2017 MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS
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## Cover Stories

Our cover reflects several of our MPE benefits that members highlighted during our recent member survey. These benefits include our scholarships, trainings/symposiums, educational updates, and classroom grants.

### 2017 Member Survey Results
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Dr. Brad Johns

“If it weren’t for you being such an excellent teacher, I would have NEVER had the confidence or security within myself to try harder and actually do better. Math was SOOOOO SOOOOO hard for me. But you taught it in a way that I understood and helped me realize that I CAN do it, if I keep trying.”

These are the moments that teachers live for. Earlier this fall, I was part of something amazing. Our principal had scheduled an assembly for our students by the group Say Something. The assembly was about trying to get kids to say something to an adult if they see something going on that is not right. The group dealt with such difficult topics as bullying, rape, and abuse. Towards the end of the program, the organizer called all the teachers in the room down to the floor. He began to talk about how, as teachers, we invest our lives into every single one of our students. He told them that we push them hard because we expect and want the very best for each and every one of them. He told the group of students how we spend our very own money on them so that they might have a better life one day. And then he asked them to do something that I was not expecting him to do. He asked them to come down to the floor and thank us for all that we do for them on a daily basis.

One by one they responded. Student after student came to the floor to thank us until the whole student body was there to greet us and tell us thank you. Tears began to flow from both the teachers and the students. It was an amazing experience. This went on for what seemed like an eternity. In the end, this assembly was well worth the time invested because it brought us together and made us feel more like family than ever before.

So why would I tell you this story? Well, I just wanted you to know that we, at MPE, want to thank you for all that YOU do each and every day for your students. You may not be told that very often or even at all. So, I want you to know that we appreciate you. You are the best thing that some of our students have in their lives. It is because of what you and your colleagues do on a daily basis that your students’ lives will be changed forever. Because of the work that you do, poverty will end in families all across this state. Because of you, students will be successful in college and in turn become productive citizens. Because of you, the world will in turn be a better place. Thank you for all of your hard work. Thank you for caring like you do for your students. Thank you for all that you do. Thank you. Thank you.
Each of us remembers a teacher, or teachers, who made a difference in our lives. They are the teachers who make major investments of themselves in their students, in the classroom, in the laboratory, in the library, at the computer terminal, and out on the campus.” – Dr. Robert Khayat

The above quote is from Dr. Robert Khayat’s book The Education of a Lifetime. Earlier this fall, Dr. Khayat was honored by the Mississippi Association of Partners in Education with its Winter-Reed Partnership Award for his contributions to education in Mississippi. During his acceptance remarks, Dr. Khayat focused on the critical role of teachers in their students’ lives. He eloquently described how a teacher guides not only a student’s mind, but a student’s character as well and can instill the values of love and respect in students. Your relationship with your students is one of your most valuable assets.

Thank you to those 1,374 members who participated in our annual member survey earlier this fall. Our members’ feedback is critical to our operations and drives decisions throughout our organization. I was particularly pleased to see the responses to our teacher leadership questions, as nearly 65% of respondents indicated that teachers have an appropriate level of decisionmaking in their school. Please see pages 12-14 for a summary of this year’s survey responses.

You will find several resources for the upcoming 2018 Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature on page 20. I cannot stress to our members how important it is for you to reach out to your legislators with your thoughts on legislation under consideration. The leadership has indicated it will introduce legislation to rewrite the education funding formula. My weekly emails to our membership will keep you updated as to significant developments. If you are not receiving these emails, please contact our office to make sure we have your current email address on file, as it will be imperative for educators throughout Mississippi to contact their legislators with their thoughts on any new formula.

Our office will be transitioning to a new association management system (i.e., database) over the course of the next few months. We plan to “go live” in May. In addition to expanding our online capabilities, the system will also provide more individual opportunities for our members. For example, you will be able to log into your member profile and track CEUs you earn through an MPE training or symposium. Depending on your payment method for your MPE dues, you may receive correspondence from us over the next few months referencing YourMembership (YM), the new system. Please know that these emails are legitimate and respond to them accordingly. Thank you in advance for your assistance!

As we reach the mid-point of the school year, I have a question for you. Are you being a champion? Do your students know that you believe in them? You may be the only person who they believe has that faith in them. While I think accountability is important, the most important work you do is your relationships with your students…your faith in them…your efforts on their behalf. Do you see the value in what you do? Do not ever forget the impact you have and the value you add to your students’ lives!

Merry Christmas and best wishes for a healthy and joyous 2018!
Mississippi Professional Educators will award up to twenty 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 2018-2019 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 23, 2018.
You deserve a pat on the back. The results of the 2016-17 statewide accountability system released in the fall are commendable. More than 70 percent of Mississippi’s school districts are rated A, B, or C. This achievement is no accident. It’s the direct outcome of effective teaching in your classrooms each day.

