

# ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

NEWS AND ISSUES IN ALABAMA PUBLIC EDUCATION, K-12

VOLUME 35, NUMBER 1 • AUG/SEPT 2011 • WWW.ALSDE.EDU • AEN@ALSDE.EDU

*After 42 Years in Alabama Public Education, Dr. Joe Morton retires from State Superintendent post*

## A CAREER WELL SPENT



AS THE END NEARS OF WHAT HAS BEEN A PHENOMENAL CAREER based solely in Alabama public education, STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOE MORTON's legacy is dotted with sweeping education reform, undeniable improvements in student achievement, and unprecedented challenges. Still, most importantly, Morton sees hope for a brighter future despite a dismal economic forecast. During his tenure as the State Superintendent of Education, Morton has seen healthier financial days, only to be saddled with three consecutive years of proration during the nation's most significant recession since the

Great Depression.

The oil spill in the Gulf Coast devastated the tourism industry in Alabama in



the summer of 2010, stripping badly needed tax dollars from an already cash-strapped economy. At the helm during

*continued on next page ...*

“ I've been associated with a lot of great people. I've tried to work together with people and come to a consensus on issues whenever possible. This is how we got to the point of developing programs such as the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI); the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMTSI); and ACCESS Distance Learning. We have an incredible staff at the Department and an engaged State Board of Education that has always and will continue to work tirelessly on behalf of Alabama's students. ”

### JUST A FEW OF DR. MORTON'S EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS



B.S., Secondary Education Auburn University	Ph.D., Educational Administration The University of Alabama	Sylacauga City Board of Education Superintendent	Three of Five Sylacauga schools awarded National Blue Ribbon Awards	Alabama Deputy State Superintendent of Education
<b>1969</b>	<b>1972</b>	<b>1973</b>	<b>1974</b>	<b>1978</b>
Jefferson County School Teacher	M.A., Educational Administration The University of Alabama	Sumter County Board of Education Superintendent at the age of 27 – arguably the youngest person to be a local superintendent of education in Alabama's history.	Founded the Sylacauga City Schools Foundation	Alabama Reading Initiative created
			<b>1988</b>	<b>1995</b>
				<b>1998</b>

continued from front ... those turbulent times, Morton managed to keep much needed education initiatives afloat while championing the causes of legislation aimed at making sure students had quality instructors and school leaders, thus providing equity in accessing quality education, providing healthier school meals, creating pathways to keep Alabama high school students in school and graduating on time, and countless other accomplishments. Morton doesn't credit himself too much with the undertakings of the department, rather he credits the company he has kept in his administration.

In less than eight years as State Superintendent, Morton has successfully implemented some of the state's most successful reform efforts, including the aforementioned ARI, AMSTI, and ACCESS, and has witnessed some of the largest overall educational gains in Alabama history. From testifying on behalf of the 2011 Education Budget at the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee in Washington, D.C., and meeting with the President of the United States, to touring



Dr. Morton receives a resolution from the Alabama State Board of Education President Gov. Robert Bentley

devastated and tornado-ravaged school grounds, Morton's experiences as State Superintendent have taken him a long way from his hometown of Pleasant Grove, Alabama. It was there where Morton learned about dedication and developed a work ethic that served him throughout his career. "I've worked my entire life – even as a child I worked in my family's store stocking shelves, cleaning up – it's just second nature to me," Morton said. That work ethic and ambition became apparent when, by age 27, Morton took the job of Sumter County Board of Education Superintendent, becoming the youngest superintendent ever in Alabama.

Now, twilight has fallen on an expansive career spanning 42 years in public education. Ending a career so rich in experiences, both good and bad, did not come easy. "It's never easy to know when it is the right time to leave," Morton said. "This has been a great job. It's the pinnacle of my career – I couldn't aspire to do anything at a greater level than what I've done as State Superintendent. I've enjoyed it and I have literally loved coming to work every day." Morton said an "inner voice" whispered it was time to leave what will be remembered through the annals of time as a career well spent. 🍎



## Students First Act Replaces Teacher Tenure Act

THE STUDENTS FIRST ACT, signed into law on May 26, 2011, repeals and replaces the Teacher Tenure Act of 2004, and fair dismissal laws for education personnel. The new law incorporates K-12 school and two-year college employees under one act. The bill keeps tenure protection for teachers while giving local school systems and community

### STUDENTS FIRST ACT



colleges the authority to fire bad teachers and problem employees for justifiable causes. INTERIM STATE SUPERINTENDENT LARRY CRAVEN said, "The new law allows local systems to take actions at the local level, with the local board of education following the due process rights of the employee and assuring a more timely and cost-efficient process for all."

