April has been an extremely eventful month and with the end of the school year upon us, May will be just as hectic. I spent time reflecting this month on the magnitude of our responsibility as educators. Educator Appreciation Month is an appropriate time to say thank you for EVERYTHING that you do for the students and families in the great state of Alabama. No one knows your commitment and dedication more intimately than a fellow educator. It is for this reason that I always welcome opportunities to share knowledge with future educators. It is critical that they understand the seriousness of our calling. I will serve as commencement day speaker at Athens State on May 6, 2017. As I focused on preparing my comments, I found myself wondering how to best capture, in 15 minutes, all that needs to be shared with our graduating prospective teachers. I came to the realization that this can be summed up in Henry Ward's words in a card sent to me by my eighth grade teacher when I received my doctorate. “A teacher impacts eternity, he never knows where his influence lies.” We are such integral components of our student's lives and therefore we must do everything within our power to impact those whom have been entrusted to us.

On May 1, 2017, I ended my day at a school after I learned of a shooting that killed one of our Alabama middle school students. I struggled with sleep that night because, as an educator, we are constantly wondering what we might have done differently to impact students who so senselessly pull triggers that forever change their lives and those of the deceased. My heart aches for families who experience the violence that is becoming so prevalent in our communities. Unfortunately, in an instant we could all be impacted as well. Reasons such as these, exemplify the criticalness of our work in changing lives by developing positive relationships with our students while constantly trying strategies for the student who appear unreachable. I can't tell you how many students have attributed getting on the right track to educators like you who NEVER gave up. So, yes you do make a difference and please remind yourself of this every day. Our future depends on it.

PROMISING STRATEGIES

**Back to School Home Visits**

This summer, as you begin thinking about the opening of school, consider having your teachers visit the homes of students on the first day to say hello and/or drop off a small back to school token. When I was a principal, visiting students' homes became an opening day in-service activity for my staff. There was so much power in these visits and the parents and students were always thrilled that our first visit was self-initiated and POSITIVE. Additionally, teachers got to see first-hand where their students lived and the reality of challenging home lives so many of the students experienced. The home visits taught us things about our students that led to higher expectations and lasting relationships and bonds.

My teachers no longer pulled into the parking lot and exited...
From The Deputy State Superintendent

homes and community centers in an effort to constantly outreach to parents and students.

Walking School Bus
Students deserve safe passage to and from school. Due to parent work schedules and other family obligations, many of our students are responsible for getting themselves to and from school each day. Consider working with your parent organization to establish a walking school bus. This link provides step by step guides for developing a walking school bus. Should you move forward with implementation, of any of the promising practices, please let us know the outcome.

COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL
Our Superintendents have been extremely transparent and forthcoming in sharing suggestions for improving communication at the ALSDE. We are committed to keeping LEAs informed and in the loop on major educational topics. This month we released the graduation rate and later determined that we had done so without feedback from the LEAs. I assure you we have taken your feedback very seriously and created a protocol that allows us to appropriately vet the release of any data. Please accept our sincere apology for any angst related to the release of the previous graduation rate.

Alabama State Department of Education
Public Data Release Process

Data Owner Responsibilities
1. Ensures that IT has been provided with accurate and comprehensive business rules for pulling data as well as work with IT to establish validation checks.
2. Confirms that the data pulled matches business rules provided.
3. Determines if LEAs input is vital. If needed, the data owner will provide opportunities for LEA input via a portal (e.g. Cohort, CCR) and a memorandum announcing the window for updates will be sent to all superintendents and all principals from the State Superintendent or the Chief of Staff. If a portal is not utilized, an email to LEAs providing the link to their data and a window for providing updates will suffice.
4. Upon close of update window, changes to data set are finalized and the data-owner certifies completion of updates.
5. LEAs will be notified that they have three weeks (15 business days) to review the final dataset and either submit questions to the data owner or sign off on the dataset. Should an LEA not provide input at this point, it will be deemed acceptance of the dataset.
6. The data owner will communicate to the Assistant State Superintendent, Evaluation and Innovation, who convenes meeting with data owner(s) and responsible IT personnel to ensure business rules and data provided in response to those business rules is correct and accurate.

