



# ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

NEWS AND ISSUES IN ALABAMA PUBLIC EDUCATION, K-12

MARCH 2006

## THE ARTS HELP PAVE THE WAY

To Improved Student Achievement and Decreased Behavior and Discipline Problems

On Feb. 9, the Alabama Board of Education unanimously declared March as Arts Education Month in Alabama public schools with a resolution stating: "Education in the arts, including dance, music, theatre, and visual arts, is an essential component of K-12 public education in Alabama." Alabama arts students celebrate every day through creative expression learned and nurtured by quality instruction in the state's public schools. A few of the many outstanding examples of arts education are featured in this issue of Alabama Education News. However, these, by no means, begin to touch the realm of positive and imaginative artistic expressions by Alabama public school teachers and students.

MUSIC

THEATRE

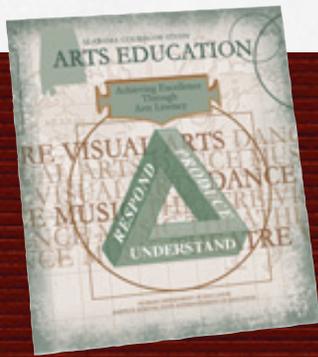
VISUAL ARTS

DANCE



### WHAT'S INSIDE?

- Arts Education Month • Good News
- Distance Learning • Teacher of the Year
- Professional Development



The *Alabama Course of Study: Arts Education* was developed by the 2005-2006 Arts Education State Course of Study Committee and Task Force. The group of early childhood, intermediate, middle, high school, and college educators is appointed by the Alabama Board of Education. Business and professional members are appointed by the Governor, as required by state law. The statewide committee and task force, chaired by **HUNTSVILLE CITY SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENT DR. ANN ROY MOORE**, began their work during Arts Education Month in March 2005.

Dr. Moore and members representing the four disciplines summarized their work at the Alabama Board of Education work session on Jan. 26. In the *Alabama Course of Study: Arts Education*:

- Content is based on the four disciplines of the arts – dance, music, theatre, and visual arts.
- Content is vertically aligned and reinforced throughout Grades K-12.
- Required knowledge and skills are developmentally appropriate.
- Challenging content standards specify what students are expected to know and be able to do, contain coherent and rigorous content, and encourage the teaching of advanced skills.
- Content standards are clear and measurable, allowing for alignment of standards as required by the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*.
- Content standards are appropriate for all students, including those with disabilities.

On Mar. 9, the Alabama Board of Education is scheduled to consider for adoption the *Alabama Course of Study: Arts Education*, which outlines the required minimum course content in the four disciplines of the visual and performing arts. The goal of the *Alabama Course of Study: Arts Education* is to provide a framework for achieving excellence through arts literacy for students in Grades K-12 in Alabama.

## The ARTS can provide effective yielding increased academic



*Michael Patrick Hayes, a student at J. Larry Newton School, created the winning design for the new Real Yellow Pages June 2007 issue as part of the Baldwin County Grandparent and Grandchild Art Show held back in January. Hayes is joined by his grandfather Ron Hayes (r) and (l-r) Baldwin County Arts Supervisor Vicky Cook and Principal Suellen Brazil. State Board of Education Member – Randy McKinney, District 1*



*The Tana Branch Gallery was created by the Auburn High School (AHS) Arts Department to display student artwork. Tana Branch (center front) has been an art teacher in the Auburn City School System 22 years. Joining Branch in the photo are (l-r front) AHS principal Dr. Cathy Long and AHS art teacher Charlotte La Roux. In the rear, (l-r) are art teachers Clay Cox and Joe Dyer. State Board of Education Member – Betty Peters, District 2*

*learning opportunities to the general student population, performance, reduced absenteeism, and better skill-building.<sup>1</sup>*



*Alabama School of Fine Arts student Morgan Long's abstract entry into the 28th Annual State Superintendent's Art Exhibit won the "Best of Show" ribbon. Long is a national Presidential Scholar in the Arts finalist. The Alabama School of Fine Arts is in Birmingham. Over 200 K-12 students from across the state submitted artwork for the show, which was displayed at the State Capitol Feb. 17- March 3. Shown with the winning entry is (l-r) Sara Wright, Alabama Department of Education Arts Specialist, and State Superintendent of Education Joe Morton. State Board of Education Member – Dr. Ethel Hall, District 4*



