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MPE Journal

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Ray & Stacy Reeves

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President**

YOUR MISSISSIPPI PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS ORGANIZATION

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Executive Director
Judy Rhodes

Frank H. Williamson, Editor

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Cover photograph by Jan Lennon at William Carey College,
Hattiesburg, MS

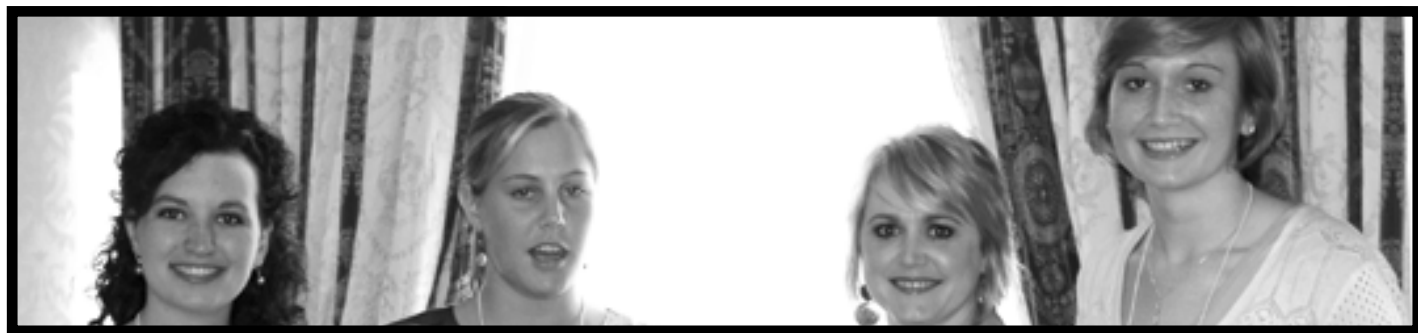
MPE NEWS . . .

Angela Lynn Sims was recently selected AEE Teacher of the Year at Star Reach, 663 Magnolia Road, Laurel, MS 39443. She has been teaching grades 2-6 at Star Reach for seven years. The Jones County Elementary Schools bus a different grade to Star Reach each day.

Stacy Reeves attended the International Reading Association's Governmental Relations Workshop in Washington DC, on February 21 through 25, 2006.

Stacy learned about discussing important educational issues with Mississippi's elected politicians. She spoke with staffers from Senator Lott's office, Senator Cochran's office, and Representative Taylor's office.

She discussed educational issues including teacher pay, funding for schools, and literacy.



2006 MPE Scholarship Winners



Heather Cook

William Carey College; Who's Who Among HS Students 2000 & 2001; US Navy Certificate of Achievement 2001; Academic Scholarships to both SMCC & WCC.



Lori Murrah

Mississippi College; Presidents' Scholar; teaches Bible School at her church; had a career as an accountant before discovering that she wanted to be a teacher.

Casey Herring

Belhaven College; Dean's List 2005; active in her church as a Sunday School teacher; plans to obtain a Master's Degree and become a Principal.



Ashley Runnels

Millsaps College; Dean's List 2005; works in the Education Dept. at Millsaps; volunteers for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.



Treasure Stringer

Delta State University; National Dean's List 2002-2006; President of MPE of DSU; Student Senator; active in several on-campus children's programs.

Nicole McCray (not pictured)

Jackson State University; Dean's List; active in her church daycare; changed her major to Education from Accounting while working as a student in an Elementary School.

**As members of MPE, benefits have
been enhanced
effective July 1, 2006.**



\$10,000 - Accidental Death & Dismemberment Coverage, (AD&D)

\$ 2,500 - Assault Related Property Damage (excess over any existing collectable insurance)

\$20,000 - Criminal Act Defense (increased from \$10,000)

\$ 5,000 - Bail Bond (increased from \$1,000)

These enhancements are, of course, over and above your \$2,000,000 Professional Liability Coverage, and Legal Services Reimbursement provisions.

MISSISSIPPI BOARD OF EDUCATION BUDGET REQUEST

At its July 21 board meeting, The Mississippi Board of Education approved the K-12 budget request for the FY 2007-08. This is a bold, but necessary and reasonable request for the K-12 education system. The State Board prioritized its request, with the full-funding of MAEP being top priority. The MAEP represents the absolute minimum that we must provide to school districts in order to provide the educational services that we require and expect. Additionally, the State Board included a request for a teacher pay raise for the 2007-08 School year, and requested that a plan be developed to move our teacher pay toward the Southeastern Average.

While the requested increase is significant, the State Board is fulfilling its duty to request funding that will continue to move our system forward.

**STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Funding Priorities
Fiscal Year 2008**

1. Full funding of MAEP (Total Cost \$2,176,836,698)	\$ 158,070,411
2. School Improvement Programs	
a. Increase at risk allocation by an additional 5%	\$ 70,342,752
b. Fund a statewide pilot pre-kindergarten program	\$ 10,000,000
c. High School Redesign	\$ 24,000,000
d. Restore EEF Teacher Supply Funds diverted to MAEP	\$ 21,206,759
3. Restore Public School Building Funds	\$ 20,000,000
4. Teacher Pay Increase* (each one percent cost \$11 million)	\$ 33,000,000
TOTAL COST OF BOARD FUNDING PRIORITIES	\$ 336,619,992
Other 2008 Requested not included above	\$ 23,184,713
TOTAL REQUESTED INCREASE OVER FY 07 LEVEL	\$ 359,804,635

* The State Board of Education supports a minimum of a 3% teacher pay increase, and a plan to bring teacher salaries in line with Southeastern average within five (5) years.

The PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dr. Stacy Reeves



There is a Chinese proverb that states: “*Teachers open the door. You enter by yourself.*” As teachers, we try to open all of the doors that stand before us and before our students. We open the doors of wisdom and knowledge and close the doors of ignorance and apathy. We open the doors to futures of happiness and prosperity and close the doors of hardship and poverty. Teachers change the world one student at a time, and by the close of our careers, we have impacted thousands of students.

We work diligently (year-round) to be prepared, educated, highly-qualified, and ready for the amazing career that we have selected. We strive to be the best in our classrooms, schools, and communities. We work hard to show students and their guardians that we care about their futures and that is why we push them to be their best and to give their best at all times. We never give up on others.

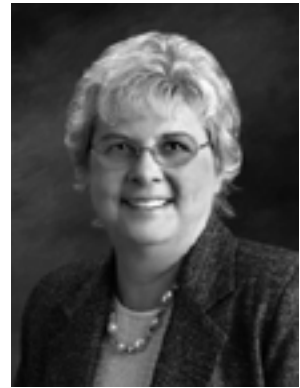
As we begin another school year, we think of the one just past and how important it is to make this one better than the last. Even if last year was the finest one of your teaching career, the one that lies ahead could far surpass it if you make up your mind that it will be so. Teachers will achieve in even greater ways than ever before through Bachelors, Masters, Specialists, and Doctorial degrees. More and more teachers attempt and achieve National Board Certification. More teachers in our state win national and international competitions and prizes. This year holds great potential for you.

As your MPE president for the 2006-2007 year, I am convinced that this year will be better than the last in terms of new members and higher levels of participation by our current members. Every organization has transitions, and it is in changing that we grow. The March 2006 MPE Convention signaled the retirement of long-time Executive Director, Dr. Mel Buckley. Mel was an exceptional director. He emphasized and reemphasized to the MPE Board that our focus has always been on helping children and teachers. Mel helped us to become the strong educational organization that we are with over 7,300 members. He served us well. He is leaving MPE stronger and better than when he found it. We all thank him for his leadership, dedication, service, and friendship.

We are honored to have Ms. Judy Rhodes as our new Executive Director. We are sure that Judy will lead and serve MPE with style, class, and many other excellent skills. She has already proven her leadership ability and her dedication to MPE over the past year by assisting Mel and the Board in every aspect. She has transitioned in to the Executive Director's position exceptionally well. We are looking forward to many happy years of her guidance and service.

As my long-time friends on the MPE Board transition out of active service on the Board of Directors, I must say “Thank you!” from the bottom of my heart for your support, help, guidance, and faithfulness to this amazing group of teacher-leaders. As a teacher, you have opened the door, and now enter in to a new year of rewards and joys for a job “Well-done.”

From the Desk of the Executive Director,



As of July 1, 2006, as a member of MS Professional Educators, you will now automatically be covered for a \$10,000 Accidental Death and Dismemberment Policy. This coverage is provided through our professional liability carrier and will be at no cost to members. Other new benefits include assault-related property coverage and an increase in criminal act defense and bail bond coverage. We continue to strive to increase your benefits as the premier educational organization in Mississippi.

Work continues on our recruitment efforts. The MPE Area Directors and I visited each Desoto County school in May, and recruited a number of new members and building representatives. We are planning a number of other visits around the state this coming school year. If you would like a scheduled visit to your school, please let me know. You may e-mail me at judy@mpe.org or call our office at 800-523-0269. **REMEMBER- IF YOU RECRUIT 5 NEW MEMBERS – YOUR NEXT YEAR’S MEMBERSHIP IS FREE!!**

We had a number of MPE Board members end their term this past March and new board members elected at our Annual Convention. A “special thanks” goes to Corey Crowder, Wanda Burkhalter, Joan Fabbri, Gil Aguirre, and Justin Evans for their service to the organization and in guiding MPE forward. I look forward to working with our new board members as we continue to improve services to our members. The next issue of the MPE Journal will feature our new board members. They are: Deborah Roane, District 2; Amy Prisock, District 4; Lia Landrum, District 5; Becky Fields, District 6; and Dr. Barry Morris, District 8.

I also want to welcome Teresa Bryant to our Area Director staff. Teresa has been a long-time member of MPE, and is now retired and living in the gulf coast area. I know she will do an excellent job in recruiting for and promoting MPE. Unfortunately, Billy Sills is no longer working with MPE. Billy has done an outstanding job as an Area Director for a number of years, and will be seriously missed by the organization.

As we approach the start of school, it also becomes “budget season” at the state level, for the 2007-08 Fiscal Year. Generally, the Legislative Budget Committee will hold budget hearings for each agency beginning in September. It would be an excellent time to contact your legislators and encourage them to support full-funding of MAEP, as well as, Community College and University needs. I applaud the State Board of Education for supporting full-funding of MAEP and for promoting further enhancements to teacher pay.

I wish each of you a productive school year as you continue to provide educational opportunities for our youth.

**Your local news events are important.
Feel free to share.**

**SEND YOUR NEWS AND PHOTOS
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Using Word Walls to Develop Vocabulary

by Mary Gail Smith

In today's classroom, high-frequency words, those words that beginning readers and writers need to know by heart and which do not always have predictable spelling patterns, account for about half of the words used. It has become imperative for teachers to find effective strategies to help students learn these words which are so important for them to become successful readers and writers.

One of the most effective methods of teaching these high-frequency and sight words is through the use of a Word Wall. Word Walls are organized collections of frequently used words, written in large bold letters and displayed in the classroom (Kieff, 2003/2004). Teachers and students alike are able to use the Word Wall as a reference point for teaching, studying, and completing assignments.

Teachers create and use Word Walls to help develop in students a growing core of words that become part of their reading and writing vocabulary. They are instrumental in helping students to recognize and correctly spell the words that are frequently used, and to see patterns and relationships between words and categories of words. Word Walls promote independent work habits by providing a readily available reference as students complete their reading and writing activities.