Assistant State Superintendent Responsibilities
7. The data owner will communicate to the Assistant State Superintendent, Evaluation and Innovation, who convenes meeting with data owner(s) and responsible IT personnel to ensure business rules and data provided in response to those business rules is correct and accurate.
8. The Assistant State Superintendent/evaluation and Innovation becomes the gatekeeper and responsible party for the data set.
9. The Assistant State Superintendent/Evaluation and Innovation apprises the State Superintendent, Chief of Staff, and Chief Academic Officer that the dataset has been determined to be accurate and the three executive instructional leaders determine the time and method of release.

Department Updates
OFFICE OF STUDENT LEARNING
Shanthia Washington, Director

The Office of Student Learning (OSL) exists to support districts and schools in improving the learning for all students. OSL is comprised of Assessment, Instructional Services, Alabama Reading Initiative, Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative, and Regional Support. We are committed to working together to provide a seamless system of service to districts. If you have instructional or support questions, please contact the section Coordinator or Shanthia Washington at or 334-353-1608. Professional development or technical assistance requests for instructional or support matters may be submitted using a support request form HERE.
OFFICE OF STUDENT LEARNING
Instructional Services, Robin Nelson

ANNOUNCING THE NEW 2017 ARTS AND WORLD LANGUAGES COURSES OF STUDY!!

The 2017 Arts Education and World Languages Courses of Study are available on the ALSDE.edu website. You will find that these documents are designed to help local districts and individual teachers to create effective, challenging, and engaging curricula for every one of their students.

Alabama Arts Education Initiative Grants

Congratulation to the following school systems, individual schools, and community organizations working directly with schools who received 2017 Alabama Arts Education Initiative Grants. These grants support the initiative to provide high-quality arts education that enlightens, inspires and develops in every Alabama Student the creative and innovative thinking necessary to ensure college- and career-readiness. These recipients received up to $25,000 to directly support arts education to Alabama students. They came to Montgomery in March to participate in the grant orientation and arts education advocacy.

Alabaster City Creek View & Meadow View Elementary
Alex City Radney Elementary
Bibb County Bibb County High School
Birmingham City Glen Iris Elementary
Birmingham City Carver High School
Choctaw County Choctaw County High School
Colbert County Colbert Heights High School
Colbert County Colbert County High School
Conecuh County Thurgood Marshall Middle School
Conecuh County Hillcrest High School
Coosa County Central Elementary
Covington County Red Level High School
Covington County Straughn High School
Covington County Florala High School
Covington County Pleasant Home School
Covington County W. S. Harlan Elementary
Cullman City Cullman High School
Cullman County Cullman County Child Development Center
Dallas County Southside High School
Dallas County Craig Elementary
Dothan City Kelly Springs Elementary
Elmore County Wetumpka High School
Escambia County Escambia County High School
Escambia County Escambia Middle School
Franklin County Tharptown Elementary
Franklin County Belgreen High School
Franklin County Phil Campbell High School
Greene County Greene County High School
Guntersville City System Wide Grant
Jefferson County Center Point High School
Limestone County System Wide Grant
Montgomery County Carver Elementary
Montgomery County Highland Gardens Elementary
Phenix City Phenix City Intermediate
Pickens County Aliceville Elementary
Pike County Pike County High School
Pike Road Schools System Wide Grant
Scottsboro City System Wide Grant
Talladega County Childersburg & Watwood Elementary
Tuscaloosa City Rock Quarry Middle School
Tuscaloosa County Matthews Elementary
Tuscaloosa County Hillcrest High School
Walker County Dora High School
Wilcox County Camden School of Arts and Technology
Wilcox County Hobbs Elementary
Wilcox County Wilcox Central High School

Community Organizations partnering and working directly with schools:
Tailor Made Leadership Academy
Fantasy Playhouse Children's Theater
Space One Eleven
Grove Hill Arts Council
Princess Theatre Center for Performing Arts
Arts and Humanities Council of Tuscaloosa County, LLC
Boys & Girls Club of SEAL
Decatur Youth Symphony, Inc.
Mobile Symphony
Dale Co Performing Arts Council

Summer School

Be on the lookout around May 15, 2017 in the Memorandum Center for the 2017 Application for Summer School. This memo is for all schools conducting summer school and will have attached paper work required by the ALSDE.
Social Studies

Law Day, held annually on May 1, 2017 is a national day set aside to celebrate the rule of law. Law Day underscores how law and the legal process contribute to the freedoms that all Americans share and also provides an opportunity to recognize the role of courts in a constitutional democracy. May 1st is the official date, but many celebrations take place before and after that date. Some bar associations, organizations, and schools celebrate a Law Week. This year’s theme is The 14th Amendment Transforming American Democracy. The Law Day Planning Guide and additional resources can be found at www.lawday.org.

