Leaders are responsible for keeping all constituents informed about progress we are making towards our goals. Currently, the ALSDE is committed to creating a strategic plan that will lead the great state of Alabama in providing an equitable education for every student regardless of demographics. As part of this work, our team has been reviewing ESSA guidance throughout the year. We recently received the Revised State Template for the Consolidated State Plan “The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act.” We take this work very seriously, and we are working to ensure we take advantage of the flexibility provided under the Act. We anticipate opportunities to speak with LEAs to learn how to better serve as we develop the strategic plan and incorporate the guidance under ESSA.

It is critical that we all seek opportunities to improve professionally. I recently had an opportunity to attend a plenary session and a small group session of Chief State School Officers featuring Betsy DeVos. She shared her views on education and her outlook for the future.

In her opening comments, Secretary DeVos shared that she views public education as all forms of education that prepares our children to contribute to society. She knows and acknowledges that the majority of our students are in public school settings, and we need to make sure they have the greatest options possible. She shared that she is passionate about education because students represent 100 percent of our future and it is important to help them develop to their greatest potential.

ESSA PLAN
When asked about the future, Secretary DeVos believes that within four years, collectively, we will be able to help more children find the right education setting and the right option for them. She sees her roles as helping to support SEA’s work. ESSA gives us new ways to support students in our states.

The personality of one state is different than another state. There is no one size fits all. Innovation occurs when there is freedom to test things out.

Secretary Devos also shared that CCSSO recently released an Equity Plan that should also guide states in providing for all students. She indicated that the USDOE will help close gaps by funding different areas and sharing best practices. These practices should allow us to champion what is working well and allow us to do things that are helping students achieve. We should try things that we haven’t tried before in public education. She encouraged other states to replicate or adopt a version of the practices that are proving successful. She encouraged us to call things out in a new way that are not working well.

BUDGET
When asked about the budget, Secretary DeVos indicated that she did not have a lot of details on the budget at this time. She shared that generally the focus of the budget is on helping support students where it can be most impactful. Title I funds will be held steady and increased. IDEA funding is increased. Secretary Devos said these are two places that the federal government can help.

When asked what we should prioritize for ESSA Submission in April and September, Secretary DeVos shared that she encourages those states who are ready to submit in April to do so. States should move ahead, timely and swiftly, to positively impact kids faster. USDOE will be there to provide technical support. Put a plan together consulting with the stakeholders in your group: parents, teachers, civic leaders. Consider what might be new and different to address the kids in our state.

When asked to share her thinking about choice, Secretary DeVos stated that, conceptually, USDOE would like to enhance what is going on in the states. In the course of developing specific policy proposals, they will include the stakeholders that were not involved in the past and positively impact kids faster. USDOE would like to enhance what is going on in the states. In the course of developing specific policy proposals, they will include the stakeholders that were not involved in the past and positively impact kids faster. USDOE would like to enhance what is going on in the states.

“We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do that. Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven’t so far.” – Ron Edmonds

continued on next page...
are involved and implement it in a way that will make sense for states. Twenty-five states have private school choice options. Some programs are working well, and others are so small they are hardly making a dent. It is important that we familiarize ourselves with the strategies that are making a difference for students.

INNOVATION AND PERSONALIZED LEARNING
Secretary DeVos started out by stating that the federal government cannot innovate. Individual and small groups at a grassroots level should innovate. The federal government should remove barriers and burdensome legislation towards innovative ideas. She said if you share stories about innovation in your state, it would take several days because of the great things you are doing. The department wants to encourage more and more latitude to try new things and try new approaches to meeting student needs and share those that are working well.

INSPIRATION
When asked what inspires her, Secretary DeVos shared a story about a student, Dennisha, who had failed third grade twice and was kicked out multiple times, and well on the track to drop out. She talked about how she mentored this student and the path her life has taken as a result of an opportunity for choice that led to a better education. Dennisha has now engaged the rest of her siblings in choice, and as a result of the education they are receiving, they are doing well. These children are just a poignant picture of why Secretary DeVos cares about kids and the future of our country. “One of my main priorities as Secretary is to ensure that states and local school districts have clarity during the early implementation of the law,” stated Secretary DeVos.

