Dianne Sellers,
MPE’s 2008-2009 President

Dianne and her family

2008 ANNUAL CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS - SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS
MPE Board of Directors 2008-2009

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MPE has enhanced its website!
NEW - PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & MEMBER FORUM
Join, renew or update your membership! Get the latest MPE news and Educational Resources!
Visit us online at www.mpe.org.
PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE
DIANNE SELLERS

Let me reiterate my comments from our annual conference on April 12 that I am looking forward to serving you as your president. My mind has been in a whirlwind with thoughts and ideas that I hope to accomplish this year. So far, we (MPE) have made great strides in producing plans for future growth and development and I want to continue the work set forth by Dennis Silas.

As I write these notes, the newspapers have announced numerous teachers for various awards throughout the state. These educators are to be commended for their dedication in the classroom. My hat also goes off to all of you that are hard-working and equally as dedicated. For we all know that our field is one of the most important, or maybe I should say the most important. Where would anyone be in the workforce without us!

At the present time, the goal to reduce the dropout rate is in a major swing mode across the state. The redesign plan and “Destination Graduation” are two concepts in motion to help students succeed. Dr. Hank Bounds and his task force have done an excellent job moving the state forward in developing plans to raise student retention.

There is a banner that hung on my classroom wall: “Knowledge Is Power.” An educated mind leads to knowledge and that leads to power. It seems that our state is on the right track. Now that summer is “knocking at our door,” some of you will use your summer to expand your knowledge with a goal of a master’s degree or beyond. Good luck to you and know that you will be rewarded at the end.

Lastly, I want to say that I am proud of our decision to award $5,000 in graduate scholarships. We realized its worth and moved forward with the idea. Congratulations to our recipients!

Wishing you all a rewarding summer!

Oh, the places we will go when we read. This picture depicts my love of reading. I love to spend time at school reading to classrooms. There is nothing that beats the gleam in their eyes while listening.
PAST PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE
DENNIS SILAS

This year has given me a refreshing vista of education from two very different angles. I was fortunately offered the opportunity to return to the classroom to teach science after serving many years as an administrator and then retiring as a school superintendent in June of 2007. Many of my colleagues doubted the wisdom of my returning to teaching after serving as a superintendent. I knew it was the right thing for me because teaching is a big part of who I am. I have had a wonderful year teaching. The amount of work that teachers do each week is unbelievable. I found myself working 60 or more hours each week and loving every minute of it because I could see first hand how my effort was impacting the lives of my students. This year has reaffirmed for me that in education “teaching is where the rubber meets the road.” Everything else must be in support of this process.

Whereas teaching provided a good but narrow view from within the classroom walls, my service as President of Mississippi Professional Educators provided a panoramic view that allowed me to truly understand how all the stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, administrators, community, business and legislators) work toward the common goal of providing the best educational experience for our children. John Donne’s famous quote can be applied to our children and revised to read “No child is an island entire of itself; every child is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.” Therefore, we should never ask for which child the bell tolls? We know that it tolls for each and every child.

I want to thank the MPE board and executive director for helping to make my term as president a successful one. I offer best wishes and support to the new MPE President, Dianne Sellers, as she begins her term.

Acknowledgment from Linda Anglin

(Note: The following is an excerpt from a note received from Linda Anglin in response to the Fall 2007 MPE Journal’s spotlighting her work in the founding of MPE. You may view the Fall issue online at www.mpe.org.)

“….This article was one of the finest honors I could ever hope to receive. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I must remind you of one fact that you omitted. I cannot claim this honor without sharing it with other deserving friends, especially Jo Ann Abernathy and Archie King. Without these two dedicated workers, there would not have been a Mississippi Professional Educators group. I tell people that the idea might have been mine, but there were the three of us who gave life to the idea. After the first few months, the organization was blessed with a growing number of superior educators who also worked to put the welfare of the students as their first priority in this fascinating profession of education.

