

# ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

The electronic newsletter of the Alabama State Department of Education

October  
2013

Issue I

## Real Facts About the ALSDE Data Use and Governance Policy

With the growing national concern over the use and misuse of personally identifiable data, I want to take this opportunity to familiarize you with the Alabama State Board of Education's recent actions to ensure that the collection and use of student data follows strict guidelines regarding privacy and confidentiality, as well as remind you of the current federal laws governing student information.

Through an approved Resolution, the State Board officially adopted a [Data Use and Governance Policy](#) that prohibits federal or state reports from containing personally identifiable data; that requires all data collected to be stored in a state-developed and state-owned data warehouse; and that mandates that access to this data be restricted to pre-screened employees. Additionally, the [policy](#) limits the disclosure of data collected through third-party testing organizations, restricting unauthorized data mining or re-disclosure of student-level data.

However, this is just the first step in the data [policy](#). With technology gaining an even greater presence in school programs, the State Board has committed to an ongoing oversight of the use and privacy of data, which may involve additional policies.

It is also important to note that the [ALSDE Data Use and Governance Policy](#) is in compliance with [The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA), a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

[FERPA](#) gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records, including the right to inspect their child's records, and to request that a school correct information they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level.

[FERPA](#) regulations require educational agencies and institutions to use reasonable methods to identify and authenticate the identity of parents, students,

school officials, and other parties before disclosing or permitting access to personally identifiable information. These requirements help to ensure that educational agencies and institutions protect

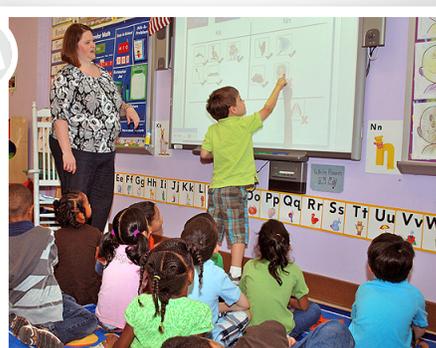
the privacy of education records and do not violate FERPA by disclosing education records to the wrong party.

[FERPA](#) classifies protected information into three categories: educational information, personally identifiable information, and directory information.

The existing provisions include:

- **Educational information:** The most current regulations clarify who may receive student information to conduct evaluations of education programs, and under what circumstances these types of disclosures may occur. The regulations also provide best practices for written agreements that cover the circumstances of these disclosures, as well as best practices for reasonable methods an entity disclosing student information must take to comply with FERPA.
- **Personally identifiable information:** Personally identifiable information can only

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## Facts About the ALSDE Data Use and Governance Policy

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be disclosed if the educational institution obtains the signature of the parent or student (if over 18 years of age) on a document specifically identifying the information to be disclosed; the reason for the disclosure; and the parties to whom the disclosure will be made. Failure to comply with these requirements will result in a violation of FERPA.

- **Directory information:** FERPA does not bar disclosure by the educational institution. Directory information, such as a list of students' names, addresses, and telephone numbers, can be disclosed provided that the educational institution has given public notice of the type of information to be disclosed, the right of every student to forbid disclosure, and the time period within which the student or parent must act to forbid the disclosure.
- **Privacy Technical Assistance Center:** The [Privacy Technical Assistance Center](#) is a "one-stop" resource for education stakeholders that provides a variety of [resources](#), including training materials and technical briefs that provide guidance and best practices on protecting personally identifiable information.

In summary, data is a powerful tool in determining the learning needs of students, and we must not lose sight of that. At the same time, however, we need to assure parents, students, and the citizens of our state of our due diligence in protecting that data from inappropriate use. [aen](#)

– STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION DR. TOMMY BICE

## Alabama Lawmakers Invited to Tour Schools as Part of "Learning with Legislators Day"

The Alabama State Department of Education is encouraging state lawmakers to visit the public schools within their districts as part of **Learning with Legislators Day**.

Beginning at 8:30 a.m. Oct. 22, Alabama legislators are invited to tour schools in the areas they represent in order to see firsthand the exciting learning opportunities students are experiencing in classrooms throughout the state. The Alabama State Board of Education has also asked Legislative Budget Committees and their chairmen to attend the work session on Oct. 24 as the Board's special guests.

