



# MPE JOURNAL

[www.mpe.org](http://www.mpe.org)

Spring 2023 - Vol. 35, No. 1

## MPE's New President Chris Chism



2023 BPS Highlights    Meet Your New MPE Board    MPE Scholarship Winners

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

# Office Staff

## President

Chris Chism  
317 Grandview Court  
Pearl, MS 39208  
662-549-0257  
cchism@pearlk12.com

## President-elect

Dr. Melissa Bufkin  
467 Myrick-Strengthford Road  
Laurel, MS 39443  
601-433-1759  
mbufkin24@hotmail.com

## Secretary-Treasurer

Dr. Tracey Gregory  
1500 Peachtree Street  
Jackson, MS 39202  
662-231-1571  
tgregory@belhaven.edu

## Past-President

Dr. LaShundia D. Carson  
1048 Lee Lane  
Raymond, MS 39154  
601-672-0939  
ldcarson@alcorn.edu

## District 1

JoDeana Patterson  
6555 Hwy 178 E  
Fulton, MS 38843  
662-231-6656  
dpatterson@itawambacountysschools.com

## District 2

Cassie Hudson  
21829 Hwy 315  
Sardis, MS 38666  
662-609-6060  
chudson@spanola.net

## District 3

Bettie Martinek  
169 Oak Drive  
Greenville, MS 38701  
662-347-0095  
bettie.martinek1@gmail.com

## District 4

Nicole Dozier-Jones  
303 Rogers Way  
Columbus, MS 39702  
662-579-9199  
nicole\_09@hotmail.com

## District 5

Dr. Cody Killen  
10181 Road 1519  
Philadelphia, MS 39350  
601-562-4570  
codykillen@gmail.com

## District 6

Roderick Davidson  
602 Berridge Dr.  
Ridgeland, MS 39157  
601-415-5537  
nupe111996@yahoo.com

## District 7

Dr. Alicia Conerly  
2115 Pricedale Drive SE  
Bogue Chitto, MS 39629  
601-383-6360  
alicia.conerly@gmail.com

## District 8

Amy Massey  
314 Walter Lott  
Seminary, MS 39479  
601-325-6611  
amy.massey@lamarcountyschools.org

## Community College

Jason Shows  
117 J.P. Parker Road  
Laurel, MS 39443  
(601) 580-4390  
shows.jason123@gmail.com

## University

Robin Atwood  
405 Walnut Street  
Hattiesburg, MS 39401  
(601) 266-5066  
robin.atwood@usm.edu

## Retirees

Dr. Tommye Henderson  
140 Pinehaven Place  
Clinton, MS 39056  
(601) 331-2874  
tommyec.henderson@gmail.com

## Rep.-at-Large

Monica Mitchell  
115 Briarwood Drive  
Senatobia, MS 38668  
(662) 402-1346  
msleavy@yahoo.com

## Executive Director

Kelly Riley  
222 North President Street  
Suite 100  
601-573-6169  
kelly@mpe.org

## Kelly Riley

Executive Director  
kelly@mpe.org

## Barbie Ferguson

Deputy Director  
barbie@mpe.org

## Stephanie Miller

Accounts Manager  
stephanie@mpe.org

## Kathy Goldsmith

Office Manager  
kathy@mpe.org

## Jessica Ridgeway

Receptionist  
jessica@mpe.org



2  
0  
2  
3  
—  
2  
0  
2  
4

# AREA DIRECTORS

## Gigi Barron

4701 US Hwy 11  
Purvis, MS 39475  
(C) 228-834-2227  
gigibarron123@gmail.com

## Dr. Kim P. Roberts

96 Coopers Crossing  
Pontotoc, MS 38863  
(C) 662-418-9472  
kimpatt123@gmail.com

## Shannon Eubanks

330 Nations Lane SE  
Brookhaven, MS 39601  
(C) 601-757-3059  
shannoneubanksmpe@gmail.com

## Kris Winter

1967 Oak Forest Rd.  
Pontotoc, MS 38863  
662-488-1740  
kpwinter1010@gmail.com

## Minetta Fortenberry

10221 CR 397  
Philadelphia, MS 39350  
(C) 601-416-9054  
minettafortenberry@icloud.com

## Julie Wilson

125 CR 434  
Oxford, MS 38655  
662-816-2753  
jawilson2016lms@gmail.com

## Brenda M. Smith

P.O. Box 616  
Leakesville, MS 39451  
(C) 601-394-8370  
ssmith55@tds.net

# MPE STATE OFFICE

P.O. Box 22550

Jackson, MS 39225-2550

Toll Free:(800) 523-0269

[www.mpe.org](http://www.mpe.org)

# Mississippi Professional Educators



# MPE Journal

**Executive Director**  
Kelly Riley

All articles not otherwise signed are staff written. Permission to reproduce material appearing in *MPE Journal* must be obtained from MPE headquarters. The Mississippi Professional Educators assumes no responsibility for the opinions or points of view expressed by contributors to *MPE Journal* unless statements have been authorized by action of the Association. MPE endorses no item or service other than those under the auspices of the Association. *MPE Journal* is a trademark of MPE.

