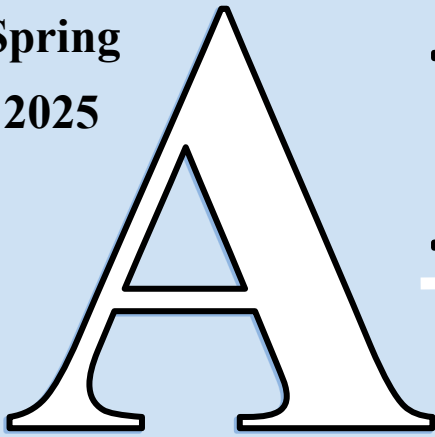


Spring
2025



Vol. 73 No. 3

Alabama

Elementary Administrator

Alabama's 2025 NAESP National Distinguished Principal



Stan Stokley
Saraland Elementary
Saraland City



Facing the Challenges of 2025 Together



Stan Stokley
Saraland Elementary
Saraland City

Facing the Challenges of 2025 Together

As we turn the corner into 2025, we are reminded of both the challenges and opportunities facing public education. As school leaders, it is our responsibility to understand these challenges and lead effectively within our schools and communities. Let's take a moment to reflect on some of the pressing issues for the year ahead.

School Choice: Navigating Change

Our state legislature recently passed a school choice act, which will eventually allow parents to receive up to \$7,000 annually toward private school education. While the long-term effects of this legislation remain uncertain, a critical question looms: How much funding will this redirect from public education?

One of the stated goals of school choice is to foster competition between public and private schools, ultimately improving both sectors. For us as public-school leaders, the challenge is clear: ensure our schools are so exceptional that parents feel no need to explore alternatives.

A key strategy in this effort is to *highlight the positive*. Too often, negative news dominates the narrative about schools. We must counteract this by showcasing the success stories, achievements, and community impact of our public schools. I encourage every school to designate at least one person to share positive content on social media daily. While social media has created its fair share of challenges, we can harness it as a powerful tool to uplift our schools and control the narrative.

Embracing and Managing Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly becoming one of the most transformative forces in education. As we explore its potential, several pressing questions arise: How should schools use AI? Should its application be limited to teachers? How do we monitor and guide student use of AI beyond the school walls?

To address these challenges, our district formed a system-wide committee with representatives from all four schools and the central office. This group meets monthly to develop policy proposals and outline procedures for managing AI effectively. Recently, we purchased a user-friendly AI program for staff to explore its benefits for teaching and learning throughout the school year.

Our goal is to explore AI tools and transition to cost-effective options, such as those available through existing district contracts. The more difficult challenge, however, is determining how to regulate and guide student use of AI. This remains a work in progress. As we proceed with caution, we are working to find the best options based on available information. This is a historic moment in the evolution of educational technology—stay tuned as we continue navigating this evolving landscape.

Advocating for Public Education

Recent political changes in Washington, D.C., bring uncertainty about their impact on public education. To ensure our voices are heard, AAESA leadership will travel to the National School Leaders Advocacy Conference in March. There, we will meet with national leaders to discuss critical issues, including mental health, special education, and educational funding.

We want to represent your concerns effectively. If you have specific issues or priorities, you'd like us to address, please reach out to me, Dr. Wilson, or any AAESA officer.

Looking Ahead

As we move into the new year, I encourage each of you to reflect on the incredible work you do for our students, schools, and communities. The challenges of 2025 are real, but so is the dedication and resilience of our educators. Together, we can meet these challenges head-on and continue to build strong, thriving public schools.

Wishing each of you a healthy and productive year!



2025 Alabama District Distinguished Principals



District I
Dana Rhinehart
Creekside Elementary
Limestone County
Finalist



District II
Stan Stokley
Saraland Elementary
Saraland City
2025 Alabama NDP



District III
Nakelya Mullins
University Place Elementary
Tuscaloosa City



District IV
Kara Scholl
South Shades Crest Elem.
Hoover City
Finalist



District V
Chris Melton
Gaston Elementary
Etowah County



District VI
Tisha Lewis
Sweet Water High
Marengo County



District VII
David Carpenter
Jeter Primary
Opelika City



District VIII
Shannon McCurdy
Florence B. Mathis Elem.
Baldwin County



District IX
Joy Jones
W.S. Harlan Elementary
Covington County



District X
Hovet Dixon
Highlands Elementary
Huntsville City

2025 Alabama's NAESP National Outstanding Assistant Principal



Scott Mitchell
Brock's Gap
Intermediate
Hoover City

Stephen Phillips, assistant principal of Holly Hill Elementary School in the Enterprise City School System, has been named Alabama's NAESP

National Outstanding Elementary Assistant Principal by the Alabama Association of Elementary School Administrators (AAESA) and Publishers' Warehouse. This prestigious award, sponsored by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), recognizes assistant principals who demonstrate excellence and significantly contribute to student learning. Mr. Phillips was honored at a special presentation at Holly Hill Elementary on January 31, 2025.

Serving as assistant principal at Holly Hill for nearly two years, Mr. Phillips was selected for his exceptional leadership, dedication to academic success, and commitment to student well-being. His contributions to Holly Hill's improved state report card score and the development of student-centered initiatives are among his notable achievements.

With support of Mr. Phillips' leadership, Holly Hill Elementary achieved a 97 on the 2023-2024 state report card, maintaining a perfect score of 100 in academic growth and significantly reducing chronic absenteeism. His work to enhance the Response to Intervention (RTI) process, improve school safety protocols, and mentor new teachers has further strengthened the school's capacity to support all students.

"We are honored to recognize Stephen Phillips as Alabama's NAESP National Outstanding Elementary Assistant Principal," said Dr. Vic Wilson, executive director of AAESA and CLAS. "Stephen exemplifies exceptional educational leadership. His dedication to fostering a culture of excellence and his ability to inspire both staff and students make him an invaluable

asset to Holly Hill Elementary and the Enterprise community."

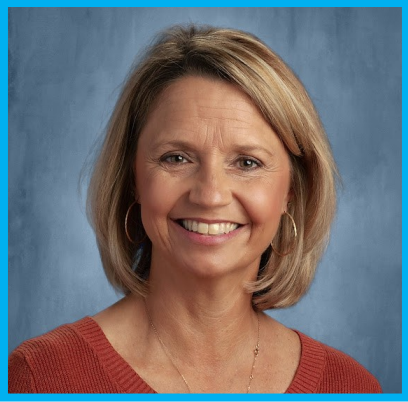
The NAESP, committed to preparing assistant principals for future leadership roles, and Publishers' Warehouse, a long-time supporter of the Council of Leaders in Alabama (CLAS), partner to honor outstanding assistant principals.

Mr. Phillips will be recognized at the CLAS Summer Conference and the National Conference on School Leadership in July. His nomination has been submitted to Washington, D.C., for potential national recognition.

AAESA proudly recognizes Mr. Phillips for his accomplishments, honors, and dedication to educational leadership, which have significantly impacted educators and students. He is a deserving recipient of the National Outstanding Assistant Principal of the Year Award.



2025 Alabama's NAESP National Outstanding Assistant Principal



District I
Rebecca Martin
Cedar Hill Elementary
Limestone County



District II
Talia Johnson
Dawes Intermediate
Mobile County



District III
Kiera Ezell
University Place Elementary
Tuscaloosa City



District IV
Sherita Williams
Greystone Elementary
Hoover City



District V
Matthew Loyd
John S. Jones Elementary
Etowah County



District VII
Spencer Wade
Redland Elementary
Elmore County



District VIII
Ginny Clayton
Daphne Elementary
Baldwin County



District IX
Stephen Phillips
Holly Hill Elementary
Enterprise City



District X
Quavis Brown
Williams Elementary
Huntsville City

Attendance 101



Jenny Breazeale
Fairhope West Elem.
Baldwin County

Fairhope West Elementary's approach to tackling the issue of... attendance.

Fairhope West Elementary is an amazing school! I'll admit, I maybe a tad bit biased, but I cannot tell you how encouraging and rewarding it is to be surrounded by a staff that truly loves our students and desires to grow and get better for our kids. Unfortunately, we all know that this is not the case in every school or organization. However, West, like all schools, is occasionally faced with challenges and issues that are simply out of our circle of control. We know, as leaders, it is how we respond to those challenges that will determine whether we will be crippled or empowered. At West, we choose to be empowered by responding in a manner that builds perseverance, resilience, and strength.