While we know more work needs to be done in schools that have not made improvements, we can’t forget to celebrate the progress that we have made in public education. District grades for 2016-17 include 15 “A” districts, 43 “B” districts, 43 “C” districts, 36 “D” districts and 9 “F” districts. The Mississippi State Board of Education (SBE) joins me in congratulating all teachers on the countless hours you spend with students to improve achievement.

You are the ones who prepare them for their next phase in life, whether it’s the next grade, college, or direct entry into the workforce. I hope you will pause to reflect on what has been accomplished but also how we can grow. I encourage you to look at the student-level data that’s available in your schools to see where children are performing.

I have said many times: Every data point has a face. No matter if it’s a high-performing student or a student who struggles academically. We need to know each child’s strengths and weaknesses if we are to better understand what supports they need to reach or to maintain proficiency. Now is also the time when you can reflect on your own instruction and lesson plans. What standards did you excel at teaching? Which ones do you need to strengthen?

As you reflect, rest assured that the Mississippi Department of Education is also taking time to do the same. We are looking at the data as well on a statewide level to see where we need to provide professional development or shore up support to districts. It is our goal as an agency to be a resource to you in the districts.

We are also reviewing the components in our Statewide Accountability System. I stated a few years ago that after several years of implementing the current accountability model, the MDE would examine the business rules associated with the model to see if changes need to be made.

The 2016-17 accountability grades are based, in part, on how well students perform and progress from year to year on the Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP) tests for English language arts (ELA) and Mathematics. The accountability system also factors in how well students perform on science tests in grades 5 and 8. Accountability grades for high schools and districts include the four-year graduation rate, student performance on Biology, U.S. History and ACT tests, and student participation and performance in advanced coursework such as Advanced Placement and dual credit/dual enrollment courses.

In addition, the accountability system places an emphasis on the progress students make in ELA and Mathematics from year to year, particularly the lowest performing 25 percent of students.

The Accountability Task Force, which includes district leaders and teachers, is discussing ways we can address any unintended consequences that developed when the model went into effect four years ago. That work will continue over the next few months and any recommendations for changes will go to the Commission on School Accreditation for consideration before it will be considered by the SBE. We want to ensure that student growth and achievement are reflected in the letter grades for schools and districts.

Finally, I wish you well for the last half of the school year. I appreciate all your hard work and effort as we work together to provide students with the opportunity to reach their goals.
I am a believer in the importance of partnerships and their ability to bring groups together to accomplish tasks vital to the improvement of our state.

An example of a recent partnership in the postsecondary world with state government that is having a major impact across Mississippi is the implementation of the Complete 2 Compete (C2C) initiative. The program is a collaborative effort between the Mississippi Community College Board and the community and junior colleges, the Institutions of Higher Learning, the Mississippi Department of Employment Security, and the Mississippi Department of Human Services.

Study after study shows the benefits of earning a postsecondary degree. Having either an associate’s or bachelor’s degree often leads to higher incomes, increased chances of both finding employment and staying employed, and improving the overall workforce throughout the state. In Mississippi, it is estimated that 32,000 Mississippians have earned enough college credits but were not awarded a college degree because they dropped out. Additionally, 127,000 adults in the state are within a few courses of finishing a degree. The sad reality is that sometimes life gets in the way of an education and students that are within one or two classes of earning a degree may drop out before completing all necessary coursework.

C2C is a joint effort between each community college and university to identify those students who may be eligible for a degree, but unfortunately were not able to obtain it for one reason or another. The website was officially unveiled on August 15 and 40,000 letters were mailed to potential program participants in October. When former students input to the C2C website specific information about the previous institutions they attended and number of credits they have earned, that individual is assigned a counselor at either the community college or university that helps them navigate the system to determine if they are eligible for a degree or how many hours may be needed to complete a program. If a financial barrier was the reason for dropping out, there are resources available to help with that as well.

As I write this, there have been 3,860 applications to the program; 76 students have enrolled in the program; and 81 associate’s degrees and 21 bachelor’s degrees have been awarded with no additional coursework. The outcomes we are already seeing in the program are remarkable. More people will now have access to the degrees that are vital to success in today’s 21st century global economy.

Additional information about C2C can be found at www.msc2c.org.

In October, Dr. Larry Nabors, President of Mississippi Delta Community College, announced that he will retire on June 30, 2018. Dr. Nabors has dedicated his professional career to Mississippi’s educational system. He began serving as President of Mississippi Delta on February 1, 2013, and prior to that, was at Northeast Mississippi Community College where he served in positions such as Executive Vice President, Dean of Instruction, and taught courses in algebra, statistics, and calculus. Dr. Nabors impacted the lives of thousands of students throughout his career, and I would like to congratulate him on his well-deserved retirement.

I hope each of you has a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Thanks for all that you do to better Mississippi and our citizens!

