Frequently Asked Questions
Regarding Mississippi’s Charter Schools
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Lori Brennan

New Year, New Beginnings...

We are halfway there! And I’m sure many of us are “living on a prayer.” It has been a very eventful, crazy-busy year for me and I know many of you feel the same way. We are entering a new year, a new decade, and there are changes being made. We have new leadership in the state legislature and I am ready to see what 2020 has in store for us!

When I joined MPE fifteen years ago, I really joined it for the liability insurance and legal protection that members receive. My husband was a new teacher and I wanted to make sure we were both protected against anything that might come about. However, all these years later, I am so thankful that I joined…and I have never used either of those benefits! We received one of our weekly emails and in it was information about our annual convention (as it was called back then) that would take place on a weekend that we were already going to be in Jackson, so we decided, “Why not?” That was the BEST impulsive decision I believe I have ever made. The plethora of information that we received in those eight hours was invaluable. When we left that day, my husband told me that he’d be interested in attending again. All of these years later, I think we have missed one symposium and that was due to illness.

This year, our symposium will be on April 4, with Todd Whitaker as our keynote speaker. Jim and I will celebrate our 28th wedding anniversary with MPE members because neither of us wants to miss it! If you’ve never been, consider joining us this year. Symposium is a great place to learn new things, meet new people, and support each other. It is definitely something that should be on your to-do list!

This new year and this new legislative session, MPE is planning to work closely with our leaders to advocate for public education. Kelly’s weekly emails during the session will keep us well informed of the happenings regarding teachers and education, so make sure you read those on Fridays. The best way to shape the future of public education is to stay informed and continue doing what you are doing—creating well-educated students who will become our leaders.

Given that education was such a hot topic during the election, I believe that we need to keep our profession in the forefront. Many ran on campaign promises for teacher raises and education funding. It is now time to hold our legislators to those promises. I plan to stay in contact with my local representatives and I hope you will too. They have heard us and we need to make sure they continue to hear us.

As you begin this second half of the school year, continue to “do your best you.” Our students are counting on us to finish strong and we are teachers…Strong is our middle name. I am looking forward to seeing all of you at Symposium!

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Kelly Riley

It is early November as I write this message. I saw my first Christmas ad in early October in the midst of campaign ads. As I get older, it seems each year passes more quickly than the one before. In reflecting on MPE activities in 2019, several highlights come to mind:

- Gerry Brooks and Marshall Ramsey highlighted our 2019 Best Practices Symposium in March. More than 300 educators enjoyed this wonderful day of learning, networking, and laughing! Symposium provided the perfect boost for those in attendance to finish the school year on a strong note.
- We provided several resources to our members for their reference in making informed decisions during this year’s elections. Our board met with three of the four major candidates for Governor, as well as the two major candidates for Lt. Governor, at its annual planning retreat in June. We also published our Find Your Voice: MPE’s Legislative Advocacy Guide for Educators which shares resources and best practices for Mississippi educators in advocating for students and educators throughout our state. It is available via the “Quick Links” section of our website.
- As sponsor of the Mississippi NBCT Network, MPE facilitated the network’s first annual Learn and Lead Conference on November 2. Over 50 NBCTs from around the state attended. Peggy Brooks, NBCT, President and CEO of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, provided our keynote. See page 11 for more on this exciting day!
- As 2019 comes to a close, it is time to focus on the 2020 Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature. It is critical that educators and public education supporters hold elected officials accountable for their campaign promises, especially when it comes to education funding and teacher compensation. I anticipate that Education Scholarship Accounts (i.e., vouchers) will be a hot topic this session, as the program’s enabling legislation expires June 30, 2020. I also anticipate we will see a significant number of bills regarding testing. See page 20 for resources you may use in advocating for your students with legislators throughout the session.
- As the number of charter schools in Mississippi has increased over the past few years, I have received more and more questions from MPE members regarding charter operations. Please see pages 12-14 for some of the most frequently asked questions. While charters are described as public schools, the article explains several differences between Mississippi’s traditional public schools and charters.
- As always, we honor and celebrate a number of our members’ accomplishments in our “Member Spotlight” you will find on pages 16, 21, and 22. Be sure to see our “Save the Date” reminder on page 23 for our April 4, 2020, Best Practices Symposium featuring Dr. Todd Whitaker. Registration will open for MPE members in January and non-members may register in March if space allows.
- MPE has had much to be thankful for in 2019. We appreciate our nearly 14,000 members throughout the state who are committed to their students. I appreciate our incredible MPE team – from our Board of Directors to the incredible staff I have the privilege of working with each day. In the final days of 2019, I hope you will take some time to rest, to reflect, and to prepare for a wonderful 2020. May the blessings of the season fill your heart!
Mississippi Professional Educators will award up to twenty scholarships in the amount of $1,000 each to MPE members who wish to pursue graduate level studies at a college or university in Mississippi.

