CHARTING A COURSE FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Academic Success
Pathways to Success

Educators of Excellence
Salute to our Veterans
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Message From the President

Sonya Swafford

Keeping my goal in mind to focus on “professional” educators and to highlight them in our journals/emails has been an easy task. It’s been easy because teachers from all over the state have answered the call and are nominating “professionals” at work doing what they do best—going above and beyond. We spotlighted Sharon Long in our fall MPE Journal and are recognizing Dr. Roma Morris and Vicki Shirley on page 11 of this issue for their exceptional contributions to their students and our profession.

I’ve given much thought to our middle name—Mississippi Professional Educators. Our founders were very insightful and purposeful about including the word professional in the title. From this organization’s beginning, we were to be to be an elite group for like-minded educators. The word professional is defined as characterized by or conforming to ethical standards of a profession. Many adjectives come to mind when I think of the word professional such as resourceful, hard-working, conscientious, business-like manner, honest, punctual, and passionate are just a few examples.

Think about the professionals who influenced you to become a professional educator. One of my influences goes back to third grade—Mrs. Jane Webster. She was a teacher ahead of her time. She was implementing cooperative learning and differentiated instruction before the terms were even identified. Not only was she a great teacher, but she was a wonderful person who I knew …. loved me. All of the children in our state deserve a teacher like Mrs. Webster. One who is passionate about their occupation, but most importantly LOVES children.

This brings us to a current topic of the Code of Ethics. Let’s go back to the definition: Characterized by or conforming to ethical standards of a profession. As many of you know, the Mississippi State Board of Education adopted the Mississippi Educator Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct this past February. It applies to all persons licensed according to the rules established by the State Board of Education. It helps protect the health, safety, and general welfare of students and educators. I’ve heard much discussion questioning why we as educators need a code of ethics. I answer by saying EMBRACE it! As a member of Mississippi Professional Educators, we already hold ourselves to a higher standard. It’s who we are and what we already do.

The Code of Ethics is available at www.mde.k12.ms.us, as well as on our own MPE webpage at www.mpe.org. The 10 standards highlighted in the Code of Ethics are not anything extreme. They are meant to offer protection to students and educators. We, as educators, can go about our business as usual educating future presidents, preparing the next great literary writers, and leading the next Noble Peace Prize winners in inquiry and exploration. We can do this with confidence knowing that the Code of Ethics is a document provided to give us security, support, and opportunities to encourage student learning and professional growth. So for all the Jane Websters out there, go forth and educate with passion and love while living up to our middle name!
Message from the Executive Director

Kelly Riley

As 2011 comes to a close, MPE celebrates another successful year while looking forward to the promises of 2012. More and more professionals are joining the premier organization for professional educators in Mississippi. As I mentioned in my last column, MPE is unique in that our membership is open not only to K-12 staff, but to staff of Mississippi’s community colleges and four-year institutions as well. We also serve educators in both public and independent institutions. Our membership as of November 9 reflects our diversity:

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Certified</th>
<th>Non-certified</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Retired</th>
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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>400</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>88</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>566</strong></td>
<td><strong>944</strong></td>
<td><strong>264</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,722</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MPE values each member and their contributions to education. Thank you for your continued membership in the Mississippi Professional Educators.

MPE encourages our members’ professional growth for the benefit of themselves and their students. We also believe we should invest in the next generation of those entering our profession. MPE offers two scholarship opportunities to our members. We annually award up to five scholarships in the amount of $1,000 each to MPE members who wish to pursue graduate level studies at a college or university in Mississippi. We also offer a $500 scholarship to a student member at each of Mississippi’s fifteen schools of education. If you are interested in applying for a graduate scholarship, you will find the guidelines and application in the Quick Links menu of our homepage (www.mpe.org). Student members interested in applying for a scholarship should contact their dean’s office or their school’s director of field experiences.

Your MPE staff will be at the capitol monitoring legislative and budget developments during the upcoming legislative session. As 2012 is the first year of a new four-year term, this will be a four month rather than three month session, so as to allow for orientation of new members and transition of new leadership. Publishing deadlines do not allow us to include contact information for legislators in this issue, but we will post this information to our website as soon as it is available. As always, I am confident that you will be professional in your communications with legislators.

I hope you will mark your calendars now to join us at MPE’s 2012 Best Practices Symposium on April 14 at the Jackson Hilton. In addition to our keynote speaker, Mr. Ray McNulty of the International Center for Leadership in Education, the symposium will feature two break-out sessions for attendees. Four different presentations will be available during each break-out session. CEUs will be provided and we will also provide the latest news from the capitol. Online registration will be available on our website (www.mpe.org) beginning in February.

As we enter this most special time of year, I wish you and your students the most joyous of holidays and a successful 2012. Merry Christmas!
MPE 2012 GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS

Mississippi Professional Educators will award up to five scholarships in the amount of $1,000 each to MPE members who wish to pursue graduate level studies at a college or university in Mississippi.

