BRINGING THE PUBLIC INTO OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Mobile Area Education Foundation
MOBILE AREA EDUCATION FOUNDATION

VISION

The Mobile Area Education Foundation is an independent, non-profit, local education fund dedicated to creating higher expectations for our public schools and our community.

MISSION

The mission of Mobile Area Education Foundation is to build community responsibility for improving public education outcomes in Mobile County. We work with, but are independent of, the Mobile County Public School System.

BELIEFS

• The citizens of Mobile County own the public schools
• Change is possible and progress is taking place
  • All children can achieve at high levels
• What happens in the classroom matters most
  • Great schools make a great community

The MAEF is a member of the Public Education Network (PEN). Its mission is to build public demand and mobilize resources for quality public education for all children through a national constituency of local education funds and individuals.
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A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Mobile Area Education Foundation and the Mobile County Public School System have been working for the last decade to improve our public schools in Mobile County so that every student is guaranteed success – as a student, as a worker, and as a citizen. We are “bringing the public into our public schools” to define expectations, to partner, to monitor progress, and most importantly to support our 65,000 students and 4,700 teachers. The Mobile County Public School System has come a long way in a relatively short period of time. The school district is attracting national attention, for how it has kept its eye on reform with a significant influx of students left homeless by Katrina, and for its commitment to transforming the learning experience in the neediest schools in the system.

In this report you will find evidence of the genuine progress that has been made by goal to date. It will also provide you with data and analysis that will help define opportunities for improvement. While there are pockets of excellence throughout the system, there is a good distance to go to be able to get to excellence for every single child in Mobile County. That’s what the citizens of Mobile County have said they want. And that is what the county deserves.

We all know that the quality of life in Mobile County is directly related to the quality of our public schools. To achieve excellence for every child means we have to close the achievement gap between all races and all socioeconomic levels. Improvement and excellence must become practices that are systemic and institutionalized. An excellent education must be available to every child in the county, regardless of where he or she lives or the income level of his or her family. MCPSS is well positioned to achieve that excellence. Getting there will require the sustained focus not only of the school district but also of the school board, the business community, parents, the faith community and everyone who pays taxes.

Education is still the number one issue in this community, particularly as a strategy of economic development. A number of major new economic development announcements have been made in Mobile County. The big companies coming here have raised the expectations of the workforce and the quality of students graduating in Mobile County. They have been attracted partly because of the efforts to turn our school system around, but they are going to be serious about holding the system accountable for getting the job done.

In the next few years, we will be watching closely to see how students are achieving, not just in some subjects but in all of them. The gains we have seen in elementary schools need to be translated to middle and high school as well. To get there, we must maintain a focus on student achievement—not just at Barton but also across the community. The community must continue to apply intense demand for excellence and the support to get there.

In all, we are creating a new public story about education in Mobile County. Our data is improving, and many of the schools are indeed getting better at providing an excellent education to some of our students. But we cannot stop until we meet that promise for every child in Mobile County.

The kind of community we want to live in is dependent on having excellent schools. And that requires citizens to be a permanent fixture that brings pressure for change and a balance of support and resources as well.

As you look through the report think of it as a “victory lap.” Celebrate where we are strong and help us grow stronger where we need it. Ask questions. Get involved in solutions. We are definitely moving forward but, we still have a lot of work to do. The bottom line is that community and schools working together can ensure success for every student.
2006 RECOMMENDATIONS
2006 RECOMMENDATIONS

Each year as we produce this report, we will track progress on whether and how these recommendations are addressed.

1. COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

The YES WE CAN Community Agreement cited “No sense of ownership in our schools by our community” as one of the reasons for the public education disconnect in Mobile County. Many of our children (35%) have selected private education or are home schooled as an alternative. Our aging population is growing and is no longer involved in the current delivery of public education in our community. Until and unless the MCPSS goals that are reflected in the PASSport to Excellence become the goals of the entire community, we are in jeopardy of continuing the disconnect between the community and our schools.

We recommend that the school system—in partnership with the community—engage the public through community meetings or “kitchen table” conversations about the progress being made on the goals and to provide continuous two-way communication between and among stakeholders. The goal of these conversations should be to organize a cohesive, well-informed coalition—a “public voice” that is focused, sustained and compelling enough to drive the long-term changes needed to ensure high standards and high achievement for every child in Mobile County. Then, the community can begin the ongoing work of providing the resources needed to accomplish our goals. Annual perception data for all stakeholder groups should be collected, analyzed and reported to regularly assess customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

2. DATA WAREHOUSE

MCPSS is well on its way to be a data-driven school system. Operationally, much has been done to purchase necessary equipment and software that answers the question, “What works, for which students, over time?” To answer these questions we must have organized data. And while we are working on it, we still do not have organized longitudinal data to the student’s desk on multiple assessments/measures. Following an IBM study the district is now preparing to roll out the data warehouse in phases beginning with building or school level data.

