



Alabama Education News

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Vestavia Hills High School Science Teacher Jennifer Brown Named 2015-2016 Alabama Teacher of the Year

*Trace Crossings Elementary School Teacher
Minette Wiggins Named Alternate TOY*

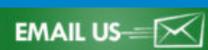
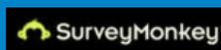
Jennifer Brown dreamed of becoming a starting player in the WNBA – that is until teaching young athletes how to play another sport (softball) made her realize she was destined instead for a career in education. Now, in her 16th year as a teacher, Brown cannot imagine doing anything else.

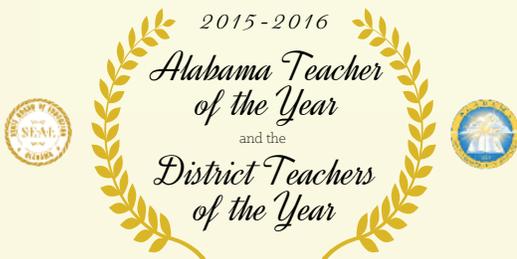
The Vestavia Hills High School science instructor will serve as the official spokesperson and representative for teachers in the state for the next year as the 2015-2016 Alabama Teacher of the Year. A graduate of the University of Alabama at Birmingham and the University of Montevallo, Brown said she feels “privileged to have the opportunity to affect lives every single day.”

“It is my goal to create a student-centered classroom packed with diverse individuals who are inspired by my passion and unafraid to make mistakes,” Brown said. “I think I am an outstanding teacher, but I know I can be better. I will continue to improve by experimenting with new strategies and by taking my own risks so that my students will enjoy an extraordinary learning experience.”

Of Brown, State Superintendent of Education Dr. Tommy Bice said, “Jennifer Brown embodies the best of what quality instruction looks like in action. Her passion for cultivating life-long learners and helping her students achieve a depth of understanding of science and real-world science application is displayed in her classroom every day.”

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Bice announced that Brown was chosen to serve as the 2015-2016 Alabama Teacher of the Year near the end of a celebration honoring the 12 semi-finalists and 4 finalists who were nominated for the coveted title. The awards ceremony is held annually in recognition of these teachers' dedication to education in Alabama public schools.

The following day, Brown received a new Chevrolet Traverse to use this year, courtesy of Alfa Insurance and the Alabama Farmers Federation. This marks the 19th year Alfa has supported the Teacher of the Year program by donating a year's use of a vehicle.

"We are thrilled to recognize Ms. Brown for all she does to educate and inspire her students," said Jimmy Parnell, president of Alfa Insurance and the Federation. "Alabama's teachers are extremely important people who help youth develop into productive citizens."

Brown has taught ninth- and tenth-grade Applied Physical Sciences, Physical Science and Biology at Vestavia Hills High School since 2002. She delights in sharing her love of science and longing for learning with her students every day, is passionate about student achievement and believes all of her students have the ability to succeed.

Minette Wiggins, a first-grade teacher at Trace Crossings Elementary School in the Hoover City School System, has been chosen to serve as the 2015-2016 Alternate State Teacher of the Year. Serving as a camp counselor at a church camp was all it took to solidify her decision to pursue a teaching degree.

Having taught in both rural and suburban school systems, Wiggins, a graduate of Troy State University and the University of South Alabama, does not believe there is a one-size-fits-all curriculum. She strives to create a 21st century learning environment for her first graders where instruction is personalized, project-based and hands-on.

The National Board Certified teacher treasures her students' enthusiasm for learning and their unconditional trust in her to lead them toward achievement and growth.

"My successes are when a child is excited about something he has learned, when she has an 'ah-ha' moment, when he achieves a goal and when academics makes a difference to the individual life of a child," Wiggins said. "My students inspire me daily to be the best teacher I can be, and they deserve nothing less. I am so very proud to be a small part of the teaching world."