Thank you again for the wonderful honor. It is my prayer that all teachers might receive the many, many blessings that I received in my forty years of teaching.”
FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This is an exciting time to be a part of the MPE family. We are steadily growing; we are steadily adding benefits for our members; and we are continuing to look for ways to improve our service to you from the state office. We have been so fortunate to have an outstanding board and a dedicated staff. I want to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the entire board for their leadership, and especially those members rotating off this year, Mike McNeece, Stacy Reeves, and Gayle Greene-Aguirre. Mike, Stacy and Gayle have a combined 45 years as MPE members and 23 years as board members. They are true professionals and have given so much of their time and expertise in making MPE what it is today. I know they will continue to support our efforts as we move forward.

I also want to welcome our new board members, Ben Hornsby, Nykela Jackson, and Deedre’ Coll….. These are outstanding individuals and will do a great job in providing leadership for MPE. The Board will have a planning retreat later this year to focus on setting our next steps as an organization. Please feel free to contact board members or any of our staff with any thoughts you have to improve our services.

A special thanks goes to Dennis Silas for serving as our president this past year, and to Dianne Sellers for agreeing to serve as president for the upcoming year.

This year’s MPE Convention was a special experience. I have received so many positive comments regarding Pokey Stanford’s keynote address on “Inclusion”. If you were unable to join us, you can find her presentation, as well as the convention photo gallery, on our website. We are beginning to plan for next year’s convention and would appreciate any suggestions you may have for the theme.

As you break for the summer, please remember to check our website for professional development opportunities and contact us if you have any questions or comments. We have also added a “forum” as a part of our website. This is for MPE members-only to discuss various educational issues. This service is new for us, so please give it a try and give us your feedback if you believe we should continue or enhance this service.

Have a great summer!!!

Judy

MPE IS LOOKING FOR NEW BUILDING REPRESENTATIVES

More than 450 of our 8000 members are building representatives. Our organization is growing stronger and larger everyday, greatly in part to these dedicated and loyal MPE members. Most of our building reps earn their membership free every year by simply recruiting new members! Recruiting as few as 5 new members a year earns you a FREE MEMBERSHIP and each member recruited after 5 earns you $10 per new member!

Call or e-mail the MPE office today if you would like to become a building representative. (800)523-0269 or e-mail stephanie@mpe.org
Newton County Elementary School Fast ForWord Program
By Lois Cooper, Public Relations Director, Newton County School District

Newton County Elementary School students have enjoyed using the Fast ForWord products during the 2007-2008 school year. These products, developed by Scientific Learning, strengthen skills necessary for critical thinking, listening and reading.

The students involved in the Fast ForWord groups eagerly anticipate attending each day. They work on a computer for up to 50 minutes daily in the lab, completing different exercises in the form of games. These exercises include activities to develop decoding, comprehension, sequencing, phonemic awareness, etc.

Another valuable aspect of the Fast ForWord program is the progress tracker. Educators can use the progress tracker to track individual, class or group performance. It also provides reports for use as response to intervention data.

“This program has been a great investment for Newton County Elementary students as they have made improvements in grades as well as attention span and self-confidence,” stated Barbara Harrison, Inclusion Teacher.

(see related picture on page 10)

2ND ANNUAL MEL BUCKLEY/MPE SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED

Joey Hutto with Ross & Yerger Insurance presented the 2nd Annual Mel Buckley/MPE Scholarship Award in April to Nicole Chapman, a Tupelo High School graduate who will attend Itawamba Community College next year.

Joey Hutto, SVP with Ross & Yerger Insurance, and the Tupelo based CREATE Foundation established the $1,000 annual scholarship in 2007 as a tribute to Mel Buckley, MPE’s former Executive Director. The scholarship is awarded to a Tupelo High School graduate who will be majoring in Education. A committee selects the scholarship recipient after reviewing applicants’ written answers to six questions regarding their decision to teach, as well as applicants’ high school activities, honors and transcripts.