A major aspect of the Students First Act is the removal of federal arbitration for termination appeals, which is replaced by an appeals procedure that guarantees due process for teachers and that is less costly for local school systems. Students First restores local boards' ability to quickly terminate poorly performing education personnel and stop pay and benefits upon termination.

Teachers can appeal to the State Department of Education and to the Court of Civil Appeals after a board's decision. A teacher can be paid until a final ... continued on back cover



### MAJOR CHANGES

- Repeals the Teacher Tenure Act and Fair Dismissal Act
- Returns discretion to local boards
- Reduces payroll time for terminated employees
- Changes process for terminations & transfers
- Exempts RIFs and partial cancellations
- Eliminates criminal stays

### WHO'S COVERED

#### Teachers

- Any employee required to have certificate
- Includes tenured principals

#### Classified Employees

- Bus drivers
- Cafeteria workers
- Custodians
- Supervisors (noncertificated)
- CSFO's and Superintendents are excluded

# Alabama AYP Results Exceed U.S. Secretary's Predictions

More than **72%** of Alabama Schools Made AYP (*Met 100% of Goals*)

More than **87%** Met Over 90% of Goals

U.S. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION ARNE DUNCAN made a dire prediction that 80 percent of schools in the United States would be in School Improvement under the federal *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB). Fortunately, Secretary Duncan's prediction did not come true for Alabama, as evidenced in the 2010-2011 Accountability Reports released to the public on August 1.

More than 72 percent (1,006 out of 1,383) of Alabama schools made AYP, or met 100 percent of their goals. To help put Alabama's numbers in perspective, only 27 percent of South Carolina's 908 schools made AYP.

"We want to recognize the efforts of our students, their teachers, and school leaders in acknowledging and meeting the ever-increasing annual measurable objectives set for them under the No Child Left Behind accountability system. At the same time, we want to acknowledge the fact that one test score does not represent the education of the whole child and, as this data release is interpreted, it should be done within that context," said DEPUTY STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION DR. TOMMY BICE.



**Accountability results, assessment results, and a listing of all schools, including their respective AYP and School Improvement status, can be found on the Alabama Department of Education's website at [www.alsde.edu](http://www.alsde.edu) under "Accountability Reporting." Use drop-down menus to locate individual reports or download bulk files from links provided on the "Accountability Reporting Systems" page.**

This year, 227 schools (140 are Title I schools) and 28 school systems are identified for School Improvement. Alabama evaluated 1,383 public schools for 2011-12 AYP status (based on 2010-11 data); 932 are Title I schools (high-poverty schools that receive Title I federal funding, the largest single federal funding source for education).

**Next Steps:** The Alabama State Board of Education approved the creation of the Assessment and Accountability Task Force to review needed changes in assessments and an accountability plan to assure Alabama is in compliance with all laws and regulations regarding education and meets the needs of Alabama's students, educators, and citizens. It is anticipated that a report will be delivered to the State Superintendent of Education and Alabama State Board of Education no later than May 10, 2012.

# A dark and stormy day in Alabama ...



## WHERE WERE YOU?

- The day Elvis died
- The day Michael Jackson died
- The day the Challenger exploded
- 9/11
- April 27, 2011



**Hackleburg High School, Marion County**

Fortunately, no lives were lost at school, but most Alabama students, parents, educators, and citizens were affected in some way by the devastating storms on April 27 - from



Tuscaloosa to Phil Campbell and from Pratt City to Hokes Bluff. The tornado that struck Tuscaloosa was classified as an EF4, with wind speeds between 166 and 200 mph.