"The goal of 'Learning with Legislators Day' is to give our elected officials a clear picture of what is going on in Alabama's classrooms so that they can make informed decisions about education during the upcoming Legislative Session," said State Superintendent Dr. Tommy Bice. "An excellent way to help them learn is a school visit."

"Learning with Legislators Day" will give school administrators, teachers, and students a chance to tell state lawmakers, who reconvene for the regular Legislative Session on Jan. 14, 2014, what makes their schools great, as well as some of the challenges they face. [aen](#)



## The National Assessment Governing Board

**At a time of increasing demand for high standards in education**, America's students need wise leadership more than ever. The National Assessment Governing Board has long answered the call – and now you can be a part of the Governing Board's vital work measuring student achievement, and more.

The 26-member Governing Board was established by Congress to set policy for The Nation's Report Card, also known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

The Governing Board is seeking qualified and passionate individuals to serve four-year terms and help lead groundbreaking initiatives involving NAEP, including efforts to increase parent engagement, improve academic preparedness, and provide innovations in assessment.

The following positions will be open in 2014: chief state school officer, eighth-grade teacher, fourth-grade teacher, secondary school principal, and general public member. The term for each of the five positions is October 1, 2014, to September 30, 2018. Learn more about what Governing Board members do and where they come from, and submit a nomination for yourself or someone you know [here](#):

Nominations may be submitted via [email](#) or mailed to:

Dr. Mary Crovo  
Deputy Executive Director  
National Assessment Governing Board  
800 N. Capitol St. NW, Suite 825  
Washington, DC 20002-4233



## An Outdoor Garden for Real-Life Learning

**A passion for life.** Skills to lead to a successful life. That is what all educators and parents want for students in Alabama's classrooms. At Peter Crump Elementary in the Montgomery County School System, that's what Special Education teacher Dawn Ellis wants too.

Her idea for an outdoor garden is the first step. "We want to give our students a hands-on experience so they can see why building, growing, and nurturing something is important and educational." Ms. Ellis teaches a self-contained special needs class at Crump. Her teaching focus is practical academics and daily life skills.

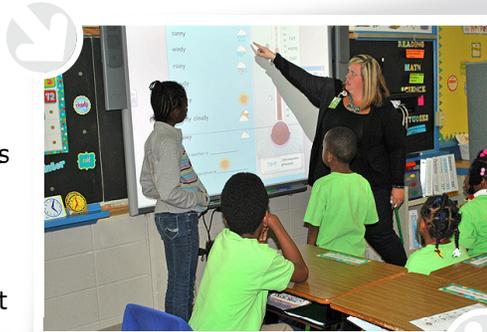
The students spend most of the week learning the extended academic standards, with Fridays being a day for team building and fun. Exercise; workstations that promote confident, individual learning; and singing and dancing are all part of a day filled with energy. Ellis wants the students to feel passionate and skilled, and have ownership of their work.

Initially when she imagined the idea for the outdoor garden, she wanted to provide an active learning environment, but due to the school's limited funds she wasn't able to create one right away. That didn't stop her though.

To further this desire, Ellis has been reaching out to the community and local business leaders to help in the creation of an outdoor classroom at her school. The garden will help to teach students the learning standards and to push themselves with work and see bountiful results that they can own as their own. She plans to have students work with their own garden barrel, as well as plant herbs and seasonal flowers and vegetables. Ellis believes an outdoor classroom will help her special students learn how food is grown through a hands-on teaching approach and how to work together in groups – an important life skill.

Ellis has asked businesses for donated items and still needs sponsors for community-based field trips, materials, and volunteer labor to help build raised garden beds and purchase supplies to grow plants and vegetables.

If you would like to see the dynamic projects that Ms. Ellis is working on for her special education class, visit her [Donors Choose page](#). Other Montgomery and Alabama teachers have projects also available for viewing.



## School Bus Safety Week: Oct. 21-25

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) is urging citizens, particularly motorists, to join with the department in observing **School Bus Safety Week, October 21-25**. School Bus Safety Week is an ideal time for drivers to reacquaint themselves with the law and what is required to help prevent crashes, injuries, and fatalities.

In the 2012-2013 school year, there were 272 collisions, 10 injuries, and one fatality involving school buses in Alabama, according to the ALSDE. Most student fatalities occur outside the bus during loading/unloading, and the younger the child is, the more vulnerable he or she is to be killed outside the school bus. It is also important to note that the afternoon school bus trip is twice as dangerous as the morning school bus trip.

