



ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

NEWS AND ISSUES IN ALABAMA PUBLIC EDUCATION, K-12

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2008



National Award-Winning Program Jobs for Alabama's Graduates (JAG) Prepares Students for Success!

Alabama's dropout prevention program focusing on at-risk students receives award for exceeding national goals for the third consecutive year!

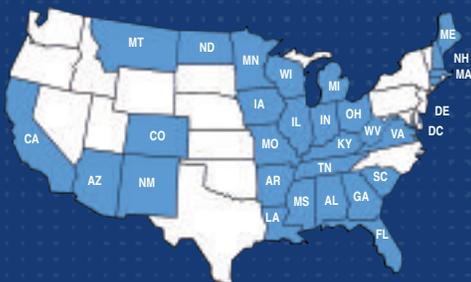
JOB FOR AMERICA'S GRADUATES (JAG), a national program with a vision of "A Nation without Dropouts," recently released its annual report which highlights Alabama as a state surpassing national performance goals in almost every possible challenge. JAG is a school-to-career program for at-risk high school youth focused on keeping young people in school and providing them with school and work-based learning experiences. This will lead to career advancement opportunities or enrollment



in a postsecondary institution after high school. JAG is the nation's largest model for at-risk and disadvantaged young people who receive school-to-career program services.

Alabama, one of 30 states to offer the JAG program, has recently received the prestigious **JAG National 5-of-5 Award** for the third consecutive year. This award is given for successfully exceeding the national goals in the areas of graduation rates, total job placement and military service, total positive outcomes, total full-time placements, and total full-time job placements (full-time placement means placement in some form of post high school program and job placement is specifically full-time employment). *continued on next page ...*

2008-2009 JAG States



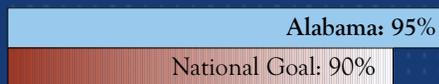
JAG program components include:

- ★ Classroom instruction of 37-81 employability and life skills
- ★ Adult mentoring, guidance/counseling, and tutorial assistance
- ★ Summer employment training
- ★ Link to school and community-based services
- ★ Advisement and support
- ★ Student-led leadership development
- ★ Job and postsecondary education placement services
- ★ 12-month follow-up services
- ★ Accountability system

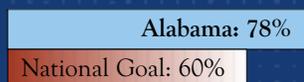


Alabama's outcomes compared to the national goals:

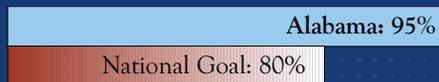
GRADUATION RATE



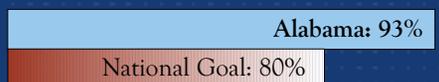
TOTAL JOB PLACEMENT & MILITARY SERVICE



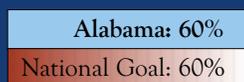
TOTAL POSITIVE OUTCOMES



TOTAL FULL-TIME PLACEMENTS



TOTAL FULL-TIME JOBS



Jobs for Alabama's Graduates

continued from front ...

Recently, Alabama has seen a concerted effort to address one of America's biggest problems in education – high school dropouts. STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOE MORTON and the Alabama State Board of Education have set in place several programs aimed at supporting academic and social issues that contribute to students dropping out. The First Choice diploma option and supporting programs offer creative alternatives such as Credit Recovery and Credit Advancement to help students navigate through school efficiently. Also, graduation coaches who focus on the progress of at-risk students and the Preparing Alabama Students for Success (PASS) program are broad based initiatives meant to discourage high school dropouts.

Alabama JAG students Jessica Robertson and Lauren Morris help preschool Xander Argiro make a "get well" card for his mother. Alabama JAG students collectively volunteered more than 21,000 hours to community service projects last year.



The JAG program is one of the most effective state programs serving at-risk students, is available in 19 school systems statewide, and serves as yet another deterrent for students who consider dropping out of school.

Morton said there is no 'one size fits all' solution to the very serious problem of high school dropouts, and every possible solution must be utilized. "JAG identifies students who have a propensity to drop out of school and gives them something to believe in – something to work toward. It adds value and meaning to many students who probably feel disenfranchised and discouraged in school," Morton said.

"Our teachers believe that making a genuine investment in our state's students is the most important responsibility that we could ever have," says state JAG Program Manager MANDY NICHOLS. "Receiving this award is wonderful, but we know that we must continue to work hard each day to positively impact the lives of Alabama's most at-risk students; those in danger of failing, dropping out, or becoming unemployed after leaving school. Failure is simply not an option for this program because the futures of these students and our state are depending on its success."

In addition to obtaining the national goals, 66% of all seniors are enrolled in further education courses. Forty-five percent (45%) of these students had one or both parents who never finished high school.

