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ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS



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The beginning of a new school year is upon us once again. We at the Alabama State Department of Education, representing the State Board of Education, want to thank each and every educator in the state for the hard work and dedication you give to the field of public education. As we move into this new school year there will be challenges and difficult circumstances to overcome. There will also be victories and amazing breakthrough moments that will remind us why we chose this profession. Through it all, we want you to know that the State Department of Education supports your endeavors and looks to assist you in any way possible.

Public education in Alabama is moving in a new and exciting direction. This year, new academic standards with increased rigor, a return to assessment for instructional purposes, and a greater emphasis on students graduating prepared for college, careers, and citizenship in the 21st century will become our focus.

That brings us to the purpose of this letter, which is not to ask for your support . . . rather, it is to extend ours. Too often there is a disconnect between the everyday responsibilities of teachers and administrators at the local level and the functions of policymakers at the State Department of Education. We want to make it abundantly clear that we are here to provide assistance in any way possible to ensure the success of your students and your schools.

For those of us who have dedicated our lives to the betterment and furtherance of public education, there is no greater joy than to see a child achieve. We want that joy for you here at the State Department of Education, and we know you want that as well. The future of public education includes bold new ideas that will continue to move Alabama towards being a leader in educational reform. As an educator, your unwavering support for the young people of this state is essential to creating a public education system that works – a system that harnesses the budding ability of each student and prepares him or her for a future of his or her choosing. In other words, a system that prepares students for life.

As we embark upon this exciting time in education, we are here to help you realize the promise of Alabama's most valuable asset – our students.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Bice – State Superintendent of Education

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Shelby County Students Could Be The Stars of a Documentary!

Calera High School eighth-grade students in Brian Copes' Principles of Engineering class may soon add the title of movie star to their growing list of accomplishments. If funding can be secured, the students will be the focus of a full-length, 90-minute documentary film highlighting their efforts to provide affordable transportation to underdeveloped countries.

Copes and James Chambliss, owners of MagnoliaLand Entertainment, are currently trying to secure over \$100,000 to make the project a reality. The funding would not only go to help cover the projected production costs of the documentary, but also the raw materials needed to build a Basic Utility Vehicle kit and transportation for Copes and his students to take it to an underdeveloped country.

"The purpose of this documentary is to inspire other students and other teachers," Chambliss said. "If they see other students and teachers working on a project like this, hopefully, it will inspire them to do one of their own. We also want to show the Alabama automobile industry that our schools are working to produce a skilled workforce that can one day work in their factories and plants."

"We can not only help them learn to build their own affordable transportation, but also how to make their own fuel using products that are probably readily available to them," said Copes.

Copes is working with a volunteer board of directors to form a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization called Skilled Knowledgeable Youth (SKY) in order for corporations to make tax deductible donations to this project.



A New Day – Changing the Culture of Learning and Teaching at Lee High School

Many fear change. Many embrace it. The challenge of educational success is daunting for many educators, but the staff at Robert E. Lee High School in Montgomery County Schools has taken the task head on. With a large change in staffing due to a transformation effort at the school, Lee High School will begin this school year with an enthusiasm and excitement possibly not seen in recent years. A decline in academic progress, as seen in its Adequate Yearly Progress scores, brought about the decision for a transformation process to begin this year at Lee.

Mr. Lorenza Pharrams, the principal at Lee, has helped to create a Continuous Improvement Plan, which the school will follow to change attitudes, learning and teaching styles and academic results. With more than 50% of his staff new to the school or to teaching entirely, Pharrams has the opportunity to start new – with innovative and personalized programs and people that have ambition and desire to work with students who may need more than just everyday instruction.

The school has employed 15 Teach for America (TFA) educators, some of them coming from Chicago, New York City, North Carolina, and even right here in Birmingham, Alabama. They chose to come to Lee High School knowing of the need for academic improvement.

