can call in to 844-274-7474 for help with Stride.

ALSDE encourages students to take advantage of reading opportunities and technology at Alabama’s public libraries. Locations and information can be found HERE.

Downloadable Materials for Students
- Summer Reading Challenge Certificate
- Summer Math Challenge Certificate
- Summer Learning Challenge Bookmark
- Librarian Poster

Time to Prepare for a Total Solar Eclipse!

In a little over four months there will be a total solar eclipse visible from a vast swath of the United States. On August 21, the moon will block out the sun and the sky will go dark in the middle of the day. This hasn't occurred on the Continental U.S. since 1979.

Although Alabama is not on the path of totality (the 70 mile wide track of the umbra or dark shadow of the moon), the state will experience an excellent partial solar eclipse (between 80%-99% of the sun). A great deal of the sky will be blocked out by the moon, depending on location in the state. The highest level partial eclipse happens in the northeast corner of the state.

This is a phenomenal opportunity for kids and teachers. It can be connected to various aspects of science standards and is something students will remember forever. Be part of the experience and teach challenging science skills at the same time!

There are various resources for teachers across all grade levels and discipline on teaching about the eclipse:
- Teacher Toolkit
- Website with resources, classroom activities and structured lesson plans
- Map of the eclipse path.
2017 Green Ribbon Schools Named

U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos announced two schools and one university are among the 2017 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools. Across the country, 45 schools, nine districts, and nine postsecondary institutions are being honored for their innovative efforts to reduce environmental impact and utility costs, improve health and wellness, and ensure effective sustainability education.

2017 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools:
- Childersburg Elementary School, Talladega County School System
- Sycamore School, Talladega County School System
- The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)

The honorees were named from a pool of candidates nominated by 28 states and the Department of Defense, Education Activity. The selectees include 39 public schools, including five magnet schools and one charter school, as well as six nonpublic schools. Forty-four percent of the 2017 honorees serve a disadvantaged student body and 14 percent are rural.

The schools and university were recognized at the Alabama State Board of Education Meeting on May 11. The Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) worked in collaboration with the ALSDE to nominate the University of Alabama at Birmingham. All schools were celebrated with a picnic lunch provided by the Environmental Education Association of Alabama (EEAA). Green Ribbon Flags sponsored by Legacy and Partners in Environmental Education were presented to each of the schools. Special environmental-related gifts were presented by Noresco and Wave PowerSteward.

First of its Kind: Winfield City School System Earns AdvancED STEM Certification

The Alabama State Board of Education and the Alabama State Department of Education are proud to recognize the Winfield City School System as they have recently opted for the elementary and middle school to go through the AdvancED STEM Certification process. In February 2017, to ensure that relevant curriculum with continuing opportunities for cross-curricular integration was occurring, the system followed rigorous guidelines and submitted evidence online, which allowed for certification of Winfield Elementary and Winfield Middle Schools to become the first AdvancED STEM Certified schools in the state of Alabama.

In Winfield City Schools, data-driven decisions are made every day to meet the individual learning needs of diverse students and key educational practices are employed to create a dynamic educational model, focused on reinforcing high academic standards, personalizing learning opportunities through work-based learning and student choice. Authentic mastery-based projects engage students in college prep academic and career focused curriculums. Robotics is seen in the Pre-K programs and continued in a natural progression through the high school grades, as students are competitive in rocketry and robotics teams.

The AdvancED certification shows that Winfield City Schools System is providing for their students a quality education that will equip them to be life-long learners in this ever changing world.

Congrats to Winfield City Schools! The system will be honored at the June Alabama State Board of Education meeting in Montgomery.

Alabama Students Honored by National PTA

Three students from Alabama have been honored by National PTA for achievement in the 2016-2017 National PTA Reflections arts in education program. Ellie Crane, a student at the Academy for Academics and Arts in the Huntsville City School System received an Award of Excellence in Literature (Middle School); Aubrey Askew, a student at Booker T. Washington Magnet High School in the Montgomery County School System received an Award of Merit in Photography (High School); and Demi Adetona, a student at Hampton Cove Middle in Hampton Cove in the Huntsville City School System received an Award of Merit in Music Composition (Middle School). The award honors imagination, creativity and interpretation of the theme “What’s Your Story.”

