

Winter
2022

A

Alabama

Elementary Administrator

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Brigett Stewart

Alabama's NAESP

2022 National

Distinguished Principal



AAESA President's Report



Waller Martin
Brookwood Elementary
Enterprise City

Greetings from Brookwood Elementary School in Enterprise, Al!! I hope this article finds you in good spirits and

all is well. I know this is a busy time of year for all of us, as there are all kinds of school activities taking place throughout our buildings. Christmas parties, activities, and parades are just a few of the many events that take place in our schools. I hope you're able to take some time to enjoy these events with your staff, parents, and especially your students. This is a special time of year in the school business!!

For some of our students, the only holiday they may experience is the one at school!! I'm always so very proud of our teachers who make sure all their students have a happy holiday, and are included in the classroom gifts. Our teachers go above and beyond to ensure all students are included in the gift exchange. Please be sure and thank all your staff members for what they do for your students, especially during this time of year.

I have never been a big supporter of New Year's resolutions, simply put I just have a hard time following through on them!! I do sit down at the beginning of the year with my calendar and lay out a "game plan" for the rest of the school year. I look at the events and try to go ahead and prioritize my action steps. I find this helps me to stay ahead of the game and helps me from getting behind.

One of the big items on my list is of course the ACAP and that week of assessments/testing. Last year in January I meet with several leadership team members and we sat down to develop a "game plan" to prepare for the administration of the ACAP. Last year was the first time we administered the ACAP, since we were in the first year of reconfiguring to a Pre-K/sixth grade school. Earlier in the school year (August) our reading and math specialists shared data with our teachers. This data included ACAP performance from the previous year, as well as the student's strengths and weaknesses. We asked our teachers to use this data and help guide their instruction as well.

Our thoughts were to start early, and not wait until the week before testing. Although we had addressed the ACAP with our teachers throughout the year, we began to "drill down" in late January. During our weekly teacher meetings we addressed concerns with our teachers as they pertained to students, and areas of content. Our reading and math coaches assisted teachers, and set up coaching cycles for our teachers who needed extra assistance. We also met with Intervention, EL, and Sp. Needs teachers to solicit input and provide support as needed.

Please understand that we didn't allow the administration of the ACAP to dominate our school or completely consume everything we did, however we wanted to make sure we did everything we could to help our students be successful!! We simply wanted to help our students become better test takers. As a Principal I want my students to do the best and be the best!! I would hope that every Principal would want this for their students as well.

AAESA President's Report Cont'd

One thing that resonated with our team was that we needed to start test preparation early. We started one month prior to the assessment, and every Friday we blocked off 1.5 hours and allocated this time specifically to ACAP preparation. We provided the teachers with a detailed schedule and script to practice the assessment. We practiced securing cell phones, using devices, bathroom breaks, and just plain "sitting still" when the test was completed. We tried to create a "near perfect" testing environment. We didn't make announcements, and we discouraged check-outs.

During these four Fridays everyone learned so much!! Each week we picked up on details and items that we had missed and not thought of. We saw improvement each week!!

I also reached out to the high school football, basketball, and baseball coaches. I asked them if they would have their teams create a video encouraging our students to do their best on the test and take it seriously. They were happy to oblige me!! We played the videos for the students prior to the practice tests. This really seemed to "fire-up" our students, and created an enthusiastic test taking environment.

The Friday before testing began we invited the high school cheerleaders over for a pep rally. Excitement filled the air!! We asked several sixth grade students to speak to the student body on the importance of doing your best, this was big for our students.

We sent school wide blasts home to students wishing them good luck and encouraging them to get a good night's sleep, while eating a good breakfast. The PTO helped provide goodie-bags and treats as

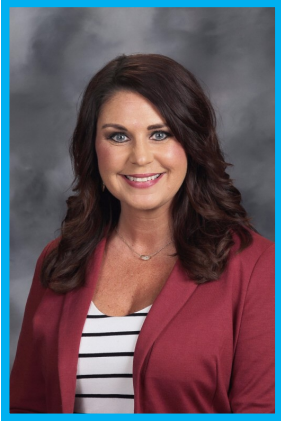
well. Classroom teachers created their own reward incentives and provided treats also.

I'm sure you're wondering how we did after all this hard work and preparation!! I can tell you that our scores were above state average and near the top of our district!! I was very proud of our students, staff, and parents.

I know ACAP is a long ways off, but it will be here before you know it!! It's never too early to start thinking about it and making plans. In the meantime I hope you have an opportunity to spend time with family and friends during the holidays, while getting some much needed rest. I encourage you to take some time for yourself and get away from the daily grind. Remember January is right around the corner!!



Life Changing Experience



Brigett Stewart
Piedmont Elementary
Piedmont City

Being named as Alabama's 2022 National Distinguished Principal has been a life changing experience filled with some of the

most heartwarming and memorable moments of my career and life. Last February, as a textbook committee meeting was ending, my superintendent asked me to stay after and meet with him about another matter. During the meeting he got an urgent call that a very angry parent was in our gym demanding to see me. He told me that he would escort me there. As we crossed the parking lot to the gymnasium, my superintendent could barely match my pace as I sprinted to the gym. To my shock and surprise, I opened the door to the sound and sights of my entire school cheering and chanting my name! Students were holding congratulatory signs and as I moved further into the gym, my eyes found my husband, children, family and dear friends all there to share in the excitement. I was overwhelmed with so many emotions and when Dr. Vic Wilson turned the mic over to me, I could barely gather myself to speak and thank everyone. It was a day that I will never forget.

In the weeks and months that followed, I began receiving emails with details for the National Distinguished Principal event that would be held in Washington, D.C. in the fall. The excitement was palpable! I was given advice from former NDPs about what to expect and over and over again, I was told that it would be a once in a lifetime experience. On the day before I left for Washington, I was given a surprise send off by the entire school. Students lined every hallway and cheered as I walked through. They gave me hugs and threw confetti. It was so special to have that kind of support from my school family.

I was able to bring my husband, Tracy, with me as my plus one for the NDP festivities in D.C. For the first time ever, the NDP events were held at the historic Willard InterContinental hotel. It did not disappoint! The hotel is

beautiful and filled with a rich history dating back to the early 1800's. One of the most interesting things I learned is that the term "lobbyist" was coined by President Ulysses S. Grant while at the Willard. He was a frequent visitor of the hotel, and petitioners would often wait in the lobby to ask him for legislative favors. He referred to them as "lobbyists". When we arrived at the hotel, I was given a welcome bag full of goodies and a special handwritten note by Zone 4 Director, Ashley Wilson. Upon entering our room, I was greeted by the most beautiful flowers with well wishes from Dr. Vic Wilson and Rickey Darby. Our first chance to meet other NDPs was on a nighttime trolley tour of the monuments. It was breathtaking! The weather was perfect and a full moon lit up the sky making a perfect backdrop for photos. It was nice to chat with other NDPs and their families while aboard the trolley and have some down time before the big events!

The next morning we checked in at the NAESP welcome desk and received our official NDP lanyard and badge, our own NDP stationary, and other goodies. We met our Zone 4 Director and the other Zone 4 NDPs from the southeast region of the country. We exchanged stories about our schools and immediately developed a comradery. In fact we chatted so long that eventually we noticed the Zone 4 crew was the only group still there talking! A good sign for sure!

Later that day, we all gathered to listen to each NDP give a two minute speech. It was one of my most favorite parts of the trip. I loved hearing the stories of heart, laughter, surprise, and gratitude for our profession. I shared a quote from one of my students, Liam, who had written a letter to me before my trip. He said, "It aint easy being a principal, but you don't have to do it alone." Everyone laughed at the first part and then I heard some affirmative "awwws" as I read the second part. Liam's words are so true! Our jobs as school leaders are challenging and can feel overwhelming at times. I am thankful I don't have to do it alone and have an incredibly supportive team!