Eligibility requirements for the scholarship include:

- Applicant is a member of MPE
- Applicant will be under contract as a full-time educator in Mississippi during the 2020-2021 school year
- Applicant is accepted and enrolled in graduate coursework at a Mississippi college or university OR intends to enroll in such coursework if awarded a scholarship

For more information, visit www.mpe.org.

Applications must be received in the MPE office by February 21, 2020.
The Mississippi Department of Human Services and the State Early Childhood Advisory Council (SECAC) partnered with multiple state agencies to create Mississippi’s Family-Based Unified and Integrated Early Childhood System. This system provides the framework of “an early childhood system underpinned by common case management, a collaborative referral process, and an integrated data system unlike any other in the country.” This system provides resources to families and childcare providers to ensure quality care for early childhood development. Quality care provides the developmental foundation for the child on which future success will be built. Quality care also provides parents with the opportunity to access the education and training needed to join Mississippi’s workforce.

In 2017, the Mississippi Community College Board, in partnership with the Mississippi Department of Human Services, established Early Childhood Academies (ECA) across the state to provide the training and learning resources to parents and childcare providers needed to ensure a quality environment for early childhood development. Quality care provides the developmental foundation for the child on which future success will be built. Quality care also provides parents with the opportunity to access the education and training needed to join Mississippi’s workforce.

In 2019, Mississippi’s early education system included the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS), the Mississippi Department of Early Childhood (MDEC), Head Start, and private and public providers to bring together mixed delivery systems, expand best practices, maximize parental choice and ensure quality care as part of the Preschool Development Grant B-S. Bringing the college ECA, MDE collaborative and Head Start systems of delivery together is a unified effort to ensure children have access to quality care from birth through all other levels of education and eventually success as part of Mississippi’s workforce.

In October 2019, Mississippi’s team was invited to present at the Zaentz Early Education Innovation Challenge at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The purpose of the Zaentz Early Education Innovation Challenge is to provide funding to recognize promising new ideas that have the potential to transform early education and promote positive outcomes at various levels of the early education system. More than 200 ideas were submitted by various organizations and individuals from across the country and Mississippi’s topic was titled “A Family-Based Unified and Integrated Early Childhood System,” which was selected from fifteen finalists invited to present at Harvard University. I am proud to report that from all entries that were submitted from across the country Mississippi placed third! These results would not be possible without help from all partners that include the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS), the Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB), the Early Childhood Academy (ECA), the Kellogg Foundation, and Mississippi State University’s National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center (NSPARC) and childcare centers.

The 2020 legislative session is set to begin on Tuesday, January 7, and conclude on Sunday, May 10. This will mark the first year of a new four-year term, which is the reason it is a 125-day session instead of 90 days. It is my hope that each of you will educate yourself on legislation that can impact our students daily before our eyes. Our profession changes, too, as one initiative to improve student outcomes is replaced by another initiative, as one educational trend is replaced by another trend.

As the new year begins, we will see many changes at the State Capitol. Many statewide elected officials will serve in a different role than they have in the past. Seats in both the House of Representatives and the State Senate will change hands. This will lead us to have many questions about how the legislative session will unfold. Many candidates have expressed their commitment to education on the campaign trail and state revenue collections are up when compared to estimates. Hopefully, these factors will yield an increase in education funding.

As educators, our commitment never wavers. We are committed to our students and to helping them succeed in the classroom and beyond. We provide the foundation on which our students will build their lives. We must be dedicated to our task; there is no room for unfilled promises. Whether we work on the Pre-K, K-12, community college, or university level, we all work toward the goal of providing a firm foundation on which our students can construct their careers, provide for their families, and contribute to their communities.

Increasing educational attainment in Mississippi will have a profound impact on our state, increasing employment, wages, and state revenue that can be used for roads, bridges, and education. Increasing educational attainment also reduces unemployment, poverty, infant mortality, and incarceration rates. We know that increasing educational attainment will contribute to a better quality of life for all Mississippians.

Everyone in our state benefits from the work we do as we educate the future workforce for our state. We must continue to work together to demonstrate to state leaders and the voters across the state to remind them that directing state funds to education is an investment. It is both an investment in our children and our collective future.

EDUCATORS MUST PREPARE FOR SEASON OF CHANGE

Dr. Andrea Scott Mayfield
MCCB Executive Director

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

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It is often said that there is nothing as constant as change. This may be trite, but it is also true. As educators, we see this as our students change daily before our eyes. Our profession changes, too, as one initiative to improve student outcomes is replaced by another initiative, as one educational trend is replaced by another trend.

