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MPE Journal
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**MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Tamra Mills

“True grit is making a decision and standing by it, doing what must be done. No moral man can have peace of mind if he leaves undone what he knows he should have done.” John Wayne

Not many would argue the wisdom of The Duke. There has never been a better example of true grit than what was displayed among teachers across our state during the 2020-2021 school year. Grit can be defined as “a passion and perseverance for long-term and meaningful goals. It is the ability to persist in something you feel passionate about and persevere when you face obstacles.” I can’t think of a better term to illustrate the hard work and dedication given by educators across our state.

I have never been more proud to be an educator. But...let’s be honest. This year has been HARD! What students are in class? What students are virtual? What students are quarantined? It became all quite mind-boggling. Many days we left the classroom feeling as though we just did the best we could. That is okay! We didn’t quit. That is because teachers have grit.

Our work, however, is far from over. I am thankful for the recent pay raise given to teachers and assistant teachers. Like many of you, I am hopeful this is a step in the right direction. A wise man once said, “A goal without a plan is just a wish.” I applaud Senate leaders for being committed to developing a long-range plan to increase Mississippi’s average teacher salary to the southeastern average. I have to believe that legislators and educators in our state are committed to work together to set attainable goals that will address the teacher shortage and school funding levels.

I am proud of the work MPE does every day on behalf of teachers and students. MPE is committed to offering scholarships, grants, trainings, resources, and professional advice, as well as many other benefits for our educators. I applaud Senate leaders for being committed to developing a long-range plan to increase Mississippi’s average teacher salary to the southeastern average. I have to believe that legislators and educators in our state are committed to work together to set attainable goals that will address the teacher shortage and school funding levels.

I look forward to serving as your MPE president—with emphases added to the word “serving.” As a teacher for the past twenty-five years, I feel as though my career has taught me how to serve more effectively. That is what teachers do. We serve! We serve our children, school, parents, and community. We see what needs to be done, and we do it. Educators across our state have been pushed to be more creative and flexible than ever. We have learned so many valuable lessons throughout the year. I think all of us would agree that our “normal” may never look exactly the same. As we transition to this “new normal,” it is important to remain positive. Teachers, we will have challenges in the upcoming year. I feel confident that we will rise to the occasion. How do I know this? One reason! Teachers have grit!

**MESSAGE FROM THE PAST-PRESIDENT**

Devin Walsh

““It’s okay not to be okay.” This is the quote I saw everyday on a flyer about mental health that hung beside the time clock. I remember thinking to myself as I read it, “Is it? Is it really okay not to be okay? What about my students? What about the paperwork? Who will take care of things in my classroom?” I knew I wasn’t okay but I didn’t know the full impact the daily stress of teaching during a pandemic was having on me. After several months, I finally came to the conclusion that I must reach out for help. I realized that the advice I had heard from a friend was true. She had wisely told me, “You can’t pour from an empty cup.” I had been attempting to hold myself together and do everything required of me even though I honestly felt I had nothing left to give. I realized in this condition I was no good to my family, my friends, and most of all, my students. I’m certain I’m not the only teacher who has ever felt this way. The fact is, our job calls us to put others before ourselves daily and self-care sounds like a selfish concept. I have discovered recently, however, that it is not only unselfish but it is absolutely essential. We simply can’t perform our duties effectively without taking time to recharge our batteries occasionally and actually leave school at school. Living out this truth has helped me rediscover my joy. I have started a journey in my personal and professional life to become who I’ve always wanted to be.

Although this school year was a struggle many of us were not emotionally, mentally, or physically prepared for, I must say I am proud of the way we learned, learned in, and loved as educators this year. It was extremely difficult but we learned a lot about ways to meet the needs of all students. We leaned on each other even when we were forced to stay apart. We found out how much we love those around us. We saw family members and friends get ill despite their best efforts to protect themselves. Because of our love for our students, we returned to our schools and went to great lengths to keep them safe despite the fear that we may be putting our own health or the health of our family members at risk.

