President’s Message

Educators, more so than anyone else, need to advocate for students. Who knows better what students, schools, and districts need! Educators need to be THAT voice, preventing non-educators from being the lone voice for students and education. David Griffith, ASCD Senior Director of Public Policy, met with Alabama ASCD representatives in December to help further develop the AASCD advocacy plan. He suggested increasing personal contact with policy makers at the local, state, and federal levels and strengthening social media advocacy efforts. To increase personal contact with influencers, four Alabama ASCD representatives recently met with Alabama’s federal lawmakers in Washington, D.C. Similarly, a host of Alabama ASCD board members are planning to meet state lawmakers in Montgomery in the coming days. Amy Murphy, Wendy Story, and Natalia Dooley are leading the AASCD social media charge on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram by using weekly themes to help engage educators in advocacy efforts. Join, like, and follow Alabama ASCD on these platforms so that your voice for students can be heard. Encourage fellow educators to do the same. Remember, no one knows what it takes to meet the needs of the whole child better than an educator. Join AASCD in our advocacy efforts for the sake of our students!

Ashley Catrett
President
Crenshaw County

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Dr. Brenda Rickett, President-Elect
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Standards Summit IV:
Overcoming Barriers to Student Success

Make plans to attend the Summit

April 21, 2017
9:00-3:00
Hyatt-Wynfrey in Birmingham

Keynote Speaker: Ann Cunningham-Morris
She is a seasoned, highly regarded administrator. She will focus on topics of poverty and how to build capacity for leaders.

Breakout Sessions:
Will be led by practicing principal leaders and noted instructional personnel.

Registration will open February 6, cost is $40 per person, and seating is limited.

Register online at:
https://form.jotform.com/70258605460959
Advocacy in Education

Advocacy can be described as what it takes to influence policy changes. This often begins at the grassroots level with organizations just like AASCD “pushing” a cause, an idea, or a priority. There is a constant stream of data and research communicated to legislators and those making policy. Direct, personal contact with those lawmakers is more times than not, the key in being a successful advocate.

Advocacy is defined as public support for, or recommendation of a particular cause or policy and is stated in Merriam-Webster as “the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal”.

Leadership Institute for Legislative Advocacy (LILA) is an example of how educators from all states come together in Washington on the same day for a common cause to support the ASCD legislative agenda. Those priorities for 2017 are being called the 3 E’s: Equity, Excellence, Educators and dovetail with the Alabama State Department of Education’s plan of action.

Alabama ASCD has started a movement for advocacy for education in Alabama. These first seeds were sown at the annual Board retreat in September 2016 when Ronn Nozoe, Assistant Executive Director for ASCD, gave some helpful tips about how to begin this process. Then on December 8, 2016, Dave Griffith, Director of Legislative Services from ASCD spent the day with the ASCD leadership team. The discussion ranged from status of education in Alabama to the specific, crucial issues facing us now. After the status discussion, Mr. Griffith offered the following recommendations for action:

- You want to have a voice
- AASCD would not have the baggage of other more political groups/organization
- Members because of the number and scope are an asset
- You (we) need to decide how to organize for impact
- Decide on a focus and promote it weekly and monthly in a message
- Get a meeting with state superintendent, Michael Sentance
- Focus on AASCD’s role in impacting public perception in a positive manner

So, some action steps have been taken and are ongoing:

- Attend CLAS reception for legislators
- Schedule meeting with state leaders at ALSDE
- Social media thematic messages sent weekly through Twitter
- Follow-up meetings with Mr. Griffith on January 25 and last week of February

Basically, we at AASCD need to be more visible, more vocal, share success stories, and give honest opinions of students’ and teachers’ needs. Our stories are compelling and we must let those in policy–making positions know what can benefit educators.

Be an advocate for education and for the profession!

Dr. F. Jane Cobia  
Executive Director  
AASCD

Dave Griffith at left with Executive Committee on December 8

LILA with Deb Delise, Executive Director of ASCD & Dave Griffith

ASCD group with Congressman Mike Rogers on the Hill.
Speaking of Education

There's been a lot of talk about education on the national level, but we certainly all know that education talk is not just limited to the national arena. Much chatter has been going on right here in our own state, especially among lawmakers.

Every legislative session seems to bring with it more and more talk of education. Whether it be discussions of funding (or lack there of), accountability, assessments, standards, changes in structure/governance, or education policy in general. Over the past several years legislators have been laser focused on enacting education laws related to some of the areas I just mentioned.

