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ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

The electronic newsletter of the Alabama State Department of Education

From the Superintendent

As we enter this holiday season,

I want to share a true story about giving and receiving that epitomizes what I consider the core of public education in our state. This story involves two high school students, their infant son, a less than perfect home situation requiring both to work, one with two jobs, while attempting to complete high school.

The most important part of this story, however, is that they are fortunate enough to be in a school system where adults go far beyond their job description to ensure students succeed.

These two young people came to the attention of a local administrator who realized that without creative scheduling to allow them to earn the credits for graduation and continue to prepare for parts of the graduation exam neither would graduate and most likely both would leave school. This caring administrator worked with counselors and teachers to create a schedule to accommodate their course requirements, accommodate their transportation and childcare needs, and provide a support system to help them through this complicated plan toward

graduation. I can assure you that this is one of the most unique schedules I have seen and feel certain there are reasons it shouldn't be acceptable except for the fact it is right for the students!

It doesn't stop here. The system's homeless liaison and a central office staff person heard about this couple and realized that they would most likely qualify under the *McKinney-Vento Act* for services that could assist with childcare, diapers, and transportation that was beyond the couple's ability to



This story is about caring educators giving of themselves and their time to ensure the success of their students. – Dr. Tommy Bice, State Superintendent of Education

afford. That was indeed the case and now this young family has all of the basic needs being met.

They are also fortunate to live in an area where there is a Family Service Center. Through the efforts of school personnel once again this young family was connected to this organization where they now have a case manager to help with continued employment support and budgeting support, and assist them with plans for postsecondary education and training and college.

I could go on and on about the circle of care that has been created for this young family. However, at the end of the day, my take away from this story is that it never mentioned standardized testing, adequate yearly progress, or any of the myriad measures upon which public schools and our educators are often judged. Rather, it's about caring educators

giving of themselves and their time for the

success of two young people who, by all accounts, were headed toward being dropout statistics. Through these humble acts of kindness a family's life is changed forever, something beyond human measure, but that lives at the heart of what we call public education.

Dr. Jeff Langham Selected Superintendent of the Year

The role of local school system superintendents today is the basis upon which public schools can succeed in providing all of their students with a good foundation for life beyond high school, be it through postsecondary/higher education or a job. Superintendents must successfully manage school system operations and provide effective leadership to guide local boards of education into implementing successful programs and initiatives that ensure success. In addition, they must follow-through and be visible within the school system to ensure that all local school system personnel take their jobs of educating students seriously. One such superintendent in Alabama was recently named Superintendent of the Year by the School Superintendents of Alabama (SSA) organization and Classworks, a business affiliate of SSA.



Dr. Jeff Langham, Elmore County Schools, was selected from nine outstanding superintendent candidates from Alabama.

Dr. Langham is a tireless educator who continually works to improve the quality of education for students in his school system, Elmore County. He seems to possess boundless energy and enthusiasm for promoting public education issues, initiatives, and causes, and is seen often at events in his county and outside his county striving to enhance opportunities for students. He has myriad experience and is often sought out for public comment on how financial, legislative, and other challenges will impact the classroom.

While Dr. Langham has vast experience in the actual school setting, having served as a classroom teacher, staff development trainer, assistant principal, curriculum coordinator, and superintendent, he also was employed by the Alabama State Department of Education for three years. During that time, he assisted school systems across the state in building-based student support team implementation and provided training and technical assistance to educators as a facilitator of the highly successful 7 Habits of Highly Effective People program.

On another note, given all that Dr. Langham does for public education in his system and throughout the state (on some occasions even when experiencing serious medical issues), he devotes countless hours of time volunteering with a local community theatre group where he helps and even stars in theatrical performances. His commitment of service to others and the joy with which he eagerly serves others make him uniquely qualified for Superintendent of the Year in Alabama.

Each and every one of Alabama's local superintendents should be commended for the important job they do every single day to help students become prepared for life after high school. Most of the time it is a thankless job, and many people have no idea the amount of time spent each and every day making sure the job is done right and to the total benefit of students. Thank your superintendent the next time you see him or her; it will probably brighten his or her day.

Dr. Langham is a tireless educator who continually works to improve the quality of education for students in his school system.