That night, we attended a reception at the U.S. Department of State. The terrace provided amazing nighttime views of the city and the Washington Monument. It was a wonderful time to chat with other NDPs and their guests. I also got to meet NAESP Executive Director, Dr.

Life Changing Experience Cont'd

Earl Franks, who used to serve as the executive director of CLAS. He shared some of his fond memories of serving school leaders in Alabama. We were able to tour the Diplomatic Reception Rooms which house many pieces of Martha Washington's porcelain collection.

On Friday, our day began early with a walk to the White House where Lifetouch took a group photo of the 2022 NDPs. We shot a few video segments and seized the opportunity to take a few selfies in front of the White House lawn.

Next, we were bussed to the United States Department of Education. I must admit that I was a little awestruck at the sight of the building and while reading those words stretched across the front. I never imagined myself being invited to a place like this, and it felt surreal. It was a special moment. While there, we were treated with a quick surprise visit by U.S. Secretary of Education, Dr. Miguel Cardona, who thanked us for our service and commitment to students across the country. We participated in round table discussions about special education, social emotional learning, and teacher shortages with representatives from the U.S. Department of Education. We also made time for a few photos! Upon returning to the hotel, we participated in an 80's themed team building session led by principal and author, Andy Jacks. Everyone sang along to the familiar 80's tunes and formed new connections during this fast paced highly interactive session. Lots of laughs were shared and memorable pictures of everyone donning 80's attire.

Before heading upstairs to get ready for the main event, we were able to share mementos from every NDP's home state. We were greeted with fun music by the NAESP Directors as they gave each one of us giant white bags to collect our items. It was so much fun seeing the unique and creative mementos from each state. I brought delicious pecan brittle to share from a local fudge shop in our town called, Dugger Mountain Fudge & Coffee Company. One of my favorite items that I received was maple syrup candy from Vermont.

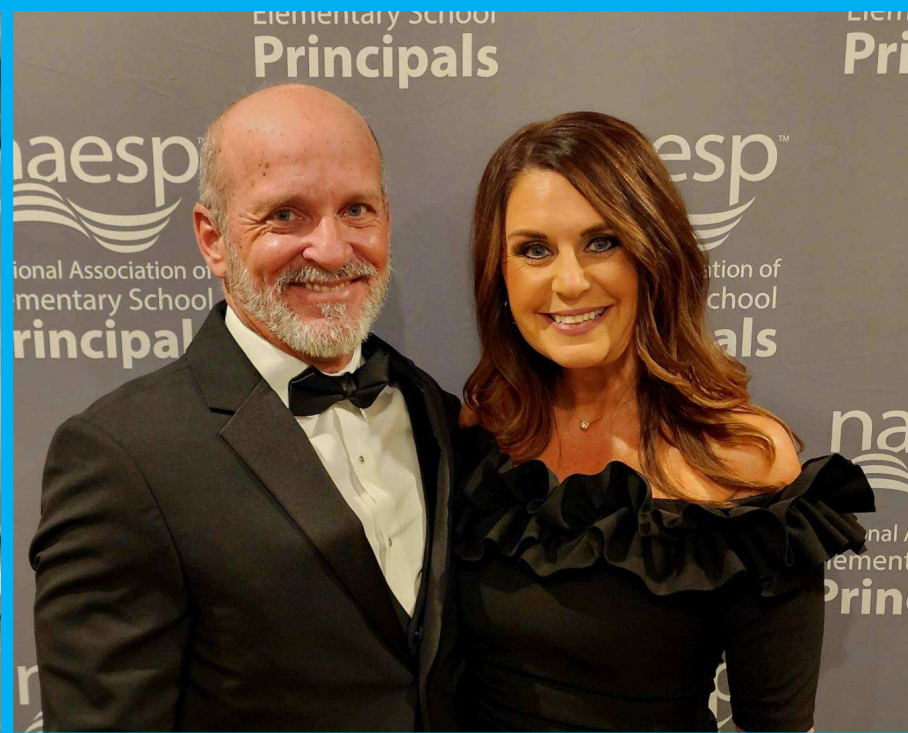
On Friday evening, we put on our best attire and headed downstairs to the main event. We had opportunities to take professional photos prior to dinner, and we also had photo booth props to take some fun pictures with friends. When the grand ballroom doors were finally

opened, we began making our way to our seats. The entire room was simply gorgeous with attention to every little detail from the gold trimmed place cards to the NDP seal atop a chocolate tart dessert. U.S. Secretary of Education, Dr. Cardona, addressed the NDPs with such high regard. He described the struggles we are currently facing in education and the respect he has for principals and teachers across the nation who are tackling these issues daily. Next, all of the NDPs assumed their positions near the stage and one by one we ascended the stairs to receive our framed certificates and engraved golden bells. After a congratulatory champagne toast by NAESP President, Dave Steckler, all of the NDPs were asked to stand and participate in the tradition of ringing their bells for students. It was a beautiful and poignant moment that I will treasure forever. The night ended with everyone on the dance floor singing and dancing the night away! The entire night was magical!

I remain humbled by the honor of being named the 2022 National Distinguished Principal and feel privileged to have represented our state and the AAESA organization in D.C. It has been a remarkable and unforgettable experience! I am grateful to work alongside each of you extraordinary leaders and look forward to helping future NDPs prepare for the journey as so many of my fellow NDPs did for me! Thank you!



Life Changing Experience Cont'd



Life Changing Experience Cont'd



Life Changing Experience Cont'd



Executive Director's Report



Vic Wilson
AAESA Executive Director

Congrats to all of you for so much great news! Alabama is rocking the education world, and it goes back to the leadership in our schools. Thank you for your hard work. Alabama has the top six spots for growth in math scores for all students. This is the top six in the nation! Alabama has 19 in the top 25. Even the SEC doesn't have this kind of dominance. Just sayin'.... The chart below shows the school districts that rank in the top 25 for growth. The number adjacent to the rank is the actual growth students showed. For example, Piedmont students had 1.24 years of growth above grade level. Keep in mind, this growth occurred during a pandemic.

Piedmont City	1	1.24
Andalusia City	2	0.80
Boaz City	3	0.75
Opp City	4	0.67
Saraland City	5	0.64
Arab City	6	0.62
Demopolis City	10	0.59
Lamar County	12	0.53
Thomasville City	13	0.52
Covington County	14	0.49
Vestavia Hills City	15	0.47
Pike Road City	17	0.46
Fort Payne City	18	0.44
Henry County	19	0.43
Tallapoosa County	20	0.42
Cullman City	21	0.41
Roanoke City	21	0.41

Haleyville City	24	0.39
Russellville City	25	0.39

Congrats to all these schools and so many more in our state who made wonderful gains. Go out and craft that narrative about the great things going on in your schools.

We held the 2022 AAESA Fall Instructional Leadership Conference in Orange Beach, and one of the highlights was the announcement of the 2022 Alabama NAESP National Distinguished Principal District Principals of the Year. We are joined in this partnership with Classworks. Congrats to the district winners and good luck on becoming a finalist.

Presentation of 2022 Alabama's NAESP NDP Nominees

District I	Mrs. Karissa Lang Crestline Elementary	Hartselle City
District II	Mr. Timothy Dollar Wilmer Elementary	Mobile County
District III	Dr. Lucile Prewitt Oakdale Elementary	Tuscaloosa City
District IV	Dr. Alice Turney Riverchase Elementary	Hoover City
District V	Mrs. Allison Alexander Corley Elementary	Boaz City
District VI	Dr. Margaret Jones Edgewood Elementary	Selma City
District VII	Mrs. Karen Snyder Cary Woods Elementary	Auburn City
District VIII	Ms. Jenny Breazeale Elberta Elementary	Baldwin County
District IX	Mrs. Tamika Fleming Heard Elementary	Dothan City

The 2022 elections have ended, and control of the House and Senate has been decided. From a national perspective, the House will be controlled by the Republicans, and the Senate will be controlled by the Democrats. Stay tuned on how this change could impact education.

