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May 2012 · Issue I

# ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

The electronic newsletter of the Alabama Department of Education



## Superintendent's Message

I continue to be amazed at the innovative work occurring in Alabama's schools by Alabama teachers, students, and all those connected with public education. Recently, I attended the Lawrence County Agricultural Career Day, a component of its Innovative School Systems plan submitted last year, led by its superintendent, Heath Grimes. The focus of this unique plan was on infusing an agricultural theme throughout the curriculum culminating in an Advanced Academic Agricultural Endorsement to the Alabama High School Diploma. What I witnessed far exceeded my expectations and is a model of what can happen when you give teachers, leaders, and their communities the latitude to think creatively on how to best meet the learning needs of their students.

When I arrived there were hundreds of students representing two high schools and two middle schools attending workshops and meeting with representatives from state, regional, and national organizations and companies with connections to the agriculture industry. Just a few of the workshop sessions offered to the students included:



Dr. Tommy Bice, State Superintendent of Education

- DNA Extraction by Hudson-Alpha
- GPS Use in Large-Scale Farming by John Deere
- Careers in Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources by Auburn University
- Careers in the USDA by USDA Rural Development
- Careers Related to Forestry by International Paper
- Organic and Urban Farming, Agricultural Lending by Regions Bank

The list goes on and on, not to mention the over 50 booths that students were allowed to visit and ask questions about anything and everything you can imagine related to agriculture.

One story that stands out within this exceptional countywide project in real-world and project-based learning comes from Speake School, a K-8 school in Danville, Alabama, which is part of the Lawrence County School System.

At Speake School this concept has truly been taken schoolwide. Kindergarten classes are incubating eggs and studying the life cycle of chickens. Second-grade classes have pen pals in Louisiana and share agricultural likes and differences between the two states. Third-grade classes are going through the Junior Master Gardner program and composting in the classroom using vermiculture. The sixth-grade classes created a fall garden and shared the produce with the Senior Citizen Center and will do the same this spring. The sixth, seventh, and eighth graders are building a chicken coop to study the life cycle and care of chickens. A local company is funding the construction of a composter for the entire campus to use for leftovers and scraps from the lunchroom that will in turn be used to enrich the school's fall and spring gardens. From these experiences, students can understand the age-old question of why they need to learn math, science, and all classes we require them to take.

I would challenge each of our local systems to find the defining characteristic that makes them unique and turn it into a thematic unit that involves not only the students and faculty, but parents and our business and industry partners that are ultimately the recipient of our "harvest."

## Final Four Announced for Alabama Teacher Of The Year!

"After a long and detailed process, the final four candidates for the Alabama Teacher of the Year have been chosen from many other outstanding examples of educational leadership in our state. The final four are educators who have given more than just their time and attention; they have given all their energy and expertise to help prepare students for the world," said **State Superintendent of Education Dr. Tommy Bice**.

The next step for the final four is an extensive interview with the state judging committee, followed by the live broadcast awards ceremony, *The 2012 Alabama Stars in Education*, on Wednesday, May 9. The 2012 Alabama Stars in Education event is hosted by the Alabama Department of Education and Alabama Public Television (APT). The broadcast will air at 7 p.m. on local APT stations. The 2012-2013 Alabama Teacher of the Year will be announced at the ceremony.

Alabama's Teacher of the Year spends the majority of the school year serving as the spokesperson for education and the teaching profession as well as presenting workshops to various groups. Alabama's representative is automatically a candidate for the National Teacher of the Year Award.



**Amanda Fox**, Greystone Elementary School, Hoover City, District III

*"Sometimes students remark that my class makes their brains hurt, but the amazing ideas, innovations, projects, and products my students produce help me realize that I am doing the right thing."* A graduate of Samford University and Lesley University in Cambridge,

Massachusetts, Fox has taught at Greystone Elementary since 2005 and was the District Elementary Instructional Technology Specialist for six years prior. She is National Board Certified. "Don't be a teacher" is what she was told due to the hard work, long hours, and low pay, but Fox was inspired from her very first class full of inner-city students with a longing for trust, stability, and a role model being evident in their eyes. Her personal mission statement is to provide students with the opportunity to discover and develop their talents while learning to think at higher levels.



**Meghan Everette**, George Hall Elementary School, Mobile County, District V

*"My greatest accomplishments in teaching aren't reflected in plaques, titles, or shiny awards. My most honored and memorable achievements come from simple day-in and day-out acts that I can reap the rewards of later."* Everette, a Master's degree graduate

of the University of South Alabama and The University of Alabama, has taught in the Mobile County system since 2006. She has been part of numerous school events including Girls Engaged in Math and Science (GEMS). Her hope is to produce well-rounded students with an intrinsic motivation to learn, which gives her immense pride. Everette believes that teachers should take an active role in attracting positive public relations for their schools, districts, and communities to bring every possible advantage to the school.