Dr. Andrea Scott Mayfield
MCCB Executive Director
LEGISLATIVE REQUESTS REPRESENT INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE OF STATE

Early in the fall, the Joint Legislative Budget Committee took the first steps in crafting the state’s budget by holding hearings in which state agencies presented their requests. Presenting on behalf of the public university system, I stressed the importance of investing in higher education in Mississippi.

The university system’s request included an increase in appropriations of $49.2 million for campus budgets, $1.4 million for subsidiary units, $8.5 million for agricultural units, and $30.8 million for the University of Mississippi Medical Center. We will also have a bond bill request to build and renovate the living and learning spaces on our campuses and will request a bill authorizing a tax credit for expansion of the MissiON network, which will increase broadband capability at the regional institutions.

When we ask the state to invest more in higher education, we are asking the state to help us do more. Through additional resources, we will have increased capacity to educate more students, conduct more research, and serve more Mississippian through our outreach efforts.

Over the past five years, we have increased the number of degrees conferred by 8.8 percent. We awarded 17,741 degrees in 2017.

Each degree awarded represents a substantial investment:
- the faculty who taught the graduate;
- the resources and materials available in the libraries, study centers, and laboratories that helped the graduate master the materials; and,
- the facilities in which the graduate lived, learned, and received the services needed, whether health care, academic counseling, or help with financial aid.

This investment pays off. These graduates include 3,727 who majored in a STEM field, 2,848 who graduated in the healthcare field, and 2,068 who graduated with a degree in education. More than 70 percent of nursing graduates and education graduates are working in Mississippi five years after graduation.

Our graduates will contribute to our economy through increased earnings and increased tax revenue, but more importantly, they will improve the quality of life in our state by creating the workforce that will heal the sick, educate our children, and drive innovation in our state.

Increased investment also enables our universities to increase the reach of their research. Through greater investment in research initiatives, our universities can solve more problems, move the needle on health issues, increase agricultural output and make products we use safer and more efficient.

This past year, the university system received $420.7 million in research funding from federal, state, and private/corporate sources, supporting 2,407 projects.

Universities create opportunities that transform the lives of students, develop the workforce that transforms business and industry, and provide services that improve the lives of all Mississippians. Investing more in the university system enables the universities to do more for our students, our communities, and our state. The state’s investment in the university system is the grease in the wheels that move Mississippi forward.
In early August, I found it hard to believe that another school year had already begun! I knew all teachers were thinking, “Where did the summer go?” Each year it seems to get shorter and shorter with less relaxation and fun. Yet, you would never know teachers thought this as you walked into classrooms at the beginning of this school year. Classrooms were decorated with the cutest themes, posters were hung from the ceilings, and desks were aligned ready to welcome their students. Just by looking, you knew the teachers spent countless hours ensuring their room was ready for their new students in order to greet them with love. During this time, the teachers were not thinking about the budget cuts, new administration, lack of supplies, nor any other obstacles they will face this upcoming school year. Their focus was to ensure their students love their home away from home. This is a teacher and this is what they do on a daily basis. They think about themselves less and less and more and more about the well-being of their students.

The job does not stop there, however; it is just beginning. As educators continue to work through this school year, we must remember that every child can learn: “No Excuses and No Exceptions.” It is our job to transform the minds of all our students. In order to do that, we must commit to excellence for all students. Effective teaching is not a task but a passion. As we disseminate knowledge to our students, a lot of prior preparation has to be done. We should familiarize ourselves with the curriculum, pacing guides, and scaffolding documents. Lesson plans should meet the needs of all learners with rigorous, engaging activities. We can be great facilitators while students work together to share their ideas and understanding of standards with their classmates. We who exhibit high expectations for all students typically get results. Students will perform when they know someone cares.

The career path of education is not an easy one. This is my 19th year and every day has not been a bed of roses. There are days when I cry, but there are days when I laugh. Through it all, I love each and every moment of it. Education means many things to different people but to me it means life. I could not see myself in another profession. The Bible says, “How can we hear without a preacher?” I say, “How can we learn without a teacher?” When I wake up in the morning, I wonder: what new and exciting adventures will I face today? I go to bed at night knowing I have watered a seed today in at least one of my students. My final thought is: As educators, we are doing something we enjoy and we are changing the course of nature by educating children.

IT IS OUR JOB TO TRANSFORM THE MINDS OF ALL OUR STUDENTS. IN ORDER TO DO THAT, WE MUST COMMIT TO EXCELLENCE FOR ALL STUDENTS.