A Word Wall is not just a great primary grade learning tool. Teachers across the grades use them throughout their curriculum. Many elementary and middle schools require their teachers to include Word Walls in their classrooms (Hopkins, 2004). Teachers have found that seeing words on the wall helps their students become excited about words and to understand that words are important and can be used over and over again. Word Walls provide extra exposure and challenge for students who are at many different skill and interest levels.

There are a variety of ways for teachers to develop Word Walls. However, there are some guidelines that should be observed when creating these walls (Wagstaff, 1999). Words should be added gradually, approximately five a week. It is essential for the teacher to do many different activities with these weekly words for the children to be able to spell, read, and write them well. Words should be made accessible by putting them where every student can see them, writing them in large black letters and using a variety of background colors. Many teachers cut the

word cards according to their word shape. Also, the teacher should be selective about what words to put on the wall, limiting additions to common words which the children use frequently in writing.

It is not enough to simply have a Word Wall in a classroom. Patricia Cunningham says that "doing the Word Wall is not the same as having a Word Wall" (2000, p. 58). Teachers need to directly teach activities that will actively engage students. She further suggests such activities as clapping and chanting out the spelling of the words orally and writing the words on a daily basis (2002).

Word Walls have become a popular tool to teach literacy strategies in today's classrooms (Brabham & Villaume, 2001). Teachers display selected words on a wall or bulletin board and use them as the basis of word identification study. They become a kind of visual scaffolding that provides students with a reference for words they will need for literacy activities and helps them to make the transition to more independent reading and writing.

Pinnell and Fountas (1998) encourage teachers to think of Word Walls as "interactive" since they are meant to be used actively by both teachers and students. They suggest

that in order to be effective, the teacher must call attention to each word placed on the wall and help the students learn it. The teacher must continue to remind students about the words and encourage them to use these words in their reading and writing.

In conclusion, Word Walls are a wonderful tool for helping students develop an ever-increasing base of vocabulary. They help develop proficient readers and writers, and help them become increasingly more self-reliant by using a reference tool that is independent of the teacher. Walls covered with words are one part of creating a print-rich environment for students. Being exposed to that kind of environment is a critical component of emerging literacy.

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Gail Smith received her BA degree in Liberal Arts from University of Pacific, Stockton, CA.

She presently lives in Soso, MS with husband Gary. She is the mother of two daughters, Mandy and Lisa; and the grandmother of two granddaughters, Jaycee and Alexis.

Gail has taught at West Jones Elementary School in Jones County for the past 6 years, and currently teaches Second Grade.

Gail has been an MPE member since 2005.



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GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE FROM NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF JUNIOR AUXILIARIES

The Greenville, Mississippi-based **National Association of Junior Auxiliaries Inc.** is accepting applications for its Graduate Scholarship Program. Applicants must be pursuing graduate-level studies for one year in fields which address the special needs of children and youth.

Graduate fields of study include, but are not limited to, counseling, psychology, mental development, mental retardation, speech pathology, exceptional children, remedial skills development, hearing impaired, and gifted and talented. Scholarships are not awarded for graduate work in administration or in general education.

Applicants must be a permanent U.S. citizen and a permanent resident of states with chapters of nonprofit Junior Auxiliary. Those states are Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Florida, Tennessee, Missouri and Texas.

Scholarship grants are awarded annually to persons who work, or plan to work, directly with children. The NAJA Scholarship Program was begun in 1962 and has awarded more than \$741,000.

Instructions and application forms are available only from Sept. 1 through Feb. 1 from the NAJA Web site. Go to www.najanet.org.

MPE MEMBERS ARE LEADERS IN ECONOMIC EDUCATION

by Pamela P. Smith, Ph.D.

*President, Mississippi Council on Economic
Education*

Teachers across the state are teaching their students skills that will help them become economically and financially literate citizens and MPE members are doing well in this exciting area. When people are able to function effectively in the free enterprise system, they are more likely to lead happy and successful lives. For two and one-half years, the Mississippi Council on Economic Education (MCEE), the state's only non-profit organization sponsored by the business and education community, has provided professional development to teachers so they can learn skills and use interactive resources to teach students about economics and financial education. MPE teachers have excelled MCEE's premiere state-wide program, the Mississippi Stock Market Simulation.



Dr. Pamula Smith

Mary Harmon, gifted teacher at South Pontotoc Elementary, had the winning team for the Mississippi Stock Market Simulation in fall 2005. Her fourth and fifth grade students, the Moola Makers, grew their \$100,000 portfolio to \$149,690 in ten weeks. Her students came in second overall in the 2005-2006 competition. The team that won the competition grew their portfolio to \$152,093 and they will travel to New York City as grand prize winners.

Students whose teachers learn how to conduct the Simulation, invest in the real market using a web site for ten weeks. Working in teams, students learn math, communication, research, computer and business skills. "Teachers who are interested in helping their students test their skills in the world of business are rewarded by using the Simulation," said Pamela Smith, President of the Mississippi Council. "Teachers tell us that this program helps them reach students in ways that textbook lessons cannot do. Student interest in learning increases as does student attendance when they are engaged in the Simulation," said Smith.

Prizes and recognition for the students are also part of the program. Each week during the competition, *The Clarion-Ledger*, has an ad of the standings of the top teams. Harmon and her students will be honored at the winner's luncheon and will be presented with a check for \$150. In

addition, two of Mary's students won \$500 scholarships for essays on "What I Learned in the Mississippi Stock Market Simulation."

The students tell the story as to why the Mississippi Stock Market Simulation is the premiere educational program to help students learn skills about the real world and business in the classroom.