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As this first semester draws to a close, I can’t help but reflect upon my experiences in public education. Coming into education from an alternate route background, the road was a little different. Oftentimes, I lacked confidence in my abilities because I was afraid that I had missed out on learning “how to teach.” I loved my students, however, and wanted nothing but the best for them. They knew this as well. Overall, the year went well, but I knew I had room for improvement.

The summer after completing my first year of teaching, I attended a workshop on Conscious Discipline and it changed the entire way I viewed my classroom. Although very important, the workshop did not focus on state standards, data, or high-stakes testing; it simply focused on building relationships and using those relationships to manage the classroom.

After attending the workshop, I gave birth to my greatest gift—a son—which made me even more passionate about the caring environment that a teacher provides. I could not imagine sending my child to a class with someone who did not provide a loving ambiance for students or who was unwilling to learn something about him. Since attending this workshop and reaping the success of the implemented changes, my advice to all new and seasoned teachers has been to build relationships—real ones.

Don’t be afraid to do something different. Try to refrain from conforming to the “we’ve always done it this way” mentality, because in some instances, doing what you have always done will cause stagnation. The needs of our students are ever-changing and in order to reach them, we must be willing to address what is most important and that is to reach each student as an individual.

Therefore, as educators, we MUST first build relationships with students. If students are going to learn for you, they must know that you care for them. Also, relationships with students make the student more likely to become engaged in class and less involved in classroom disruptions.

Secondly, educators must build relationships with parents and the community. Attend community events outside of school, especially if your students are involved in them. Some students are not fortunate enough to have anyone to show up for them, so your showing up may mean the world to them.

Lastly, we should build relationships with fellow staff members because sometimes, you just need to know that someone is there for you. Be sure to return the favor as well.

The transition into administration has shown me that it’s also important to build relationships as an administrator. Coming from the classroom, I understand that teaching is not an easy feat and that teachers often bear the blame of everything, that it’s often where fingers are pointed when performance is low or discipline is high or for anything else, for that matter. Relationships with teachers help to build a base to provide the things needed to be poured into them so that they may pour into the students who, in turn, must pour into their education. These MUST be in place if a student is expected to learn.

For more information, please visit www.mpe.org.
Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Mississippi’s Charter Schools

The Mississippi Charter School Act of 2013 authorized charter schools to operate within our state. As the number of charter schools in Mississippi has increased, the MPE office has received an increasing number of questions from our members regarding charter operations. The following information addresses some of the most frequently asked questions.

What is a charter school? State law defines a charter school as “a public school that is established and operating under the terms of a charter contract between the school’s governing board and the authorizer. The term ‘charter school’ includes a conversion charter school and start-up charter school.” Charter schools are publicly funded, privately run schools functioning as a local educational agency and governed by an independent board. A charter school and any education service provider that provides comprehensive management for a charter school must be a nonprofit education organization.

Where may a charter school open? Charters may locate in “A,” “B,” or “C” districts. While charter students originally had to live within the district in which their charter school was located, the Mississippi Charter School Act was amended in 2016 to allow students in “C,” “D,” and “F” districts to cross district lines to enroll in charter schools in another district.

How many charter schools does Mississippi have? There are seven charter schools currently operating in our state, with five operating in Jackson and one in Clarksdale. Five of these six operated during the 2018-19 school year and served 1,600 students. Thirty additional charters will open in 2020-2021, including two in Jackson and one in Greenwood.

Does the State Board of Education oversee charter schools? No. The Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board has exclusive chartering jurisdiction and oversight of charter schools in Mississippi. The board is comprised of seven appointed members (three appointed by the Governor, three appointed by the Lt. Governor, and one appointed by the State Superintendent of Education). The board may approve a maximum of fifteen charter applications each fiscal year. The board enters into charter contracts with approved charter operators.

Do charters subject to the same rules and regulations as traditional public schools? No. MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-28-45(5) provides that a “charter school is not subject to any rule, regulation, policy or procedure adopted by the State Board of Education or the State Department of Education unless otherwise required by the authorizer or in the charter contract.” Thus, charters are not held to the state’s process standards governing administration and personnel, school operations, or instructional practices. In addition, charter schools are not required to implement the Mississippi College- and Career-Readiness Standards.

Do charters have to accept all students? No. Students apply to attend a charter school and the charter school decides who they will accept or not accept. While state law requires that 80% of a charter school’s free and reduced lunch population must reflect that of students in the school district in which the charter school is located and requires a charter school to give enrollment preference to underserved children to ensure the school meets this requirement, charters may limit admission to students within a given age group or grade level and may be organized around a special emphasis, theme, or concept. If capacity is insufficient to enroll all students who want to attend the charter, state law requires the charter school to select students through a lottery.

