



# charterconnect

magazine

MAY, 2022

**Meet  
Russell  
Raney**  
NSFA's  
new CFO

Spotlight on:  
ALABAMA'S FIRST  
Conversion Charter  
**DAVIS**  
Elementary

**approved.**  
Freedom  
Preparatory **Academy**





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# contents.

inside  
this

## issue.

Issue 16: **May, 2022**



### ➔ **Russell** Raney

Meet Russell Raney, the new Chief Financial Officer at New Schools for Alabama.

### ➔ **Davis** Elementary

A closer look at Alabama's 1st Conversion Charter!



### ➔ **Are Charters Public?**

Are charter schools public schools? Read to learn more!

### ➔ **Approved**

The Alabama Public Charter School Commission approves Freedom Preparatory Academy to open in Birmingham..



22.

### 06 **FEATURE STORY**

Meet Russell Raney, Chief Financial Officer, New Schools for Alabama

### 09 **PARENT VOICE**

Sign up to join NSFA's Parent Advocacy Group, Parent Voice

### 10 **CHARTER SPOTLIGHT**

Davis Elementary, Alabama's 1st Conversion Charter

### 18 **AL EDUCATION NEWS**

Recap of the April Alabama Board of Education Meeting

### 23 **CHARTER HAPPENINGS**

Job openings, school enrollment and more

# Our Board

**Khadijah Abdullah**  
Shipt

**Dave Borden**  
Aldridge, Borden & Company

**Carol Butler**  
The Mike & Gillian  
Goodrich Foundation

**Nick Gaede**  
Bainbridge, Mims,  
Rogers & Smith, LLP

**Brian Hamilton**  
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**Maria Kennedy**  
The Daniel Foundation

**Miho Kubagawa**  
New Schools Venture Fund

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University of West

**Dr. Jeremiah Newell\***  
Accel Day & Evening Academy  
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**Tyler Barnett**  
Chief Executive Officer

Tyler started his career in the classroom, and after earning his law degree, he worked for two state departments of education. He previously served as Charter School Director for the Arkansas Public School Resource Center, and prior to founding New Schools for Alabama, he served as State Policy Director for KnowledgeWorks.



**ShaElla Askew**  
Communications Associate

As founder of the communications firm, Hashtag Consulting, ShaElla has extensive experience managing social media platforms for entrepreneurs and organizations. She loves communicating with target audiences and, more specifically, has a passion for social media.



**Mike Brown**  
Chief Schools Officer

Mike is a school leader at heart, having been a school leader with KIPP, a principal at the Tennessee Achievement School District, and Chief Schools Officer with Freedom Preparatory Academy in Memphis. He also served as Executive Director of the Freedom



**Candie A. Mitchell-Price**  
Chief Communications Officer

In addition to founding her own national magazine, Candie has led communications and PR strategy for numerous organizations. She is also a former high school and middle school teacher for Birmingham City Schools.



**Russell Raney**  
Chief Financial Officer

Russell brings extensive experience to the financial services at New Schools for Alabama, having served as Chief School Financial Officer with multiple school districts in Alabama. He has also holds numerous relevant certifications and has served as finance director for the Alabama Association of School Boards.



**Chris Reynolds**  
Chief Operating Officer

Chris is a former CPA with an extensive background in charter school leadership, nonprofit management, and philanthropy. He has founded multiple high-performing charter school networks and supported the development of a national facilities funding strategy.



**Natalie Tucker**  
Chief of Staff

Natalie's experience as part of a school founder team (as a teacher, school administrator and district administrator) led her to find her niche in organizational strategy and growth. Natalie has worked with both young learners and adult learners throughout her career as a classroom teacher and as a professional learning designer and facilitator.



Welcome RUSSELL RANEY



*"...every child deserves the opportunity to have a quality education, and that opportunity should not be diminished simply based on a person's zip code."*

RUSSELL RANEY  
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER  
NEW SCHOOLS FOR ALABAMA



**R**ussell W. Raney is the Chief Financial Officer for New Schools For Alabama. He recently served as Assistant Superintendent & CSFO for Pike Road Schools. He has over 24 years of experience in school business and finance.

Russell received a Bachelor's degree in Accounting and a Masters of Public Administration from the University of Alabama. He is a Certified Public Accountant and a Certified Administrator of School Finance and Operations. Additionally, he holds a Child Nutrition Director professional certificate from the Alabama State Board of Education. He is married to his wife Hope and they have four grown children.

Candie: Russell, welcome to the New Schools for Alabama Team! Tell everyone a little about yourself?

