



MPE JOURNAL

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Spring 2022 - Vol. 34, No. 1

MPE's New
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Dr. LaShundia Carson

2022 BPS Highlights Meet Your New MPE Board MPE Scholarship Winners

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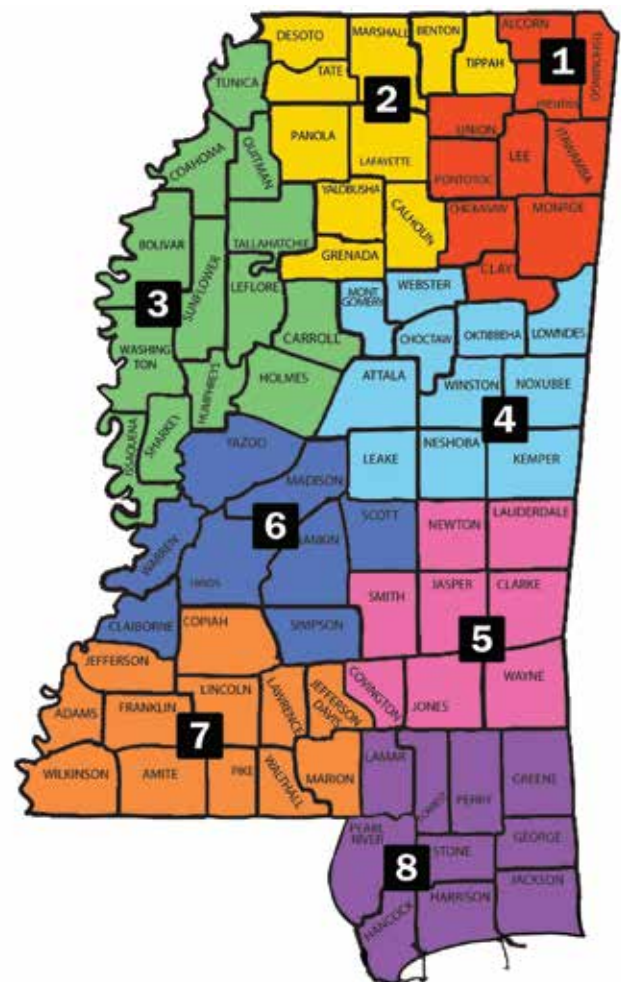
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Mississippi Professional Educators



MPE Journal

Executive Director
Kelly Riley

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MPE Journal is published three times annually by the Mississippi Professional Educators, Kelly Riley, Publisher.

Cover Stories

On the Cover
MPE's New President
Dr. LaShundia Carson

2022 Graduate
Scholarship Winners
Page 8
\$1,000 scholarships are
awarded to members of MPE

Best Practices Symposium
Highlights
Page 12

MPE Welcomes New Board
Members
Page 14

Meet Your MPE Board of
Directors
Page 15

2022 Linda Anglin
Teacher Preparation
Scholarship Winners
Page 16
MPE congratulates our
student members who
received \$500 scholarships

In Every Issue

Message from the President
Page 4
Dr. LaShundia Carson

Message from the
Past-President
Page 5
Tamra Mills

Message from the
Executive Director
Page 6
Kelly Riley

Mississippi Department
of Education News
Page 18

Mississippi Institutions of
Higher Learning News
Page 22

Features

Teachers and Administrators of
the Year
Page 10

Member Spotlight
Page 11

Rainbows and Happiness
Page 17
Chris Chism

STAR Teachers
Page 19

2020-2021 Classroom Grants
Page 20

Dr. LaShundia Carson



Effective Leadership Matters

“Leadership is not about the title or a designation. It’s about impact, influence, and inspiration.” Robert S. Sharma

Teachers are put under the microscope quite often by administrators and parents to dissect their impact on student learning, which sometimes causes low morale and a high teacher turnover. This could be a contributing factor to the state and national teacher shortage. I have two questions, “Has anyone pulled the curtain back to examine the effectiveness of the schools’ leadership? What level of support and resources are administrators providing to ensure teachers will have success in the classroom?” Administrators, I am not putting you under the microscope; however, I provide this opportunity as a time for self-reflection and self-evaluation.

IMPACT – to have a strong effect on someone or something.

It is noted that effective leadership has always been the pillar of strength for any organization, but in my opinion, it is especially imperative in the K-12 school settings. School leaders must have effective leadership skills in order to have a positive effect and “**impact**” throughout the school culture by demonstrating respect, trust, and appreciation, and by providing high-quality instruction materials to deliver meaningful learning. I have often heard teachers discuss their administrators having their “*picks or favorites*,” so it is important to be fair and transparent across the board, another avenue to demonstrate respect and gain trust. New and veteran teachers look to you to offer guidance, opportunities for professional development, and meaningful evaluations, and to be treated as professionals.