- Dr. Tommy Bice,
State Superintendent
of Education

At Mobile's George Hall Elementary, Success is Possible for Everyone

Across the United States, there is an increasing number of schools providing excellent educational opportunities for children, regardless of their home life or background. This is critical to breaking inter-generational cycles of poverty and ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to succeed – a defining characteristic of our nation. It's vital that schools are capable of changing the trajectory of a child's life.

Most recently, Public Agenda released its new report, **Failure is Not an Option**, on the techniques of nine high-performing, high poverty schools. Harvard economist Roland Fryer has identified five habits of high-performing charter schools that he says determine more than 50% of their effectiveness. Author Karin Chenoweth, in her book *Getting it Done: Leading Academic Success in Unexpected Schools*, looks at practices high-poverty schools have used to improve student achievement, including **Mobile's George Hall Elementary School**.

WBHM in Birmingham aired a two-part series on George Hall Elementary, a school that is shattering perceptions about what low-income students can achieve. Despite 99% of George Hall's students coming from low-income backgrounds, more than 95% of the students score at or above grade level in reading and math.

Click [HERE](#) and [HERE](#) to read and listen to each story on WBHM's website

Roughly 58% of Alabama's students come from low-income homes, but George Hall's success is unique in this state. It does not have to be. All children can learn at high levels with schools and teachers that give them this opportunity.

Story courtesy of A+ Education Partnership.

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Alabama National Board Certified Teacher Network

invites you to join us for our
Annual Conference
Extending Our Reach
January 26, 2013
8:30 – 3:30 pm
SPAIN PARK HIGH SCHOOL
HOOVER, AL

Keynote Speaker
Ron Thorpe, President NBPTS

Dr. Tommy Bice, State Superintendent of Education, will address conference attendees during lunch.

Featured Workshop Presenters

Dr. Frank Buck
Author of *Organization Made Easy!*
Tools for Today's Teachers

Michelle F. Accardi, NBCT
Director of State Policy and Advocacy,
NBPTS



Registration information go to:
<http://alnbctnetwork.blogspot.com>

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alnbctnetwork@gmail.com

The Sensory Classroom: A Partnership Making a Difference

Autism is a developmental disability that appears during birth to age three. Persons on the autism spectrum typically have problems communicating and interacting with others. The behaviors of individuals on the autism spectrum vary differently.

According to the Autism Society (2011), there is no known single cause for autism that has a current prevalence rate of 1 in 110 births in the United States and almost 1 in 70 for boys.

Increased awareness, evidence-based practices in behavior and instruction, and funding can help individuals on the autism spectrum and the many families facing a need for lifetime supports. One such practice is the use of sensory integration activities.

Thanks to the Auburn University at Montgomery Outreach Grant, awarded in 2011, **Wilson Elementary** has a dedicated classroom space for a Sensory Integration Lab. Directed by Dr. Laura Carpenter, this grant and the related research and scholarship that are a direct result of the grant have the potential to make a massive impact in the lives of students with autism, their teachers, and their families.

Through sensory integration, anxiety levels, over-stimulation, avoidance of people, lack of interest in the environment, transition difficulties, and the highs and lows of behavior can be addressed and lessened.

Partnering with the Auburn Montgomery School of Education program area of Special Education, special educators Elisabeth Newell and Lauren Breeding researched and equipped a lab for their students with autism as well as a learning environment for future special educators.

Mrs. Newell reported, "At times when my students are overwhelmed, off task, or on the edge of extreme sensory overload, they go to the sensory classroom. It is amazing to watch the transformation of the children to a calm and gentle state of exploration where learning can take place. I have two students who were completely nonverbal and began talking last year. I strongly believe that the daily experiences in the sensory integration classroom made the difference in their progress."

The future looks brighter for students with autism who have access to resources, research-based intervention, and well-trained special educators. The partnership with Wilson Elementary School makes this happen.



"Increased awareness, evidence-based practices in behavior and instruction, and funding can help individuals on the autism spectrum and the many families facing a need for lifetime supports. One such practice is the use of sensory integration activities."



CollegeCounts Scholarships

State Treasurer Young Boozer's Office and the CollegeCounts Board of Directors Launch a Statewide Scholarship Program

State Treasurer and CollegeCounts Board Chair Young Boozer is calling on eligible Alabama students to apply for the newly established CollegeCounts Scholarship.

