President’s Message

Professional growth for educators is imperative to improving academic achievement for students. Providing feedback to educators is one of the most important aspects for professional growth. Feedback is also one of the most difficult and often least used tools of educators. How can it be used effectively? What part will it play in the new teacher evaluation system? Why is it important? I will share what I have learned in my 34 years in education.

First and foremost, the standard must be understood. School districts should be built on the premise that all employees work together to support and improve student achievement. A teacher must understand what it means to master a standard. A building administrator must understand what it means to master a standard and what effective instruction looks like in a classroom. District administrators must understand how a building administrator facilitates effective classroom instruction and be able to support and encourage those efforts. Superintendents must understand and work with district administrators to support all these endeavors.

Effective feedback begins with instructional conversations. Face to face dialogue about expectation is paramount. These can be done in groups through PLCs, grade level groups, department meetings, etc. What is expected in the classroom? What non-negotiables do you expect to see? Learning targets? Effective questioning? Differentiated learning activities?
High level engagement (which is different from compliance)? Group activities? Time for student discussion? Obviously, lessons, formats and disciplines are different, so these non-negotiables may vary. The point though is for everyone to know what is expected.

Once classroom expectations are understood, building administrators must visit classrooms to actually see what is going on at different times, in different periods, in various subjects. Whether this is through a walkthrough or a formal or informal evaluation, administrators must be focused on all aspects of the classroom. What are the students doing? Is it meaningful? Is there ample opportunity to discuss the lesson and digest the information? Do students have an opportunity to work together? Are there questions that stimulate a deeper thinking and deeper understanding? Is the material made relevant and are “real world” examples being offered? What could the teacher do to take the lesson to the next level — the next level of deeper understanding, the next level of relevance to other disciplines, the next level of application? Where are the struggling students seated and are they engaged? Are there opportunities for differentiated learning? Are reading strategies being implemented to ensure that all students have access to the text? Administrators must look closely and deeply. The goal is not to say “good job”, but the goal is to say “good job and here are some things that will help students achieve to an even higher degree.” However, it does not stop with the “looking”. There must be follow-up face to face conversations with the teacher to discuss what was seen. In some cases, it may be difficult. If the focus is how to move students forward and not how to have a “good observation”, the conversations must take place. Remember, it is not about rating a teacher; it is about how to take instruction to the next level.

As we move up the ladder, district administrators must then support the expectations. Depending on the district, this may include working with teachers to aid them in understanding effective instruction and mastery of standards. It may also include working with building administrators to assist them in an understanding of effective observation skills. Based on data, are there any overall areas of weakness in a particular school or the district as a whole? What needs to be put in place to address the weaknesses? How can I assist with this? How can I work with the building administrator to provide professional development in a particular area? How can I assist with classroom walkthroughs or observations to help hone an administrators skill? What strategies have proved effective in other schools that I can share?

Superintendents have a daunting task. How do I put structures in place to ensure that all of the above is happening? How do I support and encourage all administrators to positively impact student achievement? How do I lead instructional conversations with my district staff and building administrators to ensure that it is a priority? How do I assist the administrators in having conversations that are effective and meaningful? How do I model that in my staff meetings and individual meetings? Do I have frequent face to face conversations with my administrators to discuss their efforts? How can I ensure that all students in the district are given the same level of instruction regardless of their school or their teacher?

Effective feedback is more than just a conversation. It is based on a standard of excellence that our students deserve. It is based on a level of achievement that we want all students to achieve. It is based on the premise that all students are given equal access to a high level of instruction and are given the tools necessary to reach the standard. Effective feedback is a must. It should be a non-negotiable in every district.
Everyone is aware that deeper learning environments hold the potential to support all students and in so doing would provide necessary skills for success in their future personal and work lives. There is much research that supports that teacher and principals are critical factors in supporting student success. It is an expectation that teachers must master teaching skills so they can orchestrate deeper learning experiences. But here is the caveat, education leaders at all levels must also understand and model deeper learning skills while supporting a culture of questioning, inquiry and risk taking. We really do need leaders who can recognize and nurture existing pockets of deeper learning and then inspire school-side expansion of those everyday practices.