Celebration of Cinco de Mayo was May 5, 2017. This holiday celebrates the defeat of the French army during the Battle of Puebla (Batalla de Puebla during the Franco-Mexican War 1861-1867) in Mexico on May 5, 1862. It is not to be confused with Mexico’s Independence Day which is September 16. Cinco de Mayo is seen as a day to celebrate the food, culture, achievements, music, and experiences of people with a Mexican background, who live in the United States. Other aspects of the day center on traditional symbols of Mexican life, such as the Virgin de Guadalupe, and Mexican-Americans who have achieved fame, fortune and influence in the United States. One final reason why Cinco de Mayo is celebrated with such veracity in the U.S. is the “Good Neighbor Policy” which President Franklin Roosevelt enacted in 1933 in his first inaugural address to encourage and improve relations with Latin American countries. Cinco de Mayo became a popular celebration of Mexican heritage and picked up steam in the United States during this period.

Memorial Day is Monday, May 29, 2017. It is observed on the last Monday of May. It was formerly known as Decoration Day and commemorates all men and women who have died in military service for the United States. Many people visit cemeteries and memorials on Memorial Day and it is traditionally seen as the start of the summer season.

Advanced Studies

Seven Alabama teachers are the recipients of 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

Library Media

Alabama Camellia Children’s Choice Book Awards

Winners of the 37th Annual Alabama Camellia Children’s Choice Book Awards are scheduled to be announced on May 5th. 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 winners, CLICK.

Summer Professional Development

Opportunities for Librarians/Administrators

Alabama School Library Conference

Mr. Sentance will also be a guest speaker at this year’s conference. Click to learn more or register for this year’s event.

Alabama Educational Technology Conference – AETC

June 13-15, 2017 - Click here to learn more or register.

Refresher for Working School Librarians (Active) JSU In-Service Center July 18, 2017

STI PD Title Number: JSU15034-17  Limit of 60 seats
Office of Teaching and Learning

The ARI Retooling Internship for Reading Specialists takes place 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. Questions regarding this internship may be directed to Mrs. Vickie Chappelle or Mrs. Karen Rutledge-Bell.

The final meeting of the State Superintendent’s Strategic Planning Committee for Reading will meet on May 9, 2017 in Montgomery. The Reading Committee will make its final recommendations for reading at this meeting. All Reading Committee meetings are live streamed on the Alabama State Department of Education’s website, www.alsde.edu.

Office of Student Learning

Instructional Services, Robin Nelson

(This is a second offering of the July 17th session as the first session is full.)

Objectives: To re-examine library catalogs and collections in consideration of emerging trends in education and technology and provide school librarians with tools to connect teachers and learners with a range of materials

MEGA Conference Sessions:
- Exploring Collaboration Opportunities: Arts Education and Library Media
- Using the Alabama Virtual Library to Differentiate Instruction
- The Highly Effective School Library Program

Links to April Library Media Newsletters
ScreenCast Challenge Nominees
School Library Month
PD and Planning
Building Library Webpages

Office of Student Learning

The AMSTI Science Update, Sandy Ledwell, Ed.D.

Many teachers will attend a train the trainer event for AMSTI Science in Alabaster on May 3-5. This pool of teachers will participate in professional learning about leading adult learning as well as specific grade level exercises. After completion of the training, the participants will then be certified AMSTI science trainers who can lead summer training.

The last cycle of the school year is winding down. Don’t forget to finish those last posts soon, so you can receive credit for AMSTI online courses!
**OFFICE OF STUDENT LEARNING**

The AMSTI Math Update, Tod Beers

The AMSTI SDE staff will host a Twitter chat on “Effective Formative Assessment Strategies for the Classroom” on May 22, 2017 at 7 PM. Please join us at #AMSTIworks. It’s never been easier for Alabama educators to collaborate with peers and grow their professional learning networks. Twitter chats are one of the best ways for educators to connect with other educators, exchange and debate ideas, ask for help and provide assistance, find new resources and take action. Teachers across Alabama who want to expand their knowledge, share instructional resources, and interact with others who have complementary professional interests are discovering that class is always in session thanks to #AMSTIworks.

**OFFICE OF STUDENT LEARNING**

Student Assessment, Maggie Hicks

The Office of Student Assessment is responsible for the coordination, development, and implementation of the state testing program. Our goal is to improve academic achievement for all Alabama students. This goal is accomplished by providing administrators, educators, parents, and the community the tools and information about student performance in the context of college and career readiness.

**ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs:**
This year, new cut scores will be implemented, and as a result, EL students will have to perform at a higher level in order to demonstrate proficiency. In preparation for this change in scoring, webinars are available for view on the WIDA website. In order to ensure that educators are knowledgeable about the scoring change, WIDA staff will host two sessions on score reports at the annual MEGA Conference. Available webinars can be found HERE.

**ACT Aspire**
The window for ACT Aspire closed on Friday, April 28. All materials will be returned to ACT Aspire by the second week of May. ACT Aspire results are tentatively scheduled to be released to the LEAs on May 31, 2017.

**Alabama Alternate Assessment**
The Alabama Alternate Assessment (AAA) testing window closes on May 12, 2017. The Student Assessment Section will be selecting general and special education educators from across the state to serve on the AAA Standard Setting Committee. The committee will be meeting in Birmingham June 20-23, 2017, to consider a student’s level of performance on the assessment to develop achievement levels.

**ACT with Writing**
Reports containing college reportable scores will be provided three to eight weeks after testing has completed. The students will receive a printed-paper score report. The school will receive a printed-paper report and two printed labels with college reportable test results to be placed in and on the high school transcript/permanent record. The ACT Profile Report for both the school and district will arrive no later than July 28, 2017.

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). The link to register for one of these workshops is HERE.
Two new courses will be available through the ACCESS Program beginning fall 2017. Along with over a hundred courses ACCESS now provides to schools across the state of Alabama, Human Anatomy & Physiology (1 credit) and Algebra with Finance (1 credit) will be offered. The Human Anatomy & Physiology course has also been approved by the NCAA for a full credit for those students working to qualify through the Eligibility Center for NCAA eligibility.

A full-credit Career Preparedness course will join the two half-credit Career Preparedness courses, A & B, which will continue to be offered. The full-credit course will be available only for students in Grades 9-12 as is Career Preparedness B. Career Preparedness A may be taken in Grades 8-12. A full-credit course in Arts Survey will also be available in the fall, and ACCESS will continue to have the half-credit Arts Survey course. Course revisions and improvements are being made to several courses based on survey information as well as comments from teachers and students. These include Algebra II, French II, and German II. A full listing of courses available in the fall is available now on the ACCESS Website (accessdl.state.al.us) under the Courses tab.

Alaska has hosted Cross-Curricular Resource Development Summits to promote developing and adding cross-curricular resources aligned to the CCRS for distribution throughout the state and nation. These summits focus on instructional design practices, providing innovative strategies to create student-centered project-based learning unit plans, lesson plans, and learning activities. The resource summits concentrate on the creation and development of resources for the core subject areas to create cross-curricular, interdisciplinary resources to engage the whole student and promote a deeper learning experience. Currently, summits have been held across the state at The Birmingham Zoo, The U.S. Space and Rocket Center, and GulfQuest National Maritime Museum. Click here for a unit plan sample created at the summit. Stay tuned for information on additional summits coming soon!

As approximately 1,300 educators and industry leaders gather, the Alabama Educational Technology Conference (AETC) enters its 21st year. The conference will be held at Hoover High School in Hoover, AL. AETC 2017 promises to be another exciting conference with the Opening Session, concurrent sessions, hands-on workshops, vendor exhibits, and student showcases. The conference will focus on providing proven and practical solutions to the challenges facing educators in the area of instruction and integrating technology into the classroom.

During one-hour concurrent sessions and hands-on workshops, Alabama’s classroom teachers will demonstrate tested solutions. Nationally known featured speakers, Jeff Utecht, Kevin Honeycutt, and Leslie Fisher will join us again this year.

The Exhibit Hall will provide even more opportunities for attendees to see the newest educational technologies and related software. There is something for everyone, from the beginner to the advanced user. We are confident your participation will be both productive and enjoyable, and we look forward to you joining us in this exciting experience.

Check out the Preliminary Program and register today on our website: http://alex.state.al.us/aetc/

Be sure to friend us on FACEBOOK: Alabama Educational Technology Conference

Follow us on Twitter: #AETC2017

For additional information call the Office of Educational Technology: 334-242-9594

Alabama Technology in Motion across the state is pleased to provide a variety of technology focused professional learning options to meet your learning styles, needs, and time.

