



ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

NEWS AND ISSUES IN ALABAMA PUBLIC EDUCATION, K-12

MARCH 2009

Professional Learning Units (PLUs) Offer Alabama Educators Greater Learning Opportunities



PLUs replace Continuing Education Units (CEUs) as the method for maintaining instructional leader certification in Alabama.

CHANGE is now the clarion call to educators electing to maintain their instructional leadership certification. Instructional leaders include individuals holding valid Alabama instructional leader certification such as superintendents, principals, educational administrators, instructional leaders, and more. Professional Learning Units (PLUs) will replace Continuing Education Units (CEUs) as the method for maintaining instructional leader certification in Alabama. The transition from PLUs to CEUs will begin in 2009, with full implementation anticipated in 2014. JOHN BELL, coordinator of the Leadership and Evaluation Unit at the Alabama Department of Education, said, "PLUs offer educators a better opportunity to experience professional learning with greater depth. A CEU is based on seat time at one event, while a PLU supports comprehensive professional study over time."

To maintain instructional leader certification educators will be required to earn five PLUs over a five-year time period: two must be earned through professional studies approved by the Alabama Council for Leadership Development (ACLD) and two may be earned through professional studies approved by local education agencies (LEAs). The fifth PLU may be earned from professional studies approved by either the ACLD

continued on next page ...

WHAT IS A PLU?

A Professional Learning Unit (PLU) is a content-driven, long-term unit of professional study for instructional leaders that fully addresses all knowledge and ability indicators under an Alabama Standard for Instructional Leaders. Professional study that constitutes a PLU requires multiple professional development experiences over time and will always be aligned with the Alabama Standards for Professional Development in Rule 290-4-3-.01(3).

A PLU is earned at the completion of professional study that fully addresses the knowledge and ability indicators under an Alabama Standard for Instructional Leaders. The professional study must include comprehensive coverage and evaluation of effectiveness in the school setting.

The PLU will take the place of the continuing education unit (CEU), which is based on seat time at one event rather than the development of knowledge and ability over time. (Alabama Administrative Code § 290-3-2-.01(29)).

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or LEA. Bell said approved professional study will fully address the Alabama Standards for Instructional Leaders and must be aligned to the Alabama Standards for Professional Development as referenced in the *Alabama Administrative Code (2904-3-.01)*. He said it is important to remember approved professional study and PLUs are directly related to an individual's instructional leader certification and not an individual's specific position, role, or place of employment.

Professional study will be approved for PLU status by the ACLD and/or LEAs. LEAs are encouraged to follow suggested ACLD guidelines when approving professional study for PLU status. LEAs are not required to submit locally approved professional study to the ACLD or the

To maintain instructional leader certification, educators will be required to earn five PLUs over a five-year time period.

Alabama Department of Education for review or approval. Software Technology Incorporated, Professional Development (STI PD) will be used to maintain records of PLUs earned.

STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOE MORTON said the state's commitment to providing the best possible training for educational leaders is unyielding. Morton cites the State Board of Education's approved "Education Ruler" as the framework for Alabama's success. One of the four key components on the Ruler includes "Effective School Leaders." "We recognize the importance of pragmatic professional development that helps our instructional leaders be as effective as possible in managing our schools and educating our children," Morton said.

Online training will soon be available for providers who wish to submit professional study applications to the ACLD for review and approval. Additional online professional study informational training for educators holding instructional leader certification will be available in summer 2009. ●



TIME FRAME FOR PHASING IN PLUs		
CERTIFICATE VALID PERIOD	MINIMUM PLUs REQUIRED	MAXIMUM CEUs ALLOWED
2005-2010	1	4
2006-2011	2	3
2007-2012	3	2
2008-2013	4	1
2009-2014	5	0

Approved professional study by the ACLD will:

- Include content and job-embedded activities delivered over time.
- Fully address one or more of the eight Alabama Standards for Instructional Leaders by:
 - Addressing all key indicators of knowledge.
 - Addressing all key indicators of ability, as applicable.
- Fully align to the twelve Alabama Standards for Professional Development over time.
- Identify the targeted participants (e.g., superintendents, superintendent-principal, principal (any grade level), educational administrator, supervisor, administrator of career and technical education, instructional leader, practicing instructional leader).
- Provide multiple methods of delivery (e.g., institutes/face-to-face/distance learning/online courses, other)
- Provide a timeframe and location(s) for delivery.
- Describe the method of evaluation, demonstrating how participants will effectively acquire knowledge and demonstrate their ability to use that knowledge to positively impact student achievement.

