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Mississippi Professional Educators



Cover Stories

Our cover reflects the south face of the Mississippi State Capitol

Legislative Session Information and Resources
Page 12

In Every Issue

President's Message
Page 4
Angela Towers

Message from the Executive Director
Page 5
Kelly Riley

Mississippi Department of Education News
Page 7

Community College News Page 8

Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning News
Page 9

Member Spotlight
Page 16

Retiree Reflections
Page 21
Philene Allen

Features

Finding Your Inner Tigger
Page 10
Lori Brennan, MPE Board of Directors

MPE Survey Results
Page 11

CREATE Recognizes MPE Members
Page 14

Winter 2016 Regional Trainings
Page 15

MASA Honors MPE Members
Page 17

2014-2015 Classroom Grants
Page 18

Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS)
Page 20
Pat Robertson

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Angela Towers

2015 has been a marvelous year of growth and progress for the Mississippi Professional Educators. This year we have celebrated the milestone of over 13,000 members. We are financially sound and, most importantly, amongst the highest respected organizations for our views and stances on educational policy. When the members of MPE speak, the legislature and citizens of Mississippi certainly listen. As we move into the 2016 legislative session, we must remember the influence we hold in the state. Our individual voices are mere whispers in a crowded room; however, collectively our 13,000 voices can create real change for education in Mississippi.

I am sure the failure of Initiative 42 has disappointed and perhaps discouraged much of our membership. After the results were announced, I was devastated. I wondered if the citizens of our state actually care about education in Mississippi. I was further disturbed as I read various comments on social media celebrating the defeat of Initiative 42. I read many comments blaming educators for the poor conditions and issues students face in education.

The most challenging part of the failure of Initiative 42 was having to face our students the morning after the election. Although many students went on with their daily routine unaware of the situation, I began to think of the struggles we will continue to face with annual education budgets. I thought of the fact that we will continue to struggle to obtain the necessary resources, materials, and personnel to provide students with an education comparable to states that spend significantly more per pupil than Mississippi. Our students deserve the opportunity to be able to compete academically with students around the world.

On the bright side, Initiative 42 has shed light on the condition of education and opened conversations about educational issues in Mississippi. Many conversations, forums, and debates have occurred due to the support and opposition of the initiative. As a result of Initiative 42 being on the ballot, many Mississippians now have a clearer understanding of the issues and challenges students, educators, and other stakeholders encounter daily due to lack of adequate funding. The increased awareness of education will definitely benefit our children. For this reason, the battle might have been lost, but the war for better education conditions for the students of Mississippi is still in progress.

As we move into the 2016 Mississippi Legislative Session, the 13,000 MPE members and countless other stakeholders will certainly keep close watch and take detailed notes on the MAEP formula. We will also continue to contact our local senators and representatives about our stances on vital education legislation. We will continue to be voices for the voiceless. We will continue the work Mississippi Professional Educators began in 1979, over 35 years ago.



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Kelly Riley

Where has 2015 gone? It is November 5 as I write this article. Restaurants and stores are already playing Christmas music. While I hope you enjoy the holidays with your family and friends, I hope you will take a moment to reflect on your incredible work in 2015, as well as on your goals for you and your students in 2016.

MPE is looking forward to several exciting events and engaging opportunities for our members in 2016:

- **2016 Symposium with Dr. Harry Wong:** We are thrilled that Dr. Harry Wong will be our keynote speaker on April 9. Registration for MPE members will open on January 18. I'll announce this and include several reminders in my weekly emails. We've already had lots of interest, so be sure to register early!
- **2016 Legislative Session:** The session kicks off on Tuesday, January 5. I encourage you to take advantage of our email and social media to stay updated on education funding and legislation. Let's take advantage of the revived conversation from Initiative 42 regarding support for our schools. See page 12 for an overview of what to expect.
- **Graduate Scholarships:** MPE will award up to ten 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. You may find the application in the "Quick Links" menu of our homepage (www.mpe.org). Applications are due by February 26.
- **Regional Trainings:** Be sure to review page 15 for a listing of our remaining regional trainings for 2016. MPE members may attend these trainings free-of-charge. Non-members may attend for a fee of \$25. CEUs are included.

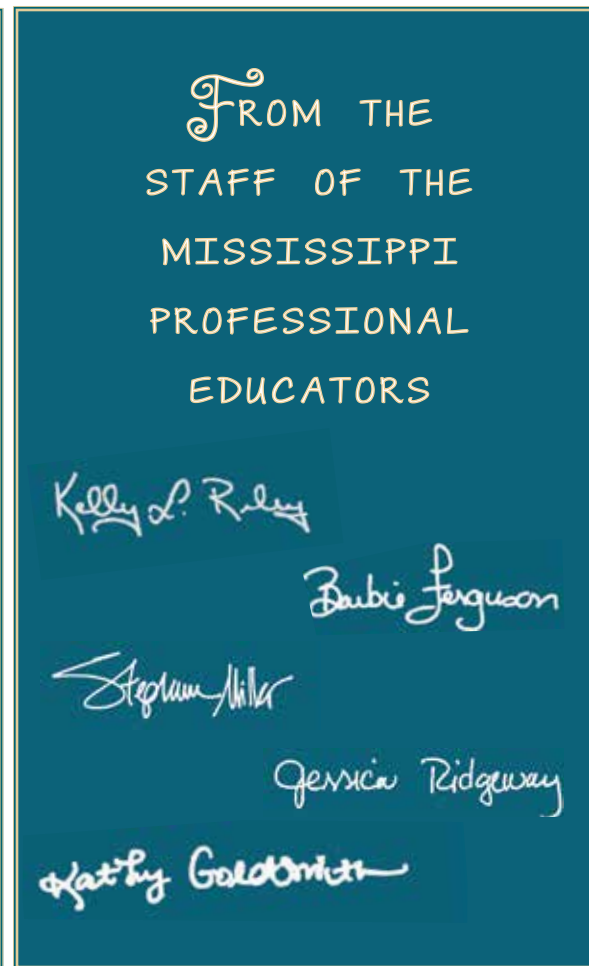
Great work is happening in classrooms around our state! Recent NAEP results found that Mississippi is No. 1 for gains in the average scale score for 4th grade math. Mississippi is ranked first, not last, not next to last! The State Board of Education recently released our PARCC results for Algebra I and English II. While we did better on English II, the results are encouraging across the board. While we experienced the anticipated dip given the new assessment, the dip was not as large as expected. About 2,500 middle school students took the Algebra I test and 70.9% scored a 4 or a 5. These outcomes are the result of you and your students' incredible work and efforts! Thank you!

