

ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

NEWS AND ISSUES IN ALABAMA PUBLIC EDUCATION, K-12

APRIL 2003

WHAT'S INSIDE ...

- Superintendent's Message
- Section Spotlight – Child Nutrition
- School System Highlight – Opelika City Schools
- School Systems Focus on *REACH*

The bottom line:

Approximately 90 percent of all children in Alabama attend public schools. That means these students are our future doctors, bridge builders, caregivers, accountants, ministers, merchants, teachers, and dreamers. That's the "What's in it for me?" If we fail them, we are only failing ourselves. The success of our schools and colleges will determine the success of our children. The success of our children will determine whether or not sufficient monies exist to fund health care, public safety, public utilities, and education.

Our futures will, to a large extent, be determined by the creative genius of our youth. Better education is the tool for its release.



Why *REACH*?

“In His Own Words”

ALABAMA SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION ED RICHARDSON

As the state Legislature debates funding issues over the next couple of months, you will be hearing even more about *REACH* – Realizing Every Alabama Child's Hopes. For two years, the state Board of Education has talked about how the plan, if funded by the Legislature, will focus on providing at least an adequate (average) education for every student in Alabama's 128 public school systems. Ensuring that the local *REACH* benefits are made known to the general public is one of the most crucial aspects of this plan's success. We have a multiple-choice crossroads. One choice is to listen to the same old well-known clichés and do nothing. A second choice is to fashion a temporary solution that delays the inevitable but doesn't fix the problem. The third choice is to face the problems and, in a fair and even-handed way, solve the problems and not leave them for our children.

To grasp the concept of *REACH* and the reality of what's being proposed, it takes an understanding of the “Big Picture.” We must begin to see beyond our own current jobs or positions. We have to project ourselves into our future, the futures of our children, our state-supported services, and our tax structure. Perhaps for the first time in the state's history, we finally have the momentum to make significant changes in the way Alabama operates.

WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO?

While there is an immediate (and long-range) need for more money to support Alabama's classrooms as demonstrated by the *REACH* plan, there is the very real and looming specter of the current financial crisis our state is facing. Alabama is again facing proration (a reduction in the state education budget). Schools have not

(Continued on Page 2)



To grasp the concept of REACH and the REALITY of what's being proposed, it takes an understanding of the "Big Picture."

(Continued from Page 1)

recovered from the proration of 2001 in which over \$174 million was cut from their budgets. In fact, schools to date have not reached 2001 funding levels and have been warned to prepare for an additional cut of six percent in fiscal year 2004.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

From all indications, fiscal years 2003 and 2004 look like they are shaping up to be among the WORST in the state's history. Fortunately, the Education Trust Fund now has a *Rainy Day* fund that takes money from the oil and gas royalties to help offset fiscal year 2003 financial problems. Voters approved this fund last year when the state was staring at the possibility of experiencing proration two years in a row. However, it is a one-time shot. There is no provision to pay back the money from the *Rainy Day* fund once it is used up. After those monies are exhausted, there is nothing left on which to fall back. Most local school systems have exhausted any reserves they had built up prior to proration in the 2000-2001 school year. If the Legislature does not act now to help increase revenue, then all state services (highways, law enforcement/prisons, Medicare ... and yes, education) will be subject to reductions. It's a "Big Picture" theme.

Most of a LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM'S budget (approximately 80 percent or higher) is devoted to maintaining salaries and benefits. Contrary to popular belief, administration costs are generally less than four percent in most of our school systems' budgets. That's better than most not-for-profit companies and substantially better than most private sector businesses. Proration is devastating because over 90 percent of a school system's budget CANNOT BE PRORATED. This includes 80-85 percent of the budget in salaries and benefits. Additionally, items such as bond debt payments, utilities, gasoline, and insurance cannot be prorated. That means approximately seven percent is left to absorb proration. Cutbacks in maintenance, travel, classroom instructional supplies, and field trips (to save gasoline), resetting thermostats (to save on utilities), review of extracurricular activities, and consolidating small schools must be considered. Several states are shortening the school year. Alabama, currently, has the shortest school year in the nation.