How are charter schools funded? While legislators have cited the overhead and administrative expenses of the state’s traditional public schools as one reason for consolidation, they have approved the opening of additional schools by way of charter schools. In addition, Mississippi’s charter schools are operating in poorer areas, with funding diverted from traditional public schools in these areas to charter schools. While charters are responsible for covering their own start-up expenses, once they are in operation, state and local funding follows students to charter schools. The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) distributes MAEP funding to charter schools at a per pupil amount equal to that provided to traditional public schools. With regards to local funds, state law requires each school district in which a charter school is located to distribute a pro rata share of local ad valorem funds to all charter schools in the district. If a student resides in one school district but attends a charter school located in another school district, the student’s district of residency sends its pro rata share of local ad valorem support funds to the student’s charter school.

While state law requires charters to have their financial records audited annually, audit reports are only required to be filed with the Charter School Authorizer Board, not with the State Auditor or the MDE, even though charters are publicly funded schools. State law requires the Joint Legislative Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER) to prepare an annual report assessing, among other things, the sufficiency of funding for charter schools. PEER’s most recent review in December 2018 found that calculating the pro rata share of local ad valorem taxes to charter schools according to the calculation in the Mississippi Charter School Act, specifically MISS. CODE ANN. Sections 37-28-55(2) and (3) (1972), results in charter schools receiving more funds per pupil than the school district in which the student resides.

Do all teachers in charters have to be licensed? No. MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-28-47 (1982) exempts up to 25% of teachers in charter schools from state licensure requirements and exempts 100% of administrators from administrator licensure requirements. Teachers and administrators must have a bachelor’s degree as a minimum requirement and teachers must have demonstrated subject-matter competency. Charter teachers must hold at least alternative certification within three years of their employment with a charter. Teachers are not covered under the Education Employment Procedures Law and their salaries are not subject to the state salary schedule.

Do charter employees belong to PERS? While the original enabling legislation specified that charter employees were not members of PERS, state law was amended in 2016 to make PERS membership optional for charter employees if the charter school’s governing board chooses to participate.

Are charters held to the same accountability standards as traditional public schools? Yes. Since charters were authorized in 2013, state law has required charters to be subject to the same student assessment and accountability requirements as traditional public schools. Charters serving grades 9-12 must meet or exceed graduation requirements set by the Mississippi Department of Education. The chart below reflects accountability ratings for the six charters currently operating in our state:

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<td>Ambition Preparatory</td>
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(Continued on page 14)
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

(Continued from page 13)

Can a charter school be closed? Yes. MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-28-33 (1972) provides that a charter contract must be revoked at any time or not renewed if the authorizer board determines that a charter school has done any of the following or otherwise failed to comply with the provisions of the Mississippi Charter Schools Act of 2013: (a) committed a material and substantial violation of any of the terms, conditions, standards or procedures required under the act or the charter contract; (b) failed to meet or make sufficient progress toward the performance expectations set forth in the charter contract; (c) failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management; or (d) substantially violated any material provision of law which is applicable to the charter school. The authorizer board may also revoke a charter if it finds that a charter school is operating in a discriminatory manner.

Charter schools are granted five-year contracts and are eligible for renewal when such contracts have expired. Contracts for Reimagine PreP and Midtown Public Charter School expire in mid-2020, so they will soon be seeking renewal. The Charter School Authorizer Board will consider both charters’ performance in deciding whether to renew the schools’ contracts. State law does not allow the board to renew the charter of an operating charter school. The authorizer board will consider both charters’ performance in deciding whether to renew the schools’ contracts. State law does not allow the board to renew the charter of an operating charter school. Midtown Public Charter School, may only have its charter renewed for up to three years.

MPE is pleased to offer the following regional training sessions. Participants will receive .6 CEU credits for each full-day course. Each session’s content is timely for educators during the 2019-2020 school year. There is no cost for MPE and MS NBCT Network members to attend and receive CEUs. Non-members must pay $25 to attend, which includes CEUs.

MPE Regional Training

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**Meeting the Social and Emotional Needs of Today’s Learners:**

This training will provide foundational understanding and research of the importance of meeting the needs of the whole child in today’s learning environment. Today’s schools are increasingly attended by students from diverse cultural, social, and economic backgrounds. Participants will gain a deeper understanding of the impact of social-emotional learning on student achievement, student behavior, and student engagement. The session will provide information on key social and emotional skills that students should develop. Teachers will also receive training on explicit lessons to teach social and emotional skills and providing opportunities for students to reinforce those skills during the school day.

* • February 7 Life Church, Laurel

**Teacher Leadership:**

Teachers exhibit leadership in multiple, sometimes overlapping, ways. Some leadership roles are formal with designated responsibilities. Other more informal roles emerge as teachers interact with their peers. Regardless of the roles, teacher leaders shape the culture of their schools, improve student learning, and influence practice among their peers. This session will explore the varied ways teacher leadership can be exhibited and developed. Career paths for formal leadership positions will be examined. Peer support opportunities will be provided.

