



## Alabama Association of Middle School Principals Fall Newsletter

November 2012

# Administrators: Get involved by joining AAMSP

## Letter from the AAMSP President



**Susan Patterson**

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

It is a great honor to serve my constituents as President of AAMSP this year. I hope your school year is progressing in an exciting and positive manner. As middle school principals, our role as the Instructional Leader is paramount to the success of our students. It is our challenge to establish a school-wide vision committed to high standards and success for all students.

Our membership in AAMSP is holding strong with a total of 365 current members. Thank you for your continued efforts to grow our organization and

create a voice for middle school principals. Our District Presidents are planning joint District Meetings with AASSP. You may contact your District President for more information. This is a great opportunity to become involved at the local level.

The purpose of AAMSP is to speak for middle school principals and to enhance the image of the middle school principal as an educational leader. The organization facilitates positive educational leadership and promotes greater recognition of the professional skill and performance demanded by the position. AAMSP also provides pertinent information regarding legislation which is in the interest of children, education and the association.

Please join us November 11-14, 2012, for the AAMSP/AAMSP Fall Conference at Perdido Beach Resort in Orange Beach. The conferences focuses on challenging students to be college and career ready. Our State Superintendent Dr. Tommy Bice will be speaking in our opening general session. There will also be information on ACT Prep and the Common Core. Join us for the AAMSP affiliate meeting on Monday at 11:30 a.m. We will be giving away two \$50.00 cash door prizes.

Sincerely,

Susan Patterson, Ed.D  
AAMSP President

Middle School Principals  
Get Involved by joining AAMSP

## Alabama Association of Middle School Principals

With the desire to provide middle school administrators with a voice, an opportunity to network with colleagues and a chance to share ideas, AAMSP invites all middle level leaders to get involved with our state organization. Contact any of the following administrators if you have questions:

### **AAMSP Officers**

Susan Patterson - President  
Fairview Middle School  
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President Elect - Larry Haynes  
Oak Mountain Middle School  
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Vice President - Tamala Maddox  
Bumpus Middle School  
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Secretary - Terri Miles  
Winfield Middle School  
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Treasurer - Andy Carpenter  
Pizitz Middle School  
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# Highlights from Alabama Middle Schools

*For several years, a number of middle school administrators have mentioned the need for a statewide newsletter that would allow sharing ideas, best practices, and provide opportunities for middle level administrators to communicate with one another.*

Two years ago, during the CLAS Convention, the AAMSP Board decided to give it a try. This is a follow-up to the initial publication, hopefully it will communicate some helpful information to middle school administrators throughout the state.

Special thanks to everyone who shared some of the positive things that are taking place in middle schools throughout Alabama. Here's a look at a few of the successful programs:

## **R.F. Bumpus Middle School Hoover City**

All R. F. Bumpus Middle School 7<sup>th</sup> grade students have been provided a Nook as a part of Hoover City School's student Engaged Learning Initiative. The color Nook devices have been provided through a partnership with Barnes and Noble.

As an integral part of the roll-out, parents were invited to attend one of three Nook Roll-Out Sessions on Tuesday, September 18<sup>th</sup> or Wednesday, September 19<sup>th</sup> to review the Electronic Device Agreement and receive basic training on how the Nook will be utilized in the classroom and at home.

Although 8<sup>th</sup> grade students did not receive a Hoover City Schools

Nook, all students have been given the opportunity to participate in Bumpus' Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) initiative.

Teachers throughout the school are developing technology-integrated units and lessons that can be supported by the devices available to students.

Both teachers and students are utilizing Edmodo, an educational social media site, as a secure place to connect and collaborate, share content and educational applications, and access homework, class discussions, and notifications.

## **Fairview Middle School Cullman County**

Using technology to engage students in active learning is a high priority for Fairview Middle School.

Fairview currently has two mobile labs in which teachers can take students on virtual field trips, teach internet safety, allow students to complete PowerPoint presentations, Word documents, etc.

One of the biggest advances that engages students in learning is FMS's new iPad lab. Utilizing iPads, students are able to apply different math and science applications to supplement their classroom instruction while being actively engaged in the programs.

One specific lesson completed by sixth graders incorporated skills from across the curriculum. Social Studies classes were studying map skills by using Google Earth. The lesson incorporated math skills while com-

puting mileage and reading skills by allowing students to use Functional Reading to interpret directions to different locations.

