



NEW SCHOOLS
FOR ALABAMA

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MAY, 2023

magazine

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Develop Shareable
Strategies**

**Parent Voice Fellowship
2022-2023 Inaugural
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**NEW SCHOOLS
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magazine

Candie A. Mitchell-Price, Editor
candie@newschoolsforalabama.org

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New Schools for Alabama

Two 20th St N, Suite 1315,
Birmingham, AL 35203
www.newschoolsforalabama.org

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Tyler Barnett
Chief Executive Officer

Our Team



ShaElla Askew
Communications Manager



Jackie Bretl
Director of Lead Development



Mike Brown
Chief Schools Officer



Melanie Haynes
Director of Accounting



Jane Ivey
Special Projects Manager



Michelle Locke
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Candie A. Mitchell-Price
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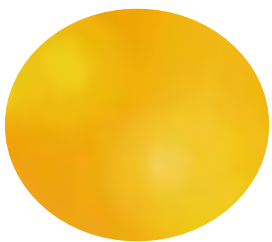


Bellingrath Middle School, Montgomery, AL

Shout out to Bellingrath's Spelling Bee Winners! Help us congratulate Mariah Curry, Jeremiah Cochran, and Norma Meija Domingas! These winners will compete district wide this month.



Charter
Spotlight



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INNOVATION FOR ALL

ALABAMA CHARTER SCHOOLS DEVELOP SHAREABLE STRATEGIES

BY TYLER BARNETT

A core tenet undergirding the charter school movement since its inception has been the hope that autonomous schools with flexibility from certain regulations might serve as laboratories for innovation. The prevailing hope is that this freedom to innovate will lead to break-the-mold strategies that can be shared and replicated elsewhere, eventually lifting all boats. Ultimately, the goal of the movement is two-fold:

(1) to escape the old sit-and-get factory model that has defined American education since the industrial revolution, and

(2) to address our national plague of longstanding achievement gaps.

Indeed, the charter school movement in Alabama—though still in its infancy—has already spawned several innovative strategies that are producing promising results. And with some outside-the-box thinking, many of these strategies can be scaled in other districts.

However, not all forms of innovation involve original, groundbreaking techniques. As Robin Lake of the Center on Reinventing Public Education has noted, sometimes schools can be innovative just by providing a high-quality tuition-free option where few other high-quality options exist.

Easy-to-Spot Innovation

To be sure, we already have some strong examples of high-performing charters in Alabama, even at this early stage. For example, in Sumter County Schools and Perry County Schools, where only 20% and 16% of students are on grade level in ELA respectively, half of the students enrolled in charter schools in those counties are on grade level. These students are even beating the statewide average of 47% proficiency.

In Birmingham, all three charters are performing among the top third of the highest performing schools in the city. Charters also make up two of the top three best non-magnet schools in the city, meaning schools that cannot screen students out based on their grades or test scores. Charter schools such as these are clearly innovative, even if based solely on the fact that they are producing unprecedented results in their locations.

On a more palpable level, Alabama has carefully curated a portfolio of charter schools offering a very diverse array of options, thus providing a wide selection of schools designed to meet the unique needs and interests of this generation. We have a school designed to help over-aged students recover credits and get back on track. We have a college preparatory

school with a specific focus on early literacy, wherein every student gets two hours of literacy instruction every single day. We have diverse-by-design schools focused on project-based learning and community service. We have a performing arts high school, and we even have an aviation school built on a partnership with Delta Airlines and other industry leaders, wherein every student will graduate with a private pilot license.

Behind-the-Scenes Innovation

These are some of the more transparent innovations in our charter school sector, but sometimes important innovation happens behind the scenes. Because charter schools are forced to operate with comparatively fewer resources than traditional schools, they need to be creative in how their schools are structured, operating with lean administrative staffing models so that more resources flow to the classroom.