The April 27, 2011, tornadoes substantially damaged Holt Elementary in Tuscaloosa County. The Tuscaloosa County Board of Education has applied for federal grants to build nine safe rooms at schools throughout the county. The safe rooms, which can withstand 250 mph winds, will be used as tornado shelters and as activity buildings and additional classrooms. Six other schools were catastrophically destroyed: Hackleburg High School, Hackleburg Elementary School (*Marion County Schools*); Phil Campbell High School (*Franklin County Schools*); Plainview High School (*DeKalb County Schools*); and Alberta Elementary School, University Place Elementary/Middle School (*Tuscaloosa City Schools*).

Alberta, University Place, and Holt students will relocate for the 2011-12 school year. The remaining schools are scheduled to open August 15 at their existing locations in temporary classrooms. At Hackleburg, a tornado safe room should be completed by mid-October.

"There were 3,350 students and 400 employees whose schools were damaged so that they could not reenter the schools as they were and the districts had to make other provisions for them," reported DEPUTY STATE SUPERINTENDENT DR. CRAIG POUNCEY. The Department of Education plans to begin collecting information on displaced students through a survey in late August and early September.

The department continues to post updated Disaster Response Information at [www.alsde.edu](http://www.alsde.edu), and as students return to school, there are also links to counseling resources. ●

# Dr. Gay F. Barnes is Alabama's 2011-2012 Teacher of the Year

## Vestavia Hills High School's Marla R. Hines Named Alternate Teacher of the Year



**GAY F. BARNES**  
2011-2012  
Teacher of the Year

“When a child who has been puzzling over a concept for days suddenly has the magical ‘Ah Ha!’ moment – and for that child in that instant, the learning is all her own – I am rewarded.”

NEAR THE END of the live 2011 Alabama Stars in Education Awards, STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOE MORTON presented DR. GAY F. BARNES, a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT), with the coveted title of Alabama Teacher of the Year. Barnes, a 20-year veteran of the teaching profession, has taught first-graders for six years at Horizon Elementary in Madison City. With the title, Barnes assumes the role of official spokesperson and representative for teachers in Alabama for the next year.

Also during the Alabama Stars in Education Awards, Morton named MARLA R. HINES as the 2011-2012 Alternate State Teacher of the Year. Hines teaches 10th-grade Physical Science at Vestavia Hills High School (Vestavia Hills City).

Morton applauded both teachers as ones who truly personify the time, attention, and patience that great educators show every day in the classroom. Morton said all of the candidates have such remarkable talent and are to be congratulated on the invaluable contributions they make in the classroom and in the lives of students. Barnes and Hines will spend much of the 2011-2012 school year serving as ambassadors for public education and the teaching profession. Barnes automatically becomes Alabama's nominee for National Teacher of the Year.



**MARLA HINES**  
2011-2012 Alternate  
Teacher of the Year

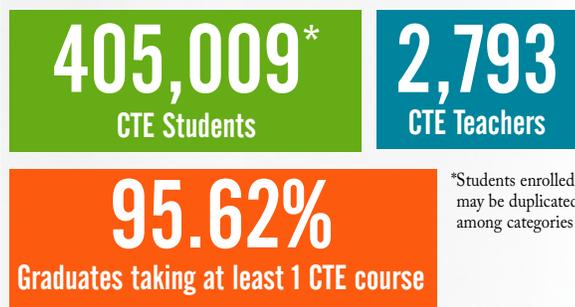
“My greatest contribution to the teaching profession is my advocacy of education reform, as I promote the use of student-centered, inquiry-based methods of teaching and learning instead of more traditional lecture-based, teacher-centered methods.”

## Career and Technical Education gets a New Look, National Brand, Logo, and Slogan

AMERICA'S LEADING CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) organizations and state programs have partnered to launch a new initiative focused on increasing support for CTE. The “Learning that works for Alabama” campaign has been developed to highlight the impact and importance of career tech to student achievement and national academic goals.

As a part of this national initiative, the Alabama Department of Education and local CTE programs statewide have adopted a new logo, brand, and slogan. The new “Learning that works for Alabama” brand and its colorful logo will be used on all CTE-related materials and websites statewide. The expectation is that more CTE awareness will be generated by using one distinctive, unified, and powerful communication effort.

Today's students must possess a variety of 21st century skills to be successful in the future. CTE is a rigorous, progressive, and vital part of the total education system. It provides students with essential life skills, prepares them for postsecondary learning, and equips them with the knowledge required for today's top career opportunities. Currently, two out of every three high school students in Alabama participates in a CTE program. These students explore career options in more than 300 courses, earn advanced diplomas and industry-recognized credentials, receive college credit, and have an opportunity to participate in seven different CTE student organizations.