Thinking back on this school year of unprecedented twists and turns in my personal and professional life, I am grateful for many things. If I’m being totally honest, I’m thankful that it is coming to a close. I would imagine there are countless others in this profession who have been deeply affected emotionally by all we’ve endured this year. I hope all educators will, perhaps for the first time, begin to make self-care a priority. If you are struggling to find your joy, I would encourage you to be brave enough to reach out for help. Find someone to talk to. Do something you love. Leave school at school and understand that it’s only when you fill your own cup that you can pour out your gifts to others. Moving forward, I know we will continue to learn, lean in, and love. I also know we have been forever changed and it really IS okay to not be okay.
MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Kelly Riley

“We can come up with all kinds of high-sounding programs, but good education and good schools are still measured by the quality of the teaching and the leadership of the school administration. The most creative and carefully planned curriculum is no good unless it is administered and taught by caring, conscientious, and competent teachers. Attracting more of them into the classroom is the most effective school reform policy that I can think of.”

– former Governor William Winter, August 1992

Public education in Mississippi lost its greatest champion with the death of former Governor William Winter this past December. He was a longtime friend of MPE and his work, especially in education, changed the trajectory of our state. Please see our tribute to him on page 11.

Legislators passed several measures during the recent 2021 Legislative Session to address the teacher shortage. This included a pay raise for teachers and assistant teachers, passage of a teacher loan repayment program, extending the repealer on the Critical Teacher Shortage Act, and addressing license reciprocity. See page 23 for additional information.

After the challenges of this school year, it was refreshing to gather for a day of professional growth and fellowship at our 2021 Best Practices Symposium on April 17. Our collage of the day’s activities on pages 12-13 captures a small part of our day that encouraged those in attendance to push through and finish the year strong. Dr. Adolph Brown joined us in “Celebrating Teachers as Champions” as he encouraged us to be balcony people and to make sure our wheelbarrows are open to everyone. As he shared, “You (educators) are the greatest American heroes I know!” Beloved WLO anchor Maggie Wade echoed this sentiment when she shared, “Teachers are champions because you are the Justice League. You wear many capes!”

A highlight of annual symposium is the election of our officers and new directors for the coming year. Tamra Mills, a fourth-grade teacher at Newton County Elementary, will lead our association this year! We welcome Cassie Hudson, Nicole Dozier, Roderick Davidson, and Amy Massey to our board. Visit page 14 to learn more about them. I would like to thank Lori Brennan (Past-President), Jennifer Gaston (District 2), Emily Edgar (District 4) and Amanda Cummings (District 8) for their service to MPE, as they rotated off our board. Our board will host its annual planning retreat in June to evaluate this year’s operations and to plan for the 2021-22 school year.

As you look forward to summer and planning for the 2021-22 school year, be sure to let yourself recuperate from this stressful and emotional school year. It has not been an easy year. Be sure to take care of yourself so that you will be at your best to meet your students next fall. Thank you for persevering through this year. Thank you for all you did for your students, your schools, and your communities! Enjoy your summer!
In Mississippi, National Board Certified Teachers can earn an additional $6,000 - $10,000 per year!

* Grow professionally
* Increase student learning
* Add to your income today and into retirement

Act today! Visit [www.NBPTS.org](http://www.NBPTS.org) to learn more.

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MPE would like to thank the following sponsors that donated door prizes to this year’s symposium.

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~ Jones Walker, LLP ~
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~ PREPS ~
~ Mississippi Department of Transportation ~
~ Mississippi Council on Economic Education ~
~ Delta State University World Class Teaching Program ~
~ Mississippi College ~
~ Mississippi State University Department of Educational Leadership ~
~ Renaissance Learning ~
~ The Specialty Company ~
~ University of Mississippi ~
~ University of Southern Mississippi ~

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2021 GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Bethany Abdul-Hadi
Mississippi State University

Cynthia Butler
Mississippi College

Jana Corner
University of Southern Mississippi

Nicole Dosit
Mississippi University for Women

Bridy Foster
University of Southern Mississippi

Leslie Ganes
University of Mississippi

Lindsey Gann
Mississippi College

Amber Hicks
Mississippi State University

Margaret Hollifield
Delta State University

Rhonda Locke
William Carey University

Tiffany Maise
Mississippi College

Nan Mangum
Mississippi College

Monica Mitchell
William Carey University

Cornelia Robinson
Belhaven University

Sara Stygles
William Carey University

Traci Sullivan
William Carey University

Katie Vander Molen
University of Southern Mississippi

Marcoe Walker
William Carey University

LaVonda White
Mississippi College

Kristen Zemek
University of Mississippi

In Mississippi, National Board Certified Teachers can earn an additional $6,000 - $10,000 per year!
Teachers and Administrators of the Year