“Alabama has a wealth of talented students. This program allows students from schools throughout the state that may not have arts programs the opportunity to showcase their work” Donna Russell – Alabama PTA President.

Awards of Excellence include a $200 Young Artist Scholarship, Silver medal and certificate. Awards of Merit include a Bronze medal and certificate. Both receive recognition in the national traveling art exhibit and online gallery.
While riding home after a busy day at work or school, have you ever stopped to notice the miles of utility lines in the area? These utility lines surround us every day – quietly during their important work.

Most are so well placed, that they fit seamlessly into the landscape, and really become unnoticeable as we do our daily activities. They deliver valuable resources, such as electrical, telephone, and Internet services to our homes, schools, local libraries, and workplaces.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy and Scientific American magazine, America's electric grid is made-up of more than 200,000 miles of utility transmission lines and over five million miles of *local distribution lines*. This does not include the millions of miles of underground utility lines that also exist in the U.S. today.

With such an enormous amount of utility needs, we must have skilled professionals prepared who can maintain, install, and upgrade these transmission lines efficiently.

**Climbing to New Heights: The New Professional Lineworker Education Program for Alabama Students.**

Many of the top utility companies and professional organizations in our state have partnered with the Alabama State Department of Education to offer qualified students an opportunity to participate in a new state-based *Lineworker* Education Program. It teaches the fundamentals of power line work, safety, electrical theory, climbing techniques, aerial framing and rigging, and operation of modern equipment. These positions are *in demand* throughout the United States.

Great Salary Potential - According to the online resource Salary.com, the average salary for skilled and certified line professionals nationwide ranges from approximately $67,897 - $74,521 annually (November 2016 data). Many companies also offer these professionals great benefits, overtime, and bonuses.

This new state initiative was specifically designed to introduce students to this exciting profession. Students and their parents learned about the requirements and skills needed for this career field.

Students had to remain physically fit, keep a clean driving record, and focus on improving their employability and leadership skills. Students also developed new academic skills to attempt to successfully pass the Construction and Skilled Trades (CAST) Test. Many utility organizations today use examinations, like CAST, to ensure they are hiring the best and most knowledgeable professionals.

Need more information on Alabama’s Lineworkers High School Program, please contact Alabama State Department of Education Specialist *Bryan Upton* at 334-242-9112.

This past school year was the first time Alabama has offered its Lineworker Education Program to high school students. The following schools were pilot sites:

- Montgomery MPACT
- Randolph-Roanoke County CTC
- Cleburne County
- Eufaula High School
- Chambers County CTC
- Anniston High School
- Tuscaloosa High School
- Walker County High School
- Limestone County CTC
- Clay-Chalkville High School
Alabama Teachers Receive College Board AP Summer Institute Scholarships

Seven Alabama teachers are the recipients of scholarships awarded by the College Board AP Summer Institute Scholarship Program. Nearly 1,700 teachers nationally applied for the competitive awards that cover the cost of tuition—and in some cases, expenses—for the AP Summer Institute week-long professional development.

The AP Summer Institute Program is offered annually to help support schools and divisions that are committed to building their AP Program. The scholarships awarded to the seven Alabama teachers represent an investment of $8,500.

This year’s recipients received competitive scholarships in the following categories:

• AP Fellows: For teachers at schools with 50 percent-plus underrepresented minority students and/or 50 percent-plus low-income students—$1,000 toward tuition and expenses.
• AP Rural Fellows: For teachers at schools designated as "rural" by the National Center for Education Statistics and with 50 percent-plus low-income students—$1,500 toward tuition and expenses.