Russell: I was born and raised in Tuscaloosa and attended the University of Alabama. I have spent the last 24 years working in Alabama public school finance, most recently serving as the Assistant Superintendent and Chief School Financial Officer for Pike Road Schools. I live in Auburn and my wife and I have 4 grown children.

Candie: Describe your position as CFO for NSFA?

Russell: I began my position as the CFO for NSFA on April 1st. In my new position, I will be supporting the new and existing charter schools with financial accounting and payroll services, including ALSDE compliance reporting, budgeting/forecasting, and annual audits. In addition to supporting the charter schools, I will also be overseeing the internal finances of NSFA.

Candie: What are you most excited about in your new position?

Russell: I am most excited to learn a new, but similar, area of school finance. I have thoroughly enjoyed my career in public education, and I am looking forward to bringing my skills to the charter school sector. I am also excited about the opportunity to build my finance team from the ground up as the charter sector continues to expand in Alabama.

Candie: What brings you to the work of educational equity? Why did you want to work at NSFA?

Russell: I have been surrounded by education my entire life. My father was an educator and my mother was an elementary school lunchroom cashier. My parents instilled in me the importance of education, and my father would always say that a solid education (knowledge) is something that no one could ever take away from me. I believe that every child deserves the opportunity to have a quality education, and that opportunity should not be diminished simply based on a person's zip code. Every parent and student should be afforded the right to choose something better. Working at NSFA will allow me to apply my knowledge and skills related to Alabama public school finance to help current and future charter schools be fiscally responsible and achieve financial sustainability.

Candie: What, if anything, do you feel will be the most challenging part of your job and what will be the most

rewarding?

Russell: I believe one of the most challenging parts for me initially will be adjusting to remote accounting work. I have spent the past 30 years in a typical office setting, therefore, that work structure is my frame of reference. The past couple of years have taught us all how to work remotely and given us the tools to do it efficiently. Initially working out the kinks and solidifying solid accounting procedures will be challenging, but I only see that as temporary. Long term, I see the most challenging aspect of the job to be helping new charter schools develop realistic budgets, leveraging all available funds as they struggle to become financially stable. I believe the most rewarding aspect of my job will be watching the Alabama charter schools become financially stable by year five, thereby helping them secure additional years on their charter.

Candie: What is the best advice you've ever been given?

Russell: When you have lived as many years as I have, it's hard to narrow that down to one piece of advice. However, there are a few pieces of advice that have stayed with me over the years. First, "there's no such thing as a free lunch," which has proven to be true over and over for me. Second, my very first accounting professor used to say, "if you're out of cash, you're out of business," which has stuck with me 30 years later.

Candie: What hobbies do you enjoy when you're not working?

Russell: My favorite hobby is cooking, which I do every day. My wife would call that a chore, but for me, it's my chance to be creative so it never really feels like work to me. I am a southerner through and through, and I love to feed people and watch their reaction to a good meal. Aside from that, I really enjoy playing tennis. I was an avid player earlier in my life but got away from the game for a few years. I have recently begun playing again.

Candie: What is one little-known fact about you?

Russell: I have always wanted to be a chef, and when I retire from accounting work, I would love to buy a food truck, setup somewhere on campus, and make people happy serving them good food.

Candie: Thank you, Russell!!! We're excited to have you!



# Are Charter Schools **PUBLIC SCHOOLS?**

BY MELINDA TOLLIVER

**H**ere are three ways to explain how charter schools are public schools:

## **1. Charter schools are tuition-free.**

Charter schools are public schools that are tuition-free—just like any other public school. They do not charge families tuition under any circumstances. Charter schools are simply another free public school option for students and families in the communities they serve and, in many cases, are founded by members of those communities.

## **2. Charter schools are open to all students.**

Charter schools accept any student who applies to them, provided there is room. Charter schools are in high demand, so to play fair they have a lottery system that gives everyone an equal opportunity to get in.

The best way to make sure all students have access to a high-quality public school

that is right for them is to ensure that charter schools exist and are allowed to thrive in the communities they are in.

## **3. Charter schools follow the same laws as all public schools.**

Charter schools are held to the same standards as other public schools in their states and are beholden to state and federal laws. They are accountable to state test standards, state education laws, and federal regulations like Title I and the American Disabilities Act. In addition, they also uphold the standards set in their charter and are accountable to each and every parent who sends their students to the school.

So, what makes charter schools different from district schools? Charter schools are not beholden to specific district school boards—affording them the ability to meet students where they are without the red tape. They're accountable to the families who attend them and the standards in their

founding charter (hence, “charter” school).