SMALL GROUP SESSION
During the small group session with the Chief State School Officers, Secretary DeVos was questioned about Title I, Title II, Title IV, Affordable Care, and IDEA. Her message remained consistent. ESSA will give us more opportunity to do what we believe is best for students at the state level. She reiterated that she was unable to provide any depth about where we are from a budget standpoint as things are changing daily.

ALABAMA REPRESENTATIVES’ AND SENATORS’ VISITS
During the CCSSO Legislative Conference, Dr. Jeff Langham, Federal Liaison for the ALSDE, and I were also afforded opportunities to share our educational priorities with our legislators.

The Education Priorities for the 115th Congress included:
• Appropriations
• Higher Education Act
• Perkins Career and Technical Education Act
• ESSA implementation
• Deregulation
• School Choice

We will keep you updated on these areas as information is made available. Please consider reviewing Edweek to remain abreast of the latest information from the 115th Congress.
Office of Student Learning

Instructional Services, Robin Nelson continued...

Cursive Writing
The 3rd Grade Cursive Writing Act (Act#2016-352) was signed on May 11, 2016 by Governor Robert Bentley. This Act puts into statute that instruction in handwriting shall include cursive writing so that students are able to create readable documents through legible cursive handwriting by the end of the third grade. The Act also requires each local board of education to certify on an annual basis, beginning with the 2016-2017 school year, that the applicable schools in the school district are meeting the cursive writing requirement. Curriculum and proficiency in cursive writing will be defined by each district.

In order to certify to the State Board of Education that the cursive writing requirement has been met, each LEA will use the link below and complete the form including the names of the applicable schools in their district along with the respective proficiency percentages in cursive writing. This form will be submitted by the end of June of each year, beginning with June 2017.

If you have any questions about the Cursive Writing Act, contact Mr. Martin Dukes at (334) 353-1191.

Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate
The 2016-2017 Advanced Placement Fee Reduction worksheet is available on the Alabama State Department of Education Web site. Students qualifying for free- and reduced-priced lunches may receive a reduction for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate examinations for the 2017 test administration. Information for receiving reimbursements for exams and the accompanying reimbursement forms are available on our website. Contact Dr. Michal Robinson at (334) 353-1191 for more information.

Advanced Placement Ordering Webinar was held on February 22, 2017. The recorded webinar and associated presentation document are available on the Instructional Services webpage. All AP Coordinators and staff involved in ordering, invoicing, and processing reimbursements are encouraged to view the webinar. Guidelines for how to order late-testing exams for students participating in the May 5 Alabama track meet without incurring the $45 per exam late-testing fee are clarified in the recording. Contact Dr. Michal Robinson at (334) 353-1191 for more information.

Library Media
Voting for the 37th Annual Alabama Camellia Children's Choice Book Awards are drawing near! The deadline to register to participate in this year's event is April 1st with all votes due by April 20th! Divisions include Grades K-1, 2-3, 4-5 Nonfiction, 4-5 Fiction, 6-8 Nonfiction and 6-8 Fiction. The Camellia Awards are voted on and chosen by the vote of Alabama students. To see this year's nominees, CLICK HERE. This year's winners will be announced during the May First Friday webinar (May 5th).

For registration and voting information, contact Dede Coe.

School Library Month is the American Association of School Librarians' celebration of school librarians and their programs. Every April school librarians are encouraged to host activities to help their school and local community celebrate the essential role that strong school library programs play in transforming learning. The 2017 theme is Because School Libraries Empower Students. The official hashtag for this year's celebration is #slm17

In conjunction with School Library Month, Alabama Library Media is hosting a Screen Cast Challenge! Be sure to visit the Alabama School Library Media Facebook page at to view and vote for your favorite Library Media Specialist created entry!