*Students at E. D. Nixon Elementary School in the Montgomery County School System combine music and dance in performances. In fact, members of the school's Choraleers recorded a Christmas CD with proceeds from the sales going directly to the school to assist in funding academic and art programs.*

**State Board of Education Member –  
Stephanie Bell, District 3**



*The Sylvania High School Drama Department performed in the Broadway Junior production of **Getting to Know The King and I** during the holidays and the troupe's first dinner theatre. Members of the drama troupe transformed the school's gym into a dinner venue as a kick-off for the building campaign to construct a new auditorium/library/media arts center.*

**State Board of Education Member –  
Dr. Mary Jane Caylor, District 8**



*Foley High School arts students painted highchairs and benches for use at Lucy Buffett's restaurant, LuLu's at Homeport Marina on the Intercoastal Waterway in Gulf Shores. In exchange for their artistic creativity, LuLu's, which is one of the school's Partners in Education, provided art supplies for students. Lucy Buffett is the sister of Alabama native singer/songwriter/storyteller Jimmy Buffett.*

**State Board of Education Member – Randy McKinney, District 1**

*1. The Impact of Arts Education on Workforce Preparation, National Governor's Association, 2002.*

# GOOD NEWS IN

## SIX IS THE MAGIC NUMBER FOR THE BARBOUR COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

After being on state financial intervention since 1999, the Barbour County School System was officially released by the Alabama Board of Education on Feb. 9, 2006. In six years, the southeast Alabama school system made a dramatic fiscal turnaround from having a \$300,000 budget deficit Sept. 30, 1999, (projected budget deficit for the following year = \$500,000) to eliminating the system's deficit budget in 2002 and keeping a positive fund balance since that time.

During those six years, student enrollment declined by 515 students causing the system to lose approximately \$2 million in state funding. Despite losing 28 professional staff positions and 51 non-certified personnel, system administrators did not throw in the towel. With the help of Alabama Department of Education financial staff, the system staff worked diligently to maintain an excellent audit history, ensuring fiscal accountability with taxpayer dollars and academic success.

**State Board of Education Member:**  
**Betty Peters, District 2**  
**Barbour County Schools Superintendent:**  
**Dr. Vic Adkison**



*Members of the Barbour County Board of Education and Barbour County Schools Superintendent Dr. Vic Adkison are joined by Alabama Board of Education District 2 Member Betty Peters, State Superintendent of Education Joe Morton, and Assistant State Superintendent of Education Craig Pouncey for the presentation of the Board's resolution.*

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING INTERVENTION:

- The Alabama Reading Initiative and Reading First Initiative have both been implemented with current DIBELS scores at Barbour County Primary School above state average.
- Barbour County Intermediate School was identified as a "Gap Closer School" in 2004-05, receiving a cash award for significant student improvement in student proficiency.
- Every Barbour County school applied to become a member of a federally funded math program for 2006-07.
- Barbour County High School students made significant improvements over the past five years on the ACT
- In 11th-grade reading in 2004-05, 87.75 percent of all 11th-graders met or exceeded content standards in reading on the *Alabama High School Graduation Exam* – up from 70.13 percent in 2003-04.
- The system's drop-out rate has steadily reduced.
- Barbour County High School graduated 95 percent of its seniors in 2004-05.

## FIRST-YEAR TEACHER STAYS ON THE RUN! .....

Third-grade teacher **MICHAEL BOND** has to maintain a pretty fast pace to keep up with his energetic students at Shades Cahaba Elementary School. However, on any given day, you may find Bond running laps around a track. In his first year of teaching, Bond still finds time to compete in track and field events. In fact, he is currently ranked first in Australia in the 1000m track and



field event and is currently training to qualify for the Australian Olympic Team in the 1500m event for the 2008 and/or 2012 Olympic Games.

Bond, a native of Hobart, Australia, came to the United States to continue his education at Troy University, earning a Master's degree in K-6 and Collaborative Education. The former Trojan ran for Troy University's cross country and track and field teams from 2002-2003 and served as a graduate assistant coach in 2004-05.

