MPE’S NEW PRESIDENT, DR. BENNY HORNBSBY
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Dr. Benny Hornsby

Hello, MPE colleagues,

It is my privilege and honor to serve as your President for the next twelve months, and I wanted to take this opportunity to briefly introduce myself and give you some of my ideas for the continued growth and success of Mississippi Professional Educators.

First, however, I want to thank Ms. Sonya Swafford, our outgoing President, for her outstanding stewardship of the organization over the past year. Many of the wonderful things that were accomplished were because of her leadership skills, firm guidance, and tactful personality.

I consider myself to be a typical educator, having taught on the junior high, high school, community college, and university levels. I hold Mississippi AAA certification in Social Studies, and my public school experience includes a total of ten years teaching in this area at Lumberton and Sumrall. I also drove a regular school bus route for six years, so I understand that part of it, too. I am currently a full-time Instructor of Sociology and Chair of the Social Sciences Department at the Forrest County Center of Pearl River Community College; I teach online in the Mississippi Virtual Community College, and I am an adjunct faculty member at William Carey University. I have been a member of MPE for fifteen years. My themes for this year are consolidation and continued growth.

I consider organizational “goals” to be a moving target, but here a few of the projects that I intend to focus on in the coming months:

• Increase MPE membership to at least 11,000 in 2012
• Offer one MPE-sponsored in-service training opportunity for teachers, with CEU credit, in each of the eight MPE districts during the 2012-2013 school year.
• Continue to increase member participation in our annual Symposium (convention)
• Increase student MPE enrollment in our community colleges and universities throughout the state
• Continue to improve communication with MPE membership, including newsletters, the website, and the Journal
• Increase the percentage of student members transitioning into professional MPE membership
• Move the MPE staff headquarters to a safer location in the Jackson area
• Continue to advocate effectively with legislators on all issues pertaining to education in Mississippi
• Reach out more effectively to recruit paraprofessionals, other than credentialed educators, for MPE membership
• Ensure that our outstanding MPE staff is treated like the consummate professionals they are, with appropriate recognition and benefits
• Raise the number of MPE Building Representatives statewide by 20 percent
• Offer more opportunities for retired MPE members to feel “connected” to the organization

Again, thank you for permitting me to be your President. Please feel free to contact me with any concern that you might have (cell: 601-408-4608; email: bhornsby@prcc.edu). I promise that you will receive my immediate response.
Thank YOU! Thank YOU! Thank YOU.......for a fabulously fun year!!! What an amazing experience this past year of service has been. I have enjoyed every opportunity to celebrate with you and honor OUR PROFESSION!

MPE's organization continues to be a leader in excellence. Our membership continues to grow, with a total number of 10,673 members as of April 25. With great pride, we addressed my goal of highlighting teachers who go that extra mile, above and beyond. We have had the opportunity to recognize and honor nine Educators of Excellence in our weekly emails and in the MPE Journal.

I hope we as educators will continue to focus on our middle name- PROFESSIONAL! If you're not, get active with MPE! Now, is the time! So much is going on in the world of education. You are the specialist. Let your voice be heard on the many issues and initiatives facing educators today- from Common Core State Standards to charter schools to administrative consolidation. Stay abreast of these issues and educate yourself on their impact on our profession and your school or classroom.

I refer back to my first article:

“The future of the world is in my classroom today, a future with the potential for good or bad…Several future presidents are learning from me today; so are the great writers of the next decades, and so are all the so-called ordinary people who will make the decisions in democracy. Only a teacher? Thank God I have a calling to the greatest profession of all! I must be vigilant every day, lest I lose one fragile opportunity to improve tomorrow.” I. W. Fitzwater

A calling to the greatest profession of all! As I count my blessings, I count my profession.
I always look forward to this issue of our MPE Journal because it celebrates the successes of so many of our members. MPE is honored to have members who are recognized for their invaluable contributions to their students, their profession and their communities.

The following pages are full of such recognitions and honors. From undergraduate and graduate scholarship recipients, to STAR teachers, to Teachers of the Year, to our Milken educator – this issue celebrates professional educators! Congratulations to all of those members recognized.

