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ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

The electronic newsletter of the Alabama Department of Education

Message from the Superintendent



Dr. Tommy Bice,
State Superintendent of Education

THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION KICKS OFF THIS WEEK with the State of the State Address by Governor Bentley on Tuesday, February 7, 2012. I urge each of you to tune in and listen to his remarks as public education will be one of his major areas of focus.

As you have probably noted over the past few weeks, there are many ideas and concepts circulating throughout our state about how to reform Alabama's public education system. As these discussions expand and you are asked about your opinion I would ask that you join me in posing the following essential questions:

1. **Is it right for the children we serve?**
2. **Is it based on an identified need?**
3. **Will it enhance public education in our state?**
4. **Is it aligned to the stated priorities of the State Board of Education?**

By following this approach, as educators we won't be placing ourselves in a position to support or oppose these ideas and concepts based on our personal or political opinion but rather remain focused on the main thing – our students.

To help us to ensure we remain focused on the main thing, your State Board and I will be embarking on the development of a long-range plan for public education in our state that will serve as the platform upon which education policy will be built. We will use Alabama's Education Ruler as our statement of vision and mission and build out a needs-based plan that is measurable and reportable and can be differentiated based on the individual needs of our 132 school systems and the over 1,500 schools they serve. We will be looking for your input as we work through this process.

As I travel this state I remain amazed at the remarkable advances I see occurring every day in public education. Thank you for all you do for our children realizing that for some, you are the one and only smiling face they might see today!



E-mail Oops ...

LAST WEEK, many educators across the state were inconvenienced by an unintended set of circumstances arising from an attempt to distribute a **"Special Message to Teachers"** from Governor Bentley statewide.

Although the message was sent intentionally, the unexpected chain reaction of bounce back e-mails, coupled with individuals responding using the "Reply All" to the full distribution list caused quite a pile up in e-mail servers across the state. This was inadvertent and we apologize greatly for the inconvenience caused.

The e-mail was not a virus nor was there any malicious content. In fact, the spirit of the correspondence was simply to relay a personal message from the Governor to Alabama teachers. It was the Alabama Department of Education's (ADE) first attempt at such a broad e-mail distribution, and things did not go as planned. The ADE's Information Systems staff worked with Alabama Super Computer and others to resolve the issue as quickly as possible.

One of the greatest technological visionaries of our time, Apple Computer founder Steve Jobs once said, "Sometimes when you innovate, you make mistakes. It is best to admit them quickly, and get on with improving your innovation."

In that regard, we offer our sincerest apologies to anyone who may have been inconvenienced.



February is Alabama Career and Technical Education Month

The Alabama CTE Commission will officially submit its final recommendations to the Alabama State Board of Education by the spring of this year. These findings will focus on implementing, maintaining, and further promoting quality CTE initiatives in Alabama's public schools.

Currently, two out of every three high school students in Alabama – 400,009 students statewide – participate in a CTE program. These students explore career options in more than 300 different courses, earn advanced diplomas and industry-recognized credentials, receive college credit, and have an opportunity to participate in seven different CTE student organizations.

Today's students will need a variety of 21st century skills to be successful in the future. Career and technical education is a vital part of the total education system. It provides students with essential life skills and prepares them for the "world of work" and postsecondary education. The work that the CTE Commission is doing is extremely important because it will have a lasting and real impact on our state's economic growth and prosperity.

To learn more about Alabama's CTE Commission or our state's Alabama CTE Month celebrations, visit www.alcareertech.org, contact your local Board of Education, or call the Alabama Department of Education's Career and Technical Education Section at 334-242-9111.



SINCE 2004, Alabama's teachers, students, parents, community leaders, and top business professionals statewide have celebrated what has become a new tradition in our state – **Alabama Career and Technical Education (CTE) Month, February 1-29**. To celebrate CTE Month this year, local school systems statewide have planned great activities for students including career fairs, college and business tours, Job Shadowing Days, and professional dress and etiquette workshops.