Six areas of deeper learning have been identified as critical for today’s students:

1. Master core content
2. Think critically and solve complex problems
3. Work collaboratively
4. Communicate effectively to inspire and communicate a vision
5. Learn how to learn
6. Develop leadership habits of mind

*Cator, Lathram, Schneider, Vander Ark (2015)*

Here are 2 fundamental questions that must be answered for the deeper learning to happen:

What should deeper learning leaders know and be able to do?

What would a system of preparation and development need to include in order to prepare deeper learning leaders?

The research by Cator, Lathram, Schneider, and Vander Ark produced 10 roles that are required to lead toward deeper learning. Each of these roles plays a specific part and fits into the process.

Here are 2 fundamental questions that must be answered for the deeper learning to happen:

What should deeper learning leaders know and be able to do?

What would a system of preparation and development need to include in order to prepare deeper learning leaders?

The 7 recommendations describe a vision for what preparation and development programs will need to include in order to equip leaders with competencies to lead towards deeper learning. There should be a broad, dynamic and complex set of pathways to help leaders become “leaders of deeper learning”.

This is a timely topic as the state moves to a different teacher evaluation system, considers micro-credentialing from universities for specialized studies, and evaluates student achievement data. Perhaps, a review of the process would be beneficial to all current and aspiring leaders, so the book, Preparing Leaders for Deeper Learning, may be just the place to start.

Be sure to follow Alabama ASCD on social media. I welcome you to become an active participant in the professional learning opportunities sponsored by AASCD.
The 2020 Alabama ASCD Winter Conference was a great success and was filled with great keynote addresses, breakout sessions, and great food. This year’s conference was packed with a wealth of information from national, state, and local educators on how to use feedback to move your organization forward. I enjoyed collaborating with other education professionals from around the state and brainstorming on how we can move education forward in Alabama and our school districts.

Thank you to all the attendees, partners, and presenters for making this conference a great success. The conference, focused on administrators, coaches, teachers, and students utilizing feedback to improve teaching and learning. There were ten great sessions over two days that focused on how to Transform Feedback for Professional Learning. Presenters led diverse breakout sessions to help educators find current information and solutions to the most pressing problems they face in schools.

Joellen Killion, Senior Advisor for Learning Forward shared information on the feedback process for administrators, coaches, and teachers. During her keynote, she shared how feedback is the core part of a continuous improvement process and shared vital information on:

- How to distinguish between feedback and feedback for learning for adults in a professional environment
- The importance of understanding the rationale for feedback for professional learning,
- Analyzing the feedback typology
- Generating ways to integrate the feedback process to advance your work
- Her session identified how critical it is to make sure assumptions are not what defines feedback, but it is the entire process of engagement, analysis, and reflection.

The second day of the conference featured Dr. Daniel Boyd, Deputy Superintendent, Alabama State Department of Education sharing information regarding updates from the state department. Break out sessions for the second day included:

1. Professional Ethics: It’s So Much more than Misconduct
2. Building Collective Efficacy in Our Schools: A Story of Research into Practice
3. Setting Up a Successful Coaching Program
4. Feedback is Not the F-Word: Giving People-Friendly Feedback
5. Cultivating 21st Century Learners
6. Crucial Conversations
7. When Our Grades Don’t Add Up
8. The Coaching Connection: One System’s Journey
10. Re-aligning for Success: An unfinished Story

If you are looking for ideas on improving teaching and learning in your district or school, I invite you to contact one of the Alabama ASCD Board of Directors and District Representatives and allow us to partner with you or share valuable insight from this year’s Winter Conference.

