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February 2013 · Issue I

# ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

The electronic newsletter of the  
Alabama State Department of Education

## From the Superintendent

**On a routine school day afternoon** as a bus was transporting students back to their homes an event transpired that will forever remain etched in our minds as educators. In one quick moment a normal school bus stop turned into a nightmare for helpless schoolchildren and their momentary caretaker, the bus driver, Mr. Charles Albert Poland, Jr. What transpired that afternoon and over the next week would not have played out the way it did without people's unselfish heroism, courage, patience, and community service.

**Mr. Charles Albert Poland, Jr.'s courageous actions will forever be remembered throughout the state.**

— Dr. Tommy Bice, State Superintendent of Education

Mr. Poland demonstrated incredible courage in his attempt to prevent schoolchildren from being harmed that afternoon. Regrettably, this heroic action caused him to lose his life trying to protect them. Those who knew him had nothing but the highest praise for him as a person and shared how much he enjoyed spending time with children each day in his role as a bus driver. I'm told that upon learning that little Ethan had been safely rescued and returned to his mother that Mr. Poland's son said that now all of his father's children had been returned safely to their homes. Mr. Poland's actions will forever be remembered in that community and throughout the state.

Members of law enforcement from all across the state rushed to survey the scene and strategize about how best to resolve this situation in the least harmful and quickest manner possible. There is absolutely no doubt that the countless man hours of work generously performed by hundreds of law enforcement personnel resulted in little Ethan being rescued and returned safely to his mother. It's commonly said that patience is a virtue and in this scenario it most assuredly was.

School system personnel, local government officials, residents of Dale County and surrounding communities and cities, and staff from the Alabama

State Department of Education provided leadership and coordinated myriad support resources that aided all of the responders and united the community in ways that should serve as a model for communities facing crises in the future. This community is forever changed, and many residents readily admit it is changed for the better because of the bonding and fellowship that has resulted from them coming together for a single common cause – to help return a little boy safely to his mother.

As for Ethan, the little five-year-old boy at the center of this local, state, national, and even international news story, isn't it wonderful that children at this age are so innocent and trusting and resilient and that they are filled with wonderment and excitement most of the time. I'm comforted to know that he

appears to be doing very well and that he is anxious to pick right back up where he left off ... being a little kid going to school and having fun! The passing of time will no doubt erase some of this incident from his mind and who knows what he may grow up to become. One thing is for sure, because of the flawless way in which this incident was handled Ethan is now safely back to being

one of our public school students and for that I am very thankful!



## Law Day 2013

The Alabama State Bar and the Law Day 2013 Committee have established a competition for students in Grades K-12 in celebration of Law Day on May 1, 2013. This year's theme is "Realizing the Dream: Equality for All."

Students can participate in essay, poster, and social media competitions. This is an effective way for students to learn about Law Day and celebrate our freedoms through lessons in Civics, American History, and Alabama History. The deadline for student entries is **Friday, March 29, 2013**, and winners will be announced on or before April 15, 2013.

For additional information, contact **David E. Rains**, Chairman of the Law Day 2013 Committee, at 205-344-5000 or **Associate General Counsel Juliana Dean** at 334-242-1899.

For details and application, click [here](#).

## EA Surveys Now Available!

**EDUCATEAlabama (EA)** surveys are now available for EA Reviewers, EA Evaluators, and EA Evaluatees!

These surveys will provide feedback to the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) on EDUCATEAlabama and will guide ALSDE decisions in improving the EDUCATEAlabama online process for use in 2013-2014.

Who Should Complete? All EA Reviewers, Evaluators, and Evaluatees using EDUCATEAlabama. The surveys consist of 13 questions or less, taking approximately five (5) minutes to complete. Surveys should be completed during March 1-31, 2013.