Alabama's school bus drivers, mechanics, transportation supervisors, and other transportation employees work diligently to ensure safe transportation for the more than 377,000 elementary and secondary students transported to and from school each day of the school year. However, the safety of these students should be of the utmost importance to all.



## Go Green! Time to Apply for Green Ribbon School Status

The U. S. Department of Education, Green Ribbon Schools Program, and the Alabama State Department of Education recognize schools taking a comprehensive approach to greening their school. The ALSDE encourages all schools to apply and be a part of this innovative and prestigious group of schools. A comprehensive approach incorporates environmental learning with improving environmental and health impacts. Becoming a U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School is a two-step process.

The first step is to complete and submit a form to be selected as a nominee by the Alabama Green Ribbon Schools Advisory Committee. Once selected as a state nominee, the second step of the process requires signatures for the Nominee Presentation Form that will be sent to the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) along with the application.

The USDE selects honorees from those presented by eligible nominating authorities nationwide. Selection will be based on documentation of the applicant's high achievement in the three USDE Green Ribbon Schools Pillars:

**Pillar I:** Reduce environmental impact and costs.

**Pillar II:** Improve the health and wellness of students and staff.

**Pillar III:** Provide effective environmental and sustainability education, incorporating STEM, civic skills, and green career pathways.

Schools demonstrating exemplary achievement in all three Pillars will receive the highest rankings. It is important to document concrete achievement. It will help you to assemble a team to complete the application. This team might include: a facilities manager, physical education director, food services director, curriculum director, finance department representatives, teachers, and students. The USDE Green Ribbon Schools Green Strides Resources Page and Webinar Series should be checked for standards, programs, and grants related to each Pillar, Element, and Question. This is an excellent clearinghouse of information for all schools, not only those that apply.

The questions in this application will help applicants demonstrate high achievement in these Pillars as well as provide space for including pertinent documentation. E-mail completed applications to [sfarrell@alsde.edu](mailto:sfarrell@alsde.edu) on or before the deadline of **December 20, 2013**. If there are questions regarding the application process, contact Mrs. Shirley J. Farrell or Martha Anne Allison at 334-242-8114.

To assist with the application process, the Alabama State Department of Education will host two Webinars. In order to participate in the Webinar, a computer with speakers (microphone is optional) is required. A tablet or smart phone may be used, but the WebEx app must be downloaded. 

**October 31, 2013** · 3:15 – 4:15 PM · Pillar III activities

<http://tinyurl.com/GRSAthree> · password: grsa

**December 3, 2013** · 3:15 – 4:15 PM · Q & A all topics

<http://tinyurl.com/GRSAfour> · password: grsa

## The Annual State Superintendent's Visual Arts Exhibit



The annual State Superintendent's Visual Arts Exhibit will be held February 6-21, 2014. The exhibit of student artwork will be on public display in the Old Supreme Court Library of the Alabama State Capitol. An awards luncheon will be held for the Best of Show, First-, Second-, and Third-Place award-winning students and their visual arts instructors on February 13, 2014.

School systems may submit fifteen (15) pieces of artwork. Systems wishing to participate must complete and submit the 2014 System Intent to Participate Form by November 1, 2013. Submit only one form per system. Each system must appoint a local system contact. This individual will be responsible for distributing the guidelines to all schools, as well as organizing the process to select entries from the system. Please encourage all schools to participate.

**Deadline for entries:** Artwork representing school systems will be received from January 14-17, 2014. For further information, contact Mrs. Sara B. Wright, Administrator, Standards/Courses of Study and Textbooks Section, at telephone number 334-242-8059 or via [e-mail](mailto:). [View the Guidelines](#) for entries. 



## The Alabama Counseling Association (ALCA) Annual Conference – Coming Soon!

### The Alabama Counseling Association (ALCA)

Annual Conference will be held in Birmingham, AL, at the Sheraton Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex on November 20-22, 2013. As always, the ALCA Annual Conference will provide professional development for school counselors and offer information on current school counseling topics to include their role in Alabama's PLAN 2020. New counselors may attend the ALCA conference to meet the training requirement expected as part of the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) Counselor Academy.

