89 Years in Education: MPE’s New President Rhonda Travis with her Mother and Grandmother

MPE’s 30th Annual Convention Highlights

2009 Graduate and Undergraduate Scholarship Winners
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MPE Journal - Spring/Summer 2009

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MPE Journal is published three times annually by the Mississippi Professional Educators, Judy Rhodes, Publisher.
What an exciting time to be a MPE member! This year we celebrate our 30th year. I consider myself lucky to not only be a member of MPE during this time, but its president. Like me, I am sure you are very grateful to our founders for their foresight, courage, and determination in bringing MPE into existence. I wonder if Linda Anglin and her group ever thought MPE would reach the numbers and milestones we have reached? I am thankful for their vision.

We had a great convention this year. Thank you Judy and Staff for putting so much into it and doing another great job. Dr. Richard Long gave us some very good information about Response to Intervention. I know some of us cringe when we hear RTI, but it is here to stay, and nothing to be scared of. As professional Mississippi teachers, we have been carrying out RTI for years, we just may not have called it that. Our top priority has always been the success of the student, and as professional educators, we know how to differentiate, adapt, and tailor to different learning styles and needs. If you visit the MPE website, it contains links to useful websites about RTI and to Dr. Long’s website.

Speaking of the website, do you visit it often? It really does have much useful information. This is a great tool for us as members to use when discussing MPE with other educators. The website provides easy access to view membership questions or information, and it makes signing up a breeze. Let’s use the website this year as we fulfill our goal of 10,000 by 2010. If every member recruits 10 more, imagine what our numbers will be! Please remember to include your support staff. Those assistants and bus drivers need MPE too. Ask your area director to include a day at the transportation department during the time your area is visited.

I cannot tell you how much pride I feel when I get to tell others that I am affiliated with MPE because it is such a positive organization, and full of true professionals. As we begin this year together, I hope you are looking forward to it as much as I am.

FROM THE COVER:

MPE President Rhonda Travis continues a family tradition of educators and MPE members. Her mother Billie Burt (seated left) retired after teaching elementary school for 30 years. Rhonda’s grandmother, Dr. Jeanne Williams (seated right), retired after teaching college English for 38 years. Rhonda has taught French and English for 21 years. Together, the three have impacted students’ lives for 89 years. What a wonderful legacy!
MESSAGE FROM THE PAST PRESIDENT
DIANNE SELLERS

Let me first say that it was an honor to serve you as president this past year. I turned the role over to Rhonda Travis with pride in our accomplishments in various areas. We succeeded in many avenues because of the hard work of so many people. If you served on a committee, I would like to thank you for your time and effort.

Many thanks to Becky Fields, Debroah Roane, Amy Prisock, and Dennis Silas for serving on the board. Their dedication is appreciated by the board and members.

In case you missed the news, this year is our 30th anniversary. Three of our founding members were present at the annual convention. Those three were Linda Anglin, Jim Brewer, and Jo Anne Abernathy. Surely our growth and commitment made them proud! It was also great to see Jerome Smith and Mel Buckley representing past executive directors at the dinner.

When school is in session again, your help with membership drive is very vital to our growth. If you aren’t a building representative and would like to help distribute materials, please contact the office. Recruit five new members and receive a free membership for the next year. What a great savings!

Lastly, I would like to commend the office staff for their commitment to our organization. Without their expertise and dedication, we could not prosper. The work of Judy, Kelly, Stephanie, Betsie and Deeanna is very much appreciated.

Thank you again for letting me serve you for a year. It was truly a blessing. Have a restful and safe summer break.