And—what someone may not have told you—the more people learn about what is a charter school and understand that charter schools are public schools, the [more likely they are to support them](#).

*Melinda Tolliver is the director of digital strategy at the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. This article is reprinted with permission by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, the leading national organization committed to advancing innovative public schools. This article originally appeared on [The Charter Blog](#) on February 24, 2022.*



# Alabama Public Charter School Parents: We Need You!

Join Parent Voice, NSFA's Parent Advocacy Group! Parent Voice is a network for parents and guardians whose children attend Alabama public charter schools.

Email [candie@newschoolsforalabama.org](mailto:candie@newschoolsforalabama.org) or scan below to join our Facebook group

Join FB Group!



## Why Join?

- \*Quarterly Lead & Learn Sessions
- \*Parent & Student Resources
- \*Advocacy Training
- \*Stipend for Parents who join Planning Committee (limit per school) & more!



By working together, members can help shape the future of their children's charter schools.

## Two Ways to Join



Candie Mitchell-Price



[Candie@newschoolsforalabama.org](mailto:Candie@newschoolsforalabama.org)



New Schools for Alabama :  
Parent Voice Facebook Group



<https://bit.ly/3JBqW30>

[www.newschoolsforalabama.org/parentvoice](http://www.newschoolsforalabama.org/parentvoice)

# Davis Elementary



## Alabama's FIRST Conversion Charter School

BY TYLER BARNETT

charter  
Spotlight

Along with others from the New Schools for Alabama team, I visited Montgomery's Davis Elementary twice this April, spending over an hour at the school each time. We visited with staff, toured the campus, and casually observed everything from instruction to the lunch process to playtime. Davis is the state's first and only conversion charter school, and it is independently operated by a renowned national school turnaround organization, Phalen Leadership Academies (PLA).

Before these visits, I had never been to a PLA school, so I did not know what to expect. However, I do know how difficult school turnaround work is, so any expectations I did have were admittedly modest. After two visits and innumerable hours of consultation with those leading the conversion charter effort, I can offer you this: something special is happening at Davis Elementary, and you should see it for yourself.

Sometimes, when a district or a charter school network undertakes a school turnaround effort, the leaders make overt signals to the community that a seismic transformation is underway. Such overtures might come in the form of a new school name, flashy new colors,





"We could not do this without Ericka Anderson." -Ann Sikes, Executive Director, Montgomery Education Foundation



conspicuous cosmetic improvements to the school, a radical shift in the academic model, or all of the above. But PLA is more subtle.

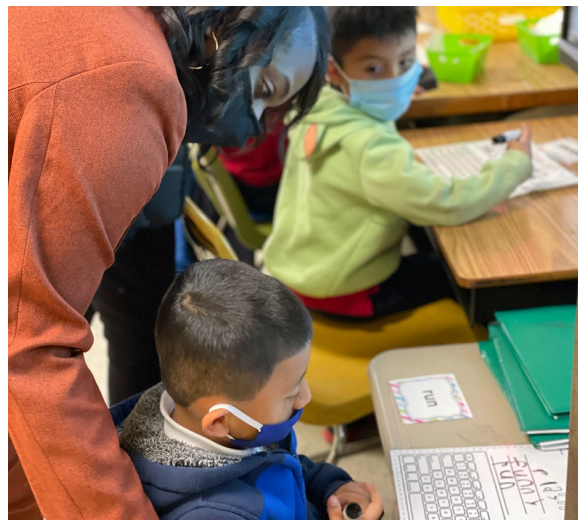
At Davis, they know what works, and they limit their focus to those strategies, applying PLA's trademark microscopic attention to detail. Those who have lived in the community for some time will note that, despite new leadership, the school looks much the same as it always has. PLA has undoubtedly freshened a few things up outside (they removed a rotted tree from the grounds and recently put up a new sign identifying the school as PLA at Davis Elementary) but generally, the curb appeal is the same. It is what can be found inside the building that truly makes them unique.

At the registration desk, visitors to Davis Elementary are greeted with smiles by a leadership team accustomed to hosting tours. On the tour, leadership team members inform guests that they are welcome to pop into any classroom they like (so long as students are not testing), and teachers and students rarely show signs of surprise in response to visitors. The culture at the school—one that I would define as intentional, reflective, and joyful—is palpable, and the adults exude a level of comfort and confidence in their practice that is rare, especially among first-year turnaround schools.

