Mississippi’s Adoption of Social Emotional Learning Standards

Self-Awareness
Identifying one’s values and emotions as well as one’s strengths and challenges

Self-Management
Self-regulating emotions and behaviors to achieve personal and academic goals

Social Awareness
Showing understanding and empathy for others

Responsibility Decision-Making
Making ethical, constructive choices about personal and social behavior

Relationship Skills
Forming positive relationships, working in teams, dealing effectively with conflict
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President
Devin Walsh
6 Nicolaus Drive
Hattiesburg, MS 39402
601-297-7222
devin.walsh@lamarcountyschools.org

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

President-elect
Tamra Mills
47 Monroe Street
Hickory, MS 39332
601-527-0843
tmills@newton.k12.ms.us

Past-President
Lori Brennan
317 Jamaica Drive
Ocean Springs, MS 39564
228-861-4824
loribhp@yahoo.com

District 1
Gennella Graham
904 E. 10th Street
Corinth, MS 38834
662-643-7790
graham@corinth.k12.ms.us
gennellagraham@gmail.com

District 2
Jennifer Gaston
8850 Hwy 31N
Oakland, MS 38948
662-230-0663
jgaston@coffeevilleschools.org

District 3
Nicole Spinks
1500 Deering Street
Cleveland, MS 38732
662-299-7910
nicole_spinks@hotmail.com

District 4
Emily Edgar
3759 Plum Nellie Road
Columbus, MS 39701
662-488-5335
emyedgar@gmail.com

District 5
Missy Bufkin
467 Myrick-Strengthford Road
Laurel, MS 39443
601-433-1759
mbufkin24@hotmail.com

District 6
Chris Chism
105 Airline Terrace
Pearl, MS 39208
662-549-0257
ccchism@pearl.k12.ms.us

District 7
Amber Combs
119 Mann Lane
Roxie, MS 39661
601-384-7933
acombs@fcsd.k12.ms.us

District 8
Amanda Cummings
7101 Oakhurst Drive
Ocean Springs, MS 39564
662-816-9994
amandacummings@hotmail.com

Community College
Dana Knight
72 Kings Lane
Laurel, MS 39443
601-477-5428
dana.knight@jcjc.edu

University
Dr. Tracey Gregory
1500 Peachtree Street
Jackson, MS 39204
662-231-1571
tgregory@belhaven.edu

Retirees
Ike Sanford
170 Highway 598
Seminary, MS 39479
601-299-1559
ikesanford081977@gmail.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

MPE STATE OFFICE
P.O. Box 22550
Jackson, MS 39225-2550
Toll Free:(800)523-0269
www.mpe.org

AREA DIRECTORS

Michael Goff
105 Carter Lane NE
McCall Creek, MS 39647
601-532-6556
(C) 601-384-6748
mikegoff@ftcweb.net

Brenda M. Smith
P.O. Box 616
Leakesville, MS 39451
601-394-2847
(C) 601-394-8370
ssmith55@tds.net

Cheryl Howard
700 East Friendship Rd.
Cleveland, MS 38732
662-710-7265
tiggerabc12360@yahoo.com

Julie Wilson
125 CR 434
Oxford, MS 38655
662-816-2735
jawilson2016lms@gmail.com

Randal Livingston
247 Livingston Road
Louisville, MS 39339
662-773-2577
(C) 662-803-8393
Jolivingston@hotmail.com

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

Office Staff

2020-2021

2020-2021
### Cover Stories

**Mississippi’s Adoption of Social Emotional Learning Standards**
Page 12
Ginger Koestler
The MDE develops the Mississippi Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Standards to address the social and emotional needs of all students and to ensure success in school and life.

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MPE Journal is published three times annually by the Mississippi Professional Educators, Kelly Riley, Publisher.
If you’re reading this, you survived the beginning of the school year and have lived to tell the tale. Congratulations! This has been a trying time, to say the least. Educators are struggling and there is no doubt we are being pushed to the absolute limit. I must admit, even as I write this, I am having difficulty coming up with something to motivate and uplift others when I’m in need of encouragement myself.

Since I’m unable to find the words, I’ll share wisdom from another source. I recently read an article by Dave Ramsey. The financial expert and radio show host started by calling teachers “unsung heroes.” He then outlined the best things to say to them. I’ll pass these words along in case you haven’t heard them from anyone else lately.

1. Thank you. These simple words are meaningful but not said enough to those in our profession. Thank you for the time and effort you put in. Thank you for the concern and care you show for your students. Thank you for stepping up in the face of adversity and taking on the extra responsibilities that go along with keeping others safe.
2. I appreciate you. You make a difference. You go above and beyond daily. You impact the lives of others and your influence goes far beyond the classroom.
3. You deserve a break. You won’t be effective if you don’t recharge your batteries from time to time. Give yourself permission to put your needs before the needs of others. Do something you enjoy. You are worth it and it’s necessary.
4. Your sacrifices don’t go unnoticed. I know you often give up your personal time to grade assignments, plan lessons, and prepare materials. This extra work is what makes you the type of teacher students will remember for years to come. You give of yourself even when you’re drained and have very little left to give.