**Suzanne B. Culbreth**, Spain Park High School, Hoover City, District III

*"The benefit comes not in the concept*

*taught but in the process of learning, which can be applied to life."*

Culbreth is a high school math teacher at Spain Park High School with a Master's degree from the University of Montevallo. She has taught at Spain Park since 2008 and at Oak Mountain High School from 2002-2008. Culbreth considers her greatest contributions to be as a supporter and encourager of fellow and future teachers. She enjoys incorporating technology into her classroom as much as possible. Discovery is the cornerstone of her instruction. She believes students should be engaged in mathematics and should tangibly experience it beyond working a set of problems successfully.



**Karen M. Clem**, Athens High School, Athens City, District VIII

*"I fully believe in developing good work habits and I*

*try to instill those in my students. If I can succeed in this, I know they will reap the rewards for their hard work in future careers..."* Clem has a

Master's degree from The University of Alabama and is National Board Certified. She has taught math at Athens High School since 1989. Her greatest contributions to education are her passion for teaching and enthusiastic methods used to teach math. She works hard at convincing the students that they can be successful in math by leading by example, teaching them different strategies and techniques. She believes building self-confidence builds confidence in math.

## Afterschool Communities: Supporting Students After the Bell Has Rung

Alabama will be joining the ranks of 40 other states across the nation in the formation of Afterschool Community Networks. The driving force behind the various state associations is to build community awareness, formulate policies, and grow support for sustaining high-quality afterschool and expanded learning opportunities for children and youth. Statewide Afterschool Networks do not supply services, but instead provide support and resources to improve policies that champion before/after/summer school programs. They seek to establish partnerships across agencies, communities, and states to advance policies nationwide.

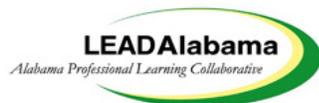
In July 2011 the Afterschool Alliance of Washington, D.C., selected **Ms. Cherry Penn**, the Afterschool Childcare Program Supervisor and 21st Century Grant Programs Manager for Baldwin County Public Schools, as one of 20 individuals across the nation to represent their state as an Afterschool Ambassador. In this role Ms. Penn is spearheading the efforts in Alabama to form an Alabama Afterschool Community Network. The effort is being strongly supported by the Alabama Department of Education, the Truman Pierce Institute of Auburn University, and numerous organizations throughout the state.

To further the process in Alabama, a Steering Committee comprised of individuals with a key interest in supporting before/after/summer school programs has been organized. The Steering Committee members and representatives from various statewide organizations and agencies will be meeting with a representative from the C. S. Mott Foundation. A letter of intent to apply for a Mott Foundation grant, which will help fund the Alabama Afterschool Community Network, has been submitted.

If you are interested in knowing more about these endeavors or wish to be a part of Alabama's ongoing before/after/summer school efforts, please contact Ms. Cherry Penn at [cpenn@bcbe.org](mailto:cpenn@bcbe.org).

### LEADAlabama Announcement

Professional Education Personnel Evaluation (PEPE) Program Central Office, Principal, and Assistant Principal systems will be replaced by LEADAlabama as the online formative evaluation process for central office and building-level administrators in Alabama's schools. All school system administrators who are evaluated with PEPE will be formatively evaluated using the LEADAlabama online process beginning August 1, 2012.



### LEADAlabama Implementation Training

**Target Audience:** LEA Superintendents and Evaluation Coordinators  
Access STI-PD - <https://pdweb.alsde.edu/pdweb/> to attend one of the following sessions

June 18, 2012	June 19, 2012	June 20, 2012	June 21, 2012
Athens Regional In-service Center	University of Montevallo	Auburn Regional In-Service Center	Troy Regional In-Service Center
8:30 AM-12:30 PM	8:30 AM-12:30 PM	8:30 AM-12:30 PM	8:30 AM-12:30 PM
STI-PD#: ATHRIC	STI-PD#: LEAD2012	STI-PD#: EARIC584	STI-PD#: TU20261
<b>LEADAlabama 2012</b>	Max. Session Size: 100	Max. Session Size: 70	Max. Session Size: 100
Max. Session Size: 100			

For more information, contact: Dr. Christopher Blair at (334) 353-0478 or [cblair@alsde.edu](mailto:cblair@alsde.edu)



### “Name the Lander” class visits Space Camp!

Karen McDonald's fourth-grade students from Valley Intermediate School in Pelham claimed their prize for naming the Rocket City Space Pioneers' lander "Spirit of Alabama" in the recent "Name the Lander" Contest. They participated in simulated space missions, rocket building and launching, and realistic astronaut simulators at Space Camp®.



