

**MINUTES OF THE ALABAMA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
THE STATE OF ALABAMA
SEPTEMBER 14, 2023
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA**

The Alabama State Board of Education met for its regular meeting of Elementary/Secondary Education matters on Thursday, September 14, 2023, at 10 a.m., in the auditorium of the Gordon Persons Building, Montgomery, Alabama. The meeting was called to order by the Vice President of the Board in accordance with *Alabama Code* (1975), §16-3-7, as amended.

PRESIDING: MRS. TRACIE WEST, VICE PRESIDENT

The invocation was done by Reverend Shane Isner, Pastor, First Christian Church, Montgomery, Alabama, and the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag was done in unison.

The following members were present:

Present

Mrs. Stephanie Bell in person
Dr. Tonya Chestnut in person
Mrs. Marie Manning in person
Mrs. Belinda McRae in person
Dr. Wayne Reynolds in person
Dr. Yvette Richardson in person
Mrs. Tracie West in person
Mrs. Jackie Zeigler in person

Absent

Governor Kay Ivey

Dr. Eric G. Mackey, State Superintendent of Education, was also present.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

On motion by Mrs. Stephanie Bell and seconded by Dr. Tonya Chestnut, the Board voted unanimously to approve the agenda.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE AUGUST 10, 2023, MEETING

On motion by Mrs. Stephanie Bell and seconded by Dr. Yvette Richardson, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes for the meeting of August 10, 2023.

On motion by Dr. Wayne Reynolds and seconded by Mrs. Stephanie Bell, the Board voted unanimously to approve the following:

**RESOLUTION COMMENDING MRS. SERENA OWSLEY
ATHENS CITY SCHOOL SYSTEM
RECIPIENT OF THE 2023 ROBERT L. MORTON AWARD**

WHEREAS, the Alabama Association of School Business Officials (AASBO) has established an annual award recognizing Chief School Financial Officers bearing the name Robert L. Morton Award in honor of the man who served as Assistant State Superintendent of the Alabama State Department of Education's Division of Administrative and Financial Services; and

WHEREAS, Robert L. Morton dedicated his life to distinguished service to America, the state of Alabama, and its children through serving in pivotal roles in the field of education including teacher, coach, principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent; and

WHEREAS, AASBO seeks to recognize, through this award, the dedication that individuals bring to their communities, their profession, and their school system in everyday life by identifying school business officials devoted to going above and beyond, both in their positions and in serving their communities; and

WHEREAS, Serena Owsley has shown leadership, commitment, and dedication to her job and community during her 26 years of service in public education. Mrs. Owsley presently serves as the Chief School Financial Officer/Assistant Superintendent of Administration and Finance for the Athens City School System; and

WHEREAS, her achievements made within her school system; her service provided to her peers, subordinates, and community; and her stellar reputation with those who recommended her are noted; and

WHEREAS, AASBO considers Serena Owsley worthy of recognition and acknowledgement for her honesty, integrity, work ethic, and consummate professionalism; and

WHEREAS, AASBO wishes to bestow upon Serena Owsley the Robert L. Morton Award as this organization celebrates the best their profession of school business management has to offer; and

WHEREAS, the Alabama State Board of Education acknowledges the honor of receiving such a distinguished award and joins AASBO in applauding Serena Owsley for such an accomplishment:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Alabama State Board of Education does hereby express its appreciation to Serena Owsley for her dedicated and distinguished work in public service and with the Athens City School System; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Alabama State Board of Education does hereby congratulate Serena Owsley upon being named the recipient of the sixteenth annual Robert L. Morton Award and wishes her continued success.

Done this 14th day of September 2023

On motion by Mrs. Stephanie Bell and seconded by Mrs. Marie Manning, the Board voted unanimously to approve the following:

**RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING SEPTEMBER 2023 AS
STATEWIDE ATTENDANCE AWARENESS MONTH IN ALABAMA**

WHEREAS, the Alabama State Board of Education and the State Superintendent of Education are committed to dedicating resources and attention to reducing chronic absenteeism rates, starting as early as kindergarten, since good attendance is essential to student achievement and graduation; and

WHEREAS, chronic absence is now a required reporting metric under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act; and

WHEREAS, the Alabama State Department of Education has developed guidelines in support of consistency for school attendance to assist school systems; and

WHEREAS, chronic absence is defined as missing 18 or more days of school for any reason, including excused and unexcused absences, or just two or three days a month, which is a proven predictor of academic trouble and dropout rates; and