Brown and Wiggins will spend much of the 2015-2016 school year serving as ambassadors for public education and the teaching profession. Brown automatically becomes Alabama's nominee for National Teacher of the Year.

ALSDE Child Nutrition Unit kicks off Summer Food Service Program with 3rd Annual Rally

To mark the 40th anniversary of the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (USDA FNS), this year has set a goal of serving 200 million meals nationwide to children and teens who are at risk of experiencing hunger when school is out – 14 million more meals than were provided in 2014.

Alabama, which is among the Top 10 states in the nation that are continuing to experience gains in the number of SFSP sponsors as well as meals served, has once again been tasked by the USDA to boost SFSP participation in order to help increase the number of children who receive proper nutrition during the summer and are thus ready to learn when they return to school in the fall.

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE), Child Nutrition Program (CNP) Section, recently hosted a rally to kick off the state's efforts to aid the USDA FNS in achieving its goal on the steps of the Alabama State Capitol Building.

The third annual kickoff rally, "**Break for A Plate,**" featured remarks by State Superintendent of Education Dr. Tommy Bice and Robin Bailey, USDA FNS Southeast Regional Administrator.

Other highlights of the celebration included performances by the Greenville High School Band and Luverne High School Cheerleading Team; an appearance by the Montgomery Biscuits Baseball mascot, Big Mo; and tours of the Mobile County School System's Super Food Express, which administers summer meals via school bus.

Alabama SFSP sponsors served a total of 1,995,852 meals in 2014, up from 1,650,896 in 2013. In addition, 172,173 children were served last year, compared with 137,537 in 2013.

Aside from the annual rally, the continued growth of the state's summer feeding program can also be attributed to awareness raised through www.BreakforaPlate.com, a Web site developed to promote the need for more sponsors in USDA targeted areas where SFSP participation is low.





The Summer Learning Challenge!

For Alabama's students, summer is a time of fun, but those months away from school can result in a loss of knowledge and reading ability. **The Summer Learning Challenge** raises awareness of the summer loss epidemic, shares compelling research on the importance of personalized reading activities and provides access to a variety of free resources to support targeted reading and math summer learning.

There are FREE ways to keep students engaged and excited about education:

The Lexile-based "**Find a Book, Alabama**" tool offers students over 160,000 books from which to choose. This book-search tool enables individuals to build custom reading lists based on their Lexile range and personal interests and checks the availability of books at the local library. The search tool includes a growing collection of English literary and informational books.

Children, parents and educators can also **pledge to read** using the "Find a Book, Alabama" tool. Encourage students to pledge to read!

- The **Alabama Summer Learning Challenge** also includes a **FREE email-based math skills program** for children who have just completed 2nd through 6th grades. Parents and other summer care-givers can begin registering for the program today. Starting Monday, June 22, parents will begin receiving daily emails with fun activities and resources to help their children retain math skills acquired during the previous school year. After the program ends on Friday, July 31st, parents can print an award certificate to celebrate their child's summer accomplishment!
- This summer, **Stride Academy** is FREE to all students in the state from now to August 7. Register at www.AlabamaSummerStride.com, then log in at <http://www.stridegroups.com/start/> to learn and play! Students who registered for Alabama Summer Stride in previous years will need to create an account for this summer.

Prevent "Summer Slide" with a cool blend of **online math, reading and science skills practice**; spectacular video games; and peer competitions to pass the lazy summer days. Students may access the Stride Academy learning platform online anytime, 24-7, on tablets, PCs and Macs. LTS Education Systems offers the Stride Academy game-based learning program used in many Alabama school districts during and after school hours for fun and personalized learning.

Students who have used Stride Academy during the 2014-15 school year do not have to register again and may continue to use their assigned login codes throughout the summer. LTS will provide a dedicated Parent Support Line for the Summer Learning Challenge. Parents can call in to 1-855-382-6528 for help with Stride Academy.

Teachers, be sure to send those student login codes home with your students before the end of school!