So, as you prepare to face another day, keep these things in mind and even though you may not hear them from anyone else, remember that you heard them from me. Take a moment to pass them along to a colleague who is most likely feeling the same way. Chances are they could probably use some encouragement too.
“On particularly rough days, I like to remind myself that my track record for getting through bad days so far is 100%, and that’s pretty good.”

My sister shared the above quote on Facebook one evening after I had had a rough day at the office. I had arrived at work to find my computer out of commission for several hours due to “technical difficulties.” This was in addition to our website and database being down, so we could not verify memberships or make changes to accounts when members called. Needless to say, this made daily operations a bit challenging. This quote made me reassess the situation. It made me thankful to work with a dedicated team who continued to serve our members to the best of their ability under the conditions. It made me reflect on my attitude in response to the challenges and look forward to the opportunities of the coming days in that week. We have all had plenty of rough days in 2020, but the new year is approaching and I’m looking forward to all the promises it holds.

Our focus article on pages 12 and 13 provides an overview of the new Social Emotional Learning (SEL) standards developed by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE). As shared in the article, the MDE developed these new standards to support the “whole” Mississippi student and address the social emotional needs to ensure their success in school and in life. Recent months have reinforced the critical importance of supporting the “whole student,” and I hope you will find this information beneficial. The article complements the SEL training we provided last year, as well as throughout the summer and into this school year.

I am extremely excited to share that we will soon unveil a new “Legislators by School District” resource on our website (www.mpe.org) that will allow you to identify legislators by school district and will provide contact information for each legislator who represents that school district. I’ve said it before and I will say it again — it is critical that educators share their thoughts on legislation with their respective legislators throughout the session. This new tool should make it easier for you to do so.

We’ve had an overwhelmingly positive response to the two new membership benefits we are offering this year. October 29 was an exciting day as I visited Northwest Rankin High School to congratulate Coach Austin King on winning the drawing for our student loan contest. See page 7 for a picture of me presenting him with a “big check” to celebrate his win. Our office received numerous inquiries related to our new $500 High School Senior Scholarships after MDE sent this information out to its listserv of high school counselors. We will award up to ten of these scholarships next spring. Visit the “MPE Grants and Scholarships” section of our website for the scholarship application.

I have had the privilege of serving as MPE’s Executive Director for ten and a half years. There have been great days and there have been rough days, but through it all our team’s main goal has been to serve and support our members in an efficient and effective manner. In this season of thanksgiving and cheer, I am truly blessed to work with the board and staff that I do and to serve you, our members. I wish you, your family, and your students the merriest of Christmases and the most joyous of holidays, as well as blessings of peace and good health in 2021!
This is a school year like no other. Many of you are dealing with virtual learning, in-person learning with health precautions, or both. I am aware of the stress that comes with delivering instruction under these circumstances and I wanted to update you on work in development at the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) that will hopefully provide additional support through health services and professional development.

First, I have been in several conversations in recent weeks with doctors and leaders at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, Division of Medicaid, Mississippi Academy of Pediatrics, Mississippi Medical Association, Mississippi Academy of Family Physicians, The Center for the Advancement of Youth, and the Mississippi Department of Health. The funding for Mississippi Connects, the digital learning plan I wrote about in the previous journal, afforded the state an opportunity to use technology to expand tele-health/teletherapy services for students and teachers. A telemedicine network will allow students and teachers to set appointments and meet with health providers remotely from the school. The services include both mental, behavioral, and physical health appointments. We hope to release details soon about launching the program.

Also, MDE’s Office of Professional Development currently offers several professional development (PD) opportunities to districts, which include face-to-face or virtual sessions, online Canvas courses, follow-up coaching support, and PD-on-Demand options. Each of these supports is offered free for educators across the state and covers the areas of English Language Arts, Mathematics, Special Education, and Science. Several cross-curricular sessions are also available. Face-to-face sessions are available directly to districts and must be requested by administrators of a school or district. While there is a minimum of fifteen participants required for each session, the Office of Professional Development is happy to work with the Mississippi Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs) and open any sessions as regional trainings so those numbers can be met and more teachers can receive these valuable trainings.

Any sessions available for face-to-face support are also available for virtual PD support in sixty- to ninety-minute videoconference sessions. These must also be requested by an administrator. Once a session has been provided, either face-to-face or virtually for a district/school, the administrators may request follow-up coaching support. In addition to district- and school-requested support, teachers may register directly for several online professional opportunities throughout the year.

The PD-on-Demand option consists of bite-sized professional development offerings great for independent study or Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). CEUs (and in some cases, SEMIs and OSLs) are offered for ALL sessions that last at least five hours.

Finally, as part of Mississippi Connects, we will provide three years of intensive professional development from the Barksdale Reading Institute, Google, Microsoft, and Apple. Barksdale Reading Institute is working with MDE to design a three-year plan to roll out scalable PD throughout the state. In addition, all districts will be offered consultant services to assist with building a robust three-year training plan. This PD plan will build your capacity to utilize technology.

I’m especially excited about virtual PLCs in development that will allow teachers to collaborate with their peers...
KING WINS STUDENT LOAN CONTEST

Austin King was the lucky winner of our first MPE Student Loan Contest this past October. A 2020 graduate of Mississippi College, he teaches Mississippi Studies and serves as an assistant softball coach at Northwest Rankin High School in the Rankin County School District. King was selected as the winner via a random drawing of MPE Student Members who transitioned to a First Year Professional membership between January 1, 2020, and September 30, 2020. MPE will pay his student loans – up to $3,000 – for one year. MPE Executive Director Kelly Riley presented King with the “big check” on October 29.