WHEREAS, the definition of attendance has expanded “beyond the classroom” to include virtual and remote learning; and

WHEREAS, improving student attendance and reducing chronic absences takes commitment, collaboration, and tailored approaches to challenges and strengths in each community; and

WHEREAS, the impact of chronic absence hits low-income students particularly hard if they do not have the resources to make up for lost time in the classroom, making them more likely to face systemic barriers regarding getting to school; and

WHEREAS, chronic absence exacerbates the achievement gap that separates low income students from their peers; and

WHEREAS, student absenteeism undermines efforts to improve struggling schools since it is hard to measure improvement in classroom instruction if students are not engaged to benefit from instruction; and

WHEREAS, schools and communities must do more to identify, analyze, project, and share data on how many students are chronically absent so that appropriate interventions are matched with the needs of the students; and

WHEREAS, chronic absence can be significantly reduced when school systems, teachers, parents, and communities work together to monitor and promote good attendance and address hurdles that keep children from getting to school:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Alabama State Board of Education does hereby proclaim that Alabama schools will stand with the nation in recognizing September 2023 as “Attendance Awareness Month” and is hereby committed to focusing on reducing chronic absenteeism so that all children have an equitable opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive academically, emotionally, and socially.

Done this 14th day of September 2023

On motion by Mrs. Stephanie Bell and seconded by Dr. Tonya Chestnut, the Board voted unanimously to approve the following:

**RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING OCTOBER 2023 AS
STATEWIDE PARENT ENGAGEMENT MONTH IN ALABAMA**

WHEREAS, the Alabama State Board of Education and the State Superintendent of Education strongly support parent and family engagement in the education of Alabama students, and parent engagement is critical to student and school success; and

WHEREAS, the Alabama State Board of Education is committed to parent and family engagement in our schools as it strives to provide all public school children with an opportunity for a quality education with high academic standards that offer every student an opportunity to graduate and to obtain the necessary skills to be prepared for the 21st century; and

WHEREAS, more than 30 years of research identify parental engagement as a key component in ensuring a child’s academic achievement, and a successful partnership between educators and parents is one of the most crucial factors influencing the success of students in school; and

WHEREAS, Statewide Parent Engagement Month provides parents the opportunity to learn how they can become more actively engaged in their children’s education by visiting their children’s school, learning about the curriculum, consulting with their children’s teachers, and participating in school activities; and

WHEREAS, Statewide Parent Engagement Month is an excellent opportunity for Alabama’s public schools to emphasize and increase parent engagement, to partner with communities to raise awareness, and increase support for public education:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Alabama State Board of Education proclaims October 2023 as Statewide Parent Engagement Month in Alabama; declares this year’s theme as **Home and School Partnerships: Connecting the Dots to Strengthen Student Learning** which encourages educators, communities, parents, and families to participate in this observance; and challenges educators to solicit sustained, year-round parent and family engagement.

Done this 14th day of September 2023

On motion by Mrs. Marie Manning and seconded by Dr. Tonya Chestnut, the Board voted 5-3-0 to approve the following. Mrs. Stephanie Bell, Mrs. Jackie Zeigler, and Dr. Wayne Reynolds opposed.

**ALABAMA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING A CUT SCORE
FOR THE LOWEST LEVEL IN READING FOR THE ALABAMA COMPREHENSIVE
ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (ACAP)**

WHEREAS, the Alabama State Board of Education supports increasing student achievement, including an emphasis on reading in the early grades, as witnessed by its continued commitment to high quality reading instruction, assessment, and professional development; and

WHEREAS, the *Alabama Literacy Act* specifically provides, in part,

“(h) [As amended by Act 2022-391] Commencing with the 2023-2024 school year, third grade students shall demonstrate sufficient reading skills for promotion to fourth grade. Students shall be provided all of the following options to demonstrate sufficient reading skills for promotion to

fourth grade, and the State Superintendent of Education shall provide guidelines for the implementation of this subsection:

(1) Scoring above the lowest achievement level, as determined by rule of the State Board of Education, on a board-approved assessment in reading as provided in Section 16-6G-3.

(2) Earning an acceptable score on an alternative standardized reading assessment as determined and approved by the State Superintendent of Education.

(3) Demonstrating mastery of third grade minimum essential state reading standards as evidenced by a student reading portfolio. The State Superintendent of Education and the task force established under subsection (a) of Section 16-6G-3 shall establish criteria for minimum essential standards and the student reading portfolios and a definition of what constitutes mastery of all third grade state reading standards.