Visit our website at www.mpe.org
- UPDATE your membership profile
- JOIN or RENEW your membership
- Receive current BENEFITS INFORMATION
- Access our EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PAGE

*Look for email announcements soon regarding MPE’s partnership with JBHM Education Group to provide professional development services throughout Mississippi.*
MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
JUDY RHODES

Did you know as a member of MPE, you are a member of the fastest growing and most respected educational professional association in Mississippi? Through the leadership of your board, and with your help as members, our membership has grown over 30% in the last 3 years. There is absolutely no question we are the largest in the state with over 8,500 members. Most organizations are struggling especially with the current economic situation. I assure you we will continue to offer the best service and benefits at the most reasonable cost. With our dues being only $120 per year, the cost of our membership is less than one-third of other organizations. And do not forget, we offer $2 million in liability coverage, while other organizations only offer $1 million. As an educator in our current society, it is critical to have the professional liability coverage. Please continue to encourage your non-member co-workers to join our family.

Your board is made up of 16 members statewide who give of their time to help us move forward. Members serve 3-year terms and rotate off periodically. As a part of the annual business meeting held during our annual convention, board members who have served their time rotate off, and new members are nominated and elected to join the board. Members who completed their service this year were Becky Fields, Madison County School District; Deborah Roane, Calhoun County School District; Amy Prisock, Mississippi State University; and Dennis Silas, formerly Drew School District Superintendent and now retired. These folks have done a great job and I want to personally thank them.

A special welcome goes to our new board members. Sunnie Barkley, principal of Olive Branch Elementary, will represent District 2. District 3 will be represented by Angela Towers, principal of Cypress Park Elementary in Cleveland. Amy Ellis, our District 4 representative, teaches at Sudduth Elementary in Starkville. Donna Robins, first grade teacher at Clinton Park Elementary in Clinton, will represent District 6.

As we start another membership year, we as staff members and your “incoming” board will work hard to continue to enhance services, with no increase in dues. This past year we were able to implement our new graduate level scholarship program for 5 deserving members. For those that applied and were not successful, please try again next year. While it is wonderful to be able to help 5 members, it is difficult to turn down any applicant. As we grow, hopefully we can expand this program to assist more deserving members. We are working on new “legal assistance” policies, and thanks to a change in the current law we requested, we will be able to enhance this service to you as members in the coming year, and hopefully, provide this service direct, to reduce cost. Additionally, we have increased our involvement in recognition programs such as “Teacher of the Year” and “STAR Teacher” (Student-Teacher Achievement Recognition). Please assist us in identifying new ways we can positively promote teaching as a career, and ways we can show our support and appreciation for your hard work and dedication.

We are also working on a cooperative agreement with the JBHM Education group to jointly coordinate and provide short-term staff development sessions beginning this summer and fall. Please watch your weekly emails for information regarding these opportunities. Please let us know your suggestions and ideas.

To start receiving weekly emails from the Executive Director, email judy@mpe.org
MPE Members Develop “Muse of Fire”

Two MPE members are playing a critical role in the development of a new biology curriculum centered on that persistent Southern pest – the fire ant. Kathy McKone is a veteran high school biology teacher at Bogue Chitto High School and has been a member of MPE since 2007. Susan Bender, a MPE member since 2004, is lead teacher for Jim Hill High School’s Student Oriented Academic Research Program (SOAR). Kathy and Susan are two of five Mississippi high school teachers working with research scientists from the University of Mississippi Medical Center and the Marine Biological Laboratory in Maine to develop the “Muse of Fire” biology curriculum. The content will allow students to learn about subjects ranging from molecular biology and environmental sciences to toxicology and human health. The Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) is supporting development of the curriculum and Millsaps College is also involved.

Teachers and scientists met in the summer of 2008 to develop the coursework and a variety of experiments. Then each teacher tested one part of the curriculum with their students to make sure the lessons engaged students and moved students beyond fire ants to wider biology concepts. Kathy incorporated the work this past fall into Bogue Chitto High School’s first biomedical research course. Susan presented her fire ant epidemiology case studies at the National Science Teachers Association’s National Conference in New Orleans this past March. The team will finalize the curriculum this summer and make it available to teachers wherever fire ants are found.

Recruitment Recognitions

MPE would like to recognize the following members who have recruited 15 or more new members in the last two quarters.