Today, seven charter schools are saving precious dollars and getting reliable support by taking advantage of the Back Office Services Program at New Schools for Alabama. In this program, our team provides expert services by doing the day-to-day accounting, bookkeeping, payroll, and federal programs functions for

participating charters, helping them avoid the cost and headache of staffing an in-house back-office team. This allows more dollars to flow to classrooms, where many schools are providing 2:1 adult-student ratios by staffing each class with a master teacher and a paraprofessional.

Because charter schools are inherently schools of choice—families are not forced to attend based on their home address—they must work hard to attract and retain the families who choose to attend. Community outreach and parent involvement are so fundamental to the

success of a charter school that charter schools are required to present strong plans for each just to get authorized in the first place. Many charters have community liaisons who engage in door-to-door knocking to get the word out. They hold informational events at community centers and in parks. They partner with community-based organizations to enhance their credibility and establish strong roots. And many charters partner with local churches where congregations with vested interests in their communities help charters get off

the ground.

Each of these schools have some innovative practices that districts can employ if they are willing to partner; and those innovations can take many forms—governance, staffing, student recruitment, pedagogy, curriculum, and more. Sometimes it is providing a unique experience built on outside-the-box thinking that students cannot get elsewhere (see the Alabama Aerospace and Aviation High School) and sometimes it is a behind-the-scenes strategy that saves scarce resources (see



**It is our belief that we are stronger together
--if we can work together, there is no limit to
what we can achieve for kids in our state.**

the Back Office Services Program).

Shareable Practices Leading to Powerful Collaboration

One of the most powerful outcomes of any innovation is the ability to measure its effectiveness and share it when successful so others can benefit. And of course, charter schools are not the only bastions of innovation in our state. Several district schools are also delivering uncommon results using break-the-mold strategies. And in a few very exciting cases, districts and charters are beginning to share their successes across sector lines.

At University Charter School, their unprecedented results in Sumter County are no secret, and others have taken notice. As a result of the litany of districts that have visited their school to explore their model, University Charter School recently launched U-PREP, which is a program designed to share their best practices in order to improve literacy and math achievement among other high-poverty, rural schools in Alabama. New Schools for Alabama was proud to make a \$100,000 grant for the program, which

supports their collaboration with districts like Pickens County, Demopolis City, Sumter County, and Marengo County.

At Accel Day & Evening Academy, we provided a \$75,000 grant to support a collaboration with Chickasaw City Schools wherein they partner to provide after-school and summer school programming to address ongoing literacy and numeracy gaps among at-risk students in Mobile County. The program, dubbed Bridging the Gap, provides daily interventions in reading and math as well as profound daily enrichment offerings for four days per week after school and for five days per week during summer school. This program is so compelling that the U.S. Department of Education recently announced that it will fund the partnership with a \$2.7 million Full-Service Community Schools Grant.

Efforts such as these to collaborate and share best practices not only promise to do great things for kids, but they also send a message that charter schools and district schools do not have to be adverse. It is heartening to see leaders putting children first and building cross-sector partnerships where they know kids will

benefit, irrespective of what type of school they choose to attend. After all, every child deserves to attend a school where they will be loved, nurtured, and developed to their fullest potential, and that is something I believe we all agree on.

At New Schools for Alabama, we hope to support more collaborative partnerships like these in the future. To that end, this year, we are seeking to fund at least two more collaborative partnerships between districts and charters to share best practices and show the state that cats and dogs can in fact co-exist amicably under one roof. It is our belief that we are stronger together—if we can work together, there is no limit to what we can achieve for kids in our state.

Tyler Barnett is the Chief Executive Officer 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.