Mentoring by veteran teachers and district support has been crucial this summer in assisting new teachers like Anastasia Porter, Ninth Grade World History TFA teacher, in acclimating to the school and community. "As a first-year teacher, it can be daunting, but the staff has reached out to us, making it known that any topic is open to discussion." Pharrams has made mentoring a focus of his plan for change, with more seasoned teachers paired with new teachers, to provide necessary support and encouragement. "Mentoring can be done anywhere and provides teachers with crucial support necessary for their success," he said.

Curriculum alignment and collaboration seen in 'teaching pods' are elements of the plan. The pods, an expansion of the middle school concept, allow core subject teachers to be grouped together, giving the opportunity to teach across the curriculum with concepts from reading, math, science, and social studies to be included in each other's teaching. Teachers will share a common planning period as well, allowing time for discussion of their students. Reviewing data will be an important part of the period, with a focus on interpreting data in order to lead instruction.

Josh Stone, a Montgomery County teacher in his seventh year, moved from Jefferson Davis High School to Lee in order to be a part of this exciting change. "I see a confidence, an excitement, and motivation in all the teachers here at Lee that I've not experienced before. We know it will be difficult but we have received tremendous district support with additional professional development. Changing perceptions will occur when we grow and



Principal Lorenza Pharrams

progress." As the school year progresses, Stone hopes to change minds as the educational and local community sees progress at Lee.

The administration has put in place interventions that will help those students who are in more need academically and emotionally. Achieving higher academic scores is a main goal but having an engaging, inviting, and trusting school environment is the first step to progress. Pharrams has created an accountability system for students and teachers in which each student will have a teacher that he or she can go to with any problem. Each teacher will have up to 18 students for whom they are responsible. A survey taken last school year showed that only 40% of Lee High School students felt like they had someone they could go to for help – that left over 1,200 students who felt the opposite. Pharrams hopes to change that.

Pharrams first goal is to make AYP. His second, to offer help outside of the normal school day and environment, such as Credit Recovery, Supplemental Education Services, all focused on reaching those students who have commitments such as work or family or who get lost along the way and need that additional help. "Maximizing the seven hours of the school day is crucial and helping those same students after school is also," Pharrams said.

Investing in students and teachers with focused and innovative practices is crucial to Lee High School's plan. The goal for all Lee High School students is being college- and career-ready. "With community and educational support, the challenge can be met," said a new TFA teacher, Whitney McBride. With new and seasoned, motivated educators at the forefront of a culture change Lee High School hopes to accomplish its goal of educational success.

This is the first of a three-part series with the next installment due in December.



Teacher Josh Stone

Alabama Council for Leadership Development Deadline for Submissions

The Alabama Council for Leadership Development (ACLD) reviews school systems' professional study submissions throughout the year. Proposals deemed acceptable are approved as Professional Learning Unit (PLU) credit for professional staff that hold a valid Alabama instructional leader certificates. Those holding such certificates may include, but are not limited to, selected central office staff, principals, assistant principals, career technical education directors, teachers, and other educators.

The submission deadline for the upcoming meeting is **September 4, 2012**. The professional study applicants will be notified by **September 21, 2012**. For complete information and technical assistance needs contact Telena Madison, Alabama Department of Education, Office of Teaching and Leading, at 334-353-5230 or tmadison@alsde.edu.

The 2012 Summer Reading Challenge

has come to a close, and we are proud to announce 374 pledges were received, with over 2,500 books students committed to reading this summer!

Thank you for the support during the inaugural year of the Summer Reading Challenge, with a special shout-out to our biggest group supporter, the Black Belt Parent Leadership Academy, working directly with parents and students to encourage academic and social success!



Alabama Student Elected New National TSA Officer

Alabama's Career and Technical Education (CTE) students continue to earn top accolades and represent our state well nationally.

Kaitlyn Beans, a student at Montgomery County's Brewbaker Technology Magnet High School, has just been selected to serve as the 2012-2013 Technology Student Association (TSA) National Treasurer.