Alabama AP Fellows Recipients
• Ashley Washington, Eufaula High School, Eufaula City School System
• Keshia Williams, Robert E. Lee High School, Montgomery County School System
• Miriam Matson, Munford High School, Talladega County School System
• Rosemary Lewis, Ramsay Alternative High School, Birmingham City School System

Alabama AP Rural Fellows Recipients
• Brian Cannon, Cordova High School, Walker County School System
• Casey Jones, Monroe County High School, Monroe County School System
• Brandon Gilliland, Munford High School, Talladega County School System

MEGA 2017
Alabama State Department of Education
A Professional Development Enhancement Opportunity
JULY 10-14, 2017
MOBILE, ALABAMA
MOBILE CONVENTION CENTER
RENAISSANCE BATTLE HOUSE HOTEL
RENAISSANCE RIVIERVIEW PLAZA HOTEL

AETC 2017
Alabama Educational Technology Conference
JUNE 13-15, 2017
HOOVER, ALABAMA
The Treasure in the Forest: SWEET WATER HIGH SCHOOL

Drive west along Highway 10 in south Marengo County, and you will see acres of pine forests. This is a rural, agricultural area, where farmers not only plant cotton, corn, and row crops but also trees to supply the many wood product industries in the area. Drive on down the steep Gooley hills, round the winding curve and there sits the small town of Sweet Water. The first thing you notice is the huge cotton gin on the right. You will also spot a bank, a hardware store, a gas station, a small family restaurant, and City Hall. In Sweet Water, there are no stoplights, no strip malls, and no fast-food places. Nevertheless, the 258 people who live here have something even more unique, something they call “the treasure in the forest.” To find their treasure, you have to turn off Highway 10 onto Main Street and travel a short distance through a quiet neighborhood. There, nestled among the trees is Sweet Water High School (SWHS), the town’s pride and joy. In fact, this school is so special to these people that they often use the name “Sweet Water” to mean both the town and the school!

Sweet Water was settled in the early 1840’s. In 1920, citizens built the first formal school building. From the beginning, Sweet Water High School was the hub of the town, and townspeople saw themselves as a vital part of the school. This symbiotic relationship has improved the school, just as the school has improved the community.

SWHS has 645 students in Grades K-12. These students are 41% African Americans, 58% Caucasians, and 2% other races. Over 69% qualify for free or reduced lunches. Most get to and from school on buses, coming from 10 smaller feeder communities that surround the town. This area was hit hard by the nation’s economic downturn, and recovery has been slow. Unemployment still stands around 11%, as compared to a state rate of 6%.

For the outside looking in, the buildings at SWHS may show some age; but step inside, and you will realize that something truly amazing is going on there.

“This is a happy place,” explained Mark Davis, who grew up here and graduated from the school. “If teachers feel healthy, happy and fulfilled, then they will relate to students in that way. In turn, if students feel healthy, happy, and fulfilled, they will take great pride in their school and feel safe. They will also be excited about learning.”

At Sweet Water High School, students and teachers work as a family, guided by high expectations, cooperation, trust, and respect. A dedicated, diverse administration and faculty set the tone for excellence. Phyllis Mabowitz, the principal, arrived about ten years ago to serve first as a teacher and then the instructional coach. She stayed on to take the helm of the school three years ago. On the other hand, Mark Davis, the assistant
A SPARK Along The Way

The Alabama State Department of Education Honors Teachers and the Leaders they Inspired

Many successful people, in various walks of life, have been influenced by the dedication, instruction, or maybe just the kind words of a teacher. During May 8-12, as the nation celebrates ‘Teacher Appreciation Week’ the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) honors educators who have provided a ‘Spark Along the Way’ to individuals who have become some of Alabama’s most notable residents.

The ALSDE sought comments from leaders from various areas of government and industries across Alabama to ask how a teacher impacted their lives. Whether a taskmaster who held them accountable for an assignment or a motivator who made them feel the sky is the limit ALSDE asked for personal thoughts and stories about those teachers who inspired them to become the leaders they are today.

We received replies from several leading Alabamians to include (in no particular order): Dr. Jack Hawkins Jr, Chancellor, Troy University; Congresswoman Terri Sewell; Governor Kay Ivey; singer Shane Owens; Dr. Shelley Stewart, Mattie C. Stewart Foundation and O2 Communications; and Mayor Todd Strange, City of Montgomery.

The ALSDE will showcase the submissions received at our annual “Teacher of the Year” celebration on May 10 and throughout the week on social media and on various ALSDE publications.