Alex Buckner, fourth grade student at South Pontotoc Elementary said, "Buy low and sell high! My teacher made us repeat this every day. We learned that stock prices changed constantly, so we had to keep an eye on them every day. Learning to do research, knowing what affects the stocks and buying low and selling high are things that will help me someday when I invest my own money," said Buckner.

Benjamin Bowen, also one of Mary Harmon's students, won a \$500 scholarship for his essay and he shared advice, "Remember, buy low, sell high, and check your stocks!"

Regional workshops are held in the spring and fall for teachers to learn how to bring the Simulation to their students. Virtually any subject area can integrate the Simulation into their lessons. It is open for teachers of students in grades 4 through 12. At the workshops, teachers are provided with lessons that they can use to help their students understand the free enterprise system and also taught how to use the website where research on stocks can be done and where trades are made. Check the Mississippi Council on Economic Education: www.msccouncil.org for workshops or e-mail the office and you will be notified of the schedule: msccouncil@mscee.org

Sponsors of this year's competition are: Entergy, International Paper, JBHM Education Group, Trustmark and The Clarion-Ledger. MPE Executive Director, Judy Rhodes, is a member of the Board of Directors for the MCEE.

REDESIGNING EDUCATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY WORKFORCE IN MISSISSIPPI

By Dr. Hank M. Bounds
State Superintendent of
Education

At the Mississippi Board of Education meeting held in May, I unveiled a draft plan for redesigning education for today's workforce. We discussed why these changes are necessary and what can be



accomplished for education and for the state by redesigning education.

I asked the Board members to imagine the headlines for K-12 education that they would like to see in 10 years, then shared with them the headline I envision: “Mississippi public schools break into the top 15 on national assessments.” There are also a number of subheads that correlate: “Mississippi’s dropout rate drops by 50 percent;” “State-funded Pre-K program moves Mississippi forward;” “Economic development improves; education cited as primary cause.”

But one large question looms over all of these: How do we get from where we are to where we want to be? The draft implementation plan, “Redesigning Education for the 21st Century Workforce in Mississippi,” addresses this question.

First, let’s look at where we are. While we have been making strides in student achievement, particularly in closing the achievement gap, we still rank close to the bottom on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). NAEP exams are considered the nation’s report card. Even with the recent teacher salary increase, we still rank close to the bottom in average teacher salary. We have far too many students who are not receiving a high school diploma. We stand now at a crossroads. We can either take the stance that Mississippi has always been and will always be close to the bottom on any national measure or we can believe that we can make the changes necessary to improve the educational system, economic development and quality of life in our state dramatically.

I believe we can change the face of Mississippi, beginning in our schools. It won’t be easy or cheap. But it can and must be done.

There are four overriding issues that must be addressed:

- We must increase the rigor of the curriculum and assessments.
- We must increase the quantity and quality of our teachers.
- We must increase the quantity and quality of our administrators.
- We must change our culture from one that does not value education to one that does.

We begin by strengthening pre-kindergarten programs. Some children grow up in print-rich environments and are read to from birth. Some do not. Some children arrive at the first day of kindergarten molded, refined and ready to learn. Some do not. Mississippi is one of the few states that do not offer universal pre-k programs. We should begin by at least offering pilot programs, even if we cannot fund a statewide pre-k program. I believe we will find the investment in pre-k will pay great dividends down the road through a reduction in need for social services, a reduction in crime and an increase in tax revenues as these children

grow into adults.

We help give students greater direction at the middle school level. Through career discovery courses, we help students explore the possibilities of what life can bring and help them see the relevance between what they are learning in class and what they will be doing in life.

In high school, we provide students with seven career pathways:

- Health Care
- Agriculture and Natural Resources
- Construction and Manufacturing
- Transportation
- Business Management and Marketing
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Math
- Human Services

We arrived at these seven pathways by looking at where the growth is and will be. We looked at which industries will have the job opportunities for today’s students. Then we looked at how to prepare these students to enter these jobs. Some will enter their careers by obtaining a four-year degree; some will enter their careers by going to a community college; others will enter the workforce directly from high school. We looked at how to prepare students for each of these three entry levels.

This represents a major shift in thinking. For too long, an individual’s career was chosen by how they were prepared. We want to prepare students for the career they choose.

One tool that we will use to do this is technology. We will use online counseling for both parents and children to help them make informed decisions throughout elementary, middle and secondary school. We will also use online courses to provide additional flexibility and prepare them to use technology throughout their careers. We plan to require each student in the ninth grade to take at least one online course and will be only the second state in the nation to do so.

This is a bold vision for education and for Mississippi. The educational system cannot accomplish this on its own. We need to reach out and join hands if we are going to change the face of education.

If we don’t dream for the children, who will?

JOINING MPE ONLINE

1. Go to www.mpe.org.
2. Click on login (right side of webpage).
3. Under “not yet a member”, click on the word [here](#).
4. Fill out MPE member registration form.
5. Click “Submit”.
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Mississippi Professional Educators' State Convention Saturday, March 11, 2006





Developing Comprehension

by Lauren Armstrong

The main objective of reading is comprehending what is read. Comprehension is a difficult process which requires active and deliberate cognitive attempt on the part of the reader (Lipson & Cooper, 2002). Comprehension can be taught and is often started even before the book is read. A variety of different strategies are used to teach comprehension. In order to help children develop comprehension, prior knowledge and vocabulary should be evaluated. Prior knowledge and vocabulary greatly influence reading comprehension (Lipson & Cooper, 2002).