* • January 16 Hancock Leadership Center, Tupelo

**Effective Supports for English Language Students:**

This session will orient teachers on the usage of data from the current EL assessments required by the state, which include the following domains: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Teachers will be provided with information on assisting with progress monitoring of EL students using alternate forms of the state-required EL assessment. Participants will be exposed to instructional materials and strategies. Teachers will also receive information on developing effective communication skills to include parents and guardians.

* • January 15 Holmes Community College, Attala Center, Kosciusko

**Arts Education Across the Curriculum:**

This training will provide foundational understanding and research of the importance of integrating the arts throughout their curriculum, regardless of their content area. The session will incorporate participant-designed units in various content areas throughout the day, as well as sharing best practices with the group. Participants will receive content-specific activities for each of the four core subjects, as well as supports in integrating famous artists into the curriculum. Teachers will receive instructions and resources for creating hands-on activities.

* • January 22 Northwest Community College, Oxford

To register, go to www.mpe.org, click on the “MPE Regional Trainings” tab, and then click on the training you wish to attend or scroll down to locate the MPE calendar and click on the training hyperlink.
MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

MSU STUDENT CHAPTER GIVES BACK

MPE is proud to support student chapters on several university campuses, including Mississippi State University. Amy Prisock, Recruiting Coordinator for MSU’s College of Education and former university representative on the MPE Board of Directors, sponsors the Association of Educators at Mississippi State (AEMS). MSU students spent the first weekend in October creating an inviting space for pre-K to college students of a local tutoring center in Starkville. Volunteers provide a range of support and tutorial services, including homework assistance; ACT, GED and PRAXIS preparation; test taking strategies; and, college enrollment/financial aid. MSU students cleaned, primed, painted, and sealed the center’s tables. Each table was painted with four to six different colors to create a space for the student to call their own when working. Below are a few pictures depicting the MSU students’ work and results.

MPE AWARDS NEARLY $41,000 IN CLASSROOM GRANTS

MPE’s classroom grants allow our members to try out a new idea or to buy the “extras” for an already great lesson plan or project to enhance their instructional program. Congratulations to the following forty-six members selected by our grant review committee to receive a grant:

Bethany Abdul-Hadi, Enterprise Attendance Center
Ann Adams, North Pontotoc Middle
Carlos Bailey, North Pontotoc Elementary
Linsey Bouds, West Hancock Elementary
Kristy Brand, Warren Central High School
Angie Burns, Myrtle Attendance Center
Jessica Burns, Longleaf Elementary
Evo Butler, T.L. Westan Middle
Rodney Carver, Lewisburg High School
Julie Chasse, Weir Elementary
Randolph Castrillo, Hazlehurst Elementary
Marie Davis, Middle School of Poplarville
Elvira Deyarmond, Thames Elementary
Sagogue Evans, Kosciusko Elementary
Laura Jo Ferguson, Northside Elementary
Maci Fisher, Oak Grove Lower Elementary
Anita Graham, Union Middle
Ashley Henry, Collins Elementary
Darby Knight, Pontotoc High School
Kelli Landrum, West Jones High School
Summer Lewis, Rankin County School District Gathering Grounds
Rebecca Malone, North Pontotoc Elementary
Kari McRae, Simpson Central School
LaShano Middleton, Greenhill Intermediate
Amy Alza, Saltillo Elementary
Renna Moore, Power APAC
Loren Nabiors, Ripley Elementary
Tracie Newell, Saltillo Primary
Beckie Nieman, North Pike Elementary
Susanna Oglesby, New Hope High School
Donna Potts, Kosciusko High School
Susan Powell, Pleasant Hill Elementary
Emily Raines, Ripley Elementary
Jonathan Reeves, West Point High School
Stacy Reeves, University of Southern Mississippi
Heather Rice, Clarkdale High School
Corrandra Scott, Southaven Elementary
Gwen Shackle, Center Hill High School
Linda Gayle Strum, Eastside Elementary
Alisha Thomas, Henderson Ward Stewart Elementary
Katie Thompson, South Forrest Attendance Center
Hayley Trantham, North Pontotoc High School
Kimberly Watkins, Scott Central Attendance Center
Danielle Whittington, Columbia Elementary
Christy Wise, North Pontotoc High School
Nicole Wood, Richland Upper Elementary

We would like to recognize the following twelve members who have already earned a free membership for their recruitment efforts during the first quarter of this year:

Lashundia Carson, Alcorn State University
Iris Dismuke, Clay County School District
Emily Edgar, Lowndes County School District
Rochelle Holston, Pearl River County School District
Cheryl Howard, Quitman County School District
Brad Johns, Rankin County School District
Sky Kong, Poplarville Separate School District
Charles McClatchy, Marshall County School District
Aimee Piland, Lamar County School District
Anjanette Powers, Delta State University
Stacy Reeves, University of Southern Mississippi
Stephanie Thornton, Leake County School District

RECRUITMENT SPOTLIGHT

MPE 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 premier 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, 2019, and June 30, 2020. Free memberships will be credited towards the next year’s membership.