Davis's culture clearly starts at the top with the principal, Ericka Anderson. Anderson was recruited by PLA to lead Davis, having previously served for 14 years as a principal in Title I schools in Georgia. That experience prepared Ms. Anderson for success at Davis, where 88% of the students are economically disadvantaged according to state data. Anderson has also participated in PLA's Principal-in-Residence program, which

is an intensive residency in which PLA leaders undergo structured training with peers and mentors across the PLA network to learn the PLA model and adapt those best practices to their local context.

"We could not do this without Ericka Anderson," said Ann Sikes, Executive Director of the Montgomery Education Foundation (MEF), which is the local nonprofit driving the conversion charter school effort in partnership with Montgomery Public Schools. "She is so positive, and her attention to detail is just incredible. She knows what's important and she goes right after it."



This attention to detail permeates Davis Elementary today. On my first visit to the school, I heard a soundtrack of classical music playing constantly over the intercom as we walked the halls. "That was Ericka's idea. She wants students to be exposed to music they might not otherwise hear outside the school very often," Sikes said. With a limited budget, Anderson also concentrated facility upgrades on the features that made the most difference,



installing new LED overhead lights and adding fresh white paint to brighten the halls. She also upgraded a weathered sign out front and cleaned up the grounds. Much of these upgrades were possible only because of a \$1.5 million grant MEF received from New Schools for Alabama to support the work at Davis Elementary.

MEF was the partner that originally recruited PLA to Montgomery, and they are the holders of all three charters in the ambitious strategy of a feeder pattern of three conversion charter schools in the city. Davis is the first school to convert, and next year Nixon Elementary and Bellingrath Middle will follow, serving about 1,500 kids collectively.

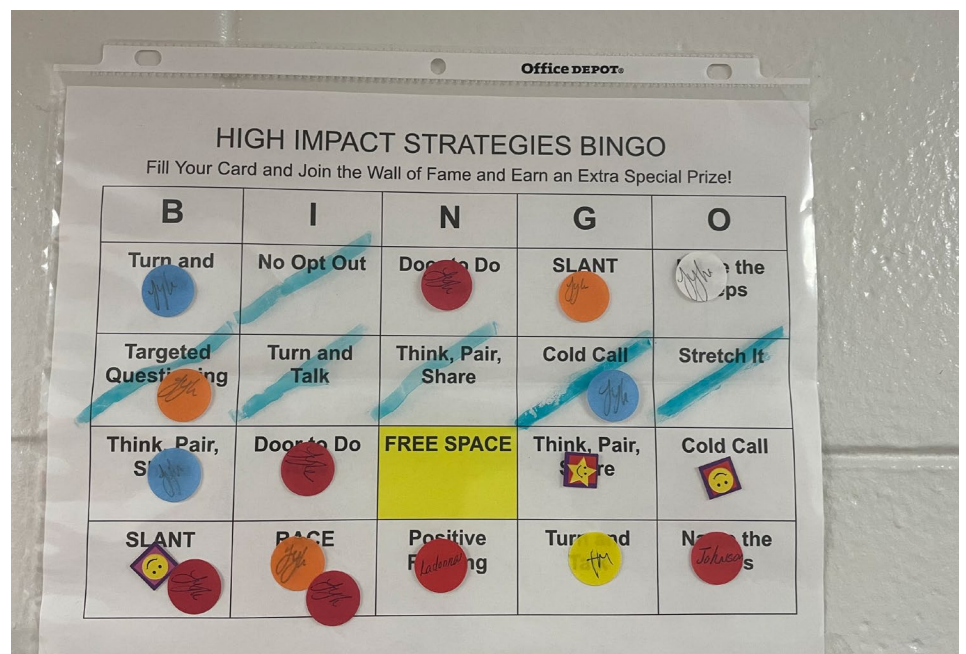
In addition to Anderson, PLA brings its proven practices to Davis, resulting in a culture of high expectations for all, but also one where students and staff are not afraid to fail. Students frequently take formative assessments using the NWEA MAP program, which is a nationally-normed assessment program that allows the school to set baseline data, establish individual student goals, and measure progress compared to their peers across the country. Students who achieve over 80% proficiency on those assessments participate in a scholar parade around the halls where their success is celebrated, and students who do not reach 80% receive intensive targeted support to get them on track.

Similarly, teachers receive regular observations, and they welcome feedback from their school leaders. Each teacher

at a PLA school is placed on one of three tiers, each having its own coaching cycle. Those in a Tier I coaching cycle are observed weekly, and those on a Tier III coaching cycle are observed monthly, with Tier II teachers receiving feedback somewhere in between. Anderson also introduced a reward system for teachers based on the game of Bingo. Each teacher has a Bingo board attached to the wall outside their door, and that Bingo board has a marker placed on a square for each teaching strategy the teacher has mastered. Those getting four strategies marked in a row receive a prize of some kind.