HOW TO OBTAIN A COPY OF YOUR INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER CERTIFICATE

- Submit a Duplicate Certificate Request (Form DUP)
- Submit a \$30 fee to the Alabama Department of Education
- If employed by an LEA, the LEA will have the Form DUP
- All individuals, regardless of employment, may obtain Form DUP by:
 - Go to www.alsde.edu
 - Select "Sections"
 - Click on "Teacher Education and Certification"
 - Select "Publications"
 - Click on "Forms"
 - Click on "Form DUP" to download (directions for form completion and fee submission are included)

For additional information, or to obtain an ACLD Professional Study Application, [CLICK HERE](#). To obtain an online professional study training packet, contact *Ms. Chris Wilson* at 334-353-8646 or or *Mrs. Telena Madison* at 334-353-5230.

Art Exhibit Showcases Alabama Student Artists

THE ANNUAL STATE SUPERINTENDENT'S VISUAL ARTS EXHIBIT honored over 400 K-12 student artists and their teachers. The student art show was displayed February 9-20 in the State Capitol's Old Supreme Court Library. The student showcase is sponsored by the Alabama Department of Education, Alabama Alliance for Education in the Arts, Alabama Arts License Tag Grant, and Alabama Institute for Arts Education.

MARCH IS ARTS EDUCATION MONTH

For information on arts education in Alabama's public schools, contact [Martha Lockett](#), Arts Education Specialist, Curriculum and Instruction, Alabama Department of Education, at 334-242-8082.

For a complete list of the 2009 State Superintendent's Visual Arts Exhibit Winners, visit [CLICK HERE](#).



BEST OF SHOW winner Callie Fleming with teacher Jeff Conway (Opelika City Schools).

Torchbearer Schools Prove Every Child Can Learn

DESPITE THE OBSTACLES of poverty and crime that are often credited for the erosion of the social, economic, and educational fiber in cities across America, certain schools facing these conditions continue to thrive. In Alabama, the Torchbearer School designation has been established to recognize those who, despite their circumstances, push toward a higher mark in the attainment of educational excellence. Torchbearer Schools are those that have managed to weave an intricate tapestry of pride, expectation, discipline, curriculum, communication, and hard work to produce results that are nothing short of remarkable. This year, the Alabama Department of Education has identified seven schools (see list on page 4) that face overwhelming poverty yet outpace their counterparts in key educational benchmarks including the *Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test (ARMT)* and the *Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE)*.

STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOE MORTON said the kind of structure and learning taking place in

these seven schools underscores the pedagogical philosophy that, given the appropriate environment, every child can learn. "Torchbearer Schools have a poverty rate of at least 80% and are very often located in socioeconomically distressed neighborhoods. Still, a minimum of 95% of their students pass the AHSGE, 80% score exceptionally well (Level III or IV) on the ARMT, and they have high school graduation rates that exceed the state average," Morton said. "These schools exemplify what can be achieved when schools are committed to excellence for all students."

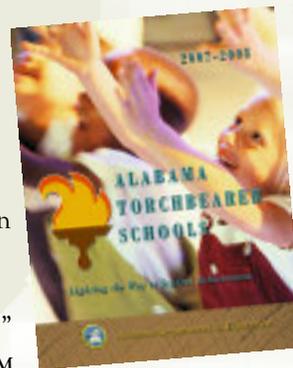
DR. ANGELA MANGUM, director of the Torchbearer School program, said these schools serve as an example that all schools can learn from. Despite their surroundings, these schools have managed to overcome the circumstances of poverty and rally around one vision and one focus – that all students can learn and be successful,"

Mangum said. "They realize they can make a profound difference in the lives of their children by providing a quality education with high standards. They don't use their environment or circumstances as an excuse for what they can't do. They look beyond that to see the potential in every child." Mangum said the concentration of successful

schools in the Mobile area is a product of a systematic approach.