Attention MPE Members: Is your child a member of the Class of 2021?

MPE will award up to ten $500 scholarships to high school seniors who have at least one parent who is a member of MPE. Visit “MPE Grants and Scholarships” at www.mpe.org for the scholarship application and guidelines. Applications are due March 26, 2021, and we will announce recipients in April 2021.
In Mississippi, we have a problem with the number of our citizens that are employed. In fact, our workforce participation rate is among the lowest in the nation. As providers of workforce training across the entire state, the community colleges are setting out to meet this issue head-on. Part of the reason for this low rate could be access to quality workforce training. As a result, I am proud to say that beginning in 2021, the Mississippi Online Workforce College (MSOWC) will be pushed out across the entire state as a way to help address our workforce shortfalls.

The MSOWC is a consortium effort among the fifteen community colleges and the Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB) and is being developed by Jones County Junior College. The program is an innovative online delivery model of workforce training for unemployed, underemployed, those currently employed, or anyone else looking to improve job skills. Currently, there are more than 700 self-paced, affordable courses that lead to micro-credentials, credentials, course credits, and possibly degrees. Additionally, employers will have the opportunity to develop customized training that will benefit their specific business or industry by providing pre-employment screening or customizable and scalable courses. This delivery model will be the first of its kind in the nation and is something we are all excited about.

We have presented the MSOWC model to various stakeholders across the state, along with the United States Department of Labor and the United States Department of Education. Each time the system has received positive feedback. This effort is another example of the community college system seeing an issue that needs addressing and then meeting it head-on. I am grateful for the leadership of Dr. Jesse Smith, president of Jones County Junior College, along with the other fourteen community college presidents and all workforce personnel, for playing an integral part in helping to increase the state’s workforce participation rate.

COVID-19 continues to provide challenges to each of us, regardless of what and where we teach. The way that each of you has responded to this challenge is a testament to your commitment to our students. For this, I am grateful.

As we approach Christmas and the end of 2020, I hope that each of you has a wonderful holiday season and that 2021 is a banner year for each of us.
ACHIEVING ATTAINMENT GOAL WILL IMPROVE ECONOMY, QUALITY OF LIFE IN MISSISSIPPI

At its meeting held earlier this fall, the Education Achievement Council set an educational attainment goal for the state: to increase the postsecondary attainment of Mississippi’s workforce to 55 percent by 2030 and increase it to 60 percent by 2035.

In 2010, the council was established by the Mississippi Legislature to establish education achievement goals for the state, monitor and report on the state’s progress toward these goals, and prepare an annual report card compiled from the annual reports submitted by each state institution of higher learning and community college in the state. Members include representatives of the Mississippi Legislature, the Governor’s Office, the State Institutions of Higher Learning, Mississippi’s Community Colleges, the Mississippi State Board of Education, the Mississippi Department of Mental Health, and the Mississippi Economic Council.

Setting an attainment goal is an important step. It helps us all to be on the same page and understand what we are working toward. Mississippi’s current rate of postsecondary attainment, defined as a degree, credential or industry certification earned beyond high school, for adults age twenty-five to sixty-four is 45.2 percent. The national average is 51.3 percent. This goal is certainly a challenge but was reached after careful research and thorough discussion. While reaching this goal is formidable, it is certainly attainable if we all work together with focus and determination. While setting a challenging goal during such challenging times may seem counterintuitive, if the pandemic and its impact on the economy has taught us anything, it has shown us that those with credentials of value are more prepared to pivot as the economy shifts.

The work toward reaching this goal begins at birth. We cannot wait until a student enters high school to ensure that he or she is prepared for college or a career. We cannot wait until students enter community colleges or universities to begin preparing them for the workforce.

Each link in the chain of learning is essential. The preschool experiences, whether in the home or an early childhood education setting, play a profound role in the child’s cognitive development. Each year of learning serves as the foundation for the subsequent years of learning. Just like the foundation of a home, if it is weakened or compromised, the structure is likely to fail. If every link is strong, from early childhood through post-secondary education, then the student will be better prepared to succeed.

Together, we can achieve this goal. The work you do each day in your classroom, whether in-person or virtual, plays a crucial role in achieving this goal. The advocacy work of Mississippi Professional Educators plays an important role in our success. The leadership of our K-12 schools, community colleges, and universities at the campus and state level plays a role. We must also have continued support from our community and business leaders across the state.

Like a running back with the ball heading for the end zone, we must use all our talent and resources to push us forward, while fighting off the barriers to our success. Making this touchdown will achieve far more than just winning a game; it will lift Mississippi’s economy and improve the quality of life for all Mississippians.
As a teacher, I've been lucky. Somehow, I've managed to weasel my way into education on three continents. There was abseiling and bushcraft in Australia. There was elementary school in the infamous mobile classroom—with no air conditioner—in north Mississippi. There was a bilingual school in South America. If that wasn't adventure enough, now I'm in all the glory of teaching high school English to a rather apathetic crowd. As expected, I've learned a few things along the twisted way.