Eligibility requirements for the scholarship include:

• Applicant is a member of MPE

• Applicant will be under contract as a full-time educator in Mississippi during the 2012-2013 school year

• Applicant is accepted and enrolled in graduate coursework at a Mississippi college or university OR intends to enroll in such coursework if awarded a scholarship

For more information, visit www.mpe.org.

Applications must be received in the MPE office by March 2, 2012.
Chastity McLemore is a teacher and the director of the GED program at Biloxi High School where she also serves as the Head Cheerleading Coach. She earned her Associates of Arts degree from Pearl River Community College, her Bachelor of Science in Sports Administration from USM, and her Master’s in Education from William Carey University. She has been a member of MPE since 2009. Chastity is in her second year as a New Orleans Saintsation. Every year over 200 young women tryout for a place on the team, and only 32 are chosen. Here is what she shared with us about her experience:

Growing up my Dad was the number one Saints fan. I have always enjoyed dancing and cheering and felt that one day I would go as far as possible and become a professional cheerleader, and my dreams have come true. I now am a teacher and I coach the cheerleading squad at my school. I hope that I can instill in my cheerleaders the same aspiration and drive that I had growing up and following my dreams as a professional cheerleader. I expected that being a Saintsation would be such an amazing honor and experience and it is everything I expected and more. I get to cheer for my favorite NFL football team and I’m doing something I love the most, cheering and dancing.

My favorite (Saintsations) memory is the moment I stepped on the field into the Dome as the reigning World Champions. I have never heard anything that loud in my life. Our fans are the best and it’s an amazing feeling to be a part of such an amazing organization. Being a Saintsation has taught me a lot about myself. I have learned that if you want something in life you have to work hard to achieve it. I have accomplished so much in the past couple of years and have achieved so many goals. I feel that I never let anyone or anything hold me back from my dreams and I am proud of myself. I am so thankful and blessed for everything in my life. Saintsations has taught me what a true team is all about and as an educator and coach it is very important to me to instill this in my students. We all are on the team for a reason and work together. It’s amazing knowing that we are a united team and I love being able to share this with my cheerleading team and students.

I recently obtained my Master’s in Education from William Carey University. I absolutely love being a teacher and making a difference in children’s lives. I hope to further my education by obtaining a Doctorate degree. Without my fiancée, Matt Sorrels, and my amazing family, I would not have succeeded and accomplished my goals. I always knew I wanted to be involved in sports. My mom owns her owns studio where she teaches dance, gymnastics, baton, and cheerleading all-stars. I have been helping her teach as long as I can remember. She instilled in me to always follow my dreams and never start something without finishing.

I joined MPE when I was attending William Carey University. I did not have a background in education until I began my Master’s degree. I felt that being a part of Mississippi Professional Educators would help me learn and receive feedback from other teachers. Reading the MPE Journal helps me stay on track with all of the teacher benefits and news related sources. I also enjoy the fact that I have a program that supports me and my position as a teacher. I enjoy helping my students succeed. I feel that my students look at how involved I am with teaching, athletics and being a professional cheerleader and know that they can succeed and do anything they put their mind to. They always ask me, “Ms. Mac, how are you a professional cheerleader and a teacher?” I explain to them that it takes hard work and long hours, but I do it because I love it! It has always been a dream of mine and I couldn’t imagine my life any other way.
As the first half of the school year comes to a close, I am certain that all of you are looking forward to a much deserved holiday break. As you reflect on the upcoming year, please know how grateful I am for your commitment to the children of our state. What you do each day helps to shape their futures. It is only through your commitment and dedication that we are able to provide our students with a high quality education that will give them the knowledge and skills needed to compete in today's global society.

Looking Ahead

It is hard to believe the 2012 Mississippi Legislative Session is right around the corner. We anticipate that many of the discussions during this session will be focused on K-12 funding. The economic climate of our state and country is still very uncertain, but it is our goal to secure a budget that will provide adequate funding so all students in Mississippi have access to a high quality education. Other priorities established by the Mississippi Board of Education include professional development funding for the implementation of Common Core State Standards and the establishment of a Superintendents Academy, as well as support for early childhood education initiatives. If you have input or questions related to legislation, please let us know. Your involvement in the legislative process is critical to our success.

Preparing Our Students

As we look at the success of education in other countries, the U.S. is falling behind in quality, equity, and productivity. Countries such as Japan, Finland and Canada are outperforming U.S. students in reading, science, and math. A recent study titled ‘Standing on the Shoulders of Giants’ by Marc Tucker of the National Center on Education and the Economy focuses on the importance of redesigning America's education system utilizing strategies used by top performing nations. One key strategy that Mississippi has put in place is the implementation of Common Core State Standards. Common Core will ensure that all students, no matter where they live, have internationally benchmarked standards and assessments that are clear, understandable, and consistent.

Most of you are familiar with Common Core and have had the opportunity to receive training on this important initiative. These national standards and our involvement with Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) are important steps in the right direction for our state.

In closing, let me again thank you for all you do to provide a high quality education to the students of Mississippi. Please accept my best wishes for a safe and happy holiday season as you spend time with your family and friends.
The school year is now half-way over and 2011 is quickly coming to a close! I hope that each of you had a great start to the school year.