For more information, [CLICK HERE](#) or call Mandy Nichols, State Department of Education, at 334-353-1545.



Jobs for Alabama's Graduates was recognized this year as the highest achieving of all 30 states who offer JAG!



Montgomery Teacher Wins “Education Oscar”



*Stephanie Glover
2008 Milken Educator
Award Winner*

ON A RAINY WEDNESDAY MORNING in October, teachers and administrators at T.S. Morris Elementary School in Montgomery shuffled students down the hall, toward the cafeteria as they prepared for a presentation from top state officials. Teachers marched students in single file lines to take their seats as staff attended to elected officials, local and state board of education members, and seated department staff for what they thought was recognition of the school’s stellar academic performance last school year.

Although T.S. Morris’ scholastic accomplishments were outstanding last year and deserved praise – in fact, that was not why STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOE MORTON was visiting the school. Unbeknownst to the teachers, staff, and even the principal, a major nationally-known award was about to be bestowed upon an individual who the Milken Family Foundation has deemed one of the best teachers in the state.

As DR. JANE FOLEY, senior vice president of Milken Educator Awards made comments about how teachers deserved recognition just like actors and other celebrities, the tension mounted. Soon Dr. Morton, with the assistance of student helpers, revealed that the prestigious Milken National Educator Award, complete with an unrestricted \$25,000 prize, would be awarded to one lucky, but well-deserving teacher. That unsuspecting teacher was STEPHANIE GLOVER, a math teacher who was instrumental in helping to organize the event but had no idea it would be in her honor. A shocked Glover reacted with surprise and tears to the announcement that she was being singled out by the Milken Family Foundation as Alabama’s 2008 Milken Award recipient.

An emotional Glover thanked T.S. Morris Elementary principal SOPHIA JOHNSON. “She’s the leader. She sets the tone for all of us to carry out. I also thank the staff, reading coaches, teachers, lunchroom workers,

custodians – as hard as I work, you work just as hard and ever harder. I also thank the students. They are why we do this every day. All of you – your hard work is what has made this possible. You see, we’ve made a name for ourselves, not just in the city but throughout the state. I am just so thankful!”

The event was part of the Milken Family Foundation’s 22nd annual National Notifications Tour, honoring more than 80 outstanding educators as 2008 Milken Educator Award recipients.

Johnson said Glover is deserving of this recognition as she is a hard worker and a strong part of her team of teachers. “Mrs. Glover displays excellent character traits when working with the staff at Morris. Her honesty, fairness, attitude, and dedicated work ethic provide mentoring qualifications to Morris,” Johnson said. “Mrs. Glover truly cares for all of the students at Morris because she seizes opportunities to enhance lessons, work with individual students, and conduct after-school tutoring sessions and Saturday programs.”

Glover received an unrestricted \$25,000 financial reward and an all-expense-paid trip to the annual Milken National Education Conference in California next year. Glover is Alabama’s only 2008 Milken Educator Award recipient. As such, Dr. Morton said Glover stands as a shining example of what is possible and expected of Alabama teachers.

“Mrs. Glover exemplifies what being a professional educator is all about. She meets the needs of her students and goes the extra mile to do what needs to be done for her students to learn,” Morton said. “She is an ideal model of what’s right in Alabama education. Teachers like Mrs. Glover are essential to molding and shaping, not only the minds, but the character of our students. She serves as a role model for students and teachers, greatly impacting the lives around her.”

For more information on the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Awards, [CLICK HERE](#) or visit the [Alabama Department of Education’s Web site](#). Photos courtesy of Lloyd Gallman, Montgomery Advertiser. ●



Stephanie Glover (center) receives the prestigious Milken National Educator Award.

ALEX Takes National “Best of the Web” Honors



THE ALABAMA LEARNING EXCHANGE (ALEX) has, for the second year in a row, won a national Digital Education Achievement Award sponsored by the Center for Digital Education for “Best of the Web” 2008. The e.Republic’s Center for Digital Education and Converge magazine recently announced winners of these highly-coveted awards which showcase exceptional education Web sites, projects, and programs across the nation. The awards recognize educators, students, parents, and volunteers who are creating meaningful education experiences for students using digital technology.

MARINA LEIGHT, vice president of the Center, said, “We had an impressive field of applications this year. Education leaders along with students, parents, and teachers in Alabama are making the Web an exciting place with all kinds of innovation. This year’s winners, which includes the Alabama Learning Exchange, represent an outstanding showcase of great ideas.”

