President’s Message

“Intentional Leadership, Powerful Perseverance” was the theme of the recent AASCD/AAESA Fall Instructional Leadership Conference. Alone, those are four mighty words. Combined together, they are no less than empowering. It is amazing how words and actions can have such an impact on the work we do each day. AASCD board members spent time with Jim Owens just prior to the conference starting. Mr. Owens challenged us to exercise “Mindful Leadership in Uncertain Times”. He pushed us to take a hard look at ourselves to determine personal barriers to being our best selves. Additionally, he pushed us to be mindful; to be present in the moment. Mr. Owens encouraged us to focus on the foundations of resiliency – physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional preparation in order to be the best leaders possible. “Leadership,” said Mr. Owens, “is the absence of delusion.” He left us with 5 A’s to abide by in order to thrive in times of change: acknowledge, accept, adapt, anticipate, and accelerate. In thinking about the mindful leadership ideas presented, framed by the conference theme, it seems only fitting to stop, reflect, adjust as needed, and move forward – intentionally, mindfully, and powerfully.
The Culturally Responsive Leaders

How do I help my teachers and administrators understand the importance of being a leader who is culturally responsive?

Well, what we do know is that there is an increasing body of research that demonstrates the importance of addressing the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families. The cultural underpinning of schools in the United States is largely based on middle-class, European values which leads many administrators to ignore or downplay the strengths of diverse students and their families. As long ago as 1999, a study was conducted by Angela Valenzuela who defined this approach as subtractive schooling which basically meant that differences were viewed as deficits.

One of the major drivers for this topic is Standard 3 of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders which states “Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.” So back to the question of how do we take this important goal and realize it through our own actions?

There are several ways to approach this issue and here are a few suggestions:

- Define core values of the school
- Clarify common practices to create a safe and positive school climate
- Articulate behavior and individual learning plans
- Standardize discipline procedures
- Increase opportunities for student inclusion and engagement

I have been in several schools this fall that have leaders who are doing what is important for students to succeed. Boaz High School under the leadership of principal, Gary Minnick, has instituted a Career Technology academy approach that includes every student in the 9-12 school. He has taken the time to provide support for the teachers through book studies, scheduling reorganization and resources; develop an active association with the local Chamber of Commerce and businesses; and to know his students and their families.

Childersburg Middle School principal, Jena Jones, and Childersburg High School principal, Quentin Lee, have taken project based learning to a higher level with STEAM, Innovation challenges, involvement with community stakeholders, and support of teachers through book studies, school visits, and peer teaching observations.

The Craft Academy, led by Linda Poindexter, is a true partnership with business/industry and school systems. There are students from the
Our students are increasingly diverse and varied in their assets and needs; but achievement gaps and opportunity gaps still abound in Alabama. The best hope is for school leaders to know their communities and students and be innovators. School leaders are the face of the school and set the tone and the priorities. They are critical to the accessibility of high quality, rigorous, and engaging options for students. Maybe principal preparation programs need to take a hard look at just how to address ways to develop culturally responsive leaders; and, also to determine what components should be included in the programs so they understand how to individualize and personalize learning opportunities. This is not an easy fix, but there are many leaders in Alabama who are quietly and intentionally going about their jobs of ensuring student success. They are culturally responsive leaders. We all need to acknowledge and applaud their efforts!
Leaders of curriculum and instruction from all across Alabama gathered the first of November for the joint AASCD/AAESA Fall Instructional Leadership Conference at Perdido Beach Resort to share great ideas for instruction, learn from national leaders, and network with colleagues.

On day one of FILC, the keynote speaker was Gerry Brooks, YouTube Principal Sensation. His presentation was entitled, “Personal Climate and Culture: Becoming the Best Educator You Can Be”. His humor concerning being a principal and just overall educator was spot on. He shared great anonymes for students, parents and teachers as well. They were hilarious. Throughout his presentation he kept the crowd laughing while at the same time being very realistic with what educators deal with in today’s educational setting. He offered wonderful insight and tactics to handle the day to day stresses that we deal with in education. You are encouraged to look him up on YouTube and to follow him on Twitter @gerrybrooksprin.

The conference also provided several breakout sessions with wonderful presenters. Chelsea Neighbors presented “Mental Health and the School Environment”. Her session was very eye-opening and informative. Her topic focused on mental health issues with school aged children. Many of the statistics she provided were astonishing, such as:

- One in five young people ages 13-18 live with a mental health condition.
- Approximately 50% of students ages 14 and older with a mental illness drop out of school.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death for youth ages 10-24 with 90% of those having a mental illness.

