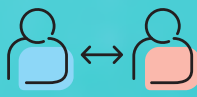




# CLAS School Leader

The Official Publication of CLAS  
Summer Issue 2020  
Volume 48, No. 3



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Summer Issue 2020

# CLAS School Leader

## Mission Statement

The mission of the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools is to coordinate and facilitate the resources of all members for the advancement of public education.

## Acknowledgments

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## About CLAS

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# Double Vision



I looked back at the first Friday Update and the first edition of the CLAS Leader Magazine from August 2019. Wow, we had such normal high hopes for a regular year! How naïve we were. The first semester did not give us an indication of the chaos that awaited us in March. Of course, there was a small story in December about a virus in Wuhan, but certainly that was nothing for us to worry about at the time. Little did we know...

Fast forward to March, and we pumped the breaks due to the coronavirus and Covid-19. Very quickly thereafter, the pumping of the breaks became slamming on the breaks and pulling the emergency breaks for security. Every aspect of what we knew and believed to be the correct way to educate disappeared between mid-March and now. Lines were blurred; confidence was shaken, and timelines simply disappeared. As medical experts scrambled to learn as much as possible, daily life changed drastically.

We now find ourselves faced with starting a new school year with a bit more knowledge and even more uncertainty. Do we start virtually, face to face, or a blended option of the two? Do we delay the start completely? Can we have co-curricular activities? How do we get kids to and from school? What do we do if we get a breakout at our school? These and countless other questions are being

asked in 138 districts across the state, and our school leaders are front and center in the crisis. Every person in your community wants to know the plan, and every person also has an opinion on what the plan should be. Unfortunately, no template exists for this crisis; therefore, school leaders are having to rely on the best data they can find.

Networking with each other is critical during crisis times. Talking with your peers to learn about ideas that might work can be powerful and critical as you begin your school year. Additionally, school leaders are also having detailed conversations with public health officials, and these too are critical conversations to have so that you can make the best possible decision for your school.

History will be the judge of our decisions. Some decisions we make will be correct; others could be incorrect. Both results are acceptable as long as the decisions were made by following a process with the best data available at the time. If this occurs, history will be kinder to those who follow that process. History will NOT be kind to those who fail to decide. Those under your care are looking to you to make tough decisions, and never has this been more important.

Gather data, discuss with your team, communicate the plan to stakeholders, and boldly go in the



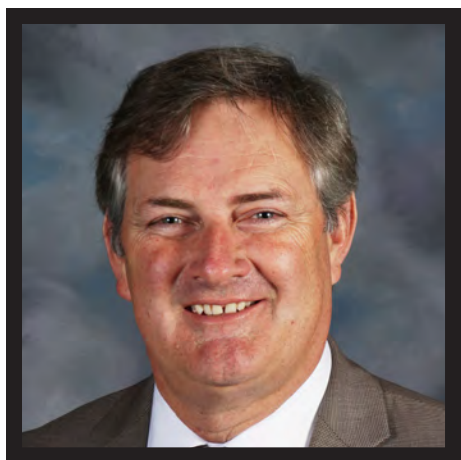
direction of your plan. Reflect often. Adjust where, when, and how necessary; apologize when appropriate; stand up for your team when appropriate; and carry on with your head held high. Take care of those under your care, and you will be thought of as an effective and exemplary leader.

Good luck on your endeavors and please let us know where we can help!

You are all rock stars in my book!

With warmest regards,

*Vic Wilson*  
Vic



**Vic Wilson, Ed.D.**

*Vic Wilson is the Executive Director of the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools. He joined the CLAS staff in July of 2017.*

*Vic has 27 years in public education as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, superintendent, and now as the executive director of CLAS.*

*Vic is married to Felecia Dailey Wilson, and they are the parents of Dailey (23), Emma (19), and Paul (16).*

*Aside from spending time with his family, Vic loves reading, sports, and the arts.*

 @Othell



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## Great Summer Learning at the 2020 CLAS Convention @ Home



Regardless of what the general public thinks about summers for educators, it is not very easy to get away from the workload and family obligations for several days to focus on your own learning in the summertime.

Because of this, I have always had a great deal of respect for educators (teachers, administrators, and others) who make the time for continued growth and learning, especially in the summer. This new learning and networking is vital to our ability to improve education and to make teaching and learning better for our staff and our students.

As Michael Fullan and Lyle Kirtman assert, outside networking has significant benefits for our students. In this blog, I would like to celebrate all educators who have committed to continued professional learning during this incredibly challenging time. More specifically, I want to focus on the 2020 CLAS Convention @ Home that went fully virtual this summer and highlight the wonderful community of learners that came together for this event.

LEARNING WITH 

If you are not familiar with the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS), and the work that they do in professional learning, then I would recommend that you visit their website to learn more and consider becoming a member.

CLAS events have always been very supportive learning environments where old friends come together for new learning. Colleagues from all over the state spend several days together and share in the mission of improving our work while collaborating and networking for the benefit of all students.

As a former district-level administrator, I have personally reaped the benefits of learning from other leaders across the state. While much of my learning has come from researchers and educational authors, many of the innovative ideas that we worked on in our district came from informal coffee conversations with like-minded educators and leaders who were working hard to implement new programs in their own districts.

This year, we've all had to scramble to figure out how we are going to continue building community and learning together despite our physical distancing. In my current professional learning role at ABPC I was very interested to see how CLAS Executive Director Vic Wilson and his crew were going to bring all their amazing sessions online this summer. The Virtual CLAS Convention of 2020 did not disappoint.

The CLAS team began this year's effort by actively communicating their plan for a virtual five-day conference and promoting this new way of learning in a fun and exciting way with great graphics and clever phrases like "Zoom Casual" attire for learning from your own couch.

They also promoted their (always) impressive lineup of





speakers and sessions and clearly laid out the registration and participation process. As the time for the convention drew closer, reminder emails went out with additional directions and answers to any remaining questions.

As with most of our digital efforts these days, there are always glitches and barriers to overcome. The CLAS team did an amazing job fielding questions and letting participants focus on the learning. The virtual “Helpdesk” was there if anyone needed extra support.

It has been a struggle in the past several years to bring some leaders into our new digital era, but in 2020 necessity has spurred us on and has given many the fortitude to grow and learn in new ways. I’m sure that Vic Wilson’s helpdesk team dealt with many log-in and technical issues on the user end, and like other servant organizations, they sought to calm frustrations and find needed work-arounds.

## WHAT AN AGENDA!

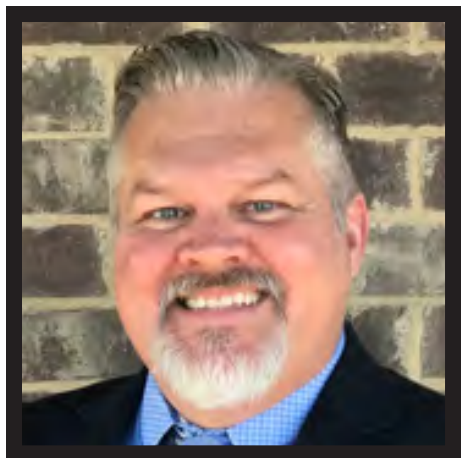
The agenda definitely had something for everyone this year. Virginia Principal of the Year Hamish Brewer was a perfect keynote speaker to kick off the event. He reminded us all how important it is to be relentless in our pursuit to engage kids and work hard to improve the lives of our students and their families.



Keynote Speaker for Opening General Session - Hamish Brewer



I could go on for several more pages about the opening session, but this is already getting long, and there is so much more to share.



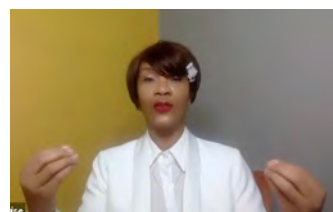
### Dr. Stoney Beavers

*Dr. Beavers is a recently retired assistant superintendent of Blount County Schools. He was named the assistant director of the Alabama Best Practices Center in February 2020.*

*He completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Montevallo. While teaching at Hoover High School, he completed a Masters in Secondary Education. From there, Beavers decided to pursue a dream and joined the United States Peace Corp where he applied and received an invitation to work as a teacher in Paraguay.*

*Beavers was an award-winning teacher before moving into the field of administration.*

@StoneyBeavers



Keynote Speaker for Second General Session - Regina Louise

The keynote session by Regina Louise was simply amazing. If you have not seen the movie based on her life in foster care, *I Am Somebody’s Child: The Regina Louise Story*, it definitely deserves a look. Her vulnerable presentation was heartfelt and refreshing.