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) hosted a virtual Mississippi Administrator and Teacher of the Year celebration on April 29. Leslie Tally, a second grade English Language Arts teacher at Lawhon Elementary in the Tupelo Public School District, was named the 2021 Mississippi Teacher of the Year. Tally has been a member of MPE since 2013. Mandy Lacy, principal of DeLisle Elementary in the Pass Christian School District, was named the 2021 Mississippi Administrator of the Year. Congratulations to the following MPE members honored as their respective district’s 2021 Teacher or Administrator of the Year.

TEACHER OF THE YEAR

- Jessica Flynn, Aberdeen
- Sherry Putt, Alcorn County
- Lacey Lovelace, Amory
- Robin Craft, Bay St. Louis-Waveland
- Ashley Flint, Cleveland
- Nancy Dent, Clinton
- Courtney Holland, Columbia
- David Slade, Covington County
- Rebecca Wortham, Houston
- Jacqueline Shirley, Lafayette County
- Mason Smith, Lamar County *
- Kathleen Canavin, Laurel
- Florida Weathers, Leake County
- Ashley Yelverton, Lincoln County

ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR

- Nicholas Hathcock, Amory
- Cornishse Sims, Clarksdale
- LeDennis Norwood, Cleveland
- Jason Royborn, Columbia
- Felicia Ballard, Covington County
- Yolanda Johnson, Greenville
- Steven Covington, Hancock County
- Ashley Blackman, Jackson County
- Angela McCarty, Lamar County

* Congressional District Finalist for 2021 Mississippi Teacher of the Year

* Congressional District Finalist for 2021 Mississippi Administrator of the Year

A Tribute to William Winter (1923-2020)

“Poorly educated people translate into poor people. Education is the one thing that will break the cycle of poverty. It is the only thing that will unlock the door of economic opportunity.” — former Governor William Winter in a speech to the Southern Growth Policies Board in Atlanta, Georgia, December 10, 1992

Mississippi lost a statesman and public education lost its strongest advocate when former Governor William Winter died December 19, 2020, at the age of 97. Often referred to as Mississippi’s Education Governor, he was a champion for all students and educators. William Winter brought hope to multitudes of Mississippians via his policies founded on the principles of a strong system of public education for all.

Winter was elected to the Mississippi Legislature in 1947 and went on to serve our state as state tax collector, state treasurer, and lieutenant governor before serving as governor from 1980 to 1984. The Mississippi Legislature killed his progressive education agenda twice before Governor Winter and his “Boys of Spring” built an indomitable grassroots campaign that resulted in the passage of the Education Reform Act of 1982. The landmark legislation changed the trajectory of public education in Mississippi. Among other provisions, it created state-funded kindergarten, authorized compulsory school attendance, authorized the hiring of assistant teachers, and implemented a statewide performance-based accreditation of public schools.

MPE members were part of the grassroots campaign in support of Governor Winter’s education agenda. MPE founder Linda Anglin and other members, including Jeannette Thrash of Decatur, worked endlessly with Governor Winter in the passage of the Education Reform Act of 1982. Thrash recalls, “It was my privilege, along with Mrs. Linda Anglin, to attend the signing of the bill. Three of my most prized possessions are one of the pens, with his name on it, used to sign the bill; a signed picture of the three of us he sent me; and a letter of thanks.” Winter maintained a close relationship with Anglin and MPE, attending several of our symposiums throughout the years.

Governor Winter’s legacy will impact Mississippi for generations to come, including his efforts to build the Museum of Mississippi History and the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum. In his final years, Governor Winter raised funds for the Foundation for Mississippi History to endow field trips to the museums for schools with limited resources. At his death, his family requested donations to the foundation and MPE was honored to celebrate Governor Winter’s life and leadership with a donation to be used for these field trips.