Upon arriving at Fairhope West, I discovered there had been a small problem that had grown over the years – attendance. In 2022, the chronic absenteeism percentage was 10.22%, and in 2023, it had increased to 12.37%. Absenteeism was not only an issue but an issue that was getting worse. West currently has a student population of around 975 students and a free/reduced percentage of 40%, declaring West a Title 1 school; however, being a school in Fairhope with an absenteeism issue wasn't something I was expecting to walk into as the new principal. The data was right in front of us, and we had to address it immediately. It became one of the first issues we decided to tackle as a new team under new leadership.

Reflecting on our plan of attack, there were several attributes that I would contribute to our success story. These contributors can be implemented in any school no matter the size, demographics, etc.

Collaboration

If we were going to make a difference in our attendance,

we needed a team who bought-in, strategized, and was committed to the task at hand because some of the underlying attendance issues were simply out of our circle of control. Therefore, we had to believe we could make a difference as well as be willing to try new things and strategies. Basically, we were undergoing our own action-based research, willing to fail while at least trying. Our team consisted of our counselors, social worker, registrar, assistant principals, and myself. We met weekly consistently, digging into our attendance data, finding students who were absent, on the track to chronic absenteeism, or even tardy. We laughed, listened, brainstormed, researched, investigated, and even grieved together over stories shared about our students. From those days of planning and collaborating, intentional relationships were made with students and parents. Daily phone calls were made to parents inquiring how we could help and to help them recognize the number of days their child was missing. In one of our early meetings, our veteran counselor who had been at West for years and knew the community well, suggested that we create an accountability piece for our parents. We decided to send a personal invitation to an "Attendance 101" meeting with administration and the counseling team to the parents of students who were on the chronic absenteeism track. This invitation was sent to around 90 students at the end of each quarter. Our goal was to educate parents about what truly defines chronic absenteeism, the dangers of being chronically absent, and to serve as a partner to provide help as needed. It definitely became the talk of our community; some supported our attendance initiative and some did not. However, I was willing to put it out there because I supported our team's idea and needed everyone to realize, we *#expectexcellence* at West, which includes coming to school. Our team's next collaborative move shifted to ways to encourage and motivate our students to come to school. Our registrar came up with the idea of recognizing the class with the best attendance each week. Our ideas didn't stop there. They continued to flow among our team with the goal of simply getting our students in school. All in all, as a leader, we must surround ourselves with collaborative people who challenge our thinking, encourage growth, and strive for excellence.

Communicate

One of the biggest "aha" moments in our journey to address our attendance issue was the power of communication. People don't know unless they know. A LOT of our community just didn't know the meaning of chronic absen-

Attendance 101 Cont'd

teeism, that attendance was an issue at West, and that our attendance affected our State Report Card grade. Therefore, we were bound to educate our community. We started with our staff then shifted to our parents through our Attendance 101 meetings, Parent Teacher Organization Board meeting, Parent Advisory Team meeting, parent/teacher conferences, attendance tidbits in our weekly newsletter, FaceBook posts, etc. We then started talking to our students weekly reminding them we *#expectexcellence*. It was truly simply making all aware of the importance of coming to school through communicating, educating, and building an expectation in our students to come.

Celebrate

One of the most fun ways we saw success was to celebrate our students for coming to school! We collaborated with our team, staff, students, and parents on various ways we could celebrate students who came to school every day for an entire month, including no tardies or checkouts. Yes, we raised the bar and had high expectations, but we wanted our community to know we *#expectexcellence* at West. Now, we know students get sick and that is out of their circle of control. Guess what? They can strive to be at school every day the next month. We celebrated with things the students wanted from extra recess time with the principals,

ice cream social, dance party, snack wagon, field trip to our local ice cream parlor, etc. It's all the kids could talk about, and we ENJOYED our time with those students each month celebrating them. They felt honored and valued. Yes, I think they loved the rewards, but I ultimately think they loved the recognition and the feeling of pride of that accomplishment. Coming to school every day for a month is a BIG DEAL! We then added not only celebrating the individual students monthly, but we also recognized a class per week with the best attendance with our West Win Attendance Flag. We all like a little friendly competition, so our students love winning that cool flag and being recognized in our morning news and on FaceBook. Our teachers may like it too since with that flag comes an extra 15 minutes of recess and jeans pass for the week. Celebrating our West Wins has become who we are at West.

As leaders, we will face challenges. That's a guarantee. However, we found at West, when we collaborate, communicate, and celebrate together as team, it sure makes it fun when we overcome those challenges and take our chronic absenteeism from 12.37% to 5.77% in one year. That is most definitely a WEST WIN!



Executive Director's Report



Vic Wilson
AAESA Executive
Director

Greetings everyone,

Spring has sprung, and the calla lilies are in bloom. Well, that is a bit premature, but you get the point. We may not have these flowers, but we do have spring testing, spring sports, and spring activities. I wish you luck in all these endeavors.

We are in the middle of the 2025 legislative session too, and I hope you are paying attention to the activities with the legislature. The best source of information we have is the Advocacy Update from Whitney Miller-Nichols. She sends this out every Friday afternoon following the Friday Update, and I encourage you to read each edition for great information about legislative activities. She also has a legislative update in this magazine.

We have some great news to share. The 2025 NAESP National Distinguished Principal has been named. Join me in congratulating Dr. Stan Stokley. Dr. Stokley has been a successful principal for many years and has served in many leadership positions for AAESA. The NDP committee has done a fabulous job with this choice, and I can think of no better person to represent Alabama as the NDP.

We also have a new Zone 4 Director for NAESP. Dr. Bonnie Sullivan from Pike Road Intermediate School was elected by Zone 4 members to serve

as the Director. This is a huge honor for Dr. Sullivan and for Alabama. The last Zone 4 Director from Alabama was none other than Jill Eaton. We are thrilled to have such an important position filled by an Alabama principal, and I know that Dr. Sullivan will be a wonderful advocate for NAESP, Zone 4, and Alabama. Congrats Dr. Bonnie Sullivan.

We have passed the halfway point of the second semester, and that means we can coast for the rest of the year – not! You are all great leaders, and I know you will finish the year on a strong note. If we can help you in any way, let us know. We want you to finish on a high note and the knowledge that you have done the best you can for those under your care.

Who Said You Can't Come Home?



Hope Zeanah

***AAESA Assistant
Executive Director***

Thomas Wolfe's novel, *You Can't Go Home Again*, includes the line, "You can't go back home to your family,

back home to your childhood." This adage is meant to infer how nostalgia causes us to view the past in an overly positive light, and how humans tend to remember people and places from our upbringing in a static term.

To this I say, "nah, you're tripping!" I got that term from my teenaged granddaughter in a text. It means something that is not true or a lie. Thirty-three years ago, I became a member of AAESA. The recommendation to join came from a veteran elementary principal in my district to me as a brand-new principal. Now, thirty-three years later with my appointment as the AAESA Assistant Executive Director I have "come back home." The people and places of our organization may have changed, but the positive light is still there.

Drafting this article also took me "back home" to the first article I wrote for the AAESA magazine. It was about a little boy named Noah and his mother who stopped by one day during summer break. You know the day; Title I budgets were due that week, you still had three positions to fill, and your head custodian got sick before finishing waxing the east wing. One of those days.

You see Noah was coming to school for the first time. He had two older siblings that had attended the school plus I had been his mother's principal when she was in middle school. Noah was excited!

As any good school secretaries do, I could hear Mrs. Stewart questioning Noah and his mother regarding an appointment and how a tour of the school was NOT going to happen today. It was at this point when I heard Noah say, "but I need to learn to read, and I need to see where it's going to happen."

The superintendent himself could have been sitting in my office when I heard this, and I would have still gotten up and walked out to meet Noah. This child was going to get a tour of his new school, budgets, hiring, or waxed floors was not a priority anymore!