As the week progressed we were treated to great breakout presenters like principal leader George Couros, global education researcher John Hattie and many others. It must have been an exhausting week for the CLAS staff and officers, but they should be (and were) applauded for how they moved a convention online with such poise and grace. Like so many of us working on new platforms these days, they made it work, and they made it work well.



Post-Convention Speaker John Hattie

**Continued on page 39**

# Should You Do Business with a Company Owned by Your Family?

## QUESTION

Should you, as a board of education employee, do government business with a company owned by your family?

## ANSWER

No.

## SCENARIO

The grass at school is an eyesore and needs mowing. Your father, who runs a landscaping business, tells you that he will help you out. He'll get the grass mowed, and he won't make any profit himself, but he says you must cover the cost of his men doing the work. Accordingly, you will only pay half the regular price. You will save the taxpayers money.

You, yourself, should not make this decision. You should not do anything to contract with or to pay your father's business.

## THE LAW

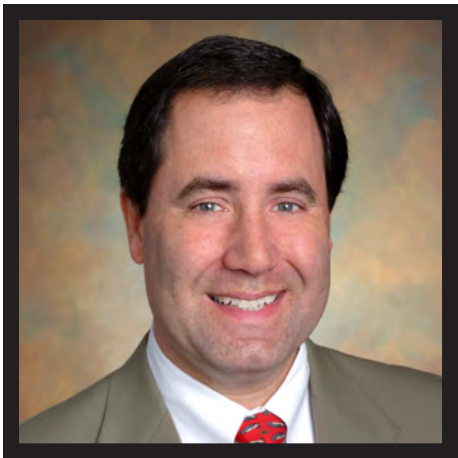
The Alabama Ethics Act prohibits any public official or public employee from entering into a contract, on behalf of the government, with a family member if any money or thing of value is exchanged.<sup>1</sup> The law also presumes that a "conflict of interest" exists when a public employee does business with a family member or the business of a family member.<sup>2</sup> A family member's business is defined as any business where the family member owns more than 5% of the business.<sup>3</sup>

While this law seems harsh, the reality is that the Ethics Commission and the public should not be required to debate whether the family business really offered the government a substantial savings. To avoid the debate over whether the family member really did offer the government a discount, the law simply prohibits this transaction.

On the other hand, if the decision to hire your father's landscaping service is made by someone else, who has no opportunity for personal gain, and the Board follows the other safeguards under the Ethics Act, perhaps the central office can have your father's company mow the school's grass.<sup>4</sup> But you should stay out of that.<sup>5</sup>



- 1 Alabama Code section 36-25-5
- 2 Alabama Code section 36-25-5(f) and 36-25-1(8)
- 3 For a detailed analysis of who is your “family member,” see The Ethics Corner in the previous issue of CLAS School Leader.
- 4 As noted in the last issue (the Spring issue) of CLAS School Leader, if you are a public employee, and not a public official, your father is not a “family member” unless he is your dependent. On the other hand, if you are a “public official,” your father is a “family member.” But why take the risk? The risk includes a complaint made to the Ethics Commission which you may win, but which you still must defend.
- 5 Your family member may be required to follow Alabama Code section 36-25-11 and file the contract with the Ethics Commission within 10 days.



**Mark Boardman**

*Mark Boardman is an attorney who represents governments and employees of state and local governments, including 123 boards of education. In addition, he also defends individuals before the Alabama Ethics Commission.*

*Boardman has served as a past president of the Alabama Council of School Board Attorneys. He also served two years as president of the Alabama Association of Municipal Attorneys.*

*Boardman is a frequent presenter for CLAS as well as other education entities.*

# Attention Superintendents!

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## Alabama and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad...School Year

Or not. Many of you may remember Judith Viorst's classic children's book, *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*, in which Alexander suffers through a day filled with unexpected disappointments. From waking up in the morning with chewing gum in his hair, to the family cat choosing to sleep in bed with his brother instead of him that night – Alexander experienced what he thought was a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day.

Of course, for Alexander his perceived misfortune was not really that bad after all. In Alabama, and across the nation, the difficulties we anticipate this school year are very real. Never before have school systems, teachers, parents, students, and communities faced such an enormous hurdle. Even with the benefit of brilliant teachers and administrators, understanding parents, accommodating students, and generous federal funding, we fully expect for the 2020-2021 school year to be one of the most challenging endeavors most families and educators have ever experienced.

Without question, COVID-19 has left an indelible mark on almost every aspect of life in America; not the least of which is its

impact on public education. Although the safety and wellness of our students has been, and will always be, our primary concern. We also have a solemn obligation to provide quality education to each of the state's more than 740,000 students. Achieving that goal under ordinary circumstances is challenging; under the cloud of COVID-19 it seems nearly insurmountable.

However, I believe as a community, as a state, and as a nation, we will find a way to not only maintain, but thrive during this crisis. As the philosopher Plato once said, "necessity is the mother of invention." Schools are getting creative as they redesign the school-day experience in a way that maximizes learning and minimizes the possibility of COVID exposure. In communities across the state, friends and neighbors are helping each other, particularly focusing on the plight of working parents. Although the term "we're all in this together" has become a bit cliché, it has never been truer than it is now.

The suggestions and recommendations within the Roadmap to Reopening Schools that the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) published serves as a broad guide for school leaders to consider. However, the detailed, day-to-day specifics of how each school system will operate is the

### Dr. Eric Mackey

*Dr. Eric G. Mackey currently serves as the Alabama State Superintendent of Education. Prior positions include executive director of the School Superintendents of Alabama, superintendent of Jacksonville City Schools, principal, and assistant principal.*

*Throughout his career, Dr. Mackey has been an advocate for increased rigor and advanced high school courses as well as challenging elementary and middle school classes.*

*He and his wife, Robin, have three boys, John (22), Brandon (19), and Christopher (14).*



**Continued on page 20**

# 2020-2021 CLAS Leadership Announced

At the 2020 CLAS Convention @ Home, CLAS welcomed incoming president Dr. Susan Patterson and announced Donald Turner, Jr., as president-elect.

At the Second General Session, Dr. Autumm Jeter bestowed the presidential position upon Dr. Susan Patterson during the virtual "Passing of the Gavel" ceremony. Patterson was elected to a three-year term, starting as president-elect, on the CLAS Board

of Directors in 2019. She will preside over the CLAS organization for the 2020-2021 year and will finish her term as past president in the 2021-2022 year. Patterson currently serves as the superintendent of the Cullman City school system. She is also a member of the School Superintendents of Alabama (SSA). Patterson's presidential nomination was made by SSA.

Outgoing President Dr. Autumm Jeter was presented with a plaque commemorating her service. She will also be presented with a president's ring provided by Herff Jones. Jeter holds the position of superintendent of the Bessemer City school system. She was nominated for CLAS president by the Alabama Association of Elementary School Administrators (AAESA) in 2018. On July 1, Jeter assumed the past president's position on the CLAS Board of Directors.



Dr. Autumm Jeter passes the gavel and confers upon Dr. Susan Patterson the CLAS presidency during a virtual ceremony of the CLAS Convention @ Home

## Advertiser Index

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## Dr. Susan Patterson Assumes CLAS Presidency



Dr. Susan Patterson, superintendent of the Cullman City School System, has assumed the presidential role for the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools. Patterson was elected by CLAS members in 2019 as president-elect. She will serve as president

for a one-year term, then as past president for an additional year. The presidency was previously held by Dr. Autumn Jeter who relinquished the role to Patterson during the virtual “passing of the gavel ceremony” at the CLAS Convention on June 16, 2020.

“The CLAS Board of Directors has no shortage of excellent leaders and Dr. Patterson is no exception. She has a willingness to serve and to lead within the school district and within CLAS. Her leadership will help further our mission to advance public education in Alabama and we are excited for her to be a part of our executive leadership team this year,” said CLAS Executive Director Dr. Vic Wilson.