For young people experiencing mental health issues or substance use challenges, teachers may be the first line of defense. Get involved at your school and seek out professional development opportunities on this topic and provide them to the faculty and staff. #BeTheDifference with Youth Mental Health First Aid.

AASCD’s own Brenda Rickett, presented a standing room only session on “Professional Conversations.” This session provided insight into learning how to make conversations educational leaders have effective and impactful. Asking the right questions is a key to successful conversations. The session also provided help for leading PLCs so they are effective.
Day Two of FILC began with a focus on “Intentional Leadership” with keynote speaker Kwame Simmons, a principal from Detroit, Michigan. The challenging time in education that we are facing call for great leaders and great leaders must be intentional in their efforts. Understanding how to be intentional as leaders begins with reflection on our values and consideration of how our personal and professional values differ or overlap. Challenges presented to educational leaders can be “technical” or “adaptive.” For example, taking a medication to relieve high blood pressure would be a technical challenge but changing one’s lifestyle for exercise and better diet with be an adaptive challenge. Both are necessary, but moving on to the solutions from adaptive challenges help us move to better cultures within our school settings. Fostering healthy, supportive, and safe learning environments involve key steps and processes. The sessions were informative and engaging as Dr. Simmons not only shared his views but dialogued with audience members throughout the presentation.

Our ending session on Wednesday was provided by Danny Steele. Dr. Steele led us on a journey to examine how to positively and meaningfully impact school culture as educational leaders. Some examples of ideas he has implemented as an educational leader are: using cool athletic traditions like touching the sign, using the Hippocratic Oath as a model to inspire writing personal Teacher Oaths, providing a Wall of Dreams on which students can write their dreams, creating a display of teacher hopes for students, making 100 phone calls to parents in the first 100 days of school, creating a Kindness Project, and others. As Dr. Steele shared, “Awesomeness is a choice!” You can follow Dr. Steele on his Twitter feed at @SteeleThoughts.

ALABAMA STANDARDS IMPLEMENTATION SUMMIT V

April 20, 2018  ■  Embassy Suites Hoover

“Hard Conversations in the Multigenerational Workplace”
by Jennifer Abrams

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Position/Title

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Nozomi Morgan said, “Leaders are people who make things happen.” Leadership, then, is about being passionate about what you do and what you believe, and using that passion to inspire others, take risks, and move the work forward.

Each year, Alabama ASCD recognizes passionate leaders in education in our state who stand out, take risks, and make progress in their work. First, we honor those who are in the early years of their educational careers and have distinguished themselves as leaders.

At the 2017 AASCD Fall Instructional Leadership Conference in November, Bonnie Sullivan of Elmore County Schools received the AASCD Emerging Leader Award. Sullivan is the current principal of Wetumpka Elementary and has been an elementary teacher in both primary and intermediate grades, intervention specialist, and assistant principal in Elmore County in the 12 years of her educational career. She has also served as an adjunct instructor for Auburn University in Montgomery. In her relatively short career, her work has been honored and recognized with several awards, she has published an article in a scholarly journal, and she continues to serve as an officer in several professional organizations and honor societies. She is pursuing a Ph.D. degree in from Auburn University with upcoming graduation in December, 2017. One of her colleagues said of her, “Mrs. Sullivan is always looking for innovative, new ideas, . . . grants, donations, etc., that will help enrich our school and maximize our impact on student learning.” Another describes the “nurturing, stimulating and academically challenging environment for all students” that she has established in the school.

She was nominated by a colleague in the district who has great respect and admiration for her and believed her worthy of this honor. Alabama ASCD is proud of the passionate leadership of Mrs. Bonnie Sullivan of Elmore County Schools!

AASCD also recognizes veteran educators for their consistently outstanding leadership in the ever-changing field of curriculum and instruction. Also recognized at the recent Fall Instructional Leadership Conference as the Outstanding Curriculum Leader for Fall, 2017, was Mrs. Khristie Goodwin, Curriculum Coordinator for Oxford City Schools. Goodwin has worked with curriculum and instruction, special education, and counseling and guidance, for more than ten years, guiding educators in ongoing reflection and improvement of educational experiences for all students. She is highly regarded by her Oxford colleagues as well as colleagues across the state.

Goodwin is described as a “humble and quiet leader, one who does not seek credit, but does seek opportunities to collaborate with others . . . to advance learning for students and adults within her sphere of influence.” She is known as one who models reflective practice and takes risks to innovate and experiment in order to lead others to the next level. Her participation and leadership in the Alabama Best Practices Center’s Key Leaders Network has earned her high endorsement from colleagues both inside and outside her school district.