## Alabama Leading Nation to Future Aerospace Success

### "State Pilots America's New Aerospace Curriculum for Secondary Students"

Alabama has become a leader in the aerospace manufacturing and aircraft components industry. If you take a close look at Alabama's rich history, you will find a strong connection to aerospace and engineering success.



In 1910, the Wright Brothers opened the nation's first civilian flying school in Montgomery. The honorable achievements of the famed Tuskegee Airmen during World War II and the Marshall Space Flight Center's service in creating the International Space Station also provide a brief glimpse into our aerospace history.

In 2010, the Alabama Department of Education's Career and Technical Education (CTE) Section and the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) partnered to create our nation's first *Preparation for Tomorrow* (PFT) Aerospace Engineering curriculum for secondary schools to use in preparing students for aerospace technology and engineering careers.

Alabama was one of twelve states selected to participate in this innovative initiative. The PFT Advisory Panel was comprised of top national scientists, university professors, aerospace professionals, and key governmental officials. The first two foundation courses for this program have already been developed, and writing is near completion on the program's final two courses.

PFT is currently being administered and piloted in four high schools:

- **Baldwin County High School** – Baldwin County
- **Booker T. Washington High School** – Macon County
- **Brewbaker Technology Magnet High School** – Montgomery County
- **Foley High School** – Baldwin County

Alabama has distinguished itself as a productive leader in the PFT consortium and will host the *Master Teacher Training Seminar* for the Summer Training Institute for all consortium members. **The Master Teacher Training Seminar is scheduled to take place in Mobile, at the Renaissance Mobile Riverview Plaza Hotel, on May 11-12.**

Currently, Alabama is the only state to successfully start the curriculum "piloting" process – a key part and important final step in fully implementing this program nationwide.

Representatives from Kansas, Kentucky, Ohio, South Carolina, New Jersey, West Virginia, Georgia, Arkansas, Maryland, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, and Oklahoma will be attending the Master Teacher Training Seminar in Mobile.

To learn more about the *Preparation for Tomorrow* Aerospace Engineering Curriculum, contact Alabama CTE Administrator and PFT Project Manager, Craig Collins, at [ccollins@alsde.edu](mailto:ccollins@alsde.edu) or (334) 353-8387.

## Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle!

Hewitt-Trussville High School has a new recycling program, and it is student-initiated! Program sponsor and high school teacher Erin Cornelison said, "I recycled in my classroom last year, and I saw how



some of the kids really enjoyed it. Senior Board president Hannah Riddle helped propel recycling at school."

The Recycle Rally program is a multi-year collaboration between

PepsiCo, Waste Management, and

Keep America Beautiful. The

program aims to

raise awareness of the importance of recycling among students. Mrs. Cornelison said, "The students are responsible for collecting the recyclable items, weighing the bags, and scanning the barcodes to accrue points during their free time before or after school." Through Recycle Rally, the school will accumulate points to compete with other schools across the nation for prizes and money for the school, all while helping to make the planet a cleaner, greener place.

Mrs. Cornelison added, "In the fall we want to recruit more students who



are excited about recycling and are willing to dedicate their time. If this program becomes a success, we hope to expand our collection sites to different areas of the school."



## AWARDS/OPPORTUNITIES

### Alabama Public Television's 2012 Young Heroes

Alabama Public Television established the [Young Heroes Awards](#) in 2001 to honor Alabama students in Grades 9-12 who have excelled in academics, given of themselves through public service, overcome adversity, or inspired others through their deeds and strength of character.

Young Heroes receive scholarships, laptop computers, and other prizes. The Young Heroes Program is made possible through the support of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama, Books-A-Million, Honda, and Publix. From hundreds of nominations, a committee of Alabama business, civic, and education leaders selected the following five students as Alabama Public Television's 2012 Young Heroes:

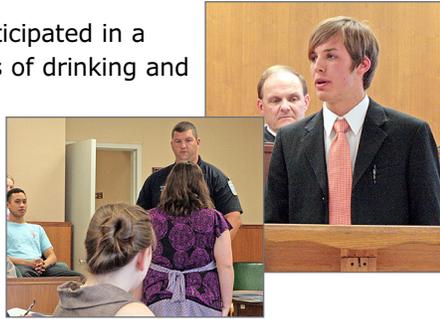
- [Ashley Askins](#), Cherokee High School, Colbert County Schools
- [Karlie Blankenship](#), Lawrence County High School, Lawrence County Schools
- [K.J. Jones](#), Cullman High School, Cullman City Schools
- [Wei Min Patrick](#), Baker High School, Mobile City Schools
- [Michael Tempero](#), J.F. Shields High School, Monroe County Schools

The 2012 APT Young Heroes will be recognized at their schools with an award as part of their senior assemblies, and videos of their personal stories of success over adversity will be shown on APT during the Stars in Education broadcast on May 9.

