



ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

NEWS AND ISSUES IN ALABAMA PUBLIC EDUCATION, K-12

OCTOBER 2009



TIPS TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE H1N1 VIRUS

Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with a flu-like illness, the CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. Keep away from others as much as possible to keep from making them sick.
- Be prepared in case you get sick and need to stay home for a week or so; a supply of over-the-counter medicines, alcohol-based hand rubs, tissues, and other related items could be useful and help avoid the need to make trips out in public while you are sick and contagious.

H1N1 an Unwelcome Visitor in Alabama Public Schools

WHEN STUDENTS AND TEACHERS entered Alabama's schools to begin the 2009-2010 school year, the H1N1 virus walked in the door with them. With absentee rates higher than normal at schools, education officials in partnership with the Alabama Department of Public Health have consistently briefed the public on ways to help curb the outbreak. In two televised joint press conferences, STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOE MORTON and STATE HEALTH OFFICER OF THE ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH DONALD WILLIAMSON gave updates on the spread of the disease and reinforced the precautions that should be taken by schools and households to decrease the spread of the H1N1 virus.

Morton emphasized the importance of both state agencies addressing this issue as a unified front. "We are working together each day to make sure that we are on the same heartbeat with how we handle this disease," Morton said. "It will

"Our collaboration with the Alabama Department of Public Health in dealing with this issue has been superb."

— JOE MORTON
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

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IN CHILDREN, EMERGENCY WARNING SIGNS THAT NEED URGENT MEDICAL ATTENTION INCLUDE:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

IN ADULTS, EMERGENCY WARNING SIGNS THAT NEED URGENT MEDICAL ATTENTION INCLUDE:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

take full cooperation between our two state agencies. That has been the case, and it has been a great collaboration in dealing with this issue.”

Concerning keeping children healthy, suggestions such as additional sanitation of desks, chairs, and railings touched by students were made. Tips were also given to help protect students and school personnel such as covering the nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing, coughing in the sleeve, and avoiding close contact with people showing flu-like symptoms. This season, because of the predominant presence of the H1N1 virus, Williamson said all identified flu cases are assumed to be H1N1.

“We are still seeing almost nothing except H1N1. It is well over 99% of all the circulating viruses that we’re identifying,” Williamson said. “We have seen a dramatic increase in the number of flu-like illnesses grow from less than 1% on the 25th of July, to almost 8% on the 27th of



August.” He said it is possible that Alabama will experience a large part of the H1N1 virus before the vaccines are available in large measures. Because of that, individuals are largely responsible for controlling the initial phases of the disease through personal protection.

“Wash your hands, cover your cough, do not send sick children to school, don’t go to work if you’re sick – these are going to be critical issues if we’re going to get through this and minimize the number of people who become ill before a vaccine is available,” Williamson said. “If sick children can stay home, schools can stay open.”

With this being the case, absenteeism in schools is a major concern; however, by early September, there were relatively few schools with extraordinarily high rates of absenteeism (greater than 20%). With the vaccine scheduled to be available in October, Williamson said school vaccination clinics are on track to begin in the latter part of October (there were no confirmed dates of anticipated vaccine receipt at press time).

The next step is voluntary vaccination of as many as possible in Alabama schools. “This is the most intensive and comprehensive vaccination effort Alabama has ever taken on,” Williamson said.

The vaccines will require a permission slip signed by a parent or guardian. The vaccine will be available at local doctor offices and health departments as well. Alabama anticipates receiving 600,000 doses by the middle of October, with 300,000 doses arriving every two weeks with over two million doses available by the end of December. ● Photos courtesy of James Gathany, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“We have seen a dramatic increase in the number of flu-like illnesses.”

– DONALD WILLIAMSON
STATE HEALTH OFFICER
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

For the most up-to-date information about the H1N1 virus, visit:



ALABAMA STUDENTS COMPETE (AND WIN) IN NATIONAL COMPETITIONS



Left to Right: Peter Andrews, National TSA President; Evan Ticknor, Vice President; LeAnn Yadon, Secretary; Zachary Barns, Treasurer; Adam Knecht, Reporter; and Alabama student JaMicheal James, Sergeant-At-Arms

THIS SUMMER, approximately 80 of Alabama's top students traveled to Denver, Colorado, to participate in exciting national competitions and advanced leadership workshops at the 2009 National Technology Student Association (TSA) Conference, June 28 - July 2.

"Our students worked so hard to make it to nationals this year. Their hard work really paid off," said **BEN SCHEIERMAN**, Alabama's TSA State Director. "This year we had a total of nine students to win Top Ten national awards, and for the second time in the past three years, a student from Alabama was selected to serve as a National TSA Officer!"