According to the teachers, using technology to engage students has proven to be beneficial. In addition, the students' attitudes toward learning are very positive, which reaps positive rewards for everyone.

## **Oxford Middle School Oxford City**

This year marks a new beginning for Oxford Middle School as they take learning to new levels in their efforts to improve math skills through a robotics course.

Under the direction of several math and science teachers within the school, OMS offers Lego Robotics through their pre-engineering program to students who qualify through their enrichment classes. The robotics classes offer a way for students to work in project-based learning groups to build a working robot using Legos.

Not only are the students having fun, they are also fine tuning valuable math skills through hands-on, active engagement. Students use higher order thinking skills to problem solve and analyze ways to build their robot and make it move while changing various aspects of the robot.

They work together to discuss what needs to be done and explore other questions as they arise. The computer program teaches students to define and set variables for things, such as distance, time, or even characteristics of the robot.

Students also refine their measurement skills as they track such things as the distance their robot travels. In addition to the enrichment classes that meet daily for one class period, OMS also offers a BEST Robotics team.

This team is made up of students  
**See State Updates --, P. 4**

**We hope you found this issue of the AAMSP newsletter to be informative. Please contact Susan Patterson ([spatterson@cchoe.org](mailto:spatterson@cchoe.org)) or Larry Haynes ([lhaynes@shelbyed.k12.al.us](mailto:lhaynes@shelbyed.k12.al.us)) if you have information to submit for a future newsletter. Articles or columns may be sent to the above e-mail addresses on or before February 28, 2013.**

# Riverchase Middle gets serious about data collection

Educators often talk about “data-driven instruction”. They know that data results are the key to improving schools. However, many times data is reviewed at the beginning of the school year and then filed away. Riverchase Middle School recently decided that “data” would be the focus throughout the year by creating a “data room” for PLC’s and grade-level meetings. The administration wanted to make data more visible for the teachers in order to make positive instructional decisions.

The data room is separated by grade levels and academic subject areas. Each student is listed on the wall according to his/her ARMT scores. Throughout the year students will be monitored and instruction designed to help each student improve. The room is not designed to ask teachers to do more.

The information is designed so teachers can evaluate the student data, renew their teaching strategies and redirect their instructional efforts to better meet the needs of the students. The information allows teachers to focus on specific areas of need, in addition to providing time to change instructional focus and implement interventions if necessary.

The individual grade-level walls are a very stimulating visual that show how each grade level is performing. The teachers then review individual students, discussing strategies to help improve their performance. The data is kept on the walls the entire year prompting teacher awareness.

Along with the assessments, discipline and attendance are also included. With this being included, all factors are discussed concerning the child’s success. By creating the data room RMS’s goals are as follows:

- Gain instructional coherence
- Measure program success and effectiveness
- Make sure students do not “fall through the cracks”
- Guide curriculum development and strategies
- Promote accountability
- Continuously improve student performance
- Improve our school

**Riverchase Middle School  
Shelby County**

According to Principal Charles Smith, the accountability bar is being raised, and the data room has put RMS on the right track. It has raised the level of awareness and taken away the guess work on reaching students.



**New Data Room makes it simple for teachers to monitor student progress**

# Updates -- (from page 2)

who have volunteered to meet after school and sometimes on the weekends for a period of six weeks to compete in the 2012 BEST competition.

Students on the team will utilize their math skills as they design and build a robot that will transport equipment. They will also design and create a display booth to use to market their robot during the competition. The benefits of implementing the robotics course will surely be seen as mid-year benchmark testing data begins to be completed.

## **Muscle Shoals Middle School Muscle Shoals City**

Several 7th grade students, parents, teachers, and administrators at Muscle Shoals Middle School had the unique opportunity to travel to Washington DC and surrounding areas October 20-26.

The students were immersed in America's rich history as they traveled from the United States' early beginnings in Philadelphia to the current state of government in Washington DC.

The trip will include a White House tour as well as participation in a wreath laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery.

Student tours to Washington, DC, meet local, state, and national standards in the area of social studies but most importantly has provided the students of Muscle Shoals Middle School a lifetime of wonderful memories.

According to assistant principal, Dr. Matthew Carpenter, "Muscle Shoals Middle School is proud to (have offered) this exciting trip to our students, which for many, will be a once in a lifetime experience."

**Thomasville Middle School  
Thomasville City**

Thomasville Middle School is getting ready to kick off its new 1:1 (T-SLATE Initiative) by providing laptop computers for students in grades 5-7 in January.