MPE loves to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of our members. I would like to offer my personal congratulations to those members we spotlight in this issue....and we have a lot of them! Be sure to also check out the following:

- **PERS update:** Read the latest news from Pat Robertson, Executive Director of the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) of Mississippi on page 20.
- **Member survey results:** Results from our recent member survey will prove beneficial during the upcoming legislative session as we discuss issues with legislators. See page 11 for a summary of our members' responses.

MPE has been blessed with another great year. We continue to offer support, resources and benefits to educators throughout our state, and our membership continues to grow (13,433 as of November 5). Thank you for your continued membership. More importantly, thank you for the incredible work you do and the service you offer each day to your students. I wish you and your family a joyous Christmas and a healthy 2016!





MPE 2016 GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS

Mississippi Professional Educators will award up to ten 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 2016-2017 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 February 26, 2016.**



**MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION**

Ensuring a bright future for every child

I'm sure you've heard the wonderful news by now. Our students are raising eyebrows all over the country – for good reason. The results from the 2015 National Assessment for Educational Progress have been released and our students made historic gains.

Mississippi bucked the national trend of flat or declining performance in 4th grade reading and math on NAEP assessments by showing a significant increase in performance. Overall, the 4th grade math proficiency rate rose from 26% to 30%. The 4th grade reading proficiency increased from 21% to 26%.

Mississippi was the only state that had significant increases in both 4th grade reading and math. Even our 8th grade students did not see the academic slide that the nation experienced.

So teachers, I want you to take your right arm, reach over your left shoulder and give yourselves a pat on the back! You deserve it. I have no doubt that your dedication, time and sincere efforts to raise the level of rigor in your classrooms made the difference for our students. Now, states around the country are wondering what's happening here in Mississippi.

I tell them this: commitment to higher academic standards, intense focus on literacy, effective professional development and hard work of teachers and administrators resulted in Mississippi students showing gains on the NAEP

assessment. All of those pieces were needed to bring about the gains we saw this year.

Here is the other exciting news. All subgroups of students, including students with disabilities, African-American students, Hispanic students, females and economically disadvantaged students have shown improvements in NAEP proficiency in 4th grade reading compared to 2013. In 4th grade math, all subgroups of students improved in proficiency with the exception of Hispanic students.

The performance of 8th grade students remained flat when compared to the performance in 2013. The Mississippi Department of Education is committed to providing additional professional development to our teachers in grades 3-5 through our Rethink Literacy! Program that incorporates literacy across content areas. We are also reviewing resources that may benefit teachers in assisting struggling readers in middle school and we hope to share those with you soon.

We know we have more work to do. Mississippi remains in the bottom tier of states in both 4th grade and 8th grade reading and math, but we are certainly moving in the right direction. Public



**Dr. Carey M. Wright
State Superintendent
of Education**

education is rising to the challenge of more rigor in the classroom and we must continue moving forward.

Our students need to be challenged, encouraged and supported. I sincerely thank you teachers for all you do each day in your classrooms to make a difference in the lives of our students. These gains would not be possible without you. I applaud your efforts. Mississippi public education is running a marathon and not a sprint to the finish line of high achievement. It is important to acknowledge and celebrate the milestones in this marathon. The NAEP report is one of those milestones. The tireless work of teachers and administrators and the resilience of our students are worthy of celebration. By working together we can raise the academic performance of our students so that parents and communities know that their children are ready for college and the workplace in the 21st century.





In September, I was honored to be selected by the members of the Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB) to serve as the fifth Executive Director of the agency.

Having spent 18 years in the Mississippi community college system, I have had opportunities to serve with members of the agency staff and know from experience in working with them, I have a fantastic team. I feel fortunate to have a solid group of individuals already in place. The key to success is having a competent team of individuals at the agency in addition to partnerships with external agencies and constituents working as one cohesive unit to move our state forward.

My support of Mississippi's community colleges is unwavering. The community colleges hold the key to economic growth and development in Mississippi. As "open access" institutions, Mississippi community colleges provide individuals with an opportunity to improve the quality of their lives in a manner that best fits their capacity and need. As key partners to business and industry, Mississippi community colleges provide critical workforce training in a timely manner to ensure industry has the workforce needed in terms

of numbers and skills. By preparing people and putting them to work, our state becomes stronger in terms of economic viability. Partnering with K-12 and IHL is key to providing a comprehensive workforce needed to be competitive globally. Through partnerships, collaboration, and focus on education for future employment, we can transform Mississippi.

I understand the value of education. As a first generation nontraditional college student, I received my Bachelor of Science in Biology from Livingston University, my Master of Arts in Teaching from the University of West Alabama, and my Ph.D. in Community College Leadership from Mississippi State University.

Most recently, I served as President at Shelton State Community College in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Prior to that, I worked for 18 years at East Mississippi Community College where some of the positions I held included Science Instructor, Distance Learning Coordinator, Academic Dean, District Director for Institutional Research and Effectiveness, Vice-President for Academic Instruction, and finally Vice-President for the Scooba Campus. My work experience in the community college is comprehensive.

Now, more so than ever before, the MCCB, Mississippi's community colleges, and other education and external partners must work together in tandem to eliminate redundancy and barriers to success. We must plan for a strong economic future by: (a) ensuring the availability of innovative programs of study and training that are aligned with current and prospective business and industry; (b) responsive solutions to industry workforce issues; (c) policies and procedures that result in compliance, unified efforts, success, and efficient operations; (d) legislation supportive of education success, workforce development, and industry recruitment; (e) quality customer



Dr. Andrea Scott Mayfield
MCCB Executive Director

services in all areas; and (f) support services conducive to success and a better quality of life. By achieving these goals, I am confident that our community colleges will provide the educational and training opportunities that are vital to the success of our citizens.