SO WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

Ultimately, local boards of education must wrestle with maintaining the quality of service in the classroom. However, having control of only seven percent of their budgets is difficult. That's why personnel cuts are the only place in a local



school system's budget where substantial savings can be realized. These are difficult choices. Unless better funding strategies are found, we are doomed as a state (and local communities) to repeat this scenario again and again.

The REACH plan basically says Alabama schools need more money to be able to give our children at least an adequate (average) K-12 education. It also demonstrates how that money will be used in the classrooms to better demonstrate accountability for how the money will be used. Without new funding for K-12 education, we cannot expect our children to compete in an ever-changing world. Over the last seven years, our schools, teachers, and

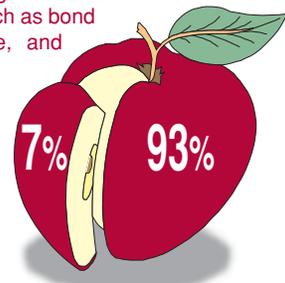
students have demonstrated more accountability than most other states in the nation.

Since 1995, the state Board of Education has adopted the toughest graduation requirements in the nation; developed accountability measures in academics, finances, and school safety/discipline; implemented teacher testing;

required background checks for all persons with unsupervised access to children; developed report cards for schools, adult education programs, and teacher preparation programs; increased test scores; and lowered the dropout rate to the lowest in the state's history and Southeast. These are good returns on investment. Now additional funding is needed to help us maintain and support those accountability measures that Alabamians want to see enacted and to provide an education for our youth that will enable them to succeed, thereby brightening all of our futures. 🍏

About 93% of a school system's budget cannot be prorated. This includes 80-85% of the budget in salaries and benefits. Additionally, items such as bond debt payments, utilities, gasoline, and insurance cannot be prorated.

Approximately 7% is left to absorb proration. Cutbacks in maintenance, travel, some classroom instructional supplies, and field trips (to save gasoline), and resetting thermostats (to save on utility costs) must be made.



BOARD BRIEFS

MARCH AGENDA ITEMS INCLUDED:

- ❖ Approved Appointments to the Alabama School of Fine Arts
- ❖ Approved Two Substitute Members to the Social Studies State Course of Study Committee
- ❖ Announced Intent to Adopt Emergency Rule as Permanent Administrative Code Pertaining to Regulations Governing Public Schools
- ❖ Tabled Adoption to Administrative Code Rule Pertaining to Transfers from Non-Accredited Schools/School Setting(s)
- ❖ Announced Intent to Adopt as a New Chapter Administrative Code Pertaining to Chief School Finance Officers
- ❖ Selected District 2 Board Member Betty Peters to Represent the Board as Teacher of the Year Judge
- ❖ Passed Resolution on Textbook Substitution for a Later Edition of *Welding: Principals and Applications*
- ❖ Passed Resolution Recognizing Monte Sano Elementary School, Huntsville City Schools, Recipient of the National PTA Parent Involvement School of Excellence Award

TEACHER OF THE MONTH FOR March

*Mountain Brook High School, Mountain Brook City Schools
State Board of Education District 6*

WANDA JEAN BURNS is the March ALFA Teacher of the Month. Representing State Board of Education District 6, Burns teaches Advanced Placement Calculus at Mountain Brook High School. Although Burns has been teaching for 23 years, she has not run out of creativity. Because Burns and her students teasingly refer to her course as “cowculus,” Burns decorates her classroom with a cow theme. When her school had an assembly on the dangers of drinking and driving, Burns’ slogan for the week was: “Alcohol and calculus don’t mix; never drink and derive.”