TSA, founded in 1976, is devoted to preparing America's middle and high school students for careers in technology-based occupations. This organization currently has 150,000 members and **only six students are selected each year to serve as national officers.**

"TSA is an awesome organization, and I am very proud to serve as the 2012-2013 National TSA Treasurer," says Alabama student Kaitlyn Beans. "Our new national officer team is excited about this great opportunity. We love to learn new things and are very passionate about technology. My involvement in TSA started in middle school, and while in high school I have held the office of Alabama TSA Vice President. It is my hope that our organization continues to grow and inspires more students to reach for success."

TSA officers are elected annually. The national positions selected each year are president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, reporter, and sergeant-at-arms. To see photos of the newly elected 2012-2013 National TSA leadership team, [CLICK HERE](#).

Also, the National TSA Conference was held this year in Nashville, Tennessee, on June 21-25. Alabama students earned three different national "First Place" awards.



Brewbaker Technology Magnet High School TSA student members (left to right) Tina Le, D`Maree Jackson, Kaitlyn Beans (new national officer), and Takia McCurry after winning top state awards in May

2012 National TSA Conference Results

Competitive Event	Place	School/Student
Communication Challenge	3	Katelyn Bonner, Central Baldwin Middle School
Construction Challenge	8	Central Baldwin Middle School (Team Event)
Essays on Technology	10	Jordan Johnson, Bay Minette Middle School
Medical Technology Issues	2	Bay Minette Middle School (Team Event)
Multimedia Production	8	Chipper Drinkard, Bay Minette Middle School
Problem Solving	1	Bay Minette Middle School (Team Event)
System Control Technology	8	Bay Minette Middle School (Team Event)
Techno Talk	1	Central Baldwin Middle School (Team Event)
Techno Talk	5	Bay Minette Middle School (Team Event)
Transportation Systems	1	Leanne Phillips, Bay Minette Middle School

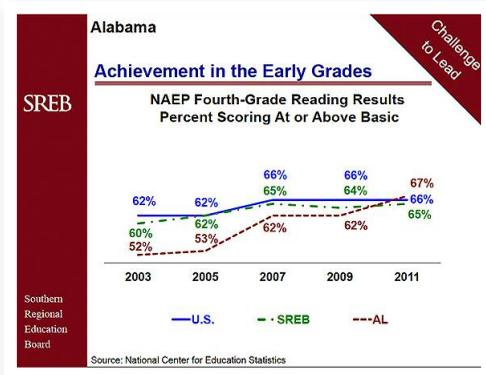


To learn more about Alabama's dynamic TSA organization, contact State TSA Director, Ben Scheierman, at (334) 242-9569 or visit the national TSA website at www.tsaweb.org.

Southern Regional Education Board Report Ranks Alabama #1 in Reading Progress

A recent report from the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) ranks Alabama as the leader in the nation for improvements in reading scores and shows positive progress in closing the achievement gap.

Dr. Tommy Bice, State Superintendent, said, "I remain amazed but, more importantly, so encouraged by the hard work of our educators and our students in Alabama as acknowledged by this report from SREB. This fact-based study confirms that we are moving in the right direction, and with a collaborative plan to leverage what works across our state we can reach our goal of every child a graduate and every graduate prepared for college, work, and adulthood in the 21st century."



Other important achievements highlighted in the report include:

- Alabama's public pre-k program is one of only five in the nation to meet all 10 nationally recognized standards of quality.
- Alabama increased the percentage of students who moved successfully from ninth to twelfth grades.
- Alabama increased its high school graduation rate, outpacing the region and the nation.
- More Alabama high school graduates enrolled in college as compared to all U.S. grads.
- More Alabama first-year college freshman returned for their second year in comparison to the regional numbers.
- Alabama's average starting salary for teachers exceeded the region and the nation, making it a very competitive place to recruit new teachers.