INFLUENCE – the capacity to have an effect on the character, development, or behavior of someone or something, or the effect itself.

Since Spring 2020, everyone’s lives have been turned upside down due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. However, teachers were given the task to deliver instruction virtually but had no training on the various platforms. As a result, many teachers became anxious and stressed, while still being held accountable to wear that “*Superman or Woman Cape*” and be productive in the classroom in the midst of it all. Administrators, so many teachers need emotional support and your “**influence**” to address the stress they have experienced and may still be experiencing. “What are you doing to check in with your Dream Team? Have you provided emotional and self-management training for them? Do you take time to hold genuine conversations with them? Are you modeling the social-emotional learning strategies with teachers as you require them to model to students?” This is something to think about and ponder!

INSPIRATION – the process of being mentally stimulated to do or feel something, especially to do something creative.

As administrators, one “**inspiration**” that is most favorable is to seek professional development opportunities for your teachers based on their individual needs. Their individual evaluation results are the blueprint to assist them with the necessary guidance and resources needed for improvement. Sometimes the “inspiration” and professional learning comes in the form of a simple thank you letter, an organized teaching and learning retreat, or a five dollar coupon to allow the teacher a 15-minute break alone. This is where your “**impact, influence, and inspiration**” come into play as a leader. The professional development support will help teachers feel more confident and encourage growth and development in the classroom.

Therefore, when teachers feel well supported by their administrators and the leadership practices are effective and transparent, that’s a recipe for retaining and recruiting teachers.

Tamra Mills



What Do We Do Now?

To begin, I want to say that I love MPE. To be your President this past year has truly been an honor. Thank you for allowing me to serve.

So, what do we do now? If you have been in the classroom at all, you certainly have heard this phrase. If we're honest, we as educators ask this question all the time, too. A whole lot has changed since the 2019 school year. Prior to this time, teachers had students with behavior problems and students performing below grade level. There were students in need of mental health services, and teacher burnout was a real issue. The pandemic did not cause all of our problems. It did, however, exacerbate them. We've learned firsthand how life can change in what seems like the blink of an eye. As we've navigated the past two years, many of us have learned that we can do more than we thought we could. I read the following information in an article published by *Smartbrief*: "Teaching is a profession in crisis. A March 2021 survey by Education Week found that 54% of teachers said they are somewhat likely or very likely to leave the profession in the next two years – a bump up from 34% in 2019. Teachers love their students, but high stress, low salary, and lack of support has a growing number of them looking for the exit. What do we do now?"

So, what do we do now? My parents taught me that when someone does something to help you, you should always say thank you. I believe we need to say thank you to our legislators who have listened. I wish I understood the ins and outs of politics. I don't. But, this is what I do know. Our lawmakers listened. The House, Senate, and Governor passed one of the largest teacher pay raises in history! There are many key people who worked to get this done. Their efforts do not go unnoticed or unappreciated. My hope is this will entice bright young minds to enter the field of education. We need more teachers who are willing to bring excitement and enthusiasm to the classroom. We need more teachers who love their job and, more importantly, their students.

So, what do we do now? We recruit. We learn. We reflect. We rest. Tell others how amazing your students are. Brag on your fellow teachers. Spend some time bettering your craft. Good teachers always keep learning. Reflect on what worked this past year and what did not. And, most importantly, spend some time this summer getting some rest. Do something that refreshes your mind, body, and soul. You deserve it! Sometimes teaching can feel like walking uphill, in the rain, on roller skates. It's hard, but you made it!

So, what do we do now? We enjoy our break. We earned it!

Kelly Riley



Our 2022 Best Practices Symposium on April 9 was a fantastic day of professional learning, fellowship and fun! If you were not able to join us and ever have the opportunity to hear Dr. Todd Whitaker speak, take advantage of that opportunity! He was so engaging and motivating. As he shared, “When we hang onto excuses, we stop looking for solutions,” and “All you have to do is give people a better idea and they’ll do better.” His message was just what those present needed as they entered the final weeks of the school year. Pages 12-13 provide a pictorial overview of the day’s events.

A highlight of our annual symposium is the election of our officers and new directors. Our MPE Board of Directors is comprised of 16 educators who volunteer their time and leadership to our association. Dr. LaShundia Carson, Acting Associate Dean of Alcorn State University’s School of Education and Psychology, will lead our association this year! We welcome Deana Patterson, Bettie Martinek, Cody Killen and Alicia Conerly to our board. Visit page 14 to learn more about them. I would like to thank Devin Walsh (Past-President), Gennella Graham (District 1), Nicole Spinks (District 3), and Amber Combs (District 7) for their service to MPE, as they rotated off our board in April.