We encourage all parents, grandparents, and citizens to tell others of their ‘Spark along the Way’ so we may always honor educators who helped us to be our best, learn some of the essentials of life, and guided us into adulthood.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield Award Grants

In the commitment to help prevent childhood obesity, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama’s Be Healthy School Grant Program is awarding $250,000 in grants to 26 schools statewide enrolling students in grades K through sixth for the 2017 - 2018 school year. The Alabama State Department of Education congratulates these schools for their implementation of school-based health and wellness programs.

The schools emphasize increased exercise, nutrition education, and parental involvement during the school year. More than 12,200 students will benefit from the program. Each school is receiving a grant up to $10,000. Since 2012, Blue Cross has awarded over $1,019,800 in 114 Be Healthy School Grants statewide impacting more than 57,500 students.

To see full list of awards, CLICK.
2017 ACCESS Awards Winners Announced

Honorees to be recognized at the Alabama Educational Technology Conference

The administrators of the Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators, and Students Statewide (ACCESS) Virtual Learning Program extend congratulations to the winners of the annual ACCESS Awards.

The winners will be recognized and presented awards during the opening session of the 2017 Alabama Educational Technology Conference (AETC) held June 13-15, 2017, at Hoover High School. Winners were selected by a panel from nominations sent in by the three ACCESS Support Centers at The University of Alabama, Troy University, and the Madison City School System.

This year’s winners are:

**ACCESS Administrator of the Year**
Donna Calhoun, Assistant Principal, Thomasville High School
Thomasville City School System

**ACCESS Teacher of the Year**
Kayla Combs, Teacher, Retired from Baldwin County Schools
Teacher for the Troy Support Center

**ACCESS Counselor of the Year**
Scherrie Banks, Counselor/Coordinator, Montgomery County Virtual School Program, Montgomery County School System

**ACCESS Facilitator of the Year**
Jennifer Reeves, Prattville High School
Autauga County School System

**ACCESS Student of the Year**
Isabella Sanders, Elmore County High School
Elmore County School System

The awards will be presented on Wednesday, June 14, 2017, at 8:30 a.m. in the Hoover High School Gymnasium.

ACCESS was launched on November 1, 2004. The distance education initiative offers opportunities for students in their local community schools that would not have been possible without a blended learning model that provides resources, connectivity, and professional development. Among the criteria for the ACCESS Awards are work and diligence that had a positive impact on teaching and learning using the ACCESS program; improvement of the quality of education in Alabama's schools; work that reflects the mission and goals of the nominee's school; and utilization of technology to advance education in Alabama.

2017 Marbury Technology Innovation Award Winners Announced

A group of K-12 educators, administrators, and support personnel are among the winners of the 14th annual Marbury Technology Innovation Award.

The award, sponsored by the Alabama State Department of Education, honors Chiquita Marbury’s invaluable years of service as a technology innovator in Alabama by recognizing educators who are exemplary models of technology teachers and leaders.

Transforming learning one child at a time was Marbury's daily pursuit. After 13 years, this passion is continued through the Marbury Technology Award program. The winners who reflect the Marbury standard of excellence are:

**Superintendent**
Dr. Ed Miller, Gadsden City School System

**Technology Coordinator**
Shawn Hudgins, Cleburne County School System

**Central Office Administrator/Leader**
Daniel Whitt, Madison City School System

**School Administrator**
Amanda Jones, Mary B. Austin Elementary School
Mobile County School System

**Elementary Teacher**
Chad Burdett, Oak Mountain Middle School
Shelby County School System

**High School Teacher**
Melanie Brooks, Walter Wellborn High School
Calhoun County School System

Nominees were judged based upon the following five criteria: Innovation and Creativity, Impact on Teaching and Learning, Leadership, Teamwork, and Scholarship. The awards panel rated teacher attribute scores for the highest level of excellence in each criteria. Each of the award winners will receive a trophy of recognition at the 2017 Alabama Educational Technology Conference (AETC) held June 13-15 at Hoover High School. The awards ceremony will take place during the Opening Session at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, June 14, 2017.
College Board AP Summer Institute Scholarships Awarded

