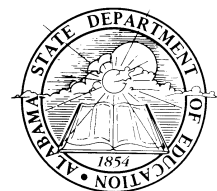




STATE OF ALABAMA  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**



Joseph B. Morton  
 State Superintendent  
 of Education

Alabama  
 State Board  
 of Education

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**September 13, 2007**

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Governor Bob Riley  
 President

**EDUCATIONAL GAINS REAP MONETARY REWARDS**  
*Money Available for Rewards More than Double*

Randy McKinney  
 District I  
 President Pro Tem

**Montgomery, AL** – Last year hundreds of schools were elated as they received significant financial rewards for their school’s performance on student assessment. This year, rewards have increased dramatically in most areas as Alabama puts its money where its mouth is on student achievement and reducing achievement gaps between defined student populations. With an increased reward budget to more than \$5 million, on **Thursday, September 13, 2007**, officials at the Alabama Department of Education will present the reward amounts to schools that Advance the Challenge, Exceed the Challenge, Address the Challenge, and Meet the Challenge.

Betty Peters  
 District II

“These are not only rewards for schools that are making progress, they are incentives that encourage more schools to demand excellence in the classroom,” said **Governor Bob Riley**, who first proposed offering financial rewards to improving schools as part of his fiscal year 2007 education budget. “That’s why I hope we will be able to continue increasing the funding for our school rewards initiative.”

Stephanie W. Bell  
 District III

Dr. Ethel H. Hall  
 District IV  
 Vice President  
 Emerita

Despite receiving no federal funding for rewards this year, Alabama’s financial contributions to schools that excel in these areas have increased from approximately \$2.5 million last year to over \$5 million this year. The Advancing the Challenge reward category now receives \$25,000 per school; Exceeding the Challenge, now receives \$20,000 per subgroup; and the Addressing the Challenge category now gets \$10,000 per subgroup. Schools that make the Meeting the Challenge goal will receive \$5,000 per school. **State Superintendent of Education Joe Morton** said the monetary reward is additional compensation for a job well done to schools that have some of the most difficult academic challenges ahead of them. For some schools, the goal is more difficult to achieve, depending on the demographics of the student population.

Ella B. Bell  
 District V

David F. Byers, Jr.  
 District VI  
 Vice President

“There is no amount of money that could truly give a good teacher what he or she is worth. The very act of educating a child is invaluable,” Morton said. “However, when it is possible to provide an incentive to a school that goes above and beyond what is already a difficult task we’re delighted to do so.” Morton said unprecedented support from Governor Bob Riley and the state legislature made it possible to increase reward amounts. The schools were selected based on the 2006-07 assessment data that was released in August and is based on how well schools overcame these specifically identified challenges:

Sandra Ray  
 District VII

Dr. Mary Jane Caylor  
 District VIII

Joseph B. Morton  
 Secretary and  
 Executive Officer

- **Advancing the Challenge** - School where percent of students scoring advanced in reading and math exceeded state percent scoring advanced. (School must have at least an 80% poverty rate.)

*-more-*

- **Meeting the Challenge** - School that met AYP for two consecutive years. (School must have at least an 80% poverty rate.)
- **Exceeding the Challenge** - School with subgroup whose percent of students scoring proficient in reading and math exceeded its state counterpart. (School will receive a monetary reward for each subgroup.)
- **Addressing the Challenge** - School with subgroup that closed the achievement gap in percent of students scoring proficient in reading and math by at least 15% when compared to its state counterpart. (School will receive a monetary reward for each subgroup.)

The reward money will go directly to the school and should be invested in instructional improvement programs and/or materials voted on by the teaching faculty. Across Alabama there are 36 Advancing the Challenge schools, 219 Meeting the Challenge schools, 105 Exceeding the Challenge subgroups, and 41 Addressing the Challenge subgroups. Although schools have been notified if they have received a reward, school officials do not know how much they will receive as schools can fall into one or varying combinations of reward levels. For example, a single school could conceivably Advance, Meet and Address the challenge. Morton said a representative(s) from each of the rewarded schools will come to the State Board of Education meeting to get notification of exactly how much their school will receive.

“There is no way to tell how long the budget will allow us to give these incentives to schools that are doing the hard job of closing achievement gaps and increasing student achievement in historically low performing populations,” Morton said. “While the opportunity is here, we want to do all we can to let every school, not just the ones receiving rewards, but *every* school know, their efforts are appreciated and their work in bringing about positive change in Alabama education will be felt for generations.”

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) establishes firm objectives for schools across America to make Adequate Yearly Progress. In Alabama, schools and systems are evaluated based on student performance with Alabama content standards, attendance rates (elementary and middle schools) and graduation rates (high schools). Depending on the demographics of a school, a school and/or school system could have anywhere from five to 37 AYP goals. The ability to reach the goal becomes more difficult yearly as the percent of students who must reach the objective increases. The goal of NCLB is for all students to achieve grade-level proficiency in reading and mathematics by 2013-14.

For a complete listing of schools and the monetary reward each school received (by Board District) [click here](#).

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