Executive Director's Report Cont'd

From a state perspective, the makeup of the legislature has not changed. However, the leadership in the House has changed as the Speaker of the House, Representative McCutcheon, retired. The new speaker is expected to be Representative Ledbetter from Rainsville. He has a strong track record of supporting education, and I look forward to working with him. This change will result in other leadership changes, and we will be engaging the leaders early and often.

We presented our legislative platform to the CLAS Board at our meeting in Prattville on November 30. You can view it on our advocacy page at clasleaders.org/advocacy.

Remember, you are the key to effective legislation. Craft your narrative, or someone will craft it for you! Make like Kiss, and shout it, shout it, shout it out loud.

I hope you all have a wonderful end of the first semester.

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Assistant Executive Director's Report



Rickey Darby
AAESA Assistant
Executive Director

During our annual Fall Conference, Dr. Kathy Murphy kicked off the conference as the keynote speaker at the first general session with the

conference theme, "Next Level Leadership." She was informative, engaging and energizing. Some of the talking points she encouraged members to accept the greater calling by being present in the moment, setting a deadline, gallop around like your own the pasture, defy the odds, get out-of-the box, create defining moments and make opportunities.

We had a successful fall conference with 180+ administrators attending great professional learning at the Perdido Beach Resort. There were 38 booths in the exhibit hall for our partners to showcase their companies. Thanks to our gold, silver, and bronze sponsors who helped sponsor meals, and breaks. We had members present breakout sessions or participate in a general session, facilitate share tables, facilitate breakout sessions, scan for a session, and take part in the general session program. Thanks to the entire CLAS staff that helped throughout the year with the planning, organizing and implementation of the conference. Mark your calendar for **Nov. 12-15, 2023**, at the Perdido Beach Resort for next year's fall conference.

AAESA is only as strong as its members. Thanks to all the members who attended their local district meetings and/or the Fall Conference. Please encourage elementary administrators in your school system to join CLAS and AAESA. Although NAESP is now optional, this national professional organization provides

meaningful opportunities for professional growth. AAESA had a membership growth to over 767 members this year.

AAESA has several opportunities for members to serve in elected leadership positions each year. If you would like to be considered for a state office, you need to get involved at the district level and serve as the president or district representative for your district. We are thankful for the members who are willing to serve in leadership roles in our organization.

AAESA, NAESP, and CLAS have several publications to keep you informed. You are reading this article in the current issue of the AAESA magazine. Thanks to Jill Eaton and all the administrators who have contributed to this issue. The CLAS Friday Update provides members with valuable information and opportunities to get involved. NAESP has various publications that keep members informed, including Principal magazine.

The NAESP National Conference will be held at the Gaylord National Harbor in National Harbor, MD on July 10-12, 2023. Registration information is available on the NAESP website. If you have never attended the national conference there is the AAESA \$1,500 Glenys Mason Scholarship, that can help with the costs of the conference. The deadline for the application is February 1st. The application can be found on the CLAS/AAESA website and is emailed to me at rickey@clasleaders.org.

Congratulations to the nine principals who were nominated for Alabama's NAESP National Distinguished Principal. In addition, ten assistant principals were nominated for the Elementary Assistant Principal of the Year.

You will have the opportunity to get involved with the state legislature this year with CLAS. In addition to the Friday Update each week, during the legislative session there are opportunities to get involved by contacting your legislator. Each Wednesday during the legislative session, you will have the opportunity to come to Montgomery to meet with your legislators.

Assistant Executive Director's Report Cont'd

Watch for information from the CLAS office on how to get involved.

During the holiday season, each of us needs to take the time to enjoy our family and friends. We need this time to provide balance in our lives. Take a moment to do something for others.

I would like to close this article with another talking point from Dr. Kathy Murphy's keynote address at the Fall Conference. She discussed how to accept the greater calling to "Do the Right Thing for the Right Reason."

John Wooden said, "You can't live a perfect day without doing something for someone who will never be able to repay you."



Candidates for 2022-2023 AAESA Officers

Vice President

David Carpenter

Jeter Primary
Opelika City

Dil Uswatte

Rocky Ridge Elementary
Hoover City

NAESP Representative

Michael South

Hibbett Intermediate
Florence City

Bonnie Sullivan

Pike Road Intermediate
Pike Road City

CLAS Board of Directors

Jami Rainey

Northridge Middle
Tuscaloosa City

Sheneta Smith

Howell Graves PreSchool
Muscle Shoals City

Karen Snyder

Cary Wood Elementary
Auburn City

Stan Stokley

Saraland Elementary
Saraland City

Submitted by Addam Moody, Nominating Committee Chair

Working to Beat Yesterday



Laura Lamb
Barkley Bridge Elem.
Hartselle City

How do you keep your stakeholders from burning out when your school is already a high performing school? Never underestimate the importance of a schoolwide theme and a good dose of fun. That is the stance the staff at Barkley Bridge Elementary in the Hartselle City Schools District is putting into practice this school year.

At the beginning of this year, our faculty wanted to develop a school wide theme focused on increasing previous successes. That was when the theme “Beat Yesterday” was born. To help our students understand this theme, we knew our students would need concrete examples. There were a couple of activities happening in our building that we used to help explain this idea to our students. One activity was a coin drive sponsored by our PTO, and the other was a Cereal Box Challenge. For both of these challenges, daily totals were posted along with the question “Did you beat yesterday?” This helped our students understand how each day’s events can move them closer to a goal. With this understanding, students are now setting their own goals and working day by day to “beat yesterday”.

Once our theme was in place, we wanted students to enjoy learning and become lifelong learners. Art instruction was identified as an area our students were needing, especially since some of our students that struggled with reading or math excel in artistic abilities. Teachers felt that art would be a motivating factor for many students, however, we didn’t want to lose any instructional time. Using this idea, we hired a part-time art teacher that works with our students on data meetings days. Previously, all of our students in a grade level would go to P.E. for an extended period of time so that teachers could meet for data

meetings. However, our growing student population and lack of space were becoming an issue in being able to house all students safely for these meetings. Now our students get to participate in an art class, our P.E. teachers are happy and our classroom teachers have time for data meetings during the school day.

Fun lessons were also incorporated through a cereal box collection contest for the Feeding our Families Community Organization. Not only did our students seek to “Beat Yesterday’s” collection amount, they used the cereal boxes to complete a domino maze throughout the library and hallways. They applied their learning from Rube Goldeberg’s STEM lessons to make creative contraptions within the domino maze. Every class participated in the creation and applied the design process to this maze. Our goal through activities like these is to instill in our students that learning is fun and never ending.

Finally, we recognized that our parents are a huge part of our success and wanted to include them in celebrating our academic accomplishments. To do this, we changed the format of our Open House to make it more of a celebration. Families were given a scavenger hunt sheet that directed them to various parts of the building to showcase student accomplishments and provide them with small rewards throughout the evening. The evening included artwork on display, posters announcing academic accomplishments, popcorn from the principal, a jumpy house, robotics in a commons area, a STEM challenge area, food trucks, and a prize for everyone that completed the scavenger hunt. It was a beautiful evening with lots of smiles, laughs, and compliments.

The last couple of years have been very challenging for our students, teachers and families. Teachers have tutored before and after school and worked summer school. Students have worked hard to catch-up from COVID losses, and parents have made sacrifices to get students to school early for tutoring and to summer school. Their efforts are making a difference, and hopefully our efforts will help them stay the course.

Working to Beat Yesterday Cont'd



Meet Your District III Representative



Jami Rainey
Northridge Middle
Tuscaloosa City

My name is Jami Rainey and I am proudly the principal at Northridge Middle School in Tuscaloosa, AL. We are a sixth

through eighth grade middle school with 729 students in the Tuscaloosa City School System. We have a staff of 77 people of which 57 are certified.