Awards, Grants, and Scholarships
In 2010, the Alabama Legislature enacted legislation urging the State Superintendent of Education to develop and implement a program to grant high school diplomas to qualifying World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War veterans. A qualified veteran or the family of a veteran may request this diploma option. In response to this legislation, the local superintendent should designate a person at each school to search through the high school archives to verify that the person for whom the request is being made was a student who left school before completing graduation to join the military during World War II, the Korean War, or the Vietnam War. Should the information not be available in some form of school records, adequate documentation could include a report card, a newspaper clipping, or notarized documentation from two verifiable sources that can confirm school attendance. The key factor is that the designated school official has evidence that satisfactorily verifies the veteran's attendance at the high school. Upon the verification of school records of attendance, the veteran must provide the appropriate military discharge documentation that indicates an honorable discharge. For deceased veterans killed in action, the veteran's next of kin must supply verification of death. Should the veteran not have the appropriate discharge documentation, he or she should contact the county veterans' service officer for information about how to obtain the necessary papers. If you have any questions about the high school diplomas for veterans, contact Dr. Carolyn Townsend at (334) 353-1191.

Social Studies
This is National Arab American Education Month and National Financial Literacy Month.

The Alabama Holocaust Commission will be observing “State of Alabama Yom HaShoah Commemoration – Days of Remembrance” at the State Capitol building April 25, 2017.

a) Survivors and some of their descendants will meet with the members of the legislature and governor for this great event.
OFFICE OF STUDENT LEARNING

Instructional Services, Robin Nelson  continued...

b) The public is invited to attend. Location: Alabama State Capitol, Old House Chamber, 600 Dexter Avenue, Montgomery, AL. Time: 11:00 am.

c) Birmingham Community Yom HaShoah Commemoration--April 23, 2017, 3:00pm, Temple Beth-El, 2179 Highland Avenue, Birmingham, AL. Program Details: "Stories Remembered & Retold: The Stories of Deceased Holocaust Survivors as Told by Their Local Descendants"

d) Holocaust Recommended Workshops and Scholarships

e) For more information contact ncarson-mullins@alsde.edu or education@bhamholocausteducation.org or rebecca@bhamholocausteducation.org

Alabama History Day Contest: 2017 Theme: “Taking a Stand in History” National (Alabama) History Day challenges students to research a topic within a yearly theme, and then create a competitive entry as a paper, exhibit, documentary, website or performance. Students compete either as individuals or with a group, and in Junior (6-8) or Senior (9-12) divisions. State winners move on to National competition each June at the University of Maryland. Contact Dr. Paul Fox, Auburn University Montgomery, P.O. Box 244023, Montgomery, AL 36124, or (334) 244-3383.

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Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI), Karen Porter

Join the Alabama Reading Initiative, the Alabama Literacy Alliance (ALA), and Barnes & Noble bookstores in Alabama to support of The Great Pre-K Book Drive in Alabama. Barnes & Noble has partnered with the ALA to ask customers to shop in-store or on-line through Easter, April 16, 2017, to donate one or more Pete the Cat books to pre-K classrooms in Alabama. All donated books will go to sixty-one pre-K classrooms across the state. In addition to the books donated by customers, Barnes & Noble stores have agreed to donate a portion of the overall sales during this period to the ALA in order to purchase additional books to be given to over two hundred Alabama pre-K classrooms. The ARI encourages all educators, community groups, and families to actively support this worthy cause! A successful drive can increase literacy opportunities throughout Alabama and put free books in the hands of pre-K children throughout the state. Ask at any Barnes & Noble for details on how you can help the book drive. If you have additional questions, please contact Karen Porter, ARI Program Coordinator and Alabama Literacy Alliance board member.

The ARI will offer a Retooling Internship for Reading Specialists the week of May 1-5, 2017. This professional learning opportunity is a carefully designed five-day coaching internship that will assist reading specialists who serve Tier II schools in increasing their expertise in reading content knowledge as well as their skill in facilitating adult learning in their schools. There will be multiple internship locations across the state. Each location is limited to 14 participants. An email containing information regarding eligibility, locations, and registration was sent to all ARI central office contacts, principals, and reading specialists via email. Statements of Intent from all interested participants are due by April 5, 2017. Questions may be directed to Mrs. Vickie Chappelle or Mrs. Karen Rutledge-Bell.