A member of the National Honor Society, Nicole has served Tupelo High School as a member of the soccer team and cheerleading squad. She is a member of Future Educators of America and Future Business Leaders of America. Nicole’s classmates have chosen her as their class favorite and she has also served on the homecoming court.
Reeves Selected for 2007-2008 Class of Emerging Leaders

Phi Delta Kappa has selected Dr. Stacy Reeves, MPE 2006-2007 President, as one of only thirteen members from throughout the world of Phi Delta Kappa’s 2007-2008 Class of Emerging Leaders. Members’ careers exemplify the Phi Delta Kappa tenets of leadership, research and service. The Emerging Young Leader Program honors educators who are age 40 or younger when they are nominated for the award. Dr. Reeves was selected from a competitive class of nominees based on their professional accomplishments. The following is from Phi Delta Kappa’s website.

Stacy Reeves
Stacy Reeves is changing the lives of children across the world.

Reeves, professor of education at William Carey University in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, has worked with orphans abroad, as well as helping children in her own state.

In Kenya, Reeves works at the Limuru Children’s Center. Among her activities there, she spends time talking with the teachers - men and women who have the equivalent of an eighth-grade education – about best practices for teaching young children English.

“In Kenya, English is the language of opportunity,” Reeves said. “In learning to read, write, and speak English, the orphans have the chance to someday earn a good job.”

In the U.S., she works with an after-school literacy program that provides one-to-one tutoring. Following Hurricane Katrina, Reeves planned a seminar on helping the children who became homeless, having seen firsthand the devastation and loss. She also worked with a New Jersey reading group that sent books to the Mississippi Gulf Coast after the hurricane.

“Joining PDK and becoming a Kappan is an extension of my life’s mission, which is to help children see the potential of their lives and see their futures as bright possibilities,” Reeves said.

Even though her students are now teachers and undergraduate students, her goal is the same. A student who nominated Reeves to be included in Who’s Who Among America’s Teachers wrote this in an email to her: “You went the extra mile to teach me how to teach and to encourage me when I desperately needed it. Furthermore, you have provided me opportunities to advance myself professionally. If that alone wasn’t enough, you’ve visited my class and offered great suggestions. I would NOT have been the teacher I am today without you!”

Although Reeves has published articles, made presentations, and received honors, she counts teaching a student to read as one of her top accomplishments.

“I am delighted to think that my tutors and I made a positive difference in his life,” she said. “To me, there is no better way to measure an accomplishment than to see who it has helped.”

WAY TO GO, BRYAN HODA!

MPE congratulates Bryan Hoda, Area Director, for recruiting almost 300 members! Bryan joined the MPE staff in January of this year as an area director for Southeast Mississippi. Since that time, he has proven to be a top recruiter, enrolling almost 300 new members. Mr. Hoda is a retired Principal from Bay Springs High School in the West Jasper School District.
At the request of the Mississippi Department of Education, 16 MPE members attended the department’s *Destination Graduation: Adult Summit* on February 28th. The day’s events supported the work of MDE’s *Destination Graduation: Teen Summit* which was held on January 15th. MDE invited state and local leaders (business, faith-based, economic, community, government and education) from around the state to attend the adult summit to gain a greater understanding of our state’s dropout problem and to help formulate solutions for local communities and schools.

Mrs. Alma Powell explained in her remarks to the crowd of approximately 2,000 that the America’s Promise Alliance is built around five promises to help young people succeed in life: caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, effective education, and opportunities to help others. Children who receive at least four of the five promises are much more likely to succeed academically, socially, and civically. She noted that at-risk students who decided to stay in school say they did it because there was one person in their life who made the difference by believing in them, mentoring them or helping them in some way.

After listening to Mrs. Powell and other national and state speakers during the morning, Summit attendees divided into break-out groups by their counties of residence to identify specific steps they can take in their local communities to address our state’s dropout problem. The challenge to everyone now is for these plans and ideas to be put into action in communities around our state. State Superintendent Hank Bounds has stated that the only way we can reach our goal of cutting the dropout rate in half in the next five to seven years is to have a robust, community-driven dropout prevention program in every community in our state.

MPE members found the day very rewarding and productive. “I think that it is significant that, when 1100 high school students at the teen summit were asked what their schools could do to increase the graduation rate, the most common answer was to have teachers who care more and are more involved. As teachers we can become so busy that it is easy to assume that students know we care and to overlook the little things that show students that we value them. Sometimes it is necessary to plan to pause and do something caring *on purpose*,” stated Stephanie Fabra, a first-year member and a teacher at Pearl River Central Middle School.

