John Maxwell once wrote, “Leaders must be close enough to relate to others, but far ahead to motivate them.” That’s exactly what our faculties, students and even the families we serve need. As the leader of your school, you have the awesome privilege of leading that charge! As elementary school principals you should have a personal desire to relate to your staff and be able to motivate them beyond the basics. The change your students and teachers need within your school walls starts with leadership and that leadership is you. You are “charged” with leading and providing (or communicating with the right people) the resources needed to go deeper with instruction in your school building and setting a school tone that’s focused on rigorous learning and innovation. In order to do those things, as Dr. Maxwell writes, you must be able to relate and motivate. You can’t get the team to “trust your process” or buy into your next level of leadership and learning vision from a top down approach, you must approach it from a collective stance to gain buy-in!

With the national tone of public education unfortunately being challenged at this time (i.e. school choice), it is important that we show the nation that we are offering the most rigorous, standards based and innovative instruction possible. In order to do this, the school leader must be able to relate to the escalating trends within education. We are very familiar with Bloom’s and Webb’s and as school leaders our goal is to get students to think (that’s a huge feat in that one word...think), as well as, be able to make cross-curricular connections. The days of excuses are gone (i.e., they can’t do this, they are just five years old, they don’t come from a good home, mom and dad are always gone). Such jargon must be removed from our vocabularies and instead focus on what we can control. We can control the academic offerings we give our students and the level of strategic teaching we engage in. If not, Alabama’s students will forever be left behind and that simply can’t happen. Let’s do more, provide more and our students will gain more!

Once again I am PROUD to serve as your President of our association this year. I want to continue to encourage you to bring Principals with you to your district meetings. I know it’s a challenge because it’s a challenge for me as well, but I won’t give up. Share our journal on social media when you receive it. Tweet it, Facebook it, and screenshot pictures and articles from within it to share on Instagram. We are the voices our our association and we need you! I want our community of elementary school principals to be noticed for all the growth that you are making academically and culturally within your schools. I want our membership to grow because when membership grows, so does that individual Principal and when that individual principal grows, so does his/her school, and when the school grows that means we are producing academically ready students who will become positive, contributing members of society. So it’s a “no-brainer,” stay involved and learn all you can from us, our AAESA and CLAS. I did and I will always tell others that part of my leadership success came from the professional learning I gained within my district, being involved in AAESA and CLAS, and wanting to lead a successful school. It’s not easy being a school leader, but you have been given the charge and you can do it! Let’s get out and relate and motivate our students, faculties, communities and colleagues to go deeper with instruction and be innovative. Our growth depends on you and I am proud to serve for all leaders! #advocateforpubliceducation
Greetings all,

I hope you are enjoying the semester, and I also hope you are prepared for the activities that accompany this time of year. We will be working in the 2nd semester before we know it; however, let us not get the cart before the horse as we have much to do between now and Jan 11, 2018.

What is the significance of that date you might ask? According to the recent memo from Dr. Ed Richardson, that is the date when the “Prototype” Report Card for Alabama will be released. That means we only have a short window to ensure that we get our thoughts on this important issue to Dr. Richardson. I have heard from some of you already, but I would like to hear from more of you. We need your thoughts on this, and we need them quickly.

AAESA has not agreed with everything regarding the report card and still do not agree with everything on the memo. Thankfully, we do have time for input. We are developing a plan of action, and part of this plan involves the input we receive from you. I encourage you to talk with your peers in your school, system, and state to make sure we are all on the same page as much as possible.

To be clear, we do not want to be seen as adversarial about following the law, we simply want to ensure that a report card is fair, accurate, transparent, reliable, and indicative of more than one score from a test that not only has potentially serious discrepancies, but one that is no longer being used by the state.

I look forward to working with you all as we work through this very important process. Good luck on a great finish to your first semester!

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**Candidates for AAESA Officers**

**Vice President**

Charlie Gardner  
Hokes Bluff Elementary  
Etowah County  

Dil Uswatte  
Rocky Ridge Elementary  
Hoover City  

**NAESP Representative**

Matt Kiser  
Edgewood Elementary  
Homewood City  

**CLAS Board of Directors**

Tim Dollar  
Wilmer Elementary  
Mobile County  

Frances Finney  
Fultondale Elementary  
Jefferson County  

Pam Fourtenbary  
West Forest Intermediate  
Opelika City  

Chris Mitten  
Windham Elementary  
Daleville City  

Winter Issue 2017
What's it like to be a principal in Anchorage? In Las Vegas? On an island in Texas where there is no bridge, only a ferry? If anyone knows me, they know I was full of questions at the National Distinguished Principal program in Washington, D.C. in October. I was "in my element" soaking up as much as I could from other administrators across the United States and overseas. I learned that the students in Wasilla, Alaska can go outside for recess unless the temperature "gets up to 20 degrees below zero." I learned that the economic boom of fracking has brought a challenge of transiency to schools. New Hampshire schools are experiencing an opioid crisis. I heard, repeatedly, how project-based learning was connecting students to their learning, and job-embedded professional development improves teaching and learning. I learned that education in Indonesia is dangerous - two educators have been imprisoned.