In order to obtain feedback regarding the 2016-2017 professional learning communities for Tier II schools, the ARI sent a survey to all Tier II reading specialists and principals in Tier II schools. We encourage everyone receiving the survey to complete it as soon as possible. Your perspective is important to us in our efforts to support student reading achievement and to support educators effectively. If you have not received a survey and you are a reading specialist or principal in a Tier II school, contact Mrs. Reeda Betts or Mrs. Vickie Chappelle and request the survey link. The deadline for completion of the survey is Monday, April 17, 2017.
April is testing month across the state of Alabama. Students will participate in ACT Aspire (Grades 3-8 and 10), the Alabama Alternate Assessment (Grades 3-8 and 10-11), and the ACT with Writing (Grade 11). In order to create a positive testing experience, the Student Assessment staff will work to solve individual and collective issues at all levels. *Please keep in mind, the 95% participation rate is still a federal requirement of the state, LEA, and school. Make sure to encourage all students to test. Remember, students absent during the scheduled testing dates can make-up test on the LEA established make-up days.

ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs:
As of March 17th, 7,200 online test sessions have been completed. Alabama is projected to assess about 22,000 English Learner (EL) students this year. As the testing window begins to draw to a close, systems are busy getting all EL students tested and materials packed up for shipping. The next phase will be Data Validation. Data Validation allows schools to check the demographic data such as name, grade, and date of birth for each student tested to ensure accurate reporting.

**ACT with Writing**
ACT Online Prep is provided to all eleventh grade students. With the new ACT Online Prep program, a student can prepare anywhere, anytime online and with a mobile app. The student can take a practice test to find out what his/her ACT score would
OFFICE OF STUDENT LEARNING
Student Assessment, Maggie Hicks

likely be. This program will give the student an opportunity to see practice questions and what the actual ACT test is like.

If a student scored 36 (a perfect score) on an earlier attempt of the ACT during a national administration, the local superintendent is granted the authority to exempt the student from the statewide test. However, students who do not test during the State Testing Event will not be included in any of the ACT State Testing reports or data files for the statewide testing.

Additionally, ALSDE and ACT, Inc., are pleased to offer Alabama educators with a training opportunity in June. This training workshop, Instructional Strategies that Support Rigorous and Relevant Learning, is designed to help classroom teachers increase the rigor and relevance of their classroom instruction. Teachers will reflect on rigor and relevance as it applies to the four core content areas (English, mathematics, science, and social studies). Many instructional strategies will be modeled throughout the session as participants learn how rigor is reflected in classroom activities, student assignments, and in-class assessments. Participants will leave with a valuable compendium of research-based instructional strategies to apply to their classrooms. These three hour workshops (morning and afternoon sessions) are recommended for secondary core-content teachers. The workshop locations are available in Huntsville (June 6), Tuscaloosa (June 7), Montgomery (June 8), Birmingham (June 12), Dothan (June 13), and Mobile (June 14). Registration information will be available in the next few weeks.

ACT WorkKeys
Score reports for ACT WorkKeys are being delivered to schools and districts the week of March 27, 2017. The National Career Readiness Certificates (NCRC) will be delivered to the high schools the week of April 25, 2017. The NCRC is based on an individual's performance on three WorkKeys skills assessments: Applied Mathematics, Locating Information, and Reading for Information. Scores on these assessments determine the certificate level – bronze, silver, gold, or platinum – an individual can earn.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP):
The NAEP assessment is complete and a big “shout out” goes to all of the school coordinators who worked diligently to ensure that all students were included to the fullest extent possible. Students were assessed on both digital devices and paper in the areas of Reading, Writing, and Mathematics. Some eighth grade students participated in pilot assessments for Civics, Geometry, and U.S. History. This will be the first time that NAEP will report state data collected via tablets.