## Donald Turner, Jr., Announced as CLAS President-Elect



Donald Turner, Jr., who leads the Calhoun County School System as the superintendent, has been elected as CLAS president-elect for 2020-2021. This position was held by Dr. Susan Patterson who has assumed the CLAS presidency as of July 1.

Turner will serve as president-elect for a one-year term, then he will become the CLAS president for the 2021-2022 year. His selection was announced at the CLAS Convention on June 17, 2020.

“Donald Turner has been a long-serving member on the CLAS Board,” said Vic Wilson, Ed.D., executive director of the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools. “He is well known and well respected throughout our organization. We are excited to have him continue serving on our board in a higher capacity, and we look forward to working with him as we work to advance public education in Alabama.”

**Awards & Recognitions**

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# Upcoming Professional Learning Opportunities

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[www.clasleaders.org/PL/events](http://www.clasleaders.org/PL/events)

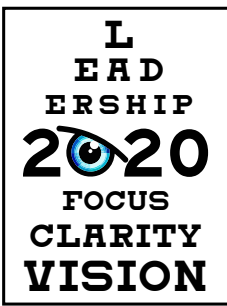
- SEP 9-11** **CLAS Leadership Institute**  
Empathy in Instruction: Strategies for Working with English Language Learners  
Virtual
- SEP 15-16** **CLAS New Principals Institute:**  
Prattville, AL - In-Person and Virtual
- SEP 28-30** **ALA-CASE Fall Conference:**  
Orange Beach, AL - In-Person and Virtual
- OCT 1** **CLAS Lunch & Learn Webinar:**  
What Resources Are Available to Assist K-12 Math Teachers?
- OCT 7** **CLAS Leadership Institute**  
Mixed Messages: The Changing Face of Discipline  
Virtual
- OCT 8** **CLAS Leadership Institute**  
Mixed Messages: The Changing Face of Discipline  
Virtual
- OCT 10** **ACGAL Conference:**  
Tuscaloosa, AL
- OCT 12-14** **SSA Fall Conference:**  
Florence, AL
- OCT 23** **AASPA Fall Drive-In Conference:**  
Alabaster, AL
- NOV 4** **CLAS Leadership Institute**  
Supporting Students to Succeed with Text Dependent Writing  
Florence, AL
- NOV 5** **AASCD Curriculum & Instruction Bootcamp:**  
Virtual
- NOV 5** **CLAS Leadership Institute**  
Supporting Students to Succeed with Text Dependent Writing  
Prattville, AL
- NOV 6** **CLAS Leadership Institute**  
Supporting Students to Succeed with Text Dependent Writing  
Daphne, AL
- NOV 8-11** **AASSP/AAMSP Fall Conference:**  
Orange Beach, AL
- NOV 15-18** **AAESA Fall Conference:**  
Mobile, AL
- DEC 1-2** **CLAS Secretaries Conference:**  
Birmingham, AL
- JAN 6** **CLAS Lunch & Learn Webinar:**  
Technology Strategies for Effective Stakeholder Engagement
- JAN 12** **CLAS Leadership Institute**  
Be Real: Educate from the Heart  
Mobile, AL
- JAN 13** **CLAS Leadership Institute**  
Be Real: Educate from the Heart  
Prattville, AL
- JAN 14** **CLAS Leadership Institute**  
Be Real: Educate from the Heart  
Huntsville, AL
- JAN 23** **CLAS Aspiring Administrators Conference**  
Location TBD
- JAN 24-26** **AASCD Winter Conference:**  
Birmingham, AL
- JAN 27-28** **CLAS Assistant Principals Conference:**  
Gulf Shores, AL
- JAN 27-29** **AASPA Winter Conference:**  
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- FEB 1-3 SSA Legislative Conference:**  
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- FEB 3 CLAS Lunch & Learn Webinar:**  
Lenses for Ethical Leadership
- FEB 4 CLAS Culture Training Day 1 of 2:**  
Location TBD
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Alabaster, AL
- MAR 9 CLAS Leadership Institute**  
Help Me, Help You - The 3-Step Approach to Problem-Solving with Kids that Every Teacher Needs to Know (and Use)!  
Daphne, AL
- MAR 10 CLAS Leadership Institute**  
Help Me, Help You - The 3-Step Approach to Problem-Solving with Kids that Every Teacher Needs to Know (and Use)!  
Prattville, AL
- MAR 11 CLAS Leadership Institute**  
Help Me, Help You - The 3-Step Approach to Problem-Solving with Kids that Every Teacher Needs to Know (and Use)!  
Huntsville, AL
- APR 6 CLAS Lunch & Learn Webinar:**  
Using Data to Inform Decisions
- APR 13 CLAS Leadership Institute**  
Social Fatigue  
Mobile, AL
- APR 14 CLAS Leadership Institute**  
Social Fatigue  
Prattville, AL
- APR 15 CLAS Leadership Institute**  
Social Fatigue  
Hoover, AL
- MAY 6 CLAS Lunch & Learn Webinar:**  
Updates from the SDE
- JUN 13-16 CLAS Convention 2021:**  
Birmingham, AL
- JUN 20-23 SSA Summer Conference 2021:**  
Point Clear, AL



**CLAS is closely monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic and may offer virtual/blended options, if needed.**



**CLAS** thanks our 2020  
**CLAS Official Convention  
Sponsors!**



# Certified Instructional Leader Credentials Awarded

In 2013, the CLAS Board of Directors established the Certified Instructional Leader (CIL) program. This program is designed to identify school or district administrators who demonstrate the knowledge and skills which are essential to the practice of effective instructional leadership.

For the seventh year of this program, 17 participants were selected after an extensive application and review process. The 2019-2020 cohort began in June 2019 with blended delivery methods incorporating online and quarterly face-to-face meetings. Candidates were required to implement learned content in their school and/or district and meet benchmarks on student growth and achievement, school culture, strategic management, effective instructional practices, and ethical leadership.



A CIL Commission was established to be an independent certifying body, which is responsible for the governance of the program, policies, and standards related to the CIL credential. This unique CIL program is administered by members of the CLAS staff who implement the policies. The CIL faculty delivers the identified content.

After completing extensive coursework and providing evidence of systemic, systemized, job-embedded implementation for competent instructional leadership, CIL participants met with the CIL Commission to determine their CIL credential status as "Accepted" or "Not Accepted: Revisions Needed."

Ramona Robinson served as a faculty member and program coordinator along with faculty members Sarah Fanning and Tommy Ledbetter. The 2020 CIL Commission members were Veronica Coleman, Charles Gardner, Davida Johnson, Maria Johnson, Thomas Jones, Rick McInturf, and Datie Priest.

Typically, the Certified Instructional Leader credential is awarded during the CLAS Convention. Due to Covid-19, the Convention was held virtually and the awards presentation

was unable to be held during that time. The following individuals received their Certified Instructional Leader credential this year:

## Dr. Anjell Edwards

Jonesboro Elementary School  
Bessemer City Schools

## Dana Junkin

Riverchase Elementary School  
Hoover City Schools

## Darrin Lett

Florence Freshman Center  
Florence City Schools

## Dr. Deidra Tidwell

Albertville High School  
Albertville City Schools

If you are interested in pursuing the Certified Instructional Leader (CIL) credential, please visit the CIL webpage at [www.clasleaders.org/CIL](http://www.clasleaders.org/CIL) for detailed information. The application process will open in April for the 2021-2022 cohort.

The advertisement features a green background at the top with the PNP logo and the tagline "Playgrounds with a Purpose". Below this, it says "Excellence in Outdoor Amenities for Schools" and lists "Playgrounds • Sensory Paths • Shades • Music". The main image shows a modern playground with blue slides and red structures. At the bottom, there is a green banner with contact information and a discount offer.

**PNP**  
Playgrounds with a Purpose

**Excellence in Outdoor Amenities for Schools**

Playgrounds • Sensory Paths • Shades • Music

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Contact:  
Jessica Hoagland  
(334)296-7503  
[jessica@petandplayground.com](mailto:jessica@petandplayground.com)

## SDE Spotlight Continued



responsibility of school leaders. They know better than anyone the unique and explicit considerations for their particular school system. There is no one answer or right answer to the question, “How do we successfully open schools in a COVID environment?” But as we move closer and closer to the start of the new school year, albeit virtual in some areas and physical in others, we have to give one another some grace as we muddle through.