What struck me the most deeply from these great men and women was that despite coming from all over the United States and overseas, we principals share similar stories. We all have runners, angry parents, state improvement plans, spouses who wait patiently at home with dinner on the table, bus discipline, and critters that get loose in the school. Our crises may be different - hurricanes, flooding, mass shootings, opioid addictions, transiency, gangs, and oil spills - but we are all still the same! We are human, and children react to stress the same. So, we principals go to work each day and strive to fill the needs of our students - dry their tears, hug them when they are scared, send food home with them on the weekend, provide needed school supplies, and encourage them to be the best they can be. We listen, love, clear the path, and work long hours as servant leaders.

The three-day celebration at the Capital Hilton began on Wednesday evening with a night tour of our nation's monuments. The first minute I stepped on the tour bus I felt like I had come home and was among friends! The NDPs and their families were friendly, welcoming, warm, open, honest, authentic, and frankly just comfortable in their own skin. What an honor and a privilege to have been in their company.

Thursday, I joined an early-bird session on the President's Education Awards Program. We were welcomed by NAESP officers, and it was especially wonderful to be greeted by an old friend, Dr. Earl Franks, who is now the Executive Director of NAESP. The highlight of the day was the NDP speeches! With a gift of purple leis from the Hawaii NDP, Nelson Shigeta, that symbolizes "honor" around our necks, we each shared stories about our schools and our NDP experiences. One NDP rapped; another chanted a native aboriginal chant; the Nevada NDP had us laughing when she began by explaining she did not go the casinos before school for a Bloody Mary and had us crying when she shared how the recent mass shooting had affected her school. The stories the principals shared held deep emotion and passion for education, our faculties, and students. I shared my story.

I'm here because of the lessons I learned from my mistakes. I'm here because I made intermediate teachers angry when I wouldn't listen to them that the district mandated reading program wasn't working. I'm here because two teachers who later became literacy coaches for the school finally convinced me that digital age teaching through the University of Missouri program called eMINTS was a way to improve teacher instruction so kids would be more engaged and motivated to learn. I'm here because Jim Knight in his book, Unmistakable Impact, along with the participants of the Alabama Best Practices Center Instructional Partners challenged my thinking - deeply
challenged me. Finally, I’m here because of a group of teachers and coaches that I call "The Dream Team" didn’t give up on me. Together, with county and city officials, community civic groups, we led Gulf Shores Elementary to become a successful project-based learning school with 1 to 1 digital initiative for 1000 children. We collaborated, planned, debated, argued, fought, problem-solved, and coached. So, this two minute speech is for all the GSES teachers, Nicole, Katie, Michele, Aaron, Debbie, Alicia, Jeremy, Philip, Sarah, and our beloved Stacey who kept telling all of us - it's fun! Let's have a great time learning.

The activities continued into the night with two more parties. The U.S. Department of State held a Welcoming Reception at the National Portrait Gallery where the NDPs from overseas were honored for their education of our American students in foreign countries. Finally, the Zone 4 principals gathered for a time to share our southern stories with each other hosted by our Director, Sharon McNary, from Tennessee.

Friday was insanely busy! The morning began early with a presentation from Crayola and the impact of art on learning. Next, we toured and were photographed at the Capitol. Our tour guide was anxious to tell each of us about our state's statues featured in and around National Statuary Hall. He made everyone laugh when he shouted out an enthusiastic, "Roll Tide and War Eagle" after asking me what state I represented. (My husband and I were not surprised to find NDPs and spouses eager to talk Alabama football during the event.) Friday afternoon, the NDPs shared mementos with each other from our home states. I took koozies from the Gulf Shores Shrimp Festival and roasted and salted pecans from B&B pecans in Fairhope. I came home with all sorts of gifts and foods from around the United States including a can of Spam!

The grand finale was the Presidential Ballroom Black-tie Awards Dinner and Dance on Friday evening. Wow! Every detail exemplified the nature of the NDP award. The NAESP emblem was carved as the ice sculpture. The dessert was served in a white chocolate model of the White House. My favorite was the NDP emblem on the mint. During the awards ceremony, each of us received a ceremonial NDP bell engraved with our name and a framed certificate. Then we danced late into the evening with our "blinking rings" and just had fun enjoying new friends.

Special thanks to many: Rickey and Jeanette Darby and Gail Morgan who took lots of photos and ensured I got to all of the events; Kara Boyer, NDP Coordinator, who organized the event and answered all of our questions; Eddie Tyler, Superintendent of Baldwin County Schools, and the Assistant Superintendents, Hope Zeanah and Marty McRae for supporting the NDP program; Amy Hiller, Principal of Gulf Shores Elementary, for allowing me to return to Gulf Shores for the interview process and organizing a surprise school-wide celebration at the end of the day-long interview; and my District VIII peers for the nomination.
National Distinguished Principals - Same but Different
National Distinguished Principals - Same but Different
Get Involved!

**Rickey Darby**

*AAESA Assistant Executive Director*

Have you ever felt like a lone reed in your school? Many times, as a building administrator, you feel like you are all by yourself. There is no other person with the same job at the school. You should make the decision to get involved in your professional organization on the district, state, or national level. Over the years my involvement in professional organizations has at times invigorated or rejuvenated me. I leave a meeting or conference and I have new ideas to tackle any issue that I am dealing with at the school. Not only have I heard from presenters at the conference, but I have networked with other administrators from across my district or across the state and discussed some of the state’s pressing issues. In 2018, I encourage you to make the resolution to attend meetings and look for opportunities to get involved. If you are interested, send me an email and I will be glad to help you find an area to get involved. The collaborative conversations and value of networking with other administrators can help you grow as a professional. The AAESA/NAESP dues provide a high rate of value of investment to a member. If you are struggling with making a list of New Year’s resolutions for 2018, I have one for you – get involved in your professional organization.