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Educational Technology, Earlene Patton

ACCESS Summer School
Over just the last three years, ACCESS has provided summer school for an average of 2,300 students from 174 schools per year. The program has allowed students to earn or recover over 12,500 half credits. Summer School 2017 will have two three-week sessions: 1st term will run from June 5 to June 23 and 2nd term will run from July 6 to July 26.

A complete list of the courses available for Summer 2017 can be found on the ACCESS Website (accessdl.state.al.us under the Courses tab then the link on the left of the page “Summer 2017 Course Offerings”). If you have questions, contact Larry Raines - at (334) 242-9594 or your support center.

Alabama Technology in Motion offers monthly TechKnowlogy webinars on a variety of timely topics related to technology integration and use.

HyperDocs for Active Classrooms
4/4/17 Elizabeth Session 3:30-4:30 ATIM-AK022
Engage your students with the 4'C (communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creation) as we learn to create HyperDocs using the Google Drive to give students engaging inquiry based learning activities. Participants will learn to create and evaluate their own HyperDocs. HyperDocs is the perfect match for all schools who wish to change the way students interact with technology. Is your school a one-to-one school? Maybe your school is a BYOD school. What if your school has limited access to technology? It doesn't matter! HyperDocs encourages students to collaborate and create and share authentic products while helping them develop critical thinking skills.

Infinite Inspiration for your Classroom with free Digital Resources from APT/PBS
4/11/2017 Kathy Heiman 3:30-4:30 ATIM-AK023
During this webinar, we will explore the free databases: PBS LearningMedia with over 150,000 digital resources including videos, interactives, lesson plans, etc., and APT's Learning Adventures database with virtual field trips to places such as the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, Monticello, and more. We will also discuss many opportunities to participate with APT in learning events such as The Vietnam Oral History Project and Holocaust Remembrance Day. To register for the webinars CLICK HERE or contact Cheri Hayes or Nikkesha Hooks.
Makerspaces STEAM Up Tuscaloosa! March 21, 2017
In partnership with Davis-Emerson Middle School, Ronda Gamble, Librarian and Alabama Technology in Motion Specialist, Dr. Robert Mayben, provided an opportunity for four of his professional learning groups to experience makerspaces in action during their spring meetings. The three librarian technology PLGs and the Master Technology Teachers PLG spent their day immersed in STEAM activities in the Davis-Emerson Middle School Library. The teachers navigated mazes with robots, programmed the robots to complete tasks, created news reports with green screens, constructed towers and more with Keva Planks, Legos, K’Nex and plastic cups, explored circuits and electricity with Makey Makeys, Littlebits, and Snap Circuits, designed their own video games with Bloxels and their own toys with 3D printers! The teachers and librarians left inspired to bring ideas for Makerspaces back to their libraries and classrooms and were prepared to be “wowed” by allowing their students to create!

Symchat with ATiM Technology Specialist March 15, 2017
Jornea Erwin, Technology in Motion Specialist Region 3 - AAMU/UAH Regional Inservice Center hosted a #symchat on Twitter. The topic of discussion was Transforming Student Discussions with Technology. Participating in the chat were teachers, instructional coaches, technology coaches, district leaders and state leaders from Alabama, as well as other educators from around the world. Check out all the ideas and resources shared with the Storify summary.

STEMposium 2017
June 26-28, 2017- Phenix City Schools, in partnership with Discovery Education invites you to join us for the 1st annual STEMposium!
Registration $79

In partnership with Alabama Technology in Motion (ATiM), the Career Technical Education (CTE) section of the ALSDE have designed an engaging technology training course through eLearning Alabama! The results of a recent survey conducted to assess the effectiveness of the CTE Teacher Certification Program (CTE TCP) revealed that participating teachers desired training sessions that would decrease the drive time for in person training. In response to this request, plans have been finalized to offer participant teachers an online course that will meet the needs of Session E of the CTE TCP.