Always carry a garbage bag on field trips. Pack an extra lunch just in case someone's mom forgets. Keep peppermints on your desk for coughs and sweet tarts in your drawer for tummy aches. Squat when you talk to little kids. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Prepare to cry—in front of your class.

If you think you look fat in that polka-dot skirt, don't wear it. Kids will tell you that you do. Check your zipper, your teeth, and your nose before you leave the bathroom. On second thought, learn to hold it. You're not going to have time to go to the bathroom.

Be good to custodians, cafeteria staff, and the secretary. They can make things happen! Stand up straight. Be neat. Carry yourself well. The angrier you get, the softer your voice should sound. Hold tightly to your heart; students have a way of taking it from you.

Write thank-you notes. Call parents more often than you think you should. Tell the little girl with the dirty hair that she's beautiful. Let the little boy that isn't wearing this year's shoes be the leader and tell him he's a good example. Play classical music. Read aloud: even teenagers love to hear your reader's voice. You should have a Ziploc bag, a Sharpie, and an index card with you at all times. Kids lose teeth to the tooth fairy in the second grade, to recess antics in the eighth, and to football in high school.

Walk down kid-crowded halls. Watch how children interact. Listen to how they speak. Jump rope if you get the chance.

Visit the teacher that's been at your school for thirty years and ask her why she does it. Ask her why she stays. She may be “old school,” but she knows more than you do. That summer vacation you think you’re getting? Yeah, right. It’s more of a quick breath than a break.

If you think it might go wrong, it will. Don't complain. Make it work. There isn't a copier in a school in the continental U.S. that operates like it should. Borrow ideas from anyone and everyone. Share. Get to know the teacher next door. Leave cookies or a Diet Coke on her desk. Love every single child that walks through your door. Love them like they’re yours because for 180 exceptionally long days, they are.
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 2021–2022 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 19, 2021.
Mississippi’s Adoption of Social Emotional Learning Standards

by Ginger Koestler
Office of Elementary Education and Reading
Mississippi Department of Education

As educators, we use a lot of professional jargon and catchphrases, none more often than “educating the whole child.” The question is, what does “educating the whole child” really mean? What does it look like? What does it include? How does it go beyond teaching the standard expectations of reading and math without placing yet another requirement on teachers?

Think back to your favorite classroom teacher you had as a student. What made you enjoy his or her class? Did he or she create a classroom where you felt safe? Did he or she love, respect, and encourage you? That teacher you are remembering was educating the whole student. He or she understood that Maslow has to come before Bloom. That teacher understood and valued the impact of social emotional learning.

Social emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2020). SEL can be further defined by the understanding that we are all social beings, each with our individual emotions. As we interact with others, our words, actions, and other behaviors are in response to the given context. We have thoughts based on this context which cause us to have emotions and then behaviors based on these emotions. In turn, our behaviors begin to trigger thoughts, feelings, and behaviors by others. This cyclical process is the foundation for interactions. By simply changing one aspect of the context such as the person, setting, or time, this changes our interactions beginning with our thoughts, feelings, and then behaviors. In this respect, social skills and emotions are interwoven in our daily lives. We also experience emotions apart from others such as when home alone. However, these emotions outside of interactions still initiate the same process—a given context that produces a thought, which leads to an emotion and then subsequently to a behavior. Learning is a social process and schools can teach, utilize, and support social emotional skills into daily routines, creating students who are not only academically fruitful but also flourish into successful adults.

The development of SEL skills fosters social competencies and increases positive social skills, reduces behavioral problems, decreases emotional stress, and improves academic outcomes for students (Greenberg et al., 2003). Additionally, social emotional competence increases our ability to form relationships and build social awareness and enhances our ability to connect with individuals of diverse perspectives, cultures, languages, histories, identities, and abilities. Student academic success is strongly linked to the development of necessary skills, behaviors, attitudes, and strategies that are critical to academic performance. The ability to recognize and manage emotions and establish and maintain positive relationships impacts both readiness and the ability to learn.

The Mississippi Department of Education, in close collaboration with Realizing Excellence for ALL Children in Mississippi (REACH MS); the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL); and the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR), has developed SEL standards to support the “whole” Mississippi student and address the social emotional needs to ensure their success in school and in life. The goals of the Mississippi SEL Standards are to provide knowledge, skills, tools, and other resources to all school staff to help improve student SEL skills and encourage students to exhibit positive social behaviors; enhance the knowledge of all school staff of appropriate classroom and school-wide teaching practices that focus...
on SEL; describe examples of adult and student behaviors that foster teaching practices that encourage SEL skills; enhance the ability of all school staff to engage knowledgeably in dialogue on SEL skills; and provide strategies and resources to all school staff to help create a positive classroom experience for all students through defining clear expectations of good practice, as well as opportunities for adults to reflect and grow from those experiences.

The Mississippi SEL Standards include five domains that are broken down into anchor standards and then age-appropriate performance standards. The standards also provide age-appropriate strategies educators can incorporate into their daily routines.