Although there are many things that contribute to a Torchbearer School's success, Mangum said a booklet is being developed to help tell the dynamic stories of how school leaders have found successful strategies in improving student achievement. The booklet will

be distributed to all public K-12 schools and district offices in Alabama. School leaders are encouraged to share these proven methods of engagement with their staff – not only for effective practices in support of high-poverty schools, but best practices to improve student achievement for all schools.



More of What's RIGHT With Alabama Schools

In the February issue of *Alabama Education News*, attention was focused on "What's Right With Alabama Schools." In light of the unprecedented accomplishments Alabama students, teachers, programs, and policies are making in so many areas, it is impossible to fit all of what's right into any single issue. And although there are enough instances to fill volumes in classrooms all across Alabama, the following are but a few more glimpses of the examples that tell the story of Alabama's continuing rise in educational excellence.

Seven Alabama schools have been chosen as **TORCHBEARER SCHOOLS** that light the way as examples of places of learning that exhibit exemplary leadership and overcome adversity in student achievement. The students at these schools outpace not only their socio-economic counterparts, but other students from all walks of life.

ALABAMA'S 2008-2009

TORCHBEARER SCHOOLS ARE:

- **Anna F. Booth Elementary**
Mobile County School System
- **Calcedaveer Elementary**
Mobile County School System
- **George Hall Elementary**
Mobile County School System
- **Indian Springs Elementary**
Mobile County School System
- **Saint Elmo Elementary**
Mobile County School System
- **Holloway Elementary**
Mobile County School System
- **F.S. Ervin Elementary**
Wilcox County School System



Fox News Channel aired a story about an initiative fully embraced by **STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOE MORTON** - the "Choice Bus." A product



of the **MATTIE C. STEWART FOUNDATION**, the Choice Bus is a visually stunning display that brings the reality of poor decision making and dropping out of school up close and personal to students. One half of the bus is a typical school bus and the other half is a life-sized prison cell. This masterful concept touches the imagination and brings to life the stark reality of what awaits an

alarming percentage of students who decide to drop out of high school. Stewart first unveiled the "Choice Bus" at a joint press conference with the **Mattie Stewart Foundation**, the Alabama Department of Corrections, and the Alabama Department of Education.

Reporter **SHEPARD SMITH** of the national cable news channel **FOX NEWS** reported on Alabama's innovative **ACCESS Distance Learning** program recently. The show, *The FOX Report*, showcased



ways that Alabama schools are eliminating geographical boundaries and providing opportunities to students across the state. The nationally broadcast news show touted Alabama as a national "trailblazer" in distance learning.

Lightning struck twice in educational excellence in Alabama in 2008 as **JUDY BROWN**, a National Board Certified Teacher, won the designation of national 2008 Association for Career and Technical Education Teacher of the



Year. In the same year **MARK RAINES**, a former television anchor and reporter who began teaching in the Tuscaloosa City School System in 2000, won the distinction of the national 2008 Outstanding New Career and Technical Teacher award. Raines was one of five national teachers competing for the 2008 Outstanding New Career and Technical Teacher award. The awards were announced during the annual Association for Career and Technical Education Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada.

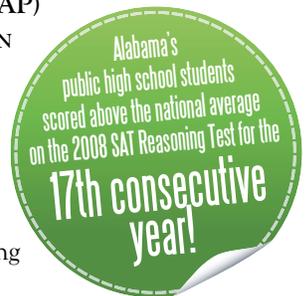
The College Board recently praised Alabama public schools for **OUTPACING THE NATION ON BOTH ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP)**

PARTICIPATION AND SAT SCORING.

The number of Alabama public school students taking AP exams

increased by 24.3

percent in 2008, compared to the national increase of just 8.6 percent. The number of AP test-takers who achieved a score of 3-5 on AP exams increased by 7.8 percent, again exceeding the national increase of 5.7 percent.