**DR. LEVENIA MAXWELL-BARNES**, the University representative for the MPE Board of Directors, and Delta State University faculty member, recruited 24 new student teachers this past quarter. Dr. Barnes earned $120 and a free membership for next year. She has been a member of MPE since 2003.


**DR. BARRY MORRIS**, chair of the Department of Education at William Carey University, recruited both student teachers and professors for a total of 15 new members. He earned a year’s membership free, as well as a check in the amount of $70. Dr. Morris has been a member of MPE since 2005 and currently serves as an officer on the MPE Board of Directors.

**MARY HILL SHULAR** from West Lauderdale Middle School in the Lauderdale County School District recruited 15 new members earning her a free membership and a check for $135. Ms. Hill has been a member of MPE since 2007.

Cox Leads MASS

Dr. Ben Cox, superintendent of the North Pike Consolidated School District and a member of MPE since 1992, is leading the Mississippi Association of School Superintendents (MASS) as the association’s 2008-2009 President. He was elected by the MASS membership in 2008 to this position. MASS is a non-profit association whose membership is made up of 150 of the 152 public school superintendents across the state of Mississippi. Congratulations, Dr. Cox.
2009 GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

MPE congratulates the following recipients of the 2009 MPE Graduate Scholarship Award. Each member received a scholarship in the amount of $1000.

DAWN DAWKINS teaches 2nd – 4th grade gifted students at Cook Elementary in Columbus. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Mississippi State University and her Master of Education in Gifted Studies from Mississippi University for Women. Dawn received her National Board Certification as a Middle Childhood Generalist in 2000. She joined MPE in 2001. Dawn is working on her Specialist degree in Educational Leadership from Mississippi State University.

EMILY VICKI KIBODEAUX is a Curriculum Specialist with the Hattiesburg Public School District. She earned both her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and her Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Southern Mississippi. She received her National Board Certification as an Early Adolescent Generalist in 1999. Vicki joined MPE in 1991. She is working towards her doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of Southern Mississippi.

STACY NECAISE teaches Spanish I, II and III at Hancock High School. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Spanish from the University of Southern Mississippi. Stacy is a member of the Association of American Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, as well as the Mississippi Foreign Language Association. Stacy joined MPE in 2002. She is working towards her graduate degree in school counseling at the University of Southern Mississippi.

LORIA NEWSOME is a sixth grade teacher at Glade Elementary in Jones County. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from the University of Southern Mississippi and her Master of Education in Elementary Education from William Carey University. She is a member of the Mississippi Reading Association and the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics. Loria joined MPE in 2007. She is in the Educational Leadership Program at Mississippi State University.

