

The Educator

THE MISSISSIPPI ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATORS E-NEWSLETTER



FROM HEADQUARTERS

Erica Jones | MAE President

What a start to the school year! My hat goes off to each of you for tackling the many different obstacles that were thrown your way. Here at MAE, we are continuing to advocate for your safety as well as the safety of our students. As you ease back into a routine, please check out MAE's social media platforms for updates to workshops and other events that may interest you. To that end, I am thrilled to share with you the following grant opportunities from The NEA Foundation.

One of the key ways in which the Foundation fulfills its mission to promote the absolute best in public education is by developing and extending grant resources to support individual educators' innovation, problem-solving, and leadership development. The Foundation currently offers three grant programs to individual educators: Student Success Grants for classroom projects focused on project-based learning and critical thinking; Learning & Leadership Grants which support professional development opportunities; and the newest offering, Envision Equity Grants which support classroom projects directly focused on equity. The first two grant programs are currently offered in amounts of \$2,000 or \$5,000. The Envision Equity program invites proposals between \$1,500 and \$5,000. With all of these grant programs, educators have one year to use awarded funds. This funding is competitive, and all proposals are reviewed by educators. Grants for these programs are typically made three times per year and the deadline for the final round of grants this year is October 15th. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

This year, here in Mississippi, the Foundation has awarded a \$5,000 Student Success grant to DeAnna Arnold, a Kindergarten-5th grade Librarian at Wheeler Attendance Center in Booneville. Congratulations, DeAnna!

Additionally, the Foundation invests in educators' learning, collaboration and leadership through its Global Learning Fellowship (GLF), a year-long program designed to enhance educators' knowledge and skills to integrate global competency into daily classroom instruction, advocate for global competencies in their schools and districts, and help students thrive in an increasingly interconnected world. Fellows are engaged in online coursework, webinars, reading and reflection, a two-day professional development workshop, and an international field study. Upon completion of the program, the Fellows become members of an active, 400-person alumni group that supports continued growth and leadership. The Fellowship is a competitive program, and all applications are reviewed by educators.

I am pleased to share that Tamora McConnell, a 3rd-5th Grade English Language Arts educator at Jackson Public Schools in Jackson, has been named a 2022 Global Learning Fellow from the state of Mississippi. Well done, Dr. McConnell!

We're so proud of these outstanding educators as well as the rest of our state's hardworking, inspiring educators. We'll continue to fight for you the way we know you're fighting for the education opportunities your students deserve.

To that end, we're pleased to welcome incoming MAE executive director Antonio Castanon Luna. Antonio has hit the ground running here at headquarters and we're excited to see where his leadership takes the Association.

As always, please reach out with any comments or concerns.

From MAE Executive Director Antonio Castanon Luna

Antonio Castanon Luna | Executive Director



MAE members and local leaders:

I hope that each of you and your families are safe during these trying times across our state.

I want to take this opportunity to share how extremely humbled and excited I am to have joined the MAE team as your new executive director. I come to you by way of the Georgia Association of Educators (GAE) where I served as the Manager for UniServ, Membership, and Organizing. I joined GAE after working at NEA, where I helped develop national recruitment, leadership development, and advocacy programs as part of a seasonal cycle that mirrors our academic year.

With these experiences providing a foundation for our work in Mississippi, I step into this role empowered by the opportunity to work alongside you and our public school educators to ensure that our students have every resource and support necessary to become productive members of our communities. I am of the firm belief that by working together, having honest dialogue, and uplifting our personal stories and collective narrative, we can ensure that our Association continues to grow its power to support our students as well as the personal, professional, and leadership development of all of our members across Mississippi.

As the son of an educator who received an incredible amount of support in our public schools, the mission outlined above and my hopes for this partnership are part of my lived experience. During my middle school years, one of my educators not only supported me in the classroom, but also advocated on my behalf to help me enter into our district's gifted program. This support provided my mother, a single parent and first-generation immigrant, with the hope necessary to call our country home. This courageous decision, grounded by the promise of opportunity by our public school system and our democracy, is what has allowed and inspired me to become a partner in this work.

Right now, we find ourselves at a point in our history in which only by coming together, neighbor with neighbor, educator with educator, constituent with public servant, we will be able to support our students in developing a lifelong curiosity for knowledge, and compassion for others and the world that we live in.

I look forward to being a leader for our organization who listens openly without judgement, supports personal and professional growth, practices our shared values and helps achieve our collective mission, and serves MAE members and leaders with the utmost effort deserved by those working for our students across Mississippi.

I look forward to many years of shared success.