Despite COVID-19 wreaking havoc in education, healthcare, and almost every imaginable industry, this crisis provides us the opportunity to reimagine what school looks like. Instead of a TERRIBLE school day for some students because they are not physically present in the classroom with their teacher, consider a parent’s opportunity to better engage with their child’s coursework. Instead of HORRIBLE school day because a student needs to travel to a local “hot spot” to get internet connectivity, consider the benefit to future students IF we tackle the issue of inequity in broadband access now. Instead of a NO-GOOD educational experience because it looks different from what we’ve known in the past, consider how the changes and inconvenience we are experiencing now, will ultimately help protect the people we love the most. And instead of a VERY BAD school year, consider the fact that despite being faced with the largest disruption of educational services in the history of our nation, we remain steadfast and resilient as we keep moving forward with the business of education.

Our students are witnessing how we rise to the challenge. Who knows what kind of challenges they will face in their lifetimes? We will model flexibility, strength, coordination, and most importantly, the ability to maintain hopeful in the face of what one

year ago would have been considered unimaginable circumstances.

I want to sincerely thank every teacher, principal, administrator, parent, student, and community member for their tireless efforts and support for public education... always, but especially during this trying time. This too shall pass. If we stay optimistic, patient, and full of grace, I believe we will be better on the other side of this not so terrible, horrible, no-good, very bad, school year.

## IN NEED OF A PLU?

### Emerging Technology for Educational Leaders

PLUACLD691 is a total online PLU.

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**\$315**

Non-Member  
**\$525**

AVAILABLE ON DEMAND AND AT YOUR CONVENIENCE!

With the increasingly complex demands of school administrators, it is important for educational leaders to understand how to use technology to increase efficiency and productivity as well as model the correct use of instructional technology. In this online PLU, participants will learn the "why" and "how" to implement effective technology use in schools.

EXPLORE THESE TECH TOOLS:

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- BLOGGING
- GOOGLE FORMS & SHEETS
- SCREENCASTING
- REMIND
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## Virtual Learning Environments Professional Learning Program



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## Albertville City Schools STEM Bus



Albertville City Schools Superintendent, Dr. Boyd English stated, " ..The ACS STEM Bus allows us to introduce students and the greater community to STEM education....Partnering with PowerUpEDU allowed us to complete our STEM Bus Project completely, in a quest to maximize the positive impact that STEM instruction has on our students. PowerUpEDU is more than a simple partner...PowerUpEDU has become a valuable part of the Aggie Family!"

Pictured l to r: Miranda Battles, AP Evans ES; Dr. Boyd English, ACS Superintendent; Robert Sims, Principal Evans ES; Maggie Phillips, PowerUpEDU; Dr. Cynthia McCarty, ALBOE District Rep.

Contact Alabama PowerUpEDU Education Consultant, Laura Russell  
205.203.8800 or [laura@powerupedu.com](mailto:laura@powerupedu.com)  
[www.PowerUpEDU.com](http://www.PowerUpEDU.com)

# CLAS UP



## YOUR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

With a CLAS Leadership Institute subscription, any school system employee can attend the following half-day seminars at no additional charge.

Empathy in Instruction: Strategies for Working with English Language Learners

September 2020

Staying Out of Legal Hot Water: Practical Tips for Avoiding Special Education Legal Disputes

February 2021

Mixed Messages: The Changing Face of Discipline

October 2020

Help Me Help You - The 3-Step Approach to Problem-Solving with Kids that Every Teacher Needs to Know (and Use)

March 2020

Supporting Students to Succeed with Text Dependent Writing

November 2020

Social Fatigue

April 2021

Be Real: Educate from the Heart

January 2021

The institutes are offered in multiple locations across the state for convenience.

**Need more information?**  
[www.clasleaders.org/LI](http://www.clasleaders.org/LI)

CLAS is closely monitoring Covid-19 and may offer virtual/blended options, if needed.



# Decatur Excel Center Selected for CLAS Little Red Schoolhouse Award

The Decatur Excel Center is this year's Little Red Schoolhouse Award winner. This award is typically presented during the Awards Luncheon of the CLAS Convention. Due to Covid-19, the Convention was held virtually, and the award was named in a recorded program.

The Decatur Excel Center is an English Language program in the Decatur City School System and is the result of four years of work. The two-in-one program focuses on newcomers and sheltered students within the school district.

Newcomers to the district, entering 6th through 12th grade who are not proficient in English, may take classes at the Excel Center. The Excel Center is also open to junior high or high school students who want to increase their English proficiency. Decatur's English Learner students voluntarily go to the Excel Center while also being part of their "home zone" school.

The Excel Center is a collaborative effort led by Special Education Supervisor Dr. Stefanie Underwood and Excel Center Principal Ressa Chittam with the support of Superintendent Dr. Michael Douglas. The result of the program has allowed the faculty,

administrators, and transportation providers to better meet the needs of English Learners and their families to find academic and social success.

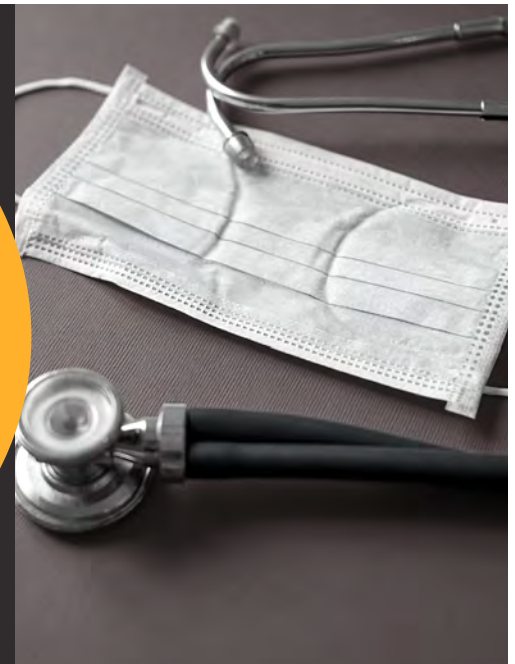
The Little Red Schoolhouse Award is given by the CLAS Board of Director to an entity that has inaugurated a significant curriculum or instructional innovation deserving of statewide recognition. The program or activity should have a positive impact on the education of children, high potential for dissemination to other schools or school system, and demonstrate leadership in curriculum or instructional procedures in an Alabama school or school system.



Photo (L to R): Mitzi Dennis, retired educator; Heath Grimes, superintendent of Russellville City Schools and representative of ALA-EL (Alabama Leaders Advocating for English Learners); Stefanie Underwood, special education coordinator for Decatur City Schools; and Ressa Chittam, principal of the Excel Center.



CLAS  
CORONAVIRUS RESOURCES  
[clasleaders.org/coronavirus](https://clasleaders.org/coronavirus)



# Title VII Sex Discrimination Includes Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Three years ago we provided commentary on a court case concerning the legal standard for school board policies about which restroom a transgender student may use. In GG. V. Gloucester County Sch. Bd., 822 F.3d 709 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2016), the principal had quietly worked out an arrangement with a transgender student to use the boys restroom, and this continued without apparent incident for about seven weeks. Then the school board got involved, and passed a policy under strong community pressure requiring that students use the restroom corresponding with their birth certificate, rather than their gender identity. The appellate court in the GG case found against the school board, taking the position that a January 2015 advisory letter from the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in enforcing Title IX was correct, that “when a school elects to separate or treat students differently on the basis of sex . . . a school generally must treat transgender students consistent with their gender identity.”

We came back six months ago with another commentary on a lower court case from Illinois, Students and Parents for Privacy (SPP) v. School Directors of Township High School District 211, 377 F.Supp.3d 891 (N.D. Ill. 2019), in which the plaintiffs claimed that a school board policy requiring that transgender students use restrooms consistent with their gender identity violated Title IX. That court denied the school board’s motion to dismiss, on Title IX and religious exercise grounds. The essential part of that argument is that in adopting a policy that follows the OCR policy letter (that students use restrooms consistent with their gender identity), the school board and staff are violating the religious freedom of parents and students who oppose the policy. Consequently, this case was permitted to go to trial on those issues.