The Mississippi SEL Standards’ domains include:

**Self-awareness**, the student’s ability to identify one’s thoughts, values, and emotions and recognize how these shape behaviors. Self-awareness involves the assessment of one’s abilities (i.e., strengths and areas of growth) and includes the need for confidence, optimism, and knowledge of which areas can be improved;

**Self-management**, the student’s ability to self-regulate emotions, thoughts, and behaviors across settings and to set and work toward personal and academic goals;

**Social awareness**, the student’s ability to empathize with and relate to others, including those from diverse backgrounds. Social awareness involves understanding societal norms for behavior and contribution to community well-being;

**Relationship skills**, the student’s ability to effectively communicate, cooperate, seek and provide support to others, manage conflict, and effectively handle peer pressure in order to establish and maintain positive relationships; and

**Decision-making skills**, the student’s ability to make constructive choices and problem-solve based on safe, ethical, and social norms while evaluating the outcomes of previous choices.

The burning question of how we keep SEL from being another checkbox or additional strain for classroom teachers still remains. The truth is… most of them are already doing it without even knowing! The Mississippi SEL standards are aligned to academic content so teachers can naturally incorporate SEL skills into lessons, activities, and daily routines without increasing their workload. The included teaching strategies serve as a bank of ideas teachers can utilize to ensure their students feel supported. With the rollout of these new SEL standards, extensive professional development is planned to ensure all educators are knowledgeable and confident in their teaching efforts and day-to-day routines.

“When educating the minds of our youth, we must not forget to educate their hearts.”

Dalai Lama

The Mississippi SEL standards can be located at: [https://www.mdek12.org/OAE/college-and-career-readiness-standards](https://www.mdek12.org/OAE/college-and-career-readiness-standards)
MPE AWARDS NON-CERTIFIED PERSONNEL SCHOLARSHIPS

MPE recently awarded $1,000 MPE Non-Certified Personnel Scholarships to the following four members, all of whom are enrolled at William Carey University:

Ashley Findley, an assistant teacher at Purvis Lower Elementary in the Lamar County School District, joined MPE in 2017.

Kayla Rogers, an assistant teacher at Monticello Elementary in the Lawrence County School District, has been a member of MPE since 2015.

Christina Rominger, an assistant teacher at Baxterville School in the Lamar County School District, joined MPE in 2017.

Robby Webb works in the Jones County School District’s Maintenance Department. He has been a member of MPE since 2010.

We are honored to support these members as they pursue their undergraduate degrees. Congratulations to all!!

MPE AWARDS DIVERSE PRACTITIONER SCHOLARSHIPS

With funding provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, MDE and MPE are partnering for a second year to award scholarships to diverse educators who wish to pursue their National Board Certification. We recently awarded sixty-two NBCT Diverse Practitioner Scholarships to educators throughout the state. Congratulations to the following twenty-two MPE members who are among the recipients:

Melissa Bonner, Petal School District
Kimberly Buckley, Jackson County School District
David Burris, Jackson Public School District
Lashawn Bush, West Point Consolidated School District
Shari Chumley, Tupelo Public School District
Lori Coleman, Jones County School District
Lucas Ferguson, Oxford School District
Angela Fitzgerald, Madison County School District
Jordan Hall, Calhoun County School District
Sheila Hodge, Lauderdale County School District
Rebecca Hooper, Laurel School District
Tobie Lambert, Mississippi School of the Arts
Deiondria Lee, Jackson Public School District
Christopher Little, Jackson Public School District
Heather Merideth, North Pike School District
Anna Morris, Marion County School District
Rhonda Murphy-Johnson, Jackson Public School District
Janice Neal, Kemper County School District
Amanda Peace, Ocean Springs School District
Ericka Pearson, Laurel School District
Katie Scully, Ocean Springs School District
Lavee Sims, Moss Point School District

We wish these members the best as they embark on their National Board journey!

VICTOR SELECTED AS MCTM HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Rebecca Asha Victor, Math Department Chair at Holmes County Central High School, has been honored as the Mississippi Council of Teachers of Mathematics (MCTM) High School Teacher of the Year. A member of MPE since 2019, she taught in India, South Carolina, and Georgia before she began her career in Holmes County in 2012. A member of the Mississippi Teacher Advisory Council, Rebecca has also served as an educational specialist and lead teacher with Mississippi Valley State’s T3 Clinic (Teachers Teach Teachers).
The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and MPE are partnering to drive awareness of Board certification among Mississippi educators as part of an exciting new grant opportunity from the Hewlett Foundation. Eleven Mississippi National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) were selected from a pool of applicants earlier this fall to serve as NBCT Ambassadors.

These NBCT Ambassadors will share information with fellow educators and administrators throughout the school year about the power of the Board certification process and the positive impacts of Board certification for students. Ambassadors began their work with a day of virtual training and reflection on October 24. The day included a message from Peggy Brookins, NBCT, President and CEO of the NBPTS.

Congratulations to the following Mississippi NBCTs for being chosen as an NBCT Ambassador:

- Tracy Barnett, Itawamba County School District *
- Ja’Net Blackmon, Greenwood-Leflore Consolidated School District
- Raimeka Brown, Rankin County School District
- Carol Cannon, Philadelphia Public School District *
- Kimberly Davis, Columbia School District *
- Chanda Ferguson, Pontotoc County School District *
- Cassie Hudson, South Panola School District *
- Anji Reddy Nalamalapu, Sunflower County Consolidated School District *
- Shawna Robinson, Monroe County School District *
- Mary Hill Taylor, Lauderdale County School District *
- Rebecca Victor, Holmes County Consolidated School District *

* denotes MPE member

In Mississippi, National Board Certified Teachers can earn an additional $6,000 – $10,000 per year!