We recommend that as the school district develops a plan for implementing a data warehouse, it needs to ensure that data can be disaggregated from the classroom to individual students so that it can be monitored over time. This is essential so that teachers can make solid, data-based decisions about teaching and learning. As evident in Tennessee and other states, the value of analyzing disaggregated data is the ability to demonstrate growth over time for students. The best analysis assign weights to the data, such as taking into account students who perform at different grade levels or start school at different learning levels. MCPSS needs to look at various ways of assigning weights to data, so that schools that may seem “behind” but are indeed making progress are not penalized. The important focus is to track progress as students and schools move forward, not to compare schools to each other.
3. GRADUATION RATES

The MCPSS is showing great progress here. But the school district is not measuring students who entered in the ninth grade and are not graduating on time. This is a problem across Alabama, because the state takes a measure on a set date, sometime in the fall, to assess how many students are on the rolls on that particular date and then compares that to the number of students in school at the end of the school year. Students that drop out, particularly in the ninth grade, often fall through the cracks. Instead, the school district must set a standard of measuring that tracks students when they sign up for school.

4. DROPOUT RATES

The state calculates dropout rates based on a four-year projection. As with the graduation rate, ninth grade students who dropout often fall through the cracks. The district must expand its initial work in student tracking. Knowing where students go – and whether they stay in school wherever they end up – would give us a better handle on how many students we are really losing.

5. CENTRAL OFFICE

The school system has a strategic plan but no one with protected time or authority to implement it. MCPSS must identify a staff person dedicated to the plan. In addition, as the system assesses the most effective use of central office functions, it will be essential to keep alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment at the center of that process. The focus of the central office must be on supporting what it takes to improve student achievement. Period.

Finally, central office must make internal and external communications a priority if the school system is going to build central office accountability.

6. SECONDARY REFORM

This report praises the gains that have been made in student performance in the elementary grades. But MCPSS cannot stop there. A skilled workforce is a high priority for the people of Mobile County, and as goals for economic development increase, secondary schools are a part of the infrastructure needed to deliver these new jobs. To get there, the school system must look hard at redesigning the learning experience for students in all middle and high schools.

MCPSS must pay attention to the mayor, and to community conversations occurring through the mayor’s task force, about the need for the redesign of secondary schools. The school system must make secondary reform a priority, and one way is to get behind the redesign work at Shaw High School. The school has a career technology focus, where students can combine going to high school and going to work. This is a good idea that might be replicated in other schools in Mobile County. But to date, the work at Shaw still is not funded. One approach would be to put together a strong public-private partnership that can raise money to support this innovation and its replication.

6. RIGOR

Alabama is setting only minimum standards for rigorous classes as evidenced on the Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE). The level of rigor that is tested in the current Third Edition is at the 11th grade level while the cut score for proficiency is at about the 50th percentile. This is unacceptable for our students. Mobile County, which aspires beyond those minimum requirements, needs additional ways of assessing the rigor of courses offered in the school district and then the Alabama Course of Study must be changed to reflect that rigor. Scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) also show that more rigorous courses are needed. Remediation rates for students at Bishop State Community College and the University of South Alabama further suggest that this is an important community issue to address.

The traditional “four-by-four” curriculum (which requires four math, four language arts, four science and four social studies classes to graduate) is often watered down. For instance, students may all participate in a graduation exam and they may all take Algebra I, but not every student is required to take more rigorous math classes. MCPSS must increase rigor of curriculum, instruction and assessment all the way up and down the line, from pre-school to high school graduation. This is supported by findings from the grade level rigor audit with Data
Works, which examined student work in 72 schools in the district. MCPSS must also focus on closing the gap in CRT achievement results, which is currently widening across grade levels. In addition, although our AHSGE results reflect progress, the cut scores that define proficiency remain too low for our students.

7. MATH and READING

By all accounts, the state legislature is going to appropriate more funding for the Alabama Math Science and Technology Initiative (AMSTI), which means more money will be coming to the school system for math, science and technology reform. When that happens, all current mathematics initiatives must be tied together. The result should be that every school has access to AMSTI, while those schools that need additional professional development work—including the academic year support—can look to proven research based best practices. So, as the state puts emphasis on AMSTI, it will be important for MCPSS to merge all current mathematics initiatives. All schools should have the benefit of math coaches for implementation support at the school site.

The governor has recently provided legislation to move the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) into every Alabama classroom, K-3, over the next three years. Just as with math, it is incumbent on ARI, ARI+, and the Alabama Reading First Initiative (ARFI) to be compatible. The governor’s recommendations include one reading coach per school in grades K-3. We recommend that Mobile County supplement additional reading coaches and provide intensive high quality training for the reading coaches in K-8 schools when necessary. In addition, we recommend that the school system reinstate pre-service training in reading for newly hired teachers.

8. SCHOOL BOARD

The school board needs to be restructured, and more members need to be added. This was the primary issue the community said it wanted addressed in the Community Agreement in 2002. Yet no action has been taken in this area. A necessary first step is to benchmark other communities and comparable districts in regard to how their boards are structured. In addition, because legislative support is needed to make changes to the structure, the legislature must be engaged in the plan.

Regardless of structure, the school board must focus on hiring people based on their credentials and the qualifications of the job. For instance, if we want to see principals contribute to higher standards and quality of instruction in schools, we must raise the bar for the criteria of how we hire them in the first place. Principals should be hired based on their capacity to perform in the position. The Quality Leadership Academy needs to be part of the criteria for what it takes to be hired as a principal in Mobile County.