DR. TOMMY BICE, Alabama’s Deputy State Superintendent of Education for Instructional Services, states, “We are so pleased that especially during these tough economic times, ALEX can offer at no charge to school districts the very ‘Best of the Web,’ while also providing 21st Century educational resources to prepare Alabama’s students for their futures, regardless of their selected vocation, or where they reside. My vision for the ALEX portal is to offer free video podcasts and Alabama-produced resources geared to the 21st Century classroom and aligned to some of the highest academic standards in the nation. ALEX is a resource that I am committed to provide for every teacher, student, and parent. All Alabamians deserve the “Best of the Web!”

Created by Technology Initiatives, Alabama Department of Education (SDE), and hosted by the Alabama Supercomputer Authority (ASA), ALEX provides a one-stop, high-quality, free resource for educators, parents, and students to support teaching, learning, and leading. ALEX underwent a Web 2.0 transformation in 2007, complete with redesign and increased functionality.

ALEX also supports leading state programs such as the Alabama Reading Initiative, Leadership Development, Library Media, English Language Learners, and Special Education by providing web space for these initiatives. “To our knowledge, no other state offers these services at no cost to its teachers. We are pleased to support this award-winning portal,” says RANDY FULMER, ASA Chief Executive Officer. Since its inception, ASA has provided web development and hosting services for ALEX.

Another feature that the awards highlighted was the capability of Alabama’s educators to create their own free Web sites on ALEX. This feature enables teachers to improve communication and student achievement by posting homework assignments, calendars, wikis, blogs, RSS feeds, podcasts, and videos to their Web sites. Teachers report that their students’ parents are thrilled that they can access their child’s teacher’s Web Site and see what they are working on at school so they can better help their child at home. District Technology Coordinators interested in setting up free Web Sites for their teachers should contact ALEX Technology Specialist [KEITH GEORGE](#).

The resources hosted on ALEX, derived from Alabama’s partner Thinkfinity.org, are provided by an impressive array of highly-esteemed organizations, such as: The Kennedy Center for Performing Arts, the National Geographic Society, International Reading Association, National Association for the Teachers of English, National Council on the Teachers of Mathematics, American Association for the Advancement of Science, National Council on Economics Education, Smithsonian National Museum of American History, the Literacy Network, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

ALEX offers a unique service that other Web portal projects rarely provide – training. By partnering with Thinkfinity.org to provide the necessary materials and training for Alabama’s K-12 educators and Teacher Preparation faculty, ALEX recruits Alabama’s leading instructional technology teachers and Technology in Motion trainers. In 2008, 20 distinguished educators received their A.C.E. (ALEX Certification of Excellence) credentials by successfully completing four days of intensive 21st Century training. Districts interested in receiving this training or learning more about ALEX should e-mail [DR. SHANNON PARKS](#), the ALEX and Thinkfinity Program State Administrator or call 334-353-1388. ●

If You Were a Child in Your Classroom, Would You Want to Come to School?



WE ARE GOING TO START TODAY WITH A POP QUIZ.

Question 1 - Who were the 2000, 2001, 2002 Oscar winners for best actress? **Question 2** - Who were the top three persons on Forbes' list of billionaires? **Question 3** - Who were the last three winners of the Miss America pageant? How many questions could you answer? Now, let's try a different quiz. **Question 1** - Who were the three teachers that most impacted your life? **Question 2** - Who are three friends that helped you through tough times? **Question 3** - Name three coworkers who have helped you the most. These questions were much easier, weren't they? The point is not that the people who receive important awards and accolades are not important, but rather they don't seem to have the same impact on our lives. It is rarely the famous name, the most powerful, or the most recognized that directly touch our lives. It is something to remember as we interact with our coworkers and our students each day. Every day we can make a difference.

Teaching can be a challenging job. In the course of a day, we are called on to be mother, father, disciplinarian, nurse, counselor, keeper of the peace - just to name a few of our job titles. Every day, millions of teachers walk into rooms across the country to teach. We are teacher-parents. In the course of a year, we will spend over 1,000 hours with our children and experience the full range of emotions associated with parenting. We will demand, cajole, nudge, rejoice, celebrate, despair, weep, laugh, sermonize, and express anger. We will experience all the emotions of a parent who may only have one child. In our case, we will have 20-30. Why, then, did we become teachers?

Teachers may give many reasons why they chose a career in education. My reason is probably a little different from most. I was a learning disabled child. My earliest memories of school involve being struck on the hand with a ruler because I couldn't do my work and having all my friends laugh at me. Starting school at a time before kindergarten was offered, my parents had done their best to prepare me for first grade. They read to me every night, and, in fact, I could repeat word-for-word many of the books my teachers read in class. When it came to me actually sounding out the words, however, I was completely lost. After coming dangerously close to repeating first grade, I was placed in Title I classes. I can remember Mrs. Richardson, the Title I teacher, playing games with me. Of course, now I know those "games" were

actually teaching me to read. Slowly, but surely, I began to catch up with my peers. By fourth grade, I was above grade level in reading.