This year the national convention will be in Orlando from July 9-11th at the Orlando World Center Marriott. This will be a great opportunity to be involved at the national level. The first 500 people to register will receive a free copy of Daniel H. Pink’s new book, *WHEN: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing*, which is scheduled for release in January 2018. He has just been announced as one of the keynote speakers at the conference. If you have never attended the national conference, AAESA has an $800 scholarship that can help with the costs of the conference. The deadline for the application has been changed to February 1st. The application can be found on the CLAS/AAESA website.

This year you have had several opportunities to get involved at the state level. In September the New Principals’ Institute was held in Prattville. We had approximately fifty first or second year elementary principals attend with eight experienced building principals serving as mentors for the table facilitation. This two-day event was a powerful time to build networks with new administrators. Throughout the fall, Vic and I have had the opportunity to attend several district meetings. These meetings provide you with the opportunity to meet and network with fellow administrators in your area. District meetings are an effective place to begin your involvement in your professional organization. Your district will have local committees and representatives on state committees.
In the beginning of November, the Fall Instructional Leadership Conference was held at Perdido Beach Resort in Orange Beach. We had 200+ elementary administrators and central office supervisors attend this three-day conference. It was an excellent time to hear from guest speakers and local educators. If you were not able to attend this year, please mark your calendars for November 4-7, 2018, at Perdido Beach Resort. Next year, we will return to the AAESA Conference format. If you have ideas or suggestions for the conference, please send them to me. We are already beginning discussions on how to make some changes to better meet the needs of elementary school administrators.

Our organization has several opportunities for elected leadership positions each year. The nominating committee presents the slate of members who are nominated for the election. These eight individuals have been involved in their local districts and have agreed to make the commitment to our organization by holding a state office. Please watch for the ballot after the first of the year. You will find information about each candidate in this issue of our magazine.

Another area for involvement for our members is during the legislative session. On January 9th, the representatives and senators will come to Montgomery for the legislative session. As members of CLAS, you will receive regular updates on the bills that are being considered. It is very important to stay informed and ask questions. In addition, sometimes members are asked to talk to their legislators in support of or against a certain bill. This involvement gives our organization a valuable voice in the legislation. The legislators really do want to hear from administrators each year.

Finally, you can get involved by helping a teacher leader who shows leadership potential in your building. The Marie Taylor and Michael Carr Scholarship provides $1,000 to further his/her education. It is offered to a current Alabama educator pursuing a degree or certification in elementary school administration. This scholarship is presented at the CLAS Conference each year. The application can be found on the CLAS/AAESA website. The deadline to apply is January 10th.

One of my favorite quotes is from President Kennedy, – “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.” I would like to take the liberty to change it to make a point about being involved in your professional organization. Ask not what AAESA can do for you, ask what you can do for AAESA. I hope to see more of you involved in our organization in 2018.
“‘INTENTIONAL LEADERSHIP... POWERFUL PERSEVERANCE” was this year’s Fall Instructional Leadership Conference theme and our speakers nailed this topic! From Day One with our opening speaker, Gerry Brooks, a Kentucky Principal at Liberty Elementary in Lexington to Tuesday with Kwame Simmons, a dedicated educator who has transformed several low-performing schools, until our Wednesday morning breakfast with Danny Steele, a Middle School Principal in Alabaster City Schools who sent us home with a focus of intentional and perseverance!

I want to personally thank Dr. Rickey Darby, our new Assistant Executive Director for AAESA who was the key reason we were successful — many long hours on the phone coordinating and organizing proved our success, and my co-chair Dr. Brenda Rickett, Director of Curriculum and Instruction in Alabaster City Schools, ASCD president-elect, and session speaker on Instructional Conversations. This conference was a huge success because of the collaboration, many meetings and emails. Planning is always key!

Every speaker shared how we can be intentional leaders and maintain powerful perseverance...those who missed the conference, truly missed an opportunity to learn from some of the best educators in the state! I would like to recognize all of the session speakers during our conference: Carmen Buchannan, Principal of Mill Creek Elementary, Madison City, Cortney Slaughter, Assistant Principal, Fultondale Elementary, and Jacqnaaii Finkley, Assistant Principal, Clay Elementary, both in Jefferson County for sharing how mentoring students does make a difference! Dr. Matt Kiser, Principal, Edgewood Elementary, Homewood City shared his social media tips, and Chelsea Neighbors, Preventive Services Director, East Alabama Mental Health Center for sharing basic mental health crisis of distress that we manse in schools, and ways to assist our students. On Tuesday, Learning Supports and Restorative Discipline and how it can change our students behaviors was presented by Dr. Orletta Rush, Executive Director of Special Initiatives and Jason Wilson, Principal of Alternative schools, both from Jefferson County. Using Google to Transform Classrooms, presenters Stacy Royster, District Technology Coordinator, Opelika City Schools, and a special bonus from Dr. Jeff Langham, Deputy State Superintendent of Education-Office of External Affairs who shared SDE Updates.