9. TEACHER LEADERSHIP

The school system is not offering professional development that gives teachers the level of content knowledge and pedagogy they need. MCPSS needs to conduct more job-embedded professional development and find a way to provide time for faculty and staff to participate. The state currently provides two professional days per year. We recommend funding the equivalent of two additional days or readjusting the length of the school day so that job-embedded professional development can be provided through early release days. Professional development days should be tied to district wide/schoolwide initiatives.

10. QUALITY ACADEMIES

Quality Academies need to be developed to provide adequate training to build the leadership capacity of the district and community to ensure implementation and sustainability to coach, assess and build capacity for leadership excellence across all stakeholder groups. A Quality Leadership Academy is in its second year of implementation to develop high-performing and aspiring principals. A new Teacher Academy has been established to coach and mentor inexperienced teachers. Quality Academies still need to be developed for teacher leaders in academic content areas, parents, students, partners in education, and school board commissioners so that all stakeholder groups are served.
MCPSS STRATEGIC PASSPORT TO EXCELLENCE PLAN 2003-2001
## MCPSS Strategic PASSport to Excellence Plan: 2003-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY GOALS</th>
<th>IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES TO MEASURE</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| **I. ALL CHILDREN CAN AND WILL BECOME PROFICIENT LEARNERS WHO WILL GRADUATE** | 1. Increase number of schools that meet or exceed CLEAR to AYP by 2006.  
2. Improve student performance to 100% proficiency in all areas by all sub groups in 2014.  
3. Increase graduation rate to 100% and decrease dropout rate to 0%.  
4. Use research based best processes and practices according to improvement in student performance. |
| **II. QUALITY LEADERSHIP AT ALL LEVELS** | 5. Increase the number of teachers and staff who meet HQ and HQ+ (75% of students show growth) proficiency standards according to improving student performance.  
6. Organize an MCPSS Quality Academy to coach, assess and build capacity to leadership excellence which results in continuously improved performance results for students, staff, school district, and partner stakeholders.  
7. Create incentives for quality staff at low performing schools. |
| **III. CREATE A NEW STORY WITH PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT** | 8. Regularly access and report responses to perception (satisfaction/dissatisfaction) of community stakeholders, parents, certified, and support staff.  
9. Begin to use PASSport process for each stakeholder to create/add value to improving student performance.  
10. Increase two-way communication with parents and the community.  
11. Increase parental involvement that results in higher student performance. |
| **IV. GOVERNANCE WITH EVIDENCE OF ACCOUNTABILITY, TRUST, COMPLIANCE, AND RESPONSIVENESS TO KEY COMMUNITIES** | 12. Report fiscal accountability.  
15. Report equity and responsiveness to key communities. |
| **V. EQUAL ACCESS TO NEEDED RESOURCES** | 16. Audit access and success for course offerings, programs and services.  
17. Audit access to quality leadership.  
18. Audit expectations for high standards and rigor by students groups.  
19. Audit access for funding, facilities, equipment and resources. |
The Mobile County Public School System (MCPSS) has over 65,000 students and is the largest school system in Alabama representing 10% of the school children in Alabama. The MCPSS is comprised of 101 schools, including:

### 60 Elementary Schools
- 45 K-5 grade schools
- 1 3-5 grade school
- 1 Pre-K school
- 1 K-2 grade school
- 10 K-6 grade schools
- 2 K-3 grade schools

### 22 Middle Schools
- 18 6-8 grade schools
- 2 4-8 grade schools
- 1 K-8 grade school
- 1 1-12 grade school

### 17 High Schools
- 16 9-12 grade schools
- 1 special education school

### School District Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School District</th>
<th># Schools</th>
<th># Teachers</th>
<th># Students</th>
<th>Students with Disabilities</th>
<th>Economically Disadvantaged</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mobile Co.</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>4137</td>
<td>65037</td>
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<td>68.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baldwin Co.</td>
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<td>Birmingham City</td>
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<td>Montgomery Co.</td>
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<td>Tuscaloosa Co.</td>
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<td>16123</td>
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<td>42.50%</td>
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DATA ANALYSIS FOR 2004-2005 SCHOOL YEAR

Key Goal I: PASSport to Excellence
ALL CHILDREN CAN AND WILL BECOME PROFICIENT LEARNERS WHO WILL GRADUATE

#1. INCREASE NUMBER OF SCHOOLS THAT MEET OR EXCEED CLEAR TO AYP BY 2006.
#2. IMPROVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE TO 100% PROFICIENCY IN ALL AREAS BY ALL SUB-GROUPS IN 2014.
#3. INCREASE GRADUATION RATE TO 100% AND DECREASE DROPOUT RATE TO 0%.
#4. USE RESEARCH BASED BEST PROCESSES AND PRACTICES ACCORDING TO IMPROVEMENT IN STUDENT PERFORMANCE.

“In urban school reform must be broad and deep. And everything must be done with strategic intent and with a focus on the organization as a whole. Urban schools are parts of very large, complex, open, and dynamic systems called school districts. It is almost impossible for schools to flourish in districts that are dysfunctional. Whole school reform models are important, but the focus of urban school reformers must be school districts.”

DONALD R. MCADAMS
Fighting to Save Our Urban Schools….and Winning!