As we look to 2012, the Legislature will soon be returning to Jackson to begin another legislative session. When they convene, we will have a new Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Speaker of the House which is very rare in Mississippi politics. It has been more than a half century since that last happened. We could also have new chairs, vice-chairs, and members for many of the legislative committees. It will certainly be a time of change for everyone at the Capitol.

As of early November, state revenue continues to improve. Through the end of October, we are $47.28 million above 2011 sine die estimate for the first four months of the fiscal year. It is my hope that we have turned the economic corner and these numbers will continue to increase and significant progress can be made towards community college Mid-Level Funding. There is no better way to spend the state’s dollars than to invest in all levels of education.

In mid-September, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College received some exciting news from The Aspen Institute as it was named one of ten community college finalists for the prestigious College Excellence Program. The college is now in the last stage of competition for the $1 million prize fund that will be awarded sometime in December. The other nine finalists are from other community colleges across the country. Earlier in the year, the same group named East Central, Mississippi Delta, Pearl River, and Hinds (along with Gulf Coast) as some of the top 120 community college in the nation. The Aspen Institute’s findings once again show that our community colleges rank among the best in the nation.

On July 1, our agency named changed to “Mississippi Community College Board.” As a result, our website address has been updated to www.mccb.edu. After December 31, we will no longer receive emails to the old address of “@msjc.edu.” All staff email addresses have been changed to “first initial, last name@mccb.edu.” Please use the new address for all correspondence.

I hope that each of you has a great second half of the school year as you continue to better the state by educating our students!

Dr. Eric Clark
MCCB Executive Director
New Year brings many changes to education, Mississippi

As educators, we love the idea of a fresh start: a new semester, a new school year, a new opportunity to make a difference in the lives of our students. As the fall semester and 2011 draw to a close, we begin preparing for the new year and a new semester. As we turn in grades for the first semester of the school year, we look forward and consider what the new year will bring.

The future of Mississippi has been the subject of a year-long effort spearheaded by the Mississippi Economic Council, Momentum Mississippi and Mississippi Partnership for Economic Development to determine how to place Mississippi in the position of greatest opportunity. I have had the privilege of serving as chair of Blueprint Mississippi 2011, a project funded by private sector leaders and foundations. I am particularly proud of the key role our four research institutions, Jackson State University, Mississippi State University, the University of Mississippi and the University of Southern Mississippi have played. They worked in conjunction with the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation and Tougaloo College. Their research was vital to the success of the effort.

We solicited and gained input from thousands of Mississippians at both face-to-face meetings held around the state and by providing online opportunities for citizens in every community to participate. Based on the research and input, we have determined that Mississippi is positioned for progress. We have a vision that, through implementation of the recommendations developed through the process, we will enable a more prosperous, vibrant and resilient Mississippi, built upon a foundation of economic opportunity for all its citizens.

As we traveled from community to community, and as we looked at the information gained online, it was clear that citizens across the state recognize education as the foundation for progress. Whatever the question is, education is the answer. From small business owners to the CEO of the state’s largest employer, we received this message loud and clear many times over. Recently, we unveiled the overarching goals and recommendations of the plan. One of the goals is to increase the educational achievement level of Mississippians. The four recommendations offered to support this goal include:

- Improve teacher quality by increasing the Teach for America and Mississippi Teacher Corps for teachers in the state, strengthening teacher requirements and considering new methods of merit-based compensation.
- Create a quality early childhood education and development system.
- Transition to all-appointed superintendents by 2015.
- Support the Education Achievement Council in its efforts to increase the number of Associate and Bachelor degree holders.

We are currently developing action steps for executing the goals and recommendations, while also assigning responsibility to those who bring the necessary resources to the table and agree to drive the process. We are also compiling the most compelling aspects of our research into an accessible online presentation, which will tell the Mississippi story and outline the work ahead that will forge a path to a brighter future for all Mississippians. These will be unveiled early in the new year at MEC Capital Day.

The new year will also mark a time of tremendous change in our state leadership. For the first time in decades, Mississippi will have a new governor, lieutenant governor and speaker of the house who will all take office at the same time. In addition, we will have many new faces in both chambers. It is important that we help all of our state and local leaders understand the imperative role that education plays in every aspect of our state.

Mississippi Public Universities provide the highest quality education and best return on investment, both for our students as individuals and our state as a whole. In addition to the service and outreach that touch the lives of every Mississippian, our universities conduct research that leads to innovations that encourage and support economic growth and opportunities to benefit all of our citizens. Our universities are a collective, powerful and unmatched resource. We are advancing our state together.

For one of our universities, the new year will bring about a much-anticipated change for the campus. A new president will join the Mississippi University for Women’s talented and dedicated staff who are helping their students reach their full potential every day. MUW provides tremendous opportunities to both men and women and both traditional and non-traditional students through both brick-and-mortar classroom and online learning programs. Interim president Allegra Brigham has done a phenomenal job leading the university and has provided a strong foundation for the incoming president. I hope all members of the MUW community will support the new president as the college forges a path to a new year and a brighter future.