The theme of this year's conference is "Alabama Counselors: Helping People – Changing Lives." Dr. Thomas R. Bice, State Superintendent of Education, will speak at the opening on Wednesday, November 20, 2013. Keynote speakers will include Ms. Ginger Robinson, a school counselor with 38 years of experience at all grade levels as well as a much-in-demand speaker; Ms. Melissa "Missy" Smith, a counselor trainer and survivor of the school shootings in West Paduch, Kentucky, and now a counselor



for troubled youth as well as a *Ladies' Home Journal* "Most Fascinating Women"; and Dr. David Barnhart, an Alabama licensed professional counselor and certified mental health counselor and author of the book *Write Your Fears Away*. Ms. Nancy Wolfe, ALCA President, will preside at the conference. In addition, there will be approximately 100 content sessions on topics of concern and need for your counselors.

The ALCA is mailing registration packets to counselors who are members of the association. Others may obtain packets by going to [www.alabamcounseling.org](http://www.alabamcounseling.org) and clicking on "Annual Conference" or by contacting Dr. Chip Wood with the

ALCA at 888-655-5460 or [alca@alabamacounseling.org](mailto:alca@alabamacounseling.org).

The ALSDE encourages you to support the attendance of counseling coordinators and counselors if at all possible. The conference is inexpensive and will provide an excellent opportunity for professional development activities for counselors and will assist counseling coordinators to reconceptualize their local comprehensive counseling and guidance program. [aen](#)

## Governor's Office Seeks Hand Made Christmas Ornaments!

**Governor and Mrs. Robert Bentley** are excited to once again open their historic home for Christmas tours on **December 2, 9 and 16, 2013, from 5-7 p.m.** Admission is free and everyone is encouraged to come see the people's house, decorated for the holiday season.

A fun way to engage fourth graders in Alabama history is to have them hand make Christmas ornaments to display on the Governor's Mansion Complex. Along with his/her Christmas spirit, knowledge of our state's history could be incorporated into the design. This will allow for the creativity of students and, more importantly, will allow children to be a part of the Christmas festivities.

We hope your fourth graders will participate! Please mail ornaments to 1142 South Perry Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36104, c/o Heather Hannah, by Nov. 18, 2013, in order for them to be displayed in the house. Due to the amount of ornaments we receive, they will not be returned and should be the size of a softball or smaller.

If you have questions, please contact Heather Hannah by phone 334-834-3022 or by [email](#).

Thank you for your help and participation! The Governor and First Lady are looking forward to celebrating the holiday season with you and your fourth grade classroom! [aen](#)



## Pinecrest Elementary School Earns HealthierUS School Challenge Gold Award of Distinction

**Pinecrest Elementary School** joins an elite group of Alabama schools that have earned the prestigious HealthierUS School Challenge Gold Award of Distinction.

Administrators, teachers, support staff, and students recently celebrated the honor during a festive assembly moderated by Sylacauga City Schools Director of Child Nutrition Kelley Wasserman, known to students in the district as "Chef Lucy." Her alter ego bears a striking resemblance to legendary comedienne Lucille Ball.

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service recognizes HealthierUS School Challenge schools as those that have made changes to improve the quality of the foods served, provide students with nutrition education, and provide students with physical education and opportunities for physical activity.

Wasserman said qualifying for certification in the HUSSC program is stringent and requires much attention to the details of the school's operations.

"The commitment of the administrators and faculty at Pinecrest Elementary School demonstrates that the well-being of the students comes first," Wasserman said. "The excellent nutrition program in place at Pinecrest, along with the fun and enthusiasm of their physical and wellness programs, combine to create an environment for the students to reach their full potential in all their endeavors."

The award has served as a catalyst for other health and wellness programs recently implemented at Pinecrest Elementary, including the Wellness, Academics and You (WAY) initiative. Other collaborative efforts include teaming with the Sylacauga Alliance for Family Enhancement (SAFE) and Dr. Joy Deupree in the "Seed to Plate: Nutrition for Rural Elementary Schools" grant. These efforts, combined with the school garden coordinated by master gardener Bill Roberts, provide health and nutrition education, hands-on gardening



*Pinecrest Elementary School students join Sylacauga City Schools Child Nutrition Director Kelley "Chef Lucy" Wasserman in the new Vegetation Station school garden.*



*ALSDE Child Nutrition Program Director June Barrett congratulates Pinecrest Elementary School on receiving the HealthierUS School Challenge Gold Award of Distinction.*



*The Child Nutrition staff at Pinecrest Elementary School and Principal Gary Rivers celebrate the school's recent honor.*

techniques and cooking experiences for students, Pinecrest Elementary School Principal Gary Rivers said.

