

April 2013 · Special Issue

# ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

The electronic newsletter of the  
Alabama State Department of Education

## Alabama Teacher Of The Year “Final Four” Nominees Announced

**It is down to the final four candidates** in the running for the 2013-2014 Alabama Teacher of the Year! The finalists are:

### Elementary

- *Tracy Pruitt, Montana Street Academic Magnet School, Dothan City, District II*
- *Kathy Perkins, Verner Elementary School, Tuscaloosa City, District VII*

### Secondary

- *Jeff S. Johnson, Hoover High School, Hoover City, District III*
- *Dr. Alison Grizzle, P.D. Jackson Olin High School, Birmingham City, District IV*

**State Superintendent of Education Dr. Tommy Bice** said the final four candidates for the Alabama Teacher of the Year have been chosen from an extensive field of educational leaders throughout the state who have given more than just their time and attention.

“The final four are educators who have given all their energy and expertise to help to prepare students for the world,” Bice said.

The next step for the final four is an extensive interview with the state judging committee. The Teacher of the Year winner will be revealed at a ceremony hosted by the Alabama State Department of Education on Wednesday, May 8, at 6:30 p.m. at the RSA Plaza Terrace.

Alabama’s Teacher of the Year spends the majority of the school year serving as the spokesperson for education and the teaching profession as well as presenting workshops to various groups. Additionally, Alabama’s representative is a candidate for the National Teacher of the Year Award. *continued on next page*



Tracy Pruitt



Kathy Perkins



Jeff S. Johnson



Dr. Allison Grizzle



**Tracy Pruitt,**  
Montana Street Academic Magnet  
Dothan City (District II)

"My most basic belief drives me every single day. All students can learn. The truth is that they all do

learn, but how do you teach students on so many levels with so many diverse backgrounds in one classroom? You work hard and never give up on any child."

Pruitt, who comes from a family of educators, earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Troy University and has taught in Dothan for the past 23 years in various positions. She is a member of several professional teaching organizations, has served on many education committees and is an active volunteer in her community. Two of her greatest accomplishments are receiving National Board Certification and knowing that her daughter wants to carry on the family tradition and become an educator. She is passionate about getting parents involved in their child's education and teaching literacy and math. She enjoys integrating technology into the curriculum because while "good-old-fashioned teaching is essential," she believes technology "makes teaching so much better."



**Kathy Perkins**  
Verner Elementary School  
Tuscaloosa City (District VII)

"Seeing students' faces light up when they make the connection between existing knowledge and

new material is truly like seeing a light bulb turn on. Knowing that I am the reason for a connection, either through modeling or by ensuring students have the proper environment to forge connections for themselves, is a great reward that motivates and inspires me to teach."

Perkins cites receiving National Board Certification and earning an Education Specialist degree in Special Education/Gifted from The University of Alabama among the highlights of her career. She has taught in the Tuscaloosa City School System since 1992 and was a nominee for the Jacksonville State Teacher Hall of Fame in 2012. She collaborates with teachers at her school and across the system to improve teaching, increase communication and provide special experiences for students. She is passionate about teaching because she believes education is essential for developing responsible citizens who respect one another, work together and look for new ways to solve problems.



**Jeff S. Johnson**  
Hoover High School  
Hoover City (District III)

"I became a teacher because I believed I could intellectually stimulate those students who are

underserved and underrepresented and engage them in a rigorous academic process that will allow them to choose a different path in life, much like myself."

Johnson is the head of the science department at Hoover High School where he has taught since 1998. The National Board Certified teacher believes he was predestined to become an educator, crediting his high school and college instructors with steering him in the right direction and shaping him into the person he is today. His teaching philosophy focuses on three core beliefs: To be successful, teachers must create positive student-teacher relationships; students want to be successful learners, but teachers must meet students where they are physically and academically; and teachers must be passionate about teaching and their subject matter.



**Dr. Alison Grizzle**  
P.D. Jackson Olin High School  
Birmingham City (District IV)

"I have yet to leave school saying, 'Today all of my students' lives were enriched because they had me as a

teacher.' Every day that I leave school, I know that I can always change something to engage more students and impact their learning more effectively."

After graduating from Denison University with degrees in mathematics and English, Grizzle decided not to pursue a career as a financial analyst and followed her heart by entering the world of education. She has taught math in Birmingham City Schools since 1999 and chose to teach in high-needs schools because she believes urban districts often have more difficulty attaining and retaining good teachers. She is a National Board Certified teacher who earned her doctorate degree at Walden University. Her greatest rewards come at the end of the school year when students receive their graduation exam results. "My students come running and screaming with hugs and tears and are ecstatic to see the word 'pass' by mathematics. It is that day I see the fruits of my labor."

## 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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## Five Top Students Accepted Into National Medical Program

The **Madison City School System** has received some exciting news. Five students at Bob Jones High School, who also participate in the school's Medical Academy, have been officially accepted into the College of Medicine Early Acceptance Program (EAP) at the University of South Alabama. This highly respected and nationally recognized initiative accepts only 15 candidates per year.

The students from Bob Jones High School that have been selected are:

- Kelly Agalsoff
- Veena Danthuluri
- Ally Heng
- Ramya Molleti
- Shravya Utlapalli

"This is what career and technical education is all about—preparing students for a lifetime of success," said Dr. Camille Wright, Madison City Schools Director of Instruction and Career and Technical Education. "The support that we receive from our community and the strong partnerships that we have developed with great education supporters like Hudson Alpha are the real keys to this type of success. We are very proud of these students. They are both college- and career-ready!"



Three of the students (Danthuluri, Molleti, and Utlapalli) plan to pursue Biomedical degrees. The other two students (Heng and Agalsoff) plan to earn Health Science-related degrees. Mrs. Melinda Lawson is the Medical Academy chair at Bob Jones High School.

To be accepted into the College of Medicine EAP at the University of South Alabama, each student had to first meet strenuous selection standards – a minimum 28 ACT composite score or a 1250 SAT score, and at least a 3.5 high school grade point average (GPA). Once accepted into this program students must maintain a 3.4 college GPA in the sciences (biology, chemistry, physics) and mathematics.

To learn more about the Bob Jones High School Medical Academy, contact Madison City Schools Director of Instruction and Career and Technical Education, Dr. Camille Wright, at 256-464-8370.