I am telling you this story to say principals today are still shining a positive light on our profession. The brief time I have been in this position I have learned principals still care about what is best for children and base decisions they make on this concept.

Upon further reflecting on Wolfe's thought process, another way to think about his statement could be we do not know what we have until it is gone. If you lose something that is so integral to your being, then you do not recognize how important it is to you until you move away from it. Once again, this AAESA has proven NO ONE is moving away from our organization. In fact, membership has reached an all-time high, earning us an additional board seat.

I will end with a music trivia question for Vic Wilson. Who sang "You Can't Go Home"? Answer, Jennifer Nettles, lead singer of the duo Sugarland first recorded the song in the county music format.

Until next time, you can find me "at home" with AAESA.



A Legacy of Family, Achievement and Transformation

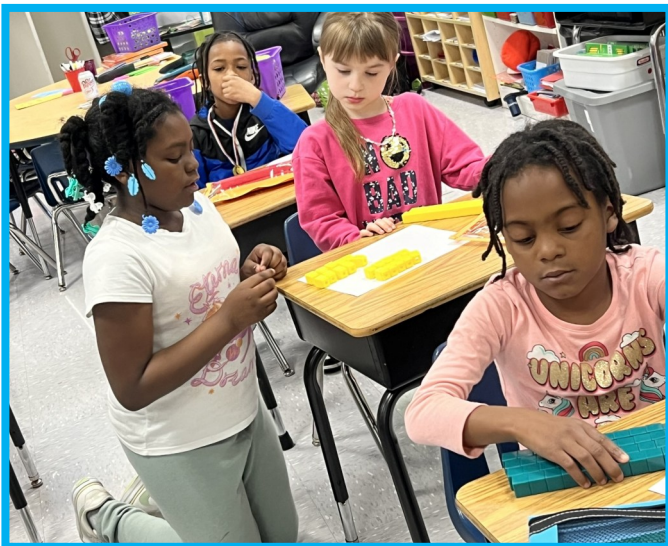


Thomas Casteel
Harlan Elementary
Florence City

Harlan Elementary is a dynamic K-5 school located in the heart of Florence, Alabama. Established in 1954, we are a neighborhood

school that has evolved significantly over the past seven decades, consistently adapting to meet the needs of our students and community. As a Title I school, we serve approximately 450 students, with 91% of our families facing economic challenges. Despite these challenges, we are driven by a collective vision of success, striving to create pathways to excellence for every child who walks through our doors.

In recent years, we've implemented innovative programs that have earned us recognition as trailblazers in student success. From cultivating a culture of collaboration to refining our instructional practices, we continuously aim to "move Northeast" and build upon our progress. At Harlan, we are committed to fostering an environment where every student receives the attention and support they need to thrive.



The Falcon Way: Family, Collaboration, and Excellence

At Harlan, we don't just talk about being a family—we live it. Our core values are embodied in what we call the *Falcon Way*, which stands for:

- **Family**
- **Achievers**
- **Loyal**
- **Collaborative**
- **One Florence**
- **Never Give Up**
- **Serve Others**



These guiding principles shape everything we do. We believe in creating a supportive, nurturing environment where both students and staff feel valued and connected. While many schools may tout the concept of "family," at Harlan, it is woven into the fabric of our school culture. Harlan Falcons are more than just students and teachers—they are a community bound by shared beliefs and a common purpose: to reach every student, teach every student, and inspire greatness in everyone.

A Track Record of Excellence

Harlan's commitment to excellence has been recognized through numerous awards. For four consecutive years, we have been honored as a *Council Leaders of Alabama*

A Legacy of Family, Achievement and Transformation

Schools (CLAS) School of Distinction. Our innovative programs, such as *Goodnight Harlan* and the *Vertical Stack Writing Audit*, have garnered statewide attention and helped us achieve *CLAS State Banner Schools* status. These initiatives have played a key role in enhancing literacy outcomes for our students. We are also known for our dedication to mentoring and our proactive approach to targeted interventions. We pride ourselves on being a welcoming school, eager to share our “Harlan Magic” with neighbors, partners, and visitors. Whether it's through open house events or classroom visits, we invite others to witness the collaborative spirit that drives our success.

Transforming School Culture and Instructional Practices

When I joined Harlan seven years ago, my primary focus was to transform the culture of our school. We needed to build a stronger belief in our ability to make a difference in the lives of every child. To foster this, we implemented a system of constructive feedback for teachers, aimed at enhancing classroom management and instructional rigor. This ongoing process has turned Harlan into a “learning university,” where both staff and students are committed to growth.

A key strategy has been our daily *Common Planning Time* (CPT), where teachers collaborate in structured sessions to discuss student progress, plan lessons, and share best practices. Every day, teachers have dedicated time to work together, aligning instruction with assessments and addressing misconceptions. Our *Learning Plans*, developed through a backwards design approach, ensure that our teaching is purposeful and results-driven. This collaborative model is central to our success, as no teacher at Harlan works in isolation.

Targeted Programs for Student Success

Our commitment to individualized student support is reflected in programs designed to meet each child where they are. Our *Goodnight Harlan* program provides recorded digital read-alouds, offering students access to

high-quality literacy resources outside of school hours. The *FLEX* program uses flexible grouping to tailor instruction to students' specific needs in reading and mathematics. With the support of interventionists and specialists, we provide Tier 2 intervention for students across all performance levels, helping them grow from their current level toward their full potential. Additionally, our math intervention efforts help students transition from concrete to abstract understanding, ensuring they master essential skills. Through these programs, we truly *Reach All and Teach All*, giving every student the support they need to succeed.

A Focus on Mentoring and Student Well-being



At Harlan, we also prioritize the emotional and social development of our students. Our partnerships with the University of North Alabama and Big Brothers Big Sisters provide mentoring opportunities that make a real impact. UNA student-athletes visit regularly as part of our *Lion Buddies* program, building relationships with Harlan students and inspiring them to think about future careers. This program has sparked a renewed excitement for higher education, with many of our students expressing a desire to attend college, just like their mentors. Our upper elementary students also mentor our lower grade level students with our Peer Helper program. Students are strategically placed to serve as role models.

In addition to mentoring, we've implemented programs like *Morning Meetings*, *Calm Down Corners*, and staff celebrations to support mental health and well-being.

A Legacy of Family, Achievement and Transformation



We teach the *Falcon Way* every day, helping students understand the importance of positive behavior, empathy, and respect. Our “Undercover Sunshine Buddy” initiative, where staff members anonymously support one another, helps foster a sense of belonging and positivity among our team.

Ongoing Coaching for Continuous Improvement

We believe that coaching is a key component of continuous improvement. At Harlan, we benefit from the expertise of a K-3 *Local Reading Specialist* and a *Math Coach*, both of whom work closely with our teachers to enhance instruction and improve student outcomes. We are also fortunate to have an Instructional Partner who serves all our students and staff with a focus on the upper elementary grades. These coaches ensure that our staff receives targeted guidance to refine their practice. Our administrators also provide coaching aligned with the *Get Better Faster* framework, helping teachers strengthen their classroom management and instructional rigor. Collabora-

tion is at the heart of everything we do. Teachers, coaches, and administrators work together to create a cohesive and effective learning environment where every student’s needs are met.

A Commitment to the Falcon Way

At Harlan, we believe that true success comes from working together as a family. Our commitment to collaboration, achievement, and service drives everything we do. We are proud to be part of the *One Florence* community, and we believe that our success is not just about what happens within our walls—it’s about making a lasting impact on the lives of the students and families we serve.

We are a school that is constantly evolving, never resting on our laurels, and always striving to improve. We are committed to serving others—whether through mentoring, instructional support, or community engagement. The *Falcon Way* is more than just a motto; it’s a living, breathing part of who we are, and it will continue to guide us as we work to make a difference in the lives of every child at Harlan Elementary.