After graduating from Hale County High School in Moundville, AL in 1992, I went to the University of Alabama. When I started at UA I thought I wanted to be an engineer so I started taking classes but stayed involved with music. My freshmen year I was a member of the Million Dollar Band and was able to experience being part of the 1992 National Championship at UA. That spring I was in basketball pep band and other ensembles. For two years this was my routine. But, in the back of my mind I remember my grandmother telling me as I was growing up that she thought I would be a preacher or a teacher. What I know now is that she was right and it was my calling to be an educator.

I graduated from the University of Alabama with a degree in Music Education. My first job as band director was at Parrish High School in Walker County. In those 2 years I was the band director and girls' softball coach while teaching 6th through 12th grade band, music appreciation, drama, and computer keyboarding. After that, I was the band director for the Winfield City School system for more than 12 years. Through these two jobs I was able to have on the job training in public relations, fiscal responsibility, planning and organizing, collaborating, and so many other intangibles. What I did not know as a young teacher was that hav-

ing all of those opportunities in both schools would teach me balance and expose me to the variety that is school leadership. This led me to pursue my Master's, Educational Specialist, and Educational Doctorate degrees in Educational Leadership from the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

My first opportunity to be a school administrator was as assistant principal at Carbon Hill High School back in Walker County. After four and one-half years I became the principal at Carbon Hill Elementary and Junior High School. CHEJHS is a PreK through 8th grade school in the same building as the high school. This was a unique opportunity for me as I was able to take my understanding of high school expectations and goals into the feeder school and guide my new school towards preparing them for where I knew they were going. While leading CHEJHS, the school report card grade steadily increased and the school was most recently recognized by A+ College Ready as a School of Excellence while being one of the pilot schools for the MSTIP (Middle School Training and Incentive Program) grant through the ALSDE.

As I begin my 25th year of education I strive to continually grow professionally. As a lifelong learner I have been involved in professional development such as the NAESP/CLAS PreK-3 Leadership Academy, the University of Alabama Superintendents Academy, A+ College Ready, and CLAS. I also value mentorship as not only do I seek guidance from those who have "been there, done that" but I also value helping others grow into leadership. As a teacher, I had wonderful principals who gave me opportunities to lead and helped me understand how to lead a school. I try to pass that forward to those who have potential to be the next school leaders within our school and as part of the UA Leadership for Character grant program.

This December I will be married to Stephanie for 20

Meet Your District III Representative Cont'd

as a family, playing golf, supporting our son in basketball, track, and golf, fishing, serving at church, playing tuba, and supporting the Crimson Tide.

I joined CLAS as an aspiring administrator and became more involved throughout my administrative career. Being a member of CLAS has provided me with a network of peers who I call friends, supported me, and helped me grow tremendously as a school leader. When I joined AAESA I had just finished the Superintendent's Academy and was looking for my next growth opportunity. I reached out to principals I knew who were involved with CLAS and they steered me to Rickey Darby. District III had a history of exceptional involvement but had decreased to very little. District III is also a very large geographic area with a wide variety of school districts. With Rickey's guidance to network and plan, we are moving ahead and have seen membership, involvement and participation grow in District III over the last several years.

Even though my school consists of grades 6th through 8th, I have grown to learn of the support AAESA and NAESP provide to middle schools as well. AAESA is a strong affiliate which supports K-8 principals in ways other organizations have not been able. I hope to use my current role to represent middle schools in continuing to move AAESA forward and grow the organization as it represents all schools inclusive of grades Pre-K through 8th grade. I am honored to serve as the District III Representative for AAESA as well as representing AAESA on the CLAS Board. If I can ever be of assistance you can reach me at jarainey@tusc.k12.al.us. I look forward to seeing you at the next CLAS event!



Meet Your District IV Representative



Kara Scholl
South Shades Crest
Elementary
Hoover City

My name is Kara Scholl. This is my 10th year as principal at South Shades Crest Elementary

School, a Pre-K-2nd grade school in Hoover. Prior to serving as Principal at SSC I was the Assistant Principal at Bluff Park Elementary, a Hoover District Math Coach, and began my teaching career at Gwin Elementary in Hoover teaching Kindergarten and 1st grades. I received my BS in Early Childhood Education from Auburn University (1998), my Master's Degree (2002), my Administration Certification (2006), and Ph.D. (2009) from UAB.

I love getting to facilitate my faculty through professional learning as we each continue to learn and grow as educators together. My love for art and crafts is an active part of each faculty meeting as we begin meetings with some type of craft learning activity. Often faculty meetings will begin with everyone completing a glyph or other craft activity. This is a fun team-building time and I have found that it is a great way for everyone to destress from the day and open their minds to the learning topic at hand.

The PTO recently had a silent auction and as a way for me to help support them, I worked with each class to complete a painting together. I had the best time working with each class and leading them through a painting or craft activity. I then took what they did, I painted the backgrounds and some small details and put it all together into a class painting. It was a wonderful way for me to bond with all of the students and it was good for my soul! I completed paintings with 32 classes and the kids loved it!

I am currently an Advisor for CLAS/NAESP PreK

-3rd Leadership Academy where I have loved having the opportunity to work with administrators across the state as they learn more about the importance of early childhood education and the Early Learning Continuum. I completed my Certified Instructional Leader program in the spring of 2022 and would recommend this program to anyone looking for a high-quality professional learning opportunity.

My husband Marc and I have been married for 20 years and have two children. Our Daughter Ryan is a senior at Spain Park and looking forward to going to Belmont next fall. She loves to sing and perform as well as participate in the SPSHS Law Academy. Our son Joseph is in 7th grade at Berry Middle school and loves all things sports and outdoors. He has recently finished his football season and is now looking forward to baseball. We also have two dogs who we breed. Ginger is a Cavapoo and Fred is a Cavalier. We currently have 5 puppies that are a lot of fun to watch and play with, but very busy!

In my spare time, I love to spend time with my family, read, paint and travel. I am a member of Independent Presbyterian Church in Birmingham and love to be involved however possible. I am currently going through Catechesis of the Good Shepherd training to be able to serve as a level one Catechist. I love to be busy, but also enjoy my quiet time! I look forward to serving District 4 and getting to know you all.



Meet Your District VII Representative



Bonnie Sullivan
Pike Road Intermediate
Pike Road City

Bonnie Sullivan has a passion for student learning and making schools the **best** place to

learn. She serves as the principal at Pike Road Intermediate School. She has earned a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education, Masters Degree in Elementary Education, Leadership Certification, and Education Specialist Degree in Elementary Education from Auburn University Montgomery. She has earned an additional Education Specialist Degree and obtained a Doctorate (PhD) in Elementary and Secondary Supervision from Auburn University.

Bonnie has 19 years of experience including: Infant and Toddler Childcare (PDG B5 Grant), Elementary and High School Administration, College Level and State Government Level Experience. She was a top three finalist for the National Distinguished Principal award. She has also earned several awards and taken on opportunities which include: Studying Schools in Australia, participating in the Principal Exchange Program in Australia, Voted Best of the Best River Region Award for 2 years, Harvard University Turnaround School Leader Program, CLAS Emerging Leader Award, RSVP Magazine Top 10 List, and Distinguished Advocate Award from Auburn University Montgomery.

Bonnie greatly enjoys being a principal and working together with teachers, students, parents, and stakeholders. Her focus is to be a principal who sees the bigger picture of how a leader can positively impact education for all students and stakeholders. She serves as a principal mentor at the CLAS New Principals Institute and is a motivational speaker for Delta Kappa Pi events. She is married to Gary Sullivan and they have a daughter Anna Katherine, a son, Truman Thomas and a mini-goldendoodle, Lucky. Her hobbies include serving in leadership organizations, loves Lake Martin, and participates in her children's extracurricular activities. Her daughter, Anna Katherine, won Little Miss Pike Road in The Patriot Pageant, enjoys ballet at Pike Road Dance Academy, and recently completed her first soccer season. Her son, Truman Thomas, loves playing outside, and music. Dr. Sullivan is honored to serve as the District VII Representative with the AAESA organization.