- >>> [Reviewer Survey](#)
- >>> [Evaluator Survey](#)
- >>> [Evaluatee Survey](#)



and will guide ALSDE decisions in improving

## The ALSDE Kicks Off Digital Learning Month



### *Virtual Field Trips and Innovative Learning Opportunities Offered Statewide*

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) kicked off Digital Learning Month to tell Alabama's digital story by showcasing ways to use contemporary tools to ensure Alabama students are college- and career-ready. Alabama has been a trailblazer using technology for the purpose of advancing education. The Alabama Learning Exchange (ALEX); Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators, and Students Statewide (ACCESS); Technology in Motion (TiM); and e-Learning for Educators are all strong tools used for the advancement of digital learning, in addition to the expansive ways technology is used in the classroom.

The ALSDE, in partnership with the Alliance for Excellent Education, participated once again in the Digital Learning Day campaign, which was held on February 6. "We are taking advantage of every possible resource to make sure



our students are well versed in the language of digital learning. High schools across the state have been equipped with tools to give each student the opportunity to have a digital learning experience. Online learning has advanced in ways that allow students to demonstrate competency in subject matters, practice for exams, receive assistance with homework, and have a virtual seat in the classroom beside students on the other side of our state,"

said Dr. Tommy Bice, State Superintendent of Education.

This national and state campaign is designed to celebrate innovative teaching and highlight practices that make learning more personalized and engaging for students, exploring how digital learning can provide all students with the opportunities they deserve – to build the skills needed to succeed in college, a career, and life.

Alabama strives to build momentum for a wave of innovation that changes policies, shifts attitudes, and supports wide-scale adoption of these promising instructional practices. Virtual field trips through ACCESS will be offered to the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, NASA, and the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Professional development opportunities for teachers include trainings from EBSCO and Technology in Motion trainers.

All education stakeholders – districts, schools, teachers, students, librarians, parents, and business and community partners – are encouraged to register to support and participate in Digital Learning Month. No matter the approach, no matter the grade level, no matter the subject or geographic location, no matter a teacher's specific comfort level with using technology, this campaign will challenge education professionals and policymakers at all levels to start a conversation, make a proclamation, improve a lesson, and/or create a plan.

To learn more about Digital Learning Month, please contact the Technology Initiatives Section, ALSDE, at 334-242-9594.



## Requests For Student Records From Disability Determination Service (DDS)

The Disability Determination Service (DDS) is a division in the Alabama State Department of Education. The DDS makes disability determinations based on the law and regulations issued by the Social Security Administration (SSA). SSA is responsible for establishing disability criteria, issuing national instructions, and developing policies and procedures regarding the processing of disability claims. The disability program, which is part of the national Social Security program, is federally administered.

The DDS is responsible for processing Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) claims for the SSA in a timely and accurate manner. In processing these claims, the DDS requests records from medical treatment sources, schools, and other sources.

### The requests for records specify the following.

- For the student **not receiving** special student services – The DDS is requesting the cumulative records, including achievement and other related test results.
- For the student **receiving** special student services, including any accommodations – The DDS is requesting copies of any of the following: the most recent evaluations for initial or continued services; the IEP; a 504 Plan; any student accommodation plans; or other medical and/or speech evaluations.

The DDS pays \$20 per completed request for school records or function questionnaires. The State Comptroller's office mandates that the DDS issue payments to only one vendor number for each school system. While the DDS addresses and requests records from a school, the vendor number directs payment to the school system and not the individual school.

For the last fiscal year, July 1, 2011, through September 30, 2012, the DDS paid \$320,440 to school systems for copies of records and completed questionnaires. Had the DDS received a response to each records request or questionnaire, the DDS would have paid an additional \$320,900. The total amount paid could have been \$641,340 if all requests had been answered. The response rate for all requests was 49.9%.

For this current year, beginning July 2012, the response rate has been only 43.6% with \$138,020 being paid and \$178,260 left unpaid to the systems.

If you receive a DDS request for school records for one of your students, please take the time to comply. School records are only part of the records obtained in processing disability claims and are, in almost all cases, considered with other information in determining one's eligibility for benefits or SSI payments. However, the records and questionnaires are very important as supportive documentation.

If DDS staff members can provide any assistance to your school system or school, please contact DDS Director [Mr. Norman Ippolito](#) at 205-989-2200, or [Mr. Jim Methvin](#) at 205-989-2203.