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

## Cover Stories

**On the Cover**  
**MPE's New President**  
Chris Chism

**2023 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

**2023 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  
Chris Chism

**Message from the**  
**Past-President**  
Page 5  
Dr. LaShundia Carson

**Message from the**  
**Executive Director**  
Page 6  
Kelly Riley

**Community College News**  
Page 10

**Member Spotlight**  
Page 18

**Mississippi Institutions of**  
**Higher Learning News**  
Page 22

## Features

**2023 High School Senior**  
**Scholarship Winners**  
Page 9

**STAR Teachers**  
Page 11

**Staying in Your Lane and**  
**Staying the Course**  
Page 17  
Roderick Davison

**Administrator Grant**  
**Winners**  
Page 19

**2021-2022 Classroom Grants**  
Page 20

**Legislative Update**  
Page 23

## Chris Chism



### **Navigating the Challenges and Embracing the Future of Education in Mississippi**

In recent years, teachers across the globe have faced an unprecedented number of challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a primary obstacle, causing a paradigm shift in the way we approach education. As we reflect on the past and look forward to the future, we cannot help but recognize the resilience, adaptability, and determination displayed by educators across the state.

The pandemic forced us to adapt quickly to remote learning, requiring all of us to embrace technology and develop new methods of instruction. In the years that followed, we all have been working to close the widened learning gaps, while also dealing with a marked change in student behaviors.

Despite these adversities, educators all rose to the challenge. Educators in Mississippi worked tirelessly to develop innovative solutions to bridge the digital divide, ensuring all students had access to the tools and resources necessary for success. We worked on strengthening relationships with students, parents, the wider community; and we also recognized the importance of collaboration to make positive changes for our students and districts. As we continue to move into a post-pandemic era, it is important to celebrate the progress that has been made within Mississippi's education system. Over the past few years, our state has seen a marked increase in dialogue between educators and legislators, with both parties working together to address the challenges faced by our schools. This collaboration has led to the implementation of new policies and initiatives aimed at providing additional support and resources for our educators and students.

In particular, Mississippi's legislators have demonstrated a genuine commitment to improving education. This drive has been led by Lieutenant Governor Delbert Hoseman and many senators and representatives in both chambers. They have allocated increased funding for public schools, invested in technology infrastructure to support distance learning, and championed initiatives that prioritize the well-being of both teachers and students. Most importantly, they listened and made us a part of important conversations. This collaborative approach has fostered a renewed sense of optimism for the future of education in our state – one that we have not had in many years.

As we look to the future, we must continue to nurture the positive relationships that have been established between educators and legislators. By maintaining open lines of communication and working together towards a common goal, we can ensure that Mississippi's education system continues to thrive. Our teachers and students deserve nothing less than the very best.

Robert Frost once said, "In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life: it goes on." As educators, we have weathered many storms over the last several years and emerged stronger, more adaptable, and better prepared for new challenges that we may encounter. We have learned to embrace change and remain grounded in our commitment to the success of our students. As we move forward, we can continue with a renewed sense of hope, knowing together, we can overcome any obstacle and continue to positively shape Mississippi's future.

## Dr. LaShundia Carson



It has been a privilege to serve as MPE president this past year. Thank you for an experience of a lifetime. Since becoming a member, I have been impressed by the intelligence and commitment to P-12 excellence that MPE has demonstrated over the years. I have also met and worked with some wonderful people over the years. The relationships I have formed with members of the MPE community have changed my life for the better. So, thank you for the inspiration, growth, and learning.

This opportunity was made possible because of you, the MPE members, the board of directors, and especially the office staff. Vince Lombardi stated, “Individual commitment to a group effort -- that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.” This leads me to express my gratitude to a group of people who are often in the background and do not always get the recognition they deserve: *our exceptional office staff* (Kelly Riley, Barbie Ferguson, Stephanie Miller, Kathy Tucker & Jessica Ridgeway). These women are the backbone of this fantastic organization’s daily operations, with a membership of over 13,500 strong. To my fellow MPE male members, respectfully, it is nothing like Power of Women.

Throughout the years, I have been afforded the opportunity to work with many people on various committees and organizations at the local, state, and national levels. Yet, as I reflect, I cannot recall one office team that exemplifies the impressive work ethic and the positivity regularly demonstrated like the MPE office team. It is understood that each of them plays an integral role, but their collaborative attitude and inspiring leadership contribute to the organization’s continued success.

I am constantly amazed by their organizational skills and ability to keep us all on track. They are always on top of deadlines and schedules and ensure everyone is on the same page. In addition, I am very honored by how the team effortlessly completes the tasks of publishing the weekly “detailed” newsletters, *MPE Journals*, Facebook and Twitter posts, providing high-quality workshops and scholarship opportunities, planning the board meetings, retreats, and especially the planning and executing of the annual best practices symposium.

Also, it is noted that Kelly and Barbie are instrumental beyond the walls of the MPE office in connecting with P-12 educators, local education agencies, institutions of higher learning colleagues, and Mississippi lawmakers. These collaborative efforts directly affect our profession’s sustainability and viability, which is also why we are recognized as the premier professional education association in the state.

From the outside, looking at the team of only “5,” they make it look flawless with their bright smiles and warm words. Their commitment, eagerness, and intuition are evident in their efforts to perform extraordinary work to ensure our organization’s top two priorities—education and achievement of students—are guided by the eight principles of belief.

As a humble but proud member, thank you to our MPE staff for thier hard work and dedication to the Mississippi Professional Educators Organization.

## Kelly Riley



The 2023 Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature concluded at approximately 2:00 a.m. in the early morning hours of Saturday, April 1. Thank you to all our MPE members who contacted their respective legislators throughout the session in support of full funding of the MAEP formula. Your voices were heard, and your communications made a difference! Building relationships with your representative and senator is extremely beneficial for our advocacy efforts at the capitol, as your experience and perspective are invaluable resources for your legislators. Thanks to all of you who have established or are working to establish these important relationships with our policy makers. You are making a difference!