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

Act today! Visit www.NBPTS.org to learn more.
MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

MPE AWARDS NBCT SCHOLARSHIPS

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

- Julie Anna Dykes
  - North Pike
  - Upper Elementary

- Lori Pennington
  - South Pontotoc
  - Elementary

- Emily Riser
  - Oxford Middle
  - School

FOUR MISSISSIPPI SCHOOLS EARN NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON HONORS

The U.S. Department of Education recently recognized four Mississippi schools as National Blue Ribbon Schools for 2020. They are among 367 schools honored nationwide for academic excellence. The recognition is based on a school’s overall academic performance or progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups. The four schools earning the national distinction for exemplary high performance are:

- Center Hill High School, DeSoto County School District
- D’Iberville Elementary, Harrison County School District
- Madison Station Elementary, Madison County School District
- Popps Ferry Elementary, Biloxi School District

Congratulations to these school families and their communities!

MEMBERS EARN ADVANCED DEGREES

Cherie Bowe, Choral Director at Pascagoula High School, has earned her Ph.D. in Educational Administration P-12 from the University of Southern Mississippi. She also teaches Music Appreciation as dual credit for Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College and is part of the Doctoral Studies Program at Belhaven University as a Dissertation Chair. She is a three-time Grammy-nominated music educator and has been a member of MPE since 2015.

Rhonda Locke graduated from William Carey University in May with her Specialist in Instructional Leadership. In addition, after ten years in Starkville as a Behavior Specialist, she recently accepted a position with the Lowndes County School District where she now serves as the Assistant Special Education Supervisor.

Megan Ruffin of New Hope High School earned her Educational Specialist degree in Ed Leadership from Delta State University in August. She has been a member of MPE since 2014.

PACHARNE RECEIVES HONORS

Vijay Pacharne, a math teacher at Starkville High School and a member of MPE since 2011, recently received two honors. He was nominated by one of his former students for the Southeastern Conference’s Extra Yard for Teachers Initiative, which highlights educators who impact the lives of their student-athletes. Vijay will be featured in an episode of SEC Nation this fall.

The Starkville Foundation for Public Education presented Vijay with its prestigious Paul Cuicchi Innovative Educator Award in October. The award, which honors Dr. Paul Cuicchi who taught at Starkville High School for thirty-three years, celebrates educators, who like Dr. Cuicchi and now Mr. Pacharne, inspire their students to become lifelong learners and active participants in the world around them.
We would like to recognize the following ten members who have already earned a free membership for their recruitment efforts during the first quarter of this year:

- James Bullard, Petal School District
- Lashundia Carson, Alcorn State University
- Tonya Craft, Lamar County School District
- Emily Edgar, Lowndes County School District
- Alice Amanda Hailey, Kemper County School District
- Becky Hayes, Lowndes County School District
- Rochelle Holston, Pearl River County School District
- Amy Prisock, Mississippi State University
- Nicole Spinks, Delta State University
- Stephanie Thornton, Leake County School District

**Recruitment Incentives**

MPE’s recruitment incentives provide a great way for you to earn a free membership, as well as a little extra money. You earn a free year’s membership for simply recruiting five new members and you earn money for each new member recruited after five. Encourage your professional co-workers and friends to join the premiere organization for professional educators in Mississippi.

- **Five new members = one year’s free membership**
- **6-9 new members = one year’s membership + $10 per member**
- **10-14 new members = one year’s membership + $15 per member**
- **15+ new members = one year’s membership + $20 per member**

You will receive $5 per student member recruited.

Recruitment bonus checks will be awarded at the end of each quarter, with the first quarter beginning July 1 and ending September 30. Credit will be given for each new member who joins or re-joins** between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021. 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
Maci Fisher  
Oak Grove Lower Elementary School, 3rd Grade  
*Generation Genius*

Thank you MPE for funding the classroom grant that provided a digital science curriculum for our entire school. To develop stronger background knowledge and vocabulary in my 3rd grade students, I knew they needed more scientific instruction and discovery-based learning. Since third grade students love to participate in hands-on learning, science experiments, and are easily engaged through video and gaming formats, *Generation Genius* was the perfect fit. Through the grant, I was able to purchase a subscription for the thirty homerooms at our elementary school, representing approximately 700 students. When students ask, “When is it time for science?” you know you’ve found a great resource!

Summer Lewis  
Rankin County School District-Gathering Grounds  
*Employment Training: Embroidery*

Thank you, MPE!!! Three little words cover so much gratitude for enabling us to purchase much-needed items at Gathering Grounds. My classroom is unique in that it is a coffee and art shop that serves as an employment training lab for students in Rankin County School District’s Special Education Transition Program. Prior to the purchase of the items, my students were limited as to what they could produce, due to only having one set of hoops and bobbin case for our embroidery machine. With the money awarded from the grant, another set of hoops and case were purchased. Now, my students can become more productive and all have an opportunity to participate in this invigorating training that covers a variety of academic/functional skills that include following directions, measuring, and basic computer skills. Furthermore, the training affords interested individuals the opportunity to work in area businesses that conduct similar services and gives them the opportunity to interact with non-disabled peers and other members of their community.