Before a text is read the development of comprehension should begin. The comprehension process begins before reading by activating prior knowledge, making predictions, thinking aloud, and discussing meanings of key words (Manning, 1999). Prior knowledge is very important to a child's comprehension. Teachers must help build prior knowledge and experiences in children by discussing the topic to be read. Before reading, the teacher should gain an understanding of the children's experiences and knowledge on the subject. If the children are not knowledgeable in the area, the teacher should provide experiences for the children by reading other texts about the subject. Once the children have the prior knowledge needed about a subject, they may then make appropriate predictions about the text. Making predictions before reading also helps in developing comprehension, but cannot be done until prior knowledge is gained (Lenski & Nietheimer, 2004). Building the children's experiences and prior knowledge about the text will help in developing comprehension (Harp & Brewer, 2005).

Another major factor in developing comprehension is vocabulary (Lipson & Cooper, 2002). Most vocabulary must be learned indirectly through conversations, being read to, and working independently. Teachers must provide many opportunities for children to learn new words through creating a print rich environment and having many opportunities for independent reading. Some of the vocabulary children learn must be taught directly. Directly teaching vocabulary helps the children learn more difficult words and should be done before reading the text. Teachers should present words before reading and discuss the meaning of each word. Children should also be able to have hands-on experience with the words before reading a text (Reutzel & Cooter, Jr., 2004). Allowing children these opportunities can help develop vocabulary, which in turn leads to the development of comprehension.

Prior knowledge and vocabulary help in comprehension development, but children must also understand the different types of texts. Two of the types of texts that children read are narrative and expository. These texts are organized in different ways and comprehension of the text is easier if the children understand these patterns (Harp & Brewer, 2005). Expository texts are also patterned, but not necessarily with one pattern. Teaching children to look for different patterns in expository text increases their comprehension in this particular type of text.

Narrative texts are typically easier for children to read. They tell the setting, characters, problem, and solution. These texts are organized in a predictable pattern and as a child understands these patterns the text is easier to comprehend. Storybooks are usually written using this pattern. Teachers can use different strategies to help children understand the organization of the narrative texts. Story maps and discussion webs are ways to help children to better understand the organization of the text. As the child better understands the organization, the better the child will be at predicting throughout the story (Reutzel & Cooter, Jr., 2004).

Expository texts teach new information and are more difficult to read. These texts are organized in many different ways, such as description, sequence, comparison, cause and effect, and problem and solution (Tompkins, 2001). Teachers can help children better understand expository text by using different teaching strategies just as would be done in teaching comprehension of narrative texts.

Many strategies can be used to enhance comprehension before reading, but there are also those that are used in the midst. During reading, teachers should use questioning to help the students understand the text structure. Teachers should help students understand how to form images in their heads as the text is being read. Making inferences about what the student is reading helps the child to better understand what is being read. In order to make inferences the children must recognize clues and draw conclusions. Referring back to the predictions the children made and discussing which ones match what really happens, also helps in developing comprehension (Harp & Brewer, 2005).

Even though the text has been read, readers are not finished with a text. Developing comprehension continues even after reading is complete. Readers should reflect on what was read by discussing it with others. Recalling the sequence of events in stories is another important technique to help children comprehend and retell the story. Children must also learn to find the problem and solution after the story has been read. Engaging the students in these types of activities after the story has been read, helps in the developing of comprehension and also helps the teacher know how much the child understands what was read (Manning, 1999).

Supporting comprehension throughout the school year is a very important task for the teacher. The student must first be taught to comprehend. Teachers should never assume children know how to comprehend, but must always teach comprehension using skills and strategies. Teachers must continue to support comprehension and provide children with experiences and encouragement along the way. Teachers must always provide children with opportunities to read a variety of different types of texts. Classrooms should be filled with wonderful literature of all sorts, narrative and expository. Reading aloud to children of all ages is a fantastic gift any teacher can give. Building experiences and prior knowledge throughout the year can help in all children's development of comprehension (Lipson & Cooper, 2002).

Comprehension is the "essence of reading" and a complex process of understanding and making meaning from what is being read (Opitz & Rasinski, 1998). Teachers must teach comprehension to children using unique skills and strategies before, during, and after reading. Both narrative and expository text should be used in developing comprehension and there should be many opportunities for guided reading as well as independent reading. Teachers must help children develop prior knowledge and vocabulary in order to have successful readers and train children to comprehend better.

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Lauren Armstrong has been teaching for 2 years. She teaches first grade at Thames Elementary in Hattiesburg, MS. She is a new member of MPE. She holds a B.S. degree from Mississippi State University in Elementary Education and is working on a M.Ed. at William Carey College in Hattiesburg. She is active with the youth group and missional efforts at Heritage United Methodist Church where she is a member.

Hattiesburg, MS and Riverside, NJ are Closer than You Think

by Stacy Reeves

I attended the International Reading Association's Government Relations' Legislative Workshop in Washington, DC on February 21 through February 25, 2006. I met the most wonderful people from all over the United States. As I began to talk about the children, teachers, and schools of Mississippi, something was set in motion: the participants became focused on helping the people of MS. The group from New Jersey really impressed me with their interest in how Hurricane Katrina devastated our schools and left so many teachers and students homeless.

As I related the facts and told of particular schools, including Waveland Elementary School in Waveland, MS, the group from New Jersey reached out to me. One from their group quietly gave me a cash donation and said it was for my "hurricane fund". Others promised to help as soon as they got back to their cities and towns.

I began to keep in touch with these folks, Natalie, Kathy, and Tom. Natalie is working behind the scenes to see how IRA can help our state teachers through monetary donations. Kathy and Tom are working through West Jersey Reading Council to send each student at Waveland Elementary a book to take home for the summer and keep. That is 187 books! Tom and I began a pen pal partnership of teachers and children in MS matched to teachers and children in Riverside Elementary in Riverside, NJ. On the MS side, four teachers and sixty children sent letters which discussed many topics including the weather, "Does it snow there?"; food, "Do you have Ward's hamburgers?"; and Hurricane Katrina, "The wind blew the roof right off my Granny's house!" As of this writing, the return letters have not arrived, but I am looking forward to hearing about New Jersey eateries!