* credit will be given for each additional member after five
** member must have previously been made inactive for a period of three months or more
MPE invites its members to apply for classroom grant funding each year to try out a new idea or buy the “extras” for an already great lesson plan or project. Ninety-nine members submitted applications for the 2018-2019 school year, with forty-two receiving grants of up to $1,000 for their class projects and instructional program. We are pleased to spotlight several of the grants below for your enjoyment, as well as your reference for ideas for your own classroom.

**Myra Kinchen**  
Clinton Park Elementary, 1st Grade Self-Contained Plants and Blocks  

Thank you, MPE, for funding the classroom grant that provided two materials for two classroom projects for my students: an above-ground vegetable garden and Kapla Blocks. The 2018 Mississippi College- and Career-Readiness Standards for Science include the use of an engineering design process—define the problem, design a solution, construct the design, evaluate the product, and improve the product—to create a solution to a problem. The Kapla Blocks helped students build and develop an understanding of the balance and design of structure. Even though the science standards are rigorous, the students made deeper connections through exploration by building an above-ground vegetable bed and planting and observing the growth of the plants. These experiences have been invaluable throughout this school year and they would not have been possible without your generous grant.

**Amber Combs**  
Franklin County Middle School, 7th-8th Grade Counseling Art Therapy  

I would like to take this opportunity to thank MPE for funding the Art Therapy grant. Without these funds, it would have been extremely difficult to offer Art Therapy to the growing number of students who wanted to participate. This grant was instrumental in providing the art supplies needed to add several more Art Therapy groups throughout the school year. These added groups were beneficial in helping promote a healthy self-concept for the participants. When students were able to find an outlet for issues they were experiencing, the students were more able to self-regulate and choose more healthy ways to deal with those issues. Art Therapy provided that outlet and has become a successful part of my counseling program.

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**Myra Deyamport**  
Thames Elementary, 2nd-5th Grade Gifted Art Infusion  

Thank you, MPE, for funding our classroom grant that helped us embark on our first robotics journey! With your help, our gifted program at Thames Elementary now has Dash and Dot robots to help develop problem solving, team building, and communication skills. Our items purchased included one Club Kit with four robots, accessories, and accompanying curricular materials. In addition, I was able to purchase one Creativity Kit, along with a professional development course. Our students are excited to learn how to program our new robot friends to try new tricks such as talking, turning, and having a Robot Dance Off! Thanks to your funding, we are able to continue applying our programming skills in fun and creative ways.

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**Julie Ingram**  
Florence Middle School, 7th-8th Grade Personal Finance Scarcity, Opportunity Cost, and the Settlers of Catan  

My primary goal is to actively engage and provide a positive learning experience for students when I am teaching personal finance and economic concepts. Opportunity cost and scarcity can be difficult for middle-school students to understand and simple lecturing techniques are not enough. I have learned that game-play allows students the opportunity to utilize the decision-making process intentionally and through practice, understand the concepts of opportunity cost and scarcity. Because of the gracious grant from MPE, I was able to purchase a class set of the game the Settlers of Catan. This game is engaging for students and demonstrates these economic concepts in a fun way. Coupled with journaling activities, the students successfully mastered an understanding of opportunity cost and scarcity.

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**Carol Brown**  
New Hope Elementary, 4th-5th Gifted Elementary Robots  

Thanks to the generosity of MPE, my students have experienced the “Power of Yes.” Students explored the concepts of a growth mindset through a variety of children’s books. Later, students began to develop a growth mindset by participating in STEM learning labs. These labs gave students a hands-on experience with the design process for them to complete one final engineering feat! As students worked, they had to become comfortable with taking risks and accepting challenges in a positive way. As a culminating activity, students hosted a Living Wax Museum. Students chose a famous person who demonstrated a growth mindset, researched the person, created a display board that included biographical information and quotes, and presented to our kindergarten through fourth grade students. By conducting the Living Wax Museum, students were able to showcase their learning and help history come to life as they shared how the power of a growth mindset can lead to accomplishments that shape our world.