Meet Your District VIII Representative



Laura Herron
Daphne Elementary
Baldwin County

It is with great excitement that I, Laura Herron, introduce myself as the principal of **Daphne Elementary School**, a proud **Leader in Me Light-house School**, dedicated to empow-

ering every child to become a leader in their own unique way. I believe that education, especially in the early years, is the foundation for a child's lifelong learning, growth, and well-being. As principal of a primary PreK-3rd grade school, I am committed to creating a nurturing, inclusive, and engaging environment where children feel safe, valued, and empowered to explore the world around them. At **Daphne Elementary School** we believe that every child has the potential to love, learn, and lead. Our commitment to the **Leader in Me** framework helps us nurture a culture of leadership, responsibility, and personal excellence. Through the **7 Habits of Highly Effective People**, we teach our students the skills they need to be successful—not just in academics, but in life.

The heart of my educational philosophy is understanding that social and emotional development is just as critical as academic learning. Young children thrive when they develop strong relationships, learn to express their emotions in healthy ways, and build confidence in their abilities. My goal is to foster these skills through play-based learning, structured routines, and meaningful interactions that encourage curiosity, cooperation, and self-regulation.

I am honored to partner with our incredible teachers, staff, and most importantly, **our families**—to create a learning environment where students feel **safe, valued, and inspired** every day. We know that education is a shared journey, and parental involvement plays a vital role in helping children develop confidence, independence, and a love for learning. I value the role of families and the community in a child's education and seek to build strong partnerships that support each child's development. Building a strong partnership with parents in school is essential for academic success.

I believe that every child is unique and learns in their own way. By recognizing and respecting diverse learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and abilities, I strive to meet the needs of all learners. Ultimately, my philosophy of education is grounded in the belief that early childhood education should inspire a love for learning, build resilience, and equip children with the foundational skills they need to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. By fostering a positive and responsive school environment, I

aim to help young learners develop the confidence, empathy, and problem-solving skills that will serve them throughout their lives.



National Blue Ribbon Schools



Karissa Lang
Crestline Elementary
Hartselle City

On September 23, 2024, the U.S. Department of Education announced their annual list of Blue Ribbon Schools. Five

schools from Alabama made the prestigious list. Only 356 school from across the nation were chosen. The announcement was made live by U.S. Secretary of Education Dr. Miguel Cardona. Schools are recognized in two categories: exemplary high performing or making significant strides in closing achievement gaps among different student groups. The Alabama schools named were:

- EPIC Alternative Elementary School, Birmingham City
- East Elementary School, Cullman City
- Carver School of Mathematics, Science, and Technology, Dothan City
- Brookwood Forest Elementary School, Mountain Brook City
- Crestline Elementary School, Hartselle City

“The National Blue Ribbon Schools Award is a testament to the exceptional achievements of students and educators at each of these schools,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Cardona. Until the announcement, only a handful of people from each district new about the special honor. Schools gathered their staff and watched live when the announcement was made. The surprise announcement brought tears, hugs, and over-

whelming excitement. They continued the celebrations t-shirts, special treats, balloons, confetti canons, and more.



School representatives from all five schools attended an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. November 7-8, 2024. Alabama was represented well! It was honor stand on stage with them, learn about all the wonderful things they are implementing at schools, and the impact they are having on the lives of their students.

All principals who represent schools chosen National Blue Ribbon are considered for the Terrel H. Bell award for Outstanding School Achievement. The

National Blue Ribbon Schools Cont'd

award is given by the U.S. Department of Education, NAESP, the Association of Middle-Level Education, and NASSP in memory of former U.S. Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell. This award is only given to nine principals. The award recognizes outstanding school leaders and the vital role they play in guiding students and schools to excellence. Award recipients have transformed their schools and have produced outstanding results for all students with the firm conviction that all students can learn.

On October 2, 2024 I learned I had been selected at the 2024 Terrel H. Bell Award. I never imagined the possibility of being chosen for this prestigious award. I would be recognized in Washington, D.C during the awards ceremony for National Blue Ribbon. I had the pleasure of collaborating with the other eight awardees. We shared our stories, our love for education, and our goals. I had the opportunity to participate on a panel for a question and answer session. The determination, grit, and passion for their schools and students was inspiring. It was an honor to share about my amazing school, staff, students, and community. This experience will be one I carry with me forever. I was immensely proud to represent the great state of Alabama and all the principals who tirelessly each day to ensure our students have the best!



Where Numbers Add Up to Success

District VII News

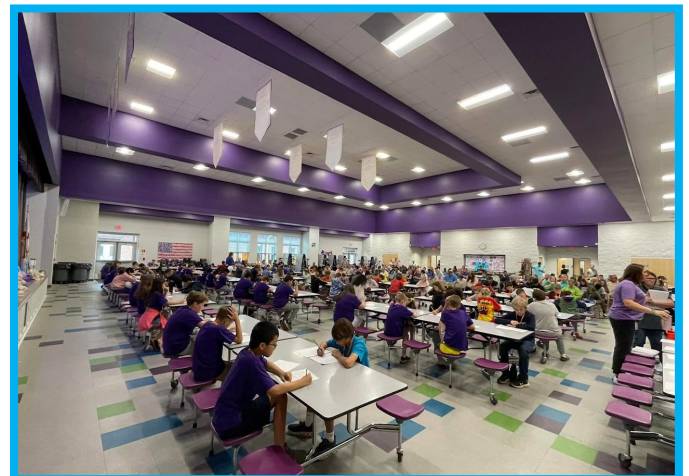
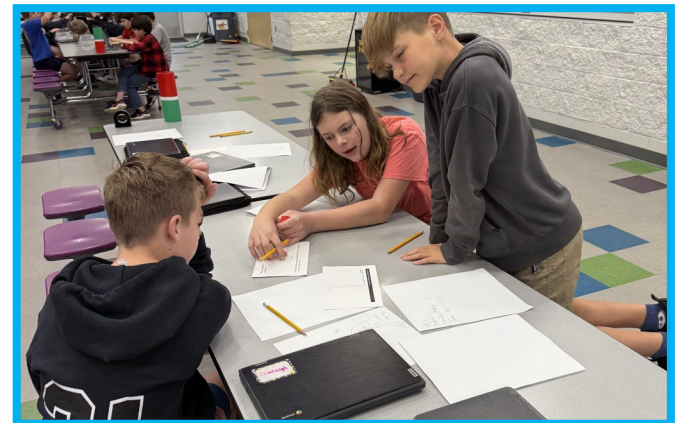
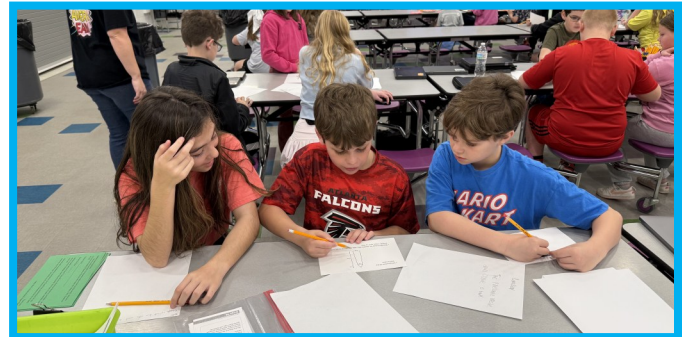
At Belforest Elementary, whose Principal is Jonathan Ellis, math isn't just a subject—it's a competition! The school's Mathletes program gives 5th and 6th graders the chance to challenge themselves beyond the classroom. Students earn a spot on the team by completing an entrance test, proving their problem-solving skills and love for numbers.

More than just a competition, Mathletes emphasizes teamwork and confidence, encouraging students to trust their mathematical reasoning. "As a 6th-grade math teacher, I saw that some students wanted an extra challenge and truly enjoyed the fun in math," says the program's coach. That passion inspired the creation of the Mathletes team, providing a space where students can grow, collaborate, and put their skills to the test.

Even students who may feel hesitant about math are encouraged to try out. "We want everyone to share their genius and try new things," says the coach. The team welcomes all who are willing to take on the challenge, helping them build confidence and discover the fun side of math.

Belforest's Mathletes compete once a year against other schools in Baldwin County! The Elementary Mathletes competition will take place on April 26 at Baldwin Preparatory Academy, where Belforest's brightest math minds will showcase their skills. If you have an elementary math team, grades 4-6, that is interested in competing, please contact Haley White at hwhite@bcbe.org.

Laura Herron
District VIII Representative



2024-2025 AAESA Election Results

Congratulations!