"We are one of the best resources to prepare students for postsecondary learning," says **Sherry Key**, Director of Alabama Career and Technical Education. "We want all Alabamians to understand the level of career preparation and leadership development students receive in our programs. Our students explore career options in over 300 courses offered statewide, earn advanced diplomas, and can receive college credit while still in high school. CTE Month is just a great time for everyone to visit our programs to see all of the hands-on learning taking place in our classrooms."

For the past six months a special leadership panel, made up of 65 leading Alabama professionals, economic experts, and educators, have been working tirelessly to develop new strategies to further the overall impact of Alabama's career tech programs.

The CTE Commission, appointed by **Governor Bentley** and the Alabama State Board of Education, have been charged to research effective ways to ensure Alabama's CTE program remains an important part of the state's overall economic development process. The CTE Commission has thoroughly reviewed the state's high school curriculum, researched the needs of Alabama's business community, and drafted preliminary recommendations to create additional opportunities for this program to reach a wider range of students, parents, and local school systems.

SOME OF THE COMMISSION'S DRAFTED RECOMMENDATIONS ARE:

- ✓ Develop a statewide communication plan to provide Alabamians with more background information on the state's career tech initiatives and their benefits to students.
- ✓ Use a comprehensive program to allow the state's business community to further invest in student success and academic excellence through apprenticeship, internship, and mentorship programs.
- ✓ Determine this program's stakeholders statewide; verify current perceptions about CTE.

Digital Learning Month

FOR THE ENTIRE MONTH OF FEBRUARY we focus our attention to the wonders of modern technology as we celebrate **Digital Learning Month**, and **tell Alabama's digital story** by showcasing ways to use contemporary tools to ensure Alabama students are college- and career-ready. All education stakeholders – districts, schools, teachers, students, librarians, parents, and business and community partners – are encouraged to participate in Digital Learning Month.

- Visit the national [Digital Learning Day website](#) to access targeted toolkits outlining ideas, updates, informational videos, webinars, and other resources.
- Check out the new **Professional Learning Community blog** where you can help broaden and contribute to the discussion regarding technology in the classroom. Dr. Bice has posted an article and question to jump start the conversation. [CLICK HERE](#) to join in! For all local school personnel: Log in using your Education Directory user name and password. For all internal Alabama Department of Education (ADE) personnel, click on the designated area and login will occur automatically while connected to the network. If you are accessing the PLC site from outside the network, click on the designated area for ADE personnel and log in using (alsde\username and password).

Throughout the month of February, Alabama encourages the sharing of ideas, creative lessons, and resources with others across the state and country. This is where you come in! Send us your best practices, best videos, best podcasts – anything to do with digital learning. We want to spotlight you! Go [HERE](#) and show off what you are doing. Click on the [Contact Us](#) button. You may be spotlighted on the ADE website, social media sites, as well as other departmental websites during the month. Schools, libraries, community programs, and classrooms are invited to showcase how they are using digital media to improve teaching and learning.

This campaign is a movement that will help provide a quality education for EVERY Alabama child. Change is up to YOU; help build this wave for innovation, personalized learning, and great teaching by *Telling Alabama's Digital Story*. For more information, call 334-242-9594.



HONDURAS 2012 "Children Changing the World"

ALMOST HALF THE WORLD – over 3 billion people – live on less than \$2.50 a day. One billion children live in poverty (1 in 2 children in the world). 640 million live without adequate shelter, 400 million have no access to safe water, 270 million have no access to health services. 10.6 million died in 2003 before they reached the age of five (or roughly 29,000 children per day).*

After reading these startling statistics, students at Calera High School in the Shelby County School System were immediately burdened to reach out and make a difference in the world. The students are helping to build an ambulance and fit amputees with prosthetic legs in Honduras.

This summer, the students under the name 'SKY' (Skilled Knowledgeable Youth) will be traveling to Honduras. This trip will be planned and led by AHMEN (Alabama Honduras Medical Education Network). The AHMEN chaperones have been to Honduras numerous times and look forward to partnering with our students.