JAMICHAEL JAMES, a senior at Montgomery's Brewbaker Technology Magnet High School, was elected by his peers as the 2009-2010 National TSA Sergeant-at-Arms.



To put this in perspective, this organization currently has 150,000 members and only 6 students are selected each year to serve as national officers.

TSA was founded in 1976 and is devoted to preparing America's middle and high school students for careers in technology-based occupations. This year, over 4,000 students participated in competitive events at this conference.

Currently, Alabama has 2,200 members who enjoy the many benefits this organization offers. To learn more about Alabama TSA, contact TSA State Director, Ben Scheierman, at (334) 242-9569 or [CLICK HERE](#).

THIS YEAR'S WINNERS FROM ALABAMA WERE:

Formula 1 in Schools (team event)

- Central Baldwin Middle School (*Fourth Place*)

Flight Challenge

- Whit Patrick - Fairhope Middle School (*Seventh Place*)

Problem Solving (team event)

- Central Baldwin Middle School (*Fifth Place*)

Structural Challenge (team event)

- Central Baldwin Middle School (*Tenth Place*)

Technology Transfer Challenge (team event)

- Pizitz Middle School (*Seventh Place*)

TSA Cup: Marine Design Challenge (team event)

- Central Baldwin Middle School (*Second Place*)

Desktop Publishing

- Christian Manuel - Brewbaker Technology Magnet High School (*Ninth Place*)

Flight Endurance

- Scott Nagy - Brewbaker Technology Magnet High School

Structural Engineering

- Eduardo Bello and Reese Clark - Decatur High School (*Ninth Place*)

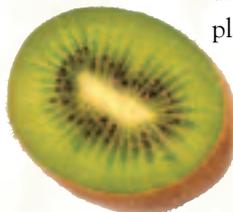


GRAPPLES AND KIWIS AND CARROTS, OH MY!

SOME ALABAMA SCHOOLCHILDREN will be eating pluots (part plum and part apricot) and grapples (look like apples and taste like grapes) this year.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) awarded Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Grants for the 2009-10 school year to [39 elementary schools in Alabama](#). [The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program](#) (FFVP) provides free fresh fruits and vegetables and nutrition education activities for all children in the participating schools. Children are encouraged to try a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables - some they've never even seen before - as well as more traditional fare such as apples and carrots. School nutrition personnel also receive food safety training.

"The intent of the program is to demonstrate healthy snack foods to children. It also encourages community partnerships with local growers and farmers markets," explained **JUNE BARRETT**, administrator,



School Nutrition Programs.

All 39 schools are Title I schools with at least 50 percent enrollment on free/reduced lunch. These grants allow schools to offer fresh fruits and vegetables during the school day at times other than breakfast, lunch, and after school. As part of the nutrition education component, some schools plan field trips to strawberry and pumpkin patches in their vicinity.

Combined with nutrition education and a reinforcement of healthful eating habits, the program emphasizes the long-term goals of positively influencing children's life-long eating habits and combating childhood obesity.



RELATIONSHIPS FIRST, EDUCATION SECOND: THE KEY TO INCREASING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

By Shannon Finley, Alabama Elementary Teacher of the Year 2009-2010

National Board Certified, Bachelor's Degree - The University of Alabama; Master's Degree - Jacksonville State University

“Tell me and I forget, involve me and I will learn.”
Many educators associate this with student learning, but it also pertains to the *parents* of the students we serve. Educators impact student learning in numerous ways, but parents are a powerful influence for academic success. As educators, we all need to set high expectations for parental involvement and raise the



standards, just like we do for our students. We have only a brief time to impact our students' lives and an even briefer time to be a shining light in the lives of their parents. We must partner with the people ultimately responsible for the children in our care.

Decades of research show that when parents are involved students have higher grades and graduation rates, better school attendance, increased motivation, decreased use of drugs and alcohol, and fewer instances of violent behavior.



**2009
Parental
Involvement
Month
Theme:
Families
and
Schools—
Perfect
Partners!**



Educators have to put *relationships first* and *education second*. We must make emotional connections with our parents that encourage involvement. Begin the year with a parent meeting where both teacher and parent discuss expectations and concerns. Let parents know the skills taught, what resources are available, and the simple ways they can help their child. Tell them their child should be at school every day. Let them know that a priority must be placed on classwork, tests, and homework. Tell them to support their child's school and that it will allow their child to see that they place a value on education. Provide parents with ample opportunities to join their

child at school. Celebrate student achievement throughout the year. Showcase and invite parents to participate. Encourage parents at these events, giving *specific* examples of a job well done.

