

ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

NEWS AND ISSUES IN ALABAMA PUBLIC EDUCATION, K-12

VOLUME 34, NUMBER 5 • MARCH/APRIL 2011 • WWW.ALSDE.EDU • AEN@ALSDE.EDU

Momentum is Key

IN HIS FIRST STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS, GOVERNOR ROBERT BENTLEY spoke of the tough choices ahead for the state of Alabama. Due to a shortfall in revenue projections, Gov. Bentley affirmed what many had already feared with the declaration of 3% proration for the Alabama Education budget. A staggering \$165 million shortfall in the education budget, without the federal crutch of stimulus funding, puts public education, along with other aspects of state government, in the situation where sacrifices must be made. Despite the fact that state agencies must tighten their belts, STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOE MORTON applauds the priority that Gov. Bentley set on protecting the programs and people in those programs as being responsible for the historic gains being made in Alabama's public education system. Flagship initiatives such as the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI); the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI); and ACCESS Distance Learning are proving worthy of the investment Alabama has made.

Although balancing Alabama's Education budget will not come without trepidation, the good news is a general consensus on one thing: education in Alabama is moving in the right direction. Educational

Alabama students go to school expecting to learn and we owe it to them to provide the best education possible with what limited resources we have.

— State Superintendent of Education Joe Morton

assessments are bearing the evidence that the state's primary education initiatives are effective. More students are taking a more diverse and rigorous course load, reading and math scores show continuous improvement, fewer students are dropping out of high school, and

continued on next page ...

Alabama has moved from near last to **25TH IN THE NATION** in overall grades and scores in an educational assessment by Education Week!



Alabama ranks above the national average for the first time in the latest "Quality Counts" report and ranks particularly highly in three categories:

- **12th in the nation** for standards, assessments and accountability
- **14th in the nation** for transitions and alignment between Pre-K, K-12, higher education and workforce development
- **18th in the nation** for standards, support and accountability of the teaching profession

3 Protecting Children
The FBI has a new program designed to teach kids Internet safety

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New nutrition guidelines means changes are coming to school lunches

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college/workforce preparedness are on the uptick. Now that the direction of education in Alabama has been established, the primary objective has to be maintaining momentum. Like in sports, the momentum of the game can set the course for future actions. Winning in the first quarter means nothing unless the momentum of the game is sustained until the end. In Alabama, the last several years of educational progress has been nothing short of impressive.

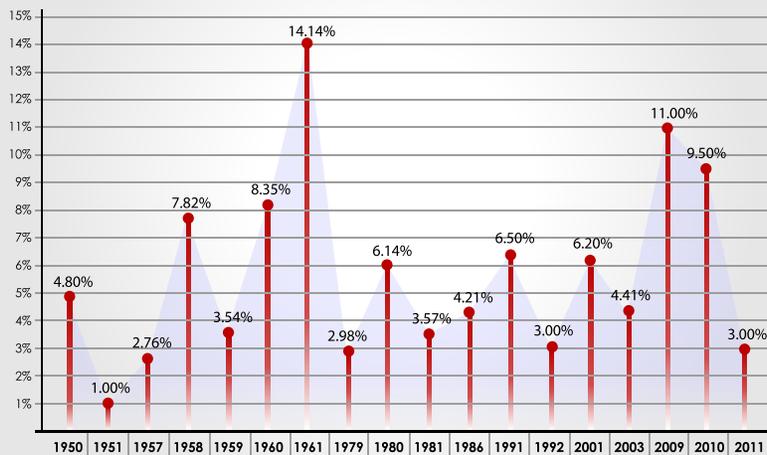
Admittedly, Alabama has been perceived by much of the country as idle in the arena of educational advancement; however, the most noted education entities and publications in America have taken notice of the stride with which Alabama has galloped forward. But we are still in the early part of the game. The fact that Alabama has moved from near last in the country to 25th in an overall educational assessment by *Education Week* means nothing if we cannot maintain the momentum. Morton said protecting what works and being innovative enough to continue to show gains in achievement are essential to Alabama's thrust forward.