PLA also has a rich system of using Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to ensure teachers are reflective and data-driven. “We do PLCs three times a week during planning time. PLCs are really important for us to look at student data and plan together, but we also know our teachers are busy,” Anderson said. “We have a policy that we do not ask our teachers to meet after school, because our teachers work hard, and work-life balance is really important. So, we have to use our time strategically to look at our data.”

To say PLA is data-driven would be an understatement—student data can



be found on nearly every wall in the building. But considering the history of underperformance at Davis, such reflectiveness is necessary to ensure that they are on-track to achieve their ambitious goals. In the five years prior to PLA’s arrival, Davis never had more than 20% of its students proficient in ELA or Math, and last year zero students were proficient in Math. Since the inception of the state’s School Report Card system, Davis has never scored higher than an F.

### Davis Elementary Outcomes

At the Montgomery Education Foundation, the staff is acutely aware of the challenges that lie ahead. “Turn around or conversion work is one of the hardest models to execute,” said Sikes. “[W]e were committed to find and recruit a proven partner that aligned with our beliefs and expectations and had

“We have a policy that we do not ask our teachers to meet after school ...our teachers work hard.”

### Davis Elementary Outcomes

School Year	ELA Proficiency	Math Proficiency	Letter Grade	Enrollment
2015-16	7.18	18.27	--	486
2016-17	10.71	14.41	F	465
2017-18	10.05	11.37	F	416
2018-19	13.89	15.48	F	488
2020-21	12.05	0.00	--	474

the capacity to do this well. We spent almost two years researching, reviewing, interviewing, and visiting possible candidates. Once we identified Phalen Leadership Academies, it was clear we had found the right partner.”

PLA’s success in turnaround work is no secret. Founded and led by Earl Martin Phalen, their achievements over the years have been featured in the New York Times, TIME Magazine, CNN, BET, Education Week, Parents Magazine, and ABC World News. They now serve over 11,000 students across the nation in over 25 schools, and they have successfully transformed 7 F-rated schools into A-rated schools.

The PLA model is relatively straightforward. They are a nonprofit network of high-quality schools raising achievement for students in historically underserved communities by providing students a rigorous, personalized, and well-rounded education. They support their model with critical wrap-around services such as a free 5-week summer camp called Summer Advantage, free in-school tutoring, free job training programs, and support in getting scholars to and through college. They also are highly selective in their recruitment of staff, and they provide intensive ongoing support to their leaders throughout each year.

However, despite their early success in transforming the school culture, leaders at Davis recognize the many challenges

that remain ahead. Perhaps most notably, we have not yet seen the results from this year’s state assessment, and leaders will undoubtedly have adjustments to make whether those results show the progress they are hoping for or not. In even the most successful turnaround cases, it typically takes 2-3 years before outcomes change significantly. And on a smaller scale, the leaders even have a few important but perhaps more superficial issues to resolve (bats have taken up residence in the ceiling around the cafeteria, and some of the original windows leak when it rains). But the school is nevertheless clearly on the right track, and a tour of the campus will engender optimism in even the most discerning visitor.

With Alabama sitting at or near dead last in the nation in student outcomes, education reform remains one of the most urgent needs in our state. And while charter schools may not be a panacea to our state’s educational woes, they must be a part of the solution, as they represent one of the best levers to increase the number of high-quality public school seats in our state by advancing innovative approaches to education.

As the state’s first conversion charter school, it is imperative that PLA at Davis Elementary succeeds as it will inevitably be a proof point for other districts that are watching carefully. If successful, Davis will not only offer life-changing educational opportunities for the kids in

that building, but they will demonstrate what is possible for other districts with struggling schools, and they may very well inspire a ripple effect of innovation across the state. With such far-reaching implications at stake, it is reassuring to see Davis Elementary in such great hands. Here’s hoping that other districts will soon take notice.

*Tyler Barnett is the Executive Director of New Schools for Alabama. Tyler started his career in the classroom, and after earning his law degree, he worked for two state departments of education. He previously served as Charter School Director for the Arkansas Public School Resource Center, and prior to founding New Schools for Alabama, he served as State Policy Director for KnowledgeWorks.*



# Out & About

IN THE CHARTER COMMUNITY

A group of middle school students from [Breakthrough Charter School](#) were able to attend a town hall hosted by Rep. Terri Sewell at Marion Military. Students were able to learn about current issues affecting Alabama and were able to ask the congresswoman what inspired her to become an elected official!