The incredible experience is going to be filmed by MagnoliaLand Entertainment. MagnoliaLand plans on creating a documentary in which they desire to use in a variety of capacities: to promote education throughout Alabama as well as



a marketing tool to attract both businesses and manufacturers to Alabama. Another goal is to get a copy of this DVD to every high school in the state of Alabama to use as an inspirational piece to encourage both students and teachers to make an impact in the lives of others.

*www.globalissues.com

Win a Trip to Space Camp for Your Entire Fourth-Grade Class!



2011-2012 Education Directory Now Online

Visit the [Education Directory online](#) for the most up-to-date listing of all school and educational organizations' contact information. In the future, each district's superintendent will continue to receive a printed directory, but otherwise, the directory will only be offered online.

Enter 'Rocket City Space Pioneers Name the Lander' Contest Beginning February 15

Visit the [website](#) to register and find instructions and rules regarding the contest, downloadable lesson plans, Lunar Lander cardboard assembly kits, and activity sheets for classroom learning.

You can submit the Lander's name from February 15-22. The entire winning class will receive a three-day 'Pathfinder' trip to [Space Camp](#) at the



U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, a transportation voucher, and a stipend for the teacher of the winning class.

The [Rocket City Space Pioneers](#) are competing in the \$30 million [Google Lunar X PRIZE](#) to build a Lander that will go to the moon.

Alabama Educator Selected as Finalist for 2012 National Teacher of the Year

DR. GAY BARNES, ALABAMA'S REIGNING TEACHER OF THE YEAR has advanced to become one of only four teachers in the nation considered for the prestigious title of National Teacher of the Year. **Barnes**, a first-grade teacher at Horizon Elementary School in the Madison City School System, was selected from teachers from across America.

The National Board Certified teacher was named Alabama Teacher of the Year last May during the



Alabama 2011-2012 Teacher of the Year Dr. Gay Barnes with a student from T. S. Morris Elementary School in Montgomery.

televised *Alabama Stars in Education Awards* event. Since then she has traveled the state representing Alabama teachers as the symbol of professionalism and dedication to the field of education.

The Council of Chief State School Officers announced the four finalists today. Barnes was overwhelmed and humbled upon hearing the announcement. "Over the last 21 years, I have been proud every minute of every day to be a teacher. To be named a finalist in the National Teacher of the Year program is both thrilling and humbling. It is thrilling to know that others deem my work with students worthy." Barnes said, "It is humbling to be singled out and recognized for doing the very same work teachers across our country are also doing day in and day out, fearlessly educating each and every child who walks through our classroom doors."

The other three finalists are Rebecca Lynn Mieliwocki of California, Angela Wilson of the Department of Defense Education Activity, and Alvin Aureliano Davis of Florida. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the program, which honors educators representing the teaching profession as their State Teacher of the Year.

Have you signed up for eLearning?



ELEARNING ALABAMA uses a web-based model to provide effective professional development that leads to gains in teacher's content knowledge, improvements in their teaching practices and increases in the achievement of their students. eLearning Alabama is an excellent way to move forward on your own professional development responsive to your schedule and needs. Check out the schedule of classes and get the PLUs you need.



- No classes to attend!
- No substitutes to find!
- No travel funds to expend!

If you need the hours or would just like to take a course for fun, consider taking our courses that use the ELA, HIS, MTH, REA, or SCI prefix. If you would like to take courses that are more technology-based, any of the three Intel Elements courses (Assessment; Collaboration; or Project Based Approaches) in addition to any of our EDU-prefixed courses are recommended.

For those in need of ACLD-approved PLUs, they can be earned prior to June 1st by completing the eLearning PLU process beginning with any of the eight EDU55xx numbered courses outlined [on our webpage link](#).

A complete listing of all 50 courses for the Spring 2012 Semester is [HERE](#). STIPD is used for registration. Course pacing guides and registration instructions can be found [HERE](#).

Did You Know?