In 2001, the YES WE CAN Community Agreement and No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) placed a new emphasis on student achievement in the Mobile County Public School System. Both call for public schools that help all students reach high standards. The creation of the PASSport to Excellence, in alignment with NCLB and the Community Agreement, demonstrates that MCPSS is working toward a shared national and local vision of student success.

For the past five years, MCPSS has worked to align curriculum, professional development and assessments to focus on student achievement and academic growth. These efforts have improved the system in significant ways; although, it is clear that work remains to be done before the vision of the strategic plan is fully realized, particularly in the areas of improving the quality of special education and the performance of secondary schools.
#1. CLEAR STATUS

In the 2004-05 school year, 61 of Mobile County’s 101 schools were designated as “clear status schools,” meaning they had met or exceeded academic achievement goals for all student subgroups or had met adequate yearly progress (AYP), as defined by NCLB and the Alabama Department of Education. That is 19 more schools in clear status than in previous school year.

The Alabama State Department of Education designated the following classifications to reward schools throughout the state for reaching AYP targets.

**HONOR ROLL SCHOOLS**
Schools that met or exceeded AYP for two consecutive years (113 in state)
- Of those, 28% (32 schools) are in Mobile.

**MEETING THE CHALLENGE SCHOOLS**
Schools that met or exceeded AYP for two consecutive years and had at least 80% poverty rate (43 in state)
- Of those, 40% (17 schools) are in Mobile.

**GAP CLOSER SCHOOLS**
Schools that significantly closed achievement gaps between student groups (73 in state)
- Of those, 14% (10 schools) are in Mobile.

## REWARDS TO SCHOOL FOR 2005-20 06

#2. IMPROVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Each spring, students in grades 3-8 take an achievement test as part of the Alabama Accountability Report.

Alabama Reading and Math Test (ARMT)

The ARMT is an accountability measure that assesses students’ proficiency in state standards. It is a criterion-referenced test that was added to the SAT10 to measure content through questions that guarantee alignment with the Alabama Course of Study.

Source: Accountability Reporting-Alabama State Department of Education – www.alsde.edu

ARMT READING/MATHEMATICS TEST
2005 READING

Source: Accountability Reporting-Alabama State Department of Education – www.alsde.edu

ARMT READING/MATHEMATICS TEST
2005 MATHEMATICS

Source: Accountability Reporting-Alabama State Department of Education – www.alsde.edu
ARMT 4TH GRADE MATH TEST

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS MEETING AND EXCEEDING ACADEMICS CONTENT STANDARDS

Source: Accountability Reporting-Alabama State Department of Education – www.alsde.edu

ARMT 8TH GRADE MATH TEST

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS MEETING AND EXCEEDING ACADEMICS CONTENT STANDARDS

Source: Accountability Reporting-Alabama State Department of Education – www.alsde.edu
SAT 10

The SAT 10 is a norm referenced test that compares student performance to the performance of students nationwide.

SAT 10 READING AND MATHEMATICS TEST
2005 READING

Source: Accountability Reporting-Alabama State Department of Education – www.alsde.edu

SAT 10 READING AND MATHEMATICS TEST
2005 MATHEMATICS

Source: Accountability Reporting-Alabama State Department of Education – www.alsde.edu
Alabama High School Graduation Exam

The AHSGE is an assessment of required high school coursework in reading, language, mathematics, science and social studies. High school students in Alabama must pass four high school graduation exams before graduation to earn a high school diploma.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

The NAEP, widely known as the “nation’s report card,” is used by the U.S. Department of Education. NAEP provides information on state and national student achievement, and how that achievement has changed over time. Since 2003, the No Child Left Behind Act requires NAEP assessments to be administered in all states in reading and math at grades 4 and 8 every two years. In its assessments, NAEP selects representative samples of students for the nation and each participating state. NAEP selects about 3,000 students for each grade and subject, or about 100 schools per state and about 30 students per school. Students with disabilities and English language learners are included in the NAEP samples.

#3. IMPROVE GRADUATION RATE; DECREASE DROPOUT RATE

Graduation rate in Mobile County is the percent passing the AHSGE-95.28%. The published dropout rate for Mobile in 2003-04 is 4.12%.

#4. RESEARCH BASED BEST PRACTICES

The district has employed research-based best practices to improve teaching and learning in MCPSS classrooms. Challenges are being addressed using proven strategies to improve student achievement.

Mobile County schools are being held accountable for student achievement in math and reading at state and local levels. Schools are implementing reading and math initiatives as a strategy to increase student achievement in those areas. These initiatives are not programs but prescriptive methodologies that seek to create deep change in teaching and learning in Mobile County classrooms.

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**NAEP BY STATE**

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS AT OR ABOVE PROFICIENT

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<th></th>
<th>Alabama</th>
<th>Florida</th>
<th>Georgia</th>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
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<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>36%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>8th Grade</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Math</td>
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<td>16%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
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<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
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<td>24%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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www.nces.edu.gov
The Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) is a statewide K-12 initiative of the Alabama Board of Education and the Alabama Department of Education. The goal of ARI is to significantly improve reading instruction and ultimately achieve 100 percent literacy for public school students. ARI is focused on strengthening reading instruction in early grades, continuously expanding all students’ reading skills and comprehension levels, and providing targeted help to struggling readers. Nineteen Mobile County elementary schools participate in ARI.