We celebrated education’s opportunities, as well as another successful year for our association, at our recent Best Practices Symposium on April 14. Ray McNulty of the International Center for Leadership in Education encouraged educators to view challenging or uncertain times as an opportunity to take the lead in creating next practices and to be agents of change. We’ve received very favorable comments on our new Best Practices Symposium (formerly known as our MPE Convention) full-day format, which allowed us to offer concurrent sessions, as well as SEMIs in addition to our traditional CEUs.

While we said “Goodbye” and “Thank you” to Sunnie Barkley and Nykela Jackson at our Best Practices Symposium for their completion of board service, we are honored to welcome Erica Armstrong (District 2) and Brad Johns (District 6). Our entire Board of Directors is to be thanked for the many hours they give of their time and service on behalf of MPE. Please take a few minutes to read Dr. Benny Hornsby’s excellent goals for the upcoming year on page 4 of this issue. I would also like to thank our MPE Past-President, Sonya Swafford, for her vision in recognizing our Educators of Excellence this past year.

The 2012 Legislative Session is in its final weeks as we finalize this issue of the MPE Journal. While some policies, such as charter schools, appointed superintendents and FY 2013 appropriations, have yet to be decided, several pieces of legislation have worked their way through the legislative process and been signed by the Governor, including the waiving of out-of-state university tuition in certain situations and the establishment of an Office of Educator Misconduct with the MDE. You’ll find highlights of the 2012 Legislative Session on page 15 of this issue.

I appreciate your continued membership in and support of the Mississippi Professional Educators. Enjoy these next few months of summer. Whether you travel, attend an institute or workshop, or spend time with family, I hope you will take some well-deserved time for yourself. It will be another new school year before we know it! Thanks for everything you did for your students this past year and best of luck as you start the new 2012-2013 year next fall!
MPE MEMBER MICHELLE BRISTER RECEIVES MILKEN AWARD

MPE Member Michelle Brister won the 2011 Milken Educator Award and its $25,000 prize. She was chosen by a Mississippi Department of Education appointed blue ribbon committee that identified candidates for evaluation and selection through a confidential process that does not take nominations or applications. The unrestricted financial award is given by the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Awards. This award is typically given to early- or mid-career teachers to reward excellence and to encourage them to stay in the teaching profession. Michelle is a sixth grade math teacher at Lovett Elementary in Clinton and has been a member of MPE since 2005. State Superintendent of Education Dr. Tom Burnham said, “She is an excellent example of a teacher that is dedicated to helping her students succeed inside and outside of the classroom.” Congratulations, Michelle!

DYSON EARNs MASTER OF EDUCATION

MPE would like to congratulate DeSean Dyson on earning his Master of Education in Educational Leadership degree from Mississippi College. He graduated in July 2011. DeSean is in his sixth year of teaching at Clinton High School and has been a member of MPE since 2006. Congratulations, DeSean!

STACEY TODD SELECTED AS MISSISSIPPI’S TEACHER OF THE YEAR

MPE member Stacey Todd, a special education teacher from Oak Grove High School, has been named Mississippi’s 2012 Teacher of the Year. The Mississippi Department of Education and the Mississippi Teacher Center sponsor the Teacher of the Year program, and Stacey was chosen from four finalists. She earned her Bachelor’s degree at the University of Southern Mississippi and her Master’s degree from the University of Phoenix. Her teaching philosophy is simple: “Every student can learn, but every student does not learn the same way.” Todd, along with four other teachers, started a local Jr. Civitan Club because she strongly believes in student community involvement. The club lets her students interact and serve with their general education peers. Lamar County Schools Superintendent, Dr. Ben Burnett says, “The passion she brings to the classroom has changed attitudes in our community and with our general education students in regards to our students with disabilities.” Stacey says that she “will strive to maintain a passion for learning in my classroom and see each student as unique and deserving of my best.” Congratulations, Stacey!
MPE congratulates the following recipients of the 2012 Graduate Scholarship Award. Each member will receive $1,000 towards their graduate studies.

**MELBA BOWLIN** is a special education teacher at Hickory Flat Attendance Center in Benton County. She earned her Bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education from the University of Mississippi and is certified in Elementary K-8 and Special Education. A member of MPE since 2002, she received her National Board Certification in 2010 and is pursuing her Master’s degree in Dyslexia Therapy at Mississippi College.

**MONICA CORLEY** is a U.S. History, Government, and Economics teacher at Brandon High School. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from Belhaven College. A member of MPE since 2010, she is pursuing her Master of Educational Leadership degree from Mississippi College.