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**Jessica Stuart**  
Oak Grove Lower Elementary, 3rd Grade Math Splashing Into Differentiation  

My students, fellow teachers, and myself are extremely appreciative of the $1,000 MPE Grant that was awarded. Math differentiation is sometimes very challenging to accomplish, especially when the idea of adding more minutes to each day is not an option. I was able to purchase 140 individual student licenses for Splash Math, an online program available for providing practice, remediation, and enrichment according to students’ individual needs. Most of the learning takes place through a gaming format, which causes the students to be eager to work in the program. When children say, “Can we work on Splash Math, please?”, I know that I’ve found an excellent resource. Thank you, MPE!
2020 MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATIVE SESSION RESOURCES

The 2020 Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature will convene at 12:00 noon on Tuesday, January 7, 2020. MPE encourages our members to be actively involved in the legislative process. The following information is provided for your reference in contacting your legislators regarding critical legislation under consideration during the 2020 Session. It is critical that educators be engaged and share their thoughts on legislation with their respective legislators, committee chairmen, and the legislative leadership throughout the session.

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY GUIDE
Find Your Voice: MPE’s Legislative Advocacy Guide for Educators is now available in the “Quick Links” section of our homepage (www.mpe.org). The guide shares resources and best practices for Mississippi educators in advocating on critical educational issues, monitoring events at our state capitol, and contacting Mississippi lawmakers to encourage them to make the best decisions for public education students and educators throughout our state.

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS AND LEGISLATIVE CONTACT INFORMATION
As this will be the first year of a four-year legislative term, the Lt. Governor and Speaker of the House will appoint committees, including committee chairmen, in January. Senate Education will have a new chairman. We are hopeful Rep. Richard Bennett will be reappointed as Chairman of House Education. We will share all committee appointments with you once they are made. You may find legislative contact information in the “Quick Links” menu on our homepage (www.mpe.org), as well as via the Mississippi Legislature’s homepage at www.legislature.ms.gov.

TIMETABLE FOR PROCESSING LEGISLATION
As this will be the first session of a new four-year term, the Mississippi Constitution provides that this will be a 125-day session, rather than a 90-day session as in the second-fourth years. The timetable for processing legislation includes the following significant legislative deadlines:

- February 24 - Deadline for introduction of general bills and constitutional amendments
- March 10 - Deadline for committees to report general bills originating in own house
- March 19 - Deadline for original floor action on general bills originating in own house
- April 7 - Deadline for committees to report general bills originating in other house
- April 15 - Deadline for original floor action on general bills originating in other house
- April 30 - Deadline to concur or not concur in amendments from other house to general bills
- May 2 - Deadline for conference reports on appropriations bills to be filed
- May 4 - Deadline for adoption of appropriations conference reports and for conference reports on general bills to be filed
- May 10 - Sine Die

LEGISLATIVE BILL TRACKING
MPE will keep our members updated throughout the session via our weekly email updates, as well as Facebook and Twitter (@MSProEd). MPE staff will develop our bill tracking spreadsheet of the bills we will be monitoring throughout the session after the March 10 committee deadline. We will update this tracking spreadsheet each Friday and post it in the “Legislative News” section of our website (www.mpe.org). You may track bills, as well as view the language of particular bills, by visiting the “Bill Status” portion of the legislative website at http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us.

INGRAM RECOGNIZED FOR ECONOMICS EXCELLENCE
Julie Ingram, a Career and Technical Education teacher at Florence Middle School in the Rankin County School District, has been selected to receive the John Morton Award for Excellence in teaching economics. Each year the National Council for Economic Education selects one teacher from a high school, one teacher from a middle school, and one teacher from an elementary school from across the United States to receive this prestigious award. Ingram has been selected as the middle school recipient for the 2019 school year.

Ingram holds certifications from the Mississippi Council for Economic Education as a Master Teacher of Entrepreneurship, Master Teacher of Economics, and a Master Teacher of Personal Finance. She was recently recognized by the Mississippi Council for Economic Education as the 2019 Economics Teacher of the Year. A member of MPE for nearly ten years, Ingram has also been recognized as the Mississippi FBLA Advisor of the Year for 2019 for receiving a scholarship.

HARPER AND NEWSOME RECEIVE NON-CERTIFIED PERSONNEL SCHOLARSHIPS
MPE is honored to announce that Natasha Harper and Becky Newsome have received $1,000 scholarships to pursue their undergraduate degrees. We are honored to support these members’ studies at a college or university in Mississippi.

- Natasha Harper, a teacher assistant at West Elementary in the Gulfport School District, is pursuing her degree in Elementary Education at the University of Southern Mississippi. She joined MPE in 2018.
- Becky Newsome, a teacher assistant at Monticello Elementary in the Lawrence County School District, will pursue her degree at the University of Southern Mississippi. She joined MPE in 2015.