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Inaugural Cohort of the Parent Voice Fellowship 2022-2023:

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 Shalonda Rodgers, Alabama Aerospace & Aviation HS
 LaQuita Moore, Legacy Prep
 Jessica Avant, Life Academy

Jametrica Powell, Empower Community School
 Jessica Lotz, University Charter School
Not pictured: Patrice Hunt, Accel Academy, Amy Thurber,

Congratulations to the recent graduates of the Alabama Charter Schools Parent Voice Network Fellowship! Their hard work and dedication to advocating for children's education is inspiring. Through the program, fellows had the opportunity to learn about various aspects that affect charter schools, including how funding is allocated in Alabama schools and how to advocate for their kids. They also attended Lead & Learn Sessions that addressed pertinent topics such as addressing bullying, raising resilient children and more.

Fellows also attended the NSFA Charter School Conference in

Montgomery, Alabama, and visited Memphis, Tennessee to learn from parent advocate and trailblazer Sarah Carpenter of Memphis Lift.

The experience gained from the program has equipped these amazing fellows with valuable knowledge and skills that can be shared with other parents and used to shape the future of the Alabama charter school sector. We appreciate their time and effort and look forward to seeing the positive impact they will make in our communities.

For parents interested in joining the program, the 2023-2024 Parent Voice cohort applications are now open. This is an opportunity to connect with other

charter parents throughout the state, gain access to resources, programs, and services, and learn how to advocate for the education your students deserve. Don't miss out on this chance to make a difference in your child's education and help impact the future of Alabama charter schools. **Apply now:** <https://forms.office.com/r/9FtWemLkTz> to join the Parent Voice Network Fellowship Cohort 2.





Across the Board April 2023: Key Takeaways from the Alabama Board of Education Meeting

Here are our key takeaways from the April 13th State Board of Education meeting and work session – and what they mean for Alabama’s students.

Top 5 Key Takeaways

1. College and University

Requirements: At the [January work session](#), the Board discussed a code change that would change the faculty requirements for traditional CAEP-accredited educator preparation programs to match the faculty requirements for alternative teacher preparation organizations. The Board adopted the amended code change, with all members voting in favor of the change except Mrs. Stephanie Bell

(District 3).

2. Conversation with State Senate

Leaders: President Pro Tempore Senator Greg Reed and Minority Leader Senator Bobby Singleton joined the Board during the work session as part of a continued effort for the Board and Legislature to work better together. This follows the February meeting where the Board met with House leaders – read our recap of that [here](#).

Sen. Reed spoke about how education in the state has been a recruitment issue for businesses. He mentioned that many legislators were eager to act on education this session, but that he encouraged them to wait until there is more data on the implementation of the

Alabama Literacy and Numeracy Acts, saying, “Let’s not change the game just to be doing something.”

Sen. Reed also said the legislature is interested in supporting principal development through increased professional learning and higher pay.

Echoing previous conversations that the Board has had with Legislators, Sen. Singleton asked for a comprehensive plan to improve education in the state, especially for failing schools. He also referenced that a lack of this plan has led to the Legislature taking action instead.

During Board member questions, new Board member Mrs. Manning reiterated that Legislators have mentioned the need for a plan from the Board multiple

times and asked if the Board should be prepared to act on failing schools. Dr. Chestnut asked when they could have a presentation on the plan, and ALSDE staff said they would present in May.

3. Proposed ESSA Amendment: ALSDE staff presented on the [proposed amendments](#) to Alabama's ESSA plan (every state is required to have a plan under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act). The Board is not required to vote on the ESSA amendment, but the amendments are required to be presented to the public and public comment period opened (comments on the ESSA amendment can be made [here](#) through May 15, 2023). In 2022, the state made an addendum to its ESSA plan. As part of the addendum's approval, the state is required to make the following amendments:

Exit Criteria Timeline: Amended to provide the Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) Schools that do not meet the exit criteria, one additional year of Continuous Improvement Plan implementation and one additional year to meet the exit criteria prior to advancing to Comprehensive Support

and Improvement (CSI) School status. Amended to provide the CSI Schools two additional years of Continuous Improvement Plan implementation and two years to meet the exit criteria prior to advancing to the next improvement status (CSI-Retained).