A new year brings new challenges and new opportunities. In 2011, much work has been done to provide a strong foundation for progress in the new year and for many years to come. As always, education is the cornerstone and, as educators, you hold the key to the future. Thank you for your dedication to your students, your schools, colleges and universities, and the State of Mississippi. I wish you the best in the new semester and the new year.
Educators of Excellence

A resident of Magee, **Dr. Roma Morris** has been recognized as an Educator of Excellence for her work in the Columbia School District. Dr. Morris is the principal at Jefferson Middle School and has been a member of MPE since 1997. Her leadership helped her school win the 2005 Governor’s Award for Excellence in the Arts, and she represented Mississippi as the 2007 NAESP National Distinguished Principal.

Dr. Morris was nominated by Dr. Charlotte Tabereaux who had the following to say about her nominee: “Roma has definitely made a positive impact on the lives of so many children, parents, teachers, and colleagues. She is an exceptional leader. She motivates her teachers, students and parents to take responsibility for achieving success in school and at home. She is a dynamic, caring administrator, who helps students reach their full potential.”

**Mrs. Vicki Shirley** has been recognized as an Educator of Excellence for her work in the Corinth School District. Mrs. Shirley is a math teacher at Corinth High School and has been a member of MPE since 1982. She is a former MPE Board Member and currently serves as her school’s MPE Building Representative.

Mrs. Shirley was nominated by Brad Johns, Chair of the Math Department at McLaurin High School in Rankin County. Vicki has been his mentor for the last 10 years and helped Brad through the National Board certification process several years ago. Brad had this to say about his nominee: “She is an incredible teacher. Her Algebra I state test scores are always in the top 5 in the state every year. Her calculator ability is unmatched. She is constantly trying to help people learn more about the calculator and how to effectively use it through the teaching of mathematics.” He says he nominated her “because of her devotion to the teachers in Mississippi and her students in Corinth.”

MPE wants to thank Roma for her hard work and professionalism, as well as the positive influence she provides to those around her. MPE wishes her the very best for continued success!
Charting a Course for Educational Excellence

Building a well-educated and well-trained work force is a top priority for any state. The Southern Regional Education Board, a nonprofit organization that works collaboratively with Mississippi and 15 other member states to improve education at every level — from pre-K to postdoctoral study — through many effective programs and initiatives, issued its Challenge to Lead Goals for Education in 2002. SREB projected that, in order for SREB states to lead the nation in educational progress, students at every level — first grade, middle grades, college and the workforce — must be ready to learn. In addition, schools and colleges must close achievement gaps among groups of students, and every state must ensure its educational agencies and institutions work together as a single system so that students can transition smoothly from one level to the next (SREB, 2011).

The operations of Mississippi’s educational system are divided among that of the State Board of Education (SBE), the Community College Board (CCB), and the Board of Trustees of the Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL). The SBE and IHL are governing boards for our state’s 152 school districts and eight public universities respectively, while the CCB is a coordinating board for Mississippi’s 15 community colleges, each with their own board of trustees. All three boards strive to create a seamless system of educational advancement and success for Mississippi’s students. MPE sent five questions to the presiding chairs of the SBE, CCB and IHL regarding their respective system’s mission, challenges, and benefits. Their responses are shared below.

State Board of Education

The State Board of Education appoints the State Superintendent of Education, sets public education policy and oversees the Mississippi Department of Education. The State Board of Education is comprised of nine members. MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-1-1 (1972) provides that the Governor appoints one member from each of Mississippi’s three supreme court districts, one school administrator and one public school teacher. Additionally, both the Lieutenant Governor and the Speaker of the House appoint two members at-large. Current members of the State Board of Education are: Charles McClelland of Jackson, Chair; Dr. Wayne Gann of Corinth, Vice-Chair; Kami Bumgarner of Madison; Hal Gage of Vicksburg; Claude Hartley of Tupelo; Bill Jones of Petal; Dr. John Kelly of Gulfport; Dr. Sue Matheson of Pass Christian; and, Jackie Murphy of Rienzi.

The State Board of Education voted unanimously in September 2011 to reappoint Charles McClelland and Wayne Gann as chairman and vice chairman, respectively. Although he is currently the owner and CEO of McClelland Moving and Storage Inc. in Jackson, most of McClelland’s career has been in public education, with his having served as a teacher and principal at several schools throughout Mississippi. From 1981 to 1994, McClelland worked in the Rankin County School District, serving as an assistant superintendent and principal of Northwest Rankin Attendance Center. For more than a decade, McClelland held the position of hearing officer for the Jackson Public School District.