Goodwin’s courageous leadership and partnership approach were instrumental in gaining her the nomination for Alabama ASCD’s Outstanding Curriculum Leader Award for Fall, 2017. We congratulate Mrs. Khristie Goodwin for using her passion for adult and student learning to meet the needs of all students in Oxford City Schools!
The Importance and Value of Ongoing Professional Learning

"Growth and learning are the business of schooling. To perform our mission well, professional learning is not an option; rather, it is the fabric that holds the most potential for high performing, quality public education in this century."  

Marie M. Adair, Executive Director, New Jersey ASCD

The basis for ongoing learning by professionals in an educational setting is connected to the essential reasons for schooling – learning and growth. Professional development serves as the bridge between where staff members are and where they need or desire to be in order to best meet the challenges of enabling all students to succeed. Professional learning should be viewed as an opportunity for renewal and growth. It should entice educators to acquire new and different skills in response to changing student needs, emerging technologies, new strategies, and new discoveries and approaches. While some individuals may need professional support, professional learning offerings should be flexible enough to accommodate a broad array of opportunities.

An initial inquiry very quickly becomes, what are the most effective ways to plan for and participate in professional learning? The principle of generating power for professional learning among key stakeholders is central to any process. Learning Forward (formerly the National Staff Development Council) describes three qualities of powerful professional learning which include the following:

- “Powerful professional learning arises from the real work going on in classrooms or schools.” (Lois Easton) A powerful experience is based on understanding how a school or district can improve learning for all students. Staff becomes engaged in identifying strategies connected to their grade or content.

- “The focus of powerful professional learning is on what is happening with learners.” (Lois Easton) It is about teaching and learning.

- “Powerful professional learning is generally collaborative.” (Lois Eason) Enriched learning experiences for adults result from learning from each other which leads to understanding what can be done to increase student learning. Common goals are established and shared. Collaborative designs hold the power to change the culture of a school and a district.

Several powerful professional learning designs can be identified and suggested. Among the collaborative designs are Lesson Study, the Tuning Protocol of Examining Student Work, Classroom Walkthroughs, many dimensions of Coaching, and Professional Learning Communities. In addition, workshops that focus on instructional design and effective strategies that are content based, models of excellence in teaching, and conferences that feature leaders in our profession who provide goals and inspiration with the best practices to achieve them, and many more. In modeling the use of these designs, the message for educators is one of quality continuous learning, offering a richer learning experience, being able to understand issues from many points of view, and building capacity in leaders and schools.

To build and strengthen a comprehensive approach to ongoing renewal is the work of successful schools. Professional learning that is viewed as essential to teaching and learning is placed at the center of initiatives and high quality instruction. “When the quality of teaching is a key element in improving education, the time spent on improving teaching is well worth the effort.” (Linda Darling-Hammond)
The challenges of educating youth today are real; the possibilities are limitless. Progress, models, exemplars, and opportunities for professional learning surround us. I invite you to meet the challenges and to share your stories of success with colleagues. Learning with and from each other is our support, our culture, our story, our joy!

**Upcoming Professional Growth Opportunities**

Information and registration is located at [www.clasleaders.org/PD/events](http://www.clasleaders.org/PD/events)

### January 2018

**3**
Lunch & Learn
Social Emotional Strategies for Reaching At-Risk Students
Webinar

**24-25**
Assistant Principals Conference
Hampton Inn & Suites, Orange Beach, AL

**31-Feb. 1**
Assistant Principals Conference
Embassy Suites, Huntsville, AL

### February 2018

**6**
Lunch & Learn
Legislative Basics: How to Establish and Build Relationships with Legislators
Webinar

**6**
Culture Change: Lead the Way (Day 1)
CLAS Office
Montgomery, AL

**7-8**
Assistant Principals Conference
Marriott Legends, Prattville, AL

**21**
CLAS Law Conference
Hyatt Regency Birmingham - The Wynfrey Hotel
Birmingham, AL

### March 2018

**6**
Lunch & Learn
School Culture Recharged: Strategies to Energize Your Staff and Culture

**8**
Culture Change: Lead the Way (Day 2)
CLAS Office
Montgomery, AL

### April 2018

**20**
Alabama Standards Implementation Summit V
Embassy Suites Hoover

### June 2018

**10-13**
CLAS Annual Summer Convention
Mobile, AL
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