We are planning and looking forward to next year’s conference on January 25-26, 2021. If you have any topics or professional learning you would like for us to address or ideas on how we can improve next year’s conference, please contact any Alabama ASCD board member or district representative and share your ideas.
Close your eyes and imagine the last great professional learning opportunity that you participated in. Did it look like this? Educators rushing into the venue to get registered, partners ready to greet you and share the latest and greatest innovative idea or item, and a great lineup of speakers waiting to provide information on instructional best practices. If you have not attended professional learning that resembles this dream, then you have been missing out on impactful professional learning!

As you know, CLAS and AASCD, along with the Alabama State Department of Education work together to offer meaningful professional learning opportunities for educators working closely with instruction in their school systems. Although the year is about to end, there are plenty of professional learning opportunities left for you! In February, AASCD, in partnership with CLAS and the SDE is offering the Curriculum and Instruction Bootcamps, which will be held on February 18 and 19, 2020. Due to the overwhelming response, we are offering two days of the bootcamps in different parts of the state. The February 18, 2020 Bootcamp will be at the Instructional Services Center in Alabaster and the February 19, 2020 Bootcamp will be on the campus of Alabama A&M in Huntsville. This will be the last of the bootcamp offerings for this year so make sure you get registered.

CLAS is excited about our 2020 Summer Convention, which will be held in Montgomery on June 14-17, 2020 at the beautiful Renaissance Montgomery Hotel and Spa and Montgomery Performing Arts Centre. Our keynote speakers will not only motivate you, but will leave you with the desire to return to your districts ready for the school year, while our clinic and break-out sessions will provide instructional best practices in working with students and adults with mental health concerns in your districts. In your spare time, you will have the opportunity to network with colleagues and catch up with old friends, so make plans to attend. YOU DO NOT WANT TO MISS IT!

Again, our goal at CLAS is to provide exemplary professional learning for school and school system administrators. For all of our professional learning opportunities, please visit our website, www.clasleaders.org. Go to the professional learning tab, and upcoming events for a listing of all CLAS offerings... and as always, if anyone at CLAS can ever assist you with anything, don't hesitate to contact us.

Servant Leadership for a Lifetime

Servant Leadership is South Carolina ASCD’s focus and theme for the Board of Directors for 2019 - 2020. At our summer training workshop, our new president shared this vision and led us through several activities that gave us time to reflect upon our leadership styles and service to others. My first thought was, “What does that mean for me in this time of my life?”

When I was working full time as an elementary school principal, I shared and encouraged students daily with our school’s mantra - really our vision - for them to be “lifelong leaders and learners”. I understood what this meant for our children and also for our faculty and staff. I also understood what it meant for me as their leader.

When I retired in 2014 after thirty-six years as a teacher and administrator, I must admit I was a little lost. Was leadership truly lifelong? How could I continue to be a servant leader in this new season of my life? What would it look like? Would any opportunities come my way?

Would I have to find contentment serving occasionally from the sidelines?

I soon learned that servant leadership is really not about position or age but rather about desire, initiative, and the heart. Opportunities were all around me. I just had to look and listen, step up and out, and offer to serve.

Some of the most uplifting and humbling opportunities came as I served on several mission teams in different parts of the world. As I worked with dedicated teachers in an isolated village in Haiti, or with energetic Roma children and volunteers in a dilapidated school in Slovakia, or with curious children and their caregivers in orphanages in Ukraine, personal growth and rewards were always vital benefits. Even though we did not speak the same language or come from the same worlds, we worked
side by side serving, learning, and doing whatever needed to be done without thought of position, wealth, or educational level.

Of course, I did not have to travel around the world to find ways to lead and serve. By definition, a servant leader focuses primarily on “the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong.” I have had life-changing experiences working with neighbors and friends picking up trash in my neighborhood and community, planting vegetables with children in local school gardens, and socializing with widows in my church.

I now have the privilege of leading and serving others in my role as Executive Director for South Carolina ASCD. In this post-retirement part-time position, I have the opportunity to work with some of the leading educators in my state. They inspire, motivate, and challenge me as we seek together to improve the teaching and learning of all students. They remind me that my skills and desire to serve are still needed and appreciated.