What I have learned is that the people outside of Mississippi want to know how we are managing, and what they can do to help. Most of them lack information. I will continue to speak loudly of my home state as one full of people of courage, endurance, and hopeful resolve to live through whatever may come. And I will continue to inform others how they can help us.



Murrah High School Receives Nationwide Recognition

Strong AP program puts Murrah on list of best schools in America

by Cathy Hayden, Staff Writer for the Clarion-Ledger
May 4, 2006, Section: Local, Page: 1B
chayden@clarionledger.com

Murrah High's commitment to push high school students into rigorous Advanced Placement courses earned the school a slot on **Newsweek** magazine's annual 1,000 best high schools in America list.

"To be recognized as one of the top 1,000 schools is awesome, especially the only one in Mississippi. We deserve to be recognized," said senior Jasmine Walker, 18, of her Jackson school.

Murrah High gives the most tests in the high-level courses of any school, public or private, in Mississippi, said Jaye Espy, educational manager for the New York-based nonprofit College Board, publisher of the AP curricula and exams.

Last year, that number of tests was 354. This year, it's 417 tests.

"That is outstanding," Espy said.

There are more than 28,000 high schools in the United States. To arrive at the top 1,000 high schools list, which is published in the May 8 edition, the magazine compared the numbers of tests to the size of the senior class, because mostly seniors take the tests, to come up with a national ranking.

Those impressive numbers put Murrah High at 503 on the 1,000-school list.

Many students take several AP exams, so the number of tests is more than the number of students.

Walker is among the Murrah students taking AP exams this year. Last year, she took the AP biology exam, scoring a 3 on a 5-point scale. That earns her college credit, if she

wants it, at all Mississippi universities. She is planning to major in psychology at the University of Southern Mississippi. This year she took the English language and the English literature exam.

Even if she doesn't get the college credit, "I would have had a leg up on the freshman year of college. I would be accustomed to working hard and achieving a lot," she said.

Christian Vance, 17, also took three exams this year.

"It's like, why not. Take a shot. You feel like you've got a good shot to do well," said Vance, who wants to major in criminal justice with a minor in chemistry at Jackson State University.

They credited a good teaching staff with their willingness to take the tests, which are optional and cost \$80 each.

"Without our teachers, we would not have good students," Walker said.



Dr. Roy Brookshire, Principal, Murrah High School

Editor's Note:

After visiting Murrah High School and reading the above article in the Clarion-Ledger, I am reminded of the movie, **The Rookie**. In that movie Jim Morris, the baseball legend, father, teacher and high school coach, was having problems reconciling his decision to remain a professional baseball player; he was about to give up the fulfillment of his lifelong dream of being a major league baseball player. After watching a little league baseball player in a game, he was reminded just how much fun playing baseball was.

Upon returning to the locker room, Jim Morris told his friend, "Guess what we get to do; we get to play baseball."

Dr. Roy Brookshire, the Principal of Murrah High School, said with a twinkle in his eye, and an enthusiasm in his voice, "we get to teach school today." This seems to be the feeling of the teachers in his school, as well. Every teacher shows enthusiasm about "getting to teach." Their enthusiasm shows in their school, and in the progress of their students.

Dr. Brookshire was asked what made his school so different from other schools in the State of Mississippi. He supplied the following information:

- In 2002 Murrah had only 12 Advanced Placement students; of those, 11 were AP scholars.
- In 2003 they had 21 AP students; 6 were AP scholars.
- In 2004 they had 28 AP students; 16 were AP scholars.
- In 2005 they had 36 AP students; 14 were AP scholars.
- In 2006 they had 64 AP students; they are anticipating have 25 to 30 AP scholars. (The test scores haven't come in yet.)

Dr. Brookshire said that all students are permitted to take Advanced Placement classes; he added that the experience of taking tougher classes gives his students the edge on any college courses they take later in the future.



Murrah High Schools AP Computer Class
Gwen Wyatt, Computer Teacher

BASE PAIR PROGRAM

Base Pair exists as a cooperative arrangement between the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMC) and the Jackson Public School District (JPSD).

The purpose of Base Pair is to facilitate unique, mentorship-based, educational opportunities between highly motivated public high school students and research faculty at UMC.

The objective is to utilize the resources of UMC, and other educational; and corporate entities to enhance the science education curriculum within the JPSD.

Each Fall Murrah High School enroll a select body of junior, and senior high school students, into an accredited preparatory class (Biomedical Research; 1 Carnegie credit) at Murrah High School. In addition to training in electronic communications and computer-based information retrieval, each student devotes a significant period of time to selection of an individual mentor. This process includes classroom study in basic elements of biomedical science, review of scientific publications authored by that potential mentor, and personal interviews with the faculty member. Visit the UMC Base Pair Web site at <http://basepair.library.umc.edu>



On Feb 24th, the Base Pair students at Murrah High School competed in divisional poster sessions of the Mississippi Academy of Sciences meeting at Vicksburg. Pictured from left to right are: Jonathan Priester (who won 1st place in the Cellular, Molecular and Developmental Biology division), Rachel Lockhart (who won 1st place in the Health Sciences division), LaRue Sutton (who placed 3rd in the Health Sciences division) and Jeff Stokes (Base Pair Lead Teacher at Murrah High School)

Integrating Children's Literature into the Elementary Content Areas

by Catrina Taylor

Today's classroom is no longer a place where reading and writing can only be taught in the reading or English class. In order to be effectively taught the two must be integrated into each and every class that the student attends. Many times the classroom is the least engaging and interesting part of a student's day; however, it is the most important part of their education. Students arrive with various degrees of learning levels. The classroom teacher must be prepared to teach and reach all levels. The only way for each student to excel on his or her level and have his or her learning level move forward is to make sure each subject is practicing reading and writing skills on a daily basis.