2022 Fall Instructional Leadership Conference



Karissa Lang
Crestline Elementary
Hartselle City

Fall Conference 2022 was definitely Next Level Leadership! We enjoyed great speakers, great food, and great fellowship. Perdido Beach Resort did not disappoint with wonderful accommodations and service.

Kathy Murphy, President of Gadsden State Community College, opened the conference with an uplifting message that challenged each of us to be the next level leaders. Her wisdom provided encouragement and her commitment to education in the State of Alabama was inspirational. She brought the house down with some Diana Ross music and ended with the message that we all have greatness and we must use it in a positive way.



Robert Hudson from Glenwood Behavioral Health reminded us we must have relationships with students before we can expect them to learn and Jeff Wooten with Cognia unpacked the new Accreditation Performance Standards. Each provided valuable information that was engaging and insightful. Breakout sessions are always an attendee favorite. This year we had the pleasure of hearing from Telena Madison, Katryna

Kinn, and Stephanie Hulon on Alabama Teacher Growth Program (ATGP), The Continuous Improvement Journey with Jeff Wooten, Community Partnerships with Amy Mason, and Working with Challenging Students with Robert Hudson.

Tuesday brought continued excitement with the highly regarded Principal Andy Jacks. We were all reminded that whoever does the talking does the learning---and yes, we had a blast throwing waded paper balls at each other! The Leadership Boom was fantastic and provided everyone an idea that could be taken back to our respective schools. A big thank you to Andy Jacks, Briggett Stewart, Amy Mason, Dil Uswatte, Waller Martin, Julie Pearce, and Charles Gardner for making the Boom Panel engaging. We celebrated our district National Distinguished Principal winners and Assistant Principal of the Year. Karen Anderson, newly appointed Director of Math Improvement, provided insight into the Alabama Numeracy Act (ANA) and implementation guidelines.

Everyone enjoyed break time each day in the Grand Reef with the vendors and conference sponsors. It's always a pleasure to engage and learn from representatives with educational companies committed to student achievement. And we can't forget the awesome prizes many of us enjoyed!



2022 Fall Instructional Leadership Conference

We wrapped up our time with State Superintendent Eric Mackey. He provided important updates and offered encouragement as we head into the last leg of the first semester of school. Liz Huntley closed it out with her awe inspiring story of Weathering the Storm. Ms. Huntley is a testament to hard work and perseverance.

A big thank you to Rickey Darby, AAESA Executive Director, for all of his hard work in making the conference a success along with everyone at the CLAS office. Waller Martin, President of AAESA, did a wonderful job keeping the conference on track and who doesn't love his stories and jokes!

If you missed the conference, I would encourage you to make plans for November 2023. You will come away with new friends, new ideas, and a renewed sense of what it means to be a next level leader!



Truman M. Pierce Leadership Award



Bonnie Sullivan
Pike Road Intermediate
Pike Road City

Congratulations to Dr. Dilhani Uswatte who was selected as the recipient for the Truman M. Pierce Leadership Award.

This award is given by the Alabama Association of Elementary School Administrators (AAESA) to an educator who has made outstanding contributions to advance the direction of education in Alabama.

Dr. Uswatte is completing her 26th year in education. She is the principal at Rocky Ridge Elementary in the Hoover City Schools System. Her motto, “Take time to inspire and be inspired” has challenged her to become more involved at the local, state, and national levels to improve education for ALL students. She has been active in groundbreaking education initiatives that include policy making, growth for teachers and administrators, and creating positive change for students.

Dr. Uswatte enjoys being a motivational speaker, leader, and cheerleader for the state of Alabama. A few of her accomplishments that highlight her efforts include being featured in a national documentary Milken Center for Advancing the American Dream, finalist for National Assessment Governing Board of Elementary Principals, featured in several magazine articles including Forbes Magazine, developed one of the first STEAM schools and earned STEM certification in Alabama, National Distinguished Principal 2020, CLAS Leader of the Year, and TedEd Educator Fellow Award. She has many more contributions to move school sys-

tems and the state of Alabama forward such as serving as co-director of District Girls Engaging in Math and Science Program, Founder of Alabama Milken Educators Mentoring Program, Co-director of Alabama TedEd Educators Leadership Program, Task Force Committee member for the Alabama State Department, CLAS Board Director, District IV AAESA President, AAESA Secretary, Samford University Assessment committee member, and Sanford Aspiring Principal Mentor. Dr. Uswatte enjoys being a motivational speaker for many organizations such as the Teacher Hall of Fame banquet, National Institute for Excellence in Teaching Conference, Hoover City New Teacher Conference and Samford University new teacher and principal events, and CLAS Conferences.

AAESA would like to recognize Dr. Uswatte for her accomplishments, honors, and dedication in educational leadership that have significantly impacted educators and students. It is with great pleasure that Dr. Dilhani Uswatte has been selected as the recipient for the Truman M. Pierce Leadership Award.



Bill Miller, Sr. Friend of Education Award



Stan Stokley
Saraland Elemenary
Saraland City

“Veterans have no greater friend on earth than this Alabama dentist” al.com

The Bill Miller award recognizes a non-educator who has made significant contributions to the field of education. This year the Alabama Association of Elementary School Administrators (AAESA) is proud to recognize Barry Booth.

Barry Booth was the oldest of three boys raised by a single mother. His father was out of the picture early in his life. They living in different states of homelessness during his childhood. One year in Texas they lived in an abandoned train car. He lived in six different states and attended 13 different schools. One of the amazing things about his life is that he graduated from high school, much less college. Dr. Booth is a public education success story and he indicated he never had a bad experience in public school.

In the fall of 1958 Barry Booth was 17 years old and a recent graduate of Aiken High School in Aiken, South Carolina. He wanted to join the Navy and see the world, but the Navy would have to wait. His mother wanted him to go to college and dental school. She drove him to the edge of town with one suitcase and dropped him off. She said to him “Auburn University is in that direction”. She told him to hitch hike there and call her when he arrived. She had no money and told him to find a way to talk his way into college. Sitting in front of the University Dean, he was informed he needed \$55 to enroll. Barry told the dean he had no money but if he would loan it to him, he would pay it back by the end of the semester.

He went out and found multiple jobs to

pay for his tuition. He lived and worked at the hospital in Auburn for his undergraduate degree, and later he lived in Birmingham where he attended dental school. He was called into the dean’s office in dental school and was told he had too many jobs. When he explained he had to work to stay in school, the dean asked him to change his name on half of his jobs. He graduated from dental school with no debt. After dental school he joined the Navy Reserve and did a tour of duty in Vietnam.

Dr. Booth established a dental practice in Spanish Fort, Alabama, and continued to practice for over 50 years. Over the years he has been actively involved in numerous organizations to support students and veterans. He has been recognized as “Veteran of the Year” two times for Mobile and Baldwin County. Dr. Booth helped organize nine Honor Flights to take local World War II veterans to see the World War II memorial in Washington D. C. He also has been strategically involved in arranging for the Liberty Legacy Program to be implemented in Mobile and Baldwin County. This program is designed to educate students in the area of American liberty, civics, and the constitution.