"We did not go from nearly last in the nation to 25th by accident. It's not an accident that we are graduating more students; having more students of all walks of life taking Advanced Placement classes; offering diverse curriculum to students in every corner of the state; and improving both our teaching methods and student achievement in math, science and technology," Morton said. "These are the results of the methodical implementation of programs that work. It is encouraging

to see Governor Bentley, the Alabama legislature, parents, students, teachers, and many others invested in education in our state fully recognize the importance of continuous improvement and support it."

LEAs Received Prorated Budgets 18 Times Since 1950

Average time: once every 3.4 years (since 1950) • Average amount: 7.86%.



Recently, Morton pled his case to the Joint House and Senate Budget Committees, outlining a detailed and itemized legislative budget request that – while not inclusive of everything needed in the state – would suffice the immediate needs for the Fiscal Year 2012.

Understanding that a combination of unforeseeable events put the state's education budget in a financial crisis, the teaching and advancement of Alabama children must go on. This is a battle that is drawn on several fronts. First, maintaining the existing division of funds between K-12 and higher education is essential. Of course, every realm of education is detrimental to the future of Alabama, but K-12 schools are the roots from which all other education blossoms. Maintaining the current split of 69.7% for K-12 is fair as K-12 has almost 75% of the state's school-aged children. In addition to a recession-inspired lag in sales and incomes taxes (which is primarily how Alabama public schools are funded) and a depleted Education Trust Fund, Alabama now has to stand alone after being temporarily propped up by federal

stimulus money last year. In short, Alabama's education budget has been reduced by \$1.5 billion since 2008 and some very tough decisions must be made in order to keep the momentum that has been established.

It is imperative to recognize the value of Alabama's teachers. It is their dedication and commitment to the profession and to their children that makes the advances in education possible. What must be a priority is the retention of as many good teachers as possible, along with the invaluable instructional time that teachers spend in the classroom.

Gov. Bentley said teachers and state employees alike will have to contribute more to their own individual retirement and health insurance programs as part of the solution to creating a sustainable funding base for the Education Trust Fund. "We must rely not on Washington, but on our own abilities as a state to accomplish the task set before us," Bentley said.

Morton said some concessions must be made to accommodate the state's financial situation. "The children in the classrooms of Alabama know nothing about proration or individual contributions to insurance or healthcare. They are unaware of fiscal budgets or legislative mandates ... nor should they be. They wake up every morning and go to school expecting to learn, and we owe it to them to provide the best education possible with what limited resources we have," Morton said. "These changes are uncomfortable, they are tough and unpopular ... but they are necessary. What we do not want to do is decrease the programs that are providing the momentum, or the days in school for students to learn. Recessions come and go. There will be healthier financial days again. But for now, Alabama must do all that it can to keep up the momentum." ●

The FBI Takes Action to Prevent Crimes Against Children

CYBERBULLYING is any type of bullying that is carried out by electronic medium, can be 24/7, and can involve mean, vulgar, or threatening content (see AEN Nov/Dec 2010 issue).



Cyberbullying is just one type of bullying and just one type of Internet safety concern. The Cyber Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) deals with these concerns and is taking action to prevent Internet crimes against children. FBI-SOS (Safe Online Surfing) is a FREE school-based Internet safety program for Grades 3-8. FBI-SOS promotes cyber citizenship by engaging students in fun, age-appropriate, online competitions where they learn how to use the Internet safely and responsibly.

“We want to empower young people to recognize and react to online dangers,” explained **NICKOLAS B. SAVAGE**, FBI Cyber Division.

Principals and teachers can challenge their students to win the FBI-SOS trophy and a visit from the FBI. The highest scorers earn trophies for their schools and winning schools receive visits from FBI Special Agents when possible. But, the most important result on the FBI-SOS Internet Challenge is increased safety for all students.