Servant leadership does not stop with retirement! Rather, it is a lifelong privilege, calling, and blessing for which I am abundantly grateful!

STEM-Focused Featuring Lauderdale County Schools

A focus of the Lauderdale County School System’s curricular efforts in the past few years has been in the area of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). We have really concentrated our curriculum and professional development efforts in this area. In particular, we have really emphasized Computer Science, robotics, and career technical course offerings.

We now offer code.org’s “Advanced Placement (AP) Computer Science Principles” at six of our seven high schools. The seventh high school will offer AP Computer Science for the 2020-2021 academic year. Teachers of this course must attend a week-long course during the summer break. They then attend two additional weekend sessions throughout the year.

Also, we offer code.org’s “Computer Science Discoveries” in six of our seven high schools. Computer Science Discoveries is an introductory level computer science class. Computer Science Discoveries are for grades (6-8). Our intent in offering this course was to increase the exposure of computer science to our middle school students. As with AP Computer Science Principles, teachers of Computer Science Discoveries attend professional development for a week during the summer followed up by two weekends during the academic year.

Every one of our schools also participates in robotics. Many schools have multiple robotics teams and/or robotics clubs. Our stakeholders, in particular, our students, teachers, and parents have really embraced robotics competitions. They are raucous affairs! The excitement of these events is really a sight to behold.

We have also trained our elementary librarians in various facets of computer science and robotics. These trainings have been facilitated by Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI) personnel and/or professional development funded by the Alabama State Department of Education. The librarians supplement their traditional responsibilities with STEM lessons. Once again, this is an attempt to really increase student interest in the STEM fields.

Finally, our career technology center, Allen Thornton Career Technical Center, currently offers Engineering courses, Industrial and Electrical Systems, Industrial Systems, and Precision Machining. Likewise, during the 2020-2021 academic year, we will offer certification in Cybersecurity. These courses allow an additional opportunity for our secondary students to have exposure to more STEM offerings.

We have to mention a special thank you to Governor Kay Ivey, the Alabama State Department of Education and our Legislature, as well. They have really emphasized computer science and robotics by offering grant opportunities. We have been lucky to receive the following grants over the past few years: AMSTI Robotics Grant, Alabama Digital Tools for Teachers Initiative, and the Alabama Middle School Computer Initiative Competitive grant. Monies awarded in these grants have really, really increased our offerings in robotics and computer science.

We are extremely excited about these curricular offerings provided for our students. We have made and will continue to make, instructional and professional development decisions in order to prepare our students for the modern workforce.
It Starts with a Ripple.

A ripple of innovation. A ripple of excitement. Ripples of newfound knowledge, engagement, collaboration, and so much more.

Our conference is designed by educators for educators, and empowers you to connect with the resources, knowledge, and community you need to implement innovative and effective instruction with a whole child approach. We learn from each other, we teach each other, and we lead each other, together. Start Your Ripple at Empower20.

As the state leader in providing professional learning for curriculum development, coaching and supervision, Alabama ASCD works to stay abreast of best practices in curriculum development and in supervisory practices that will have the greatest impact on teaching and learning. We believe Alabama education professionals who forge new paths for students and teachers through utilizing best practices deserve recognition.

The Outstanding Curriculum Leader Lifetime Achievement Award was created to honor colleagues whose leadership action in these areas is progressive, responsive, and authentic, and goes far beyond the school and district where they work. It is a long-term career achievement award given to educators who have had significant contribution and influence locally, throughout Alabama, and across the nation.

Each year, the Awards Committee seeks nominations for this award in late fall so the award can be presented at the Alabama ASCD Winter Conference in January. It is a privilege each year to serve with Brenda Rickett, Nancy Cotter, and Vicky Ozment to accept and review nominations and select the nominee who best embodies the values and leadership of the organization.

Dr. Missy Brooks has been the Director of Curriculum and Instruction for Mountain Brook Schools for 9 years, and last year she added Special Education Director to her plate. If anyone could handle both roles, she can! Because she is a learner, a collaborator, an innovator, and a capacity builder, she is able to synthesize her work into making the best decisions for every student.