I know the next few months will be very busy as I get to know MCCB staff, work with key partners, visit college campuses, and re-connect with colleagues.

Mississippi has a proud history of community college excellence and I am committed to ensuring our agency does everything we can to provide each of our colleges the resources needed to provide a life-changing education for our students. Mississippi's community college system has already been identified as one of the best in the nation. Through new and strengthened partnerships, the future of Mississippi is indeed bright.



UNIVERSITIES BRING US THE FUTURE

Last fall, fans of the 1985 film *Back to the Future: Part II* celebrated "Back to the Future Day." In the movie, the character Marty McFly travels from October 21, 1985, to October 21, 2015, to save his children. When the date actually arrived, the inevitable comparisons were made between the future imagined in the film and the present reality in which we live.

Of course, some of the future imagined in the film has become reality, while other aspects have not. What is more important to discuss is how the imagined became reality. More often than not, you will find that universities play a large role in the discoveries and solutions that shape the future.

Mississippi public universities help solve Mississippi's most pressing problems and also tackle the problems faced by our nation and our world. Research conducted by our universities addresses health issues and helps find ways to cure and prevent disease. Research also looks at agriculture, examining a wide variety of topics that help farmers produce better crops, give consumers a reliable source of nutritious food, and even explore how to turn agriculture and forestry waste into fuel.

Security, from cyber-security to keeping crowds and players safe at sport-

ing events and using unmanned aircraft systems, is also an important research topic for today and tomorrow. In labs today, universities are conducting tests that will lead to discoveries, breakthroughs and inventions that will make our lives easier, and perhaps longer, in the future.

Universities also play an important role in economic development and helping bring in the business and industry that will provide the jobs of the future to Mississippians. Once here, university research supports the growth and stability of the businesses.

The state of Mississippi supports this effort through the SMART Business Act. The Strengthening Mississippi Academic Research Through Business Act, SMART Business Act, stimulates private investment in research and development through partnerships with Mississippi public universities. The program increases the competitiveness of Mississippi companies and improves the economy of the state of Mississippi by providing a rebate equal to 25 percent of the research costs for new research agreements.

Perhaps our universities' most important role in creating the future is not in the inventions that will make our lives easier or businesses more produc-



Dr. Glenn F. Boyce
Commissioner of Higher Education

tive, but in educating the leaders of the future. Our most important investment is the investment we make in our students, who will become the teachers, engineers, doctors, entrepreneurs and writers of tomorrow.

We know the best way to save children from a future of economic instability and even poverty is through education. As educators, we all have a role to play in saving Mississippi's children and, in doing so, creating a brighter future for us all.



Finding Your Inner Tigger

As we enter into the halfway mark of the school year, I know many of us are worn out already. Between the new assessments (again) and the fight for school funding, many educators are feeling defeated in many ways. However, there was an incident that was uplifting for me. My daughter, manager of our dance team, was recognized at Senior Night during our last home football game, and yes, I was very sentimental. Right after the seniors walked across the 50-yard line with their parents and wished well in their future, the kindergarteners stormed the field representing the Class of 2028. They ran, they jumped, they skipped, and they stopped to wave at the crowd. They were full of excitement as they proudly wore their "Class of 2028" shirts. While my daughter's journey was beginning a new path, their journey was just beginning, and they could not wait! Watching those eager faces full of energy and happiness rejuvenated me.

When we are in the trenches fighting the good fight for our students, we tend to become focused on what is not happening and what is not going the way we want it to go. We feel defeated when we run

SCHOOLS THROUGHOUT THE STATE ARE BEING RECOGNIZED FOR ACHIEVEMENT. MISSISSIPPI SCHOOLS ARE RAISING THE BAR IN MANY CATEGORIES, INCLUDING ADVANCED PLACEMENT CLASSES, WHICH ARE RECOGNIZED GLOBALLY.

into road blocks or feel under attack when others can't see or understand what we are dealing with. It is very easy to become an "Eeyore" and when you add a few more Eeyores to the mix, that crankiness escalates. However, watching those babies beginning their journey reminded me that there are more positive things happening within education. Our younger children who need help are being identified at an earlier age. Those same babies are being taught higher-level thinking skills and being presented lessons in innovative ways that are different from the rote memorization that I was taught. Children are being challenged with the STEM-focused instruction that is throughout the school. Schools throughout the state are being recognized for achievement. Mississippi schools are raising the bar in many categories, including Advanced Placement classes, which are recognized globally. We still have a long way to go and many obstacles are in the way, but we cannot let that get us down.



Lori Brennan,
MPE Board of Directors

Regardless of the age of students in our classrooms, each one of them is looking at us for support and motivation. They, too, are exhausted by the challenges they have faced this school year. They need us to be their role models and show them that we are in this for them and we are willing to fight for them. They need us to encourage them to keep their heads up—we are halfway there. It is tough to stay positive for 180 days, but right now, our students need exactly that. Somehow, we have to dig deep down inside and find our inner Tigger. It is tough to be the "glass is half full" person in a society that can be so critical, but each one of us has hundreds of children looking for just that. We can do this—we are halfway there!



MPE Members Share Their Thoughts via Annual Membership Survey

MPE appreciates our 987 members who participated in our online member survey this fall. We once again used Survey Monkey to obtain members' thoughts on five questions related to MPE member benefits and eight questions regarding education policy issues. We well exceeded the 373 participants we needed for statistical significance and confidence. Survey results include:

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- ♦ 34% joined MPE for our professional liability insurance, while 1% joined for our values, 2% for our cost, and 1% for our educational news. 62% joined for all of these reasons.
- ♦ 56% are "very satisfied" and 39% are "satisfied" with their MPE benefits.
- ♦ 34% believe our liability protection is the most important benefit, while 9% favor our education updates.
- ♦ 18% want training on the effective use of technology, 14% want SPED training, and another 12% would like training on using data to drive instruction.
- ♦ 95% read our weekly emails on a regular basis.