“Our teachers are always looking for good resources,” said **TOM MOCK**, Prevention and Support, Alabama Department

of Education. “We need to educate ourselves so we can educate and protect our children.”

The FBI-SOS Challenge introduces age-appropriate scenarios and students must use critical thinking skills to apply what they’ve learned to real-world situations. Online Scavenger Hunts direct students to pre-screened websites that contain Internet safety tips. Students then take web-based quizzes and try to become Special Agents.

The FBI-SOS Internet Challenge is designed to meet state and federal Internet safety mandates. Each grade level takes a separate challenge. Grade-appropriate topics include:



- Passwords
- Privacy
- Online Predators
- Cyberbullying
- Netiquette
- Virus Protection
- Chat Rooms
- Sexting
- Instant Messaging
- Social Networking
- Cell Phone Safety
- Gaming Safety
- Reporting
- Copyright and Fair Use

The FBI-SOS site provides additional resources for parents and educators about Internet safety and cyber citizenship. FBI-SOS also includes a parent education component and parental consent is required for students to participate in the online competition.

For complete information about FBI-SOS, contact **PAUL DAYMOND**, Media and Public Affairs Coordinator (paul.daymond@ic.fbi.gov), 205-279-1457. ●

Some safe sites include:

- <http://www.kidscomjr.com/games/safety/safety.html>
- <http://home.disney.com.au/activities/surfwelldisland/>
- <http://www.nsteens.org/Videos/Cyberbullying-BrokenFriendship>



ENOUGH IS ENOUGH:

- 48 percent of K-1 students interact with people on websites; only half indicate they have parental supervision.
- 48 percent of K-1 students report viewing online content that made them feel uncomfortable; 1 in 4 children do not report this experience to an adult.
- 52 percent of teens have given out personal information online to someone they don't know offline, including personal photos and/or physical descriptions of themselves.
- 20 percent of teens have engaged in cyberbullying behaviors.
- 93 percent of all Americans between 12 and 17 years old use the Internet.
- 71 percent of teens have established online profiles.
- 65 percent of high school students admit to unsafe, inappropriate, or illegal activities online.
- 31 percent of 7th-12th graders pretended to be older to get onto a website.

CHILDREN SHOULD NEVER:

- Arrange a face-to-face or phone meeting with someone they met online.
- Upload pictures of themselves to people that they do not personally know.
- Give out identifying information such as their name, home address, school name, or telephone number.
- Download pictures from unknown sources (*there is a good chance they could be sexually explicit images or contain viruses*).
- Respond to messages or bulletin board postings that are suggestive, obscene, belligerent, or harassing.

Sources: *Enough is Enough* and www.fbi-sos.org

High Standards for Nutrition: Accomplishments and the Challenges Ahead

TO ACCOMPANY THE **HEALTHY, HUNGER-FREE KIDS ACT OF 2010**, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently released proposed nutrition standards for meals. The new standards further address obesity and poor nutrition in America's schools. The new proposed regulations will make critical changes to school meals and help improve the health and nutrition of students that participate in school meal programs every school day.



Thanks to efforts of the Alabama State Board of Education (SBE), a high nutritional standard in Alabama's schools is nothing new. In July 2005, the SBE took a pro-active stand and approved policies that limited sodium levels, required the fat content in milk to 1 percent or less, decreased snacks and beverages that were high in fat and sugar, limited the size of portions and beverage cup sizes, and promoted the sale of noncarbonated beverages and 100 percent juices along with unflavored water.

The effort to elevate nutrition in the state was also facilitated by adjusting the statewide purchasing method to buy more whole grain products and to reduce sugar, fat, and

salt content in foods. Alabama also received a Team Nutrition Grant from the USDA to provide training to local education agencies' child nutrition personnel on the use of incorporating fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grain into the cafeterias. Fifty-two Alabama public schools were recipients of the 2010 USDA HealthierUS Schools Challenge Awards. These awards from the USDA National School Lunch Programs honor schools for promoting a healthy school environment.

