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Alabama State  
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Education

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## Cultivating Positive Relationships – October is Parent Visitation Month

**October** is the time of year when the Alabama State Department of Education celebrates Statewide Parent Visitation Month. Schools are encouraged to invite parents to visit and learn how they can become partners in their child's education. This year's theme is ***Homes and Schools: Cultivating Positive Relationships.***



When parents are engaged in their children's education in positive ways, children achieve higher grades and test scores, have better attendance at school, complete more homework, demonstrate more positive attitudes and behavior, graduate at higher rates, and have greater enrollment in higher education.

An example of the work taking place in schools across the state this month to engage parents is "Bring Your Parent to School Day," hosted by Oxmoor Valley Elementary School, Birmingham City School System, from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., Oct. 15. Principal Melvin Love said this is the perfect opportunity for parents to go "back to school." Parents will get the chance to follow their child's schedule, see what instruction looks like in a 21st century classroom, sit in on small-group instruction in the classroom, eat breakfast or lunch with their child, and see students engaged in learning.

Other activities planned for Statewide Parent Visitation Month in Birmingham City Schools include a PTA-hosted parent engagement meeting at Princeton Elementary School and "Network Night" at Carver High School. A partnership between CHS and the Birmingham Education Foundation, the Carver High School event will provide an opportunity for students, parents, and community stakeholders to gather and discuss issues and solutions in advancing education and the district.

If you would like to share stories or photos from your school system's Statewide Parent Visitation Month events, send them to [epippins@alsde.edu](mailto:epippins@alsde.edu). We may highlight them on the ALSDE's social media pages or in an upcoming edition of *Alabama Education News*.

## Request for Resources: Members Only Area on [www.alspra.org](http://www.alspra.org)

To further enhance the benefits of membership, the Alabama School Public Relations Association is creating a Member's Only area on [www.alspra.org](http://www.alspra.org) that will host important and helpful resources.



ALSPRA would like to unveil a large library of materials soon and is requesting any resources you have created in recent years that can be added to the library. Communication plans, tips for communicating with the media, style guides, or anything that has aided you or others would be very helpful!

Please send the information in PDF format to [mvaldes@alsde.edu](mailto:mvaldes@alsde.edu).

# Gain Higher Readership by Modernizing Your Newsletter

Whether it is produced weekly, biweekly, or monthly, and whether it photocopied, professionally printed, or sent electronically, all the principals of *Education World's "Principal Files" team* agree on one thing: a parent newsletter is an integral piece of their school-to-home communications plan.



Although written mainly with parents in mind, newsletters are also read by teachers, students, members of the local community and business leaders, and the local media. The key is producing a school newsletter that is interesting and appealing.

Here are some tips for modernizing your newsletters:

- Shorten or place the leadership message at the end. Surveys show that it is not what people want to read first.
- Create a comic book story/storyboard for one story in the newsletter.
- Shorten all stories significantly. Stories be less than 500 words.
- Repost different pages of your newsletters on social media to drive key stakeholders back to the whole newsletter.
- If your newsletter is sent electronically, put videos in it. Create a freeze frame with the link or actual video embedded.
- Create a different teaser/email link to newsletter with at least three stories highlighted, but no more than 3-5 lines long.

## Awards & Recognition: Apply by Oct. 15 for LEAN Frog's Alabama's Best Contest

LEAN Frog, in association with the Alabama Association of School Boards, is sponsoring the second annual "[Alabama's Best](#)" contest.

The contest recognizes best practices and innovations in Alabama's K-12 public schools that impact student achievement and promote effective and efficient use of public resources. Each Alabama public school system may submit up to three entries describing a best practice implemented within the last two school years (2013-14, 2014-15).



The winning entry will receive \$3,000. Two runner-up entries will receive \$1,000 each. **The deadline to enter is Oct. 15.**

## Join the ALSDE in Celebrating Innovation!

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) is celebrating innovation in schools and classroom across the state from now to December 2015 by focusing on innovative programs, schools, classrooms, and teachers who are creating innovative opportunities.

"Celebrate Innovation!" aims to highlight the many educators in Alabama's school systems who are thinking outside the box, and coming up with new and creative ways to deliver quality education. Some have taken advantage of the Innovation/Flexibility waiver, which allows school systems greater flexibility in meeting the educational needs of a diverse student population. Others have made innovative changes that do not require a waiver.

Please join the ALSDE in its efforts to "Celebrate Innovation!" By focusing on innovative programs, schools, classrooms, and teachers, the department aims to inspire others to imagine the endless possibilities that will result in dramatic outcomes for students in Alabama schools.

For more information regarding the Innovation Celebration, visit the [Innovation Zone](#) on the [ALSDE website](#).