**State Board of Education Member: Dr. Ethel Hall, District 4**  
**Homewood City Schools Superintendent: Dr. Jodi Newton**  
**Shades Cahaba Elementary School Principal: Sue Porter**



## ALABAMA BOARD OF EDUCATION MAKES HISTORY SUBJECT-SPECIFIC TESTING OF NEW TEACHERS MADE MANDATORY



After more than 20 years of legal wrangling, the mandate for content-based testing for prospective teachers in Alabama's public schools has been approved, marking a significant milestone in the effort to ensure quality teachers in Alabama classrooms. STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOE MORTON said teacher testing validates Alabama's teachers as being highly capable, well-trained professionals. At the Alabama Board of Education meeting on Feb. 9, he said approving this mandate has been a long time coming, but the state now moves forward with a steadfast resolve to give the children of Alabama the best instruction possible.

The second category on the Alabama Board of Education's Educational Ruler is "Quality Teachers." That's exactly what the board was striving for when it approved the minimum passing score (or cut score) for 30 Praxis II content tests now necessary for teacher certification as well as "Highly Qualified" (HQ) teacher status in Alabama public schools.

*"When the [college] graduating class of 2006 was born, we were in litigation over teacher testing," Morton said. "Today we can close the loop." Morton said numerous communication efforts have been employed to keep deans, teachers, and students abreast of news concerning teacher testing, as the state department moves forward without waivering toward implementation.*

Beginning April 14, 2006 anyone completing a preparation program and applying for Professional Education initial certification in a teaching field or any area of instructional support, through traditional or alternative methods, must provide proof of passing the Praxis II test. The new cut scores also serve as the minimum scores for HQ status in the 30 subject areas. [CLICK HERE](#) to view cut scores.

Although the newly adopted cut scores go into effect on April 14, 2006 a window of time described as the "no-fault" period was earlier established as part of the usual procedure followed by the testing company, Educational Testing Service (ETS). During this time no candidate, that completed a preparation program will be denied initial certification based upon his or her score on the subject test. The "no-fault" period is between April 14, 2005, and April 13, 2006.



## TEACHERS AND STUDENTS BLAST OFF INTO A NEW YEAR

Three teachers from Walter M. Kennedy Elementary School (LORIE MYRICK, KELLI WHITTEN, and MISTY WRIGHT) attended the Exploring Space for Educators: The Classroom Connection at the U.S.

Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville this past summer. Their scholarships were funded in part by two grants through the University of Alabama Huntsville. With the help of a fourth teacher who attended the camp in 1986 (KAREN HAND), the teachers gave speeches around the community, sent out brochures, and involved their local Parent Teacher Organization to help raise money and support for the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI). The teachers raised almost \$8,000 this year and plan to continue their efforts to gain more community involvement next year. As a result of those efforts, 31 Walter M. Kennedy students and 12 students from within the Pell City School System attended the weeklong space camp on Feb. 6-10. The "Spotlight on Technology" program is available only to Alabama teachers. Additionally, a local sponsor provided the entire fourth- and fifth-grade classes at WMK (about 200 students) free tickets for the ULTIMATE FIELD TRIP offered at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in March.



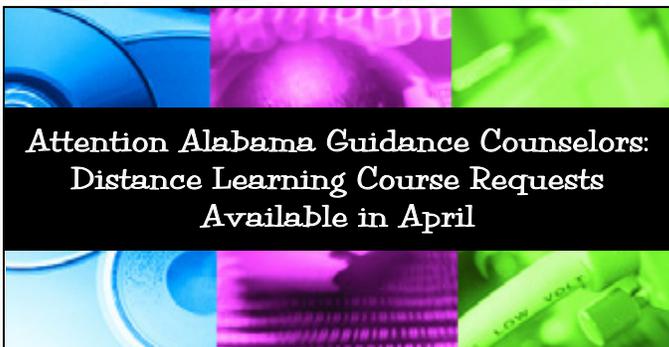
*State Board of Education Member: David Byers, District 6  
Pell City Schools Superintendent: Dr. Bobby Hathcock  
Walter M. Kennedy Elementary School Principal: Sonia Dale*