"The total number of grants and donated funds and services rendered for Pinecrest Elementary has been more than \$20,000," said Rivers, adding that the school was thankful to all the contributing parties that have helped to make Pinecrest Elementary better equipped to meet the health and nutrition needs of its students.

ALSDE Child Nutrition Program Director June Barrett noted that for the last three years Alabama has led the nation in the number of schools that have received the HUSSC Gold Award of Distinction designation. In addition to a plaque and HealthierUS School banner, HUSSC Gold Award of Distinction schools receive \$2,000.

Sylacauga City Schools Superintendent Dr. Todd Freeman told students they should be proud of what their school has accomplished.

"One of the most important things about your role is that you lead people like me, your parents, and other adults into developing healthier lifestyles," Freeman said. "By doing so, you help us grow into better leaders and into a healthier community."

Before the award was presented, dozens of Pinecrest Elementary students enthusiastically waved their hands in the air when Barrett asked them to name vegetables that are green and orange. The children also watched a video that showcased the student body eating healthy snacks; exercising; and working in the school garden, "Vegetation Station."

"Being in the garden is a lot of fun!" said Pinecrest Elementary fourth-grader Morgan Flora. "I love planting things. Eating healthier is neat, too, because it helps us have healthier bodies and get stronger." **aen**

## Madison City Board of Education Approves Spanish for Kindergarten and First Grade Classrooms

**Madison City Schools** is moving forward with introductory Spanish for kindergarten and first grade classrooms, with a goal to grow the program to other grades. Spanish is the language of choice based on parent/teacher surveys that were conducted in the spring.

The Madison City Board of Education approved the foreign language expansion as part of Superintendent Dr. Dee Fowler's goals to strengthen curriculum to better prepare students. Angie Bush, a foreign language teacher for Madison City Schools, and Judy Warmath, elementary education coordinator for Madison City Schools, are making the rounds to Madison City elementary schools to educate teachers on the plans.

The Madison City school district recently sent an instructional leadership team to Crestline Elementary in Mountain Brook to learn about its elementary foreign language program, now in its 12th year.

Madison City will hire part-time foreign language teachers to rotate between the schools. The program is being paid for with local funds, a further testament to the district's commitment to education excellence. In addition to the language lessons, instructional leaders are advocating fun skits and exercises using the Spanish translations and perhaps getting the high school Spanish classes to work with the youngsters.

First graders will receive 30 minutes per week of instruction one day per week, while kindergarten students will get 30 minutes one day every three weeks. The goal is not so much to make the youngsters conversational but to expose them to a familiarity with the language, enlighten them to another culture, and stimulate learning all while having fun.

Research has found that the benefit of second language learning not only impacts linguistic abilities but cognitive and creative abilities as well. Students who are learning a foreign language outscore their non-foreign language learning peers in the verbal and, surprisingly to some, math sections of standardized tests. Research also shows that learning a second language by the age of 7 opens learning pathways in the brain that might not otherwise develop.

Exposure to other languages/cultures will also better prepare students for the global environment they will face in the future. While Spanish is the language for the elementary program, all languages and cultures will be promoted.

Learn more about foreign language instruction [HERE](#).



Angie Bush (left) and Judy Warmath (right) meet with West Madison Elementary School Principal Dr. Daphne Jah.

## State Board of Education Meetings on Ustream.tv!

See your State Board of Education in action [HERE](#). See **LIVE** video every second and fourth Thursday of the month or [watch the archived videos](#) anytime you want (different Board meeting days in July, November, and December).

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*Alabama Education News*  
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 Montgomery, AL 36130-2101

*Alabama Education News* (USPS #387-290) is published bi-monthly by the Alabama State Department of Education, P.O. Box 302101, Montgomery, AL 36130-2101. This publication, authorized by Section 16-2-4 of the *Code of Alabama*, as recompiled in 1975, is a public service of the Alabama Department of Education designed to inform citizens and educators about programs and goals of public education in Alabama.

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