"These gains are an important step forward and confirm that many of the policies Alabama has adopted are making a difference," said **SREB President Dave Spence** in a *Huntsville Times* article.

[Click here](#) to download the full SREB report, "A Decade of Progress." Source: www.apalusa.org

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Friend or follow the Alabama Department of Education and get access to the most up-to-date information, press releases, event photos, videos, links, and much more! Links to all social media sites can also be found on our [webpage](#).



SREB Program Honors Three Outstanding Alabama High Schools

The Southern Regional Education Board is recognizing 54 high schools, technology centers, and middle schools in 13 states with national awards for outstanding achievement in school improvement and preparing more students for success in high school, college, careers, and citizenship.

SREB President Dave Spence presented the awards on July 11 in New Orleans during the 26th Annual High Schools That Work Staff Development Conference, an event that brought together more than 5,000 educators to focus on boosting student performance in the nation's public schools. The Alabama schools received two of the seven national SREB awards based on performance on the 2012 HSTW Assessment, MMGW Surveys, and state data.

The **HSTW Gold Achievement Award** was awarded to **Mary G. Montgomery High School** (Mobile County) whose students experienced a rigorous career/technical curriculum and at least 50 percent of students earned the HSTW Award of Educational Achievement based on their performance on the 2012 HSTW Assessment.

The **MMGW Depth of Implementation Award** was awarded to **Beverly Magnet School** (Dothan City) and **Carver Magnet School** (Dothan City) – schools that deeply implemented the MMGW design and had at least 50 percent of eighth-graders completing a rigorous curriculum in one or more subject area according to the 2012 MMGW Student Survey. For a complete list of schools, [click here](#).

EDUCATEAlabama Beginning Year 3

EA 2012 Training

1,800 instructional leaders and educators participated! Unable to attend?

[Click here](#) to view EA Training, Part I and

[Click here](#) to view EA Training, Part II.

View 2011-2012 EA Data Reports:

- Reviewers – System & School Reports
- Evaluators – School Reports
- Evaluatees – Individual archived data

[Click here](#) for:

- Statewide Reports
- State Board of Education Districts
- Regional In-service Centers



[Click here](#) for an EA Implementation Timeline for All EA Users in 2012-2013.

All EA users must complete Steps 1-3 by September 4th:

Step 1 – ED DIR Accounts

Step 2 – EA Login/Logout

Step 3 – EA Profile Status

All EA users must complete

Step 4 by September 19th:

Step 4 – Self-Assessment

[Click here](#) for all EA 2012 Training Materials, Directions, Tutorials, Frequently Asked Questions, and more!
Contact: educatealabama@asc.edu

LEADAlabama Launching Year 1

LEAD 2012 Training

300 instructional leaders participated!

Unable to attend? Access LEAD 2012 training materials [here](#).



LEAD Implementation Timeline

August 31, 2012:

Complete Leader Self-Assessment

September 29, 2012:

Hold Collaborative Dialogue

October 31, 2012:

Complete Professional Learning Plan

July 31, 2013:

Add Supporting Evidence

[Click here](#) to find LEAD Directions, Tutorials, Frequently Asked Questions.
Contact: leadalabama@asc.edu.

Need ACLD PLUs? Don't hesitate, start today!

Professional Development Your Way (PDYW) @ EDVANTIA 2012-2013 Schedule

To register and participate in the EDVANTIA professional studies, participants must have an active STI PD account! If you need an STI PD account, please contact your school system's STI PD Manager. If you are not employed in an Alabama public school, you must contact call Lori Newton, State Department of Education, at 334-353-1118 or send an [email](#). Edvantia cannot create an STI PD account for you.

Reculturing for Student Success

STI PD Title Number: PLUACLD045

This **16-week** online professional study provides participants with the knowledge and ability to promote and monitor a high-performance learning culture that promotes success for all students by collaboratively developing and monitoring strategic structures focused on success for all students and exploring and developing core beliefs that support distributed accountability and produce high-performance learning. Participants will earn 2 ACLD PLUs upon successful completion.