Exit Criteria for CSI Schools: Amended to no longer include the required two consecutive years of improvement, instead to require the school to show improvement as to when originally identified.

Exit Criteria for ATSI Schools: Amended to no longer include the required two consecutive years of improvement, instead to require the subgroup that led to the school's identification to show improvement as to when the subgroup was identified as in need of targeted support.

4. Passing Praxis Scores for Initial Certification and Program Admission: The Board discussed a resolution that would discontinue certain Praxis subject assessments and replace them with new Praxis assessments. These assessments are required for initial certification for educators. ETS, the company that owns the Praxis, regularly updates assessments,

and the Board resolution will adopt the updated assessments. The new tests will be effective September 1, 2023. Click [here](#) to see the resolution, which includes which tests are being replaced and what the new passing score requirements will be.

5. Board Questions – The Alabama Accountability Act: Dr. Mackey was asked by Board members about the Accountability Act and the requirement that the bottom 6% of all schools be considered failing. Rep. A.J. McCampbell introduced a bill this session, [HB30](#), that would change the designation “failing schools” in the Alabama Accountability Act to simply “lowest sixth percent school.” That bill passed the House on Tuesday, April 18th and now goes to the Senate.

To see the full April Board Meeting and Work Session agendas, click [here](#).

Used with permission by A+ Education Partnership. Also check out the A+ Education policy portal, a one-stop-shop for accessible information about evidence-based, student-centered education policy. <https://policy.aplusala.org/>.

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TFA ALABAMA OPPORTUNITY SUMMIT 2023

Co-hosted by Teach For America Alabama and A+ Education Partnership, the Alabama Opportunity Summit is the premiere education and leadership event in Alabama. This event brought together educators, school leaders, students, parents, and other community stakeholders from across Alabama. The New Schools for Alabama team had the pleasure of presenting two sessions on charter schools and teacher development.





How Parents' Voices Are Critical to K-12 Education



LET'S CONNECT

BY CANDIE A. MITCHELL-PRICE

Parents play a critical role in their children's education, and their input is essential in K-12 educational decisions. As parents, we are the primary advocates for our children, and we have unique insights into their strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles. Therefore, our voices must be heard and valued in educational decision-making processes.

There are several reasons why parent voices are essential in K-12 educational decisions:

Parents have a deep understanding of their children's needs, abilities, and interests. They spend more time with their children than anyone else and are familiar with their learning styles and preferences. Therefore, parents are best positioned to provide insights into what works best for their children and what doesn't. This knowledge is critical in making informed decisions about curriculum, teaching methods, and other educational policies.

Parents are essential partners in the education process. They work closely with teachers, administrators, and other school personnel to support their children's learning. Therefore, parents must be included in the decision-making process to ensure that they are aware of any changes in policies or curriculum and are equipped to support their children effectively.

Parent involvement in educational

decision-making promotes transparency and accountability. When parents are involved in the decision-making process, they can ask questions, provide feedback, and hold schools and policymakers accountable for their actions. This involvement fosters a culture of transparency, openness, and trust, which is essential for effective education systems.

Parent voices are critical in ensuring that education is equitable and inclusive. Parents from diverse backgrounds bring different perspectives and experiences to the table, which can inform policy decisions that benefit all students. When parents are included in the decision-making process, it helps to ensure that the needs of all students, including those from marginalized or underrepresented groups, are considered.

Parent voices are crucial in K-12 educational decisions. Parents provide valuable insights into their children's learning needs, are essential partners in the education process, promote transparency and accountability, and ensure that education is equitable and inclusive. Therefore, schools and policymakers must actively seek out and value parent input in decision-making processes. Only by working together can we create a robust and effective education system that benefits all students.

Click [here](#) to learn how NSFA's Parent Voice program seeks to keep parents at the table.