Timeka Thomas, MPE Board of Directors
We would like to recognize the following 26 members who have already earned a free membership for their recruitment efforts during the first quarter of this year:

- Belinda Beech, Jones County School District
- Kimberly Beightol, Lamar County School District
- Lance Bolen, Pascagoula-Gautier School District
- Sylvia Busby, Jones County School District
- Wade Clark, Jones County School District
- Ashley Fletcher, Lauderdale County School District
- Anderle Foster, Jones County School District
- Becky Hayes, Lowndes County School District
- Cheryl Howard, Quitman County School District
- Brad Johns, Rankin County School District
- Cassandra Jones-Taylor, Leflore County School District
- Melissa Kitchens, Pontotoc County School District
- Bill Kirby, Petal School District
- Deana Latham, Scott County School District
- Donna Mabus, Rankin County School District
- Marcia McCalmon, Benton County School District
- Charles McClatchy, Marshall County School District
- Jacqueline Miller, Petal School District
- Beckie Nieman, North Pike School District
- Mary Hill Shular, Lauderdale County School District
- Jennifer Teal, Pearl River County School District
- Timeka Thomas, Tate County School District
- John Vance, Rankin County School District
- Mark Vaughn, Jones County School District
- Christine Webster, Lauderdale County School District
- Lisa Williamson, Pontotoc County School District

**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, 2017, and June 30, 2018. Free memberships will be credited towards the next year’s membership.

* credit will be given for each additional member after five
** member must have previously been made inactive for a period of three months or more
MPE conducted our annual online member survey for three weeks in October. 1,374 members participated in this year’s survey, a 20% increase over last year’s 1,139 participants. Members responded to four questions regarding their satisfaction with our MPE membership benefits, seven questions regarding teacher leadership in their school and district, and six questions regarding legislative policy issues.

**Membership Benefits**

Survey participants were satisfied with the benefits they receive from MPE, with 59% of respondents being “very satisfied” and 37% being “satisfied” with their MPE benefits. While most (77%) reported joining MPE for the professional liability protection, 10% cited MPE’s reasonable dues as compared to other associations. Likewise, the majority (60%) of participants chose MPE’s professional liability insurance as the benefit of most importance to them, while another 16% cited our education updates via our weekly emails and/or the Journal and 13% cited our legal assistance or professional advice. In expanding our benefits to our members over the course of the past several years, we have tried to provide more than just insurance to our members, as we seek to support members in their lifelong learning and growth as professionals. Thus, comments such as “While I joined for the insurance, I have since realized the other benefits (news, scholarships, opportunities, etc…) outweigh my original reason” are rewarding to see, as is “MPE promotes professionalism.”

The topics of our regional trainings each year are driven by responses from the previous year’s member survey. The majority of this year’s participants (26%) requested training on curriculum standards, with another 21% requesting training on technology/coding and 19% indicating they prefer training on the state’s accountability and accreditation systems. Members used the comments section of the survey to request training in the arts, ELL, more topics for members working in higher education, and retirement planning. Our board will consider these requests when identifying training topics for our 2018-2019 regional trainings. Finally, while we received several requests for Saturday trainings, we piloted those a few years ago but have not offered any since that time due to a significant number of no-shows.
Teacher Leadership

A recent study by the New Teacher Center linked teacher leadership to student performance on assessments and found that students in schools where teachers have a leadership role in decisionmaking perform significantly better on state tests. The Mississippi Department of Education recently received a grant from Chiefs for Change to support the state’s effort in building a teacher leadership model. We included several questions in this year’s survey to gauge our members’ perceptions of teacher leadership in their schools and districts.

Survey responses were encouraging. 83% of survey participants feel that their administration appreciates their work with their students, 72% feel comfortable raising concerns with their administration, and 84% responded that their administration encouraged teachers to grow professionally whether through professional learning communities, professional development, advanced degrees, and/or national certification. Not surprisingly, participants indicated that teachers have greater influence on decisionmaking and opportunities for leadership at the school level than at the district level.
State Policy
Members’ thoughts and comments on education policy issues are beneficial to MPE staff in our work at the capitol during legislative sessions and throughout the year. This year’s results are no different:

- The majority (46%) of survey participants cited educational funding as the policy issue of most importance to them, with another 24% citing PERS/retirement and 15% citing educator compensation. Several participants used the comments section to promote early childhood education, as well as a pay raise for assistant teachers.
- In regard to changing the education funding formula, 48% of respondents believe the state should be responsible for the greatest portion of any new funding formula, while only 12% believe local communities should be responsible for a greater portion of a new formula. Of the 50 comments received on this question, 23 dealt with the inequality of tax bases among local communities and the impact of requiring a greater portion of education funding from our high-poverty areas whose tax base may not support such.
- 50% of participants believe any new funding formula must account for changing costs incurred by districts via an annual recalculation or indexing to inflation, while only 9% indicated it is not necessary to recalculate or index to inflation.
- As in past years, opposition to the diversion of public funds to private entities remains strong. Nearly 70% of survey participants do not support the diversion of state funds from public schools 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.