She continually builds her expertise by focusing on her own learning as she focuses on student learning. Then, she shares her learning, her expertise, and the experiences she has created in her district with educators across Alabama and the nation, through organizations like NSTA, Learning Forward, CoSN, and iNACOL. But, she doesn’t do it alone; rather, she brings her colleagues along to build their capacity to lead, innovate, and collaborate. Dr. Brooks implemented the trending best practices of student voice, building teacher and student ownership of learning, and customizing learning for student engagement with strategies such as flipped classrooms, eSchool days, blended learning, quality questioning, and total participation techniques.

With a background in Secondary Education in English and Earth/Space Science, Dr. Brooks began her career in Phenix City Schools and then, Shelby County Schools. She taught middle and high school grades for 13 years before moving into a leadership role. She served Thompson High School, Homewood High School, and Mountain Brook High School as Assistant Principal for Curriculum and Instruction. During that time, her direct approach and can-do attitude strengthened her reputation for finding solutions to students’ learning challenges.

Once she became Director of Curriculum and Instruction for Mountain Brook Schools, Dr. Brooks immediately began challenging institutional traditions with insightful questions, and influencing perspectives and instructional practices with fresh, innovative ideas. An out-of-the-box thinker, Dr. Brooks brought a new creativity and focus to the district. Collaborating with district technology, student services, special education, school administrators, teachers, curriculum and professional learning specialists, and many others, she has shared the fruits of her work in Mountain Brook with both public and private schools in Alabama as well as across the country.

The foundation of the influence Dr. Brooks has had throughout her career is the relationships she has built and nurtured. Her ability to read people and situations keeps her in tune to the educational environment just as her enthusiasm and willingness to take calculated risks move her forward. One nominator shared of Dr. Brooks: “Never hesitating to ask the tough questions in strategic ways, she leads teachers to thoughtfully consider the reasons why they teach precisely what they do and precisely how they do – continually refocusing them back to that which is best for student learning.”

Her greatest quality, however, is that she does all that she does humbly, without a thought about accolades or recognition, in the best interests of students and the teachers who work with them. Another colleague spoke of “Dr. Brooks’ relentless pursuit of building up the skillsets of teachers and students, and ... her creation of a greater capacity for innovation and engagement in the classroom to yield increased student learning” as the essence of her leadership and influence. The Outstanding Curriculum Leader Lifetime Achievement Award was designed for people like Dr. Brooks who know and live their purpose of serving the best interests of children.
Happy New Year from The Office of Student Learning (OSL)! The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) student learning staff kicked January off with our statewide Curriculum and Instruction Meetings in Athens, Alabaster, Montgomery, and Mobile throughout the month. I hope your school or district representatives had a chance to attend either the morning whole group informational session or one of the afternoon breakout sessions. If you would like to review the presentation and resources or would like to share the information with your stakeholders, you may access it at https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12mzXRW42QjN4psMty1_lwXhsPvC-Wu39d. The Office of Student Learning will host the final round of statewide meetings in April 2020, so please make plans to join us in a location near you. If you have questions regarding these statewide meetings, please contact Cristin Dillard (cdillard@alsde.edu) in Instructional Services.

As February begins, we are finalizing our collaborative efforts with AASCD and CLAS to host the Winter C & I Bootcamps in Alabaster at the Shelby County Instructional Services Center on February 18, and in Huntsville at the Alabama A & M Regional Inservice Center on February 19. The topics will include the following:

- Creating and Aligning Meaningful Pathways for All Students
- ACAP: Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program and Overview of Instructional Supports
- Standards-Based Reporting: Focused Instruction + Authentic Assessment = Transformative Results
- PowerSchool: Analytics, Learning Management System (LMS), and Special Programs Reporting
- 2019 Alabama Literacy Act: Implementation and Implications
- 2019 Alabama Mathematics Course of Study Overview and Implementation Guidance

The bootcamp format provides participants with an opportunity to take a “deeper dive” into three 90-minute sessions. Feedback from previous bootcamp events yielded suggestions for increased effectiveness to expand our collaborative support for LEAs around the most current “hot” topics that continue to impact LEAs. Registration logistics and additional information can be located at https://www.smore.com/31th6.