I teach at Alexandria Elementary School in Calhoun County. We believe that communication is the key and keeping parents informed is a priority. We have student agendas that include a yearly calendar where behavior and important news are documented daily. This encourages two-way communication because parents sign and respond as well. Every teacher in our K-5 school sends home a weekly newsletter that showcases student achievement, perfect attendance, upcoming special events, objectives, and skills that will be covered that week. Our district also has an online grade book system. Each parent has a log-in code and can check his/her child's grades as often as he/she wishes.

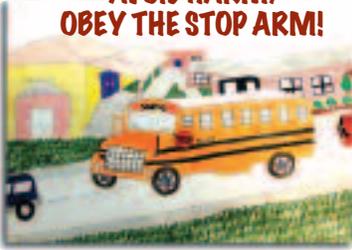
Parents can be educators' biggest allies. We can use our time to place blame and allow negativity to impair relationships or we can inspire a life-long parent commitment. Together we can raise academic achievement



and end the cycle of distrust. It takes dedication, energy, and time to change attitudes and perceptions, but we have the ability to ignite a passion for education that will change lives. One of our students may be the first person in his/her family to ever graduate high school or go to college. Include parents in their child's education. The future of our society is depending on it. ●



**AVOID HARM.
OBEY THE STOP ARM!**



SCHOOL BUS SAFETY WEEK - OCTOBER 19-23

EVERY DAY, school buses in Alabama provide transportation for over 377,852 public school students, and the safety of these students is paramount. To continue educating students, parents, and school personnel on the importance of bus safety, the Alabama Department of

Education kicks off **School Bus Safety Week, October 19-23.**

“Hundreds of thousands of Alabama’s students ride to school every day on our buses. We encourage all schools to promote School Bus Safety Week to remind students, teachers, school bus drivers, parents, and others to always be safety conscious around school buses, especially while buses are loading and unloading – the most dangerous time for students,” said JOE LIGHTSEY, Director of Pupil Transportation at the Department of Education.

Celebrated annually during the third full week of October, School Bus Safety Week promotes awareness through poster contests and distribution of community awareness toolkits. The American School Bus Council offers these tips for school bus riders:

- Be alert to traffic. Check both ways for cars before stepping off bus.
- Make eye contact with the bus driver and wait for the bus driver’s signal before crossing the street.
- Walk in front of the bus; never walk behind the bus to cross the street.
- Stay in a safe place away from the street while waiting for the bus.

School buses not only offer free transportation for school-age children, but they also offer solutions to issues facing the country. Safety is addressed by creating a

safe riding environment for students and traffic is reduced by eliminating cars on the road.

The American School Bus Council estimates that the gas savings are more than \$8 billion a year on fuel costs. Students riding in the school bus instead of a family car means fewer car trips and less pollution to the environment.

More resources can be found at the [National Association for Pupil Transportation’s Web site.](#)



Alabama Pupil Transportation Facts*

Daily Route Miles	451,798
Annual Route Miles**	81,323,640
Number of Students Transported Daily	377,852
Percentage of All Students Transported	51%
Total Number of School Buses	9,217
Average Students Per Bus	50

*Data as of October 1, 2008

**Both loaded and unloaded miles are included in this figure.

ALL KIDS EXPANDS INCOME ELIGIBILITY

GOOD NEWS FOR ALABAMA’S FAMILIES!

On October 1, 2009, income levels for the ALL Kids Children’s Health Insurance Program increased. It is estimated that about 14,000 additional children in Alabama may be eligible for ALL Kids.

ALL Kids is a low-cost, comprehensive healthcare coverage program for children under age 19 administered by the Alabama Department of Public Health. Benefits include well child check-ups and immunizations, sick child doctor visits, prescriptions, vision and dental care, hospitalization, mental health and substance abuse services, and much more.

Since its inception in 1997, ALL Kids and the Alabama State Department of Education have partnered to identify and enroll uninsured children in the public school system. “ALL Kids recognizes and appreciates all you have done to help identify uninsured

children and help families to apply for ALL Kids,” says CATHY CALDWELL, ALL Kids Program Director.