Session E of the CTE-TCP is a training event that occurs during the month of May with a focus on the use of hands on technology training which utilizes tools to enhance teaching and support student learner outcomes. Participants can register in Chalkable (STIPD) for PD Title Number EDU3362: Google Drive for CTE Teachers. Upon successful completion of the course, participants can earn sixteen CEU’s. Participants will have four weeks to complete the course as outlined below.
- May 3 - 9 Orientation week
- May 9-16 Introduction to Google Drive
- May 17-23 Google Docs
- May 24-30 Google Forms

2017 GEMS-U Expo:
From Space to Shining Sea
For the ninth year, the program Girls Engaged in Math and Science University (GEMS-U) provided female students from around the state an opportunity to celebrate STEM during the GEMS-U Expo. The event themed From Space to Shining Sea took place at two locations, the U. S. Space and Rocket Center and the Dauphin Island Sea Lab. The events featured female engineers from NASA Marshall Space Flight Center and women in marine science from the Sea Lab. These female role models encouraged the girls to pursue STEM-related careers. GEMS-U participants also participated in interactive investigations and explorations. The day concluded with the 2017 GEMS-U Exposition Showcase, during which the girls present projects created through the GEMS-U program at the respective schools. Participating schools included the following:
- Anniston Middle School, Anniston City Schools
- Bluff Park Elementary School, Hoover City Schools
- Brock’s Gap Intermediate School, Hoover City Schools
- Clark-Shaw Magnet School, Mobile County Schools
- Chilton County High School, Chilton County Schools
- Corner High School, Jefferson County Schools
- Council Traditional School, Mobile County Schools
- Handley Middle School, Roanoke City Schools
- Helena Intermediate, Shelby County Schools
- Isabella High School, Chilton County Schools
- Jemison Height School, Chilton County Schools
- Mill Creek Elementary, Madison City Schools
- Rock Quarry Middle School, Tuscaloosa City Schools
- South Shades Crest Elementary School, Hoover City Schools
- University of Alabama at Birmingham
- Vinemont High School, Cullman County Schools
- West Jasper Elementary School, Jasper City Schools
- West Morgan Middle School, Morgan County

The GEMS-U program supports the national need to close the STEM gender gap, utilizing teaching strategies to encourage girls’ self-confidence and elevate interest in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and math.

GEMS-U curriculum resources are available through the Alabama Learning Exchange.

CLICK HERE for more information about the GEMS-U program.
The Office of Learning Support (OLS) collaborates with other sections and offices at the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) to ensure that all students are engaged in relevant and rigorous learning experiences that lead to students’ academic success. Sections within OLS are Federal Programs, Prevention and Support, and Special Education. Each section provides guidance, services, training, resources, technical assistance and monitoring for schools and districts related to teaching, learning, and student achievement. Also, OLS organizes the committee, planning, and operation of the ALSDE’s statewide Annual MEGA Conference. Finally, the implementation of the comprehensive learning supports framework in districts and schools is conducted by OLS and creates stronger support options for Alabama’s students.

**OFFICE OF LEARNING SUPPORT**

**Prevention and Support Services Section (PSSS), Marilyn Lewis, Ed.D.**

Alabama school nurses promote and protect the optimal overall health status of children, provide chronic disease management and education. As well as provide screenings and health assessments as needed. The school nurse is responsible for all students’ health issues in a given school district, including field trips, extracurricular activities, school-sanctioned competition, and sporting events in which the student is a direct participant. The number of students with complex health issues continues to rise. School nurses perform all invasive procedures required for the health of the students. All school health nurses must be licensed and remain in good standing with the Alabama Board of Nursing, licensure verification is done annually. The nurse’s scope of practice is guided by the Alabama Board of Nursing

Administrative Code and Nurse Practice Act. The ultimate goal is to keep Alabama students healthy, ultimately effecting attendance, academic achievement and success. School nurses develop and implement Individualized Health Care Plans/Emergency Actions Plans for students with chronic health problems or other significant health concerns which affect their ability to learn. School Nurses improve attendance through mental and physical health promotion and disease prevention. The school nurse is an integral part of the community working collaborative for the overall well-being of student success.

For any questions, contact Prevention and Support Services, Ms. Jennifer C. Ventress at (334) 242-8165.