To learn more about the “Learning that works for Alabama” campaign or any of the educational opportunities offered by Alabama's CTE programs, contact Alabama CTE Information Specialist, Ed Crenshaw, at (334) 353-5220 or visit the [National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium website](#).

# Celebrating and Supporting Excellence in Teaching

BY GAY F. BARNES 2011-2012 Teacher of the Year



THERE IS AMPLE RESEARCH that says the single most important factor in a child's education is the quality of his or her teacher. According to Robert Marzano, "Of the in-school factors that affect learning, the quality of teaching is the most important by far." We as teachers know that teaching is hard work. It is not for the faint of heart or weak of mind!

In 2010, a movie titled "Waiting for Superman" was released and garnered much media attention. This movie spurred much conversation among the general public about all things wrong with public education and public school educators. But, there's good news! We don't have to wait for Superman. In Alabama, superhero teachers can be found everyday. Granted, they may look more like Clark Kent than Superman but their superpowers are plentiful.

These superheroes can be found in every classroom, in every school, in every district of our state. They are the men and women who chose to be teachers because their life was altered by a teacher who inspired them to believe in themselves and be their best. They are the superheroes who question and challenge policies and practices that are harmful to their students and their learning. These superheroes know that teaching is complex work and they do not shy away from it. Instead, they devote hours to graduate studies, to collaborating with colleagues, and to becoming National Board Certified Teachers so they can impact students and students' learning in positive and powerful ways.

**“ IN ALABAMA, SUPERHEROES CAN BE FOUND IN EVERY CLASSROOM, IN EVERY SCHOOL, AND IN EVERY DISTRICT OF OUR STATE. THESE SUPERHEROES ARE THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO CHOSE TO BECOME TEACHERS BECAUSE THEIR LIVES WERE ALTERED BY A TEACHER WHO INSPIRED THEM TO BELIEVE IN THEMSELVES AND BE THEIR BEST. ”**

None of the classroom teacher superheroes I know can leap buildings in a single bound or stop a speeding locomotive in its track, but the superpowers they do possess are quite amazing. These public school teachers teach everyone. Poor children. Rich children. Children who speak English. Children who do not speak English. Children who are academically gifted. Children who are academically challenged. Children with brilliant social skills. Children who struggle to engage with others. These teachers teach them all. No one is turned away.

In her book, *The Right to Learn: A Blueprint for Creating Schools That Work*, eminent educator Linda Darling Hammond states, "Bureaucratic solutions to problems of practice always fail because effective teaching is not routine, students are not passive, and questions of practice are not simple, predictable, or standardized. Consequently, instructional decisions cannot be formulated on high then packaged and handed down to teachers." The teachers I know aren't waiting on Superman or any other fictional superhero to save them. Instead, they go about the day-to-day business of working with students' families, soliciting community resources, and facing any number of challenges that may interfere with student learning head on.

My goal as Alabama's Teacher of the Year is to learn as much as possible about the work of educators across our state and to share the news and spread the word about the dedicated teachers who work tirelessly on behalf of all of Alabama's students, giving them the opportunity to succeed and achieve a future without limits. ●

## Alabama Stars in Education Awards

The 2011 Alabama Stars in Education Awards was a statewide LIVE broadcast event, hosted by the SDE and Alabama Public Television, on May 11, 2011, where Alabama's 2011-2012 Teacher of the Year and Alternate Teacher of the Year were announced.



## Board Member Takes Big Strides For Schools



JACKSONVILLE CITY SCHOOLS BOARD MEMBER LORI TIPPETS sat in a meeting hearing the bleak fiscal picture schools face. In her final term as a board member, she had reached her limit. The hardships school systems statewide are enduring had taken their toll. She decided to take action. “I had to do something to increase public awareness of the inadequate funding and the plight of our schools,” Tippetts said. The avid runner with 11 years’ experience on the board decided to run across Alabama for education. “I thought that people might pick up a newspaper and read an article about the grandma of 14 and mother of eight who is running across Alabama for education,” Tippetts said.

Tippetts wrapped up her 10K runs across 30 cities to bring awareness to the needs of public education in Alabama on August 3, ending on the steps of the state Capitol.