Vice President

Brigett Stewart

Piedmont Elementary
Piedmont City



CLAS Board of Directors

Dana Bottoms

WJ Carroll Intermediate
Baldwin County



CLAS Board of Directors

Laura Herron

Daphne Elementary
Baldwin County



CLAS Board of Directors

Tisha Lewis

Sweet Water High School
Marengo County



CLAS Board of Directors

Waller Martin

Brookwood Elementary
Enterprise City

Kudos to **Bonnie Sullivan**, principal of Pike Road Intermediate, Pike Road City, on her election as **NAESP Zone 4 Director**. Bonnie will serve for three years and represent Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

NAESP's Board of Directors lead the association by establishing goals and priorities, providing fiscal oversight, and making policy decisions. Their leadership and influence on issues of policy and practice aim to keep our nation's schools on track and headed in the right direction.

Congress in Chaos



David Carpenter

Jeter Primary

Opelika City

Happy Spring! With all of the rapid changes going on in Washington DC these days, I have taken a different approach to this quarter's magazine. In our most recent monthly Federal Relations Coordinator (FRC) meeting, we discussed the many White House executive orders and their implications for K-12 schools. Below you will find summaries of each discussion and links to articles and additional information for K-12 administrators. Please click on any content that is of specific importance to you.

Rescission of ban on immigration enforcement in "sensitive areas" like schools.

In January 2025, Homeland Security rescinded federal guidance that previously restricted immigration enforcement in schools. This change raises concerns for educators, parents, and students about how to respond if federal agents arrive at schools.

Key points:

- **Students' Rights:** Under *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), public schools cannot deny education based on immigration status.
- **FERPA Protections:** Schools cannot disclose student records without parental consent unless required by a court order, subpoena, or warrant. Legal counsel should be consulted before compliance.

- **Fourth Amendment Rights:** Federal agents need a warrant to enter school property, except in emergency situations. Schools should generally avoid granting consent for entry.
- **Interviews & Arrests:** Federal agents can interview students without parental permission but cannot conduct unreasonable seizures. Arrests on school grounds require a valid warrant.

Recommendations for Schools:

- Develop policies on handling federal agents.
- Follow FERPA guidelines strictly.
- Require a warrant before allowing entry or disclosing records.

<https://www.naesp.org/blog/a-new-ice-age-in-federal-immigration-law-enforcement/>

The executive order "**Expanding Educational Freedom and Opportunity for Families**" aims to enhance school choice for parents by enabling federal funds to support K-12 scholarship programs, private, faith-based, and charter schools. It directs the **Departments of Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, Defense, and Interior** to develop plans for expanding educational options, especially for **low-income families, military families, and Native American students**. The order emphasizes competition in education to improve student outcomes. More details: [White House](#)

Executive order on vouchers. The executive order "**Expanding Educational Freedom and Opportunity for Families**" prioritizes school choice by directing federal agencies to support K-12 educational alternatives, including private, faith-based, and charter schools. It calls

Congress in Chaos

for federal guidance on using funds for school choice programs, expanding opportunities for low-income and military families, and improving education for Native American students. The order emphasizes competition in education to enhance student outcomes. More details:

[White House](#)

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/expanding-educational-freedom-and-opportunity-for-families/> .

Executive order on ending radical indoctrination in K—12 schooling

The executive order titled "*Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling*", issued on January 29, 2025, aims to remove federal funding from schools that promote certain ideologies, including gender identity discussions and what it terms "discriminatory equity ideology." It also reinstates the *1776 Commission* to promote patriotic education and emphasizes parental rights in education. The order directs federal agencies to ensure compliance with anti-discrimination laws and parental oversight policies. You can read the full order on the White House website: [here](#).

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-radical-indoctrination-in-k-12-schooling/>

Department ending DEI programs

The U.S. Department of Education has taken steps to eliminate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives, aligning with President Trump's executive orders. Actions include dissolving the Diversity & Inclusion Council,

canceling DEI training contracts, withdrawing the Equity Action Plan, and placing DEI-related staff on administrative leave. Over 200 DEI-related web pages are being removed. The department will continue reviewing programs to eliminate DEI elements deemed divisive. More details can be found [ed.gov](#)

<https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-takes-action-eliminate-dei-dei>

Department re-instatement of 2020 Title IX guidance

The *Title IX Enforcement Directive* issued by the U.S. Department of Education on January 31, 2025, confirms that Title IX will be enforced under the 2020 Title IX Rule, rejecting the 2024 rule that expanded protections based on gender identity and sexual orientation. The directive follows court rulings and a presidential executive order reinforcing the definition of sex as male and female. Schools must align investigations with the 2020 rule. Read the full document [here](#)

<https://www.ed.gov/media/document/title-ix-enforcement-directive-dcl>

NAESP State Representative's Report



Bonnie Sullivan
Pike Road Intermediate
Pike Road City

NAESP Updates

NAESP is getting ready to host the School Leaders Conference in Washington, DC in March.

AAESA members from Alabama will be attending and sharing our concerns for our association.

Please remember to register for the United Conference July 11-13, 2025 Seattle, Washington. It will be an opportunity you do not want to miss!

The Future of Education: Adapting to a Changing World

Education is the foundation of personal and societal growth, shaping the minds of future generations and preparing them for the challenges ahead. In recent years, education has undergone a dramatic transformation, influenced by technological advancements, globalization, and shifts in pedagogical approaches. The future of education will likely continue evolving, adapting to the needs of an ever-changing world.

Technology in Education One of the most significant changes in modern education is the integration of technology. Online learning platforms, digital classrooms, and artificial intelligence-driven tools have revolutionized how students access and interact with knowledge.

Lifelong Learning and Skill Development The rapid pace of technological change means that traditional education is no longer limited to childhood and early adulthood. Continuous learning and skill development are becoming essential to stay relevant in the job market. Educational institutions and businesses are recog-

nizing the need for reskilling and upskilling programs, offering online courses and certification programs to help professionals adapt to industry demands.

The Role of Educators While technology is reshaping the learning environment, the role of educators remains crucial. Teachers are now facilitators of learning rather than mere providers of information. They guide students in critical thinking, problem-solving, and emotional intelligence, which are essential for success in the modern world. As education evolves, professional development for teachers must also keep pace, ensuring they have the skills needed to integrate new methodologies effectively.

Challenges and Opportunities Despite the many opportunities that come with the evolution of education, there are challenges that must be addressed. The digital divide remains a significant issue, as not all students have equal access to technology and the internet. Additionally, ensuring that technological advancements do not replace human interaction in education is essential for maintaining a well-rounded learning experience.

The future of education is bright, with the potential to create more inclusive, efficient, and engaging learning environments. By embracing technological innovations, personalized learning, and lifelong education, we can better prepare future generations to navigate the complexities of an ever-changing world.

Assistant Principal Community of Practice (CoP) The Assistant Principal CoP currently has 256 members. The first CoP meetup for this academic year was held on September 10, 2024, with a lively discussion on the topic of "Attracting More Students and Families to Your School." 14 community members attended. The second meetup was held on September 25 on the topic "Community of Care and Support for Students." Moderator Donna McGuire is analyzing a community

NAESP State Representative's Report Cont'd

interest survey that was completed on September 20. Based on the feedback, our moderator will be planning community activities for the rest of the 2024-2025 academic year.

Early Career Principal Community of Practice (CoP)

The Early Career Principal CoP currently has 164 members. The first CoP meetup for this academic year was held on September 10, 2024. 12 community members attended. Members were asked about their interest in topics for the coming year and were encouraged to complete an anonymous community interest survey by September 20. The number one topic of interest for the group is more training in special education. Moderator Equetta Jones has since met with our contacts at Lead IDEA about the possibility of having a speaker attend one of the fall meetups to provide more information on what leaders need to know about special education. Based on the survey feedback, our moderator will continue to plan community activities for the rest of the 2024-2025 academic year.

Professional Learning Playbook The September 4 Professional Learning Playbook yielded a 35% open rate and a 1% click rate. The top three links clicked were the UNITED25 Conference proposals, the early learning course, and how to write for NAESP. The second installment, our mid-month update which focuses solely on upcoming events, was sent on September 18, with a 33% open rate and 1% click rate, with the top three articles being the UNITED25 Conference Proposal, how to write for NAESP, and the open NAESP board positions.