AAESA salutes Dr, Booth for his many years of service to children and veterans,



AAESA Business Meeting



Cindy Poteet
Northside Intermediate
Opelika City

AAESA Business Meeting
Fall Instructional Leaders
Conference
November 15, 2022

Call to Order

By Waller Martin at 3:05

- Welcome and thanks for coming

Motion to Adopt Agenda

Motion by Francis Finney and 2nd made by Karen Snyder

No discussion and all approved

Motion to Approve Minutes

Motion by David Carpenter and 2nd by Barry Wood

No discussion and all approved

Written / Oral Reports

- **Awards - Dr. Bonnie Sullivan**
 - Truman Pierce and Bill Miller Friend Awards will take nominations in the Spring
 - Glenys Mason Scholarship - \$1,500 towards attending the National Convention (could not have previously attended a national attention
 - Michael Carr Scholarship - for a teacher in your school that is working towards administration certification \$1000 scholarship
- **Bylaws - No report**
- **Budget and Finance - Rickey Darby**
 - This fall conference report will look different once everything has been paid
 - should be updated in January. (191 registered, 8 no shows and a couple of comps - first year that we had about 180 paid)
 - Financially, very solid
- **Fall Conference 2023 - Rickey Darby**
 - Fall Conference 2023 (Nov. 12-15) at Perdido Beach Resort

- Send any suggestions to Rickey for next year
- **Federal Relations - David Carpenter**
 - David Griffith new Associate Executive Director
 - ◆ If you have found any particular successful ways that you have spent your ESSR money please share with David Carpenter or Vic
 - ◆ Invite a legislature to your school - see handout
- **Magazine Editor - [Jill Eaton](#)**
 - Please send any articles about anything exciting going on with your school or district to Jill Eaton – big part of our association is sending information out to each other through the magazine.
- **Membership - Dr. Charlie Gardner**
 - Membership report included in the packet -
 - ◆ AAESA
 - ◇ As of Nov. 17 767, active members, 747 - aspiring members - this is up compared to last year. (AAESA)
 - ◇ We gained a seat on the CLAS Board last year
 - ◇ We are largest affiliate
 - ◆ NAESP
 - ◇ Nationally, membership has dropped slightly for a variety of reasons, please encourage your people to join NAESP
 - ◇ We are at 307 which is about 20 away from where we were last year.
- **NAESP Representative - Dr. Charlie Gardner**
 - Benefits
 - ◇ Liability Insurance
 - ◇ Webinars / Resources
 - ◇ Discounts on items (EX. Walt Disney World)
 - Important Dates
 - ◇ March 26-29 National Leaders Conference in Washington DC
 - ◇ July 10 -12 Annual Convention in National Harbor Maryland
 - ◇ Now through Jan. 9th is early bird registration for Annual convention - \$100 cheaper
 - Make sure and edit your profile - and your info is up to date
- **National Distinguished Principal - Amy Mason**
 - Join NDP organization if you have not already done so
 - Paperwork to all NDP applicants will be coming from

AAESA Business Meeting Cont'd

Rickey and needs to be submitted back pretty quickly. (Paperwork will be submitted to the committee in January and top 3 finalists will be visited in February and then the winner will be announced).

- **Nominating - Addam Moody**

- Committee met earlier today and candidates were certified to run in the next elections
 - ◆ 2 candidates for VP
 - ◇ Dr. Dil Uswatte and David Carpenter
 - ◆ 2 candidates for NAESP Representative
 - ◇ Bonnie Sullivan and Michael South
 - ◆ 2 positions for CLAS Board
 - ◇ Sheneta Smith
 - ◇ Karen Snyder
 - ◇ Jami Rainey
 - ◇ Stan Stokely
 - ◆ Elections will be in January; voting will be electronic

Executive Director's Report - Dr. Vic Wilson

- Congratulations in order -
 - ◆ NAEP scores
 - ◇ Alabama has 15 of the top 20 schools in the

nation in gains

- ◆ Alabama has the top 6
 - ◇ Dill Uswatte - National Board
 - ◇ Blue Ribbons Schools (all elementary)

Assistant Executive Directors' Report - Rickey Darby

- Thank everyone for coming to the conference and hope that everyone gains something from the networking. Being here helps our association grow and hopefully helps you grow professionally.

If you have any questions about PLU - see Demica!

Adjourn

- Motion to adjourn made by Margo Jones and 2nd by Charlie Gardner
- No discussion and all approved



Charlie Gardner

Hokes Bluff

Elementary

Etowah County

NAESP is focused on providing opportunities for professional learning and meaningful engagement of its members. The peer-led NAESP Centers for Advancing Leadership offers leadership development and networking opportunities for principals at every stage to expand their learning and share best practices on current and emerging issues. The *Communities of Practice* provide an online space for members to learn, grow, and network at a national level. NAESP will soon add a new *community of practice* for school leaders with an interest in expanding their learning in equity leadership. According to the NAESP update, a new e-book series with a curated collection of NAESP's work on Leadership for Early Career Principals, Leadership for Assistant Principals, and Principals as Equity Leaders will launch in the year ahead.

NAESP and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) are planning a joint **2023 National Leaders Conference** on **March 26 – 29, 2023**, at the DoubleTree Hotel in Crystal City, Virginia. Preliminary plans include: a General Assembly (NAESP only) the evening of Sunday March 26; joint advocacy programming on Monday, March 27; focus on advocacy and Capitol Hill prep on Tuesday, March 28, to include sessions for both joint and individual NAESP and NASSP advocacy priorities; and Hill visits on Wednesday, March 29.

Also, registration is now open for the **2023 NAESP Pre-K-8 Principals Conference** in National Harbor, Maryland, just outside Washington, D.C. You are invited for pre-conference sessions on July 9, followed by the 3-day conference on **July 10-12, 2023**, for another celebration of leadership through both education and networking. Keynote speakers and their bios are included below:

Houston Kraft

Kraft is an author, a speaker, and a kindness advocate. He is the co-founder of CharacterStrong, an organization that provides PK-12 grade social and emotional curricula and trainings to over 7,000 schools globally. In 2020, he authored his first book, *Deep Kindness*.

Joanne McEachen

McEachen is the CEO and founder of The Learner First, a global education consultancy operating in three countries. She is a bestselling author with 35-plus years of experience as a teacher, principal, regional Ministry of Education leader in New Zealand, and now a globally recognized pioneer in the fields of educational design, assessment, and well-being.

Freeman A. Hrabowski III

Hrabowski is the President Emeritus of UMBC (The University of Maryland, Baltimore County) and served as president from 1992 to 2022. In 2012, he was named one of the 100 Most Influential People in the World by *TIME*, and in the same year, he was selected by President Barack Obama to chair the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for African Americans.

There will be many break-out sessions and of-course vendors offering valuable materials and resources. I hope that you will make plans now to attend. There will definitely be something for everybody!



Federal Relations



David Carpenter

Jeter Primary

Opelika City

On October 4, 2022 Federal Relations Coordinators from across the country meet via Zoom to discuss new and upcoming policy and advocacy issues for school administrators. David Griffith (NAESP Associate Executive Director, Policy and Advocacy) led the discussion.

Several FRCs mentioned an interest in connecting the federal policy developments with actions happening in their states and how they are being impacted. FRCs voiced interest in hearing success stories and words of wisdom when it comes to advocacy, as well as opportunities for collaboration with colleagues in other states. FRCs also want to make sure that they hear all sides of a political issue in order to share information with their members. Other suggestions included being provided stories that the FRCs can circulate in their states, social media content like sample tweets, and sending information to the NAESP advocacy team about an individual state's advocacy work.

Points of Discussion:

- **National Principals Month**

David noted that October is National Principals Month. As part of this celebration, NAESP is co-hosting a policy briefing on October 12 with AFSA and NASSP.

- **Loan Forgiveness**

There have been several key initiatives related to student loan forgiveness over the past weeks:

- [Biden administration loan forgiveness plan](#) – The administration is offering all student loan holders \$10,000 in loan for-

giveness (\$20,000 if they were a Pell Grant recipient). More details about when the process will open will be announced in the coming weeks.