“The dropout problem for Mississippi, as well as nationally, is a very serious issue and one we all need to address,” said Judy Rhodes, MPE’s Executive Director. “This summit was certainly a major step in pulling all stakeholders together to try to focus our efforts on this issue. We look forward as a partner to making a difference in the dropout rate in Mississippi.”

Please contact your local district’s dropout prevention team to find out how you can help implement your district’s dropout prevention plan. Visit MDE’s Office of Dropout Prevention website at [www.mde.k12.ms.us/Dropout_Prevention/state_plan.html](http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/Dropout_Prevention/state_plan.html) and click on the “Dropout Prevention District Team Members” link near the bottom of the page to determine your district’s dropout team members.
MPE Officer
Serving on Blue Ribbon Teacher Education
Reform Steering Committee

Dr. Barry Morris, MPE Secretary/Treasurer, has been selected to serve on the Blue Ribbon Committee for the Re-design of Teacher Education. Dr. Morris is the Chair of William Carey University’s Department of Education. The Blue Ribbon Committee will develop the detailed plan, including final documents and recommendations, for redesigning Mississippi’s teacher education programs.

MPE MEMBERS HONORED AS TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

Several MPE members have been selected as Teacher of the Year for either their school or their district. Dawn Dawkins, SPIRIT teacher at Cook Elementary School, was recognized as the Columbus School District’s Teacher of the Year at the district’s March Board Meeting (picture below). Dawn has been a MPE member since 2001. Velma Owens, a MPE member since 2003, was recognized by the Hinds County School Board as Raymond High School’s Teacher of the Year in February. Velma teaches Oral Communications and Reading. Jennifer Wilson, a MPE member since 1993, was recognized as Rankin County School District’s Teacher of the Year. Jennifer teaches mathematics at Northwest Rankin High School.

JUDY RHODES VISITS NEWTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Judy Rhodes, Executive Director of MPE, recently enjoyed a visit in the Newton County School District. Visiting in the Newton County Elementary School library with Rhodes, left, were (beginning second from left): Barbara Harrison, Inclusion Teacher; Joyce Luke, librarian and NCE building representative; Ellen Upton, third grade resource teacher and Newton County MPE president; and Pat Ross, Superintendent of the Newton County School District.

Photo by Lois Cooper

Don’t miss our weekly e-mails with the latest MPE and education news! Update your account and e-mail address online, e-mail mpe@mpe.org or call our office at (800)523-0269. We want to share important MPE news and events with you!
MPE WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Rep -at-large - Deedre’ Walsh Coll
Deedre’ Coll received her Master of Education from William Carey College in 2004. She is currently teaching kindergarten at Oak Grove Primary School in Hattiesburg where she served as the First Grade Collaborative Team Leader in 2006 and 2007. An adjunct professor at William Carey University since 2007, Mrs. Coll is a member of Delta Kappa Gamma and the Pine Belt Reading Council. She and her husband, Jim, reside in Hattiesburg.

Community Colleges -
Dr. Benny J. Hornsby
Dr. Hornsby retired from the Navy in 1995 after having served 24 years in the Chaplain Corps. He received his Education Specialist degree from USM in 2001. He has taught Social Studies at the high school level and has served as an adjunct professor at both William Carey College and USM. Dr. Hornsby currently serves as an instructor and the chair of the Social Studies Department at the Pearl River Community College. He and his wife, June, reside in Hattiesburg.