WANDA JEAN BURNS

Burns is a National Board Certified Teacher in Adolescence and Young Adulthood Mathematics. She has been selected Secondary Teacher of the Year from the Mountain Brook City School System and State Board of Education District 6, and named to the USA Today All-USA Teacher Team. She was a 2001 and 2002 State Finalist for the Secondary Mathematics Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

Burns and Mountain Brook High School each receive \$1,000 from ALFA Insurance Co. and the Alabama Farmers Federation. 🍏



MATH TEACHER HAS RIGHT FORMULA

*Booker T. Washington Magnet High School, Montgomery County Schools
State Board of Education District 5*

JOY STANFORD is April’s Teacher of the Month. Representing State Board of Education District 5, Stanford is a math teacher at Montgomery County’s Booker T. Washington (BTW) Magnet High School. The ability to relate complex problems to everyday life plus an interdisciplinary approach equals success for this skilled math teacher. She regularly incorporates science, history, writing, art, and dance into her math lessons.



JOY STANFORD

Stanford earned National Board Certification in Mathematics in 2001 and received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Teaching for Secondary Mathematics in 1998. Described by her colleagues and students as a leader and model teacher, Stanford heads the BTW Math Department, sponsors the Honor Society, and coordinates the schoolwide tutoring program.

Stanford and BTW Magnet High School each receive \$1,000 from ALFA Insurance Co. and the Alabama Farmers Federation. 🍏

CHILD NUTRITION



There is positive proof that healthy, well-nourished students learn better, retain more instruction, and have improved attendance. That is one of many reasons the Alabama Department of Education Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) section strives to ensure Alabama's public school students receive nutritious meals while at school.

A healthy school nutrition environment gives students consistent, reliable health information whether it's learned in the classroom or in the lunchroom. CNP staff work hard to meet federal guidelines for fat and saturated fat content, as well as the supply of protein, and essential vitamins and minerals in appropriate serving sizes. Additionally, CNP staff members make sure educators and school support personnel are well trained, not only in Grades K-12 but also in pre-school and adult feeding programs, which are also offered in the state.

Educators know CNP also reaches hungry children who may only receive daily meals served in school. That's why year-round and after-school nutrition programs are so important. However, looming budget cuts accompanied by rising fuel prices will definitely have a negative impact on local summer food service programs.

The Farm Bill, signed by **PRESIDENT BUSH** in May 2002, provided Alabama with \$1.28 million for the Department of Defense (DOD) Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Program. The DOD works with CNP to purchase fresh produce in truckload quantities for delivery to commodity distributors for speedy delivery to schools. The Bill also encourages schools to purchase locally produced foods. Thanks to this program, students are frequently offered Washington State Red Delicious Apples, Florida Navel Oranges, kiwi, pineapple, baby carrots, baked potatoes, and sweet potatoes. The state Department of Agriculture is also working with CNP to assist Alabama farmers with the Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Initiative to promote state/homegrown produce so that Alabama products feed Alabama children.

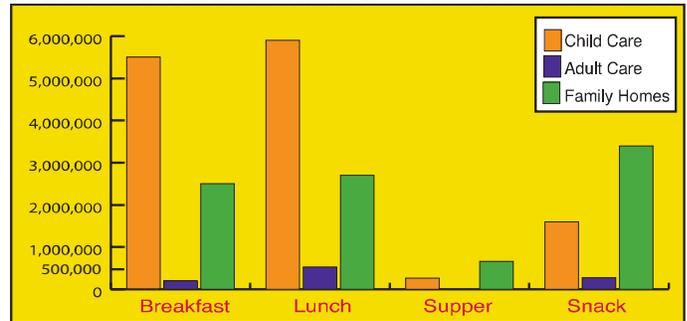


STAYING HEALTHY

CNP has also partnered with the Alabama Department of Public Health in the Jefferson County Obesity Project.

The mission of the group is to empower youth, families, and communities to achieve and maintain a healthy weight by promoting nutrition and physical activity while maximizing the use of resources. **PERRY FULTON**, State CNP Administrator, hopes this project will eventually spread to other areas of the state. "Obesity related medical conditions are the second leading cause of preventable deaths in the United States. Obesity costs \$100 billion a year in health care costs and lost productivity, plus Americans spend \$48 billion per year trying to lose weight," explained Fulton. "I am confident our healthy

MEALS SERVED FOR THE 2000-2001 FISCAL YEAR



nutrition programs are helping eliminate, or at least curb, the obesity problems some children may face. The tremendous work being done by the CNP staff and school system personnel is the contributing factor to the success of our state nutrition programs," Fulton added. According to the 2001 Alabama Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 12.3 percent of youth are overweight. Additionally, obesity is responsible for 50 percent of childhood hypertension.

