It’s just a couple of weeks – and in some school systems, days – into the start of the 2014-2015 academic year. Undoubtedly administrators and teachers in your area have worked diligently throughout the summer to ensure the school year is a success!

Several key initiatives implemented over the last couple of years are helping to transform Alabama’s classrooms into learning environments where instruction is individualized and personalized in order to better prepare students to be college and/or career ready when they graduate from high school.

To help parents, teachers, and community members gain a better understanding of these important topics, State Superintendent of Education Dr. Tommy Bice is embarking on “The Future of Public Education” tour.

The 12-city tour will be a great opportunity for parents, educators and members of the community to learn more about PLAN 2020, the Alabama College- and Career-Ready Standards (CCRS), student testing, accountability, and other programs that are reforming education in Alabama. Attendees will also get to hear, firsthand, the great work educators and students are doing, and discussing the exciting work taking place in the 2014-2015 school year and beyond.

Dr. Bice will be joined by business and industry partners, representatives from Alabama’s Community Colleges, and other education stakeholders, as such connections are important to the education system and the local and state economy. Presentations will be made from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m., followed by a question and answer session from 7:00 to 7:30 p.m.

The tour includes stops in each of the eight State Board of Education board districts and will kick off Tuesday, August 26, at Lee High School in Huntsville. Please share the information with parents, teachers, civic and business leaders and your communities by posting this link on your system’s website and social media pages.

**Coming to a City Near You:**

**“The Future of Public Education” Tour**

Tuesday, Aug. 26  
Lee High School, Huntsville

Thursday, Aug. 28  
Demopolis High School, Demopolis

Tuesday, Sept. 2  
Opelika Middle School, Opelika

Thursday, Sept. 4  
George Washington Carver High School, Birmingham

Tuesday, Sept. 9  
Carver High School, Montgomery

Tuesday, Sept. 16  
Florence High School, Florence

Thursday, Sept. 18  
Dothan High School, Dothan

Tuesday, Sept. 23  
Tuscaloosa Career & Technology Academy, Tuscaloosa

Thursday, Sept. 25  
Helena High School, Helena

Tuesday, Sept. 30  
Selma High School, Selma

Thursday, Oct. 2  
Baker High School, Mobile

Tuesday, Oct. 7  
Jacksonville High School, Jacksonville
The Alabama State Department of Education has created a toolkit of resources designed to inform, help raise public awareness and garner support of the Alabama College- and Career Ready-Standards (CCRS) in your community.

The toolkit includes key messages, talking points, frequently asked questions and sections to help foster communication with parents, business leaders, students and educators.

An electronic version of the toolkit is now available on the ALSDE website.

**Tools You Can Use:**

**The CCRS Toolkit**

Unaccompanied minors from Central America who have recently crossed the United States-Mexico border are a prevalent topic in the news as of late. Since January 1, 2014, more than 500 immigrant children have been placed with sponsors in Alabama, according to recent statistics from the Department of Health and Human Service’s Office of Refugee Resettlement.

As such, you may be receiving media inquiries regarding educational services for immigrant children who are living with sponsors zoned for your school system.

The U.S. Department of Education states: All children in the United States are entitled to equal access to a public elementary and secondary education, regardless of their or their parents' actual or perceived national origin, citizenship, or immigration status. This includes recently arrived unaccompanied children, who are in immigration proceedings while residing in local communities with a parent, family member, or other appropriate adult sponsor.

Click for an electronic fact sheet that identifies existing resources that may be helpful to communities enrolling immigrant children, including newly arrived immigrant children. It also answers Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

In addition, here is a refresher on the ALSDE’s enrollment procedures, including a copy of the new enrollment form that went into effect July 1.

**Did You Know?**

**PR Professionals Outnumber Journalists 4 to 1**

This gap is twice as wide as it was in 1980 and growing. In this competitive environment attracting the attention of a journalist is harder than ever.

To adapt, Marc Cowlin, Content Marketing and Global Public Relations Manager at Meltwater, suggests public relations professionals need to focus on building targeted pitch lists and engaging journalists to ensure pitches don’t get lost in the clutter. This can be done in many ways. Cowlin says, your best bet is through technology.

Learn more about employing new tactics here.

**Fact Sheet: Educational Services for Immigrant Children Recently Relocated to Alabama**

**Resource: Back-to-School Event Checklist**

**Alabama GRIT** – Graduate Ready. Impact Tomorrow, is encouraging school systems to share information on the CCRS, assessments, and resources during Back-to-School activities such as Open House.

GRIT suggests reaching out to communities and parents to offer ideas and support for executing ACCRS-focused activities. Activities might include teacher-presenters, model lessons, identifying resources, and involving business partners.

Find a back-to-school checklist and sample event agenda created by GRIT here.

**Resource: Inventory Tool Allows Districts to Take Stock of Assessments**

Are educators, parents or students in your school system expressing concerns that too much testing is taking valuable time away from teaching and learning? The Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts is a tool district leaders can use to take stock of their assessments and assessment strategy, and do so from a student perspective. This new resource from Achieve is free and can be modified by school systems to outline strategies to address their specific results. Find out more here.
Twitter has been around since 2006, but that doesn’t mean we’re all using it the way we should. For example, keeping your tweets around 100 characters leaves room for your Twitter followers to retweet your message and their own comments. In addition, sharing photos of innovative instruction taking place in the classroom or other events from the school day provides more opportunities for social engagement. This infographic from Passion Digital is a nice reminder of some best practices organizations and individuals should follow on Twitter.

Reminder: The CCRS of the Week are Just a Click — or Tweet — Away!

The most current Alabama College- and Career-Ready Math and English Language Arts Standards of the Week can be found on Mondays here on the ALSDE website.

You can also share, retweet and pin the standards, which are posted weekly on the ALSDE Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest pages.

Alabama School Public Relations Association – Offering PR Tips and Professional Development!

Have you considered joining a local, state-led School PR association? Check out ALSPRA - a diverse group of school PR professionals charged with the positive promotion of local schools! Don’t miss out on great information, networking and knowledge about how to promote the best of public schools!

Awards: Your School District Could Receive a $100,000 Award!

Does your district’s communication team have a working relationship with your superintendent that other districts admire, envy, or try to emulate? If so, you might be a perfect candidate to receive this year’s National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) Leadership Through Communication award.

This award is a partnership among Blackboard, American Association of School Administrators (AASA), and NSPRA. The winning school district will receive a $10,000 grant courtesy of Blackboard to improve their scholastic and communication efforts. The superintendent and communication professional will also receive free registration, lodging and transportation to AASA’s National Conference on Education in San Diego from February 26-28, 2015 and NSPRA’s National Seminar in Nashville from July 12-15, 2015.

The system’s commitment to communication is practiced and encouraged at every level and responsive, two-way communication is a priority. Learn more about the award program or apply now!

Alabama Attendance Awareness Month

September has been proclaimed “Alabama Attendance Awareness Month” in support of a national campaign to increase the understanding of educators, parents, students and community partners of the major impact school attendance has on the successful rates, both academically and behaviorally, of our students.

By promoting “Alabama Attendance Awareness Month”, students and parents can become more aware of the crucial need to be at school, on time, every day. The ALSDE will distribute tips and tactics, sample social media posts, to public information officers, as well as links to materials and toolkits to use in your districts.

Resources offer great materials to assist your LEA. These free materials may be used in newsletters, websites, social media pages and other external communications to help spread the word about attendance awareness during September and throughout the year!