Seven Alabama teachers are the recipients of scholarships awarded by the College Board AP Summer Institute Scholarship Program. The AP Summer Institute Program is offered annually to help support schools and divisions that are committed to building their AP Program. This year’s institute will be held in Washington, DC. The scholarships awarded to the seven Alabama teachers represent an investment of $8,500. Recipients are:

- Ashley Washington, Eufaula High School, Eufaula City School System
- Keshia Williams, Robert E. Lee High School, Montgomery County School System
- Miriam Matson, Munford High School, Talladega County School System
- Rosemary Lewis, Ramsay Alternative High School, Birmingham City School System
- Brian Cannon, Cordova High School, Walker County School System
- Casey Jones, Monroe County High School, Monroe County School System
- Brandon Gilliland, Munford High School, Talladega County School System

Marengo High School Graduates all Receive Scholarships

Dr. Michal Grant Robinson, Instructional Services Section, gave the commencement address to the 2017 graduates of Marengo High School in Dixon Mills, Alabama. There were 23 graduates, all of whom received awards and scholarships. The valedictorian is Kahlilisha Sharnaye Pritchett and the salutatorian Lindsey Carey. Marengo High School is Dr. Robinson’s alma mater. She stated that “It was an honor to be invited to speak to the 2017 graduates of Marengo High School. The last time I spoke there was as valedictorian of my graduating class long ago. Marengo High School is fortunate to have Mr. David Miller as principal, whose vision is to invite former graduates to share their journeys with the graduates.”

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Samantha Maynor, K-5 teacher in Madison County, who was selected for the 2017 AGI/ExxonMobil STEM & Geoscience Teacher Leadership Academy for K-5 teachers; and Amara Alexander, middle school teacher in Madison City, who was selected for the 2017 AGI/ExxonMobil STEM & Geoscience Teacher Leadership Academy for middle school teachers. The academies will be held this summer in Houston, Texas. This year the set of applications was extremely competitive, so being a successful candidate was an accomplishment. Going into their ninth year, these academies continue to have a significant impact on how Earth and Space Science teaching is done throughout the United States. By accepting a position in the academy, teachers commit to presenting geoscience and STEM professional development workshops to other teachers within the summer 2017 and/or 2017/2018 academic year. The expertise that Ms. Maynor and Ms. Alexander gain will help improve instruction in Earth and Space Science courses in the state.

Have you installed the ALSDE APP?

Get directions, department contact information, calendar dates, and links to important news right on the app! Go ahead and download it now!
principal is a native of Sweet Water, who returned to teach and then assist with the leadership of the school. The faculty is a mixture of both veteran and younger teachers. Some are former SWHS graduates, while others have taught in different Alabama school systems and in other states. About half of the teachers live within the city limits or in feeder communities nearby. The other half drive from larger towns around the area. These teachers choose to bring their own children with them, resulting in an even higher investment in the school.

SWHS believes that academics and extracurricular activities are like “a great marriage:” each should motivate and strengthen the other. Sweet Water’s proud tradition of athletic success is well documented with nine football state championships, five baseball state championships, and one indoor track championship. Each year, the school’s Robotic team places in their district and travels to Auburn to compete in the state finals. The Drama Team’s performances are major productions that showcase incredibly talented children to sold-out audiences. All of these activities serve to support, reinforce and enrich the academic program.

“It’s a partnership,” Mabowitz explained. “Our community, our parents, our children, and our teachers work together and support each other. We begin to lay the strong, academic foundations in our K-4 classes. Here, it’s not about test scores but about preparing our students for life.”

At Sweet Water, school spirit and school pride go hand-in-hand. Knowing this, administrators use both in an interesting way. After recommending trendy, inexpensive, purple and gold uniforms and outerwear for students, school leaders noticed that these small changes had also boosted self-pride that improved behavior and produced a more positive school culture.

To people in this area, Sweet Water High School is much more than just a building for learning. This community school means family and caring and helping one another and doing the right thing. It may be “small,” and it may be “rural,” but all who live here know that they have something very special, a priceless “treasure in the forest.”

The Drama Team presented “Alice in Wonderland” in March. Jack Mims (l) and Anna Grace Norris (r) played Tweedledum and Tweedledum. (Photo by Patricia Jones)