Alabama’s next Regular Legislative Session begins on February 7, 2017. A quick glance at pre-filed bills (those introduced, but placed on hold until the session is convened) shows that a few lawmakers have reintroduced constitutional amendment proposals to authorize a lottery in Alabama as an attempt to boost the Education Trust Fund and to find a source of an additional funding stream to help prop up the state's continually ailing General Fund.

It is safe to say that funding will once again be a top priority for legislators this legislative session. We know that unless new revenue sources can be identified to support the General Fund, lawmakers will continue to look to the Education Trust Fund to help fill the hole in the General Fund by diverting our public education dollars.

We are currently awaiting a report from the Joint Legislative Task Force on Budget Reform which was created by resolution last summer. Some areas the budgeting task force have been studying include a biennial budget cycle (adopting the state budgets every other year), identifying earmarks and tax credits, looking more closely at state agency spending and combining both the Education and the General Fund budgets into one. The education community has already gone on record that it will continue to oppose diversion of our education dollars as well as the idea of having a single state budget. These statements remain unchanged.

Our primary focus this legislative session will be asking the legislature to provide maximum funding for the state’s Foundation Program (our budgetary funding framework for public K-12 schools). By providing the necessary dollars to cover every day operational costs of our schools, it will allow our school systems to have budget flexibility to better serve our students and provide some much needed relief to our teachers in their classrooms as well.

In addition to funding, some of our lawmakers have been talking about the legislature’s role in creating a strategic and comprehensive education plan with specified goals. If such becomes established, some want to use those as a basis for what lawmakers should give priority to for education funding from year-to-year.

While there has been some mention in recent news regarding the possibility of legislatively mandated plans or goals for education, no formal proposals have been shared by lawmakers at this time. However, with the mention, there is sentiment among many educators that the entity charged with setting education policy in our state is the Alabama State Board of Education and not the Alabama Legislature. Nevertheless, the education community remains ready and willing to be a part of any discussions concerning this issue or any others affecting public K-12 education.

I believe we are keenly aware that while sometimes talk does not amount to much, at other times it can lead to sweeping changes - some good and some bad. One of the most important things for educators to remember is that whether dealing with lawmakers or fellow colleagues, the key is to have engaging conversations about education.

Make the discussions relevant and relatable. Allow colleagues into your space. Get lawmakers and other state and local elected/appointed officials into your schools and classrooms. Have them interact with students and teachers. Let them witness firsthand what public education in Alabama is all about. You’ll be surprised to see what a difference an accepted invite and a hands-on visit can make.

Don’t let others just chatter about education. Take the lead and get conversations going. After all, it’s up to us to be the catalyst for education talk that really matters.

Tracey A. Meyer - Tracey is the Governmental Relations and Public Affairs Coordinator for the Alabama State Department of Education. She has been with the ALSDE since 1999, but has a total of 24 years working with the Alabama Legislature. She is married with two sons, both currently attending public schools.
Upcoming Professional Growth Opportunities

Information and registration is located at www.clasleaders.org/PD/events

February 2017

7
Lunch & Learn: Fitting It All In: Balancing Work and Life (Online Webinar)

8-9
Assistant Principals Conference
Prattville, AL

14
Leadership Institute: Leaders of Their Own Learning
Mobile, AL

15
Leadership Institute: Leaders of Their Own Learning
Prattville, AL

16
Leadership Institute: Leaders of Their Own Learning
Hoover, AL

22
Law Conference
Birmingham, AL

March 2017

2
Aspiring Administrators Conference
Birmingham, AL

7
Culture Change: Lead the Way (Day 2)
Montgomery, AL

7
Lunch & Learn: Avoiding Employment Issues: Facts Every Administrator Should Know (Online Webinar)

14
Leadership Institute: Educating Hispanic/Latino Students: Implications for Teaching and Leading
Mobile, AL

15
Leadership Institute: Educating Hispanic/Latino Students: Implications for Teaching and Leading
Prattville, AL

April 2017

5
Lunch & Learn: Confrontational Leadership: 10 Keys to Success (Online Webinar)

18
Leadership Institute: Turning All Parents Into Partners
Mobile, AL

19
Leadership Institute: Turning All Parents Into Partners
Prattville, AL

20
Leadership Institute: Turning All Parents Into Partners
Huntsville, AL

21
Standard Summit IV: Overcoming Barriers to Success
Birmingham, AL

May 2017

10
Lunch & Learn: Tips and Tools for Leading Effective Meetings and Workgroups (Online Webinar)

June 2017

11-14
CLAS Annual Summer Convention
“Lead to Succeed”
Mobile, AL

26-28
 Phenix City Schools STEMposium
“AMAZING...BEST PD IN MY 16 YEARS AS AN EDUCATOR!!!”