Teachers have been involved in extensive Professional Development since last spring. A total of 21 classroom teachers received a Tablet PC along with explicit instruction on implementing the new 1:1 initiative which will include a lot of project based learning units.

In preparation for this initiative last fall, teachers at TMS began training with i21Zone through STI Achievement Services. This really helped to give teachers technology confidence as well as to set the tone for the 1:1 initiative.

Additional benefits of the program are as follows:

- Working individually with the teachers on integrating whiteboards and whiteboard resources

- Modeling a web-based Pearl Harbor lesson on December 7<sup>th</sup> using the rolling Mac Lab

- Planning and Modeling a whiteboard lesson for each math teacher with same day follow-up and demonstration of additional web-based math resources STI used this case study this summer as a marketing strategy nationwide to get the word out about Middle Schools using the i21Zone training sessions.

## **Oak Mountain Middle School Shelby County**

Oak Mountain Middle School began the current school year with a new pre-engineering program. The curriculum is based on Project Lead The Way's nationally recognized engineering program.

PLTW's hands-on, Activities-, Project-, Problem-Based (APPB) comprehensive curriculum is aligned with relevant national standards and is collaboratively developed and updated by subject matter experts – including teachers, university educators, engineering and biomedical professionals, and school

administrators.

PLTW's programs emphasize critical thinking, creativity, innovation and real-world problem solving. The hands-on learning engages students on multiple levels, exposes them to areas of study that they may not otherwise pursue, and provides them with a foundation and proven path to post-secondary training and career success in STEM-related fields.

So far this year Oak Mountain students have competed in the world wide BEST robotics competition and completed several hands project based assignments which included a tower building competition..

The enthusiasm displayed by students has increased interest in the robotics club . PLTW teacher Mr. James Salvant and system leaders believe that this program will prepare their students to be the most innovative and productive in the world. More information on Project Lead The Way can be found at [www.PTLW.org](http://www.PTLW.org).

*...Special thanks to each principal who shared a school program for the memo.*

## **Class Board Members from AAMSP**

**Evelyn Nettles -- 2012  
Green Acres Middle  
enettles@bhm.k12.al.us**

**Cindy Praytor -- 2013  
Mount Hope School  
cpraytor@lawrenceal.org**

**Martin Nalls -- 2014  
Homewood Middle  
martin.nalls@gmail.com**

**Terri Miles -- 2015  
Winfield City Schools  
t.miles@winfield.k12.al.us**

# New strategy pays dividends at HMS

Three years ago, I attended the SREB Summer Conference with some Homewood Middle School faculty members, and we were stirred to action by the concept of “Failure is NOT an Option.” In our debriefing, ideas for our own customized intervention strategies emerged from this concept that fundamentally changed that way we “do business” at Homewood Middle School.

While we did not expect the entire faculty be on board from the genesis of this paradigm shift, we were driven by awareness of the dramatic impact full implementation could have on student achievement.

Therefore, two teachers who attended the conference volunteered to establish an early intervention strategy (affectionately called “Mastery Moments”) to support at risk students who did not demonstrate competence on taught standards.

These teachers required students who earned a failing grade on any assignment to stay after school for individual and group academic coaching two days per week until they could demonstrate mastery of the content. It was a success...!

At the end of first semester, these said teachers introduced the faculty to the concept of Failure is NOT an Option with personal antidotes of their challenges as well as stories of success and inspiration. The faculty had reservations, but many were willing to attempt to broaden the implementation of the model. By the end of second semester, 80% of our faculty had implemented some form of “Failure is NOT an Option” in their classrooms.

Prior to the teachers’ initial implementation of Failure is NOT an Option, I was conducting individual, quarterly meetings with students who were failing classes. After full implementation of the strategy, however, the meetings became more frequent (once a week) and also involved the grade level counselor. We now refer to this festive gathering as “Catch Up Café.”