Tama and McClain (2001) defined content area literacy as the ability to use reading and writing to learn subject matter. It is considered to be a complex learning process dependent on a student's prior knowledge of, attitude toward, and interest in the subject. It is merely the teacher teaching the students what they need to do so they can understand all types of text including information and expository.

Integrating children's literature into all subject areas including math, science, social studies, English, reading, music, art, and P.E. has been proven to be an effective way to learn (Gabbei & Clemmens, 2005). Lowe and Matthew (2000) explain that by integrating children's literature into the content areas the information is being presented in a natural way that makes sense to the student. It makes it easier for teachers to help children develop depth and breadth in content areas. Through literature students will naturally acquire understanding and become personally involved in the topics they are studying. It is considered to be an ideal option for teaching content because it allows for interdisciplinary teaching, meeting all objectives (Manning & Manning, 1995).

It is much easier for the classroom teacher to integrate children's literature into his or her content area due to the vast variety of literature available today. Many websites and textbooks offer supplemental listings that correlate with the subject matter. The key to making the content seem real or "come alive" is to use appropriate supplemental books. The correct book will stimulate the students' interest in the topic and strengthen their reading ability (Manning & Manning, 1995). All books must intrigue, inform, and entertain students as they learn (Lowe & Matthew, 2000).

In order to correctly use children's literature in the classroom, the teacher must first understand the definition of each type of book. Lowe and Matthew (2000) wrote that storybooks must have a good story that students will

enjoy listening to, they must make sense, and they must be fun. Activity books must engage children in experimenting, interpreting, and exploring. Manning and Manning (1995) explain that topical and expository books should be used to encourage and promote interest when related to the subject matter. Biographies are most valuable when used to add significant insights about the subject matter that is informational and factual; whereas, fictional books help readers examine issues from different perspectives. Several factors must be considered prior to designing a literature based content curriculum. First, the teacher must be committed to integrating and using literature as a supplement to the curriculum. This will require time and research that not all teachers are willing to do. Second, planning is a must! The teacher must decide what concepts and skills are to be taught and mastered. Third, the teacher should consider how the community and public events can enhance the study. Finally, the teacher must recognize and accept that learning through a thematic type studies will reflect participatory learning (Models for implementing literature in content studies, 1994).

Thematic units or studies may be defined as "thematic units from a literacy standpoint, where effective teaching of language is organized around a central topic, idea, or theme that uses related activities and experiences to conduct a more in-depth study" (Gardner, Wissick, Schweder, & Canter, 2003. p. 1). Models for implementing literature in content studies (1994) explain thematic studies as having seven stages. Once a teacher has committed to the idea of integrating children's literature into the content area, he or she may want to commit to a thematic style of study.

Stage one is the planning stage of the thematic unit. The teacher identifies the thematic focus and considers needs, interests, and developmental levels of the students. The teacher should select one theme to meet focus of the unit. The theme should be presented in extended units so that the students have enough time to develop understanding and find connections to what they know and value (Gardner et al., 2003). The theme should be broad enough to incorporate many types of books, resources, and activities but not so broad that it loses sight of the area to be studied (Models for implementing literature in content studies, 1994).

Stage two constitutes the teacher selecting appropriate ability level literature that compliments the primary reading material (Models for implementing literature in content studies, 1994). According to Griffith and Horton, (2001) many academic shortfalls occur because the student is expected to read materials that are too advanced for his or her ability level. This results in severe student frustration and possible behavior problems. Often, the behavioral student's reading level is approximately one to two grade levels behind his or her grade placement. The teacher must address these issues and have books available for all

learning levels, both the extremely low and the advanced student.

Stage three is when the teacher brainstorms, define skills, chooses study objectives, and defines learning outcomes (Models for implementing literature in content studies, 1994). The thematic units should be built around the instructional objectives. These should include but not be limited to areas of listening and speaking, reading vocabulary, reading comprehension and response, writing, writing connections, and visuals (Griffith & Horton, 2001).

Stage four is the stage for the teacher to develop instructional lessons and activities, use content area knowledge and student input as a vehicle for learning, and apply various reading and learning strategies (Models for implementing literature in content studies, 1994). The instruction should be such that it capitalizes on a wide range of thinking skills; especially, the higher level thinking skills referred to as Bloom's Taxonomy (Ignatz, 2005). The instruction should stretch across the curriculum and include as many technology integrations as possible. These areas may include but are not limited to WebQuests, PowerPoint, Internet supervised research, and others (Gardner et al., 2003).

Stage five is used for establishing evaluation or assessment criteria to ensure skill objectives were met (Models for implementing literature in content studies, 1994). Depending on the skills taught the teacher should use a variety of assessment methods to evaluate the student. Performance assessment should be used by incorporating a Rubric that includes a checklist and a point system. This ensures the student understands exactly what is expected of him or her. The teacher may also incorporate self-evaluation, formal testing, and entrance and exit slips (Tama & McClain, 2001, pp. 352-386).

Stage six is for the purpose of collecting and organizing the resources and materials needed for implementation from a variety of sources. In this stage the teacher will arrange for guest speakers, field trips, and culminating activities (Models for implementing literature in content studies, 1994). "The teacher should be sure to utilize all school personnel such as fellow teachers, media specialist, curriculum specialist, and librarians. Request donations of magazines, books and other materials that will be needed" (Griffith, et al., 2001, p. 3). It is very important that all stages are complete two weeks prior to the beginning of the unit.