The Alabama Reading First Initiative (ARFI) is a federally funded K-3 reading initiative that focuses on improving students’ reading abilities in low-performing schools. For the school year 2004-05, ten low-performing Mobile County elementary schools were identified and participated in ARFI. Students in Mobile County’s ARFI schools are making significant gains in reading. Calcedeaver Elementary, one of the participating schools, has moved from being one of the lowest-achieving schools to second in the state in reading performance.

Grounded in research-based best practices, the Alabama Math, Science and Technology Initiative (AMSTI) offers training, professional development, equipment and materials, and on-site support to math and science teachers throughout the state. In 2004-05 six schools in Mobile County participated in the AMSTI initiative. The initiative, which is in its second year of implementation, is expected to show positive student gains in math, science and technology. Statewide evaluations will assess AMSTI’s effectiveness. State officials are considering expanding the AMSTI initiative to include more schools across the state.

The Mobile Math Initiative (MMI) is a locally developed math initiative funded through a public-private partnership between the system and the Mobile Area Education Foundation. A four-year combination of professional development and teacher leadership programs, MMI is focused in schools deeply in need of practice change, and aims to help teachers provide math instruction in a deeper, more meaningful way. It is currently in fifteen elementary and middle schools across Mobile County.
KEY GOAL II: PASSport to Excellence
QUALITY LEADERSHIP AT ALL LEVELS

#5. INCREASE THE NUMBER OF TEACHERS AND STAFF WHO MEET HQ AND HQ+ (75% OF STUDENTS SHOW GROWTH) PROFICIENCY STANDARDS ACCORDING TO IMPROVING STUDENT PERFORMANCE.

#6. ORGANIZE MCPSS QUALITY ACADEMY TO COACH, ASSESS AND BUILD CAPACITY TO LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE WHICH RESULTS IN CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVED PERFORMANCE RESULTS FOR STUDENTS, STAFF, SCHOOL DISTRICT, AND PARTNER STAKEHOLDERS.

#7. CREATE INCENTIVES FOR QUALITY STAFF AT LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS.

“Never before has leadership in education been more critical for public school systems. Concern about the performance of schools has mounted, while at the same time we are beginning to appreciate the complexities of bringing about school reform. When systems are complex and when the tendencies of such systems are toward overload and fragmentation, the need for leadership to forge synergy and coherence is paramount.”

MICHAEL FULLAN of the University of Toronto, in Leadership & Sustainability

MOBILE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM
TEACHER DEMOGRAPHICS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>4,354 Teachers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>83% Female - 17% Male</td>
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<td>Minority/Non-White</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers with Masters Degree or Higher</td>
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<td>Teachers with 3 or less Years of Experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Board Certified Teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nearly 70 percent of teachers employed by MCPSS are from Mobile County. A familiar pattern: students graduate from Mobile County high schools, attend local colleges and universities, and return to teach in the school system.

The Mobile County Public School System has shown evidence of quality leadership. In November 2005, the School Superintendents of Alabama named MCPSS Superintendent Dr. Harold Dodge as the 2006 Superintendent of the Year. To ensure quality leadership at all levels within the system, MCPSS is working to be more responsive to staff, build capacity and knowledge across the system and employ strategies to recruit, train and retain highly qualified teachers, principals and administrators. Some include: rigorous hiring procedures, intensive professional development opportunities, and strong relationships with colleges and universities in and outside of Mobile County to guarantee that quality educators are teaching our students.

In 2005, the Alabama Productivity Center recognized MCPSS’ successful work by awarding the Alabama Quality Award Level One – Commitment to Excellence to the Just 4 Development Laboratory, a nationally accredited pre-K program, and to MCPSS division of Federal and Special Programs. This award recognizes and honors organizations whose past or recent innovations in production, service or management have resulted in increased productivity and quality.

The school system’s partnerships with colleges and universities in and beyond Mobile County help teachers receive quality training that allows them to enter Mobile County schools armed with tools they need to fully educate students. Partnerships have also been formed to help fill classroom vacancies and address challenges within the system.

One such partnership is with Drexel University in Philadelphia, PA. Co-sponsored by a Department of Education grant, the Transition to Teaching project allows the system to recruit professionally degreed mathematicians and scientists who have recently become unemployed because of downsizing in business and industry. Math and science professionals become certified to teach through alternative certification routes by taking online coursework leading to teacher certification through Drexel University. The partnership has produced about 45 secondary math and secondary science teachers for Mobile County schools. These are significant numbers, particularly considering that teacher colleges and universities do not graduate enough math and science teachers nationally to fill vacancies in classrooms. The system also is working to expand alternate route certifications to fill special education teacher vacancies across the system.
The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) partnership between MCPSS and the University of South Alabama (USA) College of Education began three years ago with the goal of examining and continuously improving USA's teacher education program for the betterment of the Mobile County community. The NCLB program prepares teachers through extensive clinical field experience in MCPSS classrooms under the watchful eye of mentor or master teachers and USA faculty. Interns learn and assume paraprofessional responsibilities. They work alongside teachers for about 30 hours per week to provide 6,000 hours instruction to more than 300 children in reading, mathematics and other subject areas each year. NCLB interns use laptops, digital cameras and other equipment to help augment student learning. They also undergo extensive training—through programs such as Talents Unlimited and the Mobile Math Initiative – to help them better understand and support students' thought processes and learning styles. USA graduates who enter MCPSS come with more experience and more qualifications, relationships with MCPSS staff members, and are more likely to remain in the profession and system.