LINKS

"**Find a Book Alabama**" is offered in partnership with the ALSDE and MetaMetrics, Inc. Choose your reader's comfort with grade-level material or reading ability for a full list of books to read all summer! In English and Spanish. www.lexile.com/fab/alabama.

Summer Reading Log for Students **Print** your own **Bookmark!**

Print Posters and Flyers for your classroom and library!

Summer **Math** Challenge 8.5x11 size

Summer **Math** Challenge 11x17 size

Summer Learning Challenge **Flyer**

FAQ Poster for Librarians

FAQ Poster for Parents

Print the **Alabama Summer Reading Program Certificate**

Print the **Alabama Summer Math Challenge Certificate**

All Alabama Public Libraries

<http://www.publiclibraries.com/alabama.htm>. Visit your public library for book lists and summer reading programs for kids of all ages.

TIPS, RESOURCES AND RESEARCH

[Keeping Kids Off the Summer Slide](#)

American Library Association:

[Library Summer Reading Programs](#)

[10 tips to keep reading skills sharp over the summer](#)

Summer Learning Loss:

The Problem and Some Solutions

http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref_Summer_Learning_Loss/

PTA: Reading Tips for Parents

<http://www.pta.org/programs/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3562>



2015 Alabama Green Ribbon Schools Luncheon Honors Awardees

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) recognized the 2015 Green Ribbon Schools (GRS) with a unique luncheon at a local farm and at the monthly State Board of Education meeting. The schools were honored for their approach to create "green" environments through reducing environmental impact, promoting health and ensuring a high-quality environmental and outdoor education.

The winning schools and university:

- Lincoln Elementary School, Talladega County Schools
- Lincoln High School, Talladega County Schools
- Bluff Park Elementary School, Hoover City Schools
- Auburn University, Auburn, AL

All schools celebrated with a picnic lunch at E.A.T. South Farm in downtown Montgomery provided by the Environmental Education Association of Alabama (EEAA). Green Ribbon Flags, sponsored by Legacy, Partners in Environmental Education, were presented to each of the schools.



Robert E. Lee High School Students Experience a Whirlwind Trip to D.C.!



Teacher Josh Stone and 15 students from Robert E. Lee High School, Montgomery County Schools, experienced a multitude of sights, sounds and D.C. VIPs on a recent trip. The trip was funded by a private donor, allowing the students, some low-income, to travel to our nation's capital and enjoy the best of

what it has to offer. The students were part of Mr. Stone's AP history course and his ninth grade history classes. The students wrote essays and acquired recommendations. A panel of teachers then selected the students based on strength of essay, recommendations and G.P.A.

Then they were off to D.C.! The first stop was the annual Easter egg roll with President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama hosting the event. The students had a great time on the White House lawn. They toured the Capitol, learning more about the nation's history and inner workings of government. They had the opportunity to meet Martin Luther King III and discussed the legacy of his father and the path to civil rights in America.

The next stop was the U.S. Department of Education, where a surprise visit with Secretary of Education Arne Duncan was a high point of the day! Secretary Duncan sat with the class and was interviewed by the students. The students also met with interns at the USDE and at the White House.

The students then toured Google where they discussed lobbying efforts and met with software engineers. The students traveled to George Washington University and Howard University where they experienced college life. They toured a multicultural center and listened to minority students to describe their experiences, showing the realms of possibilities for the high school students. The last stop had to be the famous Ben's Chili Bowl, a hot spot for the Washington movers and shakers!

Mr. Stone and the students graciously thank Montgomery County Schools and Lee High School for their support in facilitating the trip and the donors for funding this exciting adventure.

Great Opportunity!

The Southern Institute of Forensic Science is presenting a series of workshops for forensic science teachers or any teachers wanting to introduce a variety of forensic science topics into their classes. The first of the series will be offered July 20-22 at Opelika High School in Opelika, AL. Register [here](#).

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