Finally, the last stage, stage seven, is the reflection stage for both the teacher and the student. The teacher will reflect upon the process, assess what actually happened against what was planned and expected to happen. A well planned unit allows the student to reflect on the learning process. They should be allowed to honestly state their feelings on the process and the learning outcome. Teachers

should use this information to analyze the unit and its' ability to supplement the material being taught (Models for implementing literature in content studies, 1994). In other words, was this a meaningful learning experience where students were excited about the materials and made connections between what they already knew and what they learned?

In conclusion, today's classroom is no longer a place where reading and writing can only be taught in the reading or English class. In order to be effectively taught the two must be integrated into each and every class that the student attends. Children's literature can be integrated into content classrooms in a number of ways. A classroom teacher with a desire to bring content to life can spark students' interest by using literature as a different tool to examine the content. The key is the realization that literature is a powerful tool for learning and that students bring a variety of experiences and perceptions to their reading (Models for implementing literature in content studies, 1994).

Catrina Taylor is a 6th grade teacher at West Jones Elementary School, located in the Jones County School District. She is a graduate of William Carey College, and is currently pursuing her Master's degree. She has been married for fifteen years to Jim Taylor, and they have three daughters, Ally, Kennedy, and Grace. They currently live in Soso, Mississippi. Catrina won the MPE scholarship for William Carey College in 2003.

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by Frank Williamson

On Sunday afternoon, May 7, 2006, the Area Directors for Mississippi Professional Educators gathered at the Sleep Inn in Horn Lake, Mississippi. The nine Area Directors visited 28 public schools in Desoto County on Monday through Wednesday, May 8-10, 2006.

On Monday morning the Directors went to their assigned schools to represent the MPE to the educators of Desoto County.

Many of the schools supplied teacher aids to cover the classes while the teacher visited with the Director; other schools allowed the Director to set up shop in the teachers' lounge or conference room, with the teachers coming in when they could for a visit.

The overall reception by teachers and schools was overwhelming, and the Directors feel the visits were extremely successful. A significant number of teachers and administrators joined MPE, and a number of new Building Representative were identified.

The Directors did, in fact, gather together after the school day to renew friendships. Many had attended grade school together, and hadn't seen each other for over 30 years.

The Area Directors greatly appreciate their reception by the administrators, teachers, and staff of the Desoto County Schools.

AREA DIRECTORS

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Teachers at Southaven Elementary School signing up as members of MPE when their school was visited on May 9, 2006. Pictured from left to right are Pam Hart, Vivian Parr, and Cindy Harper.

Check your MPE website:
www.mpe.org

Contact your MPE Area Representative or Area Membership Director when there is something of interest happening in your school. We support Mississippi schools and their teachers. You can contact the editor of the *MPE Journal* by E-mail :
frankhw1@earthlink.net.



The theme for Shadow Oaks Elementary School in Horn Lake is "Children First". This theme seems to be the objective for all of Desoto County Schools. This photo was taken from a mural on that school's halls.



Mississippi Public Broadcasting **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT UPDATES**

Mississippi e-Learning for Educators, a collaboration between Mississippi Public Broadcasting and the Mississippi Department of Education, is Mississippi educators' answer to online professional development. It is a web-based model of course instruction that targets improved content knowledge, improved teaching practices and increased student achievement. Teachers and administrators find the online environment a convenient way to receive professional development. The ability to access a course from a home computer via the Internet, 24 hours a day, is a tremendous incentive for educators with busy lives.

Courses are typically 6-7 weeks and are currently available to Mississippi teachers for a minimal fee. In some instances they may be offered at no cost, depending on availability of funds.

Examples of courses being piloted during the summer of 2006 are:

- "Differentiating Instruction to Accommodate Learning Styles"
- "Finding the Best Educational Resources on the Web"
- "Using Patterns to Develop Algebraic Thinking"
- "Inquiry in the Science Classroom Using Internet-Based Data Sources"
- "Helping Struggling Readers Improve Comprehension"

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· **Curriculum or Series Specific Workshops** – These workshops are designed upon request of individual schools or school districts. Using assessed needs, the Education Specialists and school staff development coordinator design workshops to address specific concerns and focus on the integration of a series, or program in a series, into the curriculum to meet instructional objectives or to more effectively address different learning styles.

· **Video Copyright Workshops** – Educators are helped to understand how copyright guidelines affect classroom practice. Topics covered: what can be recorded; how much can be recorded; the purposes for video copies; and the length of times video recordings can be kept.

· **MPB Express Workshops** – Education Specialists are available to train educators on the use of our newest and most powerful, media-rich digital resource! MPB Express (*unitedstreaming*) provides more than 40,000 award-winning video titles, downloadable images, commemorative calendar events, clip art, writing prompts, and much more, directly to your computer.

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To take advantage of any of these FREE workshops, contact Mississippi Public Broadcasting's Education Services Division at edservices@mpbonline.org, or at (800) 922-9698. But, please HURRY! We do get pretty busy at the beginning of the school year.

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TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE CONTACTS WITH STATE LEGISLATORS

Many people never contact their legislators, even though state laws and appropriations can have a major impact on their lives and our state's future. Often people believe legislators are too busy, or are not interested in reading mail or answering phone calls. Many people also think that legislators don't care what they think or question whether they can persuade a lawmaker on an important issue. These views could not be further from the truth. Most legislators value the opinion of their constituents, and rely heavily on advice from concerned and involved citizens.

When contacting legislators, consider the following points:

LETTERS – This is the most effective method for communicating with lawmakers. Be brief and logical, refer to specific legislation and bill numbers. Above all, be courteous and professional, not angry.

TELEPHONE CALLS – Calling a legislator can be very effective, especially when an important vote is coming up, and is more personal than other methods. The same suggestions apply for phone calls as letters, and it helps to prepare a few points before you call.

E-MAILS - Every state legislator has an e-mail address and many check it regularly themselves, or have a staff person follow up. The same rules apply to e-mail as letters, but being brief and concise is even more important in these communications.

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