"This scholarship program will help qualified Alabamians who may find it difficult to get other types of scholarship assistance," said Treasurer Boozer. "Not every student makes a 30 or higher on the ACT, or has parents who can afford to write a check for tuition. But there are thousands of bright young minds in our state who work hard and deserve help achieving their dream of a college degree."

Treasurer Boozer and other members of the CollegeCounts Board announced the scholarship program today at Wetumpka High School. The program is designed to offer financial assistance to Alabama students who plan to enroll in Alabama colleges and universities. It will provide one-time awards of \$4,000 to qualified recipients enrolling in four-year schools and \$2,000 to those enrolling in two-year schools. Eligible students may apply online beginning January 2 at www.collegecountsalabama.com.

Applicants must meet all of the following criteria to be eligible for this scholarship:

- Be a high school senior or first-time college freshman
- Be a U.S. citizen
- Be an Alabama resident
- Be enrolled or planning to enroll in an Alabama eligible educational institution
- Demonstrate financial need
- Have a minimum GPA of 2.75
- Have an ACT score of 26 or below (applicants attending a two-year school will not be required to submit ACT scores)

Quick Facts:

- Scholarships will be applied to tuition, fees, books, supplies, and equipment.
- Payments will be made directly to the institution and will be issued in the fall and spring.
- The application opens on January 2, 2013, and closes March 7, 2013.



There are two primary funding sources for the scholarship program: administrative fees from the CollegeCounts 529 Fund and surplus funds from the Alabama Higher Education Loan Corporation (AHELC).

Administrative fees explained: "CollegeCounts 529 Fund" is the marketing name for what is actually known as the ACES Trust Fund under Alabama law. The ACES Trust Fund is part of the ACES Program, which was established as a college savings alternative that allows contributors to open savings accounts to pay for a beneficiary's qualified educational expenses at an eligible institution of higher education. These savings accounts can be sold directly to individuals or sold to individuals by financial advisors. The ACES Trust Fund receives a 0.10% administrative fee each year from the assets held in the advisor-sold program.

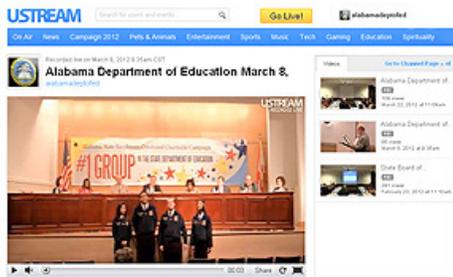
AHELC Surplus Funds explained: The Alabama Higher Education Loan Corporation (AHELC) was established to provide student loans to Alabamians. After a long period of inactivity, AHELC was revived, only to see its business model abolished by the U.S. Congress. As a result, the

AHELC Board of Directors chose to cease operations, dissolve the nonprofit corporation, and grant the existing surplus to help fund Alabama's CollegeCounts Scholarship Program. This decision was made in accordance with AHELC's founding purpose of funding higher education student aid.

The CollegeCounts Board of Directors is the sponsor of the CollegeCounts Scholarship Program, and

the Alabama State Treasurer's Office is delegated the administrative responsibilities of the program.

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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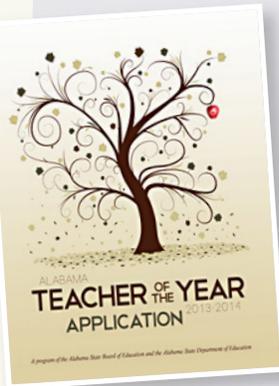
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Teacher of the Year Applications Available Now!

The Alabama Teacher of the Year Program seeks annually to honor and recognize excellence in the teaching profession by identifying outstanding Alabama classroom teachers at local, district, and state levels. [CLICK HERE](#) for the application.

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 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.

Registration Dates	Start – End Dates
12/17/2012 – 1/07/2013	1/14/2013 – 5/10/2013
4/1/2013 – 4/15/2013	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).

Registration Dates	Start – End Dates
2/18/2013 – 3/4/2013	3/18/2013 – 5/31/2013
5/6/2013 – 5/27/2013	6/03/2013 – 8/14/2013

Additional Professional Study Opportunities

If you are interested in other professional study opportunities approved by the 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.