148 of the participants shared general, closing thoughts at the end of the survey, with a significant number of these thanking MPE for our support and services. Several others suggested items for consideration (scholarships for initial National Board candidates, research regarding year-round school, information regarding MPE memberships by county). The final comment was simply, “Thank you for listening to your members!”
MPE Regional Training

MPE is pleased to offer the following regional training sessions. Participants will receive .6 CEU credits for each full–day course. Each session’s content is timely for educators during the 2017-2018 school year.

MULTI-TIERED BEHAVIORAL SUPPORTS: This session focuses on teaching participants about evidence-based social, emotional, and behavioral supports within a multi-tiered framework. Participants will explore behavioral theory as it pertains to working with students in PK-12 settings, moving across the three tiers of a positive behavioral intervention and supports framework, guidance regarding discipline policies and best practices for alternatives to suspension, and making data-driven decisions about behavioral interventions. (No cost for members or non-members to attend. Members receive CEUs free of charge and non-members may receive CEUs for $15.)

- January 19
  The Alluvian Hotel, Greenwood

INTEGRATING CODING IN THE K-8 CLASSROOM: This session will be a hands-on training that is limited to the first 20 participants. The training will examine the CS4MS (Computer Science for Mississippi) Initiative in which coding is a major component. This workshop trains teachers on how to teach computer science fundamentals through mediums such as Code.org’s curriculum and Google’s CS First program. Participants will get hands-on experience building programs that control robots such as Sphero’s SPRK+, Wonder Workshop’s Dash and Dot robots, and Ozobot. No prior experience necessary to attend this training. All participants must bring a fully charged laptop to the training. (No cost for members to attend and receive CEUs. Non-members must pay $25 to attend, which includes CEUs.)

- January 22
  Hinds Community College, Muse Center, Pearl

IMPLEMENTING MISSISSIPPI’S COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS STANDARDS – MATH: This session will share techniques and strategies that will support student learning across the full spectrum of courses under the MCCR mathematics standards K-12. Work sessions will focus on item analysis, performance tasks, formative assessments, and vertical alignment of standards. Session participants will grasp strategies and activities that will increase student engagement and deliver content aligned with MCCR standards for mathematics. (No cost for members to attend and receive CEUs. Non-members must pay $25 to attend, which includes CEUs.)

K-5 MATH TRAINING
- January 17
  Hancock Leadership Center, Tupelo
- February 12
  Hinds Community College, Muse Center, Pearl

IMPLEMENTING MISSISSIPPI’S COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS STANDARDS – SCIENCE: Using hands-on activities, this session will explore the new 2018 science content standards, providing educators proven techniques centered on student engagement that can be immediately used in the K-12 classroom. The training will focus on ensuring rigor for every grade, as well as discussing proper pacing of instructional content to achieve mastery. Participants will exit the session with strategies and activities that provide real world learning experiences. (No cost for members to attend and receive CEUs. Non-members must pay $25 to attend, which includes CEUs.)

K-5 SCIENCE TRAINING
- January 26
  Holmes Community College, Grenada
- February 1
  Hilton Garden Inn, Hattiesburg
6-8 SCIENCE TRAINING
- February 8
  Natchez Grand Hotel, Natchez

To register, go to www.mpe.org, click on the “Professional Development” tab, and then click on the hyperlink for the respective training you wish to attend. If you need additional assistance, contact Barbie Ferguson at barbie@mpe.org.
ALLEN NAMED NATIONAL MIDDLE LEVEL STUDENT COUNCIL ADVISER OF THE YEAR

Ms. Penelope Allen, teacher and student council adviser at Lafayette Middle School in Oxford, has been named the 2017 Warren E. Shull National Middle Level Adviser of the Year by the National Association of Student Councils. Ms. Allen was announced and presented with the award during the NASC National Conference held in Derry, New Hampshire, in June. The annual award is named for Warren E. Shull, the founder of NASC, and recognizes middle level student council advisers of exemplary character, leadership, and commitment to young people and who foster their development as student leaders. Ms. Allen is a math teacher at Lafayette Middle School and has served as student council adviser for eight years. She joined MPE this past June.

TUPELO HONORS TEACHERS OF DISTINCTION

Four MPE members were among sixty Tupelo educators recently nominated as Teachers of Distinction for their contributions to the Tupelo Public Schools. The CREATE Foundation, the Association for Excellence in Education, and the Tupelo Rotary Club recognize those nominated and selected as Teachers of Distinction each year. Six assistant teachers and twenty teachers were selected to receive the honor this fall. The following MPE members were nominated as Teachers of Distinction:

Talana Dover joined MPE in 2014. She teaches at Tupelo’s Early Childhood Education Center.

Lisa Mounce teaches at Parkway Elementary.

Kim Noe teaches at Tupelo High School. She has been a member of MPE since 2015.

Jeramy Turner teaches at Tupelo High School. Jeramy was named a Teacher of Distinction.

Congratulations to all of the educators honored by the Tupelo community!