- The [Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program](#) (PSLF) is a temporary Covid program that provides loan forgiveness for public service and nonprofit employees – including educators- who have worked in schools for at least 10 years (or some combination of public sector and nonprofit employment). This opportunity is independent of other loan forgiveness programs.
- [Loan Forgiveness for Educators Act](#) – The Loan Forgiveness for Educators Act, sponsored by Sen. Ben Ray Lujan (NM), Rep. Teresa Leger Fernandez (NM), and Rep. Jahana Hayes (CT), expands the Teacher Loan Forgiveness program to include school leaders and early childhood educators. Under this bill, the federal government would make the monthly federal student loan payments for educators in high-need schools and completely forgive any outstanding debt after five years of service. NAESP is an original endorsing organization of these bills and issued a [statement](#) of support. An action alert was sent in an email on Thursday, Oct. 6 asking NAESP members to send a message to their member of Congress requesting that they cosponsor the legislation.
- [NAEP Scores](#) - Reading and math scores for 9 year-olds have declined (the largest drop in reading since 1990, the first ever score decline in math). David said it is important that we remind lawmakers and the public of the unique moment in time that we are in and that these scores reflect the impact of the Covid pandemic in its entirety and that educators are working to address the needs of all students. Other looming NAEP scores are

Federal Relations Cont'd

likely to show similar results. A question was raised that NAEP scores will be used as evidence for the need for continuing additional funding levels. David said NAEP scores could be used in that way, but warned that people will be citing the results for their own purposes, including to criticize schools or to argue about school closures and other responses during the pandemic.

- **ESSER** - The first round of ESSER funding (the CARES Act) expired on Sept. 30. The American Rescue Plan funding expires in two years. It's important to show Congress how this funding is being used effectively in schools and the significant impact it is having and the need to continue to provide these resources. As an AAESA member, please share your stories of success with ESSER funding.
- The fiscal year ended on Sept 30 and Congress passed a continuing resolution (CR) that temporarily extends funding for government agencies at existing levels through December 16. The extension gives lawmakers time to reach a final FY23 funding agreement after the mid-term elections (Nov. 8). Education advocates will make federal K-12 education formula programs a priority in any spending decisions.

As we wrap up National Principals Month, we want to highlight the importance of showing legislators and policymakers firsthand what goes on in schools and classrooms across the country. Following is a checklist to schedule a legislator visit so your school can tell your story of challenges and successes as they create policies that affect you and your community. Access the checklist at: <https://www.naesp.org/blog/why-you-should-invite-a-legislator-to-your-school/>

FUTURE EVENTS

CLAS Convention

June 12-14, 2023

Riverview Hotel and Mobile
Convention Center
Mobile, Alabama

NAESP Pre-K-8 Conference

July 10-12, 2023

Gaylord National Resort and
Convention Center
National Harbor, Maryland

AAESA Fall Instructional Leadership Conference

November 12-15, 2023

Perdido Beach Resort
Orange Beach, Alabama

NAESP Benefits



Charlie Gardner
Hokes Bluff
Elementary
Etowah County

Membership in the National Association of Elementary School Principals has so many benefits. If you are not a member, please consider joining today! Members have access to professional learning and networking opportunities which can be attended through free webinars included with your membership. This is a great way to connect with your peers across the country. You may find that the issues you are facing here in Alabama may be similar to issues faced by colleagues in another far off state.

Also, included with membership is 2 million dollars of professional liability insurance. We hope that you never need this benefit but it gives us peace of mind to know it is there should we need to utilize it. Lawsuits are extremely stressful and take a negative toll on us not only professionally but personally as well. With your NAESP membership, you have someone in your corner when you feel like that you don't. Members who have had to use this benefit will agree that this is an important benefit.

NAESP provides it's members with a subscription to the *Principal* magazine which contains many interesting articles some of which are written by active principals. We sometimes find we have less and less time to read due to the demands of our jobs but the *Principal* magazine is a valuable resource to administrators. We are able to read about tried and true methods and strategies to educate children while also providing links and recommendations for best practices for teachers. One of the things I like about the *Principal* magazine is that it is an actual

"magazine" that comes through the mail and you can actually carry it with you. I know this might sound "old school" but this is why I like it!

If you are a member in NAESP, you are entitled to valuable discounts from vendors just by being a member. Discounts for auto, home, and life insurance are offered to NAESP members through various companies. Also included are travel and food discounts at resorts such as Walt Disney World and Universal Orlando Resort. Dominos, Arbys, and Subway are among others that offer food discounts. Need a car rental? Enterprise offers discounts to NAESP members across the country. Check out www.naesp.org/membership/discounts for additional information on the benefits to being a NAESP member.

NAESP strongly advocates federally for all things to improve education for America's public school children. Congress passes many laws that affect our nation's schools. NAESP is at the table when those discussions take place. As members we have opportunities to provide input as local school administrators. This is just another advantage of membership. If you are not a member or know a colleague who is not, please consider joining. NAESP recognizes the important role we have as administrators and is a valuable resource to support us and our schools. Please take advantage of these benefits with your NAESP membership. Check out www.naesp.org for updates and additional information.



District IV News

District 4 had its fall meeting on September 15, 2022. Mr. Scott Mitchell and Brock's Gap Intermediate School (BGIS) were gracious hosts for the meeting. The group enjoyed time for fellowship over dinner. After dinner, Dr. Vic Wilson and Mr. Rickey Darby provided updates from CLAS/AAESA and shared information regarding the coming Fall Conference. It is going to be a wonderful conference, with great speakers, and a great time to network with others from across the state.

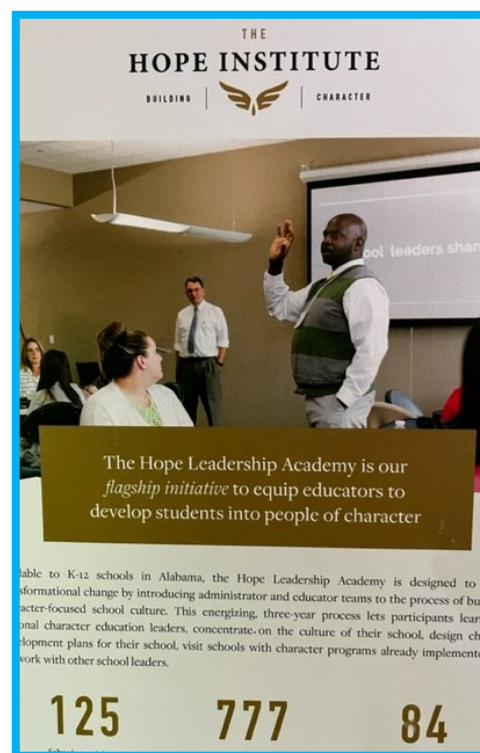
The group also had guest speakers from The Hope Institute. The Hope Institute is focused on equipping educators to build students of character. "Hope Institute is designed to inspire transformational change by introducing administrators and educator teams to the process of building a character-focused school culture." Hope Institute works with teams for a three-year process where the participants learn from national character education leaders, focus on school culture, create character development plans, and have the opportunity to visit and network with other Hope Institute schools.

Brock's Gap Intermediate School (BGIS) is one of many schools currently going through the Hope Institute training. BGIS is in year 2 of the training and according to Principal Mr. Scott Mitchell and Assistant Principal Ms. Meghan Denson it has been a very positive experience for the school. One of the greatest elements is the high-quality professional development that the team has participated in. The team has led the school and stakeholders through the process of defining their core values and now BGIS will use this as the basis for all decisions made from programs and events to discipline. The Hope Institute has been an engaging and inspiring process for the school and will continue to be for years to come. For more information about the Hope Institute see www.hopeinstitute.org/events

Other Meeting Highlights include: Dr. Alice Tur-

ney was nominated as district 4 NDP and Ms. Meghan Denson was nominated as the District 4 Assistant Principal of the year. Dr. Kara Scholl was elected as the District 4 Representative.