JASON ROSS is a mathematics instructor at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Mathematics Education and his Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Southern Mississippi. Jason is President-Elect of the Mississippi Council of Teachers of Mathematics and serves as a faculty representative on MGCCC’s SACS Leadership Team. He joined MPE in 2008. Jason is enrolled in the University of Southern Mississippi’s doctorate program in Higher Education Administration.
MPE is proud to congratulate and honor the following members who were named their respective district’s 2009 Teacher of the Year. MPE sponsored a breakfast for all district Teachers of the Year during their annual conference and also provided each teacher with a certificate of recognition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MPE MEMBER</th>
<th>SCHOOL DISTRICT</th>
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<tr>
<td>Willie Agee</td>
<td>Covington County</td>
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<td>Benjamin Bowlin</td>
<td>Tate County</td>
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<td>Mitzi Burns</td>
<td>Jefferson Davis County</td>
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<td>Jan Goldman</td>
<td>Neshoba County</td>
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<td>Angela Goode</td>
<td>Marshall County</td>
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<td>Amanda Holder</td>
<td>Drew</td>
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<td>Wendy Huffman</td>
<td>Chickasaw County</td>
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<td>Lacey Hutchinson</td>
<td>Smith County</td>
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<td>Nancy Jay</td>
<td>North Pike Consolidated</td>
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<td>James Luke</td>
<td>Philadelphia Public</td>
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<td>Melissa Martin</td>
<td>Choctaw County</td>
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<td>Jennifer Mathis</td>
<td>George County</td>
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<td>Annette McBryde</td>
<td>South Tippah</td>
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<td>Rebecca McCraw</td>
<td>Lowndes County</td>
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<td>Marquita McCullum</td>
<td>Laurel</td>
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<td>Sandra McKenzie</td>
<td>South Pike</td>
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<td>Vickie Moseley</td>
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<td>Darrinda Nicholson</td>
<td>Wayne County</td>
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<td>Kerri Peden</td>
<td>Coahoma County</td>
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<td>Wendy Pilgrim</td>
<td>Kemper County</td>
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<td>Shelley Putnam</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
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<td>Lisa Seale</td>
<td>Scott County</td>
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<td>Shelia Sewell</td>
<td>Natchez-Adams Public</td>
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<td>Dr. Deborah Sherman</td>
<td>South Panola</td>
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<td>Donna Suddith</td>
<td>Jones County</td>
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<td>Ginger Tedder</td>
<td>Starkville</td>
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<td>Denise Touchstone</td>
<td>Lamar County</td>
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<td>Nicholas Wages</td>
<td>Jackson County</td>
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<td>Ruby Wallace</td>
<td>Yazoo City Municipal</td>
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Do you want to make the world better? Inspire others with your teaching!

As we talk and work with teachers across our great state, and we hear about the personal and group conflicts in trying to make sense of testing and accountability, we can become discouraged about why we have chosen this great profession. We see teachers who feel called to reach out beyond themselves, those who are dedicated and focused on teaching the “least of these”. And we also become disheartened and disappointed in the emphasis placed on testing at the cost of creative teaching and students who are excited about learning. Eventually we remember that we are in the one profession that makes every other profession possible. At this point we pull out our “pep” talk and give it to these downcast teachers. All of us should remember why we became teachers, and for Stacy and me, it was because we wanted to change the world and to make it a better place by helping children. We would like to encourage you to remember why you became a teacher and to proudly enter your classroom as someone inspired and convinced that you have the power to make the world, your world, better.

Let the following quotes from famous individuals inspire you to change your world for the better.

“The solution to adult problems tomorrow depends on large measure how our children grow up today.” Margaret Mead, US Anthropologist

“Children are the only future of any people.” Frances Cress Welsing, US Psychiatrist

“We shall never know all the good that a simple smile can do.” Mother Teresa, Missionary

“...the best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen nor even touched, but simply felt in the heart.” Helen Keller, US writer

“The important thing is not so much that every child should be taught, as that every child should be given the wish to learn.” Sir John Lubbock, British Archeologist

“A child’s life is like a piece of paper on which everyone who passes by leaves an impression.” Chinese Proverb

“When I approach a child, he inspires me in two sentiments: tenderness for what he is, and respect for what he may become.” Louis Pasteur, French Chemist

“Children are our most valuable and natural resource.” Herbert Hoover, US President

“Invest in a human soul. Who knows? It may be a diamond in the rough.” Mary McLeod Bethune, US Educator

“Adults are obsolete children.” Dr. Seuss, US Writer

“Children need models...not critics.” Joseph Joubert, French Philosopher

“Don’t worry that children never listen to you. Worry that they are always watching you.” Robert Fulghum, US Writer

“In short, the habits we form from childhood make no small difference, but rather they make all the difference.” Aristotle, Greek Philosopher

“Live so that when your students think of fairness and integrity, they think of you.” H. Jackson Brown, Jr., US Writer

Dr. Stacy Reeves served on the MPE Board of Directors from 2002-2008 and was MPE’s President from 2006-2007. Currently, she and Dr. Barbara “Pokey” Stanford are Associate Professors, Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg.
MPE WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS TO OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SUNNIE BARKLEY (DISTRICT 2)
Sunnie has served as the principal of Olive Branch Elementary School since 1997. She earned both her Bachelor of Science in Education and her Master of Education from Memphis State University. She received her Specialist in Education from the University of Mississippi. She is a past president of the Mississippi Association of Elementary School Administrators. Sunnie joined MPE in 1992 and serves as a MPE Building Representative.