District 8 - Nykela Jackson
Nykela Jackson received her Education Specialist degree in Educational Leadership from USM in 2005. She is currently working towards her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from USM. She is an Instructional Technologist with the Lamar County School District and has also taught Gifted Education for the District. Nykela and her husband, Matthew, reside in Hattiesburg.
Approximately 225 members attended our 2008 Convention at the Jackson Hilton on Saturday, April 12. Dr. Barbara “Pokey”anford proved a dynamic keynote speaker and MPE members found the discussions informative and beneficial. As always, members enjoyed learning from and visiting with each other.
2008-2009 Board of Directors
(front, from left) Becky Fields, Philene Allen, Dianne Sellers, Dr. Candace Moore, (middle, from left) Rhonda Travis, Sonya Swafford, Deedre’ Coll, (rear, from left) Christian Graves, Dr. Benny Hornsby, Dennis Silas, Dr. Barry Morris
(not present - Nykela Jackson, Lia Landrum, Dr. Levenia Maxwell-Barnes, Amy Prisock, Deborah Roane)

The Mississippi Professional Educators would like to thank our generous sponsors and vendors who contributed to our 2008 Convention.

BAILEY EDUCATION GROUP - CISCO SYSTEMS - GREAT AMERICAN LIFE (LTC)
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The Mississippi Professional Educators awarded individual scholarships in the amount of $500 to 7 MPE student teachers at this year’s annual convention. Each applicant was chosen from their institution as a promising prospective teacher. In addition to the scholarship, the recipient received a student membership for his/her senior year and a regular membership for their first year of teaching in Mississippi.
MPE Member Adopts Military Dog

2007 is a year that will forever impact Rachel Lee’s life. Rachel, a fourth grade teacher at Quitman Upper Elementary and a MPE member since 2004, lost her 20-year old son, Cpl. Dustin Lee, in March when he was hit by shrapnel from a rocket explosion while on patrol in Iraq. In December of 2007, Rachel, her husband Jerome, daughter Madyson and son Camryn adopted Lex, an 8-year old bomb sniffing German shepherd and a link to the son and brother they had lost nine months earlier.

Dustin and Lex were a team. They worked together in Iraq sniffing out roadside explosives. Lex’s adoption is the first time a working military dog was granted retirement to live with the handler’s family. Military officials initially told the Lee Family that Lex had another two years of service before he could be adopted. But the family lobbied and petitioned for months with the assistance of a North Carolina congressman to bring Lex home to Quitman. The adoption came exactly nine months after the 20-year old Marine was killed and his dog wounded on March 21, 2007, in Iraq’s Anbar Province.

Rachel and Jerome Lee were allowed to adopt Lex in a ceremony on December 21, 2007, at Marine Corps Logistics Base-Albany in Georgia where their son and his dog were stationed. In February of this year, Dustin Lee, three other military dog handlers and three working dogs, all of whom were killed in the line of duty, plus Lex were honored at Eglin Air Force Base. Lex received a commemorative Purple Heart medal for his injuries sustained in the line of duty.

Rachel said she believes her son’s spirit will live on through the dog because of their close bond and because they were together during the final moments of her son’s life. “When we go to ‘Dustin’s Place,’ he knows. His demeanor changes. When we go over there, he goes straight to where Dustin is placed and he lays down on what would be Dustin’s left side.” At her son’s left would be where Lex attended his handler.

Lex has adapted well to the Lee family, which already included Doenja, a retired Belgian Malinois who was Dustin’s first partner. Doenja was retired from service for medical reasons, while the Marine Corps granted Lex an early retirement so he could be adopted by the Lees. Rachel reports, “His spirit has lifted us up, and it’s like he has been a part of the family his whole life.”

Lex has brought happiness not only to Rachel and her family, but to others in Quitman and the surrounding area. He has visited the National Guard base in Meridian, as well as a nursing home, where several retired veterans especially enjoyed his visit. Rachel reports, “All the phone calls that we have gotten, from World War II veterans, Vietnam veterans, say, ‘Hey, we are proud to be American and we support our veterans and we stand behind you.’ That’s the biggest love I got out of it. My family is so proud to be American. It’s just unreal, the patriotism that has been shown.”
House Bill 513, the K-12 appropriation bill, provides for the following:

- Full funding of MAEP
- An increase to the years of experience increments from 25 to 35 years over a two-year period (½ in the 2008-2009 school year and ½ in the 2009-2010 school year) (see below)
- No teacher pay raise (except for those teachers who have 26 years or more of experience)
- $7 million for classroom supplies
- $3.4 million for mentor teachers
- $3 million for early childhood education
- $8 million for MDE’s high school redesign program
- $5 million for vocational equipment
- $1.5 million for dyslexia screening
- No hold harmless funding for those districts that will receive less MAEP funding in 2008-2009 than they did in 2007-2008.