**BRAD JOHNS** serves as chair of the math department at McLaurin High School in Rankin County. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Mathematics, his Master of Mathematical Education, and his Educational Specialist in Educational Leadership from Mississippi College. A member of MPE since 1994, he is pursuing his doctorate at Mississippi College.

**SUZANNE KELLY** is an instructor with the Teacher Academy at the Lamar County Center for Technical Education. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Business Technology Education from the University of Southern Mississippi. A member of MPE since 2007, she is currently pursuing her Master’s degree in Educational Leadership at USM.

**REGINA REDDOCH** is a 7th grade English teacher at West Jones Middle School. She earned her Bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education and her Master’s degree in Educational Leadership from William Carey College. She is currently pursuing her Specialist degree in Higher Education Administration and plans to begin her doctoral studies at William Carey University.
A resident of Columbus, **CLAUDIA CARTER** has been recognized for her work as a math teacher at the Mississippi School for Math and Science. She has been a member of MPE since 1992 and currently serves as one of her school’s MPE building representatives. Claudia, a.k.a. “Mama Carter,” has taught at MSMS for its twenty-four year history.

A resident of Ocean Springs, **THOMAS POWELL** has been recognized for his work in the Jackson County School District. Mr. Powell is a math and science teacher at St. Martin High School and has been a member of MPE since 1997. Mr. Powell has written the curriculum for two unique classes, Engineering and Meteorology, which are taught only at St. Martin High School.

A resident of Columbus, **DENNIS REED** has been recognized for his work at the Mississippi School for Math and Science. Mr. Reed is a physics and chemistry teacher and has been a member of MPE since 1989. He currently serves as one of his school’s MPE building representatives. He is his school’s sponsor for the Science Bowl, Physics Competition, Rocket Competition, Robot Competition, Trebuchet Competition, and the engineering competition teams.

A resident of Brandon, **CHUCK RHOADS** has been recognized for his work in the Rankin County School District. Mr. Rhoads is an art teacher at Puckett Attendance Center and has been a member of MPE since 1999. Mr. Rhoads has over 20 years of experience teaching art in the Jackson Public Schools and the Rankin County School District. Chuck has been able to develop partnerships with the Solar Institute, Keep Mississippi Beautiful, and the VSA Arts of Mississippi which have given resources and exposed students at his school to experiences they would not normally receive.

A resident of Houston, **JENNIFER PRATT** has been recognized for her work in the Houston School District. Ms. Pratt teaches all core subject courses for grades 7 through 12 at Houston Alternative School. She has been a member of MPE since 1999 and currently serves as her school’s MPE building representative. Ms. Pratt was nominated by Michelle Malone who says that her nominee is “an educator to some, a teacher to most, a friend to many, and an inspirational mentor to all!”

A resident of Columbus, **BRUCE MIZE** has been recognized for his work in the West Point School District. He is a history teacher at West Point High School and has been a member of MPE since 2000. Bruce is the History Department Chair, Student Government Association sponsor, and Chairman of the Leadership Team. Mr. Mize was nominated by Mario Willis who says that he has personally seen his nominee “show passion and work tirelessly for student achievement.”
MPE is proud to congratulate and honor the following members who were named their respective district’s Teacher of the Year.

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<td>Courtney Kennard Honnoll</td>
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<td>Angela Mangum</td>
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<td>Stacy McDaniel</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
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<td>Daphne Nelson</td>
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<td>Glenda Richard</td>
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<td>Vicky Burns Shea</td>
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<td>Shirley Smith</td>
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<td>Tracy Stockstill</td>
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<td>Cynthia Hatten Sutfin</td>
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<td>Yolanda Taylor</td>
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<td>Hugh O. Thoms</td>
<td>Richton</td>
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<td>Stacey Todd</td>
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<td>Sonya Williams</td>
<td>Lee County</td>
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<td>Tokie Young-Butler</td>
<td>McComb</td>
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MPE WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

ERICA ARMSTRONG – DISTRICT 2
A member of MPE since 2006, Erica Armstrong serves as an assistant principal at Olive Branch Intermediate School in DeSoto County. Erica earned her Bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education and her Master’s degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Mississippi. She is currently working on her Specialist in Educational Leadership at Arkansas State University.