As we approach the spring and summer months, the ALSDE is working diligently to finalize and communicate several new state support mechanisms including a new state strategic plan; an Alabama Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework, definition, and repository of initiatives/projects and other resources; a comprehensive English Language (EL) framework of supports; and a new 5-year collaboration with the comp center, R7CC, to support Alabama in early literacy, early math, and comprehensive EL guidance. Finally, a comprehensive summer professional development listing of opportunities hosted or facilitated/co-facilitated by OSL will be posted in late-March or early-April, including but not limited to the following: 2019 Mathematics Course or Study: Overview, Transitioning, and Implementation; The Literacy Act Implementation (science of reading, multisensory strategies, dyslexia awareness, etc.); Physical Education and Health; Library Media; MEGA Conference (including new strands such as EL), and other high-yield learning opportunities.

As you continue to support student learning across the state of Alabama, please don't hesitate to contact The Office of Student Learning if you have questions or concerns. We look forward to our future collaborative efforts to best meet your LEA needs.

Dr. Elisabeth Davis
Assistant State Superintendent of Student Learning

Dr. Sandy Ledwell
Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative

Karen Porter
Alabama Reading Initiative

Angela Martin
Federal Programs

Sean Stevens
Instructional Services

Crystal Richardson
Special Education Services
Teaching as a High-Risk Profession

By Troy Hutchings, Ed.D.
Nationally Recognized Expert — Educator Ethics

Teaching is a highly challenging and highly rewarding profession. It's also a high-risk one.

Think of the attributes we most admire in teachers: a caring demeanor, willingness to go above and beyond time spent in the classroom to help students, an ability to reach children who are disconnected, and the personal knowledge of their students that can help each one find his or her passion.

It turns out these same attributes are also commonly found in teachers whose behaviors cross a line — whether in a legal sense, or through the kinds of unintended consequences that wind up damaging the trust that connects students, families, teachers and schools. These kinds of situations don't usually make headlines, but unintended consequences happen every day, creating risks for educators and students that are unlike those confronted by professionals in other fields. Consider these key differences:

- Other professionals typically provide a narrow service to address a singular problem — a legal challenge or an illness, for example. As a society, we expect teachers to address not just learning, but also a broad range of societal issues, including extreme poverty, discrimination and the negative consequences of relationships that exist outside of the classroom.
- In professions like law and medicine, the practitioner typically interprets knowledge to help the person he or she is serving. In education, teachers help students meet, and at times exceed, their own knowledge base, typically by becoming active partners in learning.
- Doctors and attorneys aren’t expected to develop personal relationships with clients as part of fulfilling their duties — in fact, it’s discouraged. From the beginning of their training, educators are taught that strong interpersonal relationships are at the heart of effective teaching and learning.
- Other professionals typically provide services to one client at a time. Educators do so for entire classrooms of children at once, each with different academic, social and emotional needs that must be addressed simultaneously for learning to take place.

Other professions work through these kinds of issues by creating a culture of social distance — which is why you don’t invite your therapist to a birthday party or ask your dermatologist to look at a rash in the grocery line. But teachers don’t hold weekly sessions with students — they’re integral parts of their daily lives for the entire school year. Unlike doctors and counselors, we also expect teachers to spend time with students outside of the classroom as coaches and club sponsors, as mentors, as counselors and, often, as the adult they can come to with the problems they’re struggling with in and out of school. Teachers who take on these additional roles are often the ones who find themselves in the most vulnerable spaces.