POLICY QUESTIONS

- ♦ 41% see MAEP funding as the legislative policy issue of most importance to them, with another 34% citing PERS/retirement.
- ♦ 38% support Mississippi transitioning to all appointed superintendents, 25% support a continued mix of appointed and elected superintendents, and 28% need more information on the issue.
- ♦ 67% believe full funding of the MAEP formula should be reached via the passage of Initiative 42, while 9% believe the legislature should fund the formula as it sees fit.
- ♦ 72% do not support the diversion of state funds to nonpublic schools, home schools or virtual schools via vouchers, tuition tax credits, scholarships, individualized education funds (IEFs) or other means. 9% support the diversion of state funds via these means.
- ♦ 58% believe Mississippi should create and fund a statewide early childhood program, while another 28% believe we should continue investing in quality pre-K programs as funds allow.
- ♦ 43% do not believe the current charter school law should be changed to allow students living in other districts to cross district lines to attend charter schools. 25% support a change in current law to allow students to cross district lines.
- ♦ 47% believe charter schools should only be operated by non-profits, while 12% believe private companies should be allowed to operate for-profit charters. 41% need more information before making a decision.
- ♦ 64% see educational funding as the most pressing policy issue for the legislature, with another 22% citing the overall budget as the most pressing issue.

MPE always appreciates hearing from our members! These results, as well as the comments provided by members in response to questions, will prove quite beneficial during the upcoming legislative session. Congratulations to Terry Clayton of the Meridian Public Schools and Heather Brinson of the Lamar County School District for winning the free memberships we gave to survey participants.



2016 MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATIVE SESSION



The 2016 Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature convenes at 12:00 noon on Tuesday, January 5, 2016. MPE encourages its members to stay updated as to legislation under consideration at the capitol throughout the session. MPE provides regular updates via email and social media to keep its members informed as to the status of this legislation so that members may in turn contact their respective legislators with their thoughts and support or concerns on particular issues or pieces of legislation. We offer the following for our members' reference during the 2016 Legislative Session.

Legislators to be in Session for Four Months

As this is the first year of a new four-year term, the 2016 session will be four months in length, as compared to the three-month sessions held in the second, third and fourth years of a term. The first year of a new four-year term provides this extra month as a learning period for new legislators, as well as for time necessary for housekeeping items such as appointment of committees.

One of the first orders of business for the House of Representatives will be the election of the Speaker of the House. While it was anticipated earlier this fall that current Speaker Philip Gunn may not be reelected, I do not think that will be the case given the Republicans' results in legislative races on November 3. Thus, the vote will be a formality. While the Lieutenant Governor presides over the Senate, members of that chamber will elect a new President Pro Tem. The President Pro Tem presides over the Senate in the Lt. Governor's absence.

Committee Chairmen Play Significant Role

The Speaker and the Lt. Governor will appoint committee chairmen, as well as members of each legislative committee, during the first few weeks of the session. Education committees generally consider over 200 bills each session and committee chairmen have a significant voice in decid-

ing which bills will or will not be considered by their respective committees. MPE will share the names and contact information for education and university committee chairmen, as well as appropriations chairmen, via email, as well as on our website, as soon as those appointments are announced.

Timetable for Processing Legislation

The timetable for processing legislation includes the following significant legislative deadlines:

- March 8: Deadline for committees to report general bills originating in own house
- March 17: Deadline for original floor action on general bills originating in own house
- April 5: Deadline for committees to report general bills originating in other house
- April 13: Deadline for original floor action on general bills originating in other house
- April 28: Deadline to concur or not concur in amendments from other house to general bills
- April 30: Deadline for conference reports on appropriation bills to be filed
- May 2: Deadline for adoption of appropriation conference reports and for conference reports on general bills to be filed
- May 4: Deadline for first consideration of conference reports on general bills
- May 8: Sine Die (Adjourning sine die comes from the Latin "without day" and it refers to adjourning without assigning a day for a further meeting. Members adjourn sine die only on the last day of the session.)

Education Expected to be a Hot Topic

Education is expected to once again be a hot topic during the upcoming 2016 legislative session. Among other education policy issues most likely to be considered, there could be further debate as to Mississippi's College and Career Readiness Standards. The Lt. Governor and the Governor have both alluded to possibly changing the law to allow students living in other districts to cross district lines to attend charter schools. It is likely that legislators will consider additional vouchers, tuition tax credits, or other diversions of state funds to nonpublic schools, home schools or virtual schools. There will also most likely be a strong push for the appointment of all school district superintendents, as well. Initiative 42's vote on November 3 sent a clear message that Mississippians want MAEP fully funded; the question is how that will be accomplished, so education funding should continue to be a significant topic at the capitol.