Registration Dates

8/13/2012 – 8/23/2012

10/8/2012 – 10/29/2012

12/17/2013 – 1/07/2013

4/1/2013 – 4/15/2013

Start – End Dates

8/27/2012 – 12/21/2012

11/5/2012 – 3/01/2013

1/14/2013 – 5/10/2013

4/22/2013 – 8/16/2013

Shared Leadership

STI PD Title Number: PLUACLD044

This 10-week online professional study will provide participants with the knowledge and ability to utilize knowledge to plan for and sustain continuous school improvement in classrooms, schools, and school systems/local education agencies (LEAs). This professional study is facilitated and supported through Edvantia's course management platform. Participants will earn 1 ACLD PLU upon successful completion

Registration Dates

8/13/2012 – 8/27/2012

9/10/2012 – 9/24/2012

11/26/2013 – 12/10/2013

2/18/2013 – 3/4/2013

5/6/2013 – 5/27/2013

Start – End Dates

9/4/2012 – 11/16/2012

10/1/2012 – 12/14/2012

12/17/2012 – 3/6/2013

3/18/2013 – 5/31/2013

6/03/2013 – 8/14/2013

Additional Professional Study Opportunities

If you are interested in other professional study opportunities approved by the Alabama Council for Leadership Development (ACLD), go to www.leadershipalsde.com. Then, click **SEARCH**. Once you find a professional study of interest, contact the provider listed on the **ADDRESS BOOK** to register.



Digital Revolution Hits Huntsville Schools

Being described as possibly the biggest paper-to-digital shift for a school district in the country,

Huntsville's new superintendent is pushing his schools head-first into the 21st Century.

On June 21st, Superintendent Casey Wardynski presented to the Huntsville school board his plans to transition the district completely away from traditional textbooks by going digital. To support a successful shift, he plans to equip all students with the appropriate technology (i.e., laptops and electronic tablets) and provide his teachers with "phenomenal" professional development to enhance learning in their classrooms.

Numerous benefits were cited in the recent *Huntsville Times* [article](#) for the complete transition, from saving the district millions of dollars in annual textbook costs, to "catching up" to how kids learn today, to even lightening the load in students' backpacks.

The Huntsville digital initiative is a collaborative effort with [Pearson Education](#), an online education services company funded by the Pearson Foundation. Wardynski explained that the system currently spends about \$5 million on traditional textbooks that typically need to be replaced within seven years. His proposal indicates that the digital books will cost half that amount annually after the initial implementation period.

Click [HERE](#) for an *EdWeek.org* article on how the major K-12 textbook publishers are responding to the digital shifts. *Source: www.apalusa.org*

Wonder® Bread 7Wonders of the USA Teacher Tour



As part of its ongoing celebration of everyday Americans who make extraordinary contributions to their communities, Wonderbread is, for a second year, inviting American families to nominate inspiring teachers for the 2012 *7Wonders of the USA Teacher Tour* program.

The 2012 *7Wonders of the USA Teacher Tour* honors selfless contributions of American teachers and the ways they inspire a sense of wonder in students by giving them the chance to visit and teach a lesson from one of America's *7Wonders*. This year, Wonder will send the seven lucky *7Wonders* teacher winners to locations in MA, MO, PA, TN, WY, and CA that celebrate American heritage.

The schools of each of the *7Wonders* winning teachers will also receive \$1,000 to help plan field trips to wonders in their local communities. Plus, families who nominate inspiring teachers can enter for a chance to win one of seven Family Field Trip packages, which include \$300 for travel expenses and a digital camera to capture all the memorable moments created on the journey.