Julie Chase  
Weir Elementary School, 2nd Grade Math  
*Books, Buttons, and STARS*

Thank you MPE for funding the classroom grant that provided buttons, lanyards, and a Math library for my classroom. My first goal was to increase and enrich their Math vocabulary understanding and usage and my second goal was to encourage and develop student leadership skills through peer tutoring. Through the MPE classroom grant, I was able to purchase two copies of sixty books for a total of 120 books, along with the buttons (for each quiz they passed) and lanyards (where the students put their reward buttons). In turn the project affected my 1st grade Math class and I was able to adapt the books to use in their Math classroom setting, so this MPE grant was beneficial for two lower-level Math classrooms.

MPE invites its members to apply for classroom grant funding each year to try out a new idea or buy the “extras” for an already great lesson plan or project. Eighty-eight members submitted applications for the 2019–2020 school year, with forty-six receiving grants of up to $1,000 for their class projects and instructional program. We are pleased to spotlight several of the grants below for your enjoyment, as well as your reference for ideas for your own classroom.
Stacy Reeves  
University of Southern Mississippi  
**Building Books**

Thank you, MPE, for the Making Books grant! The children at Earl Travillion Attendance Center and the students from USM’s School of Education truly enjoyed their book making time together. Through the grant, the second graders made their books, which were bound and taken home, making them (classroom published) authors.

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Ginny Shikle  
Center Hill High School, 9th-12th Journalism  
**In Focus: News and Photography**

I want to acknowledge the generosity of MPE for providing this classroom grant. In a perfect world, teachers would be paid like rock stars. Instead, we find ourselves underpaid, underappreciated, overstressed, and overworked. I love my job and my students, but the sad reality is that I cannot afford to pay personally for professional-grade equipment and technology that would help my journalism students to do their job. I can say with certainty that the goal of In Focus: News and Photography has been met.

Thank you, MPE, for investing in my students’ success and providing the most positive results imaginable.

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Landa Gayle Strum  
Eastside Elementary, 4th Grade ELA  
**Higher-Level Reading Books**

A huge shout out and thank you to Mississippi Professional Educators (MPE) for awarding my class this grant. With having my fourth graders coming in on higher reading grade levels, this gave me the opportunity to purchased Accelerated Reader Books for my students. The books that I purchased were hardback book series. My students absolutely LOVED them. They could not wait for me to get them leveled and on our classroom bookshelf that was dedicated to these books. My first goal was to provide Accelerated Reader books that were appropriate, interesting, hardback, and higher-grade level than what I currently had within my classroom library. The second goal was to develop a passion for reading. Through this grant awarded to me by MPE, I was able to purchase over 100 hardback books to include as part of my classroom library for my students to read and enjoy.

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Susanna Oglesby  
New Hope High School, 9th-12th STEM  
**Piloting the Future (Drones in STEM)**

WOW! What an amazing journey! A very special “Thank you” to MPE Classroom Grant for funding my grant “Piloting the Future.” The Parrot Mambo drones provided an opportunity for my students to think outside the box on STEM-related careers to understanding the concepts of (NASA) engineering design process. The technological potential with drones is immense and its uses will only grow with time. I wanted to be one of the first to pilot the program and offer my students a look into future drone careers. One of my goals was to inspire and expose new STEM careers using drones to open avenues in aerospace engineering to agriculture to commercial usages. Success! Immediately, my students were excited about flying the drones and wanting to learn more about the possibilities. The drones captured the imaginations of my students. They were intrigued with curiosity as we unpacked our drones. I can honestly say, “I had no idea what I was doing but my students had no fear of failure.” It was definitely student-centered and working together. We began the journey with excitement about flying and playing “teaching in disguise” with our drones. We had big plans after Spring Break, then life happened. COVID-19 stopped us from finishing our goals. However, before it did, my students and I learned many valuable lessons along the way, “listen and learn from each other and if you fail, you do the engineering design process again.” My students definitely taught me to believe in them. Sometimes, you just have to let them fly.
The 2021 Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature will convene at 12:00 noon on Tuesday, January 5, 2021. 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. The following information will assist you in contacting your legislators regarding critical legislation considered during the 2021 Legislative Session.

**MPE Legislator Resources**

MPE is excited to offer a new resource for our members to assist them in establishing relationships with their legislators. We will soon unveil a new “Legislators by School District” resource on our website (www.mpe.org) that will allow you to identify legislators by school district. This new page will allow you to click on a respective school district and then see the state representatives and senators whose legislative districts include the respective school district. Contact information will be provided for each legislator.

Our Find Your Voice: MPE’s Legislative Advocacy Guide for Educators, which we developed in 2019, remains available via the “Quick Links” section of our website. The guide shares resources and best practices for Mississippi educators to use while monitoring events at our state capitol and encouraging their legislators to make the best decisions for public education students and educators throughout our state.