• ATiM TechKnowlogy Webinar - May 4, 2017 3:30-4:30 pm
Discover YOUR information literacy superpowers with Britannica! We’ll cover the four “powers” of information literacy, and you’ll walk away with new classroom and library ideas under your cape! We’ll explore strategies to uncover information needs and determine how to locate, evaluate, and use the content that you find. With these strategies, you can help your students become excellent digital citizens! Register.

• Region 2 Virtual Book Studies
Courtney Hamilton, ATiM for Region 2 will host two virtual book studies that will take place over the course of the summer. Books will be provided to those located within the Region Two inservice area only.

Classroom Management in the Digital Age: Effective Practices for Technology-Rich Learning Spaces is a book study that offers teachers competency and confidence. If you have devices in your classroom already, or if you’re moving towards implementing tablets, iPads, Chromebooks, or any other device, Classroom Management in the Digital Age will partner with you in creating relevant classrooms where learning rules. Register here.
Dive into Inquiry: Amplify Learning and Empower Student Voice is a book written by Trevor MacKenzie. It provides readers with a strong understanding of the types of student inquiry and proposes a framework that best prepares both educators and learners for sharing the unpacking of curriculum in the classroom as they work together towards co-constructing a strong Free Inquiry unit. Register [here](http://elearning.atim.cc).

- **7th Annual Tech Meet Tuscaloosa** - Alabama Technology in Motion Specialist, Dr. Robert Mayben, is hosting the 7th Annual Tech Meet Tuscaloosa (TMT) on June 1st at the UA/UWA In-Service Center. Tech Meet Tuscaloosa is a free, one-day technology conference for educators interested in learning about classroom uses of emerging instructional technologies and strategies. Throughout the conference, participants learn about emerging technology integration tools and strategies, discover how the technologies can be integrated within various content areas, participate in discussions about best practices with technology, and connect with other participants to share resources for learning more about classroom integration strategies. There are elementary sessions, secondary sessions, and general technology integration sessions. All of the sessions are presented and facilitated by teachers from the Master Technology Teachers Professional Learning Group. The Master Technology Teachers PLG is an on-going partnership between Alabama Technology in Motion, the UA/UWA In-Service Education Center, The UA College of Education, and twelve innovative teachers from the UA/UWA in-service region. This year’s TMT will focus on the themes of Game-Based Learning, Flipped & Blended Learning, Project-Based Learning, Makerspaces, and Assessment Strategies with Technology. Teachers from any LEA in Alabama are invited to register and attend. More details including registration information can be accessed [HERE](http://atim.us).

- **Region 1 Technology Conference** - June 20–22, Alabama Technology in Motion Specialist, Dr. Barry Wiginton, working in collaboration with the University of North Alabama Regional In-service Center, will co-host the annual Region 1 Technology Conference for teachers and administrators. Unlike many regional conferences, many of the presenters are classroom teachers who are innovatively using technology in their classrooms. The conference provides a platform for classroom teachers to share their experience and expertise with colleagues and other educational professionals. This year’s conference will be held in two locations, UNA East Campus and Jasper High School. Conference offerings at the Jasper location will be July 19th. Having two locations reduces the travel time of teachers in the Region 1 In-service area. [Conference brochure](http://atim.us).

- **MEGA Conference 2017** - For the first time ever, Alabama Technology in Motion will offer an ACLD-approved technology PLU (Standard 6) at the 2017 MEGA Conference. The PLU will consist of one face-to-face orientation session and three face-to-face technology PLU sessions at the conference and then an online meeting in August. The PLU will be facilitated by ATiM specialists, Elizabeth Sessions and Dr. Robert Mayben. PLUACLD279 Technology Topics for 21st Century Administrators: Productivity is a hybrid professional learning experience that provides both face-to-face and online content to support educational leadership in our students’ technological world. There are many technological tools available in the marketplace that can help administrators in their tasks and help them succeed in their roles. Such tools make administrators more productive and efficient in their day-to-day tasks. For this professional learning experience, school leaders will develop technology skills and strategies to better support their teachers and improve student achievement. Administrators will work together to better use technology to improve personal productivity and model the professional use of technology. Participants will discuss ideas and strategies with other leaders in the group and apply them to their own practice. Online discussions and job-embedded tasks will be completed by participants in order to obtain this PLU.

For more details, see the MEGA Conference Program, or contact Alabama Technology in Motion, [http://atim.us](http://atim.us).