There are

1,499 Alabama Public Schools

There are

7,441 School Buses in Alabama

There are

46,074 Teachers in Alabama Public Schools

There are

744,621 Students Enrolled in Alabama Public Schools

There are

95,282,434 School Lunches Served in Alabama Public Schools Annually



Students Build Inventions to Help People with Disabilities

TUSCALOOSA CITY SCHOOLS' NORTHRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS in **Beth Allaway's** anatomy and physiology classes designed and built inventions to help people with physical disabilities. The winners of the contest were:

First Place was **James Donahoe** invented who "Handy Cabinets" that are motorized and raise and lower with the push of a button. They were designed for persons in a wheelchair, little people, or anyone who can't reach.

Second Place was **Amelia Tooson** and **Amber Watson** who invented the "Shower Assistant." This invention includes an insert for the bathtub that has a track and a chair that slides on the track. It is made for someone with back problems or is in a wheelchair. The person slides from the edge of the tub over into the chair on the track and can then move under the shower to bathe.

Third Place was **Hayden Buetner** who built "The Cube." This is a therapy cube that allows the patient to do physical therapy at home. In the center of the support cube is a harness that supports the person's weight while they stretch and work out. It comes with exercises attached to the side.

Fourth Place was **Gregory Singleton** who designed the "Fishing Friend" that attaches to a wheelchair and holds a fishing rod. It swivels and moves forward and backwards when reeling in a fish.

Fifth Place was **Grace Tant** and **Shirlyncia Moore** who invented "Walk Away" which eliminates the need for crutches. The lower leg straps into the holder and the pressure of walking is put on the skin-knee area; the bottom of the walk away swivels for easy walking.

Alabama Education Quick Facts, School Year 2011-2012

Each One Teach One Milken Educators Unite To Mentor Others

THE MILKEN EDUCATOR AWARD IS OFTEN REFERRED TO AS THE "OSCAR" OF EDUCATIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT. Recently, several former Milken Educator Award winners from across the state joined together to begin the Alabama Milken Network.

For several years the Alabama Milken Educator Award recipients have been trying to do something as a group to give back to Alabama educators and continue to improve the quality of education in Alabama. After much consideration, the



Alabama Milken Educators decided that they can make a positive impact if each one of them mentors one promising educator in his/her area of the state each year, which led to the formation of the "Milken Mentor Partnership."

With assistance from two leading experts on mentoring, **Dr. Mark Searby** and **Dr. Linda Searby**, Alabama Milken Educators have started developing their mentoring skills and knowledge on how to form strong mentor/mentee relationships.



They began their mentoring process through a "kick-off celebration and workshop" on Saturday, January 28.

The plan is to maintain contact and ongoing dialogue to create an even greater network of outstanding educators.

As mentors and mentees, who affectionately call themselves the "Milken M & M's," they are taking advantage of this incredible opportunity to form positive relationships that will help educators achieve professional goals, become more effective educators, and, ultimately, impact student learning.

"Imagine the exponential growth of education in Alabama as 'mentees' become 'mentors' to their fellow colleagues, and Milken educators work with other dynamic educators every year," **Dil Uswatte**, a 2009 Milken Award winner, said. "The Milken Mentor Partnership is really a promise . . . a promise to continue our growth as educators and inspire each other to achieve greatness."

The Alabama Board of Adjustment

THE GENERAL COUNSEL'S OFFICE handles claims filed against Local Education Agencies (LEA) with the State of Alabama Board of Adjustment ("Board"). The Board was established in 1935 and considers claims for damages to persons or property made against the State and its agencies, commissions, boards, institutions or departments. See the 1975 Ala. Code §§ 41-9-60 to 41-9-84.

The Board hears and considers all claims arising from overpayment to or underpayment from the State; claims where a legal or moral obligation against the State is claimed. The Board also hears all claims for death or injury or damages to property by the State or any of its agencies. See the 1975 Ala. Code §§ 41-9-60 to 41-9-84.

If an employee of your LEA is injured while working on the job or a student or visitor is injured while at a school or while attending a school function, a claim form can be obtained [HERE](#). All claims must be filed with the Board in a timely manner. There is a one year statute of limitations period for most claims. However, the exception of two years applies in case of death. The Board is composed of four ex officio members: the Director of Finance, the State Treasurer, the Secretary of State, and the State Auditor.

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Alabama Education News (USPS #387-290) is published bi-monthly by the Alabama 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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