Other District 4 News: Rocky Ridge Elementary School Principal Dr. Dil Uswatte has been appointed by The U.S. Education Secretary to the National Assessment Governing Board, which oversees The Nation's Report Card. Dr. Uswatte said, "I feel both blessed and honored to serve as Alabama's first principal on the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB)." Dr. Uswatte is looking forward to serving on the Governing Board to "serve as a catalyst for action to improve student achievement; inspire improvement in the quality of assessment and standards; and tell the stories of American achievement for all, over time and in context."



Kara Scholl
South Shades Crest
Hoover City

District News Cont'd

District V News

District V met on September 14, 2022 at John Jones Elementary School in Rainbow City, Alabama. CLAS Assistant Executive Director, Rickey Darby was in attendance and encouraged members to register for the fall conference. Patrice Maxwell, principal of Ray Thompson Elementary School, was elected as our new secretary. Allison Alexander, principal of Corley Elementary School, was nominated as the 2023 District V National Distinguished Principal of the Year. Amanda Martinez, assistant principal of John Jones Elementary School, was nominated for the 2023 District V Assistant Principal of the Year. Those in attendance toured the school and visited classrooms where they saw Orton Gillingham strategies in action and had meaningful discussions about student learning.

District V schools are top in the nation in learning math gains! A recent article by Trisha Powell Cain, Education Learning Lab, named the top ten scoring school districts in the United States who had the highest learning gains in math on state assessments from 2019-2022. Out of the six Alabama school districts who made the list, three were from District V! Piedmont City Schools, Boaz City Schools and Arab City Schools are raising the bar for student learning! We are so proud to spotlight these schools in our district.

John Jones Elementary School, Etowah County Schools, has started a coffee cart program that is near and dear to their hearts. Their special education friends have been working on money recognition, counting money, and giving change. To apply this skill, students are hired to work the coffee cart. Each week, the special education teacher sends out a form asking faculty and staff to place their orders. Their coffee cart, "Mugs with a Hug" delivers coffee to faculty and staff on Fridays. Students are learning great life skills and having fun in the process!



Brigett Stewart
Piedmont Elem.
Piedmont City

September 2022 CLAS Board Meeting



Dil Uswatte
Rocky Ridge Elementary
Hoover City

Overview of CLAS Board of Directors Meeting

September 19, 2022, 8:30 am
Grand Hotel

The meeting was called to order by CLAS Board President Bob Lawry. A prayer was offered by Stan Stokley. The agenda and minutes from the June 12, 2022 Board meeting was presented by Dr. Lawry and approved.

Reports:

2021-22 Year End Membership Report- As of June 30, 2022, membership was at an all time high of 4170. CLAS will continue to recruit members with the “More Members, More Rewards” program.

2022 Convention Summary- Both income and expenses surpassed budget expectations, with income above the projected amount. CLAS will continue to attempt to keep registration costs down for members.

Professional Learning Update- Dr. Sanders reviewed the attendance of the multiple professional learning events this year. She also shared information on the Banner Schools, CIL and Secretary of the Year Programs. Furthermore, she presented information on a new program called The Aspiring School Leaders Academy which met total registration capacity on the first day it opened. Planning is also currently underway for a principal/bookkeeper conference.

Legal Defense- expenditures are slightly up due to superintendent turnover.

Year-end Financial Report- Dr. Wilson reviewed all financial statements. Despite current financial challenges,

CLAS still showed a surplus at year-end of \$81,165.83

Technology Update- CLAS changed their email delivery system to Feathr. Things are slowly improving with their relatively new database called Rhythm.

Action Items:

Dr. Wilson presented the Membership Report for approval (motion passed.) Dr. Wilson also reviewed the financial and investment statements (motion passed) with assistance from David Gallahar. CLAS investments continue to be slightly down from last quarter by 11.8% compared to the market decreased rate of 13%.

Executive Director’s Comments:

Dr. Wilson reminded board members that Parent’s Choice would be presented to the Legislature again. CLAS is advocating that EVERY school receiving public funds should have the same accountability requirements. Legislative Hill Days will be organized again by CLAS for board members to speak to their representatives.

President’s Report:

President Lawry made the following appointments:

- Awards and Recognition Committee- Carrie Busby
- Election Committee- Donald Turner and Jan Tribble
- Membership Committee Chair- Tamala Maddox
- Other committee appointments will be made in the next few weeks.

Principal Leadership: Be Bold and Unapologetic

We've got a saying at NAESP: Once an NDP, always an NDP—an [NAESP National Distinguished Principal](#). Being named an NDP is an honor bestowed upon school leaders who have gone above and beyond for their schools and their students, leading learning communities with a passion for their craft and a love for education.

Once an NDP, Always an NDP

In 2012, one such NDP was Miguel Cardona, at the time an elementary school principal in Connecticut, but you might know him now as U.S. Department of Education Secretary Miguel Cardona. On the 10th anniversary of becoming an NDP, Cardona joined us during the 2022 NDP celebration in Washington, D.C., during the closing award ceremony and gala on Friday, Oct. 7.

Cardona was nominated to the role of U.S. Secretary of Education after rise through the education field, from on-the-ground experience as a public school teacher and an elementary school principal—the youngest in Connecticut for 10 years—and then an assistant superintendent and, finally, Connecticut Commissioner of Education.

“The job with the closest pace to the pace I have now was the role of the school principal,” said Cardona. “It’s the most demanding job in education, and I would argue, the most rewarding.”

Supporting the Whole Principal

A voice and leader for all students and school communities, Cardona spoke with NDPs about the challenges they’ve faced—and overcome—as they led schools through a pandemic.

Principals are leading in a time when the pressures of the pandemic shifted but never went away, he said. Cardona acknowledged he understood the challenges associated with leading during a political divide, the largest achievement gaps than in any other point in education, and a mental health crisis for our nation’s children, offering a strong message of support for school leaders. It was a timely message, as NAESP is focusing on principal wellness all October for National Principals Month.

“Take care of yourselves; we need you,” he said. “You won’t be able to serve if you’re not well—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Be OK prioritizing you every once in a while. It’s critical you prioritize yourself to be your best. We didn’t sign up for the pandemic, but we signed up to serve children, and we’re serving at a time when our children need us most.”

A Path Forward—Together

NAESP has long advocated for the principal voice to be included in policy discussions on every aspect of public education. As a former principal, Cardona understands this, too.

“We can’t talk about increasing mental health supports in our schools without focusing on the role of the principal,” Cardona said. “Want better parent engagement and student voice? We better focus on having the voice of our principals at our table. Want to talk about staffing shortages? Not without principals, we’re not. As a school principal, you’re at the heart of the ecosystem that serves children.”

“The work ahead is not easy,” Cardona said. “It’s different but just as important as your work the past two years to safely reopen schools. That work might have had you questioning yourself, but it made you stronger and prepared for today.”

Cardona challenged school leaders to set a new goal.

“For the last two years, we gave our all to fight COVID,” he said. “For the next two years, use that same passion and that same urgency to fight complacency—complacency of low expectations, complacency of silos in education that limit our growth, complacency of thinking we can’t change things.”

Cardona believes that together is the way forward in education. Earlier that day, he welcomed the NDP class to the U.S. Department of Education building in Washington, D.C., to hear from leaders in the department about their efforts to support principals and schools. The department leaders also met in small groups with NDPs to listen to these principals’ stories and experiences of struggle and learn from them what they need most in their school communities to support better outcomes for students.

To end his speech with the 2022 NAESP NDP class, Cardona offered a bright look toward the future.

“Lead boldly and unapologetically for the students we serve. Together, I am confident that the best days in education are still ahead of us.”

Krycia Gabenski is the digital communication associate at NAESP. (Via [naesp.org](#).)

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2023 CLAS CONVENTION

JUNE 11-14, 2023

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