The proposed changes to school meal standards, which would add more fruits, vegetables (with a new red-orange group), whole grains, and fat-free, low-fat white, and chocolate milk to school meals, are based on recommendations released in October 2009 by the National Academies' Institute of Medicine (IOM) and presented in its report *School Meals: Building Blocks for Healthy Children*. Schools would also be required to limit the levels of saturated fat, sodium, calories, and trans fats in meals.

According to a recent report by the Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, more than 36 percent of Alabama children 6-19 years of age are

overweight or obese. These children are more likely to have risk factors associated with chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and Type 2 diabetes.



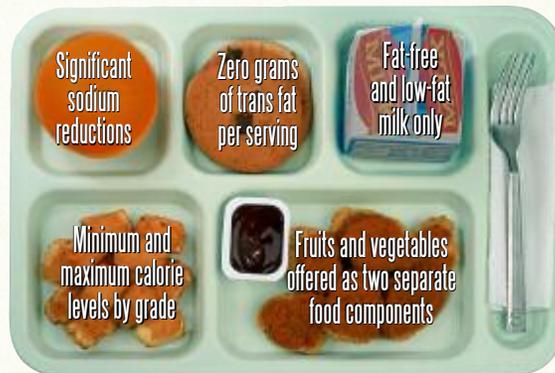
Even though Alabama has accomplished some major changes successfully, there will be challenges to achieve the goals of the new law such as decreasing sodium to 740mg at lunch. Decreasing the purchasing of pre-prepared foods that tend to be higher in sodium can help to accomplish that goal. Re-evaluating the types of a la carte items sold will help to meet the nutritional guidelines as well.

To address the possible changes, the Alabama Department of Education has scheduled training to help current school lunch personnel cook more on site at schools, from scratch, using herbs and non-salt seasoning and spices. Moving from canned vegetables to frozen or fresh vegetables and increasing flavor without

the fat is an integral component to accomplishing the new guidelines.

The USDA is seeking input on the proposed rule from the public through April 13, 2011.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO SCHOOL MEALS:



See the USDA's document for full information on the recommended changes to meals [HERE](#).



A BRIGHTER TOMORROW USING TECHNOLOGY TODAY

ALABAMA EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE
Birmingham Jefferson Convention Complex June 15-16, 2011

March is Music in our Schools Month!



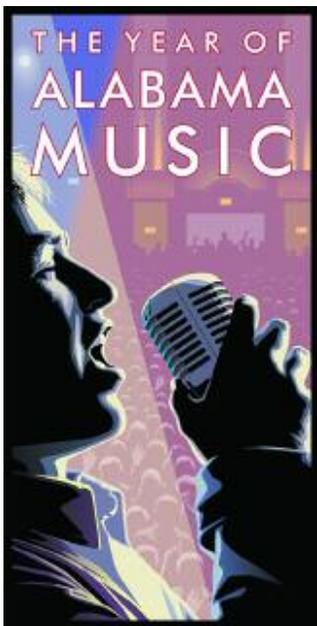
SHOWCASING THE EFFORT and the talent of music teachers and students is happening in March with **Music in Our Schools Month!** The purpose of Music in Our Schools Month is to raise awareness of the importance of music education for all students. The month of March offers an opportunity for music teachers to bring their music program to the attention of school stakeholders and to display the benefits of music education in our schools.

Teachers all over the state offer well-balanced, comprehensive, and high-quality programs of music instruction and establish music education as an integral part of every child's education. Concerts, performances, and band competitions flourish in March for all schools in Alabama.

Schools will participate in the World's Largest Concert, a sing-a-long concert linking students around the world through music. Other schools will offer parents the opportunity to join their children in music making by taking part in their music classes. In addition, music is made the focus of daily learning in other schools.

Along with the Alabama Music Educators Association and the National Association for Music Education (MENC), music education is promoted and offered through various ways in Alabama's schools. MENC's mission statement is "Music allows us to celebrate and preserve our cultural heritages, and also to explore the realms of expression, imagination, and creation resulting in new knowledge."