Jeanette Thrash (left) and Linda Anglin (right) with former Governor William Winter as he signs the Education Reform Act of 1982.

William Winter in a speech to the Southern Growth Policies Board in Atlanta, Georgia, December 10, 1992

“Poorly educated people translate into poor people. Education is the one thing that will break the cycle of poverty. It is the only thing that will unlock the door of economic opportunity.” — former Governor William Winter in a speech to the Southern Growth Policies Board in Atlanta, Georgia, December 10, 1992

“Poorly educated people translate into poor people. Education is the one thing that will break the cycle of poverty. It is the only thing that will unlock the door of economic opportunity.” — former Governor William Winter in a speech to the Southern Growth Policies Board in Atlanta, Georgia, December 10, 1992

Former Governor Winter and MPE founder Linda Anglin reminisce at MPE’s 2009 Best Practices Symposium.

Former Governor Winter speaks at an MPE conference in the 1980s.
CASSIE HUDSON - DISTRICT 2

Cassie Hudson teaches third grade at Batesville Intermediate School in the South Panola School District. She also serves as a clinical instructor for student teachers at the University of Mississippi. Cassie earned her Master of Education from the University of Mississippi. After earning National Board Certification in 2009 and recertifying in 2019, she serves as an NBCT Ambassador for Mississippi. A member of MPE since 2004, Cassie has served on the Mississippi Teacher Council since 2017.

NICOLE DOZIER - DISTRICT 4

Nicole Dozier teaches English at New Hope Middle School in the Lowndes County School District. She also lectures for Mississippi State University’s College of Education. Nicole earned her Bachelor of Science in English Education from Delta State University and her Master of Education in Reading and Literacy from the Mississippi University for Women. After earning National Board Certification in 2015, she serves as a mentor for Mississippi State’s World Class Teaching Program.

RODERICK DAVIDSON - DISTRICT 6

Roderick Davidson chairs the P.E., Health, Allied Health and Drivers Ed Department and serves as Assistant Athletics Director at Ridgeland High School in the Madison County School District. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Physical Education and Psychology from Mississippi State University and his Master of Arts from Alcorn State University. A member of MPE since 2007, Roderick serves as the Class 5A/6A District 6 Representative for the Mississippi Association of Coaches and was named District Coach of the Year in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2014, 2015 and 2016.

AMY MASSEY - DISTRICT 8

Amy Massey teaches second grade gifted students at Oak Grove Lower Elementary in the Lamar County School District. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Business Communication from William Carey University, her Master of Education in Elementary Education from William Carey University, and her Education Specialist in Educational Leadership from Mississippi State University. A member of MPE since 2002, Amy earned National Board Certification in 2015. She is also active in the Alpha Rho Chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma.
Congratulations to the recipients of MPE’s 2021 Linda Anglin Teacher Preparation Scholarship Award. Each student member was awarded a scholarship in the amount of $500.

One of my favorite cartoons is a picture of an administrator passing his assistant’s desk and asking if there were any new buzzwords created while he was at lunch. We, as teachers and administrators, hear numerous buzzwords throughout each school year. However, over the past thirteen to fourteen months, we have heard enough new ones to last us for the next several years. How many times have we heard the phrase “unique school year?” As educators, we know that each year is unique, but this year definitely ranks as the most unique year of all time – for me anyway!

While change is sometimes uncomfortable, the changes encountered this year have definitely been a good kind of uncomfortable for me. I have been forced out of my comfort zone to seize the opportunity and learn more about technology, such as Google Classroom. Most importantly, I learned how to turn my camera off during virtual meetings. For the most part, the students have adjusted and are moving right along. This has inspired me to keep teaching, leading, and learning to support students and teachers. I have also taken more chances to help make decisions for many classes and schools. I have learned that what has always worked for one school may not work for another school in this unprecedented year. It is a team effort to find what works. However, when we do find what works, we should all celebrate those small successes together.