The 2022 Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature concluded the evening of April 5. Highlights of the session included the historic \$245 million teacher and assistant teacher pay raise, as well as the Legislature’s investment of an additional \$5 million for classroom supplies and an additional \$28 million for early learning collaboratives and programs. The session was certainly not without its challenges. While the Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP) is underfunded by approximately \$279 million next year (FY 23), the tax cut plan passed by legislators eliminates \$185 million in revenue from the state budget next year and will eliminate \$524 million in revenue when the plan is fully implemented in 2026. While there are certainly pros and cons of a tax cut, one of this magnitude threatens future state funding for state services, including education.

We are honored to recognize so many of our members in this issue for various awards and recognitions. From STAR teachers, to Teachers and Administrators of the Year, numerous MPE members have been recognized this spring for their impact on their students’ lives. Page 11 recognizes those members who received one of our new Administrator School Grants. This was the first year we have offered these grants, and we have received tremendous feedback from recipients, as they are thrilled to be able to celebrate their teachers and staff.

Change is on the horizon, as State Superintendent Dr. Carey Wright has announced her retirement effective June 30. As of the last week of April, I am aware of at least 15 local districts that will have new superintendents in the 2022-23 school year. While such changes may provide a challenge, they also provide opportunities.

In closing, I simply want to say, “Thank you!” We continued to face challenges related to the pandemic and other issues during the 2021-22 school year, but educators throughout our state continued to do what was best for their students. You have earned a break. Take some time for yourself this summer. Rest, recharge, and rejuvenate these next few weeks for the upcoming 2022-23 school year, as it will be here before we know it, filled with its own challenges and opportunities. Enjoy your summer!



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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, 2022 and June 30, 2023.

Free memberships will be credited toward 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

MISSISSIPPI PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS’

CLASSROOM GRANT PROGRAM

MPE invites its members to apply for our classroom grant program to try out a new idea or buy the “extras” for an already great lesson plan or project. Up to 40 \$1,000 grants will be awarded to teachers or instructors to enhance their instructional program.

The deadline to apply is September 5, 2022. For more information, please visit our website at

www.mpe.org

2022 GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



Jennifer Acosta
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University



Julie Arender
William Carey
University



Sheila Benson
Mississippi
College



Jill Caples
Delta State
University



Jana Chao
University of Southern
Mississippi



Alicia Conerly
William Carey
University



Jennifer Cottrell
University of Southern
Mississippi



Russ Harrell
Delta State
University



Catherine Haynes
University of
Mississippi



Victoria Johnson
William Carey
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William Carey
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Charla Lewis
Mississippi
College



Angela Malley
William Carey
University



Lynda Mathieu
Belhaven
University



Monica Mitchell
William Carey
University



Shannon Priest
University of
Mississippi



Tiffany Russell
University of
Mississippi



Brittnee' Sullivan
William Carey
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Kelly Taylor
Mississippi
College



Kristen Zemek
University of
Mississippi

The Mississippi Professional Educators would like to thank our generous sponsors who contributed door prizes to this year's symposium.

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Teachers and Administrators of the Year

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) announced the 2022 Mississippi Teacher of the Year and the 2022 Mississippi Administrator of the Year on April 1. **Skye Morgan**, a history teacher at Petal High School in the Petal School District, is the 2022 Mississippi Teacher of the Year. **Kara Killough**, principal of Northwest Rankin Elementary in the Rankin County School District, is the 2022 Mississippi Administrator of the Year. Brittany and Kara are both members of MPE. Congratulations to the following MPE members honored by MDE as their respective district's 2022 Teacher or Administrator of the Year.

TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Anna Martin, Alcorn	Jalon Bullock, New Albany
Marla Hare, Booneville	Michael Franklin, Newton County
Savannah Pratt, Calhoun County	Sheronda Lee, North Bolivar
Kimberly Ryals, Forrest County AHS	Erin Fortenberry, North Pike *
Jody Conway, Greene County	Marsha Moore, Pearl River County
Carrie Whitehead, Itawamba County	Erin McKenney, Perry County
Katie Welch, Jones County	Skye Morgan, Petal **
James Jimenez, Lafayette County	Susan Hardy, South Panola
Kayla Weir, Lauderdale County	Tonia Williams, South Pike
Robin Greer, Lincoln County	Ashley Higginbottom, Tishomingo County
Madelyn Monk, Louisville	Abby Cook, Union County
Annie Garrett, Lowndes County	Jessica Johnson, Walthall County
Lauren Zarandona, MSMS	

ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR

John Anderson, Alcorn	Melissa Arnold, Ocean Springs
Deirdre Huntley, Amory	Chris Chism, Pearl
William Cook, Chickasaw County	Tracy Dearing, Quitman
Tiffanie Russell, Cleveland	Kara Killough, Rankin County ***
Joanna Barnes, Covington County	Paul Lawrence, Simpson County
Donna Breland, Hancock County	Katrina Ricks, Tate County
Jaronda Allen, Hattiesburg	Terence James, Vicksburg Warren *
Meghan Cates, Lee County *	Makisha Keyes, West Jasper
Percynthia Newsome, Marion County	

- * Congressional District Finalist
- ** 2022 Mississippi Teacher of the Year
- *** 2022 Mississippi Administrator of the Year

CELEBRATE SUCCESS

The Mississippi Association of School Administrators (MASA) named **DR. JOHN-MARK CAIN** the 2022 State Superintendent of the Year in October, and he was honored at the National Conference on Education hosted by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) in February. Dr. Cain serves as superintendent of the Lauderdale County School District.



CYNTHIA BUTLER graduated from Mississippi College in December with her Educational Specialist Degree in Educational Leadership: Administration, K-12. A teacher at Otken Elementary in the McComb School District, Cynthia received one of our MPE Graduate Scholarships last year, and we are honored to have supported her professional growth journey.

SONDRA HAMILTON graduated from Mississippi College in December with a Master of Education in the Arts, M.Ed. She teaches art at Newton High School.



MPE AWARDS ADMINISTRATOR SCHOOL GRANTS

MPE awarded Administrator School Grants in April to each of the 34 members who submitted grant applications. This is the first year we have awarded these up to \$1,000 grants to support projects that boost morale and celebrate the accomplishments of a school's teachers and staff. Congratulations to the following members for receiving grants:

1. Alexa Baltz, Senatobia Elementary
2. Angela Boutwell, Sudduth Elementary
3. Michael Brewer, Pearl High School
4. Corey Burt, Lafayette High School
5. Angelia Carr, Houston Upper Elementary
6. Dr. Bonita Coleman, Ocean Springs School District's STAR Teacher Recognition Program
7. Alicia Conerly, Monticello Elementary
8. Dr. Matt Dillon, Petal School District
9. Monica Edwards, Greene County Career and Tech Center
10. Amanda Garcia, Petal High School
11. Bill Glover, Prentiss County Career and Tech Center
12. Marsha Gray, Mooreville Middle School
13. Tyler Hansford, Union Public School District
14. Lori Harrell, North Pike Elementary
15. Ashley Henderson, West Union Attendance Center
16. Dr. Terence James, Vicksburg Warren Career and Tech Center
17. Dr. Karen Letson, Guntown Middle School
18. Rhonda Locke, Lowndes County School District's Special Education Department
19. Melinda Lowe, Mississippi University for Women, School of Education
20. Susan McClelland, Lowndes County Career and Tech Center
21. Julie Miller, George County Middle School
22. Loletha Needham, Poplarville Upper Elementary
23. Keitha O'Brian, Fairview Attendance Center
24. Diana Ravencraft, Tylertown High School
25. Alisa Storey, Franklin County High School
26. Ryan Stringer, West Marion Elementary
27. Dr. Derricka Thomas, Simpson County School District's Child Nutrition Department
28. Simone Fairley, Pass Road Elementary
29. Lealue Triplett, Okolona Elementary
30. Amber Vowell, Weir Elementary
31. Crystal Wade, Gulfport School District's ESL Department
32. LaYonda White, Rankin County School District's The Learning Center
33. Lori Wilcher, Union Elementary
34. Kelsey Williams, Florence Middle School

2022

BEST PRACTICES SYMPOSIUM





MPE WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Deana Patterson - District 1

Deana Patterson serves as the Work-based Learning Coordinator at the Itawamba Career and Technical Center in the Itawamba County School District. She previously served as a Special Education teacher in the district. Deana earned her Education Specialist in Educational Leadership from Arkansas State University. After earning National Board Certification in 2009, she recertified in 2019. Deana is also a member of the Mississippi Association of Career and Technical Educators, as well as the Association of Career and Technical Educators Work-based Learning/Youth Apprenticeship Section.



Bettie Martinek - District 3

Bettie Martinek has served as a Special Education teacher at Riverside High School in the Western Line School District since 1999. She earned her Education Specialist in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis on Special Education from the University of Mississippi. After earning National Board Certification in 2006, she recertified in 2016 and serves as a mentor for National Board Candidates in Delta State's World Class Teaching Program, as well as a National Board Ambassador. Bettie has served on Lt. Governor Hosemann's Teacher Advisory Council since 2020.