[LEAD Academy](#) students "Light it up Blue" for Autism Awareness!



[LIFE Academy](#) Kindergarten students dressed up as their future occupations for Career Day.







# SURVEY FINDS CHARTER SCHOOL TEACHERS ENGAGED MORE STUDENTS DURING PANDEMIC

BY DREW JACOBS

**T**he Institute of Education Sciences (IES), an independent research arm of the U.S. Department of Education, [recently released findings based on the 2020-21 National Teacher and Principal Survey](#). The survey asked questions about how schools responded to the pandemic and among those surveyed were more than 68,000 public school teachers from district and charter schools.

Based on what we've seen from [other surveys](#) and [our own research](#), it's not surprising to see that in the IES survey, charter school teachers reported more engagement with their students than teachers in district schools.

### Charter School Teachers Were More Engaged During the Pandemic

Teachers in charter schools reported interacting with their students at higher rates than teachers in district schools. Charter school teachers were more likely to teach lessons in real time, provide support to small groups, schedule one-on-one instruction, and hold both scheduled and unscheduled "office hours."

### Charter School Teachers Had More Real-Time Interactions with Students

Forty percent of charter school teachers reported having real-time interactions with more than 75% of their students during the pandemic, compared to 32% of teachers in district schools. Similarly, charter school teachers were less likely to report not having any real-time interaction with their students.

### Charter School Teachers Felt Supported

Charter school teachers were more likely to respond that they felt supported and well-equipped to be effective as a teacher during the pandemic. With growing reports of teacher dissatisfaction, this finding in particular offers hope that there are solutions to make teaching a more sustainable career.

Once again, we see that the charter school model offers school leaders and teachers the ability to pivot quickly when challenges arise, so it's no surprise that [families are looking to charter schools at record-high rates](#).

What can we do with this information? Policymakers can support legislation and funding that helps communities meet the growing demand for charter schools through programs like [the federal Charter Schools Program](#)—and parents can continue to [voice their support for the program](#). School and district leaders should look to the charter model to see how they can improve their ability to react. And, teachers can actively participate in the improvement process for their school, as well as [look for job opportunities](#) at the charter school that fits them best.

*Drew Jacobs is the senior director of research, policy, and evaluation at the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. His article is reprinted with permission by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, the leading national organization committed to advancing innovative public schools. This article originally appeared on [The Charter Blog](#) on March 3, 2022.*



## Across the Board April 2022: Key Takeaways from the Alabama Board of Education Meeting

**W**e're continuing our monthly series dedicated to keeping you informed about key policy discussions and decisions made by the Alabama State Board of Education and the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE). The Alabama State Board of Education meets on the second Thursday of each month to discuss important policies, procedures, and changes for Alabama's K-12 public schools. The Board takes official action during their monthly meeting and then follows up with a Work Session to get updates and discuss future action that will be voted on at the next board meeting. You can watch them live and see old meetings [here](#). Here are our

key takeaways from the April 14th State Board of Education meeting and work session – and what they mean for Alabama's students.

### April Board Meeting

[Click here](#) to view the meeting agenda.

**Attendance:** All Board members were present except Governor Ivey.

**Awards:** Congratulations to Mr. Robert M. Davis for being selected as the Barbara Fannin Memorial Employee of the Quarter!

**Educator Prep Programs:** The Board approved Jacksonville State University's Class AA Elementary Education educator preparation program.

**Foundations of Reading 190 Test:** The

Board adopted a passing score of 233 (out of 300) for the Foundations of Reading 190 test that pre-service educators take before entering the classroom. On the recommendation of the Alabama Literacy Task Force, the Board decided to switch to the Pearson test as it is more aligned to the science of reading. The switch is effective beginning September 1, 2022. Read our [March 2021 Across the Board](#) for more about the change.

**ELA Textbook Adoption:** The Board approved an addendum to the Recommendations of the State Textbook Committee for Adoption of Textbooks for English Language Arts, Grades 4-12. Core and supplemental materials were adopted at the February meeting, but some materials were accidentally left off.



There is still no action being taken on materials for K-3.

**Superintendent's Report:** Mr. Russ Cofield presented the [Academy of Craft Training](#) based in Birmingham, which allows high school students to participate in internships in the construction industry and have a career in construction after graduation.

### April Work Session

[Click here](#) to view the work session agenda.