As we march forward towards the end of this year, we must be mindful that we all have made changes and adaptations, and we are leaving a footnote in educational history. Many of our changes and successes will be noted with an asterisk at the bottom of the page to remind readers that this was a unique school year, unlike any other. It makes me feel a lot like riding the Magic School Bus with Miss Frizzle! Many of my elementary friends can probably relate to this character. Miss Frizzle was a teacher who always embraced whatever adventure came her way with her students on their Magic School Bus field trips. She took chances and seized the opportunities without thinking twice about the curves. This learning curve, especially virtual learning, has thrown many of us out of our comfort zones, and at times, we might have felt like we had fallen out of the Magic School Bus. However, we can take some advice from Miss Frizzle and march on towards the completion of this school year with a few take-aways. Without taking chances and without this unique school year of new opportunities, we would never have known what to change to create the new norm. Taking chances might seem too risky with possible negative outcomes and seizing opportunities might seem to be the only option for positive outcomes. However, we must take chances, make mistakes, and get messy! Dig deep and keep working together.

Missy Bufkin
MPE Board of Directors

Take the Chances and Seize the Opportunities

2021 LINDA ANGLIN TEACHER PREPARATION SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Angelia Churchill
Mississippi State University

Mickinzì Clark
Belhaven University

Hannah Jackson
Alcorn State University

Mikayla Jordan
University of Mississippi

Gabriella Lewis
Blue Mountain College

Adriana Medina
Millsaps College

Sadie Mitchell
University for Women

Alexis Rover
Delta State University

Gabby Seibert
University of Southern Mississippi

Ashley Smith
William Carey University

Katie Mae Wilbanks
Mississippi College

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Thank you. I want to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to you for your hard work and dedication during the 2020-21 school year. Whether you taught students in person, online, or both, you persevered, and our students have benefited from your efforts.

Please know the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) continues to develop supports to help you and students through the summer and into the next school year. I realize that additional resources are needed to supplement teachers’ instruction and to help students with any learning gaps. Beyond academics, I know that emotional and social issues have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

I have heard from many of you about the emotional stress on both teachers and students over the last year, and I am diligently working with health-care partners in the state to develop and launch a teletherapy platform.

We meet regularly to find ways to lift barriers for educators and students to access therapy and counseling services in a private, secure, and convenient manner. We are planning to pilot these services in schools in the 2021-22 school year prior to a statewide launch.

Even as we look forward to responding to school districts’ needs this fall, we know that all of you have earned a well-deserved break. I hope you take time to enjoy family and friends this summer. You are outstanding professionals and I have seen what you can do when you put students at the center of your work. I expect that same commitment will be the focus of the next year.

For now, I wish you a safe, healthy, and restful summer break and I look forward to working with you to continue to support student learning.

Dr. Andrea Scott Mayfield
MCCB Executive Director

While widely known that education and workforce training are vital to our state’s economic success, many still do not fully understand the critical role Mississippi community colleges play in shaping opportunities and achieving financial independence in Mississippi. Through articulated academic transfer programs, post-secondary career and technical programs, adult education program, and non-credit workforce training, Mississippi’s fifteen community colleges provide open access, low-cost effective solutions designed to stimulate workforce stability and economic growth opportunities through training and subsequent employment.

Mississippi community colleges have a strong presence in all of Mississippi’s eighty-two counties serving the needs of individuals, businesses, and local communities for a multi-billion dollar impact on Mississippi’s economy. Community colleges support communities across the state. Community colleges directly employ more than 8,100 people statewide and are typically among the top five employers in their region. Community colleges and their students invest more than $1 billion in their local economies through business transactions every year, fueling additional job creation. Moreover, the training and education provided by Mississippi’s community colleges are designed to stimulate workforce stability and economic growth opportunities through training and subsequent employment.

Mississippi’s community colleges have a strong presence in all of Mississippi’s eighty-two counties serving the needs of individuals, businesses, and local communities for a multi-billion dollar impact on Mississippi’s economy. Community colleges support communities across the state. Community colleges directly employ more than 8,100 people statewide and are typically among the top five employers in their region. Community colleges and their students invest more than $1 billion in their local economies through business transactions every year, fueling additional job creation. Moreover, the training and education provided by Mississippi’s community colleges prepare many of these graduates to enter “in demand” jobs earning competitive family-sustaining wages. Serving Mississippi through non-credit training for individuals who are unemployed, underemployed, and currently employed provides the workforce pipeline and talent pool essential to economic success. According to the state’s most recent Education Achievement Council Report Card, more than 115,000 students were engaged in for-credit career and technical education program or non-credit workforce training. Recipients of training have additional skills and expanded work opportunities that translate to individual economic success and increased company productivity. Did I fail to mention the community colleges are known for their highly adaptable responsiveness to changing circumstances and evolving needs? As an example, the pandemic-related changes provided an opportunity for community college innovation to expand the delivery of workforce training very quickly.