That’s not the response one might expect from a teacher who works on a Saturday. Yet, Tuscaloosa City Schools had nearly 200 educators who expressed similar sentiments at the conclusion of our Student Achievement Institute. Like many high poverty districts, TCS faces the challenge of motivating and encouraging teachers while also equipping them with the skills, resources and support needed to educate and grow all students.

Our journey to disrupt the status quo began with new leadership at the top of our organization and implementation of a robust, new strategic plan. Superintendent Dr. Mike Daria’s energy is contagious and exactly what our district needed to push past what some call the “knowing doing gap”. The new strategic plan lays the foundation for our work with goals that focus on:

• Reading by third grade
• Reducing the achievement gap through culturally responsive teaching
• Implementing digital transformation; and
• Improving student engagement

Highlights include the Student Achievement Institute (SAI) and district-wide Poverty Simulations.

The TCS SAI had one primary purpose: to support teachers and leaders in their work to close opportunity gaps for students. Led by Dr. Avis Williams, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, we used academic and survey data to determine professional development needs. Although we had begun to work with culturally responsive teaching, our data revealed that more was needed. We formed a planning team of school and district leaders and the outcome was an amazing and highly regarded two-day Institute held on two (non-Alabama football game) Saturdays in the fall. Sessions ranged from Understanding Implicit Bias to Writing for Social Justice. At our second Institute we added student voices through a district-wide writing and art contest titled “Who Am I; Is that What You See” and a session for parents hosted by state PTA leaders. Participants described the Institute as the best PD of their career and were hungry for more at the conclusion. Planning has already begun for SAI Phase II.

In a high poverty district, our curriculum team recognized that teachers and leaders needed support in understanding the challenges that many of our families face. When we were unable to schedule an organization to lead a Poverty Simulation for our school and district administrators, we ordered 5 kits from Community Action Poverty Simulations, trained a team of facilitators and conducted them ourselves. By adding an additional PD day to our calendar, we were able to schedule Simulations for all schools during the school year. The Simulation gives participants an opportunity to experience a snapshot of what it’s like to live in poverty. The outcome is a gained sense of empathy that enhances the understanding of the support that many of our students need.

The status quo is not acceptable in Tuscaloosa City. We look forward to continuing the implementation of our strategic plan. This exciting work is sure to improve opportunities for all our students!

Dr. Avis Williams is the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction for Tuscaloosa City Schools. Richjetta Branch is the Director of Professional Development for Tuscaloosa City Schools.
Navigating the changing landscape in education can prove daunting at times. We constantly look for balance between extremes and work hard to keep the focus on the whole child. At the state level Mr. Sentance, state superintendent, is diligently working to lead systems through the many changes. With recent releases of the “failing schools” list, A-F report cards, and high stake testing right around the corner, how do we focus on the student? Several sayings come to mind such as “slow and steady wins the race” and “keep the main thing the main thing.”

1. Stick to your plan. Look back at your improvement plan and the goals that were set. Gather the data to see if the plan is working. If not, make the necessary changes and move forward. If the data shows the expected results, celebrate the success and continue implementing the strategies. By either making some minor changes or by acknowledging the hard work it took to get results, you refocus on the priorities set out at the beginning of the year. Districts do this on a regular basis. At the state level, we see this being done with a “relook” at Plan 2020.

2. Focus on standards. Professional development opportunities have not been lacking in our state in recent years. However, struggling to implement best practices and increased rigor can often result in losing sight of the standards. Districts must use all opportunities to refocus on standards, discuss what mastery looks like, and look at how standards relate to assessment. At the state level, Mr. Sentance is forming committees to look at math, science and reading standards, instructional practices and professional development.

3. Ensure quality teaching. Even though spring activities can interfere with classroom observations, district and school personnel must strive to continue the quest to grow teachers and leaders. At the state level, we have heard the emphasis being placed on continuing to have quality preservice teacher education programs and quality school leadership programs.

4. Provide support and encouragement. Education is a stressful business. During times of change, be the calming force. Be positive. Stay the course. These may be common sense, but sometimes we all need reminding of how to keep the focus on students. This is necessary as we enter a difficult time of year and as we navigate the changing landscape of education in Alabama.

Join Alabama Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and be a part of the state’s only professional organization totally dedicated to instructional excellence!