I would like to also thank Lt. Governor Hosemann and members of the Mississippi Senate for their efforts to tweak the MAEP formula and fully fund it with an additional \$181 million investment. While House leaders adamantly opposed this proposal and increasing funding for schools via the MAEP formula, they agreed to appropriate an additional \$17 million for the formula as well as \$100 million in flexible funding outside of the formula for districts. We appreciate this investment in our students, educators, and schools. Visit page 23 for an overview of several significant pieces of legislation passed during the 2023 Regular Session.

Many legislators headed home to enter the throes of the campaign season. 48 House members and 22 Senate members face opponents in reelection races for their current legislative seats. Primary elections will be held Tuesday, August 8, and the general election will be held Tuesday, November 7. While MPE does not endorse candidates, contribute to political campaigns, or tell our members who to vote for, we encourage our members to educate themselves on candidates' positions and to vote in every election. As we have in years past, we will provide you with gubernatorial and lieutenant governor candidates' positions on critical education issues in advance of this year's elections.

More than 150 educators attended MPE's 2023 Best Practices Symposium featuring Brittany Wagner on April 1. Enjoy our pictorial collage on pages 12 and 13 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 service to our association. Mr. Chris Chism, superintendent of the Pearl Public School District, will serve as MPE's 2023-2024 President! We welcome Robin Atwood, Dr. Tommye Henderson, Monica Mitchell, and Jason Shows to the MPE Board of Directors. Visit page 14 to learn more about our new directors. I would like to thank Tamra Mills (Past-President), Dana Knight (Community Colleges), Chanda Ferguson (Rep-at-Large), and Ike Sanford (Retirees) for their service to MPE, as they rotated off our board in April. We appreciate their service and commitment to our association and our members.

I hope you are enjoying the first few days of your summer when you receive this issue of the MPE Journal. Thank you for another year of hard work and for investing and pouring into your students. Now it is time to take some time for yourself! As one of my favorite American icons, Dolly Parton, shared "We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails." Take the time to adjust your sails to rest your body and recharge your spirit during the coming weeks. Enjoy your summer!



## GOOD FOR US, BETTER FOR YOU!

ROSS & YERGER WAS RECOGNIZED  
AS A **"BEST PRACTICES"** AGENCY  
BY THE INDEPENDENT INSURANCE  
AGENTS & BROKERS OF AMERICA

IT'S THE TWENTIETH YEAR IN A ROW WE HAVE  
RECEIVED THIS RECOGNITION. ROSS AND YERGER  
PROVIDES **INNOVATIVE** AND **COST-EFFECTIVE**  
**RISK-MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS** FOR BUSINESSES  
ACROSS MANY INDUSTRIES NATIONWIDE.

# Ross & Yerger

KNOW THE POSSIBILITIES<sup>SM</sup>

JOEY HUTTO, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT  
SPECIAL ACCOUNTS DIVISION  
662-840-5422 | JHUTTO@ROSSANDYERGER.COM  
OFFICES IN BATON ROUGE, JACKSON, AND TUPELO  
ROSSANDYERGER.COM



PROPERTY & CASUALTY INSURANCE    EMPLOYEE BENEFITS    PERSONAL INSURANCE  
FINANCIAL INSTITUTION SERVICES    RISK MANAGEMENT CONSULTING    BONDS

## 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, 2023 and June 30, 2024.

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, 2023.  
For more information, please visit our website  
at [www.mpe.org](http://www.mpe.org)



# 2023 GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Congratulations to the recipients of MPE's 2023 Graduate Scholarship Award. Each member was awarded a scholarship in the amount of \$1,000.



Julie Arender  
William Carey  
University



Melanie Jo Bean  
University of  
Mississippi



Darcy Bingham  
Mississippi  
College



Lasonja  
Randle-Ferguson  
Mississippi State  
University



Monica Grady  
Delta State  
University



Krystal Husser  
University of  
Mississippi



Elisabeth Jolly  
William Carey  
University



Monica Mitchell  
William Carey  
University



Kristina Pollard  
William Carey  
University



Julie Roberts  
University of Southern  
Mississippi



Hannah Ward Smith  
Mississippi  
College



Kelsey Williams  
University of Southern  
Mississippi

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

Alcorn State University School of Education  
Belhaven University School of Education  
Brightview Credit Union  
Clark Bottling Company  
Delta State University College of Education and Human Sciences  
Delta State University World Class Teaching Program  
Hederman Brothers  
Jackson State University College of Education & Human Development  
Jackson State University School of Lifelong Learning  
Jones Walker, LLP  
Kids First, LLC  
Mississippi College School of Education  
Mississippi Council on Economic Education  
Mississippi Department of Transportation  
Mississippi State University College of Education  
Mississippi State University World Class Teaching Program  
Mississippi University for Women - Office of Outreach & Innovation  
Mississippi Valley State University School of Education  
PREPS  
Ross & Yerger  
The Specialty Company  
Trustmark Wealth Management  
University of Mississippi School of Education  
University of Southern Mississippi College of Education & Human Sciences  
William Carey University School of Education

## *2023 High School Senior Scholarship Winners*

|                                                                |                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Austin Batts, Bayou Academy                                    | Garrett Jones, Stone High School                |
| Tate Baucum, Newton County High School                         | Ethan Klinck, Grenada High School               |
| Ethan Box, New Hope High School                                | Noah Martin, Pearl High School                  |
| Natalie Deer, North Pike High School                           | Owen Massey, Presbyterian Christian School      |
| Lindsey Dillard, Ingomar Attendance Center                     | Alyssa McSwain, Richton High School             |
| Sam Green, Ripley High School                                  | Nathan Parker, North Pike High School           |
| Luke Hartman, Enterprise High School                           | Ellie Ray, Sharkey Issaquena Academy            |
| Katie Hayes, New Hope High School                              | Molly Tompkins, Winona High School              |
| Bailey Holly, Winona Secondary School                          | Mary Makenna Wooten, Warren Central High School |
| Camille Jester, Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science | Allison Wray, Pontotoc High School              |



In January, I was offered the greatest opportunity of my professional career when the Mississippi Community College Board named me the sixth Executive Director of the agency. I am delighted to be in this position and take seriously the responsibility of this new role.