*Gov. Bob Riley receives some “hands-on” technology experience from a Bob Jones High School student on a new tablet computer made possible through Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators, and Students Statewide (ACCESS) Distance Learning. The Governor visited Bob Jones High School in the Madison City School System during Alabama Technology Impact In Education Week, Jan 23-27.*



*U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings receives some “hands-on” technology experience from Bob Jones High School students on a new tablet computer made possible through ACCESS Distance Learning while Gov. Bob Riley and State Superintendent of Education Joe Morton look on. The Secretary visited Ramsay High School in the Birmingham City School System during Alabama Technology Impact In Education Week, Jan 23-27.*



**Attention Alabama Guidance Counselors:  
Distance Learning Course Requests  
Available in April**

**Your students can now be a part of distance learning.  
Please let them know about this exciting new opportunity!**

Requests for distance learning high school courses become available online in mid-April [CLICK HERE](#). Distance Learning courses will be open to all Alabama high schools, with guidance counselors authorized to make course requests.

Meetings to instruct guidance counselors on distance learning procedures are scheduled to occur across the state through March 14. Contact Martha Donaldson, Office of Technology Initiatives, at 334-242-9594 or [CLICK HERE](#).



# ON THE ROAD WITH ALABAMA'S TEACHER OF THE YEAR

On January 25-28, 2006, **MARGARET PETTY**, the 2005-2006 Alabama Teacher of the Year, and **ANN STARKS**, State Coordinator, participated in the activities of the National Teacher of the Year Program Conference in Dallas, Texas.

Fifty-six Teachers of the Year representing the United States and territories and forty state coordinators gathered to celebrate the teaching profession. This year's theme, *Leading, Teaching, Learning: Vision and Voice*, afforded teachers and coordinators an opportunity to collaborate and share ideas and strategies on the teaching profession and programs.

Overall, Petty and Starks gave the conference high reviews with outstanding speakers who really touched the hearts of the audience, including: **JANE WALTERS**,

former Tennessee Commissioner of Education; **MARY BETH BLEGEN**, the 1996 National Teacher of the Year; **JASON KAMRAS**, the 2005 National Teacher of the Year; and Alabama's own **BETSY ROGERS**, the 2003 National Teacher of the Year.

"Teachers of the Year were allowed to practice using their 'voice' by spending a half day at the conference formulating their recommendations concerning the teaching profession. Two areas of concern addressed were: teacher effectiveness and teacher retention. Interfacing with passionate and dedicated teachers was so inspiring," said Petty.

Starks described the coordinators session as an opportunity for each coordinator to focus on program goals through an exchange of ideas and suggestions to further strengthen Teacher of the Year Programs. "It is inspiring to know that Alabama continues to be well

represented through the support of the Alabama Board of Education, Alabama Department of Education, corporate sponsorships, and the continued support of the local school systems in bringing honor to classroom teachers," said Starks.

**JON QUAM**, Director of the National Teacher of the Year Program introduced something new this year at the conference, the National Teacher of the Year Program Online Survey. The survey provides users the ability to evaluate and compare other Teacher of the Year Programs. Alabama was one of four states selected as a pilot in using the survey.

The National Teacher of the Program, presented by ING Foundation, is a project of the Council of Chief State School Officers and sponsored by Scholastic Inc. Each year the Alabama Teacher of the Year is a candidate for the National Teacher of the Year. 🍏

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCES

THE 88TH ANNUAL ALABAMA PTA CONVENTION will be held at the Holiday Inn Select in Huntsville, April 21-22. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information.

THE 3RD ALABAMA CONFERENCE ON FATHERHOOD will be held in Birmingham, May 3-5. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information.

THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AND NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES SUMMER INSTITUTE ON THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION for K-12 educators will be held at the Tsongas Industrial History Center in Lowell, Mass. Stipends are available through the National Endowment for the Humanities. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information. **Application Deadline: March 15.**

THE 2006 MEGA CONFERENCE will be held in Mobile, July 10-14. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information. **Early Bird Registration Deadline: March 20.**

## AWARDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

THE NATIONAL MISSING CHILDREN'S DAY POSTER CONTEST is open to fifth-graders nationwide. Students are encouraged to design and create posters reflecting the theme of "Bringing Our Missing Children Home." The winner will be honored at the National Missing Children's Day Ceremonies in Washington, D.C., on May 25, and the poster will represent child safety for the coming year. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information. **Deadline: March 30.**