BECKY HAYES – DISTRICT 4
Becky Hayes just completed her first year on the MPE board and has been re-elected for a 3-year term representing District 4. Becky received her Bachelor of Science degree from MUW in 1989 and her Master of Education degree from Mississippi State in 1993. She received her National Board Certification in 2004. Becky has been a member of MPE since 1989 and teaches 2nd and 3rd grade gifted at Hew Hope Elementary in Lowndes County.

BRAD JOHNS – DISTRICT 6
A member of MPE since 1994, Brad Johns serves as the chair of the math department at McLaurin High School in Rankin County. He earned his Bachelor’s degree in Mathematics, his Master of Mathematical Education, and his Educational Specialist in Educational Leadership from Mississippi College. Mr. Johns earned his National Board Certification in Early Adolescence Mathematics in 2008, and he is currently pursuing his doctorate.

DR. BARRY MORRIS – DISTRICT 8
Dr. Barry Morris is returning to the Board to represent District 8. A member of MPE since 2005, he previously served as MPE President in 2010. Dr. Morris is the Dean of the School of Education at William Carey University. He earned his Bachelor’s degree in English from Mobile College, his Master of Science degree in Reading, Early Childhood and Elementary Education from the University of Southern Mississippi, and his Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Elementary Education from the University of South Florida.
MPE elected its 2012-2013 officers and new board members at its 2012 Best Practices Symposium held April 14 at the Jackson Hilton. Those elected as officers are: President, Dr. Benny Hornsby, Chair of the Social Studies Department at Pearl River Community College; President-elect, Deedre’ Walsh Coll, a K-1 Teacher at Oak Grove Primary School; Secretary-Treasurer, Donna Robbins, a 1st Grade Teacher at Clinton Park Elementary; Past-President, Sonya Swafford, Curriculum Coordinator for Bell Academy Magnet School in Cleveland and an Adjunct Instructor at Delta State University. Members elected for three-year terms to the Board of Directors are: Erica Armstrong, Assistant Principal at Olive Branch Intermediate School, representing District 2; Becky Hayes, a 2nd and 3rd Grade Gifted Teacher at New Hope Elementary, representing District 4; Brad Johns, Chair of the Math Department at McLaurin High School, representing District 6; and Dr. Barry Morris, Dean of the School of Education at William Carey University, representing District 8.
GENERAL BILL HIGHLIGHTS
As of April 25, 2012

HB 696 prohibits school administrators and certain other faculty, staff and employees of a local school district from influencing the grade received by a student from a teacher and prescribes the circumstances under which a teacher may change a student’s grade. (Due from Governor on April 26)

HB 707, the “School Start Date Act of 2012,” provides that, effective with the 2014-2015 school year, no public elementary or secondary school under the jurisdiction of the State Board of Education may begin a new school year before the third Monday in August. (Enrolled bill sent to Governor)

HB 1031 establishes the Mississippi Dyslexia Therapy Scholarship for Students with Dyslexia Program to provide dyslexic students with school choice. The bill creates a scholarship/voucher system so that state funds would follow a student to a private school specializing in dyslexia therapy. It requires that all compulsory-school-age children be screened for dyslexia during the period between the 2nd semester of kindergarten and final semester of grade 1, as well as other appropriate times as deemed necessary in the public schools. (Bill in conference)

HB 1095 authorizes the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning to allow institutions to waive out-of-state tuition when accordance with a waiver policy is requested by the president or chancellor of the institution and determined to be fiscally responsible by the board. (Signed by Governor on March 30)

HB 1152, the “Mississippi Public Charter School Act of 2012,” authorizes charter schools throughout the state. The bill also exempts 50% of teachers and 100% of administrators in charter schools from state certification requirements. (Bill in conference)

SB 2313 provides for the appointment of all superintendents of schools from and after January 1, 2016, and authorizes a referendum on the question of retaining the office of elected county superintendent of education in counties pursuant to petition prior to January 1, 2015. The House amended the bill to create a Joint Legislative Task Force on School Superintendents to evaluate and assess the effectiveness of school superintendents, both elected and appointed, throughout the state, in order to make a valid determination of the feasibility of having all school superintendents to be an appointed office. (Bill in conference)