In discussing the mission of the Board of Education, McClelland offers, “The Mississippi Board of Education’s vision is to create a world-class education system that gives students the knowledge and skills that will allow them to be successful in college and the workforce and flourish as parents and citizens. Our mission is to provide leadership through the development of policy and accountability systems so that all students are prepared to compete in the global community.”
Henry “Bubba” Hudspeth has served as Chairman of the Community College Board since May 2010. Hudspeth was reappointed to the Board by Governor Haley Barbour in 2009 after having previously filled an unexpired term in 2006. A lifetime resident of Louisville, Hudspeth served for nearly 29 years on the East Central Community College Board of Trustees, serving as Chairman for ten years. Hudspeth is a building contractor and real estate developer. He also serves on the Mississippi Momentum Board and the Louisville Utility Board.

In discussing the mission of Mississippi’s community colleges, Hudspeth shares, “Our 15 community colleges play an important role in Mississippi through, among other things, educating our citizens and providing workforce training for economic development. As a coordinating board, some of our responsibilities include approving programs and class locations at our colleges, managing workforce training dollars, and distributing state appropriations to the community colleges.”

Robin Robinson has served as President of the Board of Trustees since May 2011. Director of Organization Development and Corporate Communication at Sanderson Farms, Inc., Robinson also serves as chairman of the M.B. Swayze Educational Foundation and on the University of Southern Mississippi Business Advisory Council. She also served on the Governor’s Commission for Recovery, Rebuilding and Renewal following Hurricane Katrina, as well as on the Southern Growth Policies Board and the Mississippi Gaming Commission.

Acknowledging the IHL system’s enhancement of the quality of life of Mississippian s, Robinson offers that the system does so by meeting Mississippian’s diverse educational needs. “In doing so, the IHL system will be characterized by, and become nationally recognized for, its emphasis on student achievement and on preparing responsible citizens; its adherence to high academic standards and to quality in instruction, research, service, and facilities; and its commitment to affordability, accessibility, and accountability. Our goal is to provide the highest quality education and the best return on investment to our students and

Continued on page 19
MPE MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

PAM CARRUBBA RECEIVES BEST PRACTICES IN ECONOMIC EDUCATION AWARD

MPE Member Pam Carrubba was recently given the Best Practices in Economic Education Award by the Mississippi Council on Economic Education and will receive a $200 cash prize. She won for her lesson titled, “Were the Constitution Framers Clairvoyant?” Carrubba says that the writers of the Constitution established institutions necessary for the efficient conduct of private economic activity and that “over time these institutions have created a stable economic system that defined property rights and protected individual economic freedoms.” Pam is a sixth grade intellectually gifted studies teacher at Bay Waveland Middle School and has been a member of MPE since 2007.

SALTIMO HIGH SCHOOL NAMED NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL

MPE member Tim DeVaughn is the principal of Saltillo High School in the Lee County School District which was recently named a 2011 National Blue Ribbon School by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. Saltillo High School is one of only three Mississippi schools to receive the honor which is based on overall academic excellence or for success in closing achievement gaps. The two other Mississippi schools to receive this recognition are Kathleen Bankston Elementary School in Greenwood and North Bay Elementary School in Biloxi. A total of 305 schools met Blue Ribbon standards nationwide. Congratulations!

MPE MEMBER CARMON DYE RECOGNIZED AS TEACHER OF DISTINCTION

MPE member Carmon Dye was one of ten teachers and three assistant teachers recently recognized by the CREATE Foundation as a Teacher of Distinction. The CREATE Foundation recognizes teachers and assistant teachers in Tupelo for excellence in and out of the classroom every year. Students, teachers, administrators, parents, school district employees or community members make the nominations, and an external committee of educators chooses the winners. Thirty-six teachers and ten assistant teachers were nominated this year. The winning teachers received $1,000 checks, and assistant teachers received $500. MPE wants to congratulate Carmon on the wonderful honor.

MPE MEMBER DAVID LOWERY’S ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN EDUCATION JOURNAL

MPE member Dr. David Lowery co-authored an article that was recently published in the Journal of Case Studies in Education. The article was co-written by Dr. Jalynn Roberts from William Carey University and Dr. Jessica Roberts from USM and is titled, “Alternate route and traditionally-trained teachers’ perceptions of teaching preparation programs.” This study interviewed K-12 teachers in several disciplines to understand their perceptions of the effectiveness of alternate route teacher preparation programs compared to traditional teacher preparation programs. The study findings indicate that while both methods of teacher preparation are effective, the best way to train future teachers is to place teacher candidates in the classroom as much as possible and as early as possible. Dr. Lowery is an English instructor at Jones County Junior College and has been a member of MPE since 1993.
MPE Celebrates

Academic Success

MPE’s top priority is the education of children. We are proud to recognize the academic achievement, growth and success of schools throughout Mississippi. Congratulations to the students, teachers, leaders and parents of the following outstanding schools and districts!

BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS

The U.S. Department of Education recognized 305 schools in September as being 2011 No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools. This award goes to schools whose students perform at high levels or who have made dramatic improvements in their achievement, particularly for low-income children. The following three Mississippi schools earned this award:

• Kathleen Bankston Elementary, Greenwood
• North Bay Elementary, Biloxi
• Saltillo High School, Saltillo

LIGHTHOUSE SCHOOL LEADERS

The Mississippi School Boards Association (MSBA) recognized thirty-six Mississippi school districts in October as 2011 Lighthouse School Leaders. This recognition is awarded in three categories to districts that reach the highest levels of student achievement.