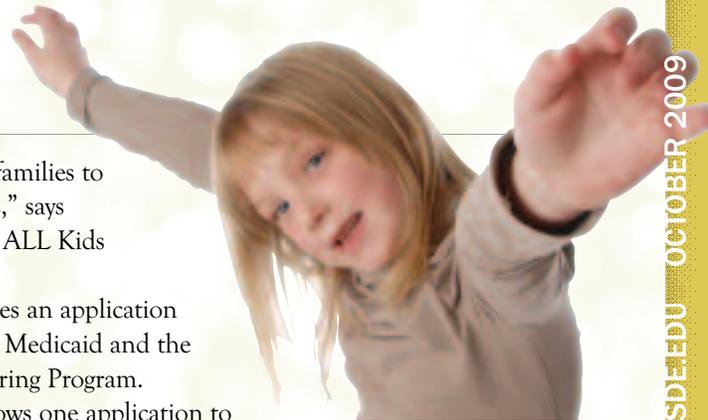
ALL Kids shares an application form with SOBRA Medicaid and the Alabama Child Caring Program.

This joint form allows one application to be considered for all three child health insurance programs. This eases the burden on families because they do not have to try to determine the program for which their child may qualify.

Parents can visit the [ALL Kids Web site](#) to get more information and to complete the online application. English and Spanish versions of the application may also be picked up at county health departments and many other health and community agencies.

Applications may be mailed to families by calling ALL Kids Customer Service (toll-free) at 1-888-373-KIDS (5437).

An ALL Kids Customer Service representative is available Monday through Friday by calling 1-888-373-KIDS. You may also contact someone by e-mail from the ALL Kids Web site.



Regardless of where you stand on the global climate change issue, learning how science is applied to study the planet and its climate will help our students acquire the skills needed to compete in a global economy.

– **STEVE RICKS**, Director of the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative



Deputy State Superintendent of Education Dr. Tommy Bice discussed changes with the Alabama High School Graduation Examination with CNN anchor Heidi Collins on “Newsroom AM” on Monday, September 14, 2009.



Alabama Awarded NASA Grant to Study Global Climate Change

THE AUBURN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE of Sciences and Mathematics, in collaboration with the Alabama Department of Education, was recently awarded \$600,000 from NASA to produce modules in the varying science focus areas of global climate change. The program, Bringing Global Climate Change Education to Alabama Classrooms, will partner with the Alabama Science in Motion (ASIM) program to effectively train teachers and educate students in Grades 9-12 about the changing planet.

STEVE RICKS, Director of the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative, said the partnership with Auburn University will allow Alabama’s teachers and their students to experience first-hand how scientists investigate global change. Teachers and students will gain unique insight into the science behind one of the most prevalent scientific issues of our time – the environment and its effect on our lives. “Different aspects of global climate change and its impact on Earth can be debated,” Ricks said. “But regardless of where you stand on the issues, learning how science is applied to study the planet and its climate will help our students acquire the skills needed to compete in a global economy.”

A interdisciplinary group of faculty members that includes Dr. Kevin Fielman, Biological Sciences; Dr. Ming-Kuo Lee, Geology and Geography; Dr. Yu Lin, Physics; Dr. Luke Marzen, Geology and Geography; and Dr. Marllin Simon, Physics, will serve as Co-PIs to develop interactive education modules designed to engage high school students on the changes in the Earth’s climate and its effect on weather, carbon cycle and ecosystems, climate variability change, and atmospheric composition using NASA resources.

“Our ability to partner with ASIM is unique. Within three years, our hands-on, inquiry-based experiments will be incorporated in the high school curriculum across the state of Alabama with the goal of creating a climate literate society,” explains **DR. MARIE WOOTEN**, Associate Dean for Research and Principal Investigator of the project.

Alabama Assessment Plan Featured on CNN Program

ON MONDAY, September 14, 2009, DEPUTY STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION DR. TOMMY BICE appeared live on the CNN program “Newsroom AM” hosted by CNN anchor Heidi Collins to discuss changes with the Alabama High School Graduation Examination (AHSGE). On Thursday, September 10, the Alabama State Board of Education voted unanimously to have State Department officials begin the initial phases of what will become a restructuring of the Alabama Student Assessment Plan. This restructuring will involve, in part, phasing out the AHSGE and replacing the exam with end-of-course tests, beginning with the freshman class of 2011.

During the live television broadcast, Bice explained that the motivation behind the forthcoming changes are less testing, more rigor, and more meaningful results for high school graduates in Alabama. Bice discussed how restructuring the AHSGE into end-of-course tests accomplishes the same thing, but allows schools to also administer and fund the ACT for all Alabama 11th-graders, EXPLORE for 8th-graders, PLAN for 10th-graders, and WorkKeys for 12th-graders.

“We can gauge from a combination of end-of-course tests and the ACT protocol, not only how students are doing in terms of content knowledge, but also their ability to succeed at the college and career-ready levels,” Bice said. “This reflects a much more rigorous approach to graduation.”