HEFFNERS’ CAREER TECH STUDENTS EARN TOP SCORES

Congratulations to the Welding instructor at Jackson County Technology Center, Mr. Ashley Heffner. His Welding I students are the current state champions by earning top scores on the Welding MS-CPAS 2 for the 2016-2017 school year. Ashley has been a member of MPE since 2016.

Congratulations are also in order for Mrs. Gena Heffner, the Teacher Academy instructor at Jackson County Technology Center. Her Teacher Academy I students are also in 1st place for the entire state of Mississippi for their Teacher Academy MS-CPAS 2 state test scores. Gena has been a member of MPE since 2003.

Ashley and Gena have been married for 21 years and love teaching Career Technical Education. Both value the contribution MPE has had on their teaching careers.
In today’s modern world of education, we have integrated vast amounts of technology into the adolescent classroom. Blended learning, flipped classrooms, and the 21st Century classroom have all become the buzzwords of this generation. Our students are so inundated with technology, from the 1:1 computers in the classroom to the smartphone in every pocket, that we sometimes forget how something as simple as an actual artifact can change the dynamics of our lesson. We can show a video of a World War I documentary or a virtual tour of a museum. We can find photographs from every angle and dimension of just about anything we can imagine, but can it really replace the real thing? There’s something to say about the feel and smell of an actual artifact that can bring a whole new perspective to the classroom experience: to hold in one’s hand a soldier’s tunic and to feel the weight of the material and the itchiness of the wool, to handle a piece of shell art that you knew was originally used to enact carnage on the battlefield before being turned into a work of art to hold flowers for a young sweetheart back home, to smell the passage of time from an old letter as one reads the shaky handwriting from a homesick soldier wishing he was back home safe from the horrors of the trenches. These are the things that technology can never replace. This is what brings history to life for our students and helps them to make a real connection to the past. 

Long gone are the days of “show-and-tell” when students use to bring items from home to share with their classmates. As a result, we have severed a critical connection between the classroom and that of the home. Gone are the days when we were able and willing to bring in guest speakers to talk to our students about World War II, the Korean War, Freedom Summer, the Civil Rights Movement, and other historical events of our past. Many of those human resources are long gone and can never be replaced. What is left, however, are the artifacts that these brave men and women left behind for use to remember them by. They tell us a story, a continuing story, of a time long gone, of a generation of trailblazers, and of individuals who pled with us to remember!

Integrating artifacts into your lessons is not as difficult as it sounds. One does not need a vast amount of resources and/or money to find items that you could use to enhance your classroom experience. All one needs are a bit of patience, some ingenuity, the internet, and creativity. So, just how and where can one find artifacts to use in your classroom? First, use sites such as eBay and shopgoodwill.com. Next, start small. Think of a lesson that would benefit from the use of an artifact(s) in your classroom or choose a historical time period that interests you. Focus on one or two small items. Once you have those items, reevaluate your objectives and see if there is room to add more. Lastly, build relations with the community by asking for their help in locating items.

A member of MPE since 2000, Bruce Mize teaches AP World History at West Point High School.

Bruce Mize,
West Point School District
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. Ninety-one members submitted applications for the 2016-2017 school year, with twenty receiving grants of up to $1,000 for their class projects and instructional program. As of the 2017-2018 school year, the number of classroom grants will increase to forty. The recipients for this year have already been selected and will be featured in future editions. We are pleased to spotlight several of the grants below for your enjoyment, as well as your reference for ideas for your own classroom.

Ellen Lewing
Germantown Middle School-6th-8th Grade Musical Theatre Encore!

Thank you MPE for funding the classroom grant that provided a start-up for our new Musical Theatre elective at Germantown Middle School in Madison, MS. Through these funds we were able to purchase a complete musical (scripts, set materials, music, and playbills) of Honk Jr. for our forty-eight Encore! students. Our 7th and 8th graders absolutely fell in LOVE with performing. Instead of passively reading “about music,” they were able to actively sing, dance, and act on stage in front of their peers and in front of their community. We invited all the 4th and 5th graders from Madison Crossing and Mannsdale. They were really excited to see their older brothers and sisters perform. With the money we earned from our first show, we were able to purchase our second production, Dear Edwina, Jr., that we performed on May 11. It looks like Encore! will be a lot bigger next year! We have a LOT of students interested in joining the class. Thank you so much for making this happen!

Lisa Pruitt
Eupora Elementary School-4th grade English/Language Arts One to One (1:1) Initiative

I would like to express my gratitude to the Mississippi Professional Educators for providing my students with an invaluable reading and technology experience. When moving to fourth grade, I had three goals in mind. My first was to provide my students with reading and technology experiences that would provide real-world knowledge. The second was to incorporate cooperative group learning where students could closely read, research, and have quality discussions. The third was for students to make presentations regarding the knowledge they had learned. I was able to purchase four iPads and the covers. As a result of the grant, my students have shown growth in the areas of reading, grammar, presenting, researching, and cooperation.