Again, these accomplishments - while impressive - do not begin to tell the whole story of all that is "right" in Alabama schools. Of course, there is a lot of work yet to be done, but Alabama is heading in the right direction. With America's economic forecast, fiscal constraints on education in particular, and the everyday challenges that come with preparing students for a diverse, challenging, and changing world, the hurdles are plentiful. However, the policies in place in Alabama schools and the evidence of their effectiveness show progress toward making Alabama a model for educational revival. 🍎

Alabama Legislators get Hands-On AMSTI Experience

IF SEEING IS A PREREQUISITE TO BELIEVING, students, staff, and administrators in Autauga County set out to make believers of members of the Alabama Legislature recently. The system, which is seeking to expand its Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI), arranged a meeting at which system leaders and students provided hands-on activities and a presentation to the House Education Appropriations Committee, along with STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOE MORTON, about AMSTI.

The presentation provided state leaders a front row seat to some of the scientific experiments and quality learning taking place in AMSTI classrooms across the state. The program included a chemical reactant activity, making an electrical circuit, an experiment demonstrating the conservation of matter, extracting DNA, and other science and mathematics related activities. Morton said the Legislators present were impressed with the presentation and it further emphasized the effectiveness of the AMSTI program.

“The Legislators know of the overarching effects of AMSTI and the fact that AMSTI is yielding positive results, but this gave them the opportunity to see some of the specific classwork that goes into the program,” Morton said. “The State Board of Education has taken part in similar activities and can vouch for the enthusiasm and interest in science and math that this type of experience can plant in students’ minds. As leaders in education, we must not only dictate to students what classes to take, but do everything within our ability to make learning interesting, exciting, and effective.”

Morton said Autauga County’s aggressive approach to bring AMSTI to the law makers was a great way to demonstrate its desire to expand the program.

STEVE RICKS, director of the AMSTI program, said AMSTI has brought its unique, hand-on approach to learning to 40 percent of all Alabama schools. Ricks said AMSTI has been lauded by the National Governors Association, the National Conference of State Legislators, and the National Science Resource Center of the Smithsonian. Most recently, he said AMSTI was the only state



initiative presented as a model for needed reform at **Science Generation: A National Imperative** hosted by the American Museum of Natural History and Goldman Sachs. The national publication *Education Leadership* states that

AMSTI provides substantial evidence that well-formulated and sustained professional development programs for teachers can significantly improve student achievement in science.

SUPERINTENDENT OF AUTAUGA COUNTY SCHOOLS GREG FAULKNER said the experience was beneficial for the students as well as the members of the legislature as they were all enlightened by the presentation.

“The kids were very excited and actually led the presentations. The [legislators] asked really good questions and were impressed with the students’ ability to answer them,” Faulkner said. “It also made the students feel great to actually do the ‘teaching’ with Alabama legislators.” He said the learning environment is vibrant and stimulating when working with AMSTI materials. “Usually students have books to learn from, but with AMSTI they actually get the hands-on experience that’s more exciting for them. It’s louder – but it definitely gets students engaged while multi-tasking.”

Faulkner said in addition to demonstrating to the legislators how effective the AMSTI program is, the point was also stressed about the importance of retaining and recruiting quality teachers. “AMSTI is great, but without a great teacher it’s just a box,” Faulkner said. ●



Currently, AMSTI is in 573 schools across the state and in all 11 in-service regions. For more information on AMSTI, [CLICK HERE.](#)

The Autauga County students enjoyed leading the AMSTI presentations and “teaching” the Alabama legislators.





Red Carpet Schools Award Program Recognizes Schools That Excel in Providing Great Customer Service

IT'S TIME TO ROLL OUT THE RED CARPET!

Montgomery Public Schools' Communication Office recently launched the **Red Carpet Schools Award**

Program, a new initiative aimed at recognizing schools and departments that excel in providing good customer service. Schools and departments have an opportunity to apply to receive a red carpet in the fall and spring. Carpets will be awarded based on a school's or central office department's ability to provide good customer service by several criteria such as parental/staff involvement activities, responsiveness, use of technologies like e-mail and School Messenger, and how visitors are treated.