Yes, Gerry Brooks is the funny principal you have seen on FACEBOOK, sharing day to day events that happen at our schools! What a way to begin our conference! Interestingly, he has a very dedicated, intentional side to his leadership that I was surprised to see! He explained that Culture and climate has to be positive, and we have to look at those who are truly happy! It wasn’t about the games, but the end result...make your kids happy, make the parents happy, and always make the teachers and staff happy... He gave us strong ideas to use for faculty meetings for the next six months, and shared games that focus on developing a strategic plan when you have a goal — all tied back to our core values as a person and as a school.

Kwame Simmons on day two asked. “Do our core values match out leadership?” He too helped us to see that we have to balance family and work. He shared a long list of core values, examples were ethics, perseverance, forgiveness, integrity, and honesty....some of the many traits that we profess as our core values. Activities helped us think, and how to
reflect on life if we focus on those core values. We met lots of educators and shared with each other...We are so alike, yet all so different! We have to believe that we will look at, and help fix any problem that arises. We have to value our communities, and all that entails to be successful. What we believe about ourselves as educators, our students, and their families is “deeply coupled with our sense of responsibility for learning. (Diamond, et. AL. 2004, pg. 83). The goal of education is to learn through building relationships within and outside our building.

Dr. Steele asked, “Do you want to be a Leader?” Something he asks his middle schoolers all the time, yet he asked us the same question Wednesday morning. He shared seven meaningful strategies that allow us to connect our core values to what choices we make every day...If you see him, ask him about the crayon box in his office! We will remember the stories he told about students we could relate to in our own buildings, and the belief that we have high hopes for all of them! Very powerful statements from “Steele Thoughts” on Twitter that we have begun to use at home, and continue to persevere, be intentional and collect the little moments each day that create school success every day!
Executive Summary of FILC Business Meeting

Veronica Coleman
Chastang-Fournier K-8 School
Mobile County

On November 06, 2017, the AAESA Business Meeting was held during the Fall Instructional Leaders Conference at the Perdido Beach Resort in Orange Beach, Al.

At 2:46pm Dr. Autumnn Jeter called the meeting to order. KayKay Criss made a motion to adopt the agenda, and Matt Scott seconded. The motion carried.

Julie Pierce our NAESP Representative gave her report. Mr. Brian Partin, NAESP President thanked everyone for their participation with NAESP. Ms. Sharon McNary, NAESP Zone 4 Director shared how impressed she was with our organization and our NDP recipient Julie Pierce and all that had been done to tell her story.

Written/Oral Reports were next with Ms. Frances Finney encouraged everyone to keep attending the Fall Conference, and to make sure to visit and patronize vendors. Michael Wilson informed us that on tomorrow the decision would be made where the Fall Conference 2018 would be held.

Matt Scott gave the awards updates. He announced Jason Dufner was voted as the Bill Miller Friend to Education Award. The deadline for the Glenis Mason award has been extended to February 1st due to no one submitting an application.

Mr. Rickey Darby gave updates on our budget and finances. He informed everyone that we had a balanced tight budget. He informed us that we need to reach out to recruit new members, encourage members to attend conferences, and get the word out to our superintendents of what was covered during the fall conference. He wanted everyone to know we are in sound shape.

Mr. David Fancher gave his report on federal relations. He informed everyone that Ms. Betsy DeVos seems to be the most hated cabinet member. He informed every one of the need to be active and involved. He informed every one of Tax Section 12 and the big changes to Title 9. He encouraged us to visit NAESP Advocate page. He also reminded everyone that in March Representatives will go to the Hill.

Laura King was not present to give a report on membership, Dr. Autumnn Jeter gave her story of being invited and encouraged us to invite a new or aspiring administrator to our organization.

Mr. Charlie Gardener gave his report on the National Distinguished Principal. He stated that 6 nominees had been submitted. January 10 is the deadline, to select 3 for a site visit.

Ms. Jill Eaton gave the requirements for our newsletter. The publication is done 4 times a year, she’s always open for leadership suggestions. The articles are to be no more than 2 pages, and she is always looking for volunteers to write an article.

Mr. Michael Wilson gave the various names of individuals nominated for various AAESA Board Positions. He informed each candidate to submit a short bio, and head shot to Mr. Rickey Darby. He stated that voting would take place in February.

Mr. Vic Wilson gave our Executive Director’s report. He wanted everyone to know his vision for our CLAS. He wants to build up our mentors, help all members on our leadership journey, whether internally with CLAS, or helping to get where you want to be. He encouraged us to invite legislators to our schools before their January 9 Legislative session. Mr. Wilson also encouraged everyone to check out CLAS Friday updates.

Mr. Rickey Darby gave his Assistant Executive Director’s Report. He gave out his business cards, and stated he wants to help our job as administrators and encouraged us to give ideas on structure for upcoming conferences. He gave information on the upcoming mentor training in Montgomery at the CLAS Office. He encouraged us again to look at the available awards and submit names. He stated we should have 10 NPD nominees. He encouraged us to get more people involved at the local level and to get all districts involved.

Unfinished business, Dr. Autumnn Jeter informed everyone of the proposed by-law changes. Mr. Rickey Darby reviewed each of the proposed changes. Dr. Jeter asked if there were any questions. Dr. Jeter asked for assistance with the upkeep of our social media accounts, Ms. Julie Pierce volunteered to keep those sites up to date. Dr. Jeter encouraged all members to stay behind our state leaders in March.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting, it was seconded and the meeting adjourned at 3:34pm.
AAESA members are connected educators. One of the ways that AAESA strives to keep that connection going is through social media. Did you know AAESA has a Facebook page and a Twitter account?