On May 10 the Alabama State Board of Education will commend these outstanding young people for their accomplishments and their characters and wish them every success in their future endeavors.

### Students Participate in Mock Trial

Guntersville High School seniors participated in a mock trial to learn the consequences of drinking and driving in Sherry Brown's government class. Mitch Floyd, a Marshall County Assistant District Attorney, came to see Mrs. Brown earlier in the year to present the idea of a mock trial in which the students would participate. Hands-on learning experiences of this magnitude are every teacher's dream, but with most schools' budgets, they don't get to become reality. Mitch worked with other District Attorneys, local clubs and organizations, as well as businesses to provide Mrs. Brown's government classes with a unique experience. In the case, a student has a few hypothetical drinks before prom and has a wreck on the way, which kills a motorcyclist. The facts of the trial came from an actual case that was tried by one of the District Attorneys while working in another county. Students researched and portrayed several roles in the trial, including attorneys, jurors, witnesses, journalists, photographers, news anchors, and courtroom sketch artist. District Judge Tim Riley presided over the case. Lieutenant Josh Case, a Guntersville Police Officer, and David Chandler, an EMT, volunteered their time to serve as expert witnesses during the trial.



### *"Championing the power of literacy!"*

Join us for the inaugural stakeholders' kickoff event of the

#### **Alabama Literacy Alliance**

*"building. literacy. connections."*

**Friday, May 11, 2012**

**10:30 am – 1:15 pm**

**Renaissance Montgomery**

The Alabama Literacy Alliance is a new statewide grassroots network of stakeholders designed to help carry out Alabama's literacy plan and build a state where all citizens reach their optimal literacy potential.

**Reservations are required. Space is limited.**

Deadline for registration is May 7<sup>th</sup>. There is no cost to attend .

To register, go to:

[www.literacy-council.org](http://www.literacy-council.org)

**Among our speakers and presenters are:**

Margaret Doughty, founder & CEO of Literacy Powerline – Dr. Stephen Black, Director of the Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility, University of Alabama — Susan Price, Interim Chancellor, Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education – Caroline Novak, President, A+ Education Foundation – Judy Stone, Program Coordinator, Alabama Reading Initiative - Ed Castile, Director, Alabama Industrial Development Training – Bradley Bryne, Attorney/Business Leader – Dr. A.Z. Holloway, Past President, Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics



# CONGRATULATIONS!

## Gwin Elementary School (Hoover City) Third Grade Class Writes and Publishes Book on Tornadoes – “April’s Rampage” Now Available

State Superintendent Tommy Bice congratulated [Mrs. Dark’s third grade class](#) that wrote and published “April’s Rampage,” a historical fiction surrounding the April 27, 2011, tornado event at a ‘Meet the Author’ event recently.

The historical fiction novel surrounds the April 27 tornadoes that swept through Tuscaloosa and other parts of Alabama. During the process, the class interviewed victims of the tornado, volunteers, and meteorologists. They combined the facts they learned to create a wonderful story about the Johnson family.

Dr. Bice met the class on the anniversary of the tragic event at a local Books-a-Million in Tuscaloosa, where they were interviewed by a local TV station.



## Sixth Grade Teachers: Tell your students how they can learn more about Emergency Preparedness and Safety for the Community!

Serve Alabama (Governor’s Office of Faith-Based & Community Initiatives) and the Alabama Department of Homeland Security have announced the 7th Annual Be Ready Camp. This camp provides an opportunity for sixth graders across Alabama to become Youth Preparedness Delegates; receive a commendation from Governor Robert Bentley; and carry the message of preparedness and safety to their schools, communities, and families.

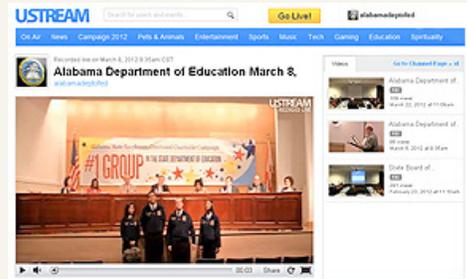
This camp has been featured in international Homeland Security journals and received national media attention, including coverage on the Cable News Network (CNN). Additionally, the camp is considered a best practice by the White House and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Check the flyer for [Be Ready Camp](#) and display it in your classroom if you’d like to participate. Submissions must be received by May 30, and acceptance letters will be mailed after the deadline.

Please contact Marguerite Long, Emergency Preparedness & Outreach Coordinator, Governor's Office of Faith-Based & Community Initiatives, at 334-954-7451 or visit [www.ServeAlabama.gov](http://www.ServeAlabama.gov) for more details.



## State Board of Education Meetings Now 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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