Candie is the Chief Communications Officer

for New Schools for Alabama. She has extensive experience developing and executing PR, marketing, social media, and branding strategies for numerous organizations, entrepreneurs, and small business owners. Candie's passion for educational equity and advocacy for marginalized communities brings her to her role at NSFA. She is also a former middle and high school teacher for Birmingham City Schools.

CHARTER HEROES

Celebrating Alabama Charter School Champions

JAKORE CARPENTER, COACH ALABAMA AEROSPACE & AVIATION HS

BY SHAECCA ASKEW

Basketball coaches like Jakore Carpenter play a critical role in shaping the lives of young people. At Alabama Aerospace and Aviation High School, he led the boys' basketball team to success on the court. He has also become a mentor and a positive influence in their lives outside school.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Carpenter and he shared his thoughts on coaching, his experiences at a charter school, and his approach to mentoring his players.

ShaElla: What led you to Alabama Aerospace and Aviation High School?

Carpenter: What led me to Aerospace and Aviation is the opportunity and willingness to learn new things. I feel this was a great opportunity for me to learn and grow with it being a new school.

ShaElla: How long have you been a basketball coach, and what are the positives and challenges of coaching for a charter school?

Carpenter: This is my sixth year coaching basketball. The positives of coaching at a charter are that the kids are great, they want to become better, and they are willing to learn. Some obstacles that I'm dealing with are that kids are from all over, so getting them to buy in and learn each other starts rough, but it gets easier because I keep them around each other a lot and create a brotherhood culture.

ShaElla: That's great. I see your team looks up to you. I also noticed that you mentor the team outside of school. Can you describe that relationship and why it's important?

Carpenter: Relationship to me is 95% of the battle when you are in the role of a coach because you have to learn the kids. It's crucial to understand them growing up as Generation Z. It's bigger than basketball with me. I want to see them win in life and teach them the ball will go flat one day, so you must be prepared for what comes next.

ShaElla: That is an excellent approach for these boys and thank you for all you do. What else would you like us to know about you?

Carpenter: I love hanging out with family and friends and I love shoes and coaching basketball. I also want to thank everybody that has poured into me to be the person I'm becoming, especially my grandparents."

Carpenter went on to explain that building relationships with his players is a crucial aspect of coaching. By understanding their backgrounds, strengths, and weaknesses, he creates a culture of brotherhood and unity that helps the team overcome the challenges of playing for a charter school that draws students from different areas.

Carpenter's approach to coaching goes beyond basketball. He sees himself as a role model and mentor, guiding his players toward success on and off the court. This attitude reflects the importance of coaches in schools, who can significantly impact students' lives beyond their academic and athletic performance.

Coaches like Jakore Carpenter are vital to the development of young people. Building relationships, fostering a positive culture, and serving as mentors help students grow into successful and responsible adults. The success of Alabama Aerospace and Aviation High School's basketball program is a testament to Carpenter's commitment to his players and a sign of the positive impact coaches can have in schools across Alabama and beyond.

Learn more about Alabama Aerospace and Aviation High School at www.alaahs.org

ShaElla Askew is the Communications Manager for New Schools for Alabama.

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.



AS BIRMINGHAM STUDENTS CONTINUE TO SUFFER COVID-RELATED LEARNING LOSS, NEW SCHOOLS FOR ALABAMA AND BLOOMBERG PHILANTHROPIES PARTNER ON COMPREHENSIVE SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAM

“Summer Boost” will serve rising first through ninth grade public charter students in eight U.S. cities – including Birmingham -- this summer



Bloomberg Philanthropies and New Schools for Alabama announced the launch of Summer Boost in Birmingham in the summer of 2023. Summer Boost is a program to support summer learning at public charter schools for rising first through ninth-grade students who have significant learning gaps exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. All public charter schools in Birmingham currently serving rising first through ninth grade students can apply for Summer Boost

which will allow them to create and run programs with a high-quality curriculum attentive to improving reading levels and math fluency.