Let Your Voice be Heard

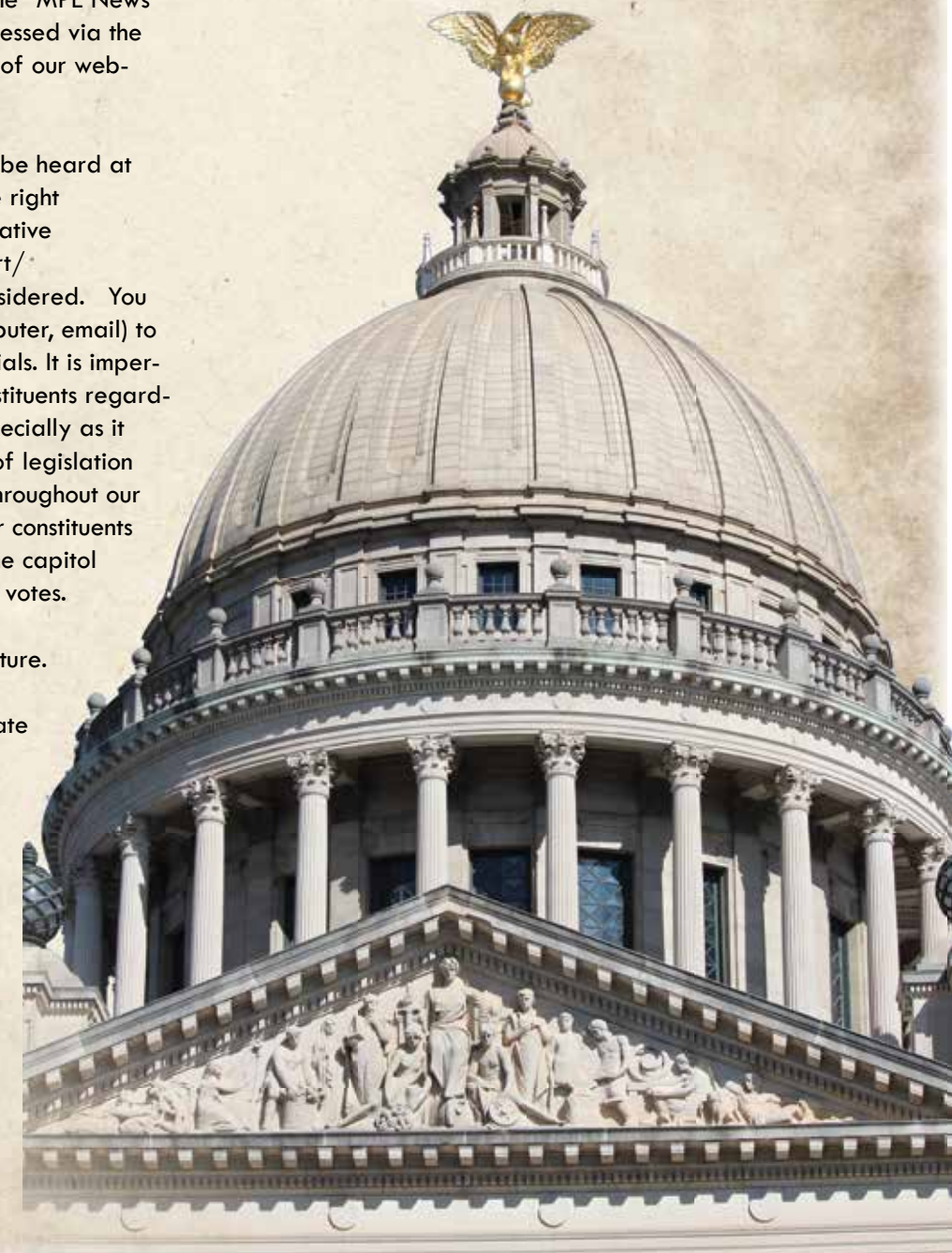
As in years past, MPE will keep its members updated throughout the 2016 Mississippi Legislative Session via our weekly email updates, as well as Facebook and Twitter, as to developments at the capitol throughout the session. You may check the status of a particular piece of legislation by visiting <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us>. In addition, once the March 8 deadline passes for committees to report general bills originating in each chamber, MPE staff will develop our bill tracking spreadsheet of the critical pieces of legislation we will be monitoring throughout the session. We will update our bill tracking spreadsheet each Friday and post it in the "MPE News" section of our website, which may be accessed via the "Resources for Educators" tab at the top of our webpage (www.mpe.org).

Educators have a right to let their voices be heard at the state capitol. Every educator has the right to contact his or her respective representative and/or senator to share thoughts/support/concerns regarding legislation being considered. You should not use school resources (i.e., computer, email) to contact your legislator or statewide officials. It is imperative that legislators hear from their constituents regarding particular bills being considered, especially as it relates to education bills – those pieces of legislation that will impact schools and classrooms throughout our state. Legislators need to know that their constituents back home are watching their votes at the capitol and will hold them accountable for those votes.

The legislature's homepage (www.legislature.ms.gov) contains contact information for legislators in the form of House and Senate rosters, as well as legislators' respective web pages. Once the House and Senate rosters are released, MPE will also provide contact information via the "Quick Links" menu that runs down the left side of our homepage (www.mpe.org). In addition to emailing your representative or senator, you may leave phone messages for members with the capitol switchboard at 601-359-3770.

Finally, be engaged with your legislators beyond the legislative session. Encourage your principal to invite your

representative and/or senator to visit your school. Help to form a committee of concerned educators, parents and community leaders to meet with your legislators on a regular, monthly basis throughout the year. Not only will this let your legislators know that you care about public education and that you are watching their votes at the capitol, it will give them a trusted group of constituents to contact for feedback. It is in the best interest of our students and our state that we all work together to advance our schools.



MPE MEMBERS RECOGNIZED AS TEACHERS OF DISTINCTION



Teresa Bernauer

A resident of Saltillo, Teresa Bernauer has been recognized for her work as an 8th grade MS Studies and Introduction to World Geography instructor. She has been a member of MPE since 2014. She has been teaching for eight years. Teresa presently teaches at Tupelo Middle School in the Tupelo Public School District.

Tupelo's CREATE Foundation recognizes teachers and assistant teachers every year who create a learning environment that fosters, encourages, and celebrates excellence in and out of the classroom. Students, parents, teachers, administrators, school district employees or community citizens make the nominations and an external committee of educators chooses the winners. The winning teachers each received \$1,000 checks and assistant teachers received \$500. MPE wants to congratulate the following teachers for achieving this prestigious honor.



Carole Elliott

A resident of Tupelo, Carole Elliott has been recognized for her work teaching first grade at Carver Elementary School in the Tupelo Public School District. She has been a member of MPE since 2014. Carole has been a classroom teacher for 13 years.



Virginia "Ginny" Miller

A resident of Tupelo, Virginia R. "Ginny" Miller has been celebrated for her effort at Tupelo High School. Ginny teaches courses from grades 9-12 in English and Journalism. She is the adviser for the student newspaper, for which she was awarded the 2014-2015 JoAnne Sellars Newspaper Adviser of the Year. She has been an MPE member since 2013.



Dana Maharrey

A resident of Tupelo, Dana Maharrey has been honored for her success at Pierce Street Elementary School in the Tupelo Public School District. Dana teaches 4th grade Gifted Education. She has been an MPE member since 2013.



Patricia Parker

A resident of Tupelo, Patricia Parker teaches at Tupelo High School in the Tupelo Public School District. She has been recognized for her efforts in Art I, Art II, Ceramics I and Ceramics II. Patricia has been teaching for 18 years. She has been an MPE member since 2013.

RECRUITMENT INCENTIVES

MPE's recruitment incentives provide a great way for you to earn a free membership, as well as a little extra money. You earn a free year's membership for simply recruiting five new members and you earn money for each new member recruited after five. Encourage your professional co-workers and friends to join the premiere organization for professional educators in Mississippi.