SB 2452 clarifies that local school districts may deduct the cost of substitute licensed employees from the salary of such employee for the first 10 days of absence due to sick leave and shall deduct the cost of such substitute licensed employee for days of absence in excess of 10. (Signed by Governor on April 23)

SB 2761 establishes a Commission on School District Efficiency within the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA). It authorizes DFA to adopt purchasing regulations and to issue procurement cards to teachers on an annual basis for the purchase of teacher/classroom supplies. (Bill in conference)

SB 2792, the “Mississippi Works” bill, authorizes students to dually enroll in their home high school and a local community college in a dual credit program consisting of high school completion courses and a work skills certificate program. It establishes this dual credit option on a pilot program basis to be implemented statewide in the 2013-2014 school year. It provides state funding under the MAEP for the dual credit program. (Bill in conference)
Congratulations to the following recipients of the 2012 Undergraduate Scholarship Award. Each student member was awarded a scholarship in the amount of $500.

Susan Bane
Blue Mountain College

Lauren Beasley
University of Southern Mississippi

Lindy Coleman
Delta State University

Leah Gray
William Carey University

Brenda Herring
Belhaven University

Christine McIntyre
Mississippi College

Jennifer A. Williams
Mississippi Valley State University

Miriam J. Timmons
Alcorn State University

LeAnn E. Williams
Millsaps College

Molly Wilson
University of Mississippi

*Ilona Jones, Mississippi State University (No picture available)
MPE is proud to congratulate and honor the following members who were recognized in April by the Mississippi Economic Council as STAR (Student-Teacher Achievement Recognition) Teachers.

Linda K. Reed, Ackerman High School
Mary Beth Black, Amory High School
Thomas L. Woodward, Bay High School
Jeff W. Lollar, Blue Mountain High School
Stephen M. Adams, Bruce High School
Poonam Nandrajog, Byhalia High School
Annette C. Sellers, Caledonia High School
Doralyn S. Kildebrew, Central Holmes Christian
Denise Tucker, East Central High School
Kathy McKone, Enterprise High School
Lona M. Moffett, Enterprise High School
Corey W. Parish, Ethel High School
Brenda S. Mason, Eupora High School
Daniel J. Fuller, Forest Hill High School
Charles S. Moore, Franklin High School
Shannon K. Cox, Germantown High School
Lisa S. Wilbourn, Grenada High School
Jamie E. Sample, Kosciusko High School
Kristin P. Walters, Kosciusko High School
Lydia R. King, Loyd Star High School
Dennis W. Reed, MS School for Math & Science
Kristy L. Rowland, Mooreville High School
Betty L. Luke, Nanih Waiya High School

Robert E. Hinton, New Hope High School
Ester M. Potts, New Site High School
Chad D. Bond, Newton County High School
James J. Lowery, North Forrest High School
Erin T. Fortenberry, North Pike High School
Jeannie M. Thompson, North Pontotoc High School
Jessica C. Stroo, Northeast Jones High School
Jennifer C. Wilson, Northwest Rankin High School
Brandon C. Webb, Oak Grove High School
Deborah A. Powell, Ocean Springs High School
Catherine A. Johnson, Pascagoula High School
Kim M. LaFontaine, Pearl High School
William E. Kirby, Petal High School
Gwendolyn Barron, Philadelphia High School
Doris M. Wheat, Presbyterian Christian High School
Chris J. Murphy, Raleigh High School
Lynn Zimmerman, Saint Martin High School
Brandy B. Clingan, South Pontotoc High School
Amanda G. Yielding, Tremont High School
Jeannie C. Sauls, Tupelo High School
Ann Habeeb, Vicksburg High School
Edith P. Fogarty, West Lauderdale High School
Thousands of graduates will walk across a stage this month with their diploma in hand and know they have taken a big step towards a successful future. It is a future that would not have been possible without the hard work of excellent educators across this state.

This school year, like most years, public education in Mississippi has faced varied and strong opinions on ways to improve student learning. The Mississippi Department of Education has supported many of those efforts.

The big education issue at the State Capitol this year was charter schools. The State Board of Education policy statement indicates support for quality charter schools in our state. Certainly, they can provide another strategy to ensure our children receive a quality education. However, charter schools are not for every school district.

Two important initiatives that will help ensure a quality education for our students have already been implemented in our public schools. Both will create higher standards for our students and provide you as educators the tools and resources necessary to help them surpass those standards.