## 14 Alabama Students Compete at Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF)



Intel/ISEF IS THE WORLD’S largest pre-college science and engineering competition. Alabama’s high school students competed with more than 1,600 students from 59 countries in this international event that culminates a year of research and experimentation by these young scientists.

### Renewable Scholarship to the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) Institute of Psychology

\$15,000 per year for up to four years

*W, Wh, Why Can’t I Have the Job? Listeners’ Perceptions of People Who Suffer from Speech Impediments*

Rosalyn Jules Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Murphy High School, Mobile

### U.S. Patent and Trademark Office Society

First Award of \$200

*The Effect of Heavy Metals on Porphyrin Ring Compounds Part Three: Leached Mercury into the Base of the Food Chain near Coal Combustion Waste Disposal Sites*

Arina Ghosh, Alabama School of Fine Arts, Birmingham

All 14 Alabama competitors were finalists and received a copy of Mathematica 5.2 Software for students from Wolfram Research, Inc.

## AMSTI Teacher Conducts Zero Gravity Experiment

Wayne Strickland, AMSTI science specialist at the Auburn site, was one of only six educators from the Southeast selected to participate in [NASA’s Reduced Gravity Education Flight Program](#). In July, Strickland’s team, the Flying Tigers, arrived at the Johnson Space Center in Houston to conduct experiments aboard NASA’s zero gravity flight – a modified Boeing 727 aircraft known as the “Weightless Wonder.”

Normally used by astronauts and scientists to experience microgravity, the “Weightless Wonder” was converted into a classroom for teachers so they could experience weightlessness and bring back that excitement for their students in their earthly classrooms. On their return, these Alabama educators will share their unique experiences and discoveries with students, other educators, and members of the community.

The program gives participants an opportunity to propose, build, and fly a reduced-gravity experiment during free falls and to gather data in a near-weightless environment. The “Weightless Wonder” provides weightlessness for 18 to 25 seconds at a time by executing a series of about 30 parabolas – a steep climb followed by a free fall – over the Gulf of Mexico.



Following the flight, the team will evaluate findings, draw conclusions, and provide the results to NASA.

“The idea is to carry out a series of experiments on the plane to see what the difference is between what happens on the ground compared to what happens under microgravity conditions,” said Edward Thomas, Flying Tigers team mentor, Auburn University physics professor, and coordinator of Plasma Sciences Laboratory.

# Alabama Leadership Academy Offers FREE Training Opportunities

## Part I

**Mobile:** Wednesday, September 28, 2011  
UCOM 3901  
307 University Boulevard · Mobile, AL 36688

**Madison:** Tuesday, October 4, 2011  
Madison City Board of Education  
211 Celtic Drive · Madison, AL 35758

**Birmingham:** Thursday, October 6, 2011  
Lincoln Professional Development Center  
901 9th Avenue North · Birmingham, AL 35204

**Montgomery:** Wednesday, October 12, 2011  
Professional Services Center  
515 South Union Street · Montgomery, AL 36104

## Part II

**Mobile:** Tuesday, February 7, 2012  
UCOM 3901  
307 University Boulevard · Mobile, AL 36688

**Madison:** Wednesday, February 22, 2012  
Madison City Board of Education  
211 Celtic Drive · Madison, AL 35758

**Birmingham:** Tuesday, February 28, 2012  
Lincoln Professional Development Center  
901 9th Avenue North · Birmingham, AL 35204

**Montgomery:** Thursday, February 9, 2012  
Professional Services Center  
515 South Union Street · Montgomery, AL 36104

- > **Why are some schools high-performing despite overwhelming challenges and obstacles?**
- > **Do you want to learn how they do it?**
- > **If you answered "yes," this training is for you!**

MAKE PLANS NOW TO ATTEND as the Alabama Leadership Academy presents "A Framework for Continuous Improvement: Nine Characteristics of High-Performing Schools – Part I and II."

Come participate in practical learning activities that are specifically designed to help leadership teams discover the power of nine school structures and practices that can transform a school from good to great. Learn about barriers that perpetuate "the knowing doing gap" and strategies that can eliminate this road block to school improvement. Join a group of concerned instructional leaders and share your thoughts and exemplary practices for improving student learning as research-based information is disseminated.