#5. HQ AND HQ-PLUS

Approximately 94 percent of Mobile County’s 4,728 teachers have reached HQ status, meaning that the teacher has obtained full certification as a teacher by obtaining specified knowledge in core content area in which they are teaching or have passed the State teacher licensing examination (Praxis). The HQ designation was a requirement for all new teachers hired in MCPSS at the beginning of the 2005-06 school year.

In addition, MCPSS has created goals for teachers that extend beyond the national and state requirement of highly qualified. Its goal is to move all teachers to Highly Qualified Plus (HQ-Plus) status, which is granted to individual teachers when 77 percent of the students they teach in a single academic year score “proficient” on standardized tests. In addition, to be designated as HQ-Plus, 100 percent of their students must show growth, as measured by a pre- and post-test assessment instrument. MCPSS is in the research and development phase of this project. The process of distinguishing HQ-Plus teachers through student performance measures requires an intricate data system that is not yet in place at the system level but, is currently being developed and implemented.

#6. QUALITY ACADEMIES

The Quality Leadership Academy (QLA) is the first step in our plan to reorganize a Quality Academy to build the leadership and management skills needed among staff, parents, students, and community and state partners to ensure continuous improvement. QLA helps MCPSS increase the number of qualified principal candidates and build leadership capacity of teachers and assistant principals. While participation in the academy is not currently a requirement for new principals in the system, new principals who do participate in the program are better able to effectively lead quality learning communities. In the 2004-05 school year thirty-six administrative interns and twenty assistant principals completed the QLA. Four have been placed in principalships.

A partnership with Teachers College Innovations, a unit of Teachers College, Columbia University in New York, offers ongoing, on-the-job orientation for new teachers. Its goal is to help teachers through their first three years in the system and increase teacher retention rates throughout MCPSS. The New Teachers Academy was piloted in the 2004-05 school year. Ninety-seven percent of initial participants returned to MCPSS classrooms the following year. Beginning in 2005-06, all first year teachers—roughly 275—are required to participate in the academy.

#7. PERFORMANCE-BASED PAY INCENTIVES

National Board Certification is considered one of the first examples of teacher compensation for high performance in teaching. It is achieved through a rigorous performance-based assessment that takes nearly a year to complete. Teachers achieving National Board Certification receive a $5,000 annual salary increase. Thirty-eight Mobile County Public School teachers have earned National Board Certification.
The State of Public Education

NUMBER OF TEACHERS
NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED

[Diagram showing the number of teachers certified by National Board for 2005 and 2006 for different counties.]

Source: Alabama State Department of Education – www.alsde.edu

PERCENTAGE
OF INCENTIVE GOALS MET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BRAZIER ELEMENTARY</td>
<td>84.62%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HALL ELEMENTARY</td>
<td>38.46%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALLOWAY-SMITH MIDDLE</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>88.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EANES MIDDLE</td>
<td>5.88%</td>
<td>76.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOBILE COUNTY TRAINING MIDDLE</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>94.12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MCPSS – www.mcpss.com
KEY GOAL III: PASSport to Excellence
CREATE A NEW PUBLIC STORY WITH PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

#8. REGULARLY ASSESS AND REPORT RESPONSES TO PERCEPTION (SATISFACTION/DISSATISFACTION) OF COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS, PARENTS, CERTIFIED, AND SUPPORT STAFF.

#9. BEGIN TO USE PASSPORT PROCESS FOR EACH STAKEHOLDER TO CREATE/ADD VALUE TO IMPROVING STUDENT PERFORMANCE.

#10. INCREASE TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY.

#11. INCREASE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT THAT RESULTS IN HIGHER STUDENT PERFORMANCE.

“By an ‘engaged public’, we mean a committed and interrelated citizenry rather than a persuaded populace”.

DAVID MATHEWS of the Kettering Foundation, in For Communities to Work

#8. ASSESSING AND REPORTING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Generally speaking, we know what our customers (the citizens of Mobile County) want. There’s nothing subtle in their expectations. They want an excellent education for their sons and

2002 CENSUS DATA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>POPULATION</th>
<th>% MINORITY</th>
<th>% BELOW POVERTY LEVEL</th>
<th>MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME</th>
<th>% HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE</th>
<th>% BACHELOR’S DEGREE / HIGHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Co.</td>
<td>399,843</td>
<td>36.90%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>$33,710</td>
<td>76.70%</td>
<td>18.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham City</td>
<td>242,820</td>
<td>75.90%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>$26,735</td>
<td>75.50%</td>
<td>18.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery Co.</td>
<td>223,510</td>
<td>51.20%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>$35,962</td>
<td>80.30%</td>
<td>28.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huntsville City</td>
<td>158,216</td>
<td>35.50%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>$41,074</td>
<td>85.70%</td>
<td>36.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuscaloosa Co.</td>
<td>164,875</td>
<td>31.90%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>$34,436</td>
<td>78.80%</td>
<td>24.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldwin Co.</td>
<td>140,415</td>
<td>12.90%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>$40,250</td>
<td>82.00%</td>
<td>23.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>4,447,100</td>
<td>28.90%</td>
<td>16.10%</td>
<td>$34,135</td>
<td>75.30%</td>
<td>19.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quickfacts – www.census.gov
daughters, and nothing less. Mediocrity is not acceptable. However, continuous feedback from all customers/stakeholders—teachers, students, parents, business, faith-based, citizens, and community-based organizations is essential to measure satisfaction and dissatisfaction among constituency groups.