**Timetable for Processing Legislation**

The 2021 Legislative Session will be a 90-day session, as it will be the second session of a four-year legislative term; thus, legislation will be considered on a much quicker timetable, assuming there are no closures due to the lingering effects of COVID-19. Significant legislative deadlines include the following:

- January 18 - Deadline for introduction of general bills and constitutional amendments
- February 2 - Deadline for committees to report general bills originating in own house
- February 11 - Deadline for original floor action on general bills originating in own house
- March 2 - Deadline for committees to report general bills originating in other house
- March 10 - Deadline for original floor action on general bills originating in other house
- March 25 - Deadline to concur or not concur in amendments from other house to general bills
- March 27 - Deadline for conference reports on appropriation bills to be filed
- March 29 - Deadline for adoption of appropriation conference reports and for conference reports on general bills to be filed
- April 4 - Sine Die

**Legislative Bill Tracking**

As in years past, MPE will keep our members updated throughout the session via our weekly email updates, as well as Facebook and Twitter (@MSPProfEd). MPE staff will develop our bill tracking spreadsheet of the bills we will be monitoring throughout the session after the February 2 committee deadline. We will post an updated tracking sheet in the “Legislative News” section of our website (www.mpe.org) each Friday. The “Bill Status” portion of the legislative website at http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us also allows you to monitor developments on legislation.
MPE congratulates the following thirty-seven members who were among the 105 educators recently selected to join the Mississippi Teacher Advisory Council (MTAC). The MTAC provides feedback to Dr. Carey Wright on the initiatives of the Mississippi Department of Education, the Mississippi State Board of Education, and the Mississippi State Legislature. Formed in 2016, the MTAC now has over 300 members.

Kasey Alford, Madison County
Gena Dearman, Rankin County
Ebenee Dorsey, Lawrence County
Mary Dunaway, Rankin County
Crawford Grabowski, Rankin County
Rebecca Graham, Pearl River County
Emily Hayes, Rankin County
Lisa Hemphill, Rankin County
Eric Hite, Rankin County
Rebecca Hooper, Laurel
Taylor Jones, Rankin County
Lisa J. Ladner, Harrison County
Amy Lee, Rankin County
Misty Lemoine, Rankin County
Rhonda Locke, Lowndes County
Laura Beth McCarty, Lamar County
Jennifer McGhee, Madison County
Brandi McGuire, Rankin County
Brandon McLain, Petal

Tarika Moffett, Petal
Ashlee Montgomery, Lamar County
Pazlee Morris, Tishomingo County
Michael Novinski, Columbia
Jennifer Pope, Rankin County
Jennifer Pratt, Houston
Misty Pritchard, Lafayette County
Melanie Rollings, Rankin County
Laura Simpson, Rankin County
Millicent Smith, Rankin County
Lori Sturdivant, Winona-Montgomery
Rachel Virgess, Laurel
Mary Henry Walker, Rankin County
Ashley Webb, DeSoto County
Taylor Williams, Tishomingo County
Jennifer Winkler, Rankin County
Lindsey Winn, Rankin County
Amanda Wood, Pontotoc County

Jennifer Pratt of Houston Alternative School won a local Back to School Essay Contest in her area. Her essay highlighted her love of teaching and ensuring that her students are not only safe, but also equipped with the necessary tools to learn, flourish, and succeed. She hopes the award will help provide resources that support traditional curricular goals, as well as safety, especially during this challenging time, to support students. A member of MPE since 1999, Jennifer serves as an MPE Building Rep.

Philip Nelson is the new assistant principal at Pelahatchie High School in the Rankin County School District. He served in Oktibbeha County before teaching at Brandon Middle and Brandon High School prior to serving as the Brandon Zone Transportation Supervisor. A member of MPE since 1999, Philip recently completed the Mississippi Alternate Path to Quality School Leadership Training Institute (MAPQSL) to earn his administrative license.
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~ Rudyard Kipling

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BEST PRACTICES SYMPOSIUM

2021

Please plan to join us for MPE’s 2021 Best Practices Symposium featuring Dr. Adolph Brown. He is the founder, President and CEO of The Leadership & Learning Institute. A former public school educator, he overcame an upbringing of extreme poverty and violence, welfare, fatherlessness, and a single mother-led household to become one of the world’s most popular speakers with his unique ability to inform as well as entertain. Dr. Brown will share his “Championship Habits” for workplace, family, and personal success. You don’t want to miss him!

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 17!

Engaging Speakers  Legislative and budget news  Great door prizes  CEUs available

Registration opens in January for MPE Members!

Saturday, April 17, 2021
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.
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
Classroom grant opportunities awarded annually
Non-certified personnel scholarships awarded annually
Student loan payment contest
High school senior scholarships
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.

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2- Know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students
3- Are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning
4- Think systematically about their practice and learn from experience
5- Are members of learning communities

And they earn $6,000 – $10,000 more each year!
Share this information with a Mississippi teacher you know who should be Board certified!
Mississippi reimburses the costs of Board certification, supports teachers in the process through the World Class Teaching Program, and pays the annual stipend!

Learn more about becoming a Board certified teacher and the stipends and supports offered in Mississippi

www.NBPTS.org

Join the Mississippi NBCT Network to expand your learning community!

www.mpe.org/nbct