Nancy Lambert
Alcorn Central Middle School-5th Grade Reading and Language Arts The Walking Classroom

Thank you MPE for funding the classroom grant that provided The Walking Classroom program for our fifth graders. This program has allowed us to get our students walking, listening, and learning at the same time, which were my goals exactly. It addresses exercise/walking - to help encourage lifelong physical activity (since we are the most obese state in the nation, this is very important!), listening - a language arts objective that can always be improved, and learning - lessons that are written to go along with the Core Curriculum Standards in addition to the lessons that are being taught in the regular classroom. In other words, The Walking Classroom ticks off all of the objectives that we had for this program. The students seem to be enjoying it very much.
Anamaria Moore  
Vardaman High School 9-12th Biology  
HNPCC: Detecting Inherited Forms of Cancer  

Thank you so much to MPE for funding the classroom grant that provided lab equipment and technology for my classroom! The grant was used to add a gel electrophoresis machine to my Biology lab as well as supplies for an experiment that allowed my students to evaluate the genetics of colorectal cancer in a fictional family. This lab allowed them to understand more fully a required topic in their curriculum, which helped prepare them for their Biology 1 state test, as well as learn more about the genetics of cancer, which is relevant to many of them in their everyday lives. The hands-on learning created a new and invaluable experience for them they otherwise would not have. My goals were to expose my students to the important field of DNA technology and increase their interest in science. Both of my goals were definitely reached with this activity, all thanks to the MPE Classroom Grant!

Ashley Rouse  
West Hancock Elementary - 4th Grade English/Language Arts  
Improving Fluency, Research, and Writing  

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to MPE for awarding and funding my classroom with the MPE Classroom Grant. When I applied for this grant, I had two main goals in mind. One goal was to help my students read electronic instructional level passages fluently and my second goal was to help my students develop teamwork skills while strengthening their writing and publication skills on research projects. Through the use of this grant, I was able to accomplish both of my goals successfully. I was able to purchase six Chromebooks to help my students with reading fluency, research skills, presentation development, and basic computer skills. My students and I are forever grateful for this huge gift to our classroom!
The 2018 Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature will convene at 12:00 noon on Tuesday, January 2, 2018. All indicators are that the legislative leadership will attempt to rewrite the education funding formula this session. It is also expected that some revisions may be made to the School Recognition Program. MPE will keep its members updated throughout the session via our weekly email updates, as well as Facebook and Twitter, as to developments and significant pieces of legislation. We offer the following information for your reference in exercising your right to let your voice be heard regarding legislation under consideration.

**LEGISLATIVE BILL TRACKING**
You may check the status of legislation by visiting http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us. MPE staff will develop our bill tracking spreadsheet of the critical pieces of legislation we will be monitoring throughout the session after the January 30 deadline passes for committees to report general bills originating in each chamber. We will share significant developments in our weekly emails. We will also update the 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).

**TIMETABLE FOR PROCESSING LEGISLATION**
The timetable for processing legislation includes the following significant legislative deadlines:

- January 30: Deadline for committees to report general bills originating in own house
- February 8: Deadline for original floor action on general bills originating in own house
- February 27: Deadline for committees to report general bills originating in other house
- March 7: Deadline for original floor action on general bills originating in other house
- March 22: Deadline to concur or not concur in amendments from other house to general bills
- March 24: Deadline for conference reports on appropriation bills to be filed
- March 26: Deadline for adoption of appropriation conference reports and for conference reports on general bills to be filed
- March 28: Deadline for first consideration of conference reports on general bills
- April 1: Sine Die

**LEGISLATIVE ROSTER/CONTACT INFORMATION**
It is important for educators throughout our state to establish relationships with their respective representatives and senators. It is far better for a legislator to turn to an experienced practitioner for input/feedback regarding a particular bill than it is for the legislator to listen to a lobbyist representing someone else’s interests. You may find legislative contact information in the “Quick Links” menu that runs down the left side of our homepage (www.mpe.org), as well as via the Mississippi Legislature’s homepage at www.legislature.ms.gov. Below are phone numbers and email addresses for key legislative leaders.