### Superintendent Updates:

#### **Reorganization for the Division of Administration and Finance:**

With the recent departure of Andy Craig, Dr. Mackey is proposing to promote Dr. Brandon Payne to Deputy Superintendent for Administration and Finance. Dr. Payne is currently serving as interim. Board members asked about Dr. Payne's experiences in finance so they could be sure that they were in compliance with the position requirements in the Administrative Code. As part of this reorganization, Drs. Mackey and Payne discussed adding a strategy and research team to this section of the department, as recommended by [PCG's review of the ALSDE](#). Dr. Mackey mentioned that this could supplement some of the research required by the newly-passed Alabama Numeracy Act. As a side note: One project Dr. Payne previously managed was digitizing the ALSDE's antiquated document routing process. An outside analysis estimated that, once fully implemented, the changes will save over 100,000 sheets of paper and over 66,000 man-hours each year.

[Social Studies Course of Study](#) was up to be adopted during COVID, but has been pushed back until 2026-2027. [Click here](#) to see the updated Course of Study Standards and Textbook Adoption Cycle through 2030.

Several Board members expressed concern about delaying Social Studies for a number of reasons. The Board discussed moving that review to 2024 from 2026. Dr. Mackey asked to bring in the Textbook Adoption and Course of Study Adoption specialists in the department before making any changes to the adoption schedule.

#### **Struggling Readers – Upper Grades:**

Dr. Elisabeth Davis could not be

there, so the presentation was given by Mrs. Bonnie Short. Supports for older students struggling with reading include Language Enrichment for Older Students (LEOS) training for teachers in grades 4-12, a middle grades coaching pilot with Alabama Best Practices Center, the ABILITY middle grades pilot with the Governor's office, as well as other professional learning opportunities offered directly from the ALSDE.

**Educator Prep Programs:** The Board considered resolutions to authorize the review of two educator preparation programs: the University of Alabama in Huntsville and the University of Montevallo.

**Administrative Code:** The Board discussed its intent to adopt a change to the Alabama Administrative Code regarding extended learning opportunities

#### **Resolutions:**

- The Board discussed a resolution commending Charles R. Drew Middle School, Talladega County School System, as a 2022 awardee for Alabama Green Ribbon schools
- The Board discussed a resolution commending Charles R. Drew Middle School, Talladega County School System, as a 2022 awardee for Alabama Green Ribbon schools
- The Board discussed a resolution commending the 2022-2023 District Teachers of the Year
- The Board considered a resolution recognizing Alabama's "Grow Our Own" Initiative and "Future Teachers of Alabama" Organization
- The Board discussed resolutions commending the following principals:
  - **Mrs. Jaclyn Wright**, Principal, Brewbaker Primary School, Montgomery County School System, recipient for Transformation and Triumph in Closing the Reading Achievement Gap, 2022 Model Schools Conference, International Center for Leadership in Education
  - **Dr. Lucretia Prince**, Principal, Crestmont Elementary School, Tuscaloosa County School System, for School Turnaround through a

Thriving Culture and Building Relationship, 2022 Model Schools Conference, International Center for Leadership in Education

- **Dr. Teresha M. Jones**, Principal, and Ms. Tonya Crews, School Improvement and Turnaround Administrator, Central High School, Tuscaloosa City School System, for School Improvement, 2022 Model Schools Conference, International Center for Leadership in Education

#### **Board Member Questions:**

Several board member questions were about legislation passed during the 2022 session. Read our Legislative Recap [here](#).

**Alabama Numeracy Act:** Several Board members asked questions regarding the implementation of the recently passed Alabama Numeracy Act, including:

**Mrs. Zeigler:** What are the qualifications of the Director of the Office of Math Improvement required by the Alabama Numeracy Act? Dr. Mackey: The position has already been posted and qualifications are listed there, but the national search will likely take more than the 90 days allowed in the law. The task force will be convened by Dr. Mackey before the OMI director is hired, but none of the real work will start until the OMI director is hired.

**Dr. Reynolds:** Regarding the Alabama Numeracy Act, how will the department handle the approaching deadlines in the law? Dr. Mackey will convene the task force within 90 days, and he anticipates that a director of the Office of Math Improvement will be hired in 90 days even though he is unsure if the person will be on-site by then. So the department will be in compliance.

**Dr. Reynolds:** With all the math coaches being hired within the school systems, how will we replace math teachers in the schools? Dr. Mackey clarified that these are elementary teachers (K-5) and that while there is not an abundance of them, the shortage is not as bad in elementary as it is in the upper grades. The department will notify schools if they will qualify to have a math coach next year by October 1 of this year. Allocation of funds for math coaches will start around July 1 of next summer so



they can get in and get trained.