The Beacon Award recognizes school districts with a QDI of 200 or above that met the growth expectations established by the Mississippi Board of Education. The 2011 recipients are:

- Clinton School District
- Enterprise School District
- Pass Christian School District
- Petal School District

The Lantern Award recognizes school districts with a QDI of 180 or above that met the growth expectations established by the Mississippi Board of Education. The 2011 recipients are:

- Amory School District
- Bay St. Louis-Waveland School District
- Biloxi School District
- Booneville School District
- Clay County School District
- Corinth School District
- Desoto County School District
- Harrison County School District
- Itawamba County School District
- Jackson County School District
- Kosciusko School District
- Lamar County School District
- Long Beach School District
- Lowndes County School District
- Madison County School District
- Monroe County School District
- New Albany School District
- Newton County School District
- Ocean Springs School District
- Oxford School District
- Pearl School District
- Pontotoc City School District
- Pontotoc County School District
- Rankin County School District
- Stone County School District
- Tishomingo County School District
- Union County School District
- Union Public School District

The Torch Award recognizes districts in which 90% or more of the students are eligible for the free and reduced lunch program and in which at least one school had a QDI of 180 or above and met the growth expectations established by the Mississippi Board of Education. The 2011 recipients are:

- Claiborne County School District
- Coahoma County School District
- East Jasper School District
- Greenwood School District
- Tunica County School District
Clicking on the “Contact your local legislator” link on MPE’s homepage (www.mpe.org) will take you to Project Vote Smart (www.votesmart.org), an online research tool which provides biographical information on state and national elected officials throughout our country. Simply enter your ZIP code in the “Find Your Candidates” space across the top of www.votesmart.org to identify your elected officials. For those ZIP codes with multiple legislative districts, Project Vote Smart then requires (look for red font on the right side of the page) your full street address. Project Vote Smart provides a wealth of information at your fingertips!
A Salute to our Veterans

Mississippi Professional Educators wants to recognize its members who have served in our nation’s Armed Forces. Thank you for your service and dedication to our country!

Steve Browning served in the Air Force for 20 years. His service included working on the Airborne Command Post as an in-flight electronic communications equipment technician in direct support of the President of the United States. He now teaches U.S. History and is the Social Studies Department Head at Moss Point High School.

Bob Buntyn spent two tours of duty in Vietnam starting in 1969. He spent most of his career in computer systems and communications and later went through the MAPQT program to obtain his teaching license. Bob has been teaching P.E. in DeSoto County for four years.

Gayle Draughn served in the U.S. Army for three years and was stationed at Fort Hood, Texas and Schweinfurt, Germany. She has been teaching a variety of English classes and electives at Perry Central High School since 2001 and also works as an Adjunct English Comp I class for Jones County Junior College.

Gayle Green-Aguirre is a retired Lt. Colonel in the Army. She served on active duty in Panama and later in the reserves for a total of 23 years of service. She is now the Honors College Director, Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society Advisor and a history instructor at Gulf Coast Community College’s Perkinston Campus.

Benny Hornsby is a retired Captain of the U.S. Navy. He served for thirty-six years on active duty in the U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps. Dr. Hornsby is an instructor of social sciences at Pearl River Community College and is President-elect of the MPE Board of Directors.

Thomas Powell served in the U.S. Air Force for 20 years and retired as a Field Grade Officer. He teaches math and science courses, as well as the only engineering class for high school at St. Martin High School in Ocean Springs.

Clay Wall is currently deployed with the B-Battery 1-204th ADA for the C-RAM Mission in Iraq. His current rank is Staff Sergeant, and he serves as a squad leader. When he is not deployed, Clay teaches 7th grade history and coaches at Puckett Attendance Center.

Jessie Taylor served as a Medic for 3 years in the Army from 1965-1968. He is now retired after 38 years as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal in the schools of Wayne and Green counties in Mississippi and Choctaw and Clarke counties in Alabama.

Tom Watts served on active duty in the Army for 28 years. He was a Battalion Commander from 1990-1992 (pictured), and retired as a Colonel in 1999. He now teaches at Madison Middle School, where he has been coordinating the school’s Veterans’ Day for the last 12 years.

Frank Williamson served in the U.S. Navy as the Chaplain’s yeoman from 1961-1967 aboard the USS Forrestal (CVA-59). Mr. Williamson if a former teacher at Rebul Academy in Learned, MS, and is currently working for Pendleton Security.
Currently, I teach Adult Education/GED classes at Northeast Mississippi Community College. Not long ago, a gentleman came to my class full of energy, but also very nervous about being in a classroom after so many years. Steven was an elderly man with an intense desire to earn his GED. But, along with his desire to learn, came an intense fear. He worked so hard and on many days fought me tooth and nail because he was juggling life and school. And, let’s face it….it’s much harder to learn at an older age than it was when we were young. But in the end, his struggles and frustrations were worth it because he earned his GED.