- Five new members = one year's free membership
- 6-9 new members = one year's membership + \$10 per member*
- 10-14 new members = one year's membership + \$15 per member*
- 15+ new members = one year's membership + \$20 per member*

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, 2015 and June 30, 2016. 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

WINTER 2016 REGIONAL TRAINING

MPE will host the following four regional trainings in the coming months. Participants will receive .6 CEU credits for each full day course. Sessions will be provided at NO COST for MPE members. The cost for non-members is \$25. To register, follow the "MPE Regional Trainings" link in the "Quick Links" section of our website (www.mpe.org) and then click on the hyperlink for the respective training you wish to attend. For additional information, or if you have any technical difficulties, please contact Barbie Ferguson at barbie@mpe.org or (800)523-0269.

IMPLEMENTING MISSISSIPPI'S COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS STANDARDS- ELA: This training will discuss keys to successful implementation of MCCR standards and discuss the language of the standards. It will give participants a portrait of a successful MCCR student, as well as encourage participants to rethink classroom instruction with examples of appropriate and effective tasks. Participants will also write assessment items at the appropriate level of rigor required of the MCCR standards.

- 6-8 ELA Trainings
 - ♦ Feb. 10 Hinds Community College, Muse Center, Pearl
- 9-12 ELA Trainings
 - ♦ Feb. 16 Southwest Community College Workforce Learning Center, Summit

IMPLEMENTING MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS STANDARDS – MATH: Topics will include: modeling the standards and their importance, collaborating through number talks, effectively using Mississippi scaffolding documents, collecting and using relevant data, modeling mathematical practices, and implementing assessment shifts. The training will focus on ensuring mathematical rigor for every grade, as well as introducing educational apps for the math classroom.

- K-5 MATH Trainings
 - ♦ Feb. 12 Hilton Garden Inn, Starkville
- 9-12 MATH Trainings
 - ♦ Jan. 7 Life Church, Laurel

The Mississippi Board of Education recently recognized the 2014-2015 state finalists for the **Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) Program**. The program, established in 1983 by the White House, allows each state to select up to five state finalists in mathematics and up to five state finalists in science. One of the state finalists in each content area will be selected as the Presidential Awardee for the state, which is the highest recognition that a kindergarten through 12th grade mathematics or science teacher may receive for outstanding teaching in the United States. MPE congratulates **Susie Oglesby and Dorothy Thomas** for their accomplishments.



Susanna (Susie) Oglesby, teaches Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and ACT Prep classes at New Hope School in the Lowndes County School District. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education K-8 and Social Studies and Science

7-8. She completed her Master of Science degree in Elementary Education, Reading and Computer Science from Mississippi State University. Susie is a National Board Certified Teacher with 15 years of classroom experience. She has been a member of MPE since 2011.

Dorothy Thomas teaches Algebra I and Foundations of Algebra at Pontotoc High School in Pontotoc City School District. Thomas received a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics from Mississippi Valley State University. She later received a Master of Education degree in curriculum and instruction



with an emphasis in Mathematics from the University of Mississippi. She received her Education Specialist in educational leadership from the University of Mississippi. Thomas is a National Board Certified Teacher of early adolescent mathematics. She has been an MPE member since 2014.

MPE MEMBERS RECEIVE ADVANCED DEGREES

Dr. Jay Rayborn of Columbia received his Ph.D. in Educational Administration from the University of Southern Mississippi in May 2015. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Coaching/Sports Administration from the University of Southern Mississippi. Jay obtained his Master of Arts in Teaching with a Physical Education emphasis from Mississippi Valley State University. Jay teaches health and physical education at Columbia Elementary School and serves as the assistant coach for the Columbia High School baseball team.



Jay Rayborn

Dr. Deborah B. Smith earned her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership at the University of Southern Mississippi in July 2015. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Marketing Management, Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education, Master of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction and her Education Specialist in Education Leadership from the University of Southern Mississippi. Deborah is an Assistant Principal at Hattiesburg High School.



Deborah Smith

Dr. Hannah Lewis recently completed her Master of Education degree in Reading Literacy from Belhaven University. She received her Associate degree in Drafting and Design Technology from East Central Community College and went on to complete her Bachelor of Science degree in Secondary Education with an emphasis in English from Mississippi State University. Hannah teaches 7th grade English at Brandon Middle School in the Rankin County School District. MPE congratulates you on your academic accomplishment!



Hannah Lewis

MPE would like to congratulate **Dr. Michael McNeece** for being named a 2015 Delta State Connected Educator award recipient. A past president (2001-2002) of MPE, McNeece retired from the Greenville Public Schools in 2011. He has been a member of MPE since 1990.

The Mississippi Association of School Administrators honored several MPE members during its fall leadership conference this past October.



Kelli Brown

Kelli Brown, principal of Petal Elementary, was honored for her selection as the Mississippi representative for the National Distinguished Principal Program. Kelli earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics from William Carey College in 1999. She completed her Master's degree in Mathematics Education and a Specialist's degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Southern MS. Ms. Brown has been a member of MPE since 2005.

Kelli Brown, principal of Petal Elementary, was honored for her selection as the Mississippi representative for the National Distinguished Principal Program. Kelli earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics from William Carey College in 1999. She completed her Master's degree in Mathematics Education and a Specialist's degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Southern MS. Ms. Brown has been a member of MPE since 2005.



Tony Cook

Tony Cook, superintendent of the Houston School District, will serve as MASA's 2015-2016 Secretary. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Mississippi and his Master of Educational Administration and Supervision at Delta State University. Cook is a native of Houston, MS, and has been a member of MPE member since 2014.



Dr. Matt Dillon

Dr. Matt Dillon, superintendent of the Petal School District, will serve as MASA's 2015-2016 Vice President. Dr. Dillon is an active MPE member who resides in Petal, MS. Dr. Dillon earned his Bachelor of Elementary Education at the University of Southern Mississippi. He received his master's and doctorate degrees from the University of Mississippi.