For the past 15 years, a significant portion of my responsibilities included serving the system at the Mississippi Capitol. This has given me the unique perspective of being familiar with all aspects of the system, particularly state policy. I am of the belief that the best way to improve all aspects of education is for each of us to work together towards a common goal...to provide the best educational opportunities for our students. This will take building on existing partnerships and exploring new ones, too.

The good news is that we have a tremendous staff at the MCCB who work each day to help our community colleges have the resources and tools necessary to educate and train our students. We also have the best community colleges in the country that provide academic programs for those transferring to a university, career-tech programs for those looking to quickly find employment, workforce training that is critical to our state, and adult educational op-

portunities for those who may have slipped through the cracks. Because of these reasons and many more, I am very grateful to our board for giving me this opportunity, and I look forward to continue playing a role in the Mississippi community college system!

The 2023 legislative session concluded in early April, and as I write this article, several bills pertaining to community colleges are awaiting Governor Reeves' signature. Among those are appropriations bills and legislation to create a statewide dual enrollment/dual credit scholarship.

Regarding the budget. Overall, the community colleges received an increase of approximately \$12.5 million in General Funds. These additional funds are to be used for salary raises for full-time employees, health insurance increases, and additional un-obligated monies into the funding formula. I am always appreciative to the Legislature for providing additional funding and feel that any new money provided is a great investment of the state's resources.

As you are probably aware, the popularity of dual enrollment/dual credit has skyrocketed throughout the educational world the past few years. In fact, it now accounts for



**Kell Smith**  
**MCCB**  
**Executive Director**

nearly 20% of the overall community college headcount. As a way to provide a fair and equitable program across the state, the Legislature approved Senate Bill No. 2487 to create a statewide scholarship program that provides 6 hours of dual enrollment/dual credit at community colleges, public universities, and private colleges for eligible high school juniors and seniors. Hopefully this scholarship will provide access to postsecondary educational opportunities to those who struggled with this in the past.

As another school year concludes, I hope you are able to enjoy downtime during the summer. Thanks for all that each of you does to educate our students. No matter the grade or subject, you are making a difference across the state.



# STAR Teachers

The Mississippi Economic Council and the M.B. Swayze Foundation honored Mississippi's 2023 STAR Students and Teachers with a celebration on April 13. MPE was proud to be a sponsor of the celebration. Each STAR Student selects one outstanding STAR Teacher whose influence has helped the graduating senior to achieve academic excellence. Congratulations to the following 76 MPE members who were among those educators honored as STAR Teachers this year:

Bethany Abdul-Hadi, Enterprise Attendance Center  
Annah Bailey, South Panola High School  
Melanie Bean, Pontotoc High School  
Andrew Beasley, Pearl High School  
Elijah Beatty, Morton High School  
Nicole Beaty, Taylorsville High School  
Kelcey Becnel, Pearl River Central High School  
Megan Berry, Clinton High School  
Lauren Bivens, Tylertown High School  
Matthew Blackwell, Lake High School  
Kelly Blanton, Tupelo High School  
Michael Burkett, Biloxi High School \*  
Tim Caldwell, West Lauderdale High School  
Wendy Cawthorn, Bogue Chitto School  
Dana Chapman, Pine Grove High School  
Andrea Clark, Oak Grove High School  
Kimberly Clayton, West Union Attendance Center  
Tiffany Cooper, Golden Triangle Early College HS  
Tina Craft, Richland High School  
Alicia Curry, McEvans High School  
Brandon Cutrer, Sebastopol High School  
Penny Dearman, East Central High School  
Tabitha Dillard, Ingomar High School  
Jill Dillinger, Eupora High School  
Amanda Eddings, Amory High School  
Emily Edgar, New Hope High School  
Dawn Gaskin, East Webster High School  
Trisha Gilbreath, Northwest Rankin High School  
Lillie Gillespie, Calhoun City High School  
Deborah Graham, Leake Central High School  
Laura Gray, Richton High School  
Laura Green, Ripley High School  
Jan Gunter, Sumrall High School  
Charles Hampton, Saltillo High School  
Carrington Harrelson, Bruce High School  
Dena Holley, North Pontotoc High School  
Beth Holloman, Caledonia High School  
Patsy Hughes, Poplarville High School