The Mississippi Online Workforce College (MOWC) was created to expand workforce training delivery solutions to include digital and virtual reality environments designed to deliver skills-based customizable training. This initiative, led by Jones College, is a consortium of all fifteen community colleges and the Mississippi Community College Board. The MOWC provides quality, in-demand, affordable skills training online, thereby removing geographical barriers to training access. The MOWC provides significant value to current company employees, those unemployed, individuals underemployed, and as a career pathway option to secondary students. I believe this system will be the first of its kind in the nation and has the possibility to change the future of workforce training.

I am a strong believer in both the importance and value of collaboration and partnerships and the MOWC is a true example of this. I am very appreciative of Dr. Jesse Smith, Jones College President, for his work and vision.

In early April, the Legislature concluded the 2021 legislative session. All things considered, I believe this was a good session for the community colleges. Proposed cuts were restored, funds were included for pay raises, a bond bill was passed, and other legislation we requested was adopted by both chambers. I appreciate the Legislature’s assistance in making sure our needs are met and providing the resources for the important work we do.

By the time you read this edition of the MPE Journal, most commencement ceremonies will have concluded and will be turning out Mississippi’s next workforce class. Your continued commitment to education is transforming Mississippi.
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. Eighty-eight members submitted applications for the 2019-2020 school year, with forty-six receiving grants of up to $1,000 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.

2019-2020 CLASSROOM GRANT RECIPIENTS

**Beckie Nieman**
North Pike Elementary
*I See Me in the Books*

Representation in our books should always be valued because we all have differences that we can learn from. Thanks to the generosity of MPE, my students have experienced that in “I See Me” books. The students truly enjoyed the new books, as it gave them a variety to choose from. Without your help, my students would not have had access to such amazing books. Besides, seeing themselves in these books also helped my students build reading skills, vocabulary, and an awareness of the world. Their reading helped them develop empathy and an ability to think critically about world issues. These books not only benefited students this school year, even though it was cut short due to COVID-19, but will continue benefiting students in years to come. Thank you again, MPE!

**Ashley Henry**
Collins Elementary and Middle Schools
*Orff Instrumental Performance*

Thank you so much, MPE! By giving Collins Elementary and Curver Middle School the MPE Classroom Grant, you have given our schools a wonderful Orff Curriculum to add to our music department and have furthered the musical development and progression of our students. My goal was to give students a chance to take their music skills to a higher level and further develop their growth in musicianship and performance practice. Because of your grant, I was able to purchase a plethora of fantastic instruments, which included a Bass Xylophone (which the students love), an Alto Xylophone, a Soprano Glockenspiel, twenty recorders, two ukuleles, a rhythm band set, a collection of music books for chanting and playing with Orff Instruments, and many other exciting instruments and instructional materials for our music program. Thank you again, MPE!

**LaShana Middleton**
Greenhill Intermediate
*S.T.R.E.A.M.ing Live: Fairy Tale Forensics*

Thank you, MPE, for funding the classroom grant that provided active participation with STREAM (Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts, and Math). By reading the fairy tales through a different lens, students seek to solve the problems of the protagonist with STREAM. Allowing the students to design, build, and create fostered engagement that extended beyond our classroom walls. Their mindssets moved from fixed to growth—making the possibilities endless. Through this grant, I was able to purchase supplies, forensic kits, scientific journals, and new books for our classroom. The active engagement provided this grant is priceless.