PROVIDING QUALITY FOODS

Another CNP goal is to improve the quality of products statewide while maintaining the lowest cost possible through the operation of the statewide purchasing program. Participating schools and school systems can visit <http://cnp.alsde.edu/> to order commodities online.

Students also approve new products served in Alabama's school lunchrooms. Positive comments from various school nutrition personnel indicate students are enjoying the healthy choices. From the new items being offered, carrots and kiwi seem to be a big hit. "Our teachers are doing a great job at emphasizing the importance of good nutrition and fitness to their students," said Fulton. "If students enjoy what they eat and at the same time are receiving healthy products, their concentration, energy, and attendance levels are boosted, improving school performance." 🍏

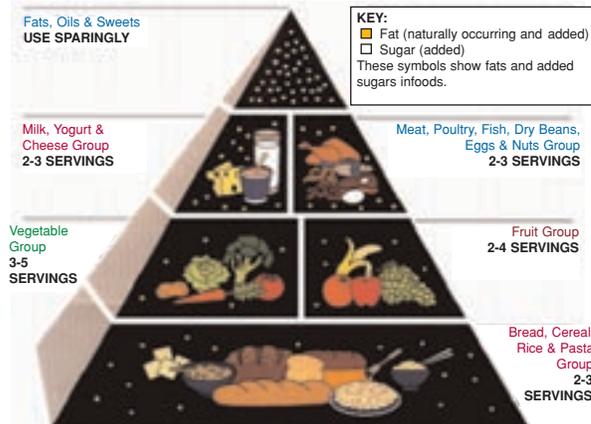
School System Highlight

OPELIKA CITY SCHOOLS

Servings of fruits and vegetables are a common occurrence in schools in the Opelika City School System. When the United State Department of Agriculture offered the option in the early 1990s to serve meals based on nutritional standards for students as opposed to food groups, the system adopted a program entitled NuMenus, offering healthier menu choices. A portion of the fresh produce is purchased from local farmers, additional fruits and vegetables are frozen not canned, and foods are steamed and cooked with spices instead of bacon or ham seasoning.

According to MELANIE PAYNE, Child Nutrition Program Director for Opelika City Schools, most students enjoy the healthy choices. "Our child feeding program focuses on the children's well being," said Payne. "The tremendous rise within the last few years in Type 2 diabetes and child obesity prompts us to make sure our students are receiving foods that are low in fat and sugar content. Feeding children more fruits and veggies and reducing fat costs more money, but the parents in our system have supported us by voting for increased funding."

Opelika City Schools participate in the statewide purchasing program. DR. PHILIP RALEY is the superintendent. 🍏



- More than 115 million meals were served in Alabama school cafeterias in the 2001-02 school year.
- Over 48.8 percent of the state's students qualified for the free- and reduced-price lunch program in the 2001-02 school year.
- Over 7,830 support personnel worked in the state's school lunchrooms during the 2001-02 school year.
- The number of school systems participating in Alabama's Child Nutrition Programs totals 123.
- Alabama is the 2nd state in the nation to implement a statewide product procurement program.
- Alabama is the 1st state in the nation to use the Internet for food product ordering and distribution. Visit our Web site by [clicking here](#).

DID YOU KNOW?



What's Cooking?



From the enrollment of 4,500 students in the Opelika City School System, approximately 63 percent qualify for free- and reduced-priced meals. School meal participation is 90 percent systemwide.