My first year in college, I had to write about a teacher who made a difference in my life. I wrote about Mrs. Richardson. I began to realize that without her teaching me to read, I would have been lost. You hear about people having great "epiphanies" - well, this was one of mine. I realized I could make a difference in children's lives. I swore if I could become a teacher, my classroom would be a safe place where every child felt smart. I can reach them in ways some teachers may not be able to. I begin every year by reading Thank You, Mr. Falker, the true story of Patricia Polacco, a learning disabled child, to my students.

*Don't label a child as "slow" or a "problem"
- look at your students as though they are all brilliant.*

I then share with them my story. They are amazed to hear that I had learning challenges just like some of them. They begin to believe if their teacher can overcome these challenges, then so can they. What have I learned from my students? I will tell you the single most important lesson they have taught me - "You will never be able to reach a child's brain, if you haven't touched their heart!" When a child believes you truly care about them, they will work their heart out for you! And remember, what is done to a child, they will do to society! Countless times you are the only salvation these children have! By the time they reach us, too often, they have already been labeled - smart, dumb, discipline problem, slow. Children learn from us how to live up to, and become the labels we put on them.

I have a very simple philosophy of education. It is actually a simple question I ask myself at the end of each and every day - "If I had been a child in my classroom today, would I want to come back to school tomorrow?" As long as I can keep answering "Yes" to that question, I know I am being an effective teacher!



Regina Everett is the 2008-09 Alabama Elementary Teacher of the Year. She teaches at Saraland Elementary in the Mobile County School System.

Rainy Day Fund Amendment Passes

ON NOVEMBER 4, 2008, Alabama voters made a sound decision in passing Amendment 1 (the Rainy Day Fund Amendment) in support of Alabama public schools. Passage of this amendment does not increase any tax, does not cut jobs, nor does it adversely affect any school system's individual savings. This amendment changes the verbiage of the existing Rainy Day Fund Amendment to increase the amount of funds available to be borrowed from the Alabama Trust Fund allowing school systems to continue funding vital programs and provide job security for Alabama teachers.

The vote, supported by 57% of Alabama voters, is a testament to the public's concern for the future of public schools. STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOE MORTON said the passage of the amendment speaks volumes about the level of concern that the general public has for making sure that quality education continues to take place in Alabama classroom.

"The people of Alabama have spoken and have soundly supported Alabama public schools. Of course, this amendment is not a solution to all of our education problems. Alabama, like all states, has a long way to go to make sure all our schools meet the needs of all our students. But we're heading in the right direction. The passage of this amendment helps us continue to move in the right direction," Morton said. "Our schools are performing at their highest academic levels ever. Alabama students are participating in Advanced Placement classes at three times the national average. Our fourth-grade reading tops the nation, and our fourth- and eighth-grade mathematics achievement are twice the national average. We are heading in the right direction - we can't turn back now."

The original amendment capped the amount of money that could be borrowed from the Alabama Trust Fund at 6% of the 2002 education budget. Amendment 1 changed that cap, making 6.5% of the previous year's adopted education budget available to be borrowed. This adjustment in wording gives the State of Alabama the ability to level out cuts during the length of the proration period instead of forcing school systems to make damaging cuts all in one year.

Thanks to the voters and those who care so much about the quality of education in Alabama, this amendment allows education officials to be good stewards of the funds needed. It also provides strong accountability, as the funds must be paid back within six years. ●



TO KEEP KIDS IN
SCHOOL,
MAKE SURE THEY
GET ON THE **BUS.**



The Choice Bus is the newest tool in The Mattie C. Stewart Foundation's fight against America's dropout epidemic. Inspired by the Foundation's own acclaimed documentary *InsideOut*, the front half of the bus contains a classroom - the back, an exact replica of a prison cell. Students get to experience firsthand the effects of not staying in school, which is often a life wasted away in the confines of a prison cell.

To learn more about how you can support the efforts of The Mattie C. Stewart Foundation or schedule *The Choice Bus* in your community, call 205-949-9494 or visit www.mattiecstewart.org.

THE
MATTIE C. STEWART
FOUNDATION

“State of Our Schools” Offers Insight on Education Issues

ANNUALLY, STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOE MORTON makes an address to the public through the Alabama Public Television (APT) hosted show entitled “State of Our Schools.” Morton uses this platform as an opportunity to speak on issues concerning education in the state and take questions via telephone and e-mail from the listening public. This year’s State of Our Schools address was hosted by APT personality KEN LASS and aired live on Thursday, October 23, 2008.