**New Course Available: EDU4434E: Alabama Virtual Library - Trainer** - June 1, 2017 In partnership with the Alabama Virtual Library (AVL) Council an introductory course was developed to teach about available resources and as a method of certifying AVL Trainers. The course is open to all k-12 teachers, school personnel, and librarians in the state of Alabama. AVL is not just another website...every student, teacher, and citizen in Alabama has access to a wealth of resources via the Alabama Virtual Library (AVL). Since 1999, AVL has provided tens of thousands of magazines/journals for research at no additional cost to the user. Each AVL resource is a subscription database. The content has been vetted and contains no advertisements or pop-ups. Yet, many Alabamians have never heard of this amazing resource. This course will help individuals explore the vast resources that are available and suggest ways to incorporate them into Alabama classrooms. Upon completion of this course, participants will have developed a collection of resources that can be used to enhance instruction in their classrooms. They may also elect to register as a Certified Alabama Virtual Library Trainer.

**Objectives:** This course will enable participants to:
- Explore the resources available via the Alabama Virtual Library (AVL);
- Learn about the varied types of materials are available;
- Identify the best resources for specific information;
- Develop resources that utilize AVL resources that can be used to train students and/or teachers; and
- Prepare to be a Certified Alabama Virtual Library Trainer.

All registration is through Chalkable PD. For [schedule and details](http://elearning.atim.cc) visit our website: [http://elearning.atim.cc](http://elearning.atim.cc).
Absenteeism and Truancy Summit: What Works in Alabama
April 5-7, 2017 – Tuscaloosa, Alabama

In spite of severe weather warnings that resulted in school closings throughout the state, nearly 100 educators from 44 school districts participated in the second Absenteeism and Truancy Summit: What Works in Alabama. The mission was clear to all who attended – we must find a means to battle the number one indicator of school failure: absenteeism.

The first speaker of the summit was Dr. Randy Sprick, Director of Teaching Strategies, Inc. and the primary author of the Safe & Civil Schools Series. As a part of the summit, each person attending received a copy of Absenteeism and Truancy – Interventions & Universal Procedures, and the Teacher’s Encyclopedia of Behavior Management, co-authored by Dr. Sprick. With his engaging style and real-life examples, Dr. Sprick carried the summit attendees through a wide range of behaviors and attitudes that interfere with school attendance. More importantly, he provided some new approaches to handling the age-old problems that result in poor school attendance.

The second day of the summit, Hedy Chang, Executive Director of Attendance Works, assisted attendees in understanding the value and critical need for community involvement in combating truancy and absenteeism as well as the need to honestly and objectively evaluate the local system and its policies. With the understanding that missing school for any reason is missing an opportunity to learn, summit participants gained a wealth of knowledge and new strategies for improving attendance.

Participants were excited and challenged by the opportunity to design an “LEA Attendance Plan” as a major component of the Alabama Continuous Improvement Plans (ACIP) already in existence with ASSIST. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) beckons for the inclusion and emphasis on chronic absenteeism which has been identified as a major indicator for predicting student failure. Click here for additional information and strategies as September Attendance Awareness Month creeps around the corner! Contact Dr. Kay Atchison Warfield for additional information and professional development opportunities projected for the calendar.
Mastering the Maze

The 2017 edition of Mastering the Maze has been updated and added to the state Web site. The document has been separated into five sections based on the process charts. Each process chart will have its own manual, which will contain questions and answers that are related to the specific section. Some of the questions and answers will be found in several of the manuals, as they relate to more than one area. The questions are numbered based on the specific manual in which it is found. For example, in Process 1: Special Education Process-Referral to IEP Implementation, questions will begin with the number 1, followed by a hyphen and then the question number (e.g., 1-1 or 1-37).

The sections are separated as follows:

- **Process 1**: Special Education Process-Referral to IEP Implementation
- **Process 2**: Reevaluation to Determine Continued Eligibility
- **Process 3**: Reevaluation to Determine if Changes Need to Be Made to the IEP
- **Process 4**: Annual IEP Team Meeting to Develop the IEP
- **Process 5**: IEP Meeting to Amend the Annual IEP

Within each process manual, there is an interactive Table of Contents. To view the interactive Table of Contents in each manual, click the section within the Table of Contents you would like and you will be directed to that section. Each page of the manual will have an interactive link to access the Table of Contents. Clicking the blue link titled Table of Contents, in the top right corner on every page of the manual, will take you back to the table of contents.