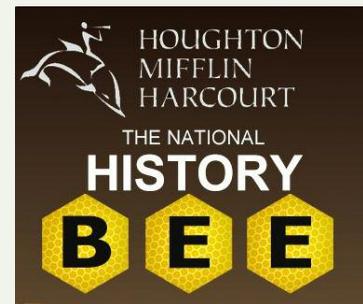
For detailed rules or to nominate a teacher in your life for the 2012 *7Wonders of the USA*, visit www.7wondersoftheusa.com. Wonder also invites you to join its Facebook community or follow it on Twitter.

To learn more about Wonder visit www.wonderbread.com.

Looking for a Fun and Exciting Extra-Curricular Activity for Your Students?

The National History Bee is an individual academic competition for elementary and middle school students. The competition tests knowledge of a wide range of historical topics that have direct relevance to what your students are learning in the classroom. School winners advance to the regional competition and the regional champions earn the right to compete in Washington for scholarships, prizes, and the title of National History Bee Champion!

For more information, [CLICK HERE](#). To see a preview of the airing of the 2012 National Championship, [CLICK](#).



Learn more about School Nutrition with a free subscription to the USDA's Team Nutrition E-Newsletter!

Become a Team Nutrition School and use the Department of Agriculture's Team Nutrition materials to help children make healthy food choices and be physically active. Team Nutrition Schools can also participate in the HealthierUS School Challenge. Sign up [HERE!](#)



State Board of Education Meetings Now on Ustream.tv!



See your State Board of Education in action - Online at <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/alabama-department-of-education>. See LIVE video every second and fourth Thursday of the month or watch the archived videos anytime you want (different days in July, November, and December).

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New State Literacy Alliance Launched

In Alabama, 15% of its adult citizens are functionally illiterate. That translates to over 720,000 of our state's potential workforce. Many of these adults may be unemployed because they simply can't complete a job application.

With unsettling numbers like these, it is clear that literacy is not just a K-12 challenge. It affects all fundamental aspects of education and of building a successful workforce for a healthy, thriving community.

For the first time, there is a cross-sector assimilation of efforts focused on meeting this challenge for the sake of Alabama's future economic and educational progress.

In May, more than a dozen nonprofits and state agencies jointly announced the creation of the Alabama Literacy Alliance, launching a mission "to foster communications and partnerships throughout Alabama to advocate, coordinate, promote, and support the effective delivery of literacy services to build a productive, literate workforce."

"The Department of Education is proud to be a part of this Alliance at what really is a critical time for our state's literacy network," said **Judy Stone**, Program Coordinator, Alabama Reading Initiative. "Spreading the best practices through an integrated system ensures that today's students have access to the very best tools to make them lifelong learners."

The vision of the Alliance is to build a state where all citizens reach their optimal literacy potential. It was formed after months of meetings between multiple literacy stakeholders, state agencies, local literacy councils, and other non-profits, including A+. The Alliance will develop a series of regional meetings across the state to expand local and regional leadership, partners, and advocates.

"There has never been a consortium of this caliber put together to address Alabama's literacy challenges," said Alliance Chair Johnnie Aycok of Tuscaloosa. "Learning to read is a cornerstone for success in all areas from education and economic development to healthcare and high-tech industry."

Click [HERE](#) to download the full news release from the Alabama Literacy Alliance and [HERE](#) to view the Alabama State Department of Education's Action Plan for Literacy (K-12).

Good health should be on every back to school list

Good health and learning go hand in hand. Poor health can lead to chronic absences, academic failure and lost work time for parents. Back to school is an excellent time to schedule your children's annual checkups, an important part of a healthy family and lifestyle. Alabama's Community Health Centers (CHCs) are conveniently located in your community and provide comprehensive, coordinated and affordable medical, dental and prevention services that your family needs to stay healthy.

To find your local community health center or for assistance with health coverage enrollment

call 1.888.75CARE1 or visit www.alaaccess.com

made to go by
accessalabama
A member of the National Minority Health Care Association