We have posted the new 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 teacher salary schedules, which reflect the above-referenced increase for annual years of experience, on our website (www.mpe.org) for members’ future reference.

Senate Bill 2405, which takes effect July 1st, creates a 15-member task force to study and report on the status of underperforming schools and districts and on the Level 5 schools and districts to the 2009 Legislative Session.

Senate Bill 2416 requires an additional six hours of training for local school board members in districts with one or more underperforming schools, as determined by the State Board of Education. The bill also requires an additional six hours of training for local school board members in districts with a serious financial condition. Local school board members in a district that meets both criteria shall attend both courses annually. The bill takes effect July 1, 2008.

Senate Bill 2666, which takes effect July 1st, changes the designation of a “Priority School” to a “School At-Risk,” which is defined as a Level 1 school or as a Level 2 school for two consecutive years. Subject to appropriations, a “School At-Risk” will receive the evaluation, technical assistance and support provided by the Department of Education as is the current procedure in law for a Priority School. The State Board of Education may, in its discretion, assess local school districts for the costs of implementing these provisions. The bill provides that the State Board of Education shall promulgate rules to ensure MAEP at-risk funds allocated to districts are specifically targeted to implement effective programs, as determined by the Department of Education, for at-risk students.
Mississippi IHL News:  
College Access Website Coming Soon to a Computer Near You

If you have ever helped a student go to college, you know the process isn’t always easy.

A student often decides where she wants to go to college through an “objective” decision-making process that takes into consideration hugely important factors, like where her best friend is going and how much fun the football games are. Then she plods through the admission process, only to learn that, as a senior, she is missing a necessary course. After figuring out how to work in the course during a summer semester, she starts navigating the maze of financial aid, at which point she realizes that she has to complete the FAFSA, which requires her parents’ income tax return that hasn’t been filed yet. How frustrating! There is no wonder why some promising students simply give up and decide that college isn’t right for them.

The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) believes that the process of going to college shouldn’t be so frustrating. That is why IHL is building a college access website to serve as a one-stop shop for all the information a student – or his or her parent – needs to prepare for college, choose a college, apply to college, and pay for college in Mississippi. The site also seeks to support the creation of a college-going culture in the state. Scheduled to launch this fall, the website will feature special sections for parents, middle and high school students, transfer students and adult learners, and young students in kindergarten through sixth grade.

Although IHL governs the eight public universities in the state, this website will include extensive information on the state’s 15 community and junior colleges and 12 independent colleges as well.

A collaborative effort of students, parents, teachers, counselors, financial aid administrators and host of others, the website has been designed with the end-user in mind. Site users will find planning checklists; lists of credits needed for admission to certain colleges; tools to search for colleges in the state that offer particular programs or meet specific criteria and to compare those colleges; general admission information and tips, as well as links to online applications; step-by-step instructions for securing financial aid; degree and career matching tools; a comprehensive scholarship database with thousands of federal, state, and private scholarships for Mississippi students; a calendar with important dates and deadlines; and capabilities for students to establish personal accounts for keeping up with their college plans or communicating with their counselors.

Thanks to the dropout prevention efforts of the Mississippi Department of Education and community partners, Mississippi is going to see more and more high school graduates. This website will help those students take the next step toward a rewarding future. It is now up to us to provide the encouragement and the empowerment these students need to continue. Let’s begin by changing our question to students from “Are you going to college?” to “Where are you going to college?”

For more information, please contact Jennifer Rogers, Communications and Marketing Associate at the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, at 601.432.6333 or jrogers@ihl.state.ms.us.