To access Process 1: Special Education Process-Referral to IEP Implementation, go the Special Education Services (SES) website. Locate the blue buttons on the right side of the page. Click “Policy”. Then click the “Mastering the Maze” tab or click to access the 2017 Mastering the Maze: Process.

Note: Access to Processes 2-5 will be provided at a later date. The links to access each process will be shared when they become available.

If you have any questions concerning Mastering the Maze, please contact Alicia Hodge by calling 334-242-8114.

Summary of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance

The Summary of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (SAAFP) provides a summary of the student’s current functioning, strengths, abilities, interests, and needs in subject and skill areas. Some sections of this form may require input from school personnel and or other persons who have contact with the student. Individuals may include, but or not limited to the following: Special Education teacher(s), Special Education case manager, General Education teacher(s), Career/Tech representative(s), Transition Coordinator, school psychologist/psychometrist, related services provider(s), family member(s) or other agency representatives.

A copy of the new Summary of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance, the directions for completing the form and an example of how to complete the form can be found on SES website. Please make sure that you are utilizing a team process that includes the student. This form must be completed for every student that exits a high school diploma or who will be exceeding the age of eligibility for FAPE.

Special Education Services strongly encourages public agencies to complete the SAAFP for all other students exiting high school.

If you have any questions concerning this form, contact Curtis Gage by calling 334-242-8114.

TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK

SES wants to send a shout out to the teachers who work with students with special needs. We appreciate all that you do each and every day for our students. You ROCK!!!

You are AMAZING, remember THAT
Title I Preschool in Alabama

In recent years, preschool has become an increased focus in the education arena. Research has shown that children who have significant early learning experiences prior to kindergarten are equipped with a strong foundation that enables them to experience success and achieve academically as they matriculate throughout high school, college and into the workforce. Title I funds can be utilized in three ways for preschool funding. The first method of funding is for school-based programs. Title I schools that operate a school-wide program may use part or all of their Title I allocations to serve preschoolers that live in their attendance zones. A targeted assisted school-based program must use criteria to identify eligible preschoolers. Secondly, district-operated preschool programs can be funded through the use of Title funds. According to ESSA, “an LEA may reserve a portion of its allocation at the district level to serve eligible preschoolers throughout the district.” Thirdly, Title I funds can be used to supplement, extend, or enhance preschool programs funded by other federal programs such as Headstart, state-funded preschools or community-based programs. In Alabama, we have approximately 37 LEAs that utilize Title funds to operate preschool programs. This equates to approximately $14,000,000 in Title funds used across the state to support early learning.

Department Updates

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.

Application Forms

Alternative certificate application forms for the 2018-2019 scholastic year will be posted by May 15, 2017.

We’ve Been Busy, Busy, Busy

During the month of March, the Educator Certification Section
• Issued 1347 Certificates/Licenses/Permits,
• Renewed Certificates for 274 individuals, and
• Answered 2145 telephone calls through our Customer Service Office.

Certification Review Process

The Educator Certification Section is often asked about the certification review process. There is not a one-size-fits-all answer as each certification route and each file is very different. The amount of time it takes to review a file can also vary based on the number of applications received, whether the application packet is complete, and the time of year. The chart on the following page is intended to provide a snapshot of the process.
Application Review Process

Minimum items which must be received for a file to assign to a specialist.
(Applications Part 1 and Part 2, fee, clear background check)

*Some routes require additional items be received before a file will assign. For example, certificate reciprocity applications require that a certificate from the other state be received.*

Documents entered and scanned into database

If application packet is not complete, file goes to hold queue. If no new activity within 10 business days, a notification letter is automatically generated and sent to applicant advising of deficiencies for file to assign for review.

- If received within 60 days, the file assigns to a specialist.
- If requirements are met, a certificate is issued/renewed.
- If requirements are not met, correspondence is sent to applicant or LEA/IHE as appropriate.

If application packet is complete, the file immediately assigns to a specialist for review to determine eligibility.

- If advised that testing is required, an individual has 6 months to meet requirements. Some certification routes require testing by a certain date or prior to application receipt, in that case, the additional 6 months is not extended.
- If advised that other documents are required, an individual has 60 days to submit.