Winners will display a large red carpet inside the front entrance of the school or department for one year and are eligible to reapply the following year. Winners will also be recognized by the Montgomery County Board of Education and the media, and will have a photo of staff members posing on the red carpet posted on the Montgomery Public Schools' Web site.

State Board Member: Mrs. Ella B. Bell, District 5

State Board Member: Mrs. Stephanie Bell, District 3

Superintendent: Mr. John L. Dilworth

Culinary Arts Academy Students Advance to National Competition

TWELVE HIGH SCHOOL CULINARY TEAMS from

Alabama competed for the state culinary championship this

past weekend. After a heated two-hour

competition, **HEWITT-**

TRUSSVILLE HIGH

SCHOOL HOSPITALITY

& CULINARY ARTS

ACADEMY students

emerged as the winner.

The students were judged by highly skilled professionals from

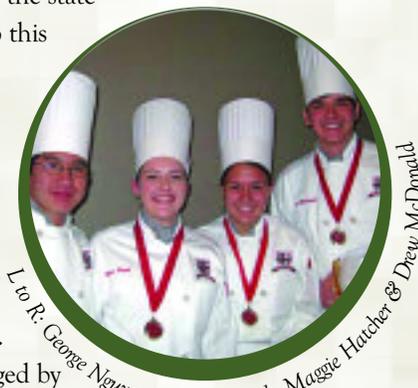
around the Birmingham area. They were evaluated on knife skills, sanitation, organization, teamwork, cooking procedures, taste, creativity, and presentation.

CHEF LAURA RINSKY, CEPC, CCE, who directs the program said, "Our dynamic team members practiced to perfect their skills in the weeks prior to the competition. Their diligence and hard work paid off." The team will be representing Alabama in the national competition to be held in Nashville, Tennessee, in July.

Board Member: David F. Byers, Jr., District 6

Superintendent: Dr. Suzanne K. Freeman

Principal: Mrs. Jennifer Hogan



Alabama Librarian Appointed To American Association of School Librarians Committee

CONGRATULATIONS to Homewood High School Library Media Specialist **ANNALISA CREWS** who has been appointed to the Intellectual Freedom Committee for the American Association of School Librarians. This two-year appointment will include working with a group of six school librarians and college faculty in school library programs to carry out the committee charge: to gather, prepare, and disseminate information on Intellectual Freedom issues and available support services pertinent to school library media programs. Over 70 percent of all challenges to books and other resources occur in schools and school libraries. The committee works with the ALA Intellectual Freedom Office and with the Freedom to Read Foundation in gathering information as requested and responding to issues and concerns.

State Board Member: Dr. Ethel H. Hall, V.P. Emerita, District 4

Superintendent: Dr. William T. Cleveland · Principal: Dr. Kevin Maddox



Alabama School Among National RAMP Honorees

VESTAVIA HILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WEST in Vestavia Hills, Alabama, has been selected as one of 60 schools from 14 states recognized for making exemplary commitment to comprehensive school counseling programs. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) announced that CELESTE NEIL (retired) was the counselor at Vestavia Hills during the time that the Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) nomination was submitted. The RAMP designation recognizes schools that are committed to delivering a comprehensive, data-driven, school counseling program and an exemplary educational environment.



State Board Member: Dr. Ethel H. Hall, V.P. Emerita, District 4
Superintendent: Dr. Jamie Blair · Principal: Mrs. Becky Patton

Celeste Neil and
ASCA president Eric Sparks.

Awards, Opportunities, and Professional Development

[Siemens We Can Change the World Challenge](#)

Deadline: March 15

[“Doodle 4 Google”](#) Opportunity for Artistic Students

School Registration Deadline: March 17

Deadline: March 31

[15th Annual Reading Rainbow Young Writers and Illustrators Contest](#)

Deadline: March 23

[Barnes & Noble Booksellers Educator Appreciation Days, April 18-26](#)

[The Teaching Artist Research Project](#)

[Best Evidence Encyclopedia](#)



Search for education grants at www.grants.gov

Alabama Stars in Education Awards Set For May 13th

THE ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION and Alabama Public Television

join together to honor those who help build a better community for all with **Stars in Education**, a live, statewide broadcast and award ceremony. The Young Heroes and Teacher of the Year Awards will be presented May 13, at the Renaissance Hotel and Convention Center in Montgomery.