The Common Core State Standards and Assessments are currently being used in every public kindergarten, first grade and second grade class across Mississippi. No longer will we wonder whether our children will be able to “make it” once they graduate. Through the full and appropriate implementation of Common Core and the corresponding assessments, our students will learn the exact same curriculum being taught in higher achieving states. This will allow Mississippi’s students to compete on a level playing field with students from across the country.

In Mississippi, and nationwide, we have too many bright students losing interest in school and dropping out. The Excellence for All system allows these students to learn and move at their own pace, essentially giving a potential dropout the same opportunity to graduate as every other student. Excellence for All gives students three paths to a better future. From the beginning of their ninth grade year, students can progress towards a high school diploma in four years, they can earn experience in vocational/technical areas that will lead to the workplace after graduation or they can earn a high school diploma as early as the end of their tenth grade year and begin college level courses. We are working with Gulfport, Corinth and Clarksdale high schools as they implement this initiative, and the results so far, are impressive.

Without professional educators who are serious about preparing our children to be successful, neither Excellence for All nor Common Core would be a reality. The Mississippi Department and State Board of Education recognize that we have outstanding educators in classrooms across the state. We know that with highly effective programs that are appropriately implemented by great educators, we are on the cusp of taking the next big step in terms of making our public schools a world class system.

Thank you for all you do to ensure a successful future for Mississippi’s students. Please accept my best wishes for a safe and fun summer. I trust this break will provide a time of rest and renewal for each of you.
I hope by the time you receive this edition of the MPE Journal, the Legislature will have concluded its 2012 session. Because this is the first year after statewide elections, this session was scheduled to last 120 days instead of the normal 90 days.

Governor Phil Bryant has stressed the importance of helping people who have dropped out of high school or are at risk of dropping out, to earn a skill so they can become productive members of society. As I write this, two bills are working their way through the Legislature to create what is being called the “Mississippi Works” Dual Enrollment-Dual Credit Option Program. This pilot program would allow students to simultaneously enroll in high school and a local community college in a dual credit program to earn a work skills certificate. If they successfully complete the required studies, these individuals would have a valuable credential which will make them more employable. This pilot program will certainly benefit those students who are at risk of dropping out of high school, and our community colleges are happy to be involved with this project, should one of these bills become law.

The state’s revenue projections continue to be met. In March, the Legislative Budget Committee increased the overall estimate for FY 2012 by $99 million and FY 2013 by $126 million. It is my hope that with additional money in the state’s coffers, more funds will be allocated to all three educational entities. There is no better investment the state can make than with our educational system.

On July 1, Dr. Phil Sutphin, East Central Community College president, will retire after leading the college for the past twelve years. Among some of his achievements while leading the college were record enrollment increases. Dr. Billy Stewart, Vice-President for Administration and Finance at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, has been chosen as the new president by East Central’s board of trustees. I congratulate Dr. Stewart on his new position and am confident that he will be a great leader for the college and also wish Dr. Sutphin the best during his retirement!

As the school year winds down, I thank all of our teachers for the outstanding job you do. Each of you is so vital to the bettering of our state. I hope that everyone has a good and productive summer!
EDUCATION HOLDS KEY TO FUTURE FOR INDIVIDUALS AND MISSISSIPPI

As you wrap up the 2011-2012 school year, you can look forward to the opportunities the summer will bring, whether that means a time of relaxation with friends and family, taking classes in pursuit of an advanced degree or planning for next year’s classes. As the recession gradually comes to an end, Mississippi can look forward to increased economic development and an improved quality of life. However, just as you have grades and final reports to complete before you can begin enjoying the summer, Mississippi has many things to do before the economy will improve significantly.

As Mississippi continues to move from a low-skill, low-wage economy to a higher-wage, middle-skill economy, it is more important than ever that we increase the number of Mississippians who hold a valued credential beyond a high school diploma. Economists predict that 54 percent of Mississippi jobs will require some postsecondary training in 2018.

Massachusetts is often at or near the top of all the lists you would like to be number one on, while Mississippi is often at or near the bottom of those same lists. The reverse is true of the lists where you do not want to be number one.

The median income in Massachusetts is $62,000 per year, while in Mississippi, it is only $36,000. They rank as the seventh highest in the country, while we rank 50th. Our unemployment rate is 11 percent, while their unemployment rank is only six percent.