National Mentor Training and Certification Program

Dr. Gracie Branch and Katie Earley conducted a meeting with the NAESP Mentor Trainer/Coach pool on September 10. The group received association updates along with professional learning focused on check-in activities and questioning tools to build con-

nections with adult learners. The NAESP Mentor Trainer/Coach pool will continue to meet every other month through May 2025. NAESP completed the first virtual Leadership Immersion Institute mentor training of the school year on September 18-19. The LII was co-facilitated by Dr. Ann Lalime and Dr. Roseanne Lopez with 26 school leaders in attendance from across the United States. At least 16 participants from this training session will go forward with the National Mentor Certification training process. Registration is ongoing for all 2024-2025 LII training and Mentor Recertification training sessions. The next LII training will take place on November 20-21, and the next recertification training will take place on October 24.

NAESP Pre-K-3 Leadership Academies

- **Alabama Pre-K-3 Leadership Academy:** 41 out of 42 academy participants completed Course 101 and transitioned into new competency-based professional learning groups at our Day 2 on-site meeting at the CLAS offices in Montgomery, Alabama. Participants reflected on their learning and developed problems of practice for each competency area.
- **Nebraska Pre-K-3 Leadership Academy:** Nebraska Academy participants are making good progress, having completed nine lessons in Course 101. Plans are underway to add a new lesson on early learning literacy in Course 201, with a transition to the new course on October 22, 2024.

Principal Leadership for the Early Grades Pilot Online Course:

Registration is now open for a six-month online course starting November 7, 2024, with a reduced early-bird registration fee available until October 25.

State Legislature Preview



Whitney Miller-Nichols
CLAS Director of
Governmental Relations

The 2025 Legislative Session began Tuesday, February 4, when the Alabama House and Senate convened in the State

House before attending the [Governor's State of the State address](#) in the Capitol that evening. The State of the State sets the tone for the coming session, signaling support for issues legislators have already announced as priorities or sometimes throwing the gauntlet to garner support for a priority the governor wants the Legislature to take up.

FY2026 Budget and Advocacy

Budget advocacy is my number one responsibility as the CLAS Director of Governmental Relations. As the CLAS lobbyist, it's my job to bring your needs and perspectives to the negotiating table and to have my words simply underscore the message you're already sharing with your state legislators and state board members.

I encourage you to review the SBOE's [FY2026 ETF budget request](#) and the Governor's FY2026 Recommended Budget ([bill](#) and [spreadsheet](#)) and let your school's legislators know which line items are of particular importance for the students you serve, especially if they serve on the [education budget committees](#). Use [this tool](#) to find their contact information.

Elementary-Related Bills to Watch

[HB9 \(Hulsey\)](#): Three-Cueing Prohibited. This is the second iteration of a legislative ban on three-cueing. The bill has four components:

1. Requires all reading instruction materials

"approved for use," whether at the state or local level, to use structured literacy and prohibits the use of three-cueing/SMV to teach reading.

2. Requires the State Board of Education to establish criteria for the evaluation of the instructional program at educator preparation programs (EPP) for the programs' approval by the state board. The bill also requires the SBOE to notify the Legislature "and public" if an EPP is not in compliance with the three-cueing ban.
3. Prohibits all local boards of education from using any reading instructional materials that utilize any aspect of three-cueing/SMV.
4. Requires every school to use instructional materials aligned to the Science of Reading/structured literacy and prohibits the use of three-cueing or "visual memory" for teaching word recognition.

[HB178 \(Gidley\)](#)/**[SB166 \(Kelley\)](#)** requires each local board of education to display an 11x14 poster of the Ten Commandments, including a contextual statement, in every school under its control. The bill requires the State Board of Education to identify free resources to implement this requirement and publish a list on its website. Posters must be displayed by 1/1/2026. This bill would also apply to institutions of higher education. This is a priority bill for the Governor.

[HB231 \(Ingram\)](#) is a proposed constitutional amendment that requires every public school to say the Pledge of Allegiance and a Judeo-Christian prayer at the beginning of each school day. The bill also requires the State Superintendent of Education to receive notice of suspected violations of this requirement and investigate them. The bill requires the department to withhold 25% of a system's state allocation if a school or schools has a consistent pattern of violating these requirements. The bill is effective upon approval by the voters of Alabama.

State Legislature Preview Cont'd

HB234 (Baker) would require every local board of education to have at least one designated adult on each school campus who will wear a mobile emergency rapid response device during the school day. The systems would be required to be in place by 10/1/2030. The bill also requires the State Board of Education to develop an approved vendor list and adopt any rules necessary. Effective 10/1/2025.

HB244 (Butler) expands the ban on sexuality and gender identity discussion to cover pre-K through 12th grade. The bill also bans teachers and other employees from displaying flags related to sexual orientation and prohibits teachers from using pronouns to address a student that differ from the child's sex at birth. Effective 7/1/2025.

HB246 (Stadthagen) requires public school employees to use the pronouns for a student that align with the student's sex at birth and provides legal protection for teachers who use a student's assigned pronouns. The bill also establishes a private cause of action against a public school if a student is harmed by pronoun usage. Effective 10/1/2025.

SB92 (Chesteen)/HB166 (Hulsey) requires each local board of education to develop and implement a policy that limits student access to and use of wireless communication devices during the school day, with some conditions. The policy must:

1. Designate a 10-minute or less daily device access window
2. Require device storage during instructional time
3. Permit teachers to allow students to use devices for instructional purposes, under supervision
4. Establish parameters for when students may have access to devices, such as for IEP/504 or emergency situations
5. Include consequences for violations

6. Distribute the policy to students, parents, faculty, and staff

The board must also adopt an internet safety policy that addresses several criteria, including access to social media platforms on board-owned devices. The State Board of Education is required to develop and approve an asynchronous course about social media usage, which all students should have access to before entering eighth grade. All aspects of the law must be implemented by July 1, 2026. This is a priority bill for the Governor.

Feel free to review [all the bills CLAS is tracking](#) and share your insights with me. If you feel strongly about a bill, I encourage you to let your system's legislators know!

2025 Advocacy Days

We are grateful to AAESA members who were able to join us for an Advocacy Day February 26.! Advocacy Days an opportunity for you to deepen relationships with your system's legislators while getting a peek at the legislative process. We start each Advocacy Day session with an issue briefing and quick legislative update before heading to the State House to watch education committee meetings. Afterwards you will connect with your legislators so that you can share priorities and concerns. We'll end your day in Montgomery with lunch back at the CLAS office. [Sign up for the Budget Advocacy Day here \(date TBD - April/May\).](#)

Glenys Mason NAESP Convention Scholarship



Scott Mitchell
Brock's Gap
Intermediate
Hoover City

Glenys Mason Convention Scholarship

Katie G. Holland
Albertville Elementary School
Albertville City School District



The Alabama Association of Elementary School Administrators (AAESA) is pleased to announce Katie Holland, principal of Albertville Elementary School in Albertville, Alabama, as the recipient of the Glenys Mason NAESP Convention Scholarship. This scholarship will enable Principal Holland to attend her first National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) Convention.

Principal Holland, a motivated leader and model lifelong learner, has served as a principal in northeast Alabama since 2017. A dedicated educator, she has a

rich background in education, having served as a teacher, academic coach, and classroom teacher, as well as a cheer and dance-line coach, all in service to the students of her community. She is committed to continuous professional growth and has demonstrated significant success in her leadership roles at the school, district, and community levels.

This July, Principal Holland will travel to Seattle, Washington, to attend the United National Conference on School Leadership, sponsored by national elementary and secondary organizations. This premier event offers invaluable opportunities for professional development and networking with instructional leaders from across the nation. Principal Holland is particularly excited about the chance to connect with diverse professionals from outside her district and state who share similar roles and challenges.

The AAESA proudly recognizes Principal Holland for her outstanding accomplishments, dedication to educational leadership, and significant impact on educators and students. The association congratulates her on this well-deserved scholarship and looks forward to her contributions to the field of education for years to come.