“Coming back to the classroom, I was very afraid because of my age and I didn’t think that I was smart enough to make it,” Steven admitted. “I was wrong, and I was reminded daily by my teacher that through my faith and courage I can do anything. I want everyone that thinks this way to know that you can do it, just as I did,” states Steven.

This should have been one of the happiest times in Steven’s life; he has accomplished a goal that could change his life forever. Instead, Steven now faces a much greater obstacle in his battle with cancer. “My battle with cancer I have approached the same way, my faith carries me through and I know that the Lord indeed has another plan for me and my healing is up to him,” states Steven.

As teachers, we often form special bonds with our students. We work to prepare them for the next step in their life whether that step is continuing their education or entering the workforce. However, I have never had to prepare someone for a battle with cancer. I’m a teacher and I want to fix things. That’s what we do, and unfortunately, this is something that I can’t fix. I am learning to stay positive and I use Steven and his determination in the classroom and in life on a daily basis as an example to my current students, hoping his story will inspire them to strive for more.

It’s never too late to learn. It’s never too late to further your education and it’s surely never too late to live your life in the moment while planning for a better future. Steven’s determination and faith have changed my life forever and I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to teach him!

It’s Never Too Late to Learn

As I think back over all the years I have taught and the many lives I have touched, one student really stands out in my mind.

Lynn Smither, MPE Board of Directors
Continued from page 13

our state. Our strategies for fulfilling our mission include establishing prudent governance policies, employing exceptional chief executives and requiring legal, fiscal and programmatic accountability.”

Charting a Course for Educational Excellence

While each board has its own unique charges and responsibilities, funding is a common challenge for each respective system. “The Mississippi Board of Education is striving to help low performing schools make significant improvements and ensure that high performing schools continue their success,” McClelland shares. “Of course, adequate funding is a key part of making sure that all of our schools are successful. In our current economy, we know that funding will be one of the biggest challenges we face. Another significant challenge is reducing the number of high school dropouts in our state. Mississippi must continue to make dropout prevention a top priority.”

Hudspeth states, “The biggest challenge facing our community colleges this year, as in previous years, is funding. Going back to FY 2000, enrollment at our community colleges has increased by approximately 50 percent while state support per FTE has decreased by 24 percent. It is a great challenge to make those two numbers fit together, while still providing a quality education at an affordable cost.” Robinson echoes the implications of record enrollment on Mississippi’s universities. “Higher education matters. Universities are the wellsprings of civilization and human capital. Our goal as a system is to increase the number of citizens in Mississippi with a Baccalaureate degree...The good news is system-wide enrollment has increased annually since 1994. This year’s increase is the largest single-year increase in enrollment. While record enrollment is great news for our state, it does present challenges. We must ensure that we have the capacity—faculty, facilities and services—to serve our students adequately. Universities must have the resources necessary to provide the highest quality education to our students.”

Challenging economic times have also allowed for more collaboration between the three boards. As Hudspeth explains, “While there may be some competition for state dollars, all levels of education are working together more closely than ever before. The dual-enrollment program offered by public schools, community colleges, and universities has been most successful, and the articulation agreements that have been signed by community colleges and universities in the past two years make it far easier for Mississippi’s college students to transfer between institutions. Collaborative efforts like these benefit not only our students but also the entire state as we produce better educated, more productive citizens!”

When asked to identify the greatest challenge facing education (system-wide) in our state, Robinson notes the impact of many of Mississippi’s children not having quality early learning experiences. “The greatest challenge facing education in Mississippi is that far too many of our children do not have early learning experiences that will ensure success in school, college or life. Eighty percent of brain development occurs during the first four years of life. On average, a child living in poverty has heard ten million fewer words than an affluent child. All too often, poor children live in environments that are not print or vocabulary rich. Children that do not have appropriate experiences in the early years do not arrive in Kindergarten ready to learn. This increases the likelihood that they will not be able to read by the third grade. Research tells us that these students are exponentially more likely to drop out of school and end up in prison. We must overcome this challenge by ensuring that all children have access to quality early learning experiences that will put them on the path to success.”

Hudspeth, McClelland and Robinson all agree it is a privilege to serve on their respective boards and to work with their fellow board members and executive staff. As Robinson explains, “There are two areas in which serving as a Trustee has afforded me the opportunity to make a difference. One, my strong belief in the benefits of education; and two, my desire to improve and enhance the quality of life for all Mississipians.” McClelland echoes the opportunity to make a difference. “Some of the most memorable experiences are seeing a low performing school district really turn their district around. When students, teachers, parents, administrators and community members rally and commit to improving their district and actually move the bar it is a wonderful experience,” McClelland shares.

Hudspeth recalls an experience which could be seen as reflective of the commitment of each of these board executives and their fellow board members in advancing Mississippi. “It has been my pleasure to represent the community college board at various functions such as our Legislative Budget Hearing, the annual Community College Trustees’ Conference, and retirement ceremonies of various community college employees including Ms. Lucille Woods from East Central Community College who, after working for 58 years, was the longest tenured community college employee in the nation.”