Time and proximity aren’t the only reasons the role of educator is a risky one. As every educator knows, the relationship between teachers and students becomes a shared space very quickly. Think of a coach who pushes a student athlete to dig in and find the untapped strength needed to break a record or win a game, or an English teacher who draws highly personal writing out of a reluctant student. Most of us can think back to our own time in school to an educator that reached us on a much deeper level than the subject he or she taught. There’s an intimate connection in all teaching relationships that’s highly nuanced, highly dependent on the individuals involved and very powerful. The shift from a student passively receiving knowledge to becoming actively engaged can blur these boundaries even further. That can be dangerous. The irony is clear. Those educators whom we have long considered as being most influential in our own development may have faced the greatest danger.
That’s not to say that educators should step back from extracurricular activities or caring for students. Few committed teachers would be willing to do so, and as a society we value the teachers who go above and beyond the classroom the most. But what we, both individually and as a profession, need to do is to acknowledge the vulnerabilities we face as educators. The uncomfortable truth is that we are in a high-risk position where seemingly insignificant missteps can, over time, cause irreparable damage to our students, our careers, our schools and communities, and the integrity of the profession — whether we break laws or school policies, or not.

Research tells us that educators make more than a thousand decisions a day, the vast majority of which involve interactions with individual students that are often made reflexively. We rarely have time to step back and think through the potential long-term implications of our actions and reactions to student behavior. And most teachers aren’t trained to do so, as they study to become educators or are mentored in their first years in the profession.

This is why teaching — like law, medicine and counseling — needs a framework that recognizes the challenging situations in which educators often find themselves. A professional code of ethics and related training can help educators recognize these difficult gray areas when they arise. More importantly, such a framework can provide a collective understanding of the challenging situations teachers face, and a mechanism that allows teachers to articulate and make decisions about those challenges individually, through conversations with peers and as a profession.

As I’ve written before, too often these kinds of difficult issues go without discussion because we don’t have a way to separate them from our personal beliefs and biases. A professional code of ethics can not only give educators the framework to guide us through the thousands of routine interactions that make up our days, but also the permission to discuss sensitive issues with each other in a professional context.

This brings me to perhaps the most important reason teaching is such a high-risk profession:

As educators, we’re trained to value and even relish the idea of professional autonomy … that once school starts and the classroom door is closed, we’re on our own. That may work well in terms of pedagogy, but it also puts us in a position where we are even more vulnerable when serious problems arise. As we will explore in subsequent articles, professional ethics connect us to each other as educators, and as professionals, in ways that shatter that isolation when it matters the most.

About the Author

Hutchings has a record of full-time teaching, research and administrative responsibilities at the university level spanning 15 years; and has served as a high school teacher, administrator and coach in public and private schooling environments for 16 years. He researches, writes and speaks about professional ethics, educator misconduct, and developing a framework for an ethical and legal teaching practice. He was the primary subject-matter expert contributing to the development of the ProEthica® program, a professional learning program on educator ethics.

For more information on the ProEthica program, contact Syfr Learning’s Matthew Shafer at Matthew@syfrlearning.com or Christine Drew at Christine@syfrlearning.com.
## AASCD Board of Directors

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<td>Evelyn Nettles</td>
<td>Region 5 Representative</td>
<td>Birmingham City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Newell</td>
<td>Region 6 Representative</td>
<td>Jacksonville City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khristie Goodwin</td>
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<td>Oxford City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily Harris</td>
<td>Region 7 Representative</td>
<td>Talladega County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avis Williams</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>LaKesha Brackins</td>
<td>Region 10 Representative</td>
<td>Mobile County</td>
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<td>Donna Ash</td>
<td>Region 11 Representative</td>
<td>Butler County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teri B. Prim</td>
<td>Region 11 Representative</td>
<td>Enterprise City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy Story</td>
<td>Assistant for Technology</td>
<td>Homewood City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisabeth Davis</td>
<td>SDE Representative</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydia Davenport</td>
<td>Higher Ed Representative</td>
<td>Alabama A&amp;M University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy Cotter</td>
<td>Executive Director Emeritus</td>
<td>Retired/Talladega County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demica Sanders</td>
<td>CLAS Advisor</td>
<td>CLAS</td>
</tr>
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