Cody Killen - District 5

Cody Killen serves as principal of Newton County High School. He earned his Education Specialist from William Carey University and will graduate later this year from William Carey with his Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership. He was honored in 2019 as Mississippi's Middle School Principal of the Year by the Mississippi Association of Secondary School Principals. Cody has served on Lt. Governor Hosemann's Administrative Academic Advisory Board since 2020.



Alicia Conerly - District 7

Alicia Conerly serves as principal of Monticello Elementary in the Lawrence County School District. She earned her Education Specialist in Educational Leadership from Arkansas State University and is working on her Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership at William Carey University. Alicia was honored as Mississippi's 2021 3rd Congressional District Administrator of the Year finalist. She serves as the Multicultural/Equity Division Director on the National Science Teaching Association Board and serves on the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) National Selection Committee Review Panel.



MEET YOUR MPE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MPE elected its 2022-2023 officers and new board members at its 2022 Best Practices Symposium held April 9th at the Sheraton Refuge Resort and Conference Center. Those elected as officers are: President, Dr. LaShundia Carson, Acting Associate Dean of Alcorn State University's School of Education and Psychology; President-elect, Chris Chism, high school principal for the Pearl School District and incoming Superintendent of the Pearl Public School District; Secretary-Treasurer, Dr. Melissa Bufkin, Federal Programs Director, Early Childhood, Curriculum and Gifted Coordinator for the Jones County School District; and Past-President, Tamra Mills, fourth grade teacher at Newton County Elementary. Members elected for three-year terms to the Board of Directors are: District 1, Deana Patterson; District 3, Bettie Martinek; District 5, Cody Killen; and District 7, Alicia Conerly.



(From left, front) Deana Patterson, Chanda Ferguson, Bettie Martinek, Dr. LaShundia Carson, Tamra Mills, Dr. Tracey Gregory, Alicia Conerly, and Nicole Dozier-Jones. (From left, back) Dr. Melissa Bufkin, Amy Massey, Roderick Davidson, Cody Killen, Ike Sanford, Chris Chism, Cassie Hudson, and Dana Knight.



2022 LINDA ANGLIN TEACHER PREPARATION SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Congratulations to the recipients of MPE's 2022 Linda Anglin Teacher Preparation Scholarship Award. Each student member was awarded a scholarship in the amount of \$500.



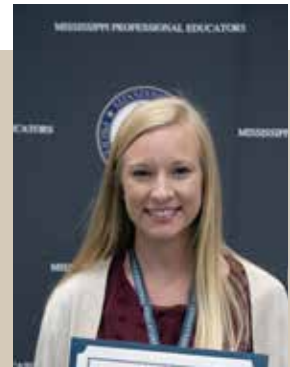
Wendy Chambers
William Carey
University



Zoe Clark
University of
Southern Mississippi



Caroline Greer
Mississippi
University for Women



Kara Kidd
Mississippi State
University



Mary Koering
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Bailey Runnels
Delta State
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Amber Scott
Jackson State
University



Shareese Shumpert
University of
Mississippi



Zaria Smith
Alcorn State
University

Rainbows and Happiness

“What is a rainbow, and why do rainbows exist?” As a child interested in science, these are the types of questions I would ask. Over the course of many science classes, I understood the process a bit more. After taking a Physics class, my understanding changed exponentially. Sunlight is both reflected and refracted through water droplets at 42 degrees with reference to the observer. The colors we ultimately see are based on the slight differences in the reflective and refractive wavelengths with respect to said observer.

This sounds complicated, doesn't it?

As a person that enjoys science and the underlying principles surrounding this topic, it makes perfect sense to me. To many others, including many of you, the beauty of a rainbow is enough. Your kids may even want to chase the pot of gold that allegedly exists at the base of that rainbow from time to time.

What does this have to do with all of us? Let me explain.

Severe storms raged through our state yesterday. Several of these storms produced very high winds and even some tornadoes. Once

the winds subsided, I drove to my school to check for damage, and I drove around to check the other district buildings as well. Luckily, here in Pearl, we came out of these storms unscathed. As I was leaving Northside Elementary, the most perfect rainbow I have ever seen appeared a short distance from the front of my vehicle. A second rainbow engulfed the first one as well. While I fully understand why this was occurring, I couldn't help but pause and enjoy its beauty. My frame of reference most certainly changed.

I believe this is representative of what we have been through over the last few years in education. Daily, we are down in the weeds searching for solutions and answers. We all know how things are supposed to work when speaking of teaching and learning. Things have changed. The problems we run into daily have changed. This job, as a whole, has become much more difficult. However, I believe all of us need to reflect on the paths we have recently taken. Are we more prepared with technology? Are we more prepared for severe weather? Have we all grown more resilient to changes that are thrown at us very quickly? Are you a better and more prepared teacher?