**OFFICE OF LEARNING SUPPORT**

**Special Education Services, Crystal Richardson**

Mediation

Mediation is one of the three formal dispute resolution options available under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA). Mediation is an impartial, voluntary, and confidential process that is provided as a method to resolve problems or disagreements about a child’s special education program. Either a parent or school official may request mediation. For mediation to take place, both the school system and the parent(s) have to agree to participate in mediation. As required under IDEA, mediation is provided at no cost to the participants.

Utilizing mediation has a number of demonstrated benefits. It can be a less expensive and less time-consuming method of dispute resolution. Mediation may result in lower financial and emotional costs compared to due process hearings. As a voluntary process mediation provides participants flexibility to devise their own remedies and may result in written agreements where schools and parents have increased commitment and ownership of the agreement. Mediation may also enable them...
to have more control over decision-making resulting in mediation agreements that are individualized with workable solutions.

Mediation is requested by contacting the Mediation Coordinator at Special Education Services (SES). This can be done by telephone, e-mail, standard mail, or fax. A sample form to request mediation is available but is not required. When making the request SES asks that you provide the student’s name, school district, and any information that will assist the mediator in identifying the areas of disagreement. On receipt of the request, the Mediation Coordinator will notify the other party of the request to determine if the other party also wants to participate in mediation. If both parties agree to utilize mediation, a mediator will be assigned and the mediator will contact the parties to schedule a date and time for the mediation session.

The mediator is an individual who is trained in effective mediation techniques and is knowledgeable about laws and regulations about special education. SES currently contracts with four independent vendors to serve as IDEA mediators. These vendors are Sharon Brown, Nika Gholston, Kia Scott, and Frank Snowden. Mediators are impartial and neutral. They are not employees of the Alabama State Department of Education. Contracts for vendors are awarded through the Request for Proposal (RFP) process. RFPs are available for review on the SES/Dispute Resolutions page of our website and provide information about the qualifications and scope of work performed by the mediators. As part of SES’ ongoing commitment to exemplary provision of IDEA dispute resolution, the four mediators recently completed two days of intensive training provide by Pingora Consulting, LLC., and participate in quarterly teleconference mediator workgroups facilitated by the Dispute Resolution in Special Education Consortium.

SES hopes that whenever a school district or a parent encounters an intractable problem or disagreement about special education services, they will give serious consideration to taking advantage of the mediation process to resolve the dispute. If you have questions or would like additional information about mediation please give SES a call at (334) 242-8114 or look at the resources available under the General Information and Parent Resources tabs HERE.

Training Opportunity this Summer
The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE), Special Education Services (SES) Section, is pleased to announce a contract with Safe and Civil Schools to provide summer training for teachers, support staff, and administrators who work with students with intensive behavioral needs. The title of the training will be Failure is not an Option: A Comprehensive/Intensive Classroom Management Program.

The ALSDE/SES, in conjunction with Ms. Laura Hamilton, consultant from Safe and Civil Schools, will offer two summer training sessions for a limited number of participants. These trainings are designed specifically for educational teams whose membership may include the following: special education teachers, general education teachers, administrators, special education coordinators, speech-language pathologists, behavioral specialists, counselors, and paraprofessionals. The team members should be those who serve students with patterns of intensive behavioral needs such as physically aggressive behaviors, self-injurious behaviors, severely disruptive behaviors, etc.

Each training session will consist of 28 hours of professional development provided over a four-day period. The trainings will be June 13-16, 2017, at AIDT, 1 Technology Court, Montgomery and June 26-29, 2017, at Cullman High School, 510 13th Street NE, Cullman. Qualifying teams will receive financial support through a memorandum of agreement provided to local education agencies.

After an overview of strategies that make up comprehensive behavior management plans, participants will receive training in the following areas:

• Understanding the basic needs of all students and how these needs play into the structure of the program.
• Establishing a solid and highly structured daily schedule.
• Designing the physical setting of the classroom.
• Developing and effectively implementing classroom rules and consequences.
• Establishing expectations and enforcing them consistently.
• Learning the differences between rules, procedures, and expectations to avoid risking inconsistencies in the classroom structure and management plan.
• Developing and effectively implementing a Point Sheet and Levels System to shape appropriate behaviors.
• Building relationships by using the ratio of interactions strategy.