- Governor Phil Bryant; Laurie.Smith@governor.ms.gov; 601-359-3100 or 601-359-3150
- Lt. Governor Tate Reeves; ltgov@senate.ms.gov; 601-359-3200
- Senate Education: Senator Gray Tollison; gtollison@senate.ms.gov; 601-359-2395
- Senate Universities and Colleges: Senator Josh Harkins; jharkins@senate.ms.gov; 601-359-3246
- Senate Appropriations: Senator Buck Clarke; bclarke@senate.ms.gov; 601-359-3250
- Speaker of the House Philip Gunn; info@philipgunn.com; 601-359-3300
- House Education: Rep. John Moore; jmoore@house.ms.gov; 601-359-3330
- House Universities and Colleges: Rep. Nolan Mettetal; nmettetal@house.ms.gov; 601-359-3331
- House Appropriations: Rep. John Read; jread@house.ms.gov; 601-359-3340

MPE will share legislators’ votes on key pieces of legislation with our members. It is particularly important that educators contact their legislator after a vote so that he/she will know that educators are watching votes and are holding legislators accountable for their work, just as educators are held accountable for their classrooms and schools.
Preparing for Retirement

Throughout your career, you always kept the needs of others in mind. In the classroom, your concern is for your students. In administrative roles, you find ways to support the teachers, which in turn takes care of the students. One very important task you must do for yourself and your family is to understand your retirement through PERS and take advantage of supplemental programs such as Mississippi Deferred Compensation.

Every suggestion should be considered prefaced with the statement “Consult a PERS professional, your attorney, your tax professional and/or your financial planner.” With that disclaimer understood, as one now enjoying the benefits of retirement, I’ll share what I’ve learned of the process.

Check to see that all unused leave from any prior employers has been certified to PERS.

Consider extra duties as you enter your HIGH FOUR years, which is generally your last four. Have you always thought about helping coach or driving a bus? If your district allows it, you might want to run for a part-time local elected position. Check with PERS to see if adjunct teaching at a state community college or other possible side jobs with covered agencies would count toward retirement.

If you are retirement-eligible, but want to continue working, discuss the Advanced Application with PERS. Also, consider if you still need disability insurance with your employer.

Evaluate the pros and cons of the Partial Lump Sum Distribution. Simply stated, you take a reduction in your monthly benefit in exchange for an up-front payment at retirement. Liquidating debt could be critical to living off your retirement allowance.

Completely understand the retirement options. I cannot stress this enough.

Your deposits to supplemental programs such as Mississippi Deferred Compensation can be used to bridge the gap, for example, from your retirement date until your Social Security date or until your Cost of Living Adjustment becomes significant.

Be sure you understand the limits of reemployment of retirees before you work as a retiree. You don’t want to jeopardize your benefits.

Once enjoying your benefits, why not pay the lifetime dues to MPE? It’s a great way to stay informed and stay abreast of legislative actions related to PERS. Be sure your legislators know you’re a PERS retiree.

And RELAX, you’ve earned it!
DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY’S MPE STUDENT CHAPTER SUPPORTS LOCAL SCHOOLS

The Student Chapter of MPE at Delta State University recently held an art supply drive to benefit the first grade students at Hayes Cooper Center in Merigold, MS. The DSU teacher candidates used the art supplies donated to lead the children in a music workshop in which they created various musical instruments. During the workshop, the children also played their musical instruments and sang songs. The leftover supplies were given to the first grade teachers to use in their classrooms.

The student chapter also held a children’s book drive this fall. The DSU teacher candidates collected children’s books to be donated to a local elementary school. The day of the book delivery, the teacher candidates spent time in the kindergarten classrooms reading to the children and leading them in a shared book activity.

Good for us,
Better for you!

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PROPERTY & CASUALTY INSURANCE    EMPLOYEE BENEFITS    PERSONAL INSURANCE
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You will not want to miss MPE’s 2018 Best Practices Symposium featuring Ron Clark. Known to many as “America’s Educator,” Ron Clark is the 2000 Disney American Teacher of the Year, a two-time New York Times bestselling author, the subject of a television movie, and the founder of The Ron Clark Academy.

Michelle Accardi, Director of State Policy and Advocacy for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, will also be with us to spotlight Mississippi NBCTs’ impact on literacy and student achievement across our state.

Donna Porter and DJ Batiste will wrap up our day. Learn how a simple act by Donna, a veteran educator, turned DJ from gang member to a graduating senior.

Save the Date!
Saturday, April 14, 2018
The Hilton
Jackson, MS

Registration for MPE members will open in January! Non-members may register beginning in March, if space is available.
WHY MPE?

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

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<th>2017 - 2018 DUES</th>
<th>MPE</th>
<th>OTHER ORGANIZATIONS</th>
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*May not include local dues  †Liability insurance not included

Your MPE membership includes...

- Professional liability protection of $2,000,000 with $3,000,000 maximum
- Legal assistance related to employment or professional matters per MPE policy
- $10,000 accidental death & dismemberment coverage
- $2,500 assault related property damage
- Identity theft coverage
- Graduate & undergraduate scholarships awarded annually
- NBCT recertification scholarships awarded annually
- Non-certified personnel scholarships awarded annually
- Classroom grant opportunities awarded annually
- Free regional trainings offering CEUs to members at no cost
- Unlimited professional advice available 24/7
- *MPE Journal* published three times per year
- Staff monitors legislation at the state capitol, with weekly updates provided to membership
- Every dollar of your dues stays in Mississippi for your benefit! MPE does not support political candidates.