On June 15, 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court issued an opinion on three consolidated cases. In Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia, 723 Fed.Appx. 642 (11<sup>th</sup> Cir.), No. 17-1618 (6/15/2020), a county employee was fired for being gay. The 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeal, whose jurisdiction includes



**Dr. David Dagley**

*Dr. Dave Dagley serves as professor emeritus of educational leadership with the University of Alabama.*

*Dagley holds the PhD degree from the University of Utah and the JD degree from Cumberland Law School. He has served as a teacher, principal, assistant superintendent, superintendent, and school board attorney. Dagley is a frequent presenter at CLAS events on various legal topics.*

*He has also been a long-time contributor to this publication.*





Alabama, had held that sex discrimination prohibited by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act *did not* include sexual orientation. In the second case, Altitude Express, Inc. v. Zarda, 883 F.3d 100 (2<sup>nd</sup> Cir.), No. 17-1623, (6/15/2020), the 2<sup>nd</sup> Circuit Court of Appeal, an employee was fired for being gay. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Circuit Court of Appeal had ruled oppositely from the 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit: that sex discrimination under Title VII *did* include sexual orientation. (Note that this represented a conflict between the two jurisdictions.) In the third case, R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes, Inc. v. EEOC, 884 F.3d 560 (6<sup>th</sup> Cir.) No. 18-107, (6/15/2020), an employee was fired for being transgender. The 6<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeal had held that Title VII sex discrimination also includes discrimination on the basis of gender identity, not just sexual orientation. In a majority opinion written by Justice Gorsuch, the Supreme Court held that sex discrimination under Title VII includes discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and on the basis of gender identity. This was a 6-3 decision, with Justice Ginsburg writing a concurring opinion, and Justices Alito, Thomas, and Kavanaugh dissenting.

The Supreme Court's decision in these three consolidated cases have been described in legal writing and in the public media as a "landmark" decision. It is certainly an important case, and it is necessary that school principals and other school leaders stop for a moment and consider where we are. Title VII is in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. 42 USC § 2000e. Title VII prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, and national origin. Title VII refers to employment law, so in the school setting, it would apply to sex discrimination in employment, as well as employment discrimination based upon the other protected characteristics (race, color, religion, national origin). Title IX is in the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX provides: "no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in any educational program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." 20 U.S.C. § 1681(a). Title IX is part of a funding bill, and its focus is upon sex discrimination in an education program or activity or service. Title VII applies to employees in the school setting; Title IX could apply to program questions involving both employees and/or students.



### **Dr. Amy L. Dagley**

*Amy Dagley, PhD, is an assistant professor in educational leadership at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She previously worked for the University of Louisiana at Monroe, and as a public educator in Alaska. She has earned bachelors and masters degrees from the University of Alaska Southeast, and a PhD from the University of Alabama.*

*Amy Dagley is the daughter of long-time columnist for this magazine, Dr. Dave Dagley.*

Note that the GG case and the SPP case, both discussed above in the first two paragraphs, are Title IX cases. They both were about sex discrimination in educational programs, and they both extended the protections against discrimination on the basis of sex to include transgender individuals. Note that the three cases consolidated and decided last month in the Supreme Court are employment cases, in which the court held 6-3 that the protections against discrimination on the basis of sex in Title VII included both sexual orientation and gender identity. We cannot yet definitively conclude that parallel situations in employment and in service provision, for example a school board policy requiring that students and teachers wear gender stereotypical clothing or a school board policy requiring that students and teachers use restrooms conforming to their birth certificate, would be decided using the same legal standards. However, the gap is closing. For many years, the courts in most jurisdictions have remarked on similarities between the two statutes and blended the legal standards. At present, one important

***Continued on page 29***

# Administrators of the Year



## Dr. Adam Clemons, Principal

Piedmont High School  
Piedmont City Schools

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a different opinion

Office Makeover: **E** Interior Elements



## Anthony Sanders, Principal

Greensboro Middle School  
Hale County Schools

Sponsor: **Curriculum Associates**

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## Dr. Dilhani Uswatte, Principal

Rocky Ridge Elementary School  
Hoover City Schools

Sponsor: **Classworks**

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## Jennifer West, Assistant Principal

Buckhorn Middle School  
Madison County Schools

Sponsor: **Horace Mann**  
Founded by Educators for Educators



## Dr. Joanna Taylor, Assistant Principal

Troy Elementary School  
Troy City Schools



# Alabama High School Principal of the Year Finalist for National Recognition

Dr. Adam Clemons, principal of Piedmont High School in the Piedmont City School System, has been selected as one of three finalists for the National Principal of the Year Award by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). Clemons was named the Alabama Principal of the Year by the Alabama Association of Secondary School Principals (AASSP) earlier this year.

Adam Clemons has 19 years of experience in the field of education with the last 12 years served as an administrator. In 2013, Clemons was chosen as the principal of Piedmont High School. In his educational career, he has had the roles of teacher, department head, assistant principal, and principal. Clemons received his bachelor's degree from Auburn University, a master's degree from Jacksonville State University, and his education specialist and doctorate from Argosy University.

When Adam Clemons became principal of the small, rural high school in 2013, he set out to help kids feel socially connected, be academically successful, and have an advantage as they enter college or the workforce. Clemons developed a teachers-as-advisers program—which was then used as a model for the state of Alabama—to provide a 30-minute advisory period to allow teachers and paraprofessionals to build relationships that support students academically, psychologically, and emotionally. Working with district leaders, Clemons helped implement mental health counseling services and training for teachers at local schools so students didn't have to travel out of town for counseling services, saving both time and expenses. In Clemons' time as principal, extracurricular participation has grown by 20 percent, the graduation rate has risen by 8 percent, and discipline referrals decreased by over 50 percent.

"On behalf of Piedmont City Schools staff and students, I would like to congratulate Dr. Adam Clemons on being selected as a finalist for NASSP Principal of the Year," said Mike Hayes, superintendent of Piedmont City Schools. "Through Dr. Clemons' leadership, Piedmont High School has risen to one of the top academic, athletic, and fine arts schools in Alabama. What has occurred at PHS during his tenure is a testament that strong leadership can turn a small, rural school with high poverty into a model for any school in the nation.

"As president of the Alabama Association of Secondary School Principals, I want to congratulate Adam Clemons for being named one of the three finalists for National Principal of the Year. This is a huge honor for not only Mr. Clemons but also for the state of Alabama and AASSP. We could not have picked a better person to represent Alabama and I'm so glad to see him get the recognition he so richly deserves," added AASSP President Joe Toomey.



Dr. Adam Clemons joined by his family as he is named Alabama's Principal of the Year!

"It is no surprise that Dr. Adam Clemons is a finalist for the National Principal of the Year! He is a leader among leaders who quietly goes about making Piedmont High School an outstanding example of a school on the cutting edge of instructional progress," commented AASSP Assistant Executive Director Katrina Akers.

"I am so very pleased that Dr. Clemons was named a finalist for the National Principal of the Year Award. He exemplifies the criteria for this award as evidenced by the success of Piedmont High School under his leadership," said CLAS Executive Director Dr. Vic Wilson. "This is one of many shining examples of the excellent things happening in public education across the state of Alabama."

"I am absolutely thrilled that Dr. Adam Clemons has received this well-deserved acknowledgement of his outstanding service in education. Let's celebrate that we are so fortunate to have someone of his caliber in Alabama education. I have had the good fortune to work closely with Dr. Clemons over the past seven years. In that time, I have observed his relentless, passionate drive to offer engaging, innovative, meaningful, and fun academic and extracurricular opportunities so that all of his students can participate in classes and activities

***Continued on page 34***

# Dr. Brenda Rickett Receives CLAS Leadership Award

Dr. Brenda Rickett, recently retired executive director of teaching and learning for the Alabaster City School System, was chosen as the 2020 CLAS Leadership Award recipient sponsored by Horace Mann. This award is typically announced during the CLAS Convention in June; however, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the award was postponed and announced in a recent Friday Update via a recorded ceremony. CLAS Executive Director Dr. Vic Wilson and representatives from Horace Mann will present Rickett with a \$1,000 check in September. Horace Mann sponsors this award annually.

Out of five very worthy nominees for this honor, Rickett best exemplified the leadership characteristics the award is intended to recognize. Her nomination was made by the Alabama Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (AASCD). This prestigious award has been given each year since 1980 by the CLAS Board of Directors to a CLAS member who is proven to be an exemplary leader, not only in the local school system, but also in their affiliated member organization.