During this hour-long conversation with the public, Morton discussed the economy of education, programs and policies that are showing promise in Alabama schools, graduation and drop-out rates, the influx of non- and limited-English speaking families, ACCESS distance learning, character education, highly qualified teachers, the State Board approved Education Ruler, and more.

The program was broadcast 12 days before Amendment 1 was passed by the people of Alabama. At the time, Morton discussed the major economic concern of making sure school systems had the financial ability to preserve initiatives that work and retain quality teachers. If Amendment 1 would not have passed, school systems would have been left on their own to borrow money to pay teachers and provide for other necessary expenses.

APT interviewed parents prior to the taping of the show and played videotaped questions from parents for Morton to answer. Parent concerns ranged from the amount of testing students currently take in school to the national graduation rate phenomenon. Concerning increased testing measures, Morton said a lot of the testing done in all schools nationwide is the fulfillment of what is required by federal *No Child Left Behind* mandates. He agreed that there is an increased emphasis on testing, but that it is essential to making sure schools are accountable for teaching and students are accountable for learning.

Morton addressed the national issue of increasing high school graduation rates and decreasing the amount of high school dropouts in Alabama. Although this is an

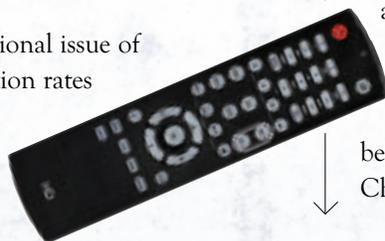


issue that every state struggles with, Morton outlined the plans being laid out in Alabama to get students into high school on a learning level that prepares them for success, keeps students in high school, and has them graduating on time with a degree “worth more than any other in the history of the state.” Thanks to many schools that have already implemented the First Choice diploma option and other components designed to help students finish high school efficiently (such as Credit Recovery, Credit Advancement, Academic Flexibility, and Graduation Coaches) positive results are already being seen. Morton said the results from the schools that have piloted First Choice are good. He said students are being encouraged and the new policies are helping students catch up to their peers and stay in school.

The success of programs such as the Alabama Reading Initiative, the Alabama Math Science and Technology Initiative, and ACCESS Distance learning were addressed as areas of incredible progress. Morton attributes the creation of these programs to the consistent increase Alabama has been experiencing in national assessments.

With immigration being a major topic both politically and educationally, Morton said some Alabama schools are seeing a sharp rise in the number of students who either do not speak or speak limited English and strides are being made to address the issue – but there’s more work to do. While there is a limited number of English Language Learning (ELL) teachers available and the expectations for ELL students to be able to pass federally mandated standardized testing after one year are stringent, Morton said the onus remains on Alabama teachers to do the best job possible under the circumstances. “Our obligation is to educate these children as they come to the door,” Morton said. “Federal law mandates that ELL students take the same tests as native-born students, even in their first year. Maybe this is something that will be reconsidered by Congress with the *No Child Left Behind* reauthorization.”

The importance of character education was also touched upon as an essential part of the overall goal of schools and as mentioned in what is considered the blueprint educational progress in Alabama – the Alabama Education Ruler. Morton said this one-page document stands as the creed by which the state’s objectives will be achieved: Safe and Disciplined Schools, Quality Teachers, Challenging Curricula, and Effective School Leaders. ●



GOOD NEWS

in Alabama Schools

APT, AMSTI Partner To Develop Middle School Math Educational Content

AS ALABAMA GAINS STATURE in the world marketplace by spawning and attracting companies such as Mercedes-Benz, Evonic DeGussa, ThyssenKrupp, Boeing, and Southern Research, it needs to ensure that it can provide a quality workforce for the future as well as provide the quality jobs that will keep the talent in state.

To help make Alabama the force it needs to be for years to come, Alabama Public Television (APT) and AMSTI (Alabama Mathematics, Science and Technology Initiative) have formed a partnership to develop and distribute original online middle school mathematics content to educators throughout Alabama. The program will be piloted in select AMSTI classrooms in January 2009.

APT has formed a taskforce of AMSTI-trained math and science educators from around the state who will serve as content developers for the project. They will work with APT's Education Department to create original, online content that can be accessed by teachers, parents, and students through APTPLUS™,

the network's free multi-media online resource. The math content

developed will focus on proportional reasoning for 8th grade students and may include video clips, flash animations, lesson plans, and interactive elements.

The partnership is made possible by a grant to APT from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). The two-year grant will focus on math, but with local support could be extended to develop into a long-term initiative that can later address the science, technology and engineering needs of Alabama students. While CPB's grant allows APT to determine strategies and begin addressing needs specific to Alabama, it also allows collaboration and sharing of content across the education departments of public broadcasting networks in Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, and Maryland.