MEMBERS EARN ADVANCED DEGREES FROM WILLIAM CAREY
Congratulations to the following members who received advanced degrees from William Carey University this past August:

- Julie Sheppard of Biloxi Upper Elementary received her Master of Education. She has been a member of MPE since 2017.
- Sara Stygles, Lead Teacher at Oak Grove Middle School, received her Specialist in Educational Leadership. She has been a member of MPE since 2013.
- Amanda Tucker (not pictured), a teacher at Nettleton Primary School, received her Master of Education in Dyslexia Therapy. She has been a member of MPE since 2015.

CHISM INDUCTED INTO SPORTS HALL OF FAME
Chris Chism, principal of Pearl High School and District 6 Director on the MPE Board of Directors, was inducted into the East Mississippi Community College Sports Hall of Fame in October. He played baseball at EMCC in 1993-94 and went on to play for the University of Florida Gators, where he started in center field for Florida’s 1996 College World Series team. A member of MPE since 2001, Chism returned to EMCC after college as an assistant coach before teaching and coaching in K-12 education.

IS YOUR MPE MEMBERSHIP PROFILE UP-TO-DATE?
Have you switched schools? Do you have a new home address, cell phone number, or email address? Please let us know! *Go to “Sign In” at www.mpe.org and update your profile today!
TUPELO HONORS TEACHERS OF DISTINCTION

The Tupelo Rotary, Kiwanis and Civitan clubs joined with the CREATE Foundation and the Association for Educational Excellence this past September to honor twenty-three teachers and six assistant teachers as Teachers of Distinction for their contributions to the Tupelo Public Schools. In addition to receiving a commemorative award, teachers received $1,000 and assistant teachers received $500. The following MPE members were honored as 2019 Teachers of Distinc-

MPE AWARDS NATIONAL BOARD SCHOLARSHIPS

MPE recently awarded $475 scholarships to the following six members who are pursuing National Board Certification:

- Tammye Harvey of Wayne Central Elementary has been a member of MPE since 2010.
- Amy Mize of Salt Hill Elementary has been a member since 2013.
- Bruce Mize of West Point High School has been a member since 2000.
- Joshua Purvis of Clinton High School has been a member since 2016.
- Kayla Quick of Northside Elementary in Clinton has been a member since 2017.
- Nikki Robinson of Petal Middle School has been a member since 2018.

We are honored to support these members as they pursue National Board Certification!

HOOH HONORED AS TSA TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Jennifer Hood, an engineering instructor at the Amory Career and Technical Center, has been named Mississippi Teacher of the Year by the Technology Student Association (TSA). She earned her National Board Certification in Career and Technical Education. Jennifer has been a member of MPE since 2012.

MILLER EARNS DOCTORATE

Marci Miller, 5th Grade Math teacher at West Lauderdale Middle School, received her Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from Liberty University on July 26. A member of MPE since 2018, she has taught in the Lauderdale County School District for the last fifteen years.

We want to hear from you! If you would like to be recognized by MPE in an upcoming journal or email, send your member spotlight to kelly@mpe.org

TUPELO HONORS TEACHERS OF DISTINCTION

Please join us for MPE’s 2020 Best Practices Symposium featuring Dr. Todd Whitaker, author of What Great Teachers Do Differently. Other titles include: Dealing With Difficult Teachers, Ten-Minute Inservice, Your First Year, What Great Principals Do Differently, Motivating & Inspiring Teachers, and Dealing With Difficult Parents. Recognized as a leading presenter in the field of education, his message about the importance of teaching has resonated with hundreds of thousands of educators around the world.

The day’s agenda and additional details will be announced in December. Priority registration will open for MPE members in January. Registration will open for non-members in March, if space allows. Mark your calendars now and plan to join us on April 4!

ENGAGING SPEAKERS   LEGISLATIVE AND BUDGET NEWS   GREAT DOOR PRIZES   CEUS AVAILABLE

REGISTRATION OPENS IN JANUARY FOR MPE MEMBERS!

Saturday, April 4, 2020
The Hilton
Jackson, MS

Register online at www.mpe.org.

Register early so you don’t miss this day of networking and learning! Non-members may register beginning March 1, if space is available.
WHY MPE?

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

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†May reflect last year's dues

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†Liability insurance not included

Your MPE membership includes...

Professional liability protection of $2,000,000 with $3,000,000 maximum
Legal assistance related to employment or professional matters per MPE policy
$10,000 accidental death & dismemberment coverage
$2,500 assault related property damage
Consistent and economical dues-MPE has not increased dues in 11 years
Identity theft coverage
Graduate & undergraduate scholarships awarded annually
NBCT scholarships awarded annually
Non-certified personnel scholarships awarded annually
Classroom grant opportunities awarded annually
Free regional trainings offering CEUs to members at no cost
Unlimited professional advice available 24/7
MPE Journal published three times per year
Staff monitors legislation at the state capitol, with weekly updates provided to membership
Every dollar of your dues stays in Mississippi for your benefit! MPE does not support political candidates.