To find our Facebook page, search for Alabama Association of Elementary School Administrators while logged in to Facebook.

To find our Twitter page, search for @AAESACLUS while logged in to your Twitter account.

Our social media accounts represent all AAESA members, so we welcome district news for posting on an ongoing basis. If your district would like information posted about meetings, upcoming events, or even good news about what is going on in your district, have your district representative email clasaaesa@gmail.com the information. I look forward to hearing from each of our districts in AAESA. By connecting on social media, we can communicate the great things going on in our individual districts and learn from one another while increasing positive communication about AAESA overall. So, let’s get those emails coming and increase those followers on social media!

As you communicate with others about social media, remind them about the benefits of AAESA membership. Sometimes things get busy as we start the school year, and we overlook important things that need to be done. If an administrator has overlooked their AAESA membership renewal, it is not too late. Membership information can be accessed very easily at www.clasleaders.org by clicking on the membership tab. Information is available for online renewal or by downloading a paper copy.

FUTURE EVENTS

NAESP Principals Conference
July 9-11, 2018
Orlando, Florida
http://www.naespconference.org/

CLAS Convention
June 10-13, 2018
Mobile, AL
http://convention.clasleaders.org/

AAESA Fall Conference
November 5-7, 2018
Perdido Beach Resort
Orange Beach, AL
Children’s books often teach valuable adult lessons, some of which can help principals become good leaders if they look with open minds and hearts. In Shane DeRolf’s The Crayon Box that Talked, the young artist helps a quarreling box of crayons see the amazing creation that results from their diversity. We can apply this to our schools and specifically to our faculty and staff members. Each individual school in our country has an identity which is the result of blending a diverse set of backgrounds, cultures, priorities, and experiences. This unique population has needs and concerns that must be supported by the school principal in order to build a healthy rapport with the school’s faculty and staff. For a good leader, this rapport, although a top priority, is not the final product but rather a fluid process of ongoing effort. Here are a few suggestions that may help leaders embrace diversity and demonstrate respect for all employees.

First, keep in mind that your faculty and staff is comprised of people with their own children, aging parents, financial worries, joys and tragedies that occur outside the school day. A good leader must be able to empathize and support the emotional and personal needs of staff and students to avoid the quarrelsome-ness of the crayons and keep everybody happy. Second, principals should be reminded that they must be approachable. This means finding that happy medium between being the boss and being a friend. Find at least one piece of common ground with each member of the staff. This may be as simple as asking about their children and interests or how well they enjoyed their most recent vacation. Then, listening, really listening and sharing a little something of yourself. Put simply, a good leader is able to relate and converse with other adults about particular subjects that are meaningful and relevant to their lives. Third, principals must remember to be considerate of personal time.

Always be mindful in your scheduling when it relates to your faculty and staff. If the information you wish to convey can be sent in an email, then send an email. There is no reason to meet after school just for the sake of having a meeting. Good leaders are respectful of those they oversee. Never lose sight of the need to treat others as they would wish to be treated. Fourth,
expresses expectations that are high, but attainable, and be sure to scaffold and model appropriate practices and attitudes, coloring the picture and laying out the crayons for all to see. You are the one they look to for guidance, reassurance, and approval. Finally, remember to always support your teachers and staff in the roles they play in the school. Never forget that they are on the front lines when it comes to educating the students.

Fostering a trusting rapport between you and your staff will bring a sense of cohesiveness to your school and allow valuable relationships to form. These relationships will be valuable important and contributions to the creation of a positive school climate. Those happy crayons will paint a beautiful picture of your school.
Public education needs your active support at the federal level. There are many ways to do this. One, was NAESP’s Title II Day of Action. This coordinated nationwide response gets the attention of our legislators. Think what the impact could be if every principal in Alabama much less the nation had participated. You Senators and Congressmen will respond to you, their constituent when you contact them. They will respond to you every time you contact them. It may only be a thanks for the information or a more detailed response to their position on the issue. Both of these can be starting points for a dialog to inform them on the issues you face as an educator.

Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, since her appointment in February, has visited 36 schools. Of these 18, were public schools, 8 charter schools, 9 private schools and 1 Bureau of Indian affairs. The secretary is met by protesters at almost every visit and still has 24-hour protection from the U.S. Marshall service. One of her continuing goals is to see the role of the Department of Education diminished or even eliminated. It was thought that she would just rubber stamp the plans submitted by the states under the Every Student Succeeds Act. In what is seen as a conflict between her ideology and legal responsibility, her department has returned several state plans to be re-developed.

The president’s education budget for 2018 proposed a 13.5% or 9.2 billion dollar reduction in funds. Fortunately that reduction has not been supported by the House and Senate education committees. Members of the Senate Labor, HHS and Education Appropriations Subcommittee dismissed that request and instead voted unanimously to increase overall spending for the department by $29 million. House lawmakers had also rejected many of the administration’s proposed cuts, but did approve overall cuts of about $2.4 billion. Agreement on a final budget is not expected until later this year. This is seen as a major setback to the increasing the number of charter schools.