## AIDT Hosts Career Expo

**AIDT, in collaboration with Career and Technical Education**, will be hosting a Career EXPO to be held at the annual SkillsUSA-Alabama Championships, Student Conference and Career Expo. This event will take place on Thursday, April 25, 2013, at the BJCC (Birmingham Jefferson Convention Center) East Exhibition Hall from 8:00 a.m. - noon.

The purpose of this event is to expose students in Grades 8-12 across Alabama to careers and career pathways and to impress upon them the importance of career exploration and preparation.



### The goals of Career EXPO are:

- To motivate students to take advantage of career and technical education courses and training opportunities while in high school
- To consider personal career goals when choosing all high school courses
- To set realistic, but challenging career goals
- To actively participate in career exploration and training throughout high school
- To explore, plan and prepare for postsecondary career training
- To focus on positive career goals that help build self-esteem and reduce negative thoughts and behavior

Students will have the opportunity to visit with industries and colleges and will also have the opportunity to witness high school and community college students in Alabama participate in over 46 multi-craft and technical contests at the Expo.

For complete information, contact [Bobby Jon Drinkard](#), Project Manager, AIDT, at 334-280-4416.

## ACLD PLUs



### Need an ACLD PLU by June 2013?

Professional Development Your Way (PDYW) @ EDVANTIA

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.

### Shared Leadership

STI PD Title Number: PLUACLD044

This 10-week online professional study will provide participants with the knowledge and ability 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 one (1) ACLD PLU upon successful completion.

#### Registration Dates:

2/18/2013 – 3/4/2013

#### Start – End Dates:

3/18/2013 – 5/31/2013

### Additional Professional Study

**Opportunities:** If you are interested in other professional study opportunities approved by the Alabama Council for Leadership Development (ACLD), go [HERE](#) and SEARCH. Once you find a professional study of interest, contact the provider listed on the ADDRESS BOOK to register.

## Using Technology to Create Student-Centered Classrooms at J.E. Turner Elementary

The faculty and students at **J.E. Turner Elementary** in Mobile, Alabama, have embraced technology as a learning tool to create student-centered classrooms. The school views the term "student-centered" as providing the tools to learners so that they can work collaboratively and independently to construct their own knowledge of the curriculum content. The skills acquired from this student-centered approach, such as collaboration skills, research and evaluation skills, problem solving skills, and creative thinking skills, will enable students to thrive in this ever-changing world where the teacher is no longer the source of all information in the classroom.

The teachers at Turner recognize that pedagogy and data are the driving force of instruction, not technology. Technology is used as a vehicle to deliver instruction and provide affordances, such as distance learning and collaboration, paperless activities, and a real audience. Some of the instruction at Turner has included group-produced digital posters about Earth's biomes, podcasts about math, production of cereal box designs based on propaganda techniques, digital storytelling with a green screen, literature circles on iPads, and math problem-solving strategies being shared on Voicethread. Each of these projects represents a meaningful learning experience by allowing student choice and voice.

Teachers are provided a **Technology Support Teacher** as a resource for planning and team-teaching the project-based activities. This support teacher also provides professional development to the faculty.

Last year, twelve iPads were purchased for the fifth-grade language arts classroom. These iPads are shared by partners in the classroom. Each fifth-grade homeroom class rotates through the language arts classroom daily and has the opportunity to utilize the iPads. An app called Educreations allows the teacher to create lessons on a digital whiteboard and then post the lessons online for students to revisit as needed.

Professional learning is an ongoing process for Turner Elementary. Recently teachers attended training on strategies to use for a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) initiative. In this training, teachers learned about several topics including initial set up of a variety of student devices, use of QR codes in the classroom, and how to use of the flipped classroom strategy to meet the needs of diverse learners. Turner will be the second elementary school in the district to implement a BYOD initiative that began in January 2013. The teachers and staff look forward to learning more about how to use these new resources in their classroom.