The target audience of this training includes school leadership teams (principal, teachers, and instructional staff), assistant principals, instructional coaches, aspiring principals, and central office staff from all districts. There is no charge to participate in this training.

All participants must register via STI-PD (CEUs will be granted) Part I: PD Title Number: ALA2011 · Part II: PD Title Number: TBA. Workshop sign-in is 8:30 - 9 a.m. with training scheduled for 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

For more information, contact [Angela Mangum](#), Ph.D., at 334-353-8924 or 1-800-846-0948.

## Be Informed. Be Involved. Be Ready.

ON SEPTEMBER 8, 9 A.M. – 2 P.M., IN THE SARTAIN PARKING LOT OF TROY UNIVERSITY, Alabama will celebrate "Be Ready Day" as part of its efforts for National Preparedness Month (as designated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security)! In addition to free admission, there will be prizes and giveaways, as well as opportunities to view equipment and displays and participate in interactive demonstrations.

"Be Ready Day" is appropriate for K-12 students. For school field trip groups, register through the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Upon arrival at "Be Ready Day," teachers receive a packet with a schedule and information they need for the day.

Gov. ROBERT BENTLEY will attend this year.

Sponsors for this year's "Be Ready Day" include the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, Alabama Department of Homeland Security, Alabama Emergency Management Agency, Pike County Emergency Management Agency, and Troy University.

For complete information, contact [Brooke Fussell](#), Community Preparedness and Response Coordinator, Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, at 334-954-7456.



**Alabama's  
8th Annual  
"Be Ready Day"  
is September 8**

# ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

Volume 35 • No. 1 • Aug/Sept 2011

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Secretary and Executive Officer –  
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*Alabama Education News* (USPS #387-290) is published monthly except for June, July, and December by the Alabama Department of Education, P.O. Box 302101, Montgomery, AL 36130-2101. Periodicals postage paid at Montgomery, AL and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Alabama Education News*, P.O. Box 302101, Montgomery, AL 36130-2101. *Alabama Education News* is composed by the Alabama Department of Education's Communication Section and printed by Walker360 of Montgomery. This publication, authorized by Section 16-2-4 of the *Code of Alabama*, as recompiled in 1975, is a public service of the Alabama Department of Education designed to inform citizens and educators about programs and goals of public education in Alabama.

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Printed on 10% post-consumer recovered fiber paper with soy-based inks



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CLICK HERE To Participate in the AEN Readers' Survey!

## Students First Act Replaces Teacher Tenure Act

*continued from page 2 ...* appeals decision is made or up to 75 days. SALLY HOWELL, executive director of AASB said, "Students First gives local school boards more latitude in using progressive discipline. It has multiple layers of due process culminating with an impartial, outside review by circuit court – much like the process state employees have now." Under SFA, teachers gain tenure and classified employees earn non-probationary status after working 3 consecutive, complete years for the same employer.

The bill cuts the massive expense of dismissals, makes the timeframe more reasonable, and ends the practice of allowing out-of-town arbitrators unfamiliar with Alabama education law to make decisions.

Any appeal will be heard by a retired Alabama appellate judge.

AASB's database of arbitration cases shows that it takes about 245 days to dismiss a tenured teacher. That's lost education dollars for pay when the teacher isn't doing the work and also for accrued employee benefits, legal fees, and substitute teacher pay. It can take eight to nine months and more than \$5,000 in legal fees just to move a teacher from teaching second grade to teaching third grade in the same school.

Students First makes changes to the way tenure is earned, how termination is processed, how appeals are handled, and still allows teachers and support personnel to be protected through their right of due process. ●

To read the full bill, visit <http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0008562.PDF>.  
For a full comparison of the Teacher Tenure Act versus the Students First Act, visit [http://issuu.com/dberkhalter/docs/studentsfirst\\_openmeetingsact\\_asca](http://issuu.com/dberkhalter/docs/studentsfirst_openmeetingsact_asca).  
For complete details on all aspects of the Students First Act, visit <http://alabamaschoolboards.org/clearinghouse.html>.

## Awards, Opportunities, and Professional Development

For a complete listing of awards and professional development opportunities, visit <https://docs.alsde.edu/documents/55/AWARDS-aug-2011-AEN.docx>