Bobby Jones

Bobby Jones, Director of Wayne County Career and Technical Center, was honored as the MASCTA Director of the Year. He is a graduate of Jones County Junior College, William Carey University and Mississippi State University. He was recognized as the 2015 Mississippi Career Tech Administrator of the Year and was recently elected Superintendent of Wayne County Schools. Mr. Jones has been an MPE member since 2000.



Dr. Ray Morgigno

Dr. Ray Morgigno, superintendent of Pearl Public Schools, will serve as MASA's 2015-2016 President-elect. Dr. Morgigno has been an MPE member since 1997. He earned a Bachelor of Social Science Education and his Master of Educational Leadership from the University of Mississippi. He received his Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from Mississippi State University in 2012.

Lisa Williamson is in her second year serving as principal of South Pontotoc Elementary. She was awarded the Roger McDaniel Scholarship from MASA. Lisa earned her Bachelor of Elementary Education from Mississippi College. Mrs. Williamson resides in Pontotoc, Mississippi, and has been a member of MPE for 20 years.



Lisa Williamson

2014-2015 CLASSROOM GRANT RECIPIENTS

MPE invites its members to apply for classroom grant funding each year to try out a new idea or buy the “extras” for an already great lesson plan or project. Thirty-five members submitted applications for the 2014-2015 school year, with sixteen members receiving grants of up to \$500 for their class projects and instructional program. We are pleased to spotlight several of the grants below for your enjoyment, as well as your reference for ideas for your own classroom.

Katie Thompson
South Forrest Attendance Center- 7th Grade, Social Studies
I Can Feel It In My Bones

Thank you MPE for funding the classroom grant that provide hands-on archaeology and anthropology activities in my class-room. As a teacher new to teaching Social Studies, I found that the students did not have a clear understanding of what archaeology and anthropology consist of. The students had read about it but did not fully understand the concepts of excavation and carbon dating. The students were in need of experiencing these concepts first-hand. Through the funds from the grant, I was able to purchase various miniature excavation kits and a half-life kit to allow the students hand-on experience.



Angel Fleming
L.C. Hatcher Elementary- Kindergarten, All Subjects
Learning Through Music and Movement

Thank you MPE for funding a grant that provided a fun and interactive multi-sensory learning environment for my students. My first goal for this project was for my students to learn and practice kindergarten readiness skills through music and movement. My second goal was for my students to use the acquired readiness skills to become emergent readers and little mathematicians. My students were able to become emergent readers and demonstrate math knowledge by learning and applying essential readiness skills gained from using the materials funded by the MPE grant.

Tabitha Dillard
Ingomar Attendance Center – 10th Grade, ELA
Teaching Across the Curriculum with Informational Texts

I would like to thank MPE for funding my classroom grant of \$500 for me to purchase *The New York Times Upfront* Scholastic magazines for my English II students. With these magazines, I was able to appropriately and accurately implement the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards in a way that not only challenged my students, but also entertained them. In addition to reading the articles within the magazines, I was also able to access debates, games, videos and links online that were relevant to the topics discussed in the magazines. Through the \$500 grant, I was able to purchase 40 bi-monthly issues of *Upfront*, "The Holocaust" Scholastic reader, and various books to add to my classroom library.



Stacey Jules-Dunn
Oak Forest Elementary- Kindergarten, All Subjects
What's In Your Center?

My students, my assistant and I would like to take to the opportunity to thank MPE for choosing our grant entitled "What's in your center?" for funding. The start of the 2014-2015 academic school year began my third year of teaching and also my third year in teaching kindergartners. When the school year began, I saw three dire needs from my new students; creative center activities, a new way to combine skill mastery and motivation to learn, and technology reinforcement. One of the overall goals for kindergarten mastery is for them to be a solid level one reader when they enter first grade. The Hot Dots, Jr. kits and pens are an innovative way to combine learning with basic technology. The award-winning educational toy comes in a variety of formats to reach early childhood students, as well as lower and upper elementary students. "What's in your center?" was a proposal to purchase instructional level sets of cards and interactive, talking, teaching pens to develop early literacy, reading, writing, mathematics and science skills while building students' understanding of fundamental concepts. We began working with the educational toys as soon as they arrived in the fall. Though the grant I was able to purchase twenty-five Hot Dots pens and fifteen Hot Dots kits for Reading, Mathematics and Science centers' use in my classroom. At this time, eighty-five percent of the students in my classroom are avid readers, with the other fifteen just about to reach their goal. In conclusion, we were able to reach our educational goals with the assistance of the grant that was awarded to my classroom.



Melissa Corry
H.W. Byers Elementary School – 2nd-6th Grades, Gifted Studies/Gifted Art
Shakespeare

Thank you to MPE for funding this classroom grant for a teaching residency workshop on Shakespeare. This is a learning experience that these students will never forget. Being immersed in Shakespeare in such a hands-on way brought the bard to life for these kids. Through this they have fallen in love with Shakespeare's plays. We are so blessed to have a professional Shakespeare company of such high caliber as Tennessee Shakespeare in our area. Our pupils would never have been afforded an opportunity to attend a camp such as this otherwise and the benefit to them has been immeasurable. They were able to experience Shakespeare through dance, performance, and stage fighting and were completely engaged. Many high school students groan when they are told they will be studying Shakespeare, but these elementary students can't wait to read and perform the plays. A second grader who can re-tell the play *Macbeth* from start to finish has accomplished something epic.



Pat Robertson
Executive Director
Public Employees'
Retirement System of
Mississippi

Every year since PERS began investing in equity markets (August 1980), we have aimed for (and, largely, reached or surpassed) a target of 8 percent in investment returns. In fact, our annualized return since that time is 9.2 percent. However, with the continued volatility in the markets, predictions that the returns of the past will not be repeated, and in conjunction with our biennial experience study, PERS has reduced its assumed long-term rate of return to 7.75 percent.

What is a rate of return?

Rate of return measures investment performance--in other words, the gain or loss on an investment over a specified period, expressed as a percentage increase over the initial investment. As with the economy, the actual return on a year-to-year basis will fluctuate; therefore, we focus on how the plan is performing on a long-term basis rather than on a particular year.

PERS has experienced above-average returns in six of the past 10 fiscal years (see accompanying chart). Though our rate of return for FY 2015 is 3.4 percent, our five-year annualized return is 11.9 percent and our 30-year return is 8.9 percent.