Richard Humphreys, Saint Martin High School  
Tracy Hunter, Lewisburg High School  
Melissa Jackson, Leake Academy  
Pamela Jackson, Senatobia High School  
Deborah Jones, Oxford High School  
Angela Kienle, Forest High School  
Kristin King, Loyd Star High School  
Tobie Lambert, Mississippi School of the Arts  
Nicholas Langston, Biggersville High School  
Misty Lemonis, Puckett High School  
Julie McCullough, Myrtle High School  
Jeanne Lee Miller, Byhalia High School  
Amy Mood, East Rankin Academy  
Elizabeth Morgan, School for Math & Science  
Darla Nash, Alcorn Central High School  
Michelle Odom, Greene County High School  
Brandi O'Neal, Seminary High School  
Joshaunda Purvis, Clinton High School  
Sherry Rankin, McLaurin High School  
William Ray, Riverside High School  
Angel Reed, Florence High School  
Tammy Russell, North Pike High School  
Christy Shivers, Heritage Academy  
Angela Skinner, Pelahatchie High School  
Erin Smith, West Jones High School  
Erin Stokes, Nanih Waiya High School  
Yvonne Swader, Mantachie High School  
Melanie Swinney, Wheeler High School  
Vickie Teel, Potts Camp High School  
Janie Thrasher, Belmont High School  
Olivia Vick, Southeast Lauderdale High School  
Ginnie Waite, Mooreville High School  
Marshall Wall, Columbia High School  
Kayla Watts, South Jones High School  
Michelle Weathers, Amite County High School  
Megan Welborn, Stringer High School  
Steven Womack, Enterprise High School  
Lauren Zarandona, School for Math & Science

\* Selected as STAR Teacher by more than one STAR Student

# MISSISSIPPI PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS 2023 BEST PRACTICES SYMPOSIUM

Pictures taken by Barbara Gauntt





# MPE WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

## Monica Mitchell - Rep-at-Large

Monica Mitchell has served as the Director of Federal Programs for the Senatobia Municipal School District since 2021. Prior to this, she served 19 years in the Cleveland Public School District, ultimately serving ten years as Career and Technical Education Director. Monica earned her Education Specialist in Educational Leadership and Supervision from Jackson State University. A grant peer reviewer for the U.S. Department of Education, she also serves as a grant reviewer for the Mississippi Department of Education and has served as a rater for Educational Testing Service (ETS).



## Robin Atwood - University

Robin Atwood directs both the World Class Teaching Program and the South Mississippi Writing Project at the University of Southern Mississippi (USM). She earned her Master of Education with an emphasis in Reading/Literacy from USM. After earning National Board Certification in 1997, she recertified in 2005 and 2015. Prior to serving at USM, she taught in Smith County and Forrest County. She was the lead writer of Common Core Professional Development (K-2 and 3-5 Grade bands) for the Mississippi Department of Education.



## Jason Shows - Community College

Jason Shows has taught history at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College (MGCCC) Perkinston Campus since 2008. He served as President of the Perkinston Faculty Association in 2019 and 2020. Jason earned his Master of Education in History from William Carey University in 2008. An MPE Building Representative, he received the Phi Theta Kappa MS/LA Region 2018 Horizon Award for Advisement. The Mississippi Humanities Council selected Jason as the 2023 Humanities Teacher of the Year for the MGCCC Perkinston Campus.



## Dr. Tommye Henderson - Retirees

Dr. Tommye Henderson retired as Superintendent of the Clinton Public School District in 2008 after also serving as a teacher or administrator in Harrison County, Jackson Public Schools, Starkville, Choctaw County, West Point and Columbus. She is now the Superintendent Search Manager and Prospective Superintendent Leadership Academy Coordinator for the Mississippi School Boards Association. Tommye earned her Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership from Mississippi State University and was honored as Mississippi's 2007 Superintendent of the Year.



# MEET YOUR MPE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MPE elected its 2023-2024 officers and new board members at its 2023 Best Practices Symposium held April 1st at the Sheraton Refuge Resort and Conference Center. Those elected as officers are: President, Chris Chism, Superintendent of the Pearl Public School District; President-elect, Dr. Melissa Bufkin, Federal Programs Director, Early Childhood, Curriculum and Gifted Coordinator for the Jones County School District; Secretary-Treasurer, Dr. Tracey Gregory, Associate Professor of Graduate Education and Director of Ed.D. Programs, Belhaven University; and Past-President, Dr. LaShundia Carson, Dean of Alcorn State University's School of Education and Psychology. Members elected for three-year terms to the Board of Directors are: Rep-at-Large, Monica Mitchell; University, Robin Atwood; Community College, Jason Shows; and Retirees, Dr. Tommye Henderson



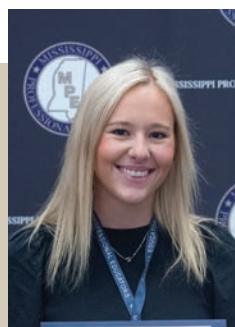
(From left, front) Bettie Martinek, Dr. Melissa Bufkin, Dr. LaShundia Carson, Dr. Tracey Gregory, and Cassie Hudson. (From left, standing) Deana Patterson, Monica Mitchell, Dr. Tommye Henderson, Jason Shows, Chris Chism, Cody Killen, Roderick Davidson, Amy Massey, Nicole Dozier-Jones, and Robin Atwood. (Not pictured, Alicia Conerly)

# 2023 LINDA ANGLIN TEACHER PREPARATION SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Congratulations to the recipients of MPE's 2023 Linda Anglin Teacher Preparation Scholarship Award. Each student member was awarded a scholarship in the amount of \$500.