Bloomberg Philanthropies launched Summer Boost in the summer of 2022 in New York City and 16,383 students from 224 New York City public charter schools participated in the program. Pre- and post-assessments show increased student proficiency in both English Language Arts and math. The percentage of students who met standards in math

nearly doubled – and in English, it more than doubled. At the same time, the share of students scoring below even the most basic levels of proficiency dropped nearly in half. By the end of the summer session, far more students had caught up to roughly where they needed to be to start the new school year and get back on track for success.

In the summer of 2023, based on the program’s 2022 success in NYC, Summer Boost will again be run in New York City and will expand to Birmingham

plus Baltimore, MD; Indianapolis, IN; Memphis, TN; Nashville, TN; San Antonio, TX; and Washington D.C.

“Students across America continue to suffer from extreme levels of learning loss caused by the pandemic, and the best opportunity we have to help them catch up is during the summer months,” said Michael R. Bloomberg, founder of Bloomberg LP and Bloomberg Philanthropies and 108th mayor of New York City. “Robust summer instruction helped thousands of New York City children get back on track last year, so this year we’re expanding the program to seven more cities including Birmingham -- and we hope other cities and districts will expand their own programs. The country won’t be able to put the pandemic behind us until we put learning loss front and center.”

“We know how important the summer months are, especially for academically struggling students and students in poverty. Without the proper supports and the necessary resources, students only fall further behind during the summer months when school is out. That is why we are so excited about the opportunity to partner with Bloomberg Philanthropies to bring Summer Boost to Birmingham and provide free, high-quality summer school options for our students in charter schools. This should be a major complement to the ongoing work in charter schools throughout the region to recover learning loss and give students the chance to succeed.” - Tyler Barnett, Chief Executive Officer, New Schools for Alabama

The pandemic compounded the ongoing education crisis in the U.S., resulting in significant learning loss, particularly for many low-income students of color. Research indicates that at the end of the 2020-21 school

year, K-12 students across the country were an average of four months behind in language arts instruction and five months behind in math instruction. Yet, fewer large districts offered summer programs last year than they did in 2021, despite the need and an influx of federal funding. Summer Boost was established to address these challenges head-on and provide additional learning to rising first through ninth-grade students to ensure they can catch up and pursue future higher education, employment, and wage-earning opportunities.

In Birmingham, New Schools for Alabama is partnering with Bloomberg Philanthropies to ensure local public charter schools are able to bring this opportunity to their students. Charter school leaders are eager to offer high-quality summer academic and enrichment programs but need private sector and philanthropic support to make it possible.

All of Birmingham’s charter schools serving rising first through ninth graders in fall 2023 are eligible to apply for funding through Summer Boost to help their students who are most in need of assistance. Each school will commit to measuring outcomes and ensuring consistent student attendance. Public charter schools should apply by March 22 and all schools granted funding will be notified by April 14. More information can be found at www.summerboost.org.

Bloomberg Philanthropies invests in 700 cities and 150 countries around the world to ensure better, longer lives for the greatest number of people. The organization focuses on five key areas for creating lasting change: the Arts, Education, Environment, Government Innovation, and Public Health. Bloomberg Philanthropies encompasses all of Michael R. Bloomberg’s giving, including his foundation,

corporate, and personal philanthropy as well as Bloomberg Associates, a pro bono consultancy that works in cities around the world. In 2022, Bloomberg Philanthropies distributed \$1.7 billion. For more information, please visit bloomberg.org or follow us on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

New Schools for Alabama is a 501(c)3 nonprofit, public charity organization created to serve kids in Alabama. The organization supports the growth of excellent public charter schools in Alabama to ensure that every child has access to a quality public education. Additionally, New Schools for Alabama recruits high-caliber leaders to establish new schools in underserved communities and fosters a policy environment that supports the growth of excellent charter schools in high-need areas throughout the state. For more information go to www.newschoolsforalabama.org





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www.newschoolsforalabama.org



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