The *assumed rate of return* is the rate we anticipate we will earn on investments over time. This is one of the most significant assumptions in the annual actuarial valuation process, as it is used to discount the expected benefit payments for all active, inactive, and retired members. Minor changes in this assumption can have a major effect on valuation results. The investment return assumption reflects the expected return based on the asset allocation set by the PERS Board of Trustees.

Why the change in the assumed rate?

In conjunction with our biennial experience study this past April, the PERS Board approved the recommendation of our actuary, Cavanaugh Macdonald, to lower our assumed rate of return to 7.75 percent, primarily as a result of a decrease in the inflation assumption from 3.5 to 3 percent.

This decision was made with caution and prudence. A recent issue brief titled *Public Pension Plan Investment Return Assumptions*, published by the National Association of State Retirement Administrators, indicates that 7.69 percent is the average rate for this assumption among the nation's largest public retirement systems (PERS currently ranks as the 69th largest pension plan in the U.S.).

Also in conjunction with the experience study, changes were made to the demographic assumptions (i.e., withdrawals, mortality rates, disability rates, salary scales) and the wage inflation assumption (i.e., how much salaries are expected to increase) was decreased from 4.25 percent to 3.75 percent.

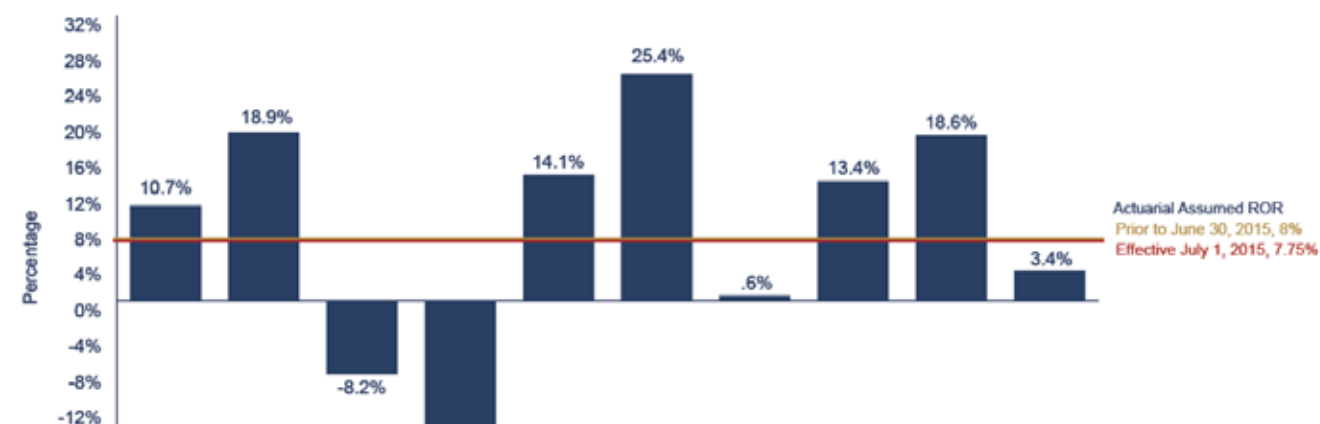
What difference will these changes make?

We review the economic and demographic assumptions and make changes to our demographic assumptions on a regular basis so that PERS does not incur large gains or losses at any one time. While these changes are necessary from a prudent management perspective, they also affect our numbers.

From an administrative perspective, the demographic changes will be implemented July 1, 2016, and will factor into the FY 2015 actuarial valuation, which will affect our unfunded accrued liability (UAL) and funding ratio (both numbers will be released in our *Facts & Figures* at the end of October). To illustrate how these changes affect our valuation, we can apply the changes to our 2014 actuarial valuation numbers and see that the UAL would have increased by \$1.5 billion to \$15.9 and the funding ratio would have decreased from 61 percent to 58.7. However, in keeping with our long-term focus, PERS is projected to exceed our funding policy goal of 80 percent by 2042, which shows that the decisions and adjustments we make now are best for the overall health of the system.

Investment Performance

Source: PERS Investments



RETIREE REFLECTIONS

Enjoying your retirement? Do we ever stop being an educator? I am in Orange Beach for a month and have been volunteering in a kindergarten classroom and loving it! So many things we can choose to do—or we can choose to do nothing. Isn't that great! MPE initiated a special recognition this year for retiring members who have belonged to MPE for 20 years or more. They are asked to choose their grade or department at their school, the PTA or education foundation of their school or the school library for a donation of \$50 in their name. Ten have already been sent out.

We have an article from Pat Robertson of PERS in this issue. You don't want to miss this. I have received several calls recently from retired members with questions about their membership. If you had a draft drawn be sure and check to see that you are paying the correct dues. If you are working part-time you probably want the \$60 part-time membership with insurance. If you don't need that please consider the one-time \$70 lifetime retired membership. There is also a \$10 a year retired membership.

Also check your teaching license---don't let it expire since it is so easy for us to renew. If you have any questions about this procedure, please call me.

I am pleased to be able to represent our retired members and to help you. Please don't hesitate to contact me at 662-588-9011 or phileneallen@bellsouth.net.



Philene Allen
MPE Board of Directors,
Retirees



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MISSISSIPPI PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS BEST PRACTICES SYMPOSIUM

2016

Dr. Harry Wong, classroom teacher and author of the bestselling book in education worldwide, *The First Days of School*, will be our keynote speaker. Dr. Wong will be joined by his wife Rosemary. They are the authors of a new book, *THE Classroom Management Book*. Harry is the recipient of the Horace Mann Outstanding Educator Award and the only recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Recognition from the National Teachers Hall of Fame. Harry and Rosemary are recognized leaders in the development of effective teachers.



Harry & Rosemary Wong

Save the Date!

“How to Be a Successful and Effective Teacher”

Saturday, April 9, 2016
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Jackson, MS

- * BREAK-OUT SESSIONS WITH ENGAGING SPEAKERS
- * THE LATEST INFORMATION ON THE BUDGET, LEGISLATION AND MUCH MORE
- * CEUS WILL BE AVAILABLE
- * GREAT DOOR PRIZES!

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opens January 18!