ANGELA TOWERS (DISTRICT 3)
Angela has served as the principal of Cypress Park Elementary in Cleveland since 2006. Her classroom experience includes teaching English, creative writing and social studies. Angela earned her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education, her Master of Education in Educational Leadership and her Educational Specialist in Administration and Supervision degrees from Delta State University. Angela was named Teacher of the Year for the Cleveland School District in 2003. She joined MPE in 2000.

AMY ELLIS (DISTRICT 4)
Amy has taught first grade in the Starkville School District since 1993. She earned both her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and her Master of Science in Elementary Education from Mississippi State University. Amy received her National Board Certification as an Early Childhood Generalist in 1999. She has served as vice president of the Mississippi Council of Teachers of Mathematics since 2006. Amy joined MPE in 2005.

DONNA ROBBINS (DISTRICT 6)
Donna is in her 14th year at Clinton Park Elementary School where she teaches first grade. She earned both her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and her Master of Science in Elementary Education from Mississippi College. Donna received her National Board Certification as an Early Childhood Generalist in 2001. She has served as a MPE Building Representative for the past 1 ½ years. Donna is a member of Delta Kappa Gamma and joined MPE in 1988.
The 30th annual convention for the Mississippi Professional Educators was held at the Jackson Hilton on Saturday, April 4th. Dr. Richard Long from the International Reading Association delivered an energetic lecture regarding “Response to Intervention (RTI).” Approximately 225 members attended the convention making it one of our most successful years ever! As always, MPE members enjoyed learning from and visiting with each other. Visit our website to view the 2009 convention photo gallery at www.mpe.org.
2009-2010 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

From back left: Donna Robbins, Christian Graves, Levenia Maxwell-Barnes, Rhonda Travis, Barry Morris, Sonja Swafford, Benny Hornsby, Deedre’ Coll, Dianne Sellers Front from left: Candace Moore, Nykela Jackson, Philene Allen, Angela Towers, Amy Ellis (Not pictured: Sunnie Barkley & Lia Landrum)
LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

2009 Legislative Session Highlights

- HB 877 requires a candidate for a local school board to receive a majority of the vote in order to be declared elected. The bill also requires a runoff election three weeks after the general election between the two candidates receiving the most votes if neither receives a majority. (Signed by Governor on March 30th.)

- SB 2314 gives local school districts greater flexibility to provide voluntary early childhood classes in their districts by authorizing districts to use any available funds to operate voluntary early childhood programs. (Signed by Governor on March 9th.)

- SB 2770 requires local school districts to provide in-service training on suicide prevention education for all licensed teachers and principals. The bill also requires, beginning in the 2009-10 school year, that in-service training include an emphasis on intensive, comprehensive and research-based reading methods for all licensed teachers in grades K-3. (Signed by Governor on April 13th.)

- SB 3085 exempts the legal services supplied by professional education associations such as MPE to their members from being categorized as “prepaid legal services.” MPE requested that this bill be introduced. This change will allow MPE to contract directly with attorneys, thus allowing us to enhance legal services for our members. This does not impact members’ professional liability protection in any manner. (Signed by Governor on March 16th.)

- SB 2628, the Children First Act of 2009, strengthens the Department of Education’s ability to intervene quickly when schools are struggling. The Board of Education may remove superintendents and school board members when districts have not met certain benchmarks for two consecutive school years. The legislation also requires athletes above the sixth grade to maintain at least a 2.0 grade-point average on a 4.0 scale. School districts must publish an annual report in a local newspaper and on their web sites. The legislation establishes the Mississippi Recovery School District within the MDE to provide leadership, management and oversight of all school districts under state conservatorship. SB 2628 also provides that the Education Employment Procedures Law shall not apply to employees in districts where the Governor has declared a state of emergency. (Signed by Governor on April 8th.)