NICKELODEON'S "LET'S JUST PLAY" SWEEPSTAKES is a nationwide campaign to engage kids in active, healthy lifestyles by providing them with the resources needed to get up, get out, and go play! Grades K-9 students are encouraged to ask Nickelodeon for funds for their school or after-school community-based program. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information. **Deadline: March 31.**

THE LAW DAY 2006 ESSAY & POSTER CONTEST, sponsored by the Alabama Bar Association, is open to students in Grades K-6 (poster contest) and Grades 7-12 (essay contest). For ideas and information, [CLICK HERE](#). **Deadline: April 21.**

THE 4TH ANNUAL JENICE RILEY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP, sponsored by the Alabama Humanities Foundation, awards a \$1,000 scholarship to a K-6 Alabama teacher to advance knowledge and teaching skills in the subject areas of history and civics. [CLICK HERE](#) or call 205-558-3980 for more information. **Deadline: April 28.**

# calendar

## MARCH - ARTS EDUCATION MONTH

*Music in Our Schools Month • Nutrition Month • Women's History Month*

- 2 Read Across America Day
- 9 Alabama Board of Education Meeting
- 14 Pi Day
- 12 Children's Poetry Day
- 23 Alabama Board of Education Work Session

## APRIL

*Math Awareness Month • Child Abuse Prevention Month*

- 2-8 National Library Week
- 3-14 *Stanford 10/Alabama Reading and Math Test (ARMT) Administrations*
- 5 Kick Butts Day – Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
- 13 Alabama Board of Education Meeting
- 21-22 88th Annual Alabama PTA Convention
- 24 Confederate Memorial Day (STATE HOLIDAY)
- 26 Earth Day
- 27 Alabama Board of Education Work Session (Birmingham)



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Copies available in Braille or other forms upon request.



## FEBRUARY BOARD BRIEFS

### ALABAMA BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS

Gov. Bob Riley, President  
 Dist. 1 - Randy McKinney, Pres. Pro Tem, Gulf Shores  
 Dist. 2 - Betty Peters, Dothan  
 Dist. 3 - Stephanie W. Bell, Montgomery  
 Dist. 4 - Ethel H. Hall, V.P. Emerita, Fairfield  
 Dist. 5 - Ella B. Bell, Montgomery  
 Dist. 6 - David F. Byers Jr., Birmingham  
 Dist. 7 - Sandra Ray, Vice Pres., Tuscaloosa  
 Dist. 8 - Mary Jane Caylor, Huntsville  
 Joseph B. Morton, State Superintendent of Education and Secretary and Executive Officer of the Alabama Board of Education

- ☞ Passed Resolution Honoring Tommy Ledbetter and Sarah Fanning, Buckhorn High School, Madison County Schools for Instructional Leadership in Their School, Alabama, and the Nation
- ☞ Approved Praxis II Passing Scores
- ☞ Selected Dr. Ethel Hall as the Alabama Board of Education's Teacher of the Year Judge
- ☞ Appointed the 2006-07 State Textbook Committee, Arts Education and Languages Other Than English – Foreign Languages
- ☞ Released the Barbour County Board of Education from Financial Intervention

FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF AGENDA ITEMS, PLEASE VISIT THE ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S WEB SITE

[www.alsde.edu](http://www.alsde.edu)

UNDER BOARD OF EDUCATION.



Brenda Smith  
February  
Teacher of the Month

## FEBRUARY TEACHER OF THE MONTH

**BRENDA SMITH**, a mathematics teacher at Florence Middle School in the Florence City School System, is the Teacher of the Month for February. Smith has been teaching mathematics to middle school students for 33 years. Smith often finds herself assisting former students and even tutoring former students now enrolled in college mathematics classes. Additionally, as the sponsor of Florence Middle School's mathematics team, her teams have won the Math

Counts competition at the University of North Alabama several times. That dedication and commitment earned her the Teacher of the Month Award for February and \$1,000 from Alfa Insurance. Her school will receive a matching award from Alabama Farmers Federation. This year, Alfa Insurance and Alabama Farmers Federation will recognize one teacher from each state school board district as well as two private school teachers and two principals.