Chris Chism
MPE Board of Directors

Most importantly, have we not served the students to the best of our ability during unprecedented circumstances?

My friends, these are our rainbows and should be the source of our happiness in 2022. The strides we have made and the outcomes we have seen with students should be a source of pride for each and every one of you. Cynicism is easy. It is a myopic view of one's surroundings, and it is used as a reason to throw in the towel and give up. My challenge to you moving forward is to choose happiness by finding your own rainbows with your students, your schools, and your family. When we choose to look for rainbows, the colors we see will seem much brighter.



MISSISSIPPI PUBLIC SCHOOLS POSITIONED FOR CONTINUED SUCCESS

We are halfway through 2022, and this time marks momentous, promising predictions for K-12 public education in Mississippi.

Our hardworking teachers will receive their largest pay raise in years – one that exceeds the Southeastern teacher pay average – beginning in the 2022-23 school year. Teachers are beyond deserving of this compensation increase, and hopefully, the increase will result in retaining and attracting quality educators in the state.

By the end of the 2021-22 school year, educators and students were experiencing something that had evaded schools for nearly two years – normalcy. Only time will tell if the change is permanent, but for now, there is guarded jubilation that the worst of COVID-19 is finally behind us.

My travels across the state have somewhat resumed. It has been a distinct pleasure greeting, meeting and gathering with teachers, administrators, students and educational coaches in recent months. Virtual meetings serve their purpose but certainly don't compare to connecting in-person.

As we continue to emerge from the pandemic, resources to accelerate learning will be important in Mississippi's public schools. And that's why the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) chose to use \$49 million of its Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) federal funds to purchase unique products and services to assist schools during this critical recovery period.

The majority of school districts in the state have opted-in to receive the resources that were all offered at no cost. The resources include the following:

- **Health and school safety platform for \$14 million**, featuring an emergency alert system to first responders, surveillance cameras that detect crowd congestion, and a system to create detailed campus maps and building floor plans with georeferenced images that give first responders precise locations of people in and around school buildings.
- **Web-based high-dosage tutoring in math and English Language Arts for grades 3-12 for \$10.7 million**, featuring live tutors 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The system allows teachers to monitor student progress and schedule small tutoring sessions. Parents can schedule sessions for after school and weekends.
- **College and career readiness platform for \$1.4 million**, which manages college and career readiness goals and plans for students in grades 7-12. The system helps students explore careers, select courses that will help them meet their goals, prepare for work-based learning and coordinate college and other postsecondary applications.
- **Digital subscriptions for \$23 million** that offer districts online learning resources for English Language Arts, mathematics, science and social studies for students in grades K-12.



Dr. Carey M. Wright
State Superintendent
of Education

In addition, other ESSER funds have allowed MDE to expand the Licensure Call Center with more customer service representatives and longer hours to better assist educators and aspiring educators.

To help address the state's teacher shortage, approximately \$9.8 million of ESSER funds were allocated to provide up to 200 scholarships for aspiring educators to earn a master's degree in elementary and secondary education as part of the Mississippi Teacher Residency program. Accepted applicants will earn their degree at either Delta State University, Jackson State University, Mississippi State University, University of Southern Mississippi or William Carey University.

Finally, up to \$17.6 million of ESSER funds will cover the cost for the University of Mississippi Medical Center to provide telehealth services for K-12 students statewide. One MDE goal for this project is to improve the overall healthcare outcomes of students in Mississippi by increasing student access to primary, acute and specialty healthcare providers.

Thanks to all teachers, administrators and staff for your dedication. I trust these resources and increased pay will be greatly beneficial to you professionally and personally as we all work together to help students succeed.

STAR Teachers

Congratulations to the following MPE members honored by the Mississippi Economic Council and the M.B. Swayze Foundation as 2022 STAR Teachers.

Tommy Ashley, Crystal Springs High School
Robin Avant, Senatobia High School
Annah Bailey, South Panola High School
Tracy Barnett, Tremont High School
Melanie Bean, Pontotoc High School
Kristy Brannon, Warren Central High School
Michael Burkett, Biloxi High School
Tim Caldwell, West Lauderdale High School
Kimberly Castille, Winona Christian School
Wendy Cawthorn, Bogue Chitto School
Dana Chapman, Pine Grove High School
Andrea Clark, Oak Grove High School
Clancy Cleveland, Union High School
Tammy Creel, McComb High School
Shirley Curry, Stringer High School
Christine Davidson, Ridgeland High School
Karen Deniakos, West Jones High School
Heather Dickey, Independence High School
Russell Dubuisson, Stone High School
Shaketta Franklin, Raymond High School
April Friar, Tupelo High School
Trisha Gilbreath, Northwest Rankin High School
Kim Grissom, Baldwyn High School
Allison Gross, Booneville High School
Cheryl Hand, Enterprise High School
Pamela Harless, Richton High School
Connie Harvey, Lake High School
Lamenda Hase, Ocean Springs High School
Kelly Hicks, Germantown High School
Amanda Jones, Perry Central High School
Molly Kennedy, Smithville High School
Angela Kienle, Forest High School
Dale Kimble, Greene County High School
Andria Layton, Seminary High School
Jacqueline Lewis, Enterprise High School