The 2009 Legislative Session was scheduled to end April 4th, but the Legislature recessed early on April 1st without passing a budget. Legislators are planning to return in May or June once they have received detailed information regarding the federal stimulus package and how it will impact the fiscal year 2010 budget.

- HB 1677 fully funds the MAEP for fiscal year 2010. The Senate amended the bill to fully fund MAEP by using a combination of state funds and federal stimulus package funds. Both the House and Senate versions of the bill contain funding for the second half of the increase to the annual years of experience increments. The House version contains $7 million for classroom supplies, while the Senate version contains $13 million. (NOTE: HB 1677 is not final. There is a House version and a Senate version. This appropriation bill will not be finalized until the Legislature returns to discuss budget issues.)
2009 UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Caitlin Babb
Mississippi State University

Benny Campbell
Mississippi Valley State University

Carlie Edwards
Belhaven College

Louis Felter
Alcorn State University

Erica Gillie
William Carey University

Heather Lambert
University of Mississippi

Melissa Panks
University of Southern MS

Abby Red
Delta State University

Kimberly Sampson
Millsaps College

Rachel Townsend
Mississippi College

MPE congratulates recipients of the 2009 Undergraduate Scholarship Award. Each student member received a check in the amount of $500.
The most important tool in ensuring our boys and girls’ success in the classroom is having a good quality teacher. Teachers devote their lives to giving their students the best education possible. I know that you cannot do it alone. This is why the Mississippi Board of Education and I are committed to providing the necessary tools and resources to help you become more successful in the classroom, which will prepare our kids to have a better opportunity in life.

I had the privilege to personally recognize teachers from across the State that were selected Teacher of the Year from their districts. All teachers cannot receive this honor at the same time but you all are making an enormous difference in the lives of so many students. I commend you for the time, effort and commitment that you bring to the classroom each and every day to ensure that our boys and girls are prepared to lead the next generation.

This generation of students will face stiff competition for career and college opportunities when they graduate. Now, more than ever, it is essential that the education we provide today prepares them to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

That is why more rigorous curriculum and testing have been implemented to reflect national standards and I am confident that students who participated in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test this year were better prepared.

This year has seen several changes in Mississippi’s education system. One of the most significant changes was the Mississippi Board of Education’s approval of a new accountability rating system. Matched with a more rigorous curriculum, the new rating system will accurately measure our schools and districts academic achievement. The end goal is to make sure that students are growing and graduating.

The passage of the Children First Act of 2009 (CFA) was another milestone in advancing Mississippi’s education system well into the 21st century. In an effort to help underperforming schools, this law centers on holding school leaders more accountable both academically and financially.

CFA also provides for the removal of superintendents and school board members when a school district has been considered “failing” for two consecutive school years. It also creates the Mississippi Recovery School District to govern school districts that have been taken over by the state and requires school districts that are designated as “failing” to establish a P-16 Council that includes representatives from the school, business and local community.

I hope that you have a great summer and thank you for all that you do for your school, the State of Mississippi and, most importantly, for the boys and girls in your community.
PROTECTING OUR MOST VALUABLE RESOURCES

Dr. Joel Lofton
Education Security Liaison,
MS Office of Homeland Security

Following the tragedy of Virginia Tech in 2007, the Mississippi Office of Homeland Security (www.homelandsecurity.ms.gov) initiated a program designed to address the genuine threat of active shooters in public settings. Defined, an active shooting is when one or more persons participate in a shooting spree with the sole intent to harm or kill others, rather than commit some other crime. While thoughts of Virginia Tech and Columbine may come to mind when such incidents are mentioned, Mississippians have experienced numerous active shooter situations first-hand. The tragedy at Pearl High School is likely the most notorious incident, but workplace shootings have occurred in numerous locations, including a Fire Station and an engineering firm in Jackson, Lockheed-Martin in Meridian, Northrop-Grumman in Pascagoula and Regions Bank in McComb. These incidents, combined with over forty school shootings resulting in more than 100 deaths nationwide in the past dozen years, strongly indicate the need for increased preparedness and vigilance.