Dr. Brenda Rickett worked tirelessly for more than 30 years in K-12 education with the majority of those years in administration. She has served as a teacher, local school administrator, and a central office administrator during her career. Prior to her retirement, she was employed by Alabaster City Schools as the executive director of teaching and learning and before that, she served as deputy superintendent for Opelika City Schools. Her superior knowledge of student learning positioned the Opelika City School System as an innovator in scheduling and instruction, resulting in multiple schools earning CLAS Banner School awards.

Rickett challenged school leaders to set goals that benefit students. During her tenure with Opelika City Schools, the graduation rate grew to record levels; the system expanded its dual enrollment and advanced placement offerings; and aligned offerings in the career technical program to meet both the needs of students

and local industry.

Brenda Rickett is also skilled in developing leaders. Dr. Farrell Seymore, Ed.D. credits her mentorship for “empowering me to grow as a leader, equipping me with the tools needed to be successful.” She mentored countless other school leaders, teachers, and students throughout her extensive career in education.

In addition to her work within the local school system, Rickett served on the board of directors for AASCD for more than six years; held two-year terms as president-elect and president; and served on the CLAS Board of Directors. She also helped develop the Central Office Boot Camp Drive-In Conference to present the timeliest information for directors through collaboration with the Alabama State Department of Education and CLAS. AASCD Executive Director Dr. Jane Cobia credits Rickett’s leadership for AASCD’s February recognition by ASCD International as having achieved the highest honor, the Overall Excellence Award.

Rickett remained dedicated to the spirit and purpose of AASCD, presenting intentional effort for the provision of high-quality professional development; providing steady leadership as AASCD faced internal and external changes; and epitomizing a truly dedicated educator. She leaves behind a legacy of learning and positive relationship-building in each school system she served.



Photo (left to right): Linda Agee, Alabaster City Schools CSFO; Derrick Hester, Demopolis Middle School Principal; Dr. Ira Sullivan, Maxwell Elementary School Principal; Dr. Keri Johnson, Tuscaloosa County Schools Superintendent; Dr. Brenda Rickett, Award Winner; Dr. Jane Cobia, AASCD Executive Director; and Dr. Vic Wilson, CLAS Executive Director.

## CLAS Leadership Award Nominees

### **Andy Carpenter**

Alabama Association of Middle School Principals  
(AAMSP)

### **Melinda Splawn**

Alabama Association of School  
Personnel Administrators (AASPA)

### **Dr. Brenda Rickett**

Alabama Association for Supervision and  
Curriculum Development (AASCD)

### **Dr. Charles Gardner**

Alabama Association of Elementary  
School Administrators (AAESA)

### **Dr. Richard Templeton**

Alabama Council of Administrators of  
Special Education (ALA-CASE)

### **Heath Grimes**

Alabama Educators Advocating for English Learners  
(ALA-EL)

## **Legal Forum Continued**



distinction between the two statutes is that it is easier for a plaintiff to get a jury award under Title IX than under Title VII. See, Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Schools, 503 U.S. 60 (1992). For school leaders trying to decide how they are to deal with these issues, these issues which represent a comparatively rapid change in social and cultural viewpoints, that is small comfort.

Three years ago we wrote these two sentences in a summary for a *CLAS Leaders* commentary. “For school principals’ decision-making, is the correct advice that schools generally must treat transgender students consistent with their gender identity?” “It seems unlikely for the short term that the Supreme Court will address this legal question, until it is again a full court.” It is surprising how quickly the court answered that question in the employment context, under Title VII, after it again became a full court. We probably shouldn’t be too surprised when it soon answers that question in the affirmative, under Title IX. In the meantime, readers are reminded that Alabama school leaders work under the jurisdiction of the 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeal. That court decided nine years ago, in Glenn v. Brumby, 663 F.3d 1312 (11<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2011), that transgender discrimination in the employment setting violates the Equal Protection Clause, a Constitutional rather than statutory provision. We may have already reached the place where discriminatory conduct against transgender teachers and students would violate “clearly established rights” under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 (Section 1983), thereby exposing school leaders to personal financial liability. School leaders are encouraged to approach these issues with great sensitivity, especially for the needs of individual students and employees. Even if your community is not ready to be sensitive on transgender issues, even if you personally are not ready to be sensitive on these issues, there will be small comfort in having the community behind you politically, since in a Section 1983 suit, the school board cannot pay for your defense by an attorney or pay for the award you will owe the plaintiff.

**SHOW**  
some appreciation for your  
*Secretary* and *Bookkeeper*

Send them to the  
**CLAS** *Secretaries Conference*  
December 1-2, 2020  
Birmingham, AL or virtual

[clasleaders.org/secretaries20](https://clasleaders.org/secretaries20)

The graphic features a white laptop keyboard, a clock, pink flowers, and paper clips on a white background. The text is arranged in a clean, professional layout, with the word 'SHOW' in large, bold, black letters. The phrase 'Secretary and Bookkeeper' is written in a cursive font. The 'CLAS' logo is a black arrow pointing right. The URL is highlighted in a pink box.



## Controlled by the Pandemic

Maya Angelou once stated, “you may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them.” These words have not only resonated with so many of us but have become a way of life for educators across the United States. Who would have thought that in March, educational institutions would be closed for an unknown amount of time? Who would have thought that schools would have to scramble to decide how to ensure that teaching and learning activities would continue for an unspecified amount of time? Who would have thought that masks, social distancing, and hand washing would become the new normal for daily interactions? While we could not control COVID-19, we are beginning to discover that we can control how we react to it.

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way that organizations are approaching professional learning activities. At the height of the pandemic, organizations made the difficult decision to cancel summer plans. As the Director of Professional Learning, I became concerned with how CLAS would

continue to place a priority on providing exemplary professional learning. We decided to push forward and were able to successfully provide the April Leadership Institute and two bonus webinars in a virtual manner.

At every staff meeting, the question was asked, “What are we going to do about the Summer Convention?” Each year, the Summer CLAS Convention is one of the largest professional development events for administrators in the state of Alabama. Many educational leaders look forward to attending this convention because of learning and networking opportunities. Others attend because of the need to earn PLUs that can be used towards renewing their educational certification. Ultimately, the decision was made to move forward with the CLAS convention in a virtual delivery, but how?



Now, more than ever, providing educators with quality professional learning is crucial. According to Arnett and Waite (2020), there are three strategies that can help you plan for an uncertain future. These three strategies are what CLAS used in the planning process for the CLAS Convention @ Home.



Some see planning a virtual convention as an opportunity while others may see it as a challenge. As we began planning the convention, we had many things that could have considered barriers: a) no prior knowledge of how to do a virtual convention, b) speaker hesitancy to present virtually, and c) the

### Demica Sanders, Ed.D.

*Prior to her appointment as CLAS Director of Professional Learning, Demica Sanders was the superintendent in Midfield City Schools. In addition, her educational career encompassed a variety of roles including special education coordinator, adjunct instructor, staff development trainer and classroom teacher.*

*Demica is married to Tim Sanders and they are the parents of Jaylon (17) and Kameron (14). She enjoys spending time with her family, traveling, and shopping.*

 [@demica\\_sanders](https://twitter.com/demica_sanders)

Many educational leaders look forward to attending this convention because of learning and networking opportunities. Others attend because of the need to earn PLUs that can be used towards renewing their educational certification. Ultimately, the decision was made to move forward with the CLAS convention in a virtual delivery, but how?

uncertainty of buy-in from CLAS members regarding a virtual convention. Instead of looking at these barriers, we began to focus on how we could be the catalyst of change for our members.



In every organization, there are roles and responsibilities that everyone must follow for it to run efficiently. CLAS has a small team, but it runs like a finely oiled machine with everyone understanding their individual roles and responsibilities. While planning the CLAS Convention @ Home, we had to develop completely different processes and approaches for tackling this new opportunity.



In uncertain and changing times, conventional approaches to planning will not work because of fear. In this journey of planning the CLAS Convention @

Home, knowledge of how to do a virtual convention was limited and the uncertainty of success was high. We could have let the fear of the unknown (this has never been done before) navigate us to the decision to cancel the convention, or we could persevere and get 'er done! As you know, we dug in, did our research, and ultimately planned an outstanding experience for our members.