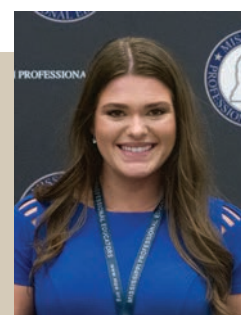
Lovely Anderson  
Mississippi Valley  
State University



McCarlie Burchfield  
Delta State  
University



Zoe Clark  
University of  
Southern Mississippi



Miranda Flippo  
Mississippi  
University for Women



Breanna Hall  
Alcorn State  
University



Shelby Hudspeth  
Blue Mountain  
Christian University



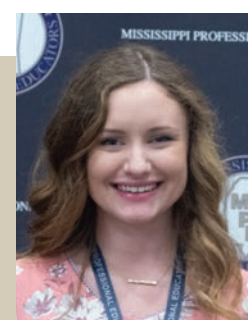
Seraiah Lodge  
Millsaps  
College



Camryn Long  
University of  
Mississippi



Luke Lott  
Mississippi State  
University



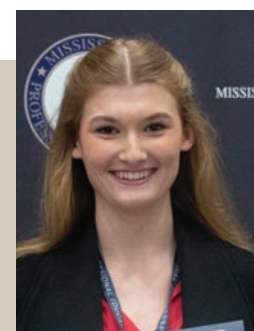
Kaylee Parks  
Mississippi  
College



Christina Rominger  
William Carey  
University



Lindsey Rufus  
Jackson State  
University



Caroline Thomas  
Belhaven  
University

## *Staying in Your Lane and Staying the Course*

As I was growing up in the small town of Mantee, Mississippi, my dad would tell me to stay in my lane as he taught me how to drive. He continued to use this phrase throughout my life. I would continue to hear him say it more and more as I grew older. As I was packing and getting ready to head off the college, we had a long talk about some of the challenges I would face while being away from home and the distractions that could pull me away from my lane and take me off course and down a dangerous path. I then learned what he was telling me about and why staying focused on the road ahead was so important in driving and in life.

The phrase “staying in your lane of life” is about setting goals, staying focused and not getting distracted by the negativity around you. Going off to college I started to see different things going on around me as well as meeting new people from all over the world. I would think about what my dad told me often. Most of the time we go thru life not really thinking about the future and what lies ahead. When I would catch myself getting off track or losing sight of my goals, I would remember what he said and straighten my course and focus ahead.

Throughout my career in teaching and coaching, I have had many doubts about whether or not this was the right lane for me. As I reflect on the times I had to choose to continue my current path or change directions, there was always one thing that kept me focused—the students. The students and athletes that I have had the opportunity to teach, coach and mentor have always been my focus and goals. Helping students achieve their goals and reaching success in the classroom and on the court has always helped me straighten myself back into my lane. Students need great teachers and coaches that can meet them where they are and help them. I love seeing students succeed at whatever they try to be. I get a chance to help so many students with their goals. Focusing on the students in front of me and ignoring the distractions and voices around me, I was able to understand that my lane was to help others achieve their goals in life just as I received guidance and direction growing up.

As educators, we are constantly being pulled in many different directions. There can be a lot of noise and distractions that keep us from focusing on our goals in the classroom. Criticism in general towards public education can be discouraging



**Roderick Davidson**

MPE Board of Directors

and make us question if this is the right lane for us. However, as you walk into your classroom and look at all those young faces, you can know that you are making a difference in their lives by being there for them, caring about their futures, and focusing on your students' needs. It is our lane that helps guide our future teachers, doctors, lawyers, engineers and other professions onto their lanes in life.

## HICKS AND NEEL HONORED AS PAEMST FINALISTS

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) recently announced six 7-12 grade teachers have been named 2022-23 state-level finalists for the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). The PAEMST program is the nation's highest honor for teachers of mathematics, science, technology, engineering, and computer science education. Congratulations to the following MPE members who are among the six finalists:

Kelly Hicks teaches math at Germantown High School in the Madison County School District



Deborah Neel teaches science at Greene County High School in the Greene County School District

## CONERLY DEFENDS DISSERTATION

Dr. Alicia Conerly, principal of Monticello Elementary in the Lawrence County School District, successfully defended her dissertation in April at William Carey University. Dr. Conerly serves as our District 7 Director on the MPE Board of Directors. She will march in William Carey's summer commencement.



We want to hear from you! Send your member spotlight to [kelly@mpe.org](mailto:kelly@mpe.org)

## BOONE NAMED CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER

The Mississippi Department of Education announced in early February the appointment of Dr. Donna Boone as Chief Academic Officer. Dr. Boone served as superintendent of the Forrest County Agricultural School District (FCAHS) for the past six years. She served as superintendent of the Quitman School District prior to her service at FCAHS. Dr. Boone has more than 30 years in education, having served as an assistant teacher, teacher, lead teacher, assistant principal, principal, director at MDE, adjunct professor, assistant superintendent, and superintendent. A member of MPE since 2011, she began her new duties in mid-March.



## MORRIS HONORED FOR BETA CLUB WORK



Kris Morris, a chemistry and physical science teacher at McLaurin High School in the Rankin County School District, has received national honors for her sponsorship of Beta Club. She received the National Beta Club Trailblazer Award in 2022 for her outstanding innovative sponsorship of her school's club. This past February, Morris was one of 17 sponsors selected from 19,000 Beta Clubs nationally to receive the John W. Harris Educator of Excellence Award which honors Beta Sponsors who are committed to Beta Club growth, who include members from all eligible grade levels in their club, participate in National Beta events with their students, and commit to service within their club. Morris is retiring this year after 39 years in public education.