The Mississippi Office of Homeland Security (MOHS) has coordinated and funded the adoption and implementation of a standard, sensible, statewide active shooter training program for all levels of law enforcement called MS Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (MS ALERRT). The adoption process has been a collaborative effort of local and state law enforcement agencies and education entities. By establishing a single training program adopted by all law enforcement training academies and recognized by the Mississippi Board of Law Enforcement Officers Standards and Training, Mississippi has become a national leader in protecting its most valuable resource, the citizen. Active Shooter training affords all law enforcement responders the means to efficiently and effectively respond to a wide range of situations in locations including schools, courthouses, churches and factories. Standardization of active shooter training increases safety for citizens and officers, effectiveness of response to critical situations and interoperability among law enforcement bodies.

The Mississippi Office of Homeland Security offers this program free of charge as outreach training to all law enforcement agencies throughout the state. This sixteen-hour course is provided in any jurisdiction that provides a venue and at least twenty participants. Though the training is restricted to law enforcement, approximately seventy of the eighty classes conducted in the first six months of training were carried out in operating schools. MS ALERRT is a major shift from traditional law enforcement training and calls for the first responding officers to act immediately and decisively to neutralize a threat. The course of instruction is a combination of classroom instruction presented through lecture, audio/visual and printed media, tactical drills and full scale force-on-force scenarios. Although schools and law enforcement agencies are encouraged to publicize that they are training, sponsors and participants are strictly prohibited from revealing specifically what is taught. Widespread public knowledge of a well prepared response force may be achieved without revealing detailed tactics or skill sets and may serve to deter such violent acts.

Though the MS ALERRT program is law enforcement specific, site administrators may wish to contact their local Police Chief or Sheriff and request that agencies train in their schools. Training Law Enforcement Officers in the facilities to which they are likely to respond is of tremendous benefit to all involved.

The MS Office of Homeland Security and the Mississippi Department of Education, Office of Safe and Orderly Schools are close partners in this important preparedness initiative. If you would like additional information regarding the MS ALERRT Program or would like to find out how you might arrange to have law enforcement train in your school, please contact MS ALERRT at msalerrt@mdps.state.ms.us or Dr. Joel Lofton at jlofton@mdps.state.ms.us. Likewise, Don Criswell in the MDE Office of Safe and Orderly Schools may be contacted to arrange MS ALERRT and/or provide non-law enforcement training, guidelines and suggested protocols for active threats at dcriswell@mde.k12.ms.us.
Mississippi’s community colleges have experienced enrollment increases during this school year. Preliminary numbers from fall 2008 show an increase of 8.2% compared to the fall 2007 semester, and spring 2009 figures show a jump of 10.7% compared to the spring 2008 semester. We expect this enrollment trend to continue in the future.

Although preliminary, these figures provide a very telling story. Mississippians realize community colleges can lead to a better life. Our colleges offer a tremendous value for someone looking to earn a degree, transition to a four-year institution, or improve their workforce training. Not only are classes affordable, they are also readily available with college branches spread out across the entire state.

Last year, our community colleges helped educate and train approximately 274,000 Mississippians. While the colleges provide a tremendous service to the state, often times they do so with limited resources. Since FY 2000, state support per credit student at community colleges has declined $265 while Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) enrollment has increased 24.8%. If our colleges receive a reduction in state support, the schools could be forced to raise tuition, increase classroom enrollment, or reduce class offerings. In the past, our strength in these areas has attracted students to community colleges. That could change because of funding. Our appropriations bills have not been adopted for FY 10. It is my hope the Legislature will consider these facts when the members reconvene to write the state’s budget.