**Loren Nabors**
Ripley Elementary
*Little Scientists*

Thank you so much, MPE, for funding my classroom grant to provide students with science lab equipment and materials. I teach intellectually gifted and I’m always looking for ways to make learning more hands-on and get the students interested in learning. This grant, helped me to do both, while meeting my objectives. My students love exploring through science but we were limited in projects we could complete because of lack of equipment. Thanks to you, we are able to complete many kinds of experiments and projects now. Through the grant, we received test tubes with trays, beakers, droppers, a balance scale, specimen mirrors, science goggles, and magnifying glasses. This equipment has enriched their learning so much and helped them to learn to be deep thinkers while using the scientific method. It has also given them an even deeper love for science. We will be able to enjoy this equipment for years to come in my classroom! Thank you again!

**Darby Knight**
Pontotoc High School
*For the Love of Books*

Thank you for funding the classroom grant that provided audiobooks and classroom sets of novels to my students. Not only are you helping these students understand a text and how/why it was written, but you are also expanding their vocabulary, empowering their minds, and giving them confidence as they leave my classroom for the real world. They are able to understand concepts across literature and connect them to historical events. They are also able to apply those concepts to their own lives. I cannot wait to watch them continue to grow. Thank you for caring about their education!

**Renna Moore**
Power APAC School
*The Faces of Jackson: Teaching Our Students to Develop Empathy and Connect to their Community thru the Photo Lens*

Thank you, MPE, for funding the classroom grant that provided our students with professional cameras and drawing tablets to help increase the quality level of artwork completed in my classroom. With this grant we had two major goals. My first goal was to implement our Faces of Jackson program, where we use art to teach our students social emotional learning and social development skills by interviewing others (such as classmates, family members, people in their community, local leaders), photographing them, and then create artwork based on the portrait and stories from the interviews. We will then use the portraits and stories to create a vibrant “portrait census” of the diversity of Jackson, that will be presented in displays and art shows in the community in the coming years. We hope that by taking time to really listen and dig deeper with their subjects, our students will develop relationships, increase the level of empathy of others, raise their awareness of community issues, and build leadership and social skills that will help them in the future. The second goal was to increase the quality level of the students’ artwork when they have the ability to use the technology of cameras and tablets in their artwork. Through the grant, I was able to purchase two Canon camera bundles and multiple Wacom drawing tablets to add to our classroom.
Instilling Hope Essential Ingredient in Educational Success

The Commencement season represents the end of one chapter and the beginning of another for graduates. It also symbolizes the end of another academic year for educators, who can then reflect, recharge, and prepare to begin again in the fall. This spring, we all hope that we are ending the chapter defined by the global pandemic and beginning a new chapter that will once again allow us to hug extended family members, attend sporting events and concerts, and travel on vacations we have postponed for more than a year.

Many of us are also feeling something that we haven’t felt in more than a year: hope. Although tinged with a healthy dose of caution, we are beginning to hope that, with the vaccinations rolling out and becoming available to more and more Mississippians, we are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

We may not often think of hope as an essential ingredient for the success of our students, but it is. Some of our students arrive in our classrooms full of hope for a bright future. They have family members or other adults in their lives that model successful lives, demonstrate the power of education, and support their children in their endeavors. Other students, unfortunately, do not have these role models and, while they may not be able to articulate it, have little hope for a better life.

Without hope, it is difficult for students to believe in themselves and believe in the difference education can make in their lives. With hope, they can recognize and take advantage of opportunities that come their way. Without this hope, they can be overwhelmed with the challenges of the pandemic. They can understand the essential role education plays in their future. With hope, they can believe in themselves. They can believe they can succeed in the classroom and their careers. With hope, students can believe they have a purpose. They can begin to discover their purpose and begin building the foundation to fulfilling this purpose.

We have all overcome numerous personal and professional challenges during the past year. Knowing this should instill hope in all of us that we will not only overcome the additional challenges we face today but emerge stronger, better, and more resilient from the experience.

My hope is that, as we reflect, recharge, and prepare to begin a new academic year in the fall, we will do so with hope for a better year and find a way to share this hope with our students.

Whether we are teaching a kindergarten student letters and numbers, helping a high school student conquer calculus, or assisting a first-generation college student register for classes, select a major, or develop a four-year plan to graduate on time, we must first instill hope in them. Learning that challenges can be overcome gives students hope.

For example, our college student register for classes, calculus, or assisting a first-generation college student register for classes, select a major, or develop a four-year plan to graduate on time, we must first instill hope in them. Learning that challenges can be overcome gives students hope.

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