As we move toward upcoming professional conferences and trainings, please know that we are closely monitoring the COVID-19 situation. Our goal is to continue to provide exemplary professional learning for our members, either face to face, blended, or virtual. Make a point to monitor our website closely, and as always, if the CLAS Staff can ever assist you, please feel free to contact us.

**Citation:**

Arnett, T. & Waite, C. (2020, June). A new road map for schools: 3 strategies can help you plan for an uncertain future. *The Learning Professional*, 41(3), pages 39-41.

# Are you monitoring your PLU progress?

[www.clasleaders.org/PL](http://www.clasleaders.org/PL)

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- PLU Status
- Professional Learning Credits
- PLU Checklists
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- Upcoming Events

# The Importance of Reading in Early Grades

Why should principals strive to improve reading in early grades? To answer this question, I will first discuss why students need to be able to read by the end of third grade. In addition, I will share some practical leadership strategies that assisted me during my career as a school-based principal. This article will also explore some predictors of early reading achievement by examining recent studies. Prior to a discussion of these predictors, we must realize the importance of why third grade reading matters. Third grade is considered to be a critical marker in a child's educational development ("Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters," 2010). So, why does reading matter? Reading matters because high levels of school dropout is associated with the failure to read proficiently ("Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters," 2010).

## RELATED STUDIES

Sparks, Patton, and Murdoch (2014) conducted a study involving 54 first graders who were administered reading, spelling, vocabulary, IQ, and listening comprehension measures. These 54 first graders were followed to the end of 10th grade. Results of the study revealed that first grade reading skills were a strong predictor of 10th grade outcomes. Specifically, the study revealed that early success in reading (first grade) predicted growth in reading ability during the course of elementary

school (second grade-fifth grade), and reading skill in fifth grade predicted growth in reading and language measures in tenth grade. This study is clear evidence of the importance of being able to read effectively in early grades. Based on this evidence, one could infer that reading ability in early grades may affect reading ability in later grades.

Lynne Vernon-Feagans et al. (2012) conducted a study including 1,292 children from low-wealth rural counties and followed these children from kindergarten to third grade. Classroom observations were conducted each year along with literacy related achievement measures. The study revealed (after controlling for poverty related variables, the quality of home environment, school entry literacy skills, and teacher rated literacy instruction) that children with more years of better classroom quality demonstrated higher third grade literacy scores. This study confirms the importance of higher-quality classrooms. This leaves a principal to ponder what if all students were instructed in higher-quality classrooms from kindergarten to third grade.

## PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

As a previous building-based school principal, I took the reins of a K-6 school with below average reading scores. Therefore, I can relate to what you are experiencing or have experienced. It would be difficult for me to imagine leading a school with high



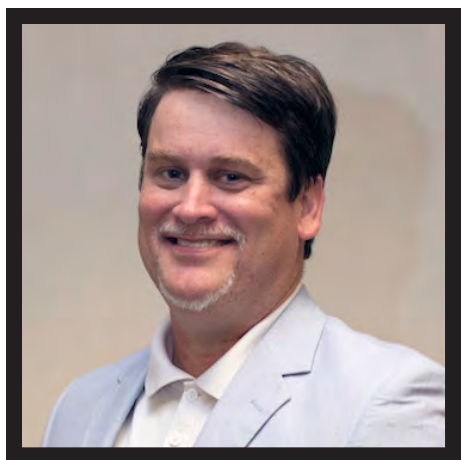


reading scores. In some cases, this may be more difficult compared with below average reading scores. My goal here is to share with you some practical strategies that assisted me in effectively collaborating with my faculty to move our reading achievement from last in the district to first in the district within a five-year period. You will probably not find these strategies in a book or text. However, I can attest that these strategies assisted greatly.

## PRACTICAL STRATEGIES



Develop trust, build relationships, and integrate a gradual transition to change. As a neophyte principal, you are only as good as the people you have in the organization. Always remember that actions speak louder than words. You must also listen more than talk, particularly during the first year. An effective leader leads by example. I allocated an excessive amount of time analyzing data the first year with the leadership team (including classroom teachers, special education teachers, reading coach, and reading interventionist) and ensuring structures were in place to allow the faculty to be successful. In addition, numerous hours were allocated to constructing authentic action plans to address reading deficiencies along with monthly data meetings led by myself. I knew very little about elementary reading prior to taking the job. However, I knew in order to be successful that I had to know enough to understand elementary reading and effectively lead data meetings. Therefore, I volunteered to attend Alabama ARI summer reading training (boy, was this a revelation...but, I learned so much...). After developing trust and building relationships, my reading coach and I began to explore other schools within the state with similar demographics and high reading achievement. Next, I scheduled a meeting with the principal and reading coach of the schools that we wanted to visit. Finally, I developed a team to visit the schools of choice composed of teachers, the reading coach, and myself. We were able to observe teaching, debrief with powerful discussions, and reflect on what we choose to apply to our own school. The next section will reflect on a five-year window through the lens of a principal.



### Dr. Jeff Cornelius

*Dr. Jeff Cornelius is an Associate Professor of Instructional Leadership at the University of North Alabama. A native of Tusculumbia, AL, he received degrees from Mississippi State University, University of North Alabama, and Samford University. He also has served as a classroom teacher, assistant principal, principal, and assistant superintendent.*

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It was important for trust and relationships to be developed in year one in order to build rapport in year two. At the beginning of year two, we were in full implantation mode with the vast majority of the faculty and

***Continued on page 40***

## Craig Pouncey Receives Dr. James A. Street Award

Dr. Craig Pouncey was awarded the prestigious Dr. James A. Street Award. This award is typically presented during the Awards Luncheon of the CLAS Convention. Due to Covid-19, the Convention was held virtually, and the award was named in a recorded program.

Pouncey is set to begin serving as president of the Coastal Alabama Community College on October 1, 2020. Most recently, he served as the superintendent of the Jefferson County School System from July 2014 to September 2019. He led more than 36,000 students in 56 schools. Jefferson County Schools is the second largest school system in Alabama.

While at Jefferson County Schools, Pouncey is credited with the expansion of both dual enrollment and career technical programs in the area's 13 high schools. His goal was to ensure pathways for students leading to high-demand skills.

Dr. Pouncey previously served as chief of staff for the Alabama State Department of Education and superintendent of Crenshaw County Schools. He earned his Ed.D. from Samford University. While at the ALSDE, his responsibilities included proper use and distribution of all state and federal funds for K-12, legislative liaison, and financial accountability.

## Alabama High School Principal of the Year Finalist for National Recognition (Continued)

that excite and engage them," commented Dr. Cynthia McCarty, Alabama State Board of Education member for district 6. "Dr. Clemons is simply an outstanding educator, one who motivates his students, staff, and faculty to be the best they can be."

The Alabama Principal of the Year Award is sponsored by the Alabama Association of Secondary School Principals and American Fidelity Assurance. A trip to Washington, D.C., to participate in the NASSP Principal of the Year Awards Program is provided by AASSP. Additionally, an

The Dr. James A. Street Award is presented by the CLAS Board of Directors in recognition of exceptional service to Alabama public education. The award's namesake, Dr. Street, was the first full-time executive director of the Alabama Council for School Administrators and Supervision (ACSAS), which is now CLAS. Dr. Street was a visionary leader who served in many capacities in public education in Alabama.

Recipients of this award may be an educator or layperson, a school system, or public or private institution or organization, profit or non-profit, that the CLAS Board of Directors considers worthy of such recognition. The James A. Street Award can be presented to a member or non-member for exceptional service or achievement that furthers the cause of public education and the interests of school administrators.

"I can't think of a more worthy recipient of the Dr. James A. Street Award than Dr. Pouncey," states CLAS Executive Director Dr. Vic Wilson. "He has achieved so much toward the advancement of public education in Alabama during his career in education administration."

office makeover is provided by Interior Elements.

"Nothing excites us more than seeing education leaders receive well-deserved recognition for their hard work and dedication. This year is an Alabama 'first,'" said Dan Chappel of Interior Elements. "Well done, Adam, you've earned it!"