As with most state agencies, we are trying to gage how the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) will impact community colleges. Thus far, we have identified several areas of the stimulus package which could affect our system. Some of the funds appear to go towards restoration of the FY 09 budget cuts the colleges have received, increases in student Pell Grants, additional workforce funds, and money for repair and renovation to existing facilities on campus. This money will go a long way towards helping community colleges.

The legislative session recessed with few bills having a direct impact on the community colleges. S.B. 3083, signed by the Governor, gives the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges land to build our own headquarters at the Education and Research Park in Jackson. H.B. 1722, the state’s bond bill, gives $2 million for preplanning of the SBCJC headquarters. The bill also allocates $7.2 million to be distributed to the colleges for repair and renovation to campus facilities. Both the House and Senate passed the bond bill, and we are waiting for the Governor to sign it.

During these difficult economic times, more importance has been placed on quality education and training. Our colleges are the institutions that are preparing Mississippian citizens with 21st century job skills. We are preparing our people and our state for greater prosperity than ever before, and to come out of the current recession faster and stronger. Our community colleges are the best investment the state can make to move Mississippi ahead economically.
3rd ANNUAL MEL BUCKLEY SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED

Joey Hutto with Ross & Yerger Insurance presented the 3rd Annual Mel Buckley/MPE Scholarship Award in April to Maggie McFerrin, a Tupelo High School graduate who will attend the University of Mississippi in the fall.

Joey Hutto, Senior Vice President 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 and an ACT Scholar, Maggie has served Tupelo High School as a member of the basketball team and track team. She is a member of Future Educators of America and Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Maggie’s classmates have chosen her as “class favorite” every year since she was a freshman, and elected her Homecoming Queen in her senior year.

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“Bailout” won honors as Merriam-Webster’s Word of the Year for 2008, but those of us in education probably cast our votes for “accountability.” As the economy sputters, and Mississippi families tighten their belts, parents will hold us more and more accountable for the quality of education we provide their children—rightly so. At the executive office of the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL), we are making efforts to be more accountable by collecting and making available data about student performance.

For the second year, the IHL Office of Policy Research and Planning has compiled the High School Feedback Report, which is being made available to Mississippi public and private high schools. The purpose of the report is to provide detailed information about enrollment and academic performance of Mississippi high school students in the state’s public universities. We anticipate that similar information about student performance at the state’s community and junior colleges will be available soon.

The feedback report:
• Shows those students who graduated from Mississippi high schools in 2007 and attended one of the state’s public universities as entering freshman during the 2007-08 academic year;
• Provides individual high school data as well as state totals and averages;
• Segments data by ethnicity and gender;
• Shows the total number of credit hours attempted as well as the average credit hours attempted in each academic discipline;
• Illustrates the relationship between high school performance, as evidenced by ACT composite scores and overall high school grade point averages, and postsecondary performance, as evidenced by credit hours attempted, credit hours earned, and first semester college GPAs; and
• Highlights academic performance (using GPA as measure) in each academic discipline.

The Feedback Report is not intended as a report card for our high schools. Rather, it is our hope that this data proves useful for identifying areas of success and areas for improvement at both the high school and postsecondary levels.

A liaison at each public university has been designated to answer questions about the report, and to work with high school superintendents, principals, teachers, and counselors to improve overall student performance. Secondary school leaders are encouraged to contact the university liaisons about any aspect of the report.

By being accountable for the performance of our students, we can improve the quality of education at every level and ensure that Mississippi graduates are prepared to compete in today’s marketplace.

Contact IHL Assistant Commissioner for Academic and Student Affairs Dr. Lynn J. House at lhouse@mississippi.edu or (601) 432-6501 for more information about the High School Feedback Report.
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*credit given for each additional member after 5
** member must have previously been made inactive for a period of at least three months

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<th>2008-2009 DUES</th>
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