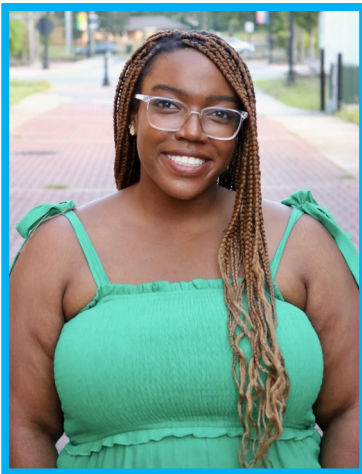
Marie Taylor/Michael Carr Scholarship



Scott Mitchell
Brock's Gap
Intermediate
Hoover City

Marie Taylor / Michael Carr Scholarship

Ava M. Travis
Ridgecrest Elementary School
Huntsville City School District



The Alabama Association of Elementary School Administrators (AAESA) is pleased to announce Ava Travis as the recipient of the prestigious 2024 Marie Taylor and Michael Carr Scholarship. This \$1,000 award supports Alabama educators pursuing degrees or certifications in elementary/middle school administration.

Travis, a dedicated 3rd-grade teacher at Ridgecrest Elementary School (Huntsville City School District), has served students for the past three years, teaching both 3rd and 4th grades. She holds degrees in educa-

tion from the University of West Alabama and the University of Alabama in Huntsville. Currently, she is pursuing an additional degree in educational administration at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, where she will utilize this scholarship to further her studies.

Passionate about cultivating positive learning environments, Travis recognizes the critical role of effective school leadership in driving academic success. She is eager to advance her career in administration and broaden her impact on students and educators alike. Her focus lies in shaping policies that champion inclusivity, academic excellence, and robust community engagement. As a future administrator, Travis envisions supporting teachers' professional development, implementing innovative programs, and ensuring equitable access to resources for all students.

Ridgecrest Elementary Principal Lisa O'Bradovich praises Travis's exceptional organizational skills, dependability, and communication abilities. O'Bradovich highlights Travis's talent for building strong relationships with parents and colleagues, emphasizing her commitment to keeping families informed and addressing their concerns with professionalism and empathy.

AAESA congratulates Ava Travis on this well-deserved honor and commends her accomplishments, dedication, and significant contributions to the field of education.

18 Strategies to Boost Executive Function at the Middle-Level

18 Strategies to Boost Executive Function at the Middle-Level

By Katy Kennedy

“I don’t know” is a typical response from middle school students when they are asked:

- Where are your basketball shoes?
- Where did you put your math homework?
- Do you want to type or handwrite your assignment?
- How can I help right now?
- What did we go over in class yesterday?
- Where do we keep the extra paper in the classroom?

When a middle schooler responds “I don’t know” in situations like this, it is most likely because they don’t know.

Executive function is a set of skills that needs to be explicitly taught, like math and science. Some students have families with strong skills in executive functioning, experienced modeling, and been explicitly taught. Some students have not.

What Is Executive Functioning?

Executive functioning is:

- “Executive functioning describes how well individuals access and use a set of brain-based skills that are essential for adaptive living in their day-to-day settings. Individuals with executive functioning deficits may display difficulties with planning, getting started and completing activities, staying organized, self-monitoring their work and behavior, adapting to changes, and controlling impulses,” as stated by the University of Colorado Medicine.

- “Executive function skills are the attention-regulation skills that make it possible to sustain attention, keep goals and information in mind, refrain from responding immediately, resist distraction, tolerate frustration, consider the consequences of different behaviors, reflect on past experiences, and play for the future,” said author Philip Zelazo.

Simply put, it is the skills an individual needs to have to function successfully in their day-to-day life.

Brain Growth in the Middle Level

You might wonder why middle schoolers often respond “I don’t know” when asked questions involving executive functioning skills. As David Vawter, author of “Mining the Middle School Mind,” says frankly: “Scientifically it is because their brains don’t work.”

Middle school is the second most crucial time of brain growth in human development. Let’s think about what happens during brain growth. Connections previously made are broken so that new connections can be made. This also means that sometimes students cannot access an area of the brain to retrieve information as a connection has been broken, according to Vawter. This is why “I don’t know” is a typical response from our students—because they truly don’t know.

Executive Function Teaching Strategies

So what does this all mean? We need to reteach our middle-level students executive functioning skills so that they can build connections even stronger than before.

Here are some ways to help teach executive function:

1. Use technology to create schedules, set goals, and track progress.
2. Give no more than two directions at a time.
3. Have students repeat directions to each other.
4. Record steps and directions visually.

18 Strategies to Boost Executive Function at the Middle-Level

5. Use a pointer or move around the room when tasks involve different areas to retrieve materials.
6. Model the mental process auditorily with think-alouds.
7. Highlight one skill per week or month.
8. Have students create mini deadlines for long-term projects.
9. Build organization time into your classroom routines.
10. Create executive functioning task cards.
11. Incorporate role-playing activities.
12. Play games to boost cognitive flexibility.
13. Help students develop questioning techniques.
14. Model organization strategies.
15. Use literature to discuss executive functioning skills through character analysis.
16. Get students actively involved in the learning process.
17. Make time to clean out lockers and backpacks.
18. Teach students how to use binders and folders to organize.

Think about the steps your brain goes through to accomplish a task from start to finish. Our students need these steps to be broken down for them as their brains are rebuilding these connections.

As adults, it can be easy to get frustrated when students respond with “I don’t know” in situations such as these. However, if we take a step back and remember that their brains are rebuilding these connections, we are critical in helping them do so.

So the next time you hear “I don’t know,” help by asking questions to trace back to where they last knew or to help them figure out what they do know.

Katy Kennedy is principal at Washington Middle School in Glendive, Montana, and a fellow at the [NAESP Center for Middle-Level Leadership](#).

FUTURE EVENTS

CLAS Convention

June 8-11, 2025

Riverview Hotel and Mobile
Convention Center
Mobile, Alabama

UNITED: The National Conference on School Leadership (formerly the NAESP Pre-K-8 Principals Conference)

July 11-13, 2025

Seattle Convention Center/Arch
Seattle, Washington

AAESA Fall Instructional Leadership Conference

November 16-19, 2025

Perdido Beach Resort
Orange Beach, Alabama

AAESA New Members

District I

Abbie Carpenter Lawrence County Schools
Adriana Denby Morgan County Schools
Kendra Draper Athens City Schools
Paige Evans Athens City Schools
Scott Flynn Winston County Schools
Charles Hammond Limestone County Schools
Emiko Hogland Cullman County Schools
Tameka Johnson Limestone County Schools
Lauren Kyle Athens City Schools
Brandi Miller Franklin County Schools
Jessica Moody Florence City Schools
Stacy Newton Florence City Schools
Max Parker Morgan County Schools
Jonathan Prestage Lauderdale County Schools
Sonya Priest Limestone County Schools
Marcy Reynolds Morgan County Schools
Tyler Skinner Cullman City Schools
Dana Speegle Morgan County Schools
Nia Strong Decatur City Schools
Rebecca Thiery Limestone County Schools
Jelisa Thompson Decatur City Schools

District II

Janna Corley Mobile County Schools
Natalie Lewis Saraland City Schools
Jahmarkus Rabb Mobile County Schools
Shenavia Todd-Norwood Mobile County Schools

District III

Cameron Channell Jasper City Schools
Karen Dixon Hale County Schools
Kiera Ezell Tuscaloosa City Schools
Kimberli Fondren Tuscaloosa County Schools
Angela Gibson Tuscaloosa City Schools
Cynthia Huff Tuscaloosa City Schools
Anna Palmer Walker County Schools
Kristin Perkins Tuscaloosa County Schools
Stacie Pritchett Sumter County Schools
Chenale Taylor-Maye Tuscaloosa City Schools
Ronda Vines Tuscaloosa County Schools
Kallie Woodley Winfield City Schools

District IV

Mariah Alfano Hoover City Schools
Byron Archibald Birmingham City Schools
Jennifer Biles Jefferson County Schools