HELPFUL LINKS FOR TEACHERS

Click on button

- [American School Food Service Association Classroom Nutrition Resources](#)
- [Centers For Disease Control Teacher's Corner](#)
- [Ask ERIC Lesson Plans](#)
- [National Dairy Council Nutrition Explorations](#)
- [USDA Food and Nutrition Resources for Teachers](#)

SUPERINTENDENTS FOCUS ON *REACH* PLAN

3 KEY COMPONENTS OF *REACH*

INSTRUCTION

- At-risk students
- Textbooks
- Materials, supplies, fees
- Additional teachers
- Additional teacher contract days
- Salary to national average

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT

- Instructional services
- Barriers to student learning
- School support programs

ADMINISTRATION

- Facility renewal and operations and maintenance
- Transportation

The leaders of Alabama's 128 public school systems have been busy attending Advanced *REACH* Training in strategic planning to implement the state's *REACH* – Realizing Every Alabama Child's Hopes plan. The primary focus for superintendents in the three-day sessions which began in February and will end in May, is to provide tools and resources to help lead the district and schools in developing strategic and school plans that:

1. Create local support for the *REACH* initiatives.
2. Identify and rank the specific needs and aspirations of the district within the context of *REACH*.
3. Involve all schools in a single process that helps satisfy all planning requirements of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), Southern Accreditation of Colleges and Schools (SACS), and National Study for School Evaluation (NSSE).



Superintendents also convened in Montgomery and Prattville to attend the Alabama Association of School Administrators conference held March 11 and 12, in which UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA PROFESSOR SUSAN PACE HAMILL presented a lecture on the efforts of tax reform. Hamill has written a report arguing the state's tax structure violates Judeo-Christian ethics (see excerpt on page 7).

School leaders also attended a presentation from new STATE FINANCE DIRECTOR DRAYTON NABERS the morning after the Governor's State of the State address. His message was both sour and sweet.

Nabers told school leaders that due to the sagging economy, Alabama continues to face an unprecedented financial crisis. However, by its very definition, "crisis" should be viewed as a turning point and an opportunity to set things right.

"GOVERNOR RILEY is committed to building a platform to help provide K-12 students with the best education possible," said Nabers. He added that it would take a concerted effort to steer the state through the current financial storm.

Band-aids will not work any more. A long-term solution is needed. One that will help reduce the tax burden

on the poor and ensure a fairer system to fund state needs. The end result will be that Alabama will be more competitive. "It will not be easy," Nabers stated. "We will need to convince many people and we must first rebuild our credibility."

The state finance director concluded his remarks by asking school leaders to return to their respective districts and begin open and honest discussions with local boards, staffs, community/civic organizations, and the media about the real issues their schools are facing. 🍏

GOVERNOR RILEY'S

FIVE STEPS TO SOLVING A CRISIS:

1. Define reality (tell it like it is).
2. Think clearly (by thinking through the problem).
Obstacles that impede clear thinking, include:
 - Greed/Selfishness,
 - Fear, and
 - Misplaced compassion (make solid personnel decisions).
3. Have courage in the face of opposition.
4. Do the right thing.
5. Have faith in God.

AN OPEN LETTER TO ALABAMA'S POLITICAL LEADERS:

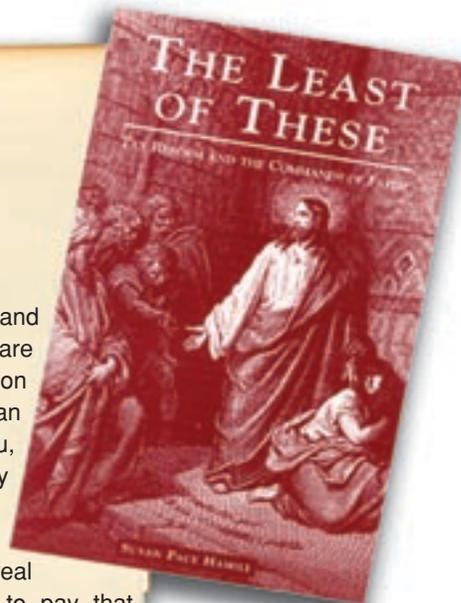
ONLY REAL TAX REFORM CAN SAVE OUR CHILDREN

By SUSAN PACE HAMILL

The numerous studies showing how Alabama's state and local tax structure unfairly burdens the poor and the fact we are facing the most serious fiscal crisis since the Great Depression compels you to take action. Biblically based Judeo-Christian ethical principles, which most of you have adopted, hold you, as our political leaders, to the highest level of accountability to eliminate this injustice poisoning our state.