The Alabama Department of Education embraces this statement and encourages all local schools to promote their music education programs this March and every month. This year, 2011, is also the Year of Alabama Music and to celebrate all the incredible musicians who have made Alabama one of the major hubs of American music, there are concerts all over the state! Blues, rock, country, jazz, gospel ... America's musical roots all run deep in Alabama. That's why 2011 is officially [The Year of Alabama Music](#). Join the celebration today! .



Schools that have music programs have significantly higher graduation rates than do those without programs (90.2% as compared to 72.95).

Schools that have music programs have significantly higher attendance rates than do those without programs (93.3% as compared to 84.9%).

Source - 2006 Harris Interactive Poll

Teens who participate in music education programs see music as their "social glue," as a bridge for building acceptance and tolerance for people of different ages and cultural circumstances and associate playing music with self-discipline, listening skills, motor ability, hand-eye coordination, and heightened intellectual capabilities.

Source - Study by Dr. Patricia Shehan Campbell, Fall 2007, *Journal for Research in Music Education*



The Alabama Department of Education and Alabama Public Television join together with **STARS IN EDUCATION**, a statewide broadcast at Frazier United Methodist Church in Montgomery on **May 11, 2011**. During this **LIVE** awards ceremony, the Alabama Department of Education will recognize excellence in the teaching profession with the Teacher of the Year Award and Alabama Public Television will celebrate the great achievements of Alabama's future leaders by recognizing the 2011 Alabama Young Heroes.



ASCA Superintendent of the Year

SHELBY COUNTY SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENT **RANDY FULLER** was recently honored for his school communication strategies, including the recent tax renewal campaign.

Fuller was named the Dr. Joyce M. Sellers Superintendent of the Year by the Alabama School



Communicators Association at its annual conference February 11.

The award is given by the organization to recognize a superintendent who employs effective communication strategies to promote his/her school and school-related activities.

Fuller was credited with implementing new programs in the district that utilize good communication strategies. Those programs include the Continuous School Improvement Process, an ongoing strategic plan that includes communication as one of 12 strategic areas, and the Key Leaders Network, which is used to communicate important information about the district to government, civic, and business leaders.

“I am very honored to have been selected by the Alabama School Communicators Association for this award,” Fuller said in a press release. “Effective communication holds the key to success in our school system as well as our everyday lives.”

Stephanie W. Bell, Board District 3

Charles E. Elliott, M.D., Board District 6

Birmingham Students Experience Africa

IN FEBRUARY, about 600 seventh-graders in the Birmingham City School System spent a week at the Birmingham Zoo through the new Trails of Africa ZooSchool, a unique program that teaches them about Africa. The Trails of Africa ZooSchool utilizes the Trails of Africa exhibit at the zoo to provide students with an interdisciplinary learning experience that includes not only science but math, social studies, and English language arts. The Trails of Africa ZooSchool curriculum includes the core subjects that students have on a daily basis at school and follows the Alabama Course of Study standards.

“This is no ordinary field trip to the zoo,” said SUPERINTENDENT CRAIG WITHERSPOON. “Students will get to actually observe the elephants but then go beyond that. They will learn far more about elephants, the cultures of the people of Africa, and the conditions there.”

“We are excited about this incredible educational opportunity for the city of Birmingham and the Birmingham Zoo. This is a part of our mission.

We expect this program to continue to grow and include more students.

The zoo worked closely with the department heads of Birmingham City Schools to develop this extraordinary project,” said **WILLIAM R. FOSTER**, CEO and President of the Birmingham Zoo.



Superintendent Craig Witherspoon

Yvette M. Richardson, Ed.D., Board District 4

2011 Annual State Superintendent's Visual Arts Exhibit

LEADING UP TO “ARTS EDUCATION MONTH” IN MARCH, over 400 student artists statewide entered the 2011 State Superintendent's Visual Arts Exhibit, an annual event to showcase the artistic talents of Alabama's public school students in Grades K-12. The student art exhibit was displayed in the Old Supreme Court Library of the State Capitol during February.