With one in five Mississippians living below the poverty line, we rank at the top of this list. Only one in 10 Massachusetts residents lives below the poverty line, ranking at number 41 on the list. Mississippi has the highest infant mortality rate, at 11 percent. Massachusetts ranks number 47, with an infant mortality rate of five percent. It is not surprising to learn that 38 percent of adults in Massachusetts hold at least a bachelor’s degree and that only 19 percent of adult Mississippians hold at least a bachelor’s degree. They rank number three; we rank number 47. Imagine how many of the first statistics mentioned that we could change by changing the last one.

Clearly, just as an individual needs an education to reach his or her full potential, Mississippi needs to have a greater percentage of adults with at least some post-secondary education to reach our full potential. We have a shrinking population of school-age children, so the largest pool we have to draw from to increase the percentage of Mississippians with a degree is the adults age 24-45. We must help Mississippians over age 24 that have some college credit, but no degree, enroll in our university system and complete the coursework necessary to graduate. Mississippi Public Universities have a number of programs and services to help them navigate enrollment, financial aid and managing all of the other issues that adult learners face.

As a teacher at any level from pre-school to post-graduate, you are helping to improve Mississippi’s economy every day. But think for a moment about your friends, church members and family members. I am certain that you know at least a few who have attended college, but no degree, enroll in our university system and complete the coursework necessary to graduate. Mississippi Public Universities have a number of programs and services to help them navigate enrollment, financial aid and managing all of the other issues that adult learners face.

As a teacher at any level from pre-school to post-graduate, you are helping to improve Mississippi’s economy every day. But think for a moment about your friends, church members and family members. I am certain that you know at least a few who have attended college, but did not earn a degree. I hope you will encourage anyone who fits this description to explore the possibility of returning to the classroom. It is the best investment of time and money they can make, for their own future and Mississippi’s future.
MISSISSIPPI PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS’  
NEW CLASSROOM GRANT PROGRAM

MPE invites its members to apply for our classroom grant program to try out a new idea or buy the “extras” for an already great lesson plan or project. Up to 16 $500 grants will be awarded to teachers or instructors to enhance their instructional program.

The deadline to apply is August 31, 2012. For more information, please visit our website at www.mpe.org

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MEL BUCKLEY SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

Joey Hutto with Ross & Yerger Insurance presented two Mel Buckley Scholarship Awards in April. Hutto, Senior Vice President with Ross & Yerger Insurance, and the Tupelo based CREATE Foundation established the $500 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. This year’s recipients are Holly Harrington and Mary Holliman Lanphere.

Holly will be attending the University of Mississippi this fall. She has been a dancer for fifteen years and has been in the Varsity and Concert Choirs, Madrigal Singers, and the Wave Connection Showchoir throughout high school. Miss Harrington also plays piano and is actively involved in the Tupelo High School theatre department.

Mary Holliman will be attending Mississippi State University this fall. She is actively involved in the youth group at Harrisburg Baptist Church and dances at the North Mississippi Dance Centre. She is a member of the Anchor Club and the Spanish National Honor Society. Miss Lanphere is an officer for the Tupelo High School Fellowship of Christian Athletes, the Crown Club of Tupelo, and the Tupelo High School National Honor Society.
Why MPE?

The premier package of benefits for the least amount of money!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2011 - 2012 DUES</th>
<th>MPE</th>
<th>OTHER ORGANIZATIONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional with liability insurance</td>
<td>$120</td>
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<tr>
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<td>$232* - $264*</td>
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<td>Retired Educator without insurance</td>
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<td>$60*</td>
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* May not include local dues

- Professional liability protection of $2 million with $3 million maximum (other organizations provide only $1 million with $3 million maximum)
- Legal assistance related to employment or professional matters per MPE policy
- $10,000 in accidental death & dismemberment coverage (one organization offers as an optional benefit at an additional cost and one provides AD&D benefits to new members for one year)
- $2,500 assault related property damage (5x the coverage of another organization)
- Only organization to provide identity theft coverage with membership
- Graduate & Undergraduate Scholarships awarded annually
- Unlimited professional advice available 24 hours per day/7 days per week (included with membership)
- Every dollar of your dues stays in Mississippi for your benefit!
- MPE does not utilize dues to support political candidates.