Kelly Matthews, North Pontotoc High School
LeAnn McEwen, West Lincoln High School
Amy Mood, East Rankin Academy
Alison Moore, New Albany High School
Anamaria Moore, Vardaman High School
Elizabeth Morgan, Mississippi School for Math & Science
Jui Londia Mosley, Houston High School
Whitney Necessary, Oak Grove High School
Vijay Pacharne, Starkville High School
Kristin Parson, Petal High School
Kim Pickering, Lewisburg High School
Kathy Pippin, Shannon High School
Benjie Poole, Mantachie High School
Logan Pullin, Bay High School
Joshanda Purvis, Clinton High School
Shelley Putnam, Columbia High School
William Ray, Riverside High School
Debbie Reeves, Quitman High School
Noah Roberts, Madison Central High School
Rachel Robertson, New Hope High School
Shawna Robinson, Hamilton High School
Kimberly Ryals, Forrest County Agricultural High School
Genitra Shields, H.W. Byers High School
Christy Shivers, Heritage Academy
James Simkins, McLaurin High School
Kathryn Soule', Caledonia High School
Amy Stringfellow, George County High School
Christopher Thrash, Oak Grove High School
Connie Townsend, Mize High School
Olivia LeAnn Vick, Southeast Lauderdale High School
Jessica Waterman, Picayune Memorial High School
Kayla Weir, Clarkdale High School
Donna Wilson, Sacred Heart High School
Jason Young, Pearl High School
Lauren Zarandona, Mississippi School for Math & Science

2020-2021 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. Forty-one members received 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.

Summer Lewis Florence High School - Gathering Grounds *Employment Training and Sublimation*

Thank you, MPE, for your generous support to Mississippi teachers! I am so honored to teach in a unique classroom that is actually a coffee and art shop open to the general public. Gathering Grounds is a part of the Rankin County School District Special Education Department and is an interactive classroom that provides hands-on instruction for transition program students. We offer one-of-a-kind student made artwork and other gift items for purchase. In order to incorporate job-skills training while providing new products this year, my students are learning about sublimation.

Sublimation is a method of printing that transfers a design onto a material or fabric using ink and heat. Furthermore, the process requires specific products that this wonderful grant allowed us to purchase. What a win-win situation for the students! They are having such a good time learning, as well as increasing their knowledge that will contribute to becoming competitively employed one day.



Michelle Rafach Pearl River Central Middle School *Reading Revival*

Thank you so much for the opportunity to empower and engage my seventh-grade students through the purchase of Playaways. With the classroom grant award, I was able to bring the world of literature to my students in a way that

was not intimidating, did not require the internet, or was not staring at a book. Instead, I was able to allow students to press play, be opened up to an audiobook, and escape to a new world. With the struggles of this school year, I needed a way to help all of my students with their reading levels, but also provide them access to books in a safe manner, and interest every type of individual. With this grant, I was able to purchase 24 Playaways and raise the confidence, excitement, and academic accomplishments of all of my students.



Jessica Holland Central Elementary *We Can Help Our World!*

Thank you, MPE, very much for funding the classroom grant for my amazing students! My first goal was to provide each student with a hands-on learning experience to help them see how much impact they have on our world. My second goal was for my students to brainstorm, research, and write out things they could do to help their world. Through the grant, I was able to purchase books for each of my students, a laptop to connect everyone together virtually, and a world map. The students learned so much through this reading and writing activity, and they will always have their story “10 Things I can do to help my world” by Melanie Walsh as a precious keepsake.



Mariah Johnson
Bayou View Middle School & Gulfport Central Middle School
Around The World in 180 Days

I would like to thank MPE for providing Bayou View Middle School and Gulfport Central Middle School's ESL students with the supplies necessary to create dioramas of new areas learned around the globe. My goal for this year was to connect students to new cultures and regions around the world, study these new areas, and allow them to design dioramas based on what inspired them from the stories read.