WILLIE WILLIAMS, a ninth-grader at the Alabama School of Fine Arts, won Best in Show with his work entitled *Not a Normal Day*. Willie's art teacher is Randy Gachet.

Student artists received awards for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place, and honorable mentions, in three age groups (Grades 7-8, 9-10, and 11-12) and two categories (Two-Dimensional Work and Photography or Computer-Generated Work). The state-level judging panel based its selections on composition, originality, and developmental appropriateness.

The Alabama Department of Education, Alabama Alliance for Arts in Education, Alabama Institute for Arts Education, and Alabama Arts License Tag Grant sponsored the 2011 State Superintendent's Visual Arts Exhibit.

For more information about arts education, contact Martha Lockett, Arts Education Specialist, Curriculum and Instruction, Alabama Department of Education, at 334-242-8082.



iTunes U Alabama Educational Site Unveiled: GALLERY 360

The Alabama Learning Exchange (ALEX), Alabama's national award-winning educational web portal, is unveiling the latest podcast innovation as part of an ever-increasing collection of resources for teachers with the launch of the Alabama iTunes U website. All podcast resources will be viewable on a variety of mobile devices and computers. Alabama's teachers and students can also subscribe to receive alerts when new educational material is added under a specific category.



The iTunes U site is an extension of ALEX's current collection of enhanced video podcasts already available in the gallery360° section of the ALEX website. The Alabama iTunes U site categorizes the content into various collections related to the appropriate course of study, allowing students and teachers to quickly locate resources on a particular topic and view those resources seamlessly.

To access the iTunes U Alabama site, [CLICK HERE](#). You will be required to download the iTunes software which is available at no cost.

Auburn Student Wins Championship



For the second consecutive year, **YOUSSEF BIAZ**, a senior at Auburn High School, won the Alabama Poetry Out Loud statewide competition and will represent Alabama in the national championship in Washington, DC.

Students from across the state competed at Montgomery's Alabama Shakespeare Festival, reciting poetry by Langston Hughes, C.S. Lewis, and others. Some students recited their own original poems.

Poetry Out Loud is a national arts education program presented by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation in partnership with state arts councils nationwide. In Alabama, the Alabama State Council on the Arts partners with the Alabama Alliance for Arts Education.

For more information about Poetry Out Loud, contact Diana Green, Arts in Education Program Manager, Alabama State Council on the Arts, 334-242-4076, Ext. 241, or Donna Russell, Executive Director, Alabama Alliance for Arts Education, 334-269-1435.

Auburn High School Principal: Dr. Todd Freeman
Auburn City Schools Superintendent: Dr. Terry Jenkins
State Board of Education Member, District 2: Betty Peters

A+ College Ready Expands to 20 More Alabama High Schools

STATE SUPERINTENDENT JOE MORTON recently told Alabama legislators, "We are changing the landscape on how Alabama is perceived in this nation and in this world."

Advanced Placement (AP) is one way that's happening. On the heels of Alabama's positive performance in the College Board's 7th Annual AP Report to the Nation, GOV. ROBERT BENTLEY, DR. MORTON, and A+ COLLEGE READY announced AP expansion to 20 more Alabama high schools:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Carver High School - Birmingham City | 11. Saraland High School - Saraland City |
| 2. Jackson-Olin High School - Birmingham City | 12. Calera High School - Shelby Co. |
| 3. Greenville High School - Butler Co. | 13. Shelby Co. High School - Shelby Co. |
| 4. Hillcrest High School - Conecuh Co. | 14. Tallassee High School - Tallassee City |
| 5. Stanhope Elmore High School - Elmore Co. | 15. Hewitt Trussville High School - Trussville City |
| 6. Oak Grove High School - Jefferson Co. | 16. Central High School - Tuscaloosa City |
| 7. Asbury High School - Marshall Co. | 17. Northridge High School - Tuscaloosa City |
| 8. Douglas High School - Marshall Co. | 18. Paul Bryant High School - Tuscaloosa City |
| 9. Kate D. Smith DAR High School - Marshall Co. | 19. Hillcrest High School - Tuscaloosa Co. |
| 10. Monroe Co. High School - Monroe Co. | 20. Tuscaloosa Co. High School - Tuscaloosa Co. |