NOTES

1. Other sections within the Department have to review some files to determine eligibility (Career and Technical Education, Educator Preparation, etc.)
2. Each applicant’s situation is different. We will be happy to provide information to LEA/IHE certification personnel on specific applicants when asked.
3. Notes regarding an applicant’s file that has been reviewed are available to authorized LEA/IHE certification personnel on the certification portal.
STRATEGIC INITIATIVES – Chasidy White, Director

The Nation's Report Card: 2016 Arts was released on April 25th. It showed that Hispanic eighth-grade students scored higher in music in 2016 than in 2008 and that score gaps narrowed between Hispanic and white eighth-graders in both music and the visual arts. In the visual arts specifically, students eligible for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) scored higher in 2016 compared with 2008, narrowing the difference in scores between those students and their higher-income peers. And while The Nation's Report Card, also known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), shows no overall score changes in music and the visual arts since the last arts assessment of eighth-graders in 2008, it does reveal changes in access to and participation in music and visual arts activities, varying by gender, income and region.

“The visual arts and music have always been vital components to students’ well-rounded education, which is why they are included in NAEP. NAEP shows us that how students respond to music and to visual arts can be assessed and can provide reasonable and objective information about the state of arts education in America,” said Dr. Joe Willhoft, a testing and measurement expert and a member of the National Assessment Governing Board. “And as a former art teacher, I’ve seen firsthand how the arts — music, visual arts, drama and dance — are an essential part of a student's learning and development.”

The Nation’s Report Card includes not only performance data but also responses from students and school administrators on students’ experiences with music and the visual arts both inside and outside of school. These contextual data show that there are differences in students’ access to opportunities in the arts and in overall student participation in music and the visual arts by gender, income and region.

The average scores in music declined for male students and stayed about the same for female students in 2016 compared with 2008. In the visual arts, the average responding scores for both male and female students were not significantly different from the 2008 scores. The score differences by gender remained unchanged from 2008 to 2016 in both music and the visual arts. In 2016, female students were more likely to sing in a chorus or choir at school than their male peers. Female students were also more likely than male students to participate in music and visual arts activities outside of school, such as playing instruments, taking art classes and taking private music lessons.

In music, the difference in scores by eligibility for NSLP has remained unchanged since 2008, but in the visual arts, NSLP-eligible students scored 5 points higher than their ineligible peers in 2016, narrowing the difference significantly compared with 2008. The results also reveal that students eligible for NSLP were less likely than ineligible students to play a musical instrument or take music lessons outside of school, or to visit an art museum or exhibit on their own. However, they were more likely than their higher-income peers to keep a journal or sketchbook.

While the percentages of schools with full-time specialists and curriculum requirements for either music or the visual arts in 2016 have not changed since 2008, access to the arts varies by the region of the country where students go to school. In the Northeast, 93 percent of students attend schools that have full-time music specialists on staff, compared with 74 percent of students in the West. Nearly 90 percent of students attend schools in the Northeast that have full-time visual arts specialists on staff, but two-thirds in the West and in the Midwest do.

“The arts have a significant impact on student academic progress,” said Alberto Carvalho, a Governing Board member and the superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the nation’s fourth-largest school system. “Music and visual arts have a powerful influence, enriching students’ lives and encouraging students who otherwise may be reluctant to participate fully in the school experience.”

The Nation's Report Card also illuminates the availability of arts-related resources in schools and how exposure to music and the visual arts at school correlates with test scores. The results indicate that 63 percent of students had enrolled in a music class in 2016 and that those who had taken a music class scored an average of 12 points higher on NAEP than students who had not taken music. Compared with 2008, a smaller percentage of students listened to musical performances at school in 2016. Students who heard a musical performance at school scored an average of 25 points higher on the music assessment than students who did not hear a performance.

In 2016, 42 percent of students had taken a visual arts class — unchanged from 2008. But in art classes, students were less likely to be asked by their teachers to draw or paint every day in 2016 compared with 2008. Students who took an art course at school and students who painted or drew in class at least once a week scored an average of 10 points higher on visual arts questions than students who did not take an art course or draw as often.

In addition, there were fewer opportunities for arts exposure outside of school, with smaller percentages of students playing a musical instrument on their own in 2016 than in 2008. Similarly, for visual arts, smaller percentages of students took art classes outside of school or made their own artwork.

“Every student should have access to arts education to develop the creativity and problem-solving skills that lead to higher success both in and out of school,” said Ayanna Hudson, director of arts education at the National Endowment for the Arts. “Arts education can be especially valuable for our nation’s underserved students, leading to better grades, higher graduation rates and increased college enrollment. That’s why NAEP is an important tool, providing a national snapshot of student achievement in the arts, including serious gaps in access, so we can know how best to assist our students.”

The full report can be found HERE.