**Dr. Reynolds:** How does the timeline being proposed for the Numeracy Act affect the expenditure of funds in the current fiscal year? The legislature allocated a small amount of money in the supplemental budget which is immediately available to set up the OMI in the first 90 days.

**“Bathroom Bill” and “Don’t Say Gay” Bill: Dr. Reynolds:** On the last day of the session, the legislature passed the “bathroom bill”, and the SBOE is required to handle implementation. How will we do that? The bill requires that restrooms that are for multiple person occupancy have to be for male or female

students as identified on their birth certificate. Some districts have made plans for certain students to use single unisex bathrooms, and this doesn’t affect that. Regarding the amendment that states no instruction can be given in grades K-5 on gender identity or sexual orientation that is not age or developmentally appropriate, Dr. Mackey said there is no instruction in grades K-5 in these topics at all. The amendment also included a ban on classroom discussion of the same topics, which is more tricky because if a child brings it up, it has to be cut off. The law says the board has to write a rule on that. Dr. Mackey said that it would be considered a violation of the teacher code

of ethics. A draft of the code change will likely be presented in June so that it can be in place for the fall.

**NAEP Data: Dr. McCarty:** When are NAEP scores going to be released? Dr. Mackey said that they are typically released in October, but there is a discussion about releasing data anywhere between September-January 2023 to avoid being released around election season.

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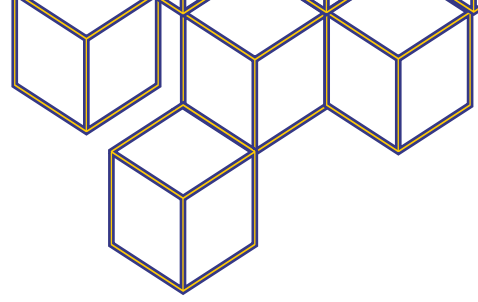
# AL Public Charter School Commission News

## Charter School Commission Approves



Freedom  
Preparatory  
Academy,  
Birmingham, AL

**Fall, 2023**



# WHAT WE DO

## » New School Development

We recruit high-quality charter school operators and develop homegrown leaders to build great schools throughout Alabama.

## » Technical Assistance

We provide applicants and operators with expert guidance on technical needs such as developing an application, finding a facility, managing the back-office, and more.

## » Community Engagement

We ensure that parents and communities have access to clear information about school quality and the benefits that other options may present.

## » Policy Advancement

We work with policymakers and administrative agencies to ensure that the regulatory landscape is supportive of high-quality charter schools.



# CHARTER HEROES

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## MS. KOURTNEY NILSEN

[i3 Academy](#)

Ms. Kourtney Nilsen of i3 Academy won The One Class At a Time Award from CBS 42! She will receive \$1000 to spend on adaptive technology for her classroom. i3 Academy is the first charter school to receive this award. Congrats, Ms. Nilsen!





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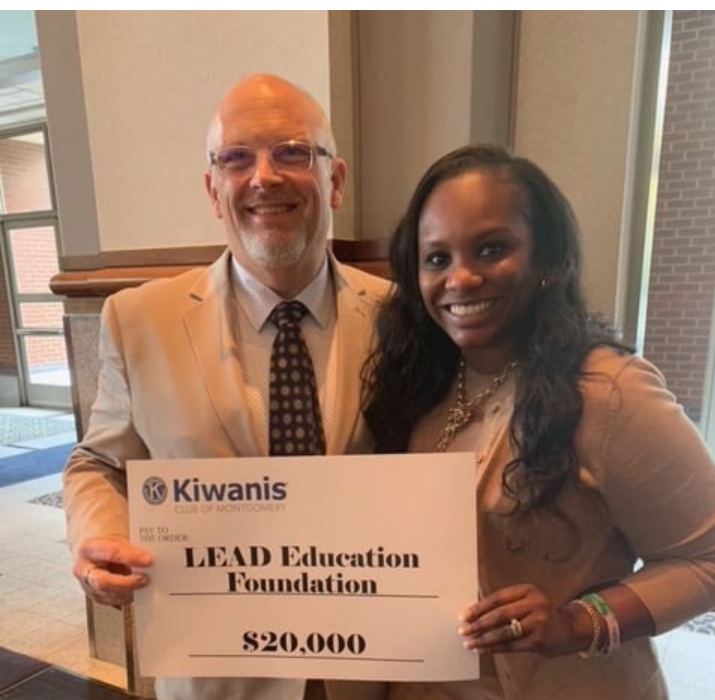
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Lead Academy received a grant from the Kiwanis Club of Montgomery and the Alabama National Fair alongside other organizations that are focused on serving children in the River Region! #LEADingtheway

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