The training will include an overview of how to teach social skills and how to correct social errors with precorrection, social coaching, and the social skill correction procedure.

If you have questions or need assistance, contact Ms. Tina Sanders at (334) 242-8114.
Office of Teaching and Leading Support

Federal Programs, Edmund Moore

Homeless Liaison Training for City and County Local Education Agencies
Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act authorizes the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program and is the primary piece of federal legislation related to the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness. It was reauthorized in December 2015 by Title IX, Part A, of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Training to implement new provisions under ESSA for city and county local education agencies (LEAs) began on March 21, 2017, at Auburn University Montgomery (AUM). The second training is scheduled for April 18, 2017, at Alabama State University (ASU) through the College of Education. This training provides an overview of the McKinney-Vento Law and the new provisions under ESSA. It will also provide best practices in homeless education to help educators and agencies work together to promote better identification, school stability, school enrollment, support for academic success, child center and best interest decision making.

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) worked collaboratively with the following agencies to provide training: HUD, Preschool, Head Start, Alabama College System, Alabama Department of Human Resources, and One Place Justice Center.

For additional information, contact Mr. Edmund Moore, Federal Programs Coordinator, Mr. Robbie Mangum, Education Administrator, or Mrs. LaDonna Rudolph, Education Specialist, by telephone at (334) 242-8199.

Department Updates

Dr. Jayne Meyer, Director

To help ensure that every child is taught by a well-prepared teacher, every school is led by a well-prepared and effective leader, and every school system is led by a well-prepared and visionary instructional leader, the Office of Teaching and Leading coordinates the efforts of the education community to ensure that prospective educators are prepared to begin and continue eligibility for employment in Alabama schools and school systems. Standards adopted by the Alabama State Board of Education (ALSBE) are the basis for reviewing educator preparation programs. A variety of certificate approaches are provided and efforts are made to issue and renew certificates in compliance with ALSBE standards. Assistance is provided to teachers and other educators who are seeking employment and to school systems in need of personnel. Assistance is facilitated for teachers seeking certification from the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards.

Office of Teaching and Leading Assessment

Educator Assessment, Althea Hampton, Ed.D.

- Educator Assessment and ETS are preparing to host a score setting study for Praxis Test 5531: Pre-Kindergarten Education.
- Praxis Test 5203: Teaching Reading: Elementary Education has a regeneration study that will be conducted in 2018-2019 to reflect the 2017 International Literacy Association standards. Given that we are considering moving from Test 5204: Teaching Reading to Test 5203, we have informed our liaison that we would like to participate in this test regeneration process.
- EPPs continue to pilot edTPA. Of the 27 institutions, 20 have submitted at least one student's portfolio to be scores by Pearson/SCALE. The others continue to host boot camps and other activities to prepare for edTPA submission.
- The last administration of the Alabama Educator Certification Test (AECT) offered through ACT WorkKeys is July 8, 2017. Anyone who has not passed all three sections: Reading, Writing, and Mathematics will be required to take the ETS Praxis Core.
- Educator Assessment and Educator Certification are currently revising the pages displayed on the Alabama Praxis website.

www.alsde.edu
• Following the April ALACTE and COPE meetings, the Previously Accepted Praxis table will be replaced with the updated table indicating the current tests and certification areas that each of the assessments are/were required for.

• Four Alabama representatives have been selected to participate in the Praxis Science Content Knowledge Assessment multi-state score setting (Sandy Ledwell, Amber Moore, Alicia Whitlock, and Timothy Johnson). We are proud to have them represent Alabama.

The Alabama State Department of Education recently awarded 110 teachers support to obtain National Board Certification. This increase in candidates is outstanding.

• 2017-2018 Alabama Network to Transform Teaching (NT3) Pilot District Application

• 2017-2018 Application for NBCT Candidate Support

• 2017-2018 NBCT Mentor Application

For additional information, contact:
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