Depending upon the speed of the federal government, tax reform may have already passed or not. As it has been presented there will be several impacts on education. In the House version the American Opportunity Tax Credit is seen as a victory for school choice advocates: It would allow families to use up to $10,000 in savings from 529 college savings plans for K-12 expenses, including private school tuition. It eliminates many deductions including the $250 deduction that teachers can use to cover classroom expenses. "It ends the Coverdell Education Savings Account program but allows past and new savings to flow into 529 accounts—which eliminate donors' income limitations and allow for higher contributions. Many feel that this will only benefit wealthier families that are able to put money away for private school. The plan does not include a tax credit for donations to private schools scholarships or a voucher program which have been pushed by the President and Secretary of Education.

One of the big impacts on education is the rolling back or pausing of previous federal regulations and guidelines. One of these being considered for “pausing” is a new rule that would require school districts to use federal funds to address the overidentification of minority students in special education. This rule has been in the works for three years. Under the rule, districts would only start being identified with potential bias problems in the spring of 2019. Changes on the guidelines for sexual assaults under Title IX have also been changed.

Let your representative know what your needs are for your school and students. To find email addresses  https://www.house.gov/representatives/find/ and https://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm?State=AL.

Don’t forget to vote December 12th!!
The Great Conversation

Horace Mann, educator, politician, and the first great American advocate of public education, stated, “Education ... beyond all other devices of human origin, is a great equalizer of the conditions of men—the balance-wheel of the social machinery.” My experience affirms Mann’s declaration: I believe in public education; I am a product of public education; I would never have had the opportunities afforded me had it not been for public education. I am not alone in these convictions; countless of my fellow educators have shared similar anecdotes about the impact of public education on their lives.

How do we transform the dialogue about public education from the anecdotal to the tactical, creating capacity for support? It must begin with those of us who are involved in, believe in, and are passionate about the institution telling good news stories. If we are not willing to stand up and speak out in support of the power of public education, how can we expect those not involved to follow suit?

In his book, Schools Cannot Do It Alone: Building Public Support for America’s Public Schools (2010), author and education consultant Jamie Vollmer describes what he calls the “Great Conversation,” which he believes, and I whole-heartedly agree, needs to take place in our school buildings and school districts. “The people working in America’s public schools are often the largest and, potentially, most powerful force in the community,” he writes. To recalibrate the conversation about public education, he recommends following these simple-to-understand and easy-to-execute steps.

- Shift your attention from the negative to the positive.
- Stop bad-mouthing one another in public.
- Use your social networks to share something positive.

Monitor progress.

According to Vollmer, we have everything we need to participate in this dialogue; we must only take the first step. “Each of us is already immersed in our own vibrant social networks that can act as conduits for our message. By adding this simple but essential ingredient, and without breaking the budget, every district is perfectly positioned to set the stage to unfold the full potential of every child,” he writes.

School building and school system administrators, as supporters of public education, must become passionately engaged in this “Great Conversation.” As you have seen from the political climate at both the state and federal levels, times are changing. We simply cannot afford to sit idly by and allow public education objectors to dismantle what Horace Mann referred to as “the greatest discovery made by man.”

To ensure the continuation of a thriving public education system, we must amplify our message about our passion for students and the successful instructional strategies that are making a difference in their lives. In short, we must join the conversation and tell our own success stories about the impact of public education. Our students deserve it.

—Dateline NAESP
Bill Miller, Sr. Friend of Education Award

Matt Scott
Creekside Primary
Limestone County

The Bill Miller Friend of Education Award is presented to someone who has shown considerable contributions to education over the years that is not an educator. Formerly known as the Southeastern Award this honor has been re-named for Mr. Bill Miller, Sr., in appreciation for his many years of selfless contributions to AAESA, CLAS and other educational organizations.

Mr. Jason Dufner was awarded the Bill Miller, Sr., Friend of Education Award at the Fall Instructional Leadership Conference on November 4, 2017. Mr. Dufner is an American professional golfer who currently plays on the PGA Tour where he is a five-time winner. He has won one major championship, the 2013 PGA Championship and a Five-Time PGA tour winner. Mr. Dufner is ranked 27th in the world and has been ranked as high as 6th in the world. He was also ranked in the top 10 for 50 straight weeks. Mr. Dufner is also a Ryder Cup and President’s Cup team member.

Mr. Dufner played golf at Auburn University where he walked-on and was a three-time winner. In 1997, he was named to the NCAA Honorable Mention All-American Team. Mr. Dufner graduated from Auburn University in 2000 with a degree in Economics.

Mr. Dufner’s major contribution to education is the “Jason Dufner Foundation”. The Jason Dufner Foundation focuses on ending childhood hunger in Lee County, Alabama through partnerships with local, regional and national organizations. Currently, the foundation provides weekend food for more than 1,400 children throughout the school year, summer feeding assistance, as well as providing resources and programs to impact Auburn-area initiatives such as Our House, the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Lee County and the Hunger Solutions Institute at Auburn University.

Through the foundation, Mr. Dufner is also active with End Childhood Hunger in Alabama (ECHA) – a statewide task force formed to leverage resources, raising awareness and funds for the issue.