## AMSTI Partners With the McWane Science Center

**AMSTI** (Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative), along with Lincoln Elementary School (Talladega County Schools), partnered with the McWane Science Center recently to work on real-life problem solving with hands-on applications. "If I Had a Hammer" was a project to learn the skills of home construction and incorporate curriculum and skills learned in Alabama schools.



Students from Lincoln Elementary learn construction skills at the McWane Center in the "If I Had a Hammer" project.



## AMSTI Accepted Into Prestigious Group

The **Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE)** has just been notified that the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI) has been accepted for inclusion in the Change the Equation's (CTEq) STEMworks database. CTEq publishes the annual report "Vital Signs."

This distinction provides further empirical evidence from a well-recognized and respected national group concerning the benefits of AMSTI.

"The AMSTI program will help make this database a critical resource for STEM learning advocates, program developers, educators and funders who are looking for programs that meet a high bar for effectiveness," said CTEq reviewers.

**AMSTI was reviewed in the following categories:**

- > Need
- > Evaluation
- > Sustainability
- > Replication and Scalability
- > Partnerships
- > Capacity
- > Challenging and Relevant Content
- > STEM Practices
- > Inspiration
- > Underrepresented Groups



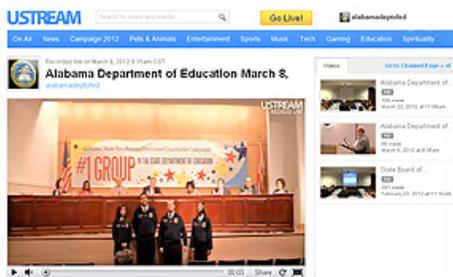
2013 Alabama Pharmacy Association  
**POISON PREVENTION**  
**Art Contest**

[www.aparx.org](http://www.aparx.org)

[www.poisonprevention.org](http://www.poisonprevention.org)

Questions? Call APA at 334.271.4222

## State Board of Education Meetings 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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Contact **Alabama Education News**  
334-242-9950 (p) · 334-353-4682 (f)  
[aen@alsde.edu](mailto:aen@alsde.edu) (e) · [www.alsde.edu](http://www.alsde.edu) (w)

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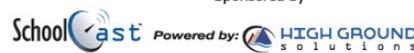
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## Alabama School Communicator Association Annual Conference

# School Safety in Uneasy Times

Sponsored by



**March 1st 9 a.m.-4 p.m.**

Shelby County Instructional Services Center, 601 1st Street South (Hwy. 31), Alabaster, AL 35007

**9 a.m.- 12 p.m.:** Footprints of Disaster: How Schools Prepare and Respond to Crisis with Keynote Speaker Rick J. Kaufman, APR, Executive Director of Community Relations and Emergency Management for Bloomington (MN) Public Schools, and a nationally respected crisis management consultant, trainer and author



>The threats facing schools today are broader than ever before – from natural disasters to infectious disease to misguided students and adults who commit random acts of violence. Knowing what to do when faced with a tragic event can be the difference between chaos and calm, or even life or death. This powerful workshop will help participants understand their role in responding to a crisis and what steps are critical to restoring a “normal” setting. The interactive session will prepare school leaders to develop strategies to prevent and respond to emergencies using table-top exercises and simulations.

**12-1 p.m.:** School Safety Education Policy & Legislation Preview With Alabama State Senator Cam Ward and Alabama Association of School Boards Director of Governmental Relations Lissa Tucker

**1-3 p.m.:** Safe and Secure Schools Panel Discussion With Alabama State Department of Education Prevention and Support Services Education Specialist Thomas Mock; Homeland Security, Virtual Alabama Project Leader Lamar Davis; and National Association of School Resource Officers Training Director Kerri Williamson

**3-4 p.m.:** Managing Your Message in a Manic Media – Joey Kennedy, Community Engagement Specialist, AL.com and Birmingham News

#### Details:

- > Cost is \$40 for ASCA members and \$80 for non-members (includes a one-year membership to ASCA).
- >Cost includes snacks, drinks and lunch.
- >Alabaster area [Hotels](#)

> > > [Register Now!](#)



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