MPE GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP

MPE is excited to announce its NEW Graduate Scholarship Program. MPE will award up to five scholarships annually in the amount of $1,000 each to MPE members who wish to pursue graduate level studies at a college or university in Mississippi. The scholarship is available to any teacher that:

▪ Is a member of MPE
▪ Will be under contract as a full-time teacher in Mississippi during the upcoming school year
▪ Is accepted and enrolled in graduate coursework at a Mississippi college or university OR who intends to enroll in such coursework if awarded a scholarship

We will recognize our 2008 MPE Graduate Scholarship recipients in the next edition of the MPE Journal. 2009 scholarship applications will be due March 1, 2009.
Our community and junior colleges are one of Mississippi’s greatest treasures. About 70,000 of our students are taking courses for credit and another 160,000 are preparing for specific jobs through workforce training. We also provide basic adult education and GED preparation. Altogether, more than 275,000 Mississippians—nearly 10% of our entire population—take classes from a community college every year.

With today’s evolving economy, the community and junior colleges’ workforce training programs are essential to preparing our citizens for 21st century jobs. Up until 1940, most Mississippians made their living off the land in farming or in timber. Between 1940 and the 1980s, we attracted low-wage, low-capital industries typified by the garment factories in nearly every town. In those days, we Mississippians did not have to be educated to work on the farm, in the woods, or in the garment plant.

Now, our citizens must be educated for new jobs in today’s economy. Our community colleges provide training that prepare Mississippians for existing jobs and jobs of the future.

Mississippi had the first two-year college system in America, and we still lead in many areas. In 1994, Mississippi was the first state in the nation to launch an All State Academic Team to recognize the best community college students. Our 15 colleges administer this program in conjunction with Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society for two-year college students, which is headquartered in Jackson. In 2000, Mississippi Community Colleges started the Mississippi Virtual Community College (MSVCC), in which students can take classes on-line via the internet. At the beginning, students signed up for about 1,300 classes. Now about 20,000 students take approximately 40,000 on-line classes each semester. MSVCC has gained national recognition and has served as a model for numerous other states.

In the past 20 years, the number of community college students 25 years and older has increased from 11,300 to 23,500 (more than 100%). There are several reasons. Community college classes are available close to your home, no matter where you live in Mississippi. Community college classes are offered at night, on weekends, and on-line, which makes it convenient for adults with full-time jobs. Finally, community college classes are inexpensive, costing on average less than half the price of taking the same classes at a public university.

We are a great bargain and we can make your life better! The average cost of tuition and required fees for a whole year at one of our state’s community colleges is only $1,722. Nationally, the average high school graduate earns $31,500 a year, the average community college graduate earns $40,600 a year, and the average 4-year college graduate earns $50,900 a year. Each year thousands of Mississippi students earn two-year technical degrees that prepare them to go directly into skilled, high-paying jobs. Of the students who begin at community college and then go on to a university, on average their grades in their junior and senior years are as good as or better than the grades of the students who start at the university.
Administrator Spotlight

**Thigpen Appointed Superintendent in Cleveland**

After having served as Interim Superintendent of the Cleveland School District since May 2007, Dr. Jacquelyn Thigpen assumed the duties of Superintendent in February 2008, becoming the first African American female to hold this position in the district. Dr. Thigpen is a native of Cleveland and is a product of the school system she now leads. A MPE member since 1999, she received her Doctor of Education with an emphasis in Curriculum and Instruction from Delta State University. Dr. Thigpen has served on the State Advisory Panel for Special Education and previously served the Cleveland School District as Director of Special Services.

**Hollis Named Head of Middle School**

Ruthie Hollis traded her 7th grade science classroom for the administrative office when she assumed the role of Head of St. Andrew’s Episcopal Middle School this past January. Ms. Hollis received both her Bachelor of Science and her Master’s degrees from Mississippi State University’s College of Education. She was selected as a top-20 teacher in the country for The Maury Project in Ocean Sciences by the U.S. Naval Academy and was also the Lead Teacher of the Mississippi delegation attending the National Student Summit on Oceans and Coasts in December 2006. A MPE member since 2002, Ms. Hollis joined the faculty of St. Andrew’s in 2004 after teaching in Rolling Fork and Starkville.

Retiring this year?

If you will be retiring this school year, please contact the MPE office and let us know. Retiree membership is still only $10/year and includes a subscription to the *MPE* Journal.