Dr. Suzanne Freeman Named Alabama's 2009 Superintendent of the Year

THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS OF ALABAMA (SSA) and Classworks, an SSA Premium Business Member, recently named Dr. Suzanne Freeman as Alabama/Classworks 2009 Superintendent of the Year. Freeman has served since 2004 as the first superintendent in the newly formed Trussville City School System after having served as superintendent in Cullman City Schools for four years.



Freeman was selected from nine finalists throughout the state, each of whom is an outstanding superintendent. Freeman will be honored at the Superintendent of the Year Luncheon on February 3, 2009, held during SSA's Legislative Conference in Montgomery. Classworks will provide Freeman with a Superintendent of the Year ring and travel expenses to the AASA National Conference on Education, to be held February 19-21, 2009 in San Francisco, CA. At the national conference, Freeman will represent Alabama and receive a bronze medallion with the Superintendent of the Year emblem and a plaque from the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), SSA's national affiliate and national sponsor of this program.

Each state's winner will be recognized during the National Conference on Education where the national winner for 2009 will be announced. Nominations for the award were submitted from the nine districts of the School Superintendents of Alabama membership to a committee of educators and representatives of education. Prior to serving as superintendent in Cullman City Schools, Freeman served as assistant superintendent in Auburn City Schools for three years and as principal for five years. She began her career in education as a teacher in the Opelika City School System in 1986. She holds a Doctorate of Philosophy and a Master of Education from Auburn University, and her Bachelor of Arts from Asbury College.

"Dr. Freeman has created a leadership team and worked collaboratively both within the system and within the community to create an urgency to improve the educational opportunities for children. This would be a daunting task for many, but for Dr. Freeman it was energizing and stimulating. She unleashed her innovative and creative abilities to empower her leaders and staff, to integrate technologies and technology tools throughout the system, and to continually look for improved opportunities for learning at all levels," stated DR. SUSAN LOCKWOOD, SSA Executive Director.

Alabama's Education Efforts Featured in National Publication

INNOVATIONS IN ALABAMA were featured in the September issue of *Techniques*, a national magazine that examines trends in America's career and technical education programs.

In this article, readers have a chance to take a closer look at Alabama, as well as Texas, as they begin to implement statewide "career clusters" models. This new concept, which is gaining widespread support in school systems across the country, divides all of the nation's occupations into 16 distinct groups or "clusters." By grouping jobs with similar knowledge and skill requirements into categories and career pathways, educators have a more focused method of helping students decide which careers and postsecondary learning opportunities they want to pursue. This article, which is titled "Career Clusters; Implementation in the States," also discusses Alabama's CTE Futures Framework, and secondary and postsecondary articulation agreements.

In February, the State Board of Education approved a new career and technical education course of study that includes a 16 career clusters model, with 49 individual career pathways that all end with students receiving business and industry-recognized credentials. Alabama's 16 career

clusters are: Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources; Architecture and Construction; Arts, Audio/Video Technology, and Communications; Business, Management, and Administration; Education and Training; Finance; Government and Public Administration; Health Science; Hospitality and Tourism; Human Services; Information Technology; Law, Public Safety, Corrections and Security; Manufacturing; Marketing, Sales and Service; Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics; and Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics.

The *Techniques* magazine is an award winning monthly publication produced by the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE). This organization is one of America's largest associations dedicated to the advancement of education opportunities that prepare students for career success. To review a copy of this article, [CLICK HERE](#). Also, to learn more about other on-going efforts to establish the career cluster concept nationwide, visit the State's Career Clusters Initiative [HERE](#).

Approximately 100,000 readers nationwide read Techniques each month.



Counseling Programs Get Statewide Recognition

THREE SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAMS in Alabama were all the 'rave', as they were recently recognized by the Alabama School Counselor Association (ALSCA) in receiving the Recognition of Accountability, Verification, and Excellence (RAVE) award. DIANNE THOMPSON-MCDONALD of Vestavia Hills Elementary School (Vestavia Hills School System) and JUDY STOPPELBEIN of Vestavia Hill Elementary School - Liberty Park (Vestavia Hills School System) were informed that their school counseling programs were selected to receive the RAVE Silver award for the second consecutive year. MS. REBECCA MURRAY and MS. LETICIA VARNER, both of Jonesboro Elementary School (Bessemer City School System) were informed that their school counseling program was selected to receive the RAVE Bronze award.