(i) If a student does not demonstrate sufficient reading skills on one of the three options listed in subsection (h) and does not qualify for a good cause exemption, the student may not be promoted to fourth grade.” *Section 16-6G-5, Code of Alabama (1975)*:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Alabama State Board of Education establishes that for purposes of promotion to fourth grade under provisions of the *Alabama Literacy Act*, the lowest achievement level for the reading subset of the ACAP English Language Arts will include any and all raw scores below 435; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Alabama State Board of Education intends to review this lowest achievement level in the summer of 2024 and on a regular basis thereafter, following future administrations of the statewide English Language Arts reading assessment and reserves the right to make amendments as deemed necessary by the Board.

Done this 14th day of September 2023

On motion by Mrs. Jackie Zeigler and seconded by Dr. Yvette Richardson, the Board voted unanimously to approve the following:

ALABAMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FISCAL YEAR 2024 OPERATING BUDGET

On motion by Dr. Yvette Richardson and seconded by Mrs. Marie Manning, the Board voted unanimously to approve the following:

ANNOUNCE INTENT TO REPEAL ALABAMA ADMINISTRATIVE CODE RULE 290-3-3-.60, PERTAINING TO ALTERNATIVE TEACHER PREPARATION ORGANIZATIONS, AND ADOPT NEW ALABAMA ADMINISTRATIVE CODE RULE 290-3-3-.60, PERTAINING TO ALTERNATIVE TEACHER PREPARATION ORGANIZATIONS (ATPO)

On motion by Mrs. Marie Manning and seconded by Dr. Yvette Richardson, the Board voted unanimously to approve the following:

ANNOUNCE INTENT TO ADOPT AMENDED ALABAMA ADMINISTRATIVE CODE CHAPTER 290-3-6, PERTAINING TO CHARTER SCHOOLS

EXECUTIVE (INCLUDES LEGAL AND PUBLIC INFORMATION)

Dr. Mackey stated that there was no report necessary for the month of September.

STATE SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Dr. Mackey stated that he became a new superintendent in 2002, his first trip to the Gordon Persons Building was a meeting with Mr. Robert L. Morton, Assistant State Superintendent of Administration and Finance. He recalled a statement from Mr. Morton that “nobody really remembers past superintendents after a few years, but” he added emphatically, “everyone remembers that one who was superintendent when the school system went bankrupt; don’t be that one.” Dr. Mackey stated that it was a special honor when the Alabama Association of School Business Officials (AASBO) decided to memorialize Mr. Morton by naming their annual award in his honor. Dr. Mackey congratulated Mrs. Serena Owsley, Chief School Financial Officer at Athens City School System, as the 2023 recipient of the Robert L. Morton Award. He acknowledged Mrs. Beth Patton, Superintendent of Athens City School System, and Mr. David Smith, AASBO Executive Director.

Dr. Mackey allowed Dr. Jimmy Hull, Assistant Superintendent of Career and Technical Education (CTE)/Workforce Development, Mr. Craig Collins, Administrator, Jobs for Alabama's Graduates (JAG), Ms. Mandy Nichols and Ms. Charlotte Dabbs, Education Specialists in JAG, to give some highlights and accomplishments of the newly named 6 of 6 Program. The old program was 5 of 5. This year, for the first time, there is an added measure. The JAG Program provides specialized support for students who are up against difficult barriers that limit them from reaching graduation and career goals. Through early intervention including classroom instruction, counseling, employability skills development, and job placements services, the JAG Program has seen a 99% graduation rate and 95% full-time job placement rate. Alabama JAG Performance Goal: Graduation Rate – 99%; Total Civilian Job Placements and Military Service – 74%; Total in Full-Time Employment – 88%; Total in Full-Time Positive Outcomes – 92%; Further Education Rate – 47%; and Connectivity Rate – 97%. Now, teachers contact students after graduation. Everyone finds that as an important piece. Dr. Mackey stated that the Department will ask for an increase of funds for the program next year. He said that growth does not happen without a team, and certainly would not have happened if the Board did not ask for more funding. He thanked the CTE group and the Board Members.

There being no other business before the Board, on motion by Mrs. Marie Manning and seconded by Dr. Tonya Chestnut, Board Members voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 10:55 a.m. The next Alabama State Board of Education Meeting for Elementary and Secondary Education will be held on Thursday, October 12, 2023, at 10 a.m. in the Auditorium of the Gordon Persons Building followed by the Work Session.

Vice President

Secretary and Executive Officer