The Alabama Department of Education recognizes excellence in the teaching profession with the Teacher of the Year Award. It is given to a remarkable educator who has gone above and beyond, teaching students at the highest level. The use of a 2009 Chevrolet Impala, SMART Board 600i interactive whiteboard system, and many other exciting prizes will be awarded to the recipient. The Teacher of the Year is also a candidate for National Teacher of the Year.

Alabama Public Television celebrates the great achievements of Alabama's future leaders with the 2009 Alabama Young Heroes Awards. This award is given to five outstanding young people who have demonstrated courage, determination, volunteerism, and academic excellence. These students have overcome adversities, only to inspire others with their actions. Scholarships, laptops, and other prizes will be given to the winners.

Please [CLICK HERE](#) and [HERE](#) for more information on this live, statewide broadcast and event.



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M A R C H

Arts Education Month/Women's History Month/National Reading Month
Transition Awareness Month (Students with disabilities transitioning from high school into postsecondary)

March 12 - Alabama State Board of Education Meeting
March 26 - Alabama State Board of Education Work Session

A P R I L

Child Abuse Prevention Month/Mathematics Education Month

April 9 - State Board of Education Meeting
April 23 - State Board of Education Work Session
April 27 - Confederate Memorial Day

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CLEVELAND HIGH'S CAFFEE CHOSEN ALFA TEACHER OF MONTH

By Kim Hall

A successful teacher must be able to “support a positive learning environment,” says **NANCY B. CAFFEE**, who teaches seventh- and eighth-grade science at Cleveland High School in Blount County, but has found there are plenty of other places where she can teach outside the walls of a classroom.



That's why Caffee's students may experience learning on field trips to Birmingham's McWane Center, the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, the Space & Rocket Center, the Civil Rights Museum or the Chattanooga Aquarium.

“Teaching is a rewarding experience and can happen anywhere ... Students need opportunities to question and find answers for themselves,” explains Caffee, who utilizes a variety of teaching methods, such as visual, auditory, expository and kinesthetic learning to reach each and every student.

That's why Caffee has been selected Alfa's Teacher of the Month for March, earning her a \$1,000 award from Alfa Insurance and Cleveland High School a matching \$1,000 award from the Alabama Farmers Federation.

Caffee holds bachelor's in secondary education from the University of Alabama-Birmingham and a master's in secondary education from the University of Phoenix. This school year, Caffee is taking a leading role in implementing the Alabama Math, Science and Technology Initiative (AMSTI) at Cleveland High. Caffee also seeks outside funding for special projects and has received numerous grants that has allowed the school to expand its science department.

During 2009, Alfa Insurance and the Alabama Farmers Federation will honor one outstanding teacher from each of Alabama's eight state board districts, as well as two principals and two private school teachers. Visit www.AlfaFarmers.org.

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State Superintendent of Education and Secretary and Executive Officer of the Alabama Board of Education | Joseph B. Morton

FEBRUARY BOARD BRIEFS

- ⚡ Resolution in Recognition of March 2009 as “Arts Education Month” in Alabama Schools
- ⚡ Resolution in Recognition of the 2009 Annual State Superintendent's Visual Arts Exhibit
- ⚡ Resolution Proclaiming February 1-28, 2009, as Alabama Career and Technical Education Month
- ⚡ Resolution Proclaiming February 9-13, 2009, as “Growing Our Own” Week in Alabama – A Special Statewide Celebration for Alabama's Teachers
- ⚡ Resolution to Appoint the Social Studies Course of Study Committee
- ⚡ Resolution for Adoption of Health Education and Physical Education State Courses of Study

For a complete list of agenda items, visit the Alabama Department of Education's Web site www.alsde.edu under “Board of Ed.”

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