The RAVE is awarded for state-level recognition of exemplary implementation of the Comprehensive Counseling and Guidance Model for Alabama public schools, which is directly aligned with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Standards. RAVE is a continuous improvement document that provides a school counseling program an opportunity to demonstrate effective communication and a commitment to implementing an outcome-based, data-driven program. Each school counseling program will be honored at the Alabama Counseling Association (ALCA) Annual Fall Conference luncheon in Huntsville on November 20.



Calling All Teachers of Girls in Math and Science!

WHEN IT COMES TO CREATING engaging 21st Century science, math, and technology K-12 classrooms, Alabama is par with the country – unfortunately. The current research for girls’ choice regarding math and science courses shows a significant decrease in motivation and a negative perception in comparison with boys in math and science.

However, due to an innovative project spearheaded at the University of Alabama at Birmingham by **DR. MELANIE SHORES**, Project Investigator for the Girls Engaged in Math and Science (GEMS) Project, this is all about to change. The project needs all science and math “hands on deck” as 100 girls (along with their teacher sponsors) will be selected to participate in an exhibition to be held at the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex (BJCC) on December 5, 2008.

“By the time my daughter enters a classroom, I want teachers across Alabama to be aware of the differences in the ways that female and male students learn in the areas of math and science,” Shores said. GEMS is a program designed to give Alabama teachers the tools they needed to address the issue of lower female student interest in math and science in K-12 classrooms. With funding from The Malone Family Foundation and support from the Alabama Learning Exchange (ALEX), the GEMS project started out with the goal of gathering 50 teachers from across the state to create 250 exemplary lesson plans that focused on specific methods of instructing female students.



In July of 2008, 50 Master teachers, including AMSTI teachers, Presidential Awardees, etc., (selected by the GEMS team at UAB following an intensive application process), met on campus for a week-long work session, during which they worked hard to create model lesson plans that would emphasize the various ways girls learn. At the end of the week the teachers exceeded the original goal, and the lesson plans were uploaded to the Alabama Learning Exchange, where they are now hosted by the Alabama Supercomputer Authority. The plans range in topic and grade level, and are available to teachers all across the state and country. To locate these plans, [CLICK HERE](#), search, and then type in “GEMS” in the search box.

After lesson plans were uploaded to ALEX, the next step was to see how female students responded to the lesson plans, so in August, 100 girls from Girls, Inc. and Girl Scouts gathered at UAB for the GEMS Implementation Day. Distinguished teachers from the original group of 50 came to teach their best lessons created in July. The girls had two sessions – one in math and one in science, and then were surveyed on their experience.

When asked if they were now more interested in learning about math and science, on average 47% of girls said that they did have a heightened interest.

The culmination of the GEMS project will be a grand exhibition at the BJCC on December 5th of math and science projects presented by female students under the supervision of a teacher, who has used a GEMS-approved lesson plan.

Applications are currently being accepted from teacher-sponsors for this event. To learn more about the project, or to access the online application, [CLICK HERE](#). If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Melanie Shores at mshores@uab.edu or Ms. SONYA HARDY at lekeesha@uab.edu. All sponsors will receive a stipend, and the girls will be treated to a luncheon. Help a girl you know become part of GEMS today, and increase girls’ participation in math, science,

and technology in Alabama, and give them every chance to succeed in the 21st Century world!

Contact SHANNON PARKS for information or for questions about this article at 334-353-1388 or sparks@alsde.edu. For GEMS Project contact Dr. Melanie Shores at mshores@uab.edu.



Awards, Opportunities, and Professional Development

The 2009 Toyota Family Literacy Teacher of the Year will receive a \$7,500 award for his or her program and a trip to the 18th annual National Conference on Family Literacy in Orlando, FL, for recognition during the Opening General Session. For complete information, [CLICK HERE](#). **DEADLINE: December 5, 2008**

Letters About Literature is a national reading and writing program for children and young adult readers in Grades 4-12. Students write a personal letter to an author, living or dead, explaining how that author's work changed the student's way of thinking about the world. For complete information, [CLICK HERE](#) **DEADLINE: December 6, 2008**

The National Teacher Hall of Fame is accepting nominations. Five of the nation's most outstanding teachers are inducted annually and honored with permanent recognition in The National Teachers Hall of Fame museum. For complete information, [CLICK HERE](#). **DEADLINE: January 2, 2009**

4th Annual Reaching At-Promise Students National Conference is February 20-22, 2009 in San Diego, CA. For complete information, call 1-800-871-7482, [CLICK HERE](#) or e-mail info@rapssa.org. **REGISTRATION DEADLINE: January 9, 2009**

J. Craig and Page T. Smith Scholarship Foundation is a program that supports 50 first-generation students at Alabama colleges and universities. For complete information, [CLICK HERE](#). **DEADLINE: January 15, 2009**

The 2009-2010 Alabama Teacher of the Year application is online. For complete information, [CLICK HERE](#) contact Ann Starks at 334-242-9700 or astarks@alsde.edu. **DEADLINE: January 26, 2009**

Alabama Schools Get Christmas Bonus

IN DECEMBER 2008, GOV. BOB RILEY and other State Board of Education members, along with STATE SUPERINTENDENT DR. JOE MORTON and Deputy Superintendents DR. TOMMY BICE and DR. EDDIE JOHNSON will present over \$3.5 million (State funds: \$2,467,250 and Federal funds: \$1,048,804) in Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) rewards to more than 200 schools for their academic progress.