*If you are retiring and are currently on bank draft, do not forget to cancel your draft!*

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**MPE ANNOUNCES DUES INCREASE FOR THE 2008-2009 SCHOOL YEAR**

As we strive to increase your benefits and to plan for MPE’s future, our operational costs do increase. We will have a small increase in dues for next year. Membership dues will increase effective July 1st to $120 for professionals, $200 for couples and $60 for non-certified or part-time. There will be no increase for student teachers or retirees. At $10 per month, MPE is well below other associations’ dues and is the lowest of our sister organizations in the southeast. Memberships due for renewal in the upcoming months may be renewed at the current rate of $100 if payment is received before July 1, 2008. For those of you on bank draft, your new monthly charge effective July 1st will be $10.50 for professionals, $17 for couples and $5.25 for non-certified or part-time. Remember that you may receive a free membership for recruiting 5 new members in a year and you can earn $10 for each additional new member over 5.
Problems in Secondary Education
by David C. Lowery

(NOTE:  David Lowery is a student at Jones County Community College.  The full text of the following summary is available at www.mpe.org in the MPE News section.)

Perhaps no occupation has more problems than education.  These problems cover quite a broad range of topics from devising the curriculum to meet the individualized needs of students to ability grouping and even to the controversial issue of multicultural education.  Scholars, teachers, and even students of education feel that they have the answers and can offer suggestions on how to improve these problems, but it seems that very little of this advice is ever given the opportunity to work before something new comes along.  Educational problems have caused numerous teachers to leave the classroom, and these problems have also caused students, once interested in becoming life-long educators, to decide not to go into teaching.

Leaders in the field of education always rally for reform.  Reform, however, only presents one minor aspect of the plethora of problems that can be evaluated when one is studying the field of education.

One of the predominant issues in education is the development and delivery of curriculum.  Educators have examined student learning and achievement for decades to determine which type of curriculum should be taught and to determine exactly how it should be taught.  After looking at the various roles that schools can play, it is important to ask the following question:  who determines what we teach?

Because politics will play a role in any venture that a person undertakes, hopefully, it is safe to assume that political leaders are looking out for the best interest of the students in the classrooms of America.  To do this, these leaders must provide the best opportunities available so that our education system will be sound and comparable with any other education system in the world.  One side feels that a more classical approach should be taken, and the other side feels that more modern writers should be taught to avoid creating an “aliterate” society (Evans, 2002, p. 337).

A second problem that I feel warrants discussion is the issue of tracking or ability-level grouping.  Much of the material that I have read on tracking presents it from a negative standpoint because they say that it is discriminatory.  Evans (2002) further mentions that advocates against tracking say that it harms self-esteem.  I see the lack of tracking in schools as a negative consequence for those who plan on going to college.  If students are not challenged to prepare them for post-secondary education while they are in high school, then they will enter college already behind other classmates who have been given the opportunity to be in honors or advanced placement programs.

The last problem that I would like to focus on is multi-cultural education.  Because of the diversity of our nation, teachers are finding themselves in classroom situations where there are many differences among students in relation to race, religion, and even sexual orientation.  Because America has primarily been labeled a nation that is predominantly Caucasian, many critics say that the education system in America is mostly catered to a white audience of students.  Any students in minority groups are not presented material that is particular to their culture or their situation, so many feel that multicultural education will help balance the scales toward a more equal view of the world.  One side feels that a more classical approach should be taken, and the other side feels that more modern writers should be taught to avoid creating an “aliterate” society (Evans, 2002, p. 337).

The problems of secondary education appear to be staggering to those who may contemplate entering into the teaching field.  Each year that I teach, it seems that a new problem arises.  The individual teacher must decide what works best in his or her classroom by using a blend of common sense and educational training.  Staying current on research in any areas that seem problematic in the classroom is a must if the teacher is going to survive a teaching experience.

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MPE MEMBERSHIP CARDS

In February, the MPE office mailed all members a packet including a new MPE membership card, Perkscard and member update sheet. If you DID NOT receive any of this information, please contact our office at (800)523-0269 or mpe@mpe.org.