- In fall 2005, the National Center for Teacher Quality piloted a teacher survey in Mobile County. The survey collected teacher feedback on working conditions and attitudes, and allowed teachers to identify resources they need to become better leaders of classrooms. Results from the survey are expected in spring 2006.

- An online student survey on equity and rigor was conducted in January 2006. Findings will be reported in Spring 2006.

- In spring 2005, community-based volunteers conducted school-based surveys with respect to needs and priorities on local school campuses.

#9. BUILDING A STAKEHOLDER INFRASTRUCTURE

A stakeholder infrastructure that mobilizes support for the school system is emerging in Mobile County. Building on the YES WE CAN Community Agreement, a collective call for school system change from some 1,400 citizens, MCPSS continues the work of engaging the following critical stakeholders.

- Community Leaders: Partners in Education, an initiative between MCPSS and Mobile Area Education Foundation, has connected 1,000 businesses, community organizations, churches and individual citizens to local schools. A network of 2,717 volunteers spent more than 35,000 hours helping schools and students in 2004-05. This translates into a $2.2 million investment in the system. Religious leaders have increased the level of conversation among parishioners around issues of educational equity, accountability and maintaining high expectations. Ministers speak about report cards from the pulpit, offer tutoring and other after-school activities, and

## PARTNERS IN EDUCATION ECONOMIC IMPACT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>#OF VOLUNTEERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>$1,276,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>$1,587,946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>$2,240,820</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MAEF – [www.maef.net](http://www.maef.net)

## PARTNERS IN EDUCATION VOLUNTEER HOURS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>#OF VOLUNTEER</th>
<th>HOURS</th>
<th>#OF PARTNERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>1100</td>
<td>23,000</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>2334</td>
<td>32,056</td>
<td>975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>2717</td>
<td>35,804</td>
<td>1025</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MAEF – [www.maef.net](http://www.maef.net)
volunteer their own time in schools. Bay Haas, the executive director of the Mobile Airport Authority, agrees that creating a quality system of education is essential for Mobile County’s future economic development. This is why more than 1,000 businesses, he notes, have become partners with schools to provide a range of academic and financial help.

- **Citizens:** A community education summit in the spring of 2005 brought together over 800 citizens for candid discussions about school system progress and challenges. The open forum demonstrated a commitment to engaging community members in a substantive way. Over the past four years we have convened over 2000 citizens through Learning Forums. Recognizing the parallel between educational attainment and quality of life is part of the ongoing process.

- **Parents:** MCPSS is tapping federal dollars to help train parent organizers, and a network of local school “Key Communicators” has been established. A faculty member and parent at every school share information with parents and staff about the system’s strategic plan. Schools are hosting student-led parent-teacher conferences that are helping parents connect with schools in deeper ways.

- **Students:** The voices of students reflect a renewed commitment to raising expectations for success across the system. A student-directed Equity Project is assessing access to rigorous course offerings, school programs and services in Mobile County schools.
  - The Superintendent’s Advisory Council is comprised of a junior and a senior high school student from each school in Mobile County. These students meet each month with Dr. Dodge and advise him of any student concerns or issues facing their high schools.
  - Each high school in Mobile County has a Principal’s Student Advisory Council that meets once a month and is comprised of at least two students from every grade level. This council is designed to give high school students a greater voice within their schools and provides a channel so that the principal can release and receive information, address student’s questions and resolve concerns.

“Just having those partnerships is tremendous in terms of supporting public education,” says Haas. “Anything we do that ties the benefit of education to careers and prosperity is beneficial. We’re the poorest metro area in the state of Alabama. We’re changing that. Education will be a critical element.”

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#10. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Effective school systems recognize the importance of keeping stakeholders informed, and they welcome parents and community leaders as crucial allies in improving schools. While the Mobile County Public School System has made progress in telling a new public story about ongoing reform and has clearly articulated goals in its strategic plan, system officials acknowledge that they must continue to improve dialogue and develop partnerships in order to sustain community-driven, strategic changes.

The Mobile County Public School System Television Network and the Office of Communications produce “INSIDE Education,” a newsmagazine that airs on cable television. In addition, news updates help keep the public informed about important issues and provide stories about the work of students, teachers and support staff.
KEY GOAL IV: PASSport to Excellence

GOVERNANCE WITH EVIDENCE OF ACCOUNTABILITY, TRUST, COMPLIANCE, AND RESPONSIVENESS TO KEY COMMUNITIES

#12. REPORT FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY.
#13. REPORT REGULATION AND COMPLIANCE.
#14. REPORT ETHICS AND TRUST.
#15. REPORT EQUITY AND RESPONSIVENESS TO KEY COMMUNITIES.