While their terms of service are far shorter than 58 years, these three board executives are committed to charting and staying the course to educational excellence in Mississippi. MPE thanks Charles McClelland, Bubba Hudspeth and Robin Robinson, as well as their fellow board members on the State Board of Education, the Community College Board, and the Board of Trustees of the Institutions of Higher Learning, for their service.

References:
Southern Regional Education Board, Mississippi and SREB, 2011.
For some time, we have talked about the three Rs of education: Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships. Common core standards will address the rigor in our classrooms; however, rigor is not going to change postsecondary experiences for students without relevance and relationship. High school is the time for students to understand the connections between their career choices and the education and training that will help them accomplish their goals. Pathways to Success is a way to help students make these connections. This program aims to help students form relationships with mentors in high school and to help them understand the relevance of their courses to their career goals.

Recent research has placed Mississippi in the top three states in the country for the highest percentage of high school graduates going directly into postsecondary education. Unfortunately, many of those students do not complete their postsecondary education goals. Mississippi has too many students exiting high school and either entering remedial classes at the postsecondary level or not completing their postsecondary graduation requirements. One study indicated that as much as 39% of Mississippi’s four-year-college students requires remediation, a factor that may lead to high dropout rates. A successful Pathways to Success system can help teachers and counselors reach these students early on and guide them towards courses that properly train them for their career goals.

Research has proven that students must begin thinking about their career opportunities as early as elementary school but no later than middle school. In the Pathways to Success initiative, students will do career exploration based on the 16 National Career Clusters during their K-8 years. At the end of the eighth grade, a student will craft a flexible individual Career and Academic Plan (iCAP) that will identify what classes the student will take over the next 4 years in order to achieve his or her career plans for postsecondary education. Postsecondary experiences can include obtaining an industry certification, associate or bachelor’s degrees, or graduate degrees. Mississippi now has multiple pathways to a standard diploma. In order to make sure students are prepared for the postsecondary experience that will help them achieve their career goals, the iCAP will be revised and updated each year. Changes will be based on each student’s graduation requirements and his or her current career choice. ICAP plans will center on all students being career and college ready no matter what type of future plans they have.

We can’t afford to wait; the cycle of remediation and dropout at the postsecondary level must be broken. Students must exit high school not just academically prepared but with a diploma that allows them to pursue their career or postsecondary education goals.

The Mississippi Department of Education and the Research and Curriculum Unit have conducted training sessions this fall as the first steps in implementing Pathways to Success. Over the next several years, additional professional-development opportunities will be given to local school districts to improve the process and to implement additional career and postsecondary planning for students. The planning sessions this fall are just step one in the Pathways to Success. As we develop this process, there will be additional training and resources available for school districts.

Mississippi schools are aiming to transform the lives of students and, in doing so, helping to change the landscape of our country’s economy. American businesses are evolving at a rapid pace, becoming more multifaceted and technological by the hour in order to exist in a world that is more interactive than it was even a decade ago. To push Mississippi to the front of the pack, we have to make sure that our students are entering the workforce prepared. The Pathways to Success program not only readies students to take on these challenges but also encourages them to be contributing members of society.
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You will receive $5 per student member recruited.

Recruitment bonus checks will be awarded at the end of each quarter, with the first quarter beginning July 1 and ending September 30. Credit will be given for each new member who joins or re-joins** between July 1, 2011 and June 30, 2012. Free memberships will be credited towards the next year’s membership.

* credit will be given for each additional member after 5
** member must have previously been made inactive for a period of three months or more
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Break-out sessions with engaging speakers and the latest information on the budget, common core standards and much more. CEUs will be provided on-site for a minimal fee. Do not miss this opportunity for quality professional development, updates on MPE activities and great fellowship.

SATURDAY, APRIL 14, 2012
THE HILTON
JACKSON, MS
Registration: 8:15 - 9:00 a.m.
Program: 9:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Ray McNulty, President of the International Center for Leadership in Education, will be our keynote speaker. Mr. McNulty has been an educator since 1973 and has served as a teacher, vice principal, principal, and superintendent, as well as Vermont’s education commissioner from 2001-2003. As commissioner he focused on aligning the Department of Education’s work on the key issues of early education, educator quality, and secondary school reform.

McNulty was a senior fellow at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation prior to joining the International Center. While at the Foundation he worked with leading educators from around the country to improve the nation’s high schools. Mr. McNulty is committed to raising performance standards for both teachers and students and to building solid connections between schools and their communities. He is a past president of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and is the author of It’s Not Us Against Them — Creating the Schools We Need, published in 2009 by the International Center.
WHY MPE?

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

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<tr>
<th>2011 - 2012 DUES</th>
<th>MPE</th>
<th>OTHER ORGANIZATIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Professional with liability insurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Couples with liability insurance</td>
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<td>Non-certified or part-time with insurance</td>
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<td>$232* - $264*</td>
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<td>Retired Educator without insurance</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)
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