When people think of English as a Second Language, they usually think of textbooks and grammar rules written on a board or conversations on how to order from a restaurant. This project allowed us to have fresh discussions on what is happening in our global world and better allowed students to create and show what they have learned. Thanks to MPE, this project can be sustained for many school years to come and can be adapted for new content while helping students to learn how to communicate about a variety of topics.



Stephanie Stringer
Columbia Primary School
EBOOKS for the Library



Thank you, MPE, for funding the classroom grant that provided interactive Read-to-Me eBooks for our library. Our first goal was to enhance Columbia Primary students' overall learning experience by making the learning process more interactive and engaging while remaining safe and germ free as much as possible. The second goal was to bring our library collection up to date with digital resources that appeal to diverse interests. Through the grant, I was able to purchase 6 series of books for a total of 26 titles with an average copyright date of 2019.



Kristie Johnson
Popps Ferry Elementary
Operation Increase Read-Along Books, Learning Materials, and Learning Games

Thank you, MPE, for funding my classroom grant, Operation Increase Read-Along Books, Learning Materials, and Learning Games. Covid-19 changed the classroom environment greatly. I found myself with not enough devices, read along books, and activities to keep my students engaged during their resource time while I work one on one with their peer. A light at the end of the tunnel came when I was awarded the MPE classroom grant.



I was so excited to be able to purchase more hands on learning materials and learning games for my students to enjoy. The personal cd players and additional read a-long books I purchased with the grant gave my students independence while reading A.R. books. The hot dots/power pens and the other hand held activities gave my students who are auditory and hands on learners plenty of extra learning supports at their fingertips. Also, many of my students improved on their weekly IEP goal checks. Thanks, MPE, for giving this special education teacher more resources for her students. The items will be enjoyed for years to come.





PROGRESS CONTINUES TOWARD ATTAINMENT GOAL

As educators, we understand the transformative power of education. We understand that earning a degree changes the lives of individuals and families. We also understand that having more Mississippians holding a post-secondary degree is good for the state, improving the economy and the quality of life in our state.

Completion matters. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median weekly earnings in 2020 for workers with less than a high school diploma was \$619, but the median weekly earnings for workers with a high school diploma was \$781. Likewise, workers with some college, but no degree, earned \$877 in median weekly earnings, while those with an associates degree earned \$938 and those with a bachelor's degree earned \$1,305. Those with advanced and professional degrees earned more. (Source: www.bls.gov)

In addition to earning more, workers with higher educational attainment were less likely to be unemployed. The unemployment rate in 2020 for those without a high school diploma was 11.7 percent; for those with a high school diploma was 9.0 percent; and for those with some college, but no degree was 8.3 percent. The unemployment rate for workers with an associates degree was 7.1 percent; with a bachelor's degree was 5.5; and lower

for those with advanced and professional degrees. (Source: www.bls.gov)

The Mississippi Education Achievement Council (EAC) has been focused on this issue for more than a decade. Established by the Mississippi Legislature during the 2010 regular session, the council was tasked with establishing education achievement goals for the state, monitoring and reporting on the state's progress toward these goals, and preparing an annual report card compiled from the annual reports submitted by each state institution of higher learning and community college in the state. Representatives of the Mississippi Legislature, the Governor's Office, the State Institutions of Higher Learning, Mississippi's Community Colleges, the Mississippi State Board of Education, the Mississippi Department of Mental Health, and the Mississippi Economic Council make up the Mississippi Education Achievement Council.

In October 2020, the Education Achievement Council adopted the **Ascent to 55%** goal for our state: By 2030, Mississippi will increase the postsecondary attainment of its workforce to 55%. By 2035, Mississippi will increase the postsecondary attainment of its workforce to 60%.

Achieving the goal is a heavy lift, and the community colleges, colleges, and universities in the state cannot reach it alone. All the groups represented on the EAC have an important role in reaching the goal, and we must also work with organizations outside the council to succeed.



Alfred Rankins, Jr., Ph.D.
**Commissioner of
Higher Education**

Woodward Hines Education Foundation (WHEF) is a key partner in these efforts. WHEF recently awarded a four-year, \$1 million grant to the Public Education Forum (PEF), a non-profit education and public policy research group, to support **Ascent to 55%** goal. PEF is a subsidiary of the Mississippi Economic Council (MEC). The grant will provide \$250,000 annually for four years, to increase public awareness, develop partnerships with state and industry leaders, support data collection, monitor progress, and coordinate with state education officials.

While the **Ascent to 55%** is a lofty goal, these kinds of partnership and efforts make it attainable. As educators, we can encourage all our students to set lofty goals for themselves and earn the degrees necessary to reach those goals. As we increase the number of Mississippians with postsecondary credentials, we will strengthen the state's workforce, improve the state's economy, and make the state a better place to live and raise a family.



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