Look for a much more in-depth article outlining details of the Alabama Student Assessment Plan in an upcoming issue of *Alabama Education News*.



The five Alabama schools honored with the prestigious **Blue Ribbon Schools Program Award**:

- Brewbaker Technology Magnet High School, Montgomery County Schools ~ State Board Member: Mrs. Ella B. Bell – District 5
- Cherokee Bend Elementary School, Mountain Brook City Schools ~ State Board Member: Mr. David F. Byers, Jr. – District 6
- Vestavia Hills High School, Vestavia Hills City Schools ~ State Board Member: Mr. David F. Byers, Jr. – District 6
 - West Point Elementary School, Cullman City Schools ~ State Board Member: Mr. David F. Byers, Jr. – District 6
 - WS Harlan Elementary School, Covington County Schools ~ State Board Member: Mrs. Betty Peters – District 2

Five Alabama Schools Given Top National Award

FIVE ALABAMA SCHOOLS were recently named **Blue Ribbon Schools** by U.S. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION ARNE DUNCAN. Nationally, 314 public and private elementary, middle, and high schools received the honor given to schools that are either academically superior or have made dramatic gains in student achievement and helped close gaps in achievement among minority and disadvantaged students.

“To be a named a **Blue Ribbon School** is proof of how hard our teachers and students work every day to be a success. These Alabama schools are faced with a multitude of obstacles, such as poverty. They have overcome the odds and triumphed,” said STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOE MORTON.

For the past 27 years, more than 6,150 of America’s schools have received this coveted award. “These Blue Ribbon Schools have shown that all children

can learn with appropriate supports,” Duncan said. “They are producing outstanding results for their students. Some have shown dramatic improvements in places where students are overcoming the challenges of poverty, and others serve as examples of consistent excellence that can be a resource for other schools. They are places where improved teaching and learning benefits every student, and where students are challenged to meet high expectations with the active support of teachers, parents and the community.”

Awards, Opportunities, and Professional Development

Join Jumpstart on **OCTOBER 8, 2009**, and **Read for the Record!** Eric Carle’s *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* is this year’s selection. Help set a world record and celebrate the joy of reading all over the globe! For complete details, [CLICK HERE](#).

2009 Carnegie Corporation of New York/New York Times **I Love My Librarian Award!** [Nominate a librarian HERE](#).
DEADLINE: October 9

Fulbright Classroom Teacher Exchange Program for K-12 teachers. [CLICK HERE](#) for details. Participating countries for 2010-2011 include India, Ghana, France, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. **DEADLINE: October 15**

[The Art Institutes Passion for Fashion Competition 2010](#) for High School Seniors: Win full-tuition scholarship to one of The Art Institutes schools. **DEADLINE: November 20**

FREE - Federal Resources for Educational Excellence - teaching & learning resources from federal agencies. Topics include Animations, Primary Documents, Photos, Videos, Arts & Music, Medicine, Geometry, and lesson plans for the Depression and *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

The 2009 Health and Human Services Conference on Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder will be **OCTOBER 26-27, 2009**, at The Bryant Conference Center, The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama. For further information, contact [Nova Hodo](#), Program Assistant at (205) 348-3029.



OCTOBER



Parental Involvement Month
School Bus Safety Month
Computer Learning Month
Child Mental Health Month

October 8.....State Board Meeting
October 12.....Columbus Day (State Holiday)
October 22.....State Board Work Session
October 31.....Halloween

NOVEMBER

Child Safety and Protection Month
November 11.....Veterans Day
November 12.....State Board Meeting
November 15-21.....American Education Week
November 26.....Thanksgiving Day



The Alabama State Board of Education **BOARD BRIEFS**

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2009 9:30 A.M. Gordon Persons Building Auditorium

- Adopt Proposed Repeal of the *Alabama Administrative Code*, Chapter 290-6-1, and Adopt a New *Alabama Administrative Code*, Chapter 290-6-1, Pertaining to Career and Technical Education
 - Adopt Proposed Amendments to the *Alabama Administrative Code*, Rules 290-2-1.01 and 290-2-1.04, to Allow for the Annual Apportionment of Funds and to Include the Posting of Paid Invoices on Local Boards of Education Web Sites
 - Resolution to Approve a Teacher Education Program, Auburn University Montgomery and The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama
 - Approval of Michael Sibley, Acting Director of Communication
 - Resolution to Approve Alabama Student Assessment Plan
- For a complete list of agenda items, visit the Alabama Department of Education's Web site www.alsde.edu under "Board of Ed."*

Alabama Education News

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