AP is a rigorous academic program that offers high school students the opportunity for college-level study with more than 30 wide-ranging courses. These schools join 43 others already participating in A+ College Ready's Advanced Placement Training and Incentive Program. A+ College Ready, a division of the A+ Education Partnership, is funded by a \$13.2 million grant from the National Math and Science Initiative.

"A+ College Ready is a proven investment that is preparing our students today for the jobs of tomorrow," said Gov. Bentley. "The expansion of Advanced Placement training into 63 schools proves that Alabama is not only committed to building and sustaining a world-class workforce, but that our teachers and students are most definitely up to the task."

The College Board report cited Alabama as a national leader in rising AP participation and success rates. According to the report, from 2006 to 2010:

- The number of Alabama's student test-takers increased 125 percent.
- The number of AP exams administered to Alabama students increased 144 percent (some students take multiple exams).
- Alabama students' AP exam scores of 3-5 increased 79 percent.

"Alabama students are succeeding in AP classes at unprecedented rates. With the addition of 20 new schools, we will open AP classroom doors to more students than ever before, including some who may not have initially believed they could succeed at this level," said Morton. "Our results show that with the right support, Alabama teachers and students can and will achieve at high levels."

ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

Volume 34 • No. 5 • Mar/Apr 2011

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Alabama Education News (USPS #387-290) is published monthly except for June, July, and December by the Alabama Department of Education, P.O. Box 302101, Montgomery, AL 36130-2101. Periodicals postage paid at Montgomery, AL and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Alabama Education News*, P.O. Box 302101, Montgomery, AL 36130-2101. *Alabama Education News* is composed by the Alabama Department of Education's Communication Section and printed by Walker360 of Montgomery. 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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Printed on 10% post-consumer recovered fiber paper with soy-based inks



CHERYL HALL NAMED ALFA TEACHER OF MONTH



It's for her steadfast dedication to enriching the lives of others that Cheryl Hall was named Alfa's Teacher of the Month for March. As March's honoree, she will receive \$1,000 from Alfa Insurance. Her school, Lacey's Spring Elementary (Morgan County Schools), will receive a matching award from the Alabama Farmers Federation.

Hall earned her bachelor's degree in elementary education from Athens State University and her master's of education degree from Alabama A&M University. She also earned a place in "Who's Who Among American Teachers" and was awarded the Jenice Riley Memorial Scholarship for "Excellence in Social Science Education" by the Alabama Humanities Foundation.

During 2010, Alfa Insurance and the Alabama Farmers Federation are honoring one outstanding teacher from each of Alabama's eight state board districts, two principals, and two private school teachers. Application information is available under Ag Links in the Agricultural Resources Section of AlfaFarmers.org under Ag Links.

Superintendent Bill Hopkins · Charles E. Elliott, M.D., Board District 6

Awards, Opportunities, and Professional Development

For a complete listing of awards and professional development opportunities, [CLICK HERE](#)

State Board of Education Meeting Agenda Items

- Resolution in Recognition of Matt Akin, Piedmont City Schools Superintendent, Recipient of eSchool News 2011 Tech-Savvy Superintendent Award (School Board District III)
- Resolutions in Recognition of 2010 Science Presidential Award Finalists
- Resolutions in Recognition of 2010 Mathematics Presidential Award Finalists
- Resolutions Commending the 2011 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards Finalists

For a complete list of agenda items, to hear podcasts, or to see photos from Alabama State Board of Education meetings, visit www.alsde.edu and click "Board of Ed."