LaTosha Billups Jefferson County Schools
Kellie Carlee Alabaster City Schools
Wendy Cespedes Shelby County Schools
Leah Colley Hoover City Schools
Timberly Hill Jefferson County Schools
Charlotte Jackson Blount County Schools
Brooke Lawson Jefferson County Schools
Amanda Lilley Mountain Brook City Schools
Alexandria Loggins-Howlett Jefferson County Schools
Heather Mays Mountain Brook City Schools
Shannon Montgomery Shelby County Schools
Alli Phelps Hoover City Schools
Brittany Spencer Jefferson County Schools
Courtney Staple Jefferson County Schools
Serra Wakefield Jefferson County Schools

District V

Kristen Atwood Pell City Schools
Crystal Braxton Talladega County Schools
Brandon Byars Guntersville City Schools
Marie Chastain Marshall County Schools
Jody Cox Talladega City Schools
April Daugherty Etowah County Schools
Mary Gilliland Etowah County Schools
Nicholas Goosby Calhoun County Schools
Jeanna Gossett St. Clair County Schools
Stephanie Hendrix Talladega County Schools
Kay Jackson Etowah County Schools
Kaylin Lancaster Cherokee County Schools
Jesse Martin Dekalb County Schools
Shelly Mason Gadsden City Schools
Jamie McCain Etowah County Schools
Laura McGilberry Sylacauga City Schools
Sawyer Merritt St. Clair County Schools
Patrice Mosley Gadsden City Schools
Anthony Patterson Oxford City Schools
Lisa Powell Dekalb County Schools
Tracey Reeves Calhoun County Schools
Amanda Rosewarne Arab City Schools
Astin Sarrell Cleburne County Schools
Amanda Smith Talladega County Schools
Alexandra Suggs Pell City Schools
Julie Walker Calhoun County Schools
Senovia Wilson Anniston City Schools
Dorthea Word Pell City Schools

AAESA New Members

District VI

- Cherylretta Bennett Wilcox County Schools
- Krystal Dozier..... Selma City Schools
- Jannalee Duke Demopolis City Schools
- Kim Holdsambeck.....Bibb County Schools

District VII

- LaTonya Bedgood Alexander City Schools
- Tiffany Carstarphen Montgomery County Schools
- Kathryn Conradson.....Tallapoosa County Schools
- Bradley Gibson Opelika City Schools
- Diamond-Cierra Graham Alexander City Schools
- Hannah Hart ALSDE
- Daisha Henderson Pike Road City Schools
- Elizabeth Landry Elmore County Schools
- Rachel Loftin Auburn City Schools
- William McDaniel Elmore County Schools
- Kiyomi Moore Montgomery County Schools
- Tanika Mumpfield Montgomery County Schools
- Dylan Nevels..... Lee County Schools
- Parker Reiss Pike Road City Schools
- Kacy Russell Elmore County Schools
- Tameka Shepherd.....Montgomery County Schools
- Dr.Danielle Streeter.....Life Academy
- Courtney Thornton..... Phenix City Schools
- Lisa Wheatley Auburn City Schools
- Stacy WilliamsMontgomery County Schools

District VIII

- Ebony Johnson..... Washington County Schools
- Alicia McKenzie..... Baldwin County Schools
- Mary Philyaw Brewton City Schools
- Molly Sparkman.....Gulf Shores City Schools
- Alexandra Wiles..... Baldwin County Schools

District IX

- Josh Blalock Houston County Schools
- Donna CammackGeneva County Schools
- Shawna Copeland.....Geneva County Schools
- Terry Crawford Eufaula City Schools
- Candice Dillard.....Geneva County Schools
- Brandi Evans Covington County Schools
- Adam LittlefieldDale County Schools
- Vincent Owens Dothan City Schools

- Kala PeakDaleville City Schools
- Debbie Rice.....Pickens County Schools
- Amanda SmithGeneva County Schools
- Matthew Smith..... Dothan City Schools
- Tony Wilson.....Covington County Schools

District X

- LaKeisha Agun Huntsville City Schools
- Crystal Alexander Huntsville City Schools
- Cheryl BowmanRetired
- Quavis Brown Huntsville City Schools
- Jennifer Douthit.....Retired
- Valerie Hereford..... Huntsville City Schools
- Nathan Holmes..... Madison City Schools
- Sherita Joiner..... Huntsville City Schools
- Miranda McFadden Huntsville City Schools
- Natis Rambus..... Huntsville City Schools
- Mallory Ray Huntsville City Schools
- Amanda Stewart.....Jackson County Schools
- Tosha Swearingen Madison City Schools
- Angelear Warren Huntsville City Schools
- Amberly Windle.....Madison County Schools

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Featured Keynote Speakers

Daymond John

An entrepreneur in every sense of the word, Daymond John is CEO and Founder of FUBU, a much-celebrated global lifestyle brand, and a pioneer in the fashion industry with billions in product sales world-wide. Former President Barack Obama appointed Daymond John a Presidential Ambassador for Global Entrepreneurship (PAGE) to harness his energy, ideas, and experience to help develop the next generation of entrepreneurs both at home and abroad. John's experience and expertise is on full display through his work as an award-winning speaker, and as a best-selling author of books such as *Power of Broke* and *Rise and Grind*. John is also celebrating his 16th season on ABC TV's critically acclaimed reality show, *Shark Tank*.



Gholdy Muhammad, Ph.D.

Gholnecsar (Gholdy) Muhammad is an associate professor of Literacy, Language, and Culture at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She has previously served as a classroom teacher, literacy specialist, school district administrator, curriculum director, and school board president. She studies Black historical excellence in education, intending to reframe curriculum and instruction today.



John C. Maxwell

John C. Maxwell is a #1 New York Times bestselling author, speaker, coach, and leader who has sold more than 34 million books. He founded Maxwell Leadership—a leadership development organization that has trained tens of millions of leaders in every nation. Having been recognized as the top leader in business and the world's most influential leadership expert, Maxwell continues to influence individuals and organizations world-wide—from Fortune 500 CEOs and national leaders to entrepreneurs and the leaders of tomorrow.



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naesp National Association of
Elementary School
Principals



ADVOCACY DAYS 2025

WEDNESDAYS DURING THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION

SAVE THE DATE - SELECT YOUR AFFILIATE'S DESIGNATED ADVOCACY DAY

February 12, 2025 MORNING SESSION

- AASCD - Alabama Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- AL-ABSE - Alabama Alliance of Black School Educators
- ACND - Alabama Child Nutrition Director's Association
- AAPASS - Alabama Association for Prevention, Intervention and Support Services

February 19, 2025 MORNING SESSION

- CLAS Board - CLAS Board Members and Affiliate Presidents
- ALA504 - Alabama Association of 504 Coordinators
- ALA-CASE - Alabama Council of Administrators of Special Education

February 26, 2025 MORNING SESSION

- AASPA - Alabama Association of School Personnel Administrators
- ACTA - Alabama Career & Technical Administrators
- ALA-EL - Alabama Leaders Advocating for English Learners
- AAESA - Alabama Association of Elementary School Administrators
- AASSP - Alabama Association of Secondary School Principals
- AAMSP - Alabama Association of Middle School Principals

April 9, 2025 MORNING SESSION

ETF Advocacy Day with Principal Affiliates

- AAESA - Alabama Association of Elementary School Administrators
- AASSP - Alabama Association of Secondary School Principals
- AAMSP - Alabama Association of Middle School Principals

WHAT TO EXPECT



Advocacy by Affiliate

Come to Montgomery on your affiliate's designated Advocacy Day.



Preparation

Meet at the CLAS office for an issue briefing before walking to the State House as a group.



Meet & Greet

Sit in on legislative committee meetings (schedule varies).

Walk the halls and visit the House and Senate chamber galleries.

Meet with legislators to share your position on key education issues and impacts to your school or system.



Be sure to schedule Advocacy Day meetings with legislators before you come to Montgomery.



Debrief

Share what you learned in a debriefing at the CLAS office.



Dine

CLAS will provide lunch for all attendees.

Visit clasleaders.org/advocacy and stay tuned to CLAS emails for more info.

Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools

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2025 CLAS CONVENTION

Step into the spotlight at the 2025 CLAS Convention – where leadership takes center stage! Register now and let your star power shine!



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convention.clasleaders.org



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