Mr. Dufner makes Auburn his home because it is a place he truly loves and supports. Believing that #HungerIsntAGame, Mr. Dufner works hard to ensure no child goes hungry in Lee County. Mr. Dufner asks to please consider joining his foundation as he works to improve the lives of those around us.
CLAS Board Meeting

Autumn Jeter
Magnolia Elementary
Trussville City

The CLAS Board convened on Sunday, September 24 and Monday, September 25, 2017, for our annual Board Retreat in Prattville, Alabama. Dr. Vic Wilson, Executive Director, presided over the meeting. CLAS Board members from all affiliates were present. Topics reviewed were the mission, purpose and roles of CLAS and CLAS Board members, upcoming meetings for the year, CLAS budget & financial information, and various membership updates. On Sunday evening, Board Members engaged in an orientation, opening session, dinner, State Department updates and ended the evening with a social hour. Monday’s agenda began with breakfast, ESSA updates, finance discussions and partnership reviews. The Board concluded conversations around m-idday.

Other specific topics discussed during the Meeting were: staff reports, recruitment incentives, professional learning update (moving from the terminology of professional development), Banner School information and revisions, Legislative and Legal Defense update, and many other points. Dr. Wilson shared with the Board how the Principal of the Year/National Distinguished Principal’s from all zones will be celebrated, as well as the financial partnership for the final nominee at both levels. The meeting was inclusive of conversations on membership and awards. The Executive Director gave comments once more, as well as the President’s Report by Mr. Richard Brown, Sr.

The next CLAS Board meeting is scheduled for December 12, 2017, at Legends in Prattville, Alabama.

Congratulations, Matt Kiser

Matt Kiser
Edgewood Elem.
Homewood City

Congratulations to Dr. Matt Kiser for being selected as the representative for the State of Alabama in Princeton, New Jersey regarding the new PRAXIS assessment for administrators. Dr. Kiser will be a panelist that will work to determine passing scores on the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA) and the Educational Leadership: Administration and Supervision (ELAS). Each of these assessment will be launched by Educational Testing Services (ETS) in September of 2018. This appointment is a continuation of Dr. Kiser’s work with ETS and PRAXIS. He was a member of the National Advisory Committee last January where he was part of a ten-person committee comprised of school leaders from across the United States that worked to develop the new PRAXIS SLLA and ELAS assessments. The new assessments are used in each state of the US and 40 countries worldwide.
District One News

District One has had a very busy fall! We had our first District One meeting in Decatur on September 20, 2017. The luncheon was rescheduled due to weather unfortunately our guest speaker was unable to attend. Lifetouch Photography sponsored the luncheon and there were seven District One members in attendance. At this meeting, we chose Mrs. Theodoria Jackson, Principal of Somerville Road, as our NDP nominee. Our next meeting will be February 27, 2018. More information about the event will be sent to our members at a later date.

Around the district, our schools have had a number of events and happenings. Cullman County’s Cold Springs students recently went on a field trip to the Alabama theatre. They had a great time visiting this historic landmark.

Russellville Elementary in Russellville City Schools hosted a family literacy night this fall. Their reading teachers, ARI coach, and administrators dressed up as storybook characters and students were encouraged to dress up as well. They created stations where the students could listen to community leaders read (local police officers and firemen), enjoy a campfire read aloud, participate in a book walk to win free books, and the students visited our book fair to purchase their favorite book. The night ended with the principal, Mrs. Kristie Ezzell reading *If You Give A Mouse A Cookie* and the kids/parents received milk and cookies to take home.

Dr. Cynthia McCarty recently visited Cullman City Schools on November 1. Dr. McCarty has served on the Alabama State Board of Education since 2014.

The Alabama School Counseling Association recently announced that they have selected Elizabeth Shaddix to receive the Alabama Elementary School Counselor of the Year award at the 2017 ALCA Annual Conference. Mrs. Shaddix is the counselor at West Elementary School in Cullman City.
District I News

Cullman City Primary School celebrated Halloween in a big way this year. They held their fall festival during the day and all of the teachers and staff dressed up as the 101 Dalmatians movie.

Forest Hills Elementary in Florence City Schools celebrated Veterans Day by honoring Veterans at a special assembly. Students wrote thank you letters to these courageous men and women and gave the letters to the Veterans at the end of the event.

Good Hope Primary School in Cullman County has community members read to their students weekly. Pictured, is Sheriff Matt Gentry, reading to a group of kindergarten students.

At Threadgill Primary School in the Sheffield County School system, they have after school tutoring several days a week. The tutors are community members who want to get involved and help students succeed.

G.W. Trenholm Primary School in Tuscaumbia has a mystery reader each month. Students tune in to the Parent Volunteer Organization (PVO) Facebook page to see who the mystery reader is! Mystery readers read a favorite story from the comfort of their own home.

Nona Adams, Assistant Principal at Creekside Elementary in Limestone County was recently named Assistant Principal for District One. Congratulations Nona!

As you can see, District One has a great number of wonderful events happening in our schools! If you are a district one member, we hope you can join us for our next meeting on February 27, 2018.

Tricia Culpepper
Cullman City primary
There has been big changes in Mobile County. Mrs. Veronica Coleman has been named Principal of the New Flagship Chastang-Fournier K-8 School. A ribbon cutting and dedication was held on Sunday, November 5, 2017.

Mrs. Hazel Fournier the schools namesake gave words of wisdom for all in attendance. An elegant reception was enjoyed by all after the ribbon cutting ceremony.