“A system cannot understand itself. The transformation requires a view from the outside.”

DR. W. EDWARDS DEMING

MCPSS strives for transparent governance that earns the trust of parents and the community. Guided by the PASSport to Excellence strategic plan, the system continues to make progress in this area, while acknowledging that establishing sound governance remains one of the most enduring challenges it faces.

#13. FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY & REGULATION AND COMPLIANCE

Financial audits of Mobile schools, a 65,000-student system with a $617 million budget, have been clear. The system’s AAA Bond rating is a distinguished indicator of sound fiscal policies. In an effort to keep the public informed about school system revenue and expenditures, MCPSS also publishes financial and budget information in the newspaper.

#14. ETHICS AND TRUST

MCPSS has benefited from consistent leadership at the top. Dr. Dodge, who has been superintendent since 1998, was instrumental in helping to rally the community and business leaders to support a tax increase for local schools. He continues to support a community-driven effort to mobilize resources for the system as articulated in the YES WE CAN Community Agreement.

Public trust in the school board remains tenuous, according to recent Mobile Register-University of South Alabama poll. Many community members believe that restructuring of the board is needed. They also say that they think the current six-year term that board members serve should be shortened. Only about one-quarter of Mobile residents say they believe that the school board is doing a good job. A majority of poll respondents say they believe that the quality of education provided by Mobile County’s public schools is fair to poor.

#15. EQUITY AND RESPONSIVENESS

MCPSS has increased the transparency of the budget and the strategic plan. Each year, the school district posts the budget and financial audits on the school district Web site for all to see. The strategic plan is also posted on the Web site. In addition, individual action plans are made public online. Action plans align goals on the strategic plan to the person responsible for accomplishing each goal. This way, the community has the chance to know whom to hold accountable for accomplishing each of the goals on the plan.
KEY GOAL V: PASSport to Excellence

EQUAL ACCESS TO NEEDED RESOURCES

#16. AUDIT ACCESS AND SUCCESS FOR COURSE OFFERINGS, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.

#17. AUDIT ACCESS TO QUALITY LEADERSHIP.

#18. AUDIT EXPECTATIONS FOR HIGH STANDARDS AND RIGOR BY STUDENTS GROUPS.

#19. AUDIT ACCESS FOR FUNDING, FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT AND RESOURCES.

“High expectations for success will be judged not only by the initial staff beliefs and behaviors, but also by the organization’s response when some students do not learn.”

LARRY LEZZOTE in Whatever It Takes

In the series of meetings that led to the creation of the YES WE CAN Community Agreement and subsequent PASSport to Excellence strategic plan, community members cited issues of equity and adequacy as major challenges in the Mobile County Public School System.

Community members from all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups made it clear that they wanted all Mobile County students to have equal access to excellent opportunities and resources that would help them succeed in and beyond school.

Community members also made it clear that they do not believe that all students have access to excellence in the current system. They believe that Mobile County students—like those in other large, urban school systems—lack equal access to courses, facilities, teachers and other resources they need to succeed. Indeed, from the start of their education, some students are not introduced to rigorous courses and are not expected to achieve at the same levels as their peers in the system.

Mobile County students, for example, can work toward one of four diplomas in high school: Regular, Advanced with Academic Endorsement, Advanced with Honors or an Alabama Occupational Diploma. Students who obtain an Occupational Diploma are not required to take standard courses such as algebra I or biology, which many believe are essential to student success in and beyond high school.

Through the Equity and Transformed Schools Projects, MCPSS is beginning to assess and audit access to course offerings, leadership and expectations, and to provide resources to schools across the system to support improvements.

MCPSS developed the Transformed Schools Plan in 2003-04 as a strategy for addressing achievement gaps between minority and poor students and white and more affluent students. While system leaders and community members know that every school in MCPSS will need some improvements before a system of equitable and excellent schools exists in Mobile County, they also acknowledge that some schools have a longer way to go than others.

Two of the Transformed Schools, Brazier and George Hall Elementary Schools, have moved off of a schools in “need of improvement” list and
Beyond “clear status.” This means they exceeded academic achievement goals, as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and Alabama Department of Education, for their overall student populations and sub-groups. District staff members attribute success of the Transformed Schools to leadership and professional development at the schools.

From November 2005 to March 2006, student leadership groups are working to assess whether all students have equitable access to rigorous course offerings, school programs and services in Mobile County high schools. Within the project, young people have assumed the roles of researchers, surveyors and interviewers and are working together to compile the type and number of courses offered across high schools. They are also identifying the type and number of tutoring, remediation and enrichment programs available to students.

Members of student leadership groups are also developing and administering an online survey for their peers to help audit expectations of rigor and achievement in schools. They will use survey results to determine whether or not there is a correlation between expectations and availability of courses, programs and services. Students will present their findings in a video that will also chronicle their experiences while working on the Equity Project.

The Equity Project aims to fully engage Mobile County youth in school improvement as collectors of data and architects of the future of MCPSS.
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BAY HAAS
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Mobile Airport Authority
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Civic Brigade Initiative

Fund-A-S.T.A.R. (Students and Teachers Achieving Results)

Junior Achievement

Mobile Math Initiative

No Child Left Behind Tutoring

Partners in Education

Superintendent Advisory Council

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