Visit https://alabamaascd.org to join today!
Educators from 30 states convened in Washington, D.C. on January 22nd to attend the Leadership Institute for Legislative Advocacy (LILA), one of the annual conferences and training opportunities of ASCD. Representing Alabama ASCD were: Ashley Catrett, President; Brenda Rickett, President-elect; Jane Cobia, Executive Director; and Mitchie Neel, Secretary. The three-day conference was a whirlwind of sessions, meetings, networking, and opportunities to be advocates for education. Understanding education policy, use of social media to share positive stories about educators and students, the new ASCD legislative agenda, ESSA updates and information, changes ahead in federal education policy, and networking opportunities to discuss important issues facing educators were all included in the conference agenda.

The 2017 ASCD legislative agenda focuses on three key points. The first is “Ensuring Equity”, which features that “all children deserve to develop to their fullest potential… to ensure that they are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.” Meeting the needs of each student in the five areas identified ensure the whole child is the focus of educator efforts. The second tenet in the agenda is “Promoting Excellence” which maintains that “no matter where they attend school, all students must be provided a safe, healthy, and accepting learning environment and a rigorous, high-quality, and personalized academic program.” The last component of the 2017 agenda is “Promoting Educators.” “As the most significant in-school factors for student achievement, teachers and school leaders deserve the support and resources to maximize student learning outcomes and prepare our young people for the future.” Educators must be equipped to deliver the best educational experience possible for our students. They must be acknowledged and appreciated for the work they do. They need the appropriate support to provide outstanding teaching and learning experiences.

The highlight of the conference was the last day when members of Congress were visited. Your Alabama ASCD delegation worked to schedule appointments with all of the offices of our Alabama Representatives and Senators. Ashley, Brenda, Jane, and Mitchie visited the offices and shared with our Congressional members key issues relating to Alabama educators, focusing on the importance of curriculum and instruction to positively impact our students. Congressional offices visited included Robert Aderholt, Bradley Byrne, Morris Brooks, Gary Palmer, Martha Roby, Mike Rogers, and Terri Sewell. A special thank you goes to Congressman Mike Rogers, who met personally with the delegation! Legislative assistants conducted the rest of the meetings and all were very interested to hear from us. The group also met with the legislative assistant for Senator Richard Shelby. The meeting scheduled with Senator Sessions was cancelled due to the impending confirmation of him as the nation’s Attorney General. The group was thrilled and pleased to have met with all of our active Congressional representatives during the day so we could share with them important issues facing Alabama educators.

There are many ways to advocate for education and impact our students! Your Alabama ASCD is working to be a part of the conversation of the future of education in Alabama and our nation to ensure we remain focused on our students. As educators we have no mission to deliver without our students. Share your success stories, challenges, and concerns. We plan to in the coming months and hope you will be a part of this effort! Keep informed by following Alabama ASCD through our social media platforms! Like us on Facebook: Alabama ASCD. Follow us on Twitter: @AlabamaASCD. Join us on Instagram: alabamaascd. Our website address is alabamaascd.org. We are currently exploring various aspects of leadership using #leadandadvocate. Join this conversation and be a part of advocating for our students!
Phenix City Schools, in partnership with Discovery Education, invites you to join us for the 1st annual STEMposium!

The STEMposium will offer an in-depth look into creating a culture of inquiry, innovation, and impact through STEM education. During a series of interactive sessions featuring the Dyer Family STEM Center, attendees will experience STEM teaching and learning, participate in hands-on STEM activities, and will begin to create a STEM definition and vision for their classrooms and schools. Sessions will be facilitated by trained and experienced STEM professionals, and keynote presentations will be delivered by Discovery Education STEM experts.

Registration cost is $79 and includes shuttles and lunch on each day.

www.pcstemposium.com

Notable STEM Speakers including:

Cindy Moss  
Robert Corbin  
Renee Cartier  

www.pcstemposium.com
YOU’RE INVITED TO JOIN US FOR THE
46TH ANNUAL CLAS CONVENTION

Conference Features:
• Networking Opportunities
• Distinguished Speakers
• Numerous Session Options
• Motivational Presentations
• PLU Credits

Notable Sessions:
• “Manage Your Message to Maximize Your Impact” with Rehema Ellis
• “Lead to Succeed in Changing Times” with Ken Blanchard
• “More Than a Bird” with Elizabeth Huntley

THE MOST IMPORTANT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE FOR ALABAMA’S CURRENT AND FUTURE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS!

2017 CLAS CONVENTION
June 11-14, 2017
Riverview Plaza Hotel and Mobile Convention Center
Mobile, Alabama

#clasconv17

Register Online
www.clasleaders.org

Enjoy Learning, Enjoy Sharing, Enjoy Leading!
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