# MPE Awards Administrator School Grants

MPE awarded 41 Administrator School Grants totaling \$40,413 for the 2022-23 School Year. These grants support projects that boost morale and celebrate the accomplishments of a school's teachers and staff. Congratulations to the following 2022-23 grant recipients:

Courtney Beard, Pontotoc City School District  
Kristi Bird, North Pike Elementary  
Alex Bondurant, Corinth Middle School  
Corey Burt, Lafayette High School  
Elizabeth Butler, Pascagoula High School  
Meghan Cates, Mooreville Elementary  
Dr. Sandy Childs-Jones, Benton County Career and Technical Center  
Babette Duty, Covington County School District, New Teacher Program  
Monica Edwards, Greene County Career and Technical Center  
Lucas Ferguson, Oxford High School  
Jeremy Gibbs, Sebastopol Attendance Center  
Bill Glover, Prentiss County Career and Technology Center  
Nikki Graham, Northside Elementary  
Ashley Henderson, West Union Attendance Center  
Dr. Terence James, Vicksburg Warren School District Career and Technical Center  
Tiffany James, New Hebron Attendance Center  
Carol Jones, N.R. Burger Middle School  
Ann-Marie Knowles, Magnolia Park Elementary  
Rhonda Locke, Lowndes County School District, Special Services Department  
Jessica Loper, Newton County Elementary  
Melinda Lowe, Mississippi University for Women, School of Education  
Dr. Angela Lowery, Osyka and Eva Gordon Elementary Schools  
Dr. Jennifer Lowery, Northeast Jones Middle and High Schools  
Wyn Mims, Petal Elementary  
Rana Mitchell, Winona-Montgomery Consolidated School District  
Dr. Wesley Quick, Germantown High School  
Cathie Raburn, Mantachie Elementary  
Dr. Jay Rayborn, Columbia Primary School  
Chrystal Smith, Iuka Middle School  
Gina Smith, Louisville, Elementary  
Ryan Stringer, West Marion High School  
Sara Stygles, Oak Grove Middle School  
Daniel Sumrall, Sumrall Elementary  
D. Amy Tate, Pierce Street Elementary  
Simone Travis, Pass Road Elementary  
Lealue Triplett, Okolona Elementary  
Amber Vowell, French Camp Elementary  
Drew Wardlaw, Clinton High School  
Lori Wilcher, Union Elementary, Middle and High Schools  
Kelsey Williams, Florence Middle School  
Antionette Woodall, Simpson Central School

# 2021-2022 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-four 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.

## **Amanda Cummings** **Magnolia Park Elementary** *Reading the Right Way*

Thank you to MPE for funding our garden this school year! I was able to buy many needed items to update our garden, including bird feeders, a new planter box and other items. In addition, the grant provided funding for plants for the students to grow in the winter and spring. The goal of our garden is to offer a tangible learning experience for our students and to get them excited and interested in making healthier choices. The students spend time in the garden weekly taking care of the plants and watching them grow. Having this experience encourages them to try fruits and vegetables that they may not have otherwise tried. It also teaches them that they can go home and grow many healthy foods with their families!



## **Jennifer Finley** **Benndale Elementary** *Free Neighborhood Library*

Thank you, MPE, for funding the classroom grant that provided a Neighborhood Library for my students at Benndale Elementary and the community in which they live. I had a goal for my 5th and 6th grade students this year. My goal was to

instill a love for reading for them and the community in which the students live. Through this my students learned what community was and the importance of giving back. Putting a Neighborhood Library at the school gave all students and families the opportunity to engage in reading whenever they wanted without having to drive close to 20 miles to get to the local library. Through the grant the library is stocked with a variety of books for all ages in our community.



## **Ashley Smith** **Glade Elementary** *A Picture Is Worth A Thousand Words*

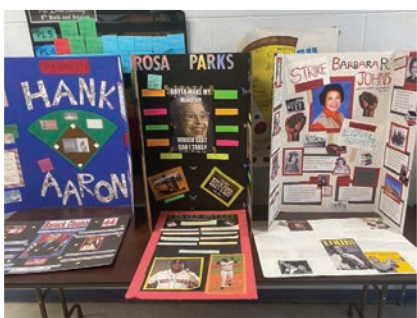
Thank you, MPE, for funding the classroom grant that provides interactive learning in my classroom. The main goal of my classroom is to motivate and encourage my students to engage in their learning, as well as to collaborate with their peers. The Canon Rebel camera kits helped my students to interact and learn through discovery. If your students are having fun while learning, it is a win-win situation. The students will actually remember the experiences and the lessons. Since sixth grade students love to socialize, digital storytelling was a perfect fit. Through receiving this grant, I was able to purchase 2 Canon Digital Camera Bundles, a tripod, and a microphone condenser to enhance the experiences for my students.



**Kimberly Davis**  
**Columbia Elementary**  
*Updated and Engaging Classroom Library*

I appreciate MPE for the opportunity to grow our classroom library and provide my students with access to engaging, diverse, and relevant books to encourage reading. Through this grant, I was able to offer student-led book clubs, AR

rewards for students who read and earned points, and a resource for many projects. My students were so excited to receive the new books, and I have had trouble keeping them on my bookshelf because they all rush to check them out as soon as they are returned. I was able to get over 100 graphic novels, literature, and informational books for my students. Thank you again for giving my students the chance to visit new places inside these pages and take their minds off of the current events in the world.



**Richard Jones**  
**Pearl Upper Elementary**  
*Get Your Business On!*

I value organizations like MPE! I'm always looking for creative activities to try in my classroom, but I sometimes lack the financial means to do so. Thank you for seeing the needs of educators and allowing them to write grants that fund these needs.

Because my grant was funded, I was able to enrich the education experiences of my students. My goals were to promote creativity, develop self-talk and self-efficacy, build risk-taking skills, work with others to achieve a goal, adapt to the roles of entrepreneurs, and work on social and communication skills. Through the grant, I was able to help students design a business, make products, and sell those products to their peers.