Schools are selected based on 2007-08 assessment data. AYP reward recipients may receive multiple rewards in multiple categories and subgroups. The varying amounts schools will receive are based on the categories below.

ADVANCING THE CHALLENGE – School where percent of all students scoring advanced in reading and math exceeded state percent scoring advanced. (School must have at least an 80% poverty rate or at least 90% of students scoring in Level IV in both reading and math.)

MEETING THE CHALLENGE – School that met AYP for two consecutive years. (School must have at least an 80% poverty rate.)

EXCEEDING THE CHALLENGE – School with subgroup whose percent of students scoring proficient in reading and math exceeded its state counterpart. (School will receive a monetary reward for each subgroup.)

ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGE – School with subgroup that closed the achievement gap in percent of students scoring proficient in reading and math by at least 15% when compared to its state counterpart. (School will receive a monetary reward for each subgroup.)

TORCHBEARER SCHOOL – High-poverty/high-performing school that meets multiple criteria.

Alfa Teachers of the Month

NOVEMBER



The Alfa Teacher of the Month for November is **GAYLE HOLLADAY**, a sixth-grade mathematics teacher at Opelika Middle School. Ms. Holladay incorporates several techniques to meet all her students' learning styles.

"Using technological and hands-on approaches, cooperative learning, and discourse gives all my students the opportunity to succeed," Holladay said. "In my classroom, the focus is on the how-and-why process – not just the correct answer."

As this month's winner, she will receive \$1,000 from Alfa Insurance, and her school will receive a matching award from the Alabama Farmers Federation.

Holladay, who holds a master's of science from Troy State University, believes knowledge can be taken back to the foundations built in previous grades. "Learning makes more sense and is easier to remember and apply when it is connected to what students already know," she said. Holladay says the most important part of her lessons is at the beginning, when motivation occurs.

"If I can connect, entice and motivate my students' interest, then exploring and guiding their learning is meaningful, and understanding is accomplished," Holladay said. Holladay is also the district leader and presenter for the TEAM Math Initiative (Transforming East Alabama Mathematics) where she helps other teachers find ways to get the best out of their students. **MARSHA TEEL**, a fellow sixth-grade teacher at Opelika Middle School, says Holladay "makes learning fun for her students as well as the teachers she instructs."

DECEMBER



KERA MIDDLETON, library media specialist at Tanner Williams Elementary School in the Mobile County School System, has been selected as the Alfa Teacher of the Month for December. Middleton organized and prepared a summer reading program for her students.

Middleton, who holds a master's from the University of South Alabama, says she wants the information she gives her students to "come alive" so they can become an involved part of the learning process.

"I provide lessons that teach the required curriculum by applying skills and objectives in various subject areas through integration," Middleton said. "Through these types of lessons, students are engaged to the point that they are not even aware of the learning that is taking place."

Last year, Middleton changed the way her school participated in the accelerated reading program by training the faculty and staff to challenge and encourage every child at the school.

She also started the Tanner Williams Millionaire's Club to recognize students who read over one million words in the school year.

Students were sent formal invitations for this "red carpet" event, and boys wore donated tuxedos while girls were treated to a hair and make-up session. Students then attended a candlelight reception with their families in the media center.

DEBORAH HESS, principal of Tanner Williams, says "Mrs. Middleton not only teaches, but knows the name and personality of every child in the school."

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



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OCTOBER BOARD BRIEFS

- ✦ Resolution Commending Dr. Shelley Stewart and The Mattie C. Stewart Foundation InsideOut Program
- ✦ Resolution in Honor of Ray Landers, Boaz Middle School, Boaz City School System, 2009 MetLife/NASSP National Middle Level Principal of the Year
- ✦ Resolution in Recognition of George Hall Elementary School, Mobile County School System; Wright's Mill Road Elementary School, Auburn City School System; Demopolis High School, Demopolis City School System; Spain Park High School, Hoover City School System; Leon Sheffield Magnet Elementary School, Decatur City School System, as 2008 *No Child Left Behind*-Blue Ribbon Schools.

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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