Mr. Marshall Hunt has been named acting Principal of Collins-Rhodes Elementary replacing Mrs. Veronica Coleman. Mr. Hunt is a native Mobilian who is very excited to continue the growth at Collins-Rhodes Elementary School.
The 2017-2018 School Year is off to a fantastic start in District IV! The first meeting of the school year took place at Fultondale Elementary on September 21st. The meeting hosted well over 30 AAESA District IV members, including special guests Dr. Vic Wilson and Mr. Rickey Darby. The meeting was brought to order by our District IV President, Dr. Dil Uswatte.

Dr. Wilson, CLAS Executive Director, addressed the group by bringing greetings for CLAS. He provided great insight into how CLAS is working diligently to improve communication with the organization and its members. A key point of emphasis was the information about the email communication blasts that CLAS members can expect each Friday. Dr. Wilson spoke to the importance of “bringing members of all areas of expertise to the table” to help bring positive change across the state. Mr. Darby brought greetings from AAESA and spoke to many of the positive changes happening within the organization. The members of District IV were provided with excellent information regarding upcoming CLAS events and professional development. During the meeting, Dr. Autumn Jeter was nominated as the District IV representative for the National Distinguished Principal of the Year. The meeting was a great time of food, fellowship, and information. District IV is truly blessed to have such wonderful professional leadership.

Matt Kiser
Edgewood Elementary
Homewood City
I have been blessed to be an educator in the Tuscaloosa County School System for 26 years and I am also a product of Tuscaloosa County Schools. Throughout my career I have had the opportunity to serve children at several different schools. Most of my years have been serving children in the primary grades.

I was given the opportunity 4 years ago to be the principal at Taylorville Primary School. Taylorville Primary School is located in south Tuscaloosa County. The faculty and staff at TPS create the environment that we like to call “Where the Magic of Learning and Leadership Begins”. Daily we make a difference in the lives of 585 students of which 52% are students of poverty.

Our school was transformed into the happiest school on earth by implementing a Disney theme throughout the entire school. Each hallway is decorated with Disney décor. Our lunchroom is our very own Disney Diner. Our Diner has a fifties theme while also incorporating Disney characters.

This year we have created and implemented a new “Character” education program. This program combines character education, school wide behavior supports, social and emotional supports and Club Disney into one plan for success for all students. Our School Promise is a commitment that students make daily.

Club Disney is a positive atmosphere of community at Taylorville Primary School, we know it takes a village to raise children. At TPS, to be able to do what is right for every child everyday it takes everyone working together. All faculty, staff and students belong to a club that was randomly selected. Faculty and staff are leaders in this club and try their best to get to know and interact with students of the same club color. Everyone has lanyards in their club color. Each student’s lanyard has a name tag that displays name, club color, lunch number and library number. Each team strives to earn points for good behavior and Club Challenges. Club points are calculated through Class Dojo.

Our school population; faculty, staff and students consist of 5 color clubs. The colors are red, blue, green, purple and yellow. Everyone belongs to a Club. Clubs are randomly created. Each classroom has a variety of each color.

Club Days are every Tuesday.

- Everyone wears their Club color.
- Grade level Clubs meet weekly at 1:30.
- Clubs meet school wide monthly on the last Tuesday of the month at 1:30.
- On monthly Club days, Club colors sit together at lunch.
- During monthly meetings, leaders discuss character traits of the month, Club traits, School Promise and awards. Some awards will include perfect attendance, least discipline referrals and points.
- Parent involvement/ volunteers sign in using their child’s Club Color to earn points for Club Challenges.

Taylorville Primary will be hosting a District III AAESA meeting at the beginning of the second semester. Be on the lookout for an email with the details.

We invite you to visit the Happiest School on Earth to witness the Magic of Learning and Leadership. See ya real soon!

KayKay Criss
TaylorvillePrimary
Tuscaloosa County
District VIII was honored to have our new CLAS/AAESA Assistant Executive Director, Rickey Darby, as the guest speaker. He did an excellent job sharing the various ways that CLAS and NAESP are helping to provide for professional learning. To help design the professional development offerings that CLAS and NAESP provides, he encouraged members to complete the CLAS surveys as they are offered to gather as much feedback as possible. That feedback is important in guiding future decisions about professional development needs.

First, Rickey shared a link to The Principals Action Plan for Every Student Succeeds Act that was developed in partnership with NAESP. The email address is as follows: [https://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/ESSA_Action_Plan.PDF](https://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/ESSA_Action_Plan.PDF)

Second, he reported that the New Principals Academy was a success. The feedback gained from the participants through the post surveys indicated that more time was needed for table top discussions; so, that will be added to the academy for next year. Donnashele Bruister, Shannon McCurdy, and Jim Perry participated from District VIII as new principals and Julie Pierce participated as a mentor principal.

Finally, Rickey encouraged members to attend the national conference, The NAESP Pre-K- 8 Principals Conference, in Orlando, FL next year between July 9-11. The theme is Lead. Learn. Rethink. July 9 - 11 in Orlando, FL is the national conference and submit for the conference. The early bird member rate for the full conference is $495. The early bird daily rate is $195.

Other business included recognizing the following award winners:
- J. Larry Newton - Bill Miller, Sr. Award
- Robbie Owen - Truman Pierce Award
- Julie Pierce - National Distinguished Principal
- Mark Doherty - CLAS Leadership

New officers were elected and the District VIII National Distinguished Principal nominee was chosen.
- President - Susan Runnells
- Vice President - Misty Wilkins
- Treasurer - Faye Shepard
- Secretary - Donnashele Bruister

Julie Pierce
Fairhope Elementary
Baldwin County
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