**Richard Humphreys**  
**St. Martin High School**  
*Environment Sensing: Using Robot Sensors in Classroom and Competition*

Thank you so much, MPE, for funding our classroom grant that provided sensors for our robotics students and robotics competition team members. My students are always looking for ways to improve knowledge in the areas of robotics and coding in preparation for their future schooling and careers as well as for the robotics competitions that they currently enjoy. The items purchased with this grant have allowed my students to use equipment that they might not otherwise experience until they are in college or industry. We look forward to using these sensors in our program for years to come. Through the grant, we were able to purchase 3 GPS Sensors, 2 optical sensors, 3 inertial sensors, 2 distance sensors, and a GPS tape for our practice field.



## LEGISLATIVE PARTNERS PLAY KEY ROLE IN EDUCATION

For educators, wrapping up the academic year gives us the opportunity to analyze what we have accomplished over the past year. We look at how much our students have learned and grown during the time spent in our classrooms. We hope that what we have poured into them has helped build a solid foundation for the challenges ahead, whether in the next chapter of their education or their chosen career years down the road.

I hope you and your students have had a productive year and it has exceeded the expectations you had last fall as the year began. I know you have worked hard to ensure your students have progressed academically during the year.

Education is a team effort. We must have partners that play important roles in the success of our institutions and our students. The Mississippi Legislature and statewide elected officials are important partners in the success of the university system. In addition to providing fiscal resources through appropriations, the Legislature considers general legislation that impacts education on all levels.

During the 2023 Regular Session, the Legislature adopted and Governor

Reeves approved several bills of interest to the university system:

- Senate Bill 2590 extends the length of a long-term lease to allow Mississippi State University to expand the College View student housing development. This project will expand campus housing options for MSU students.
- Senate Bill 2336 authorizes education employees to administer opioid antagonists to prevent drug overdoses.
- Senate Bill 2581 clarifies the authority of IHL to provide staff and administrative support to the Mississippi Commission on College Accreditation. MCCA protects Mississippi students by ensuring that institutions offering academic degrees in our state are properly accredited and financially sound.

The fiscal resources provided through appropriations play a significant role in helping our universities provide an excellent education to every student. Legislators appropriated \$428.8 million to the university system for general operations in fiscal year 2024, an increase of \$16.9 million over fiscal year 2023. The increased funding is very helpful as rising inflation continues to put pressure on university budgets.



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

Thanks to new and re-appropriated prior-year funding, the university system will have more than \$225 million available to make capital improvements on our campuses. These vital funds will address significant repair and renovation needs, enabling us to provide the learning and living spaces our students need and expect.

Both the general legislation and the appropriations will help our universities serve our students and help us advance the state together. We appreciate the partnership we enjoy with our elected officials.

As the academic year wraps up, our thoughts turn to plans for the summer. I hope yours will be filled with the experiences and opportunities that will help you recharge and build a strong foundation for an even better academic year next fall.



The 2023 Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature concluded Saturday, April 1. The following bills are among those passed by the legislature and approved by the governor:

- **HB 817** codifies per student funding for Early Learning Collaboratives to no less than \$2,500 for full-day and \$1,250 for half-day programs.
- **HB 1173** authorizes the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) to issue EEF procurement cards or digital credentials to eligible charter school teachers.
- **HB 1613** provides FY 24 funding for K-12 education. Funding includes an additional \$17 million for the Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP); a NEW \$100 million to be distributed based on average daily enrollment and that may be spent as districts see fit excluding salary increases for superintendents, assistant superintendents, or principals; \$240 million to pay for the second year of the teacher pay raise; an additional \$800,000 for state special schools; and level funding for most other programs, including classroom supplies and National Board certification.
- **SB 2079**, the “Mississippi School Safety Guardian Act,” authorizes, but does not require, districts to designate staff to participate in the School Safety Guardian Program. Guardians may carry a concealed weapon to respond to active shooter situations and any “other situation that would cause death or serious bodily harm on the school campus or in the immediate vicinity of the school campus.” Guardians’ identities are exempt from public disclosure, and guardians have civil immunity for “reasonable” action taken within the scope of their duties.
- **SB 2336** authorizes an employee of any school district, public charter school, private school, public or private university, community college or junior college to store, distribute or administer opioid antagonists to prevent drug overdoses.
- **SB 2487** creates the Mississippi Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit Scholarship Program to provide funding for public or charter high school students to enroll in dual enrollment or dual credit courses. Participating students may receive funding for a maximum of 6 dual credit/dual enrollment hours prior to high school graduation. A final grade of “C” or above in a three-credit hour dual credit course shall be weighted the same as a three (3) or above on an Advanced Placement final exam in the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System.
- **SB 2623** creates a task force to study, report and make recommendations regarding the State and School Employees’ Life and Health Insurance Plan. The 10-member task force includes one teacher and one retired state employee. Among items the task force is to review is a comparison of the plan to those in other southeastern states, including their governance, benefits/services, solvency, reserves, rate structures and increases over time. The task force is to submit its report and recommendations to the legislature by November 1, 2023.



## MPE JOURNAL

P.O. Box 22550  
Jackson, MS 39225-2550



### **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

Consistent and economical dues-MPE has not increased dues in 13 years

Identity theft coverage

Graduate & undergraduate scholarships awarded annually

NBCT scholarships awarded annually

Classroom grant opportunities awarded annually

Non-certified personnel scholarships awarded annually

Student loan payment contest

High school senior scholarships

Administrator school grants

Free regional trainings offering CEUs to members at no cost

Unlimited professional advice available 24/7

Brightview Credit Union membership

*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.

### **Optional group discounts...**

Working Advantage discount program

Long-term care coverage

SAFECO auto & home insurance

Vision & dental benefits