Instead of settling for a quick fix solution, you must remedy the inequities embedded in the tax structure. Only real tax reform can produce a fair system based on ability to pay that empowers the state and local areas to adequately fund vital services such as the public schools. And only real tax reform can close the enormous gap between the standards of justice that our faith requires and the oppression currently plaguing our state...

Only real tax reform can save our children, the most vulnerable and powerless segment of Alabama's population, who also hold the keys to our future. Until you accomplish real tax reform, Alabama's children, especially those from poor and lower middle class families, will continue to be denied the adequate education that the moral principles of Judeo-Christian ethics demand that they have.



This excerpt is taken from an editorial by Susan Pace Hamill, which addresses Alabama's political leaders, based on her articles, *An Argument for Tax Reform Based on Judeo-Christian Ethics*, published in the *Alabama Law Review* and *Constitutional Reform in Alabama: A Necessary Step Toward Achieving a Fair and Efficient Tax Structure*, forthcoming in the *Cumberland Law Review*. Susan Pace Hamill, a Professor of Law at the University of Alabama School of Law in the areas of tax and business law, received a master's degree in theological studies from the Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, which endorses her thesis.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CLASSROOM RESOURCES

The Educator's Resource Manual on Child Abuse, available from the Children's Trust Fund of Alabama will help principals, teachers, and counselors recognize signs of abuse and neglect and identify measures to take if suspected abuse is occurring. [Click here](#) to obtain a **FREE** copy, or call (334) 242-5710.

MindOH! and Project Wisdom teamed up to provide a collection of classroom resources to help students deal with the current concerns over war with Iraq, terrorism, and other current events. [Click here](#).

U.S. Department of Education Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools Web site is a one-stop shop to help school officials plan for any emergency, including natural disasters, violent incidents, terrorist acts, and war.

Legacy will host summer teacher institutes **June 22-27**, at the Southern Environmental Center/Birmingham Southern College, and **July 20-25**, at Camp Beckwith in Baldwin County. Teachers participate in exciting field trips, learn from content lecturers, and engage in hands-on teacher activities. Contact Sallye Longshore, Educational Programs Director, at (334) 270-5921, 1-800-240-5115, or [click here](#).

AWARD AND GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Alabama Safe Schools Initiative 2003 Awards of Excellence, sponsored by the office of the Alabama Attorney General, recognizes schools demonstrating excellence in their school safety planning, training, and collaboration efforts. For more information, or to receive a copy of the 2003 nomination packet, [click here](#) or contact Lynn Childs in the Office of Attorney General at (334) 242-7300. **Application deadline: April 15**

"One Class at a Time" sponsored by Birmingham's WIAT-TV CBS 42 is awarding weekly \$1,000 classroom resource grants to K-12 teachers in the station's viewing area. To qualify, interested teachers must complete an application form and submit a brief essay describing their classroom needs and the benefits to students. A winner will be selected every week for the next year. [Apply online](#) or contact the station at (205) 322-4200.

APRIL 											
NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH											
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Apr. 10	STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING				12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Apr. 14-20	YOUNG PEOPLE'S POETRY WEEK				19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Apr. 22	EARTH DAY				26	27	28	29	30	31	
Apr. 24	STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION WORK SESSION				26	27	28	29	30	31	
Apr. 25-26	ALABAMA PTA CONVENTION				26	27	28	29	30	31	

MAY 											
NATIONAL SAFE KIDS MONTH											
May 4-10 TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK											
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
May 6	NATIONAL TEACHER DAY				12	13	14	15	16	17	18
May 8	STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING				12	13	14	15	16	17	18
May 22	STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION WORK SESSION				24	25	26	27	28	29	30
May 26	MEMORIAL DAY (STATE HOLIDAY)				27	28	29	30	31		



ALABAMA Education News

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