"American Fidelity proudly congratulates Adam Clemons as a finalist for National Principal of the Year. We're honored to know Dr. Clemons and to sponsor this prestigious award for Alabama schools. American Fidelity is deeply rooted in the education community and considers it a privilege to support school administrators and education professionals through benefits administration and supplemental insurance," added American Fidelity Sales Manager John Cole.



CLAS Executive Director Dr. Vic Wilson presents the Dr. James A. Street Award to Dr. Craig Pouncey

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Aspiring Administrator.....	\$50
Reduced price for new Aspiring Administrators.....	\$30
Alabama Association of Elementary School Administrators (AAESA)	
Active .....	\$106
Aspiring Administrator.....	\$33
Retired.....	\$0
Alabama Association of Middle School Principals (AAMSP) .....	\$60
Reduced price for new members .....	\$30
School Superintendents of Alabama (SSA)	
SSA System Membership .....	Approved by Superintendent
Retired or Associate members .....	Join thru SSA
Alabama Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (AASCD) .....	\$50

Alabama Council of Administrators of Special Education (ALA-CASE) .....	\$40
Alabama Association of Prevention, Attendance, and Support Services (AAPASS) .....	\$30
Alabama Child Nutrition Directors (ACND).....	\$25
Alabama Association of Career/Technical Administrators (ACTA/AACTE).....	\$125
Alabama Association of School Personnel Administrators (AASPA) .....	\$40
Alabama Leaders Advocating for English Learners (ALAE) .....	\$50

## National Membership Dues

Membership in these national organizations is not required unless otherwise specified; however, CLAS supports the concept of total involvement and recommends national membership.

National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)	
Active .....	\$235
<i>Includes \$2 million liability insurance.</i>	
Institutional.....	\$280
<i>Includes \$2 million liability insurance. Membership is transferrable.</i>	
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Association of Career Technical Education (ACTE).....	\$80
The Council for Exceptional Children/Council of Administrators of Special Education (CEC/CASE) .....	\$125
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)	
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**I. CLAS DUES - Full Membership with Legal Services**  
(For school/system employees with administrative or supervisory positions ONLY)

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AAESA Active (Elementary Principals) .....  \$106

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SSA (Superintendents)..... Must be approved by Superintendent

AASCD (Curriculum & Supervision) .....  \$50

ALA-CASE (Special Education).....  \$40

AAPASS (Prevention, Attendance, Support) .....  \$30

ACND (Child Nutrition) .....  \$25

ACTA/AACTE (Career/Tech) .....  \$125

AASPA (Personnel & HR) .....  \$40

ALAEI (Leaders of English Learning) .....  \$50

**C. National Affiliate Dues - Optional**

NAESP Active\* (Elementary Principals) .....  \$235

NAESP Institutional\* (Elementary Principals, Transferrable).....  \$280

NAESP Assistant Principal\* (Elementary Principals) .....  \$195

ACTE (Career/Tech) .....  \$80

CEC/CASE (Special Education).....  \$125

NASSP Active\*\* (Secondary Principals) .....  \$250 Renew  \$215 New

NASSP Institutional\*\* (Secondary Principals, Transferrable).....  \$250 Renew  \$215 New

**GRAND TOTAL: \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

\* NAESP Active, Institutional, and Assistant Principal Memberships Include \$2 Million Liability Insurance.  
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AAESA Aspiring Admin (Elementary Principals).....  \$33

AAESA Emeritus (Elementary Principals, For Retirees Only) .....  \$0

AAMSP (Middle-Level Principals) .....  \$60 Renew  \$30 New

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AASCD (Curriculum & Supervision) .....  \$50

ALA-CASE (Special Education).....  \$40

AAPASS (Prevention, Attendance, Support) .....  \$30

ACND (Child Nutrition) .....  \$25

ACTA/AACTE (Career/Tech).....  \$125

AASPA (Personnel & HR) .....  \$40

ALAEI (Leaders of English Learning) .....  \$50

**C. National Affiliate Dues - Optional**

NAESP Aspiring Administrator (Elementary Principals).....  \$80

NAESP Retired (Elementary Principals) .....  \$80

ACTE (Career/Tech) .....  \$80

CEC/CASE (Special Education).....  \$125

NASSP Retired (Secondary Principals) .....  \$50

**GRAND TOTAL: \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**Address questions to (800) 239-3616 or membership@clasleaders.org**

## CLAS Convention Highlights (Continued)



As great as the learning was at this online conference, I know we all look forward to the day when we can be back in the same physical space, chatting over coffee between sessions, shaking hands and giving hugs. It was amazing to me how almost every session hit on the importance of RELATIONSHIPS. That is what we are all longing for now: to connect, to be seen, to be heard, and to see and hear others in a non-virtual world.

### A FINAL WORD FROM VIC

Vic Wilson has shared some quick information about the convention with me and a short quote that sums up

a wonderful week of learning.

“CLAS works hard to provide quality professional learning to our members and attendees, and our CLAS Convention @ Home shows a strong commitment to that belief. We simply could not let our members go through the summer without an opportunity to learn, grow, network, and communicate with each other and with great speakers. The credit for the event goes to the CLAS staff. They never shied away from our commitment to provide world-class professional learning even during a virtual event.”

“If you did not have an opportunity to join us this year, we hope that you can plan for other events and for next summer as we all continue to grow and learn in this work and to broaden our impact on the lives of students and families across Alabama. Until then, keep learning, and keep networking with others because we truly can achieve more together.”

*This article was originally published on the Alabama Best Practices Center Blog and is reprinted with permission by Dr. Stoney Beavers. Editing provided by John Norton.*



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post-convention  
attendees



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## Collegiate Composition Continued



staff buying-in to doing whatever it takes to improve reading. Year two was the year that caused some serious self-reflection by the teachers. I firmly believe that every person has his or her breaking point and a leader must be highly cognizant of this point. I discovered the hard way that sometimes it is easier to get a few on board first and allow others to develop as time progresses. As year two progressed, we began to witness some gains on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). The changes that teachers made were beginning to payoff, which simply strengthened the buy-in process. As the end of year two approached, significant gains were evident in both reading and math as evidenced on the Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test (ARMT). By the end of year two, my faculty and I were overly excited as well as myself by the end of year two.

Year three approached rather quickly. Year three became a year of refining and drilling deeper into specific reading miscues, and thus an examination of pedagogical methods specific to the rectification of these miscues. By this time, the faculty was on a mission. A mission not only to move students in reading, but also to be the best school in the district. We began to call on experts in reading to discuss best practices that align with reading miscues. For example, I invited the regional ARI Coach to join my data team during monthly meetings. She provided a wealth of knowledge. In addition, we tapped into the local university resources to access online peer-reviewed journals so that searches of literature could be conducted concerning specific reading miscues. For example, some of the first graders had exhibited difficulty with blending words. As a result, we conducted a mini literature review (as a team) of different pedagogical methods to teach blending. Teachers were able to integrate these pedagogical methods into their daily teaching. As time progressed

with these new pedagogical methods, blending also progressed.

Year four became a repeat of year three, but with more gains in both, reading achievement and math as a result of quality teaching with specific action strategies and accountability checks. As year five approached, not only did the faculty know how to teach reading, but they knew how to reach the most at-risk students. In addition, we began to branch out into other subject areas such as science and social studies. At the end of year five, the school had exceeded the other schools in the district on the ARMT and scored the highest in specific grade levels and of indicators of DIBELS. I would be remiss not to give full credit to the faculty and staff for their hard work in making a dream become a reality. As I noted earlier, you are only as good as the people that work with you. As principals, we have a duty to provide structures to make our faculty successful and frequently remove barriers that make our faculty unsuccessful. Often times, we have an excessive amount of barriers that may need to be removed before the faculty can all begin to paddle in the same direction.

This article discusses the importance of being able to read in early grades as well as why reading by the end of third grade is paramount. Moreover, the article shared some practical insights from the lens of a previous principal. It is my hope that the article provided you with both theoretical and practical knowledge of why reading is important in early grades and some reflective strategies to improve reading.

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## Military Child Education Coalition

The Military Child Education Coalition works to ensure inclusive, quality educational opportunities for all military-connected children affected by mobility, transition, deployments and family separation.

Anna Startzell  
(254) 953-1923  
anna.startzell@militarychild.org  
militarychild.org

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## Samford University School of Education

Samford University's School of Education graduate program information.

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(844) 705-1981  
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