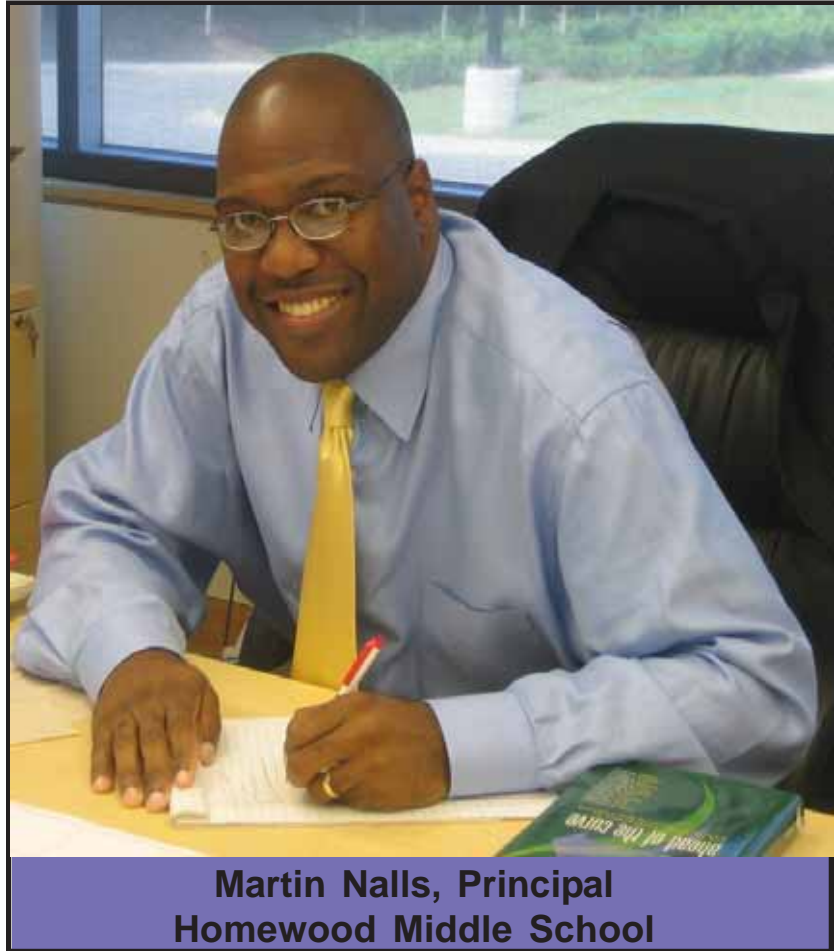
The counselor comes prepared with a printed copy of the students’ current progress report, and we give each student feedback about his or her current academic standing. Depending on the students’ progress (or lack thereof), I make additional parental contact and/or assign them to an intervention program. However, the most significant consequence of failing a class and not making progress, from the students’ perspective, is the loss of privileges.

Students who are assigned to Catch Up Café are not allowed to attend pep rallies or school dances until they show improvement on their next progress report or report card. Parents are informed of this expectation as soon as their child is assigned, so there is no misunderstanding about our expectations for academic achievement.

We have completed our second year of full implementation of Failure is NOT an Option, and the results have been phenomenal! Prior to the full implementation of this model, about 10%-12% of our students received at least one failing grade each quarter, and we averaged between 20-25 students in summer school each year.

Currently, our failure rate is about 5% for all grade levels, and for the past two summers, we have had an average of 8 students in summer school. These results surpassed my expectations, and serve as a clear illustration of what can be achieved if teachers, counselors and administrators are come together for the same goal.

....*Martin Nalls is principal of Homewood Middle School*



**Martin Nalls, Principal  
Homewood Middle School**

## Upcoming Events

AASSP/AAMSP Fall Conference  
November 11-14, 2012  
Perdido Beach Resort

Assistant Principals Conference  
January 23-24, 2013  
Embassy Suites, Huntsville  
and  
January 29-30, 2013  
Marriott Legends, Prattville

2013 CLAS Convention  
June 23-26, 2013  
Marriott Riverview  
Mobile, AL

visit [www.clasleaders.org](http://www.clasleaders.org) to register



If you have ideas for the  
AAMSP newsletter send them  
to :

Larry Haynes  
AAMSP President-Elect  
[LHaynes@Shelbyed.k12.al.us](mailto:LHaynes@Shelbyed.k12.al.us)

## AAMSP District Presidents

District 1 -- Vickie Morris, Thomasville Middle School  
District 2 -- Cassandra Scott, Straughn Middle School  
District 3 -- Logan Searcy, Selma Middle Academy  
District 4 -- Keith York, Opelika Middle School  
District 5 -- Charles Smith, Riverchase Middle School  
District 6 -- Kyle McCartney, Oxford Middle School  
District 7 -- Gaylon Parker, Moulton Middle School  
District 8 -- Lauria Merritt, Paint Rock Valley School