

# The Educator

THE MISSISSIPPI ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATORS E-NEWSLETTER



## FROM HEADQUARTERS

Erica Jones | MAE President

Fall is my favorite time of the year. I love to see the leaves changing color and welcoming the cooler temperatures after a blazingly hot summer. I smile at the back-to-school pictures that are shared, the excitement on our early career educators' faces, and there's nothing like the return to Friday night noise at a football game.

As educators across the state settle into routines, I am reminded of the importance of our profession. Respecting teaching mentors among us is essential in fostering lasting relationships with one another. Applying curriculum that is equitable, affirming, and challenging helps us to develop scholars who are ready to compete in a global society. Remembering that there is an art to teaching and that displaying compassion and understanding outweighs test scores that are displayed and critiqued by many outside of our beloved profession.

Here at MAE, we are continuing to monitor legislation that impacts you. Be on the lookout for surveys from your districts concerning American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding. We have heard from you the staggering amount of money you pull from your own pockets to outfit your classrooms with supplies. This funding is meant to provide you and your districts with the opportunity to meet and exceed expectations.

As we move into a season of shorter days and cooler temps, remember to build in time for self-care. And as always, reach out to our office should you need anything. Happy Fall, y'all!

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### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Unit updates

American Rescue Plan

Member benefits news

A note from MAE's new executive director

Antonio Castanon Luna

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## 2022 Statewide Election Posting of Positions

### State-wide Positions

President  
Vice-President  
Secretary-Treasurer  
NEA Director

### Other State-wide Positions

Higher Ed  
Administrator At Large  
Alternate NEA Director

### Board of Directors

Capital Region – Minority Race  
Delta Region – Majority Race  
Delta Region – Minority Race  
Gulf Coast Region – Minority Race  
Gulf Coast Region – Majority Race  
Southwest Region – Majority Race  
Southwest Region – Minority Race  
Northwest Region – Minority Race  
Northeast Region – Minority Race  
Northeast Region – Majority Race

### MAE Delegates to 2022 NEA RA

(two from each region will be elected)

Capital Region  
Delta Region  
East Central Region  
Gulf Coast Region  
Northeast Region  
Northwest Region  
Southwest Region

**NOTE: The NEA RA will be held in July of 2022 in Dallas, TX.**

(see back for qualifying details)

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## QUALIFYING PROCEDURES

- B. The deadline for qualifying for a place on the ballot is **November 30** of each year. This means the qualifying papers **must** be hand delivered or postmarked to the MAE office (775 North State Street, Jackson, MS 39202-3086) by that day.
- C. You may qualify in **one** of three ways:
1. Members seeking the office of President, Vice-President, Secretary/Treasurer, NEA Director or NEA Alternate Director must have been an active member in good standing for **three (3) consecutive years**. Good standing is defined as unified – local, state, and national – with all dues paid. Members seeking the office of MAE Board of Directors or NEA Delegate must be a current member in good standing.
  2. Your local association may put your name up for a position. Your local should vote on the matter and the local president then sends a letter to the MAE Elections Committee giving the name of the person nominated for the position for which the person nominated for the position for which the person is running.
  3. The prospective candidate may get 100 signatures of voting (paid in full) members from his/her MAE region to sign a petition placing the person's name on the ballot. The signatures along with a letter should be sent to MAE.
  4. To qualify as a candidate for NEA delegate one must submit a completed nomination form.
- D. All qualifying papers must be submitted in one of the following ways:
1. Sent by certified mail postmarked to the MAE no later than November 30 (return receipt requested for each position) or
  2. Hand delivered to the receptionist in the MAE office where a receipt, with **date and time**, will be given.
  3. Sent via email to [alattimore@maetoday.org](mailto:alattimore@maetoday.org)



**Nomination Form for MAE 2022 State-wide Election and MAE Delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly**

**STATE-WIDE POSITIONS**

\_\_\_ President    \_\_\_ Vice-President    \_\_\_ Secretary/Treasurer    \_\_\_ NEA Director

**OTHER STATE-WIDE POSITIONS**

\_\_\_ Higher Ed    \_\_\_ Admin At-Large    \_\_\_ Alt NEA Director    \_\_\_ NEA Delegate

**MAE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

\_\_\_ Capital Region (Minority)    \_\_\_ NW Region (Minority)    \_\_\_ NE Region (Majority)

\_\_\_ Delta Region (Majority)    \_\_\_ Delta Region (Minority)    \_\_\_ NE Region (Minority)

\_\_\_ Gulf Coast (Minority)    \_\_\_ Gulf Coast (Majority)    \_\_\_ SW Region (Minority)

\_\_\_ SW Region (Majority)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Local Association: \_\_\_\_\_ MAE Region: \_\_\_\_\_

School/Work Site: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Primary Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: Check One

- Supervisory (Administrator, Principal, etc.)
- Non-Supervisory (Teacher, Counselor, ESP, etc.)
- Retired

Ethnic Group: Check one

- American Native/Alaskan Native
- Hispanic
- Asian Pacific Islander
- Black
- Caucasian (not of Spanish origin)

I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the above information is true and correct. I am an Active, Life, Retired or Education Support member of the MAE/NEA. All information requested on this form must be provided.

Signature of Nominee: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Attached are the signatures of 100 MAE members in good standing in the Candidate's MAE Region who nominate the above candidate, or a letter signed by the local president endorsing the above candidate. (if running for State-wide positions)**

**This form may be duplicated.**

**DEADLINE FOR FILING IS NOVEMBER 30, 2021 BY 5:00 P.M.**

**NOTE: - PLEASE SEE QUALIFYING PROCEDURES FOR INSTRUCTIONS!**

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# Collective voice and member action: What's coming up at MAE

Antonio Castanon Luna | Executive Director

Dear MAE members and local leaders,

I hope that each of you and your families are safe and doing well.

With the school year ramping up and the conclusion of the first 9-week period upon us, I want to take this opportunity to share the work that your MAE is leading on our grassroots organizing and advocacy work.

Given that our strength comes from members like you and a collective voice at the worksite, district, and state level, your MAE is focused on informing and empowering educators just like you to uplift your experiences as education experts to shape the public narrative around our public schools. This narrative, our narrative, and our collective action is what ultimately pushes decision-makers from the governor's office down to local school boards to act on the needs of students and educators as defined by us, the professional voice of education.

This work comes at a crucial time. Just this past month, local school boards across Mississippi have begun making decisions on how to spend over \$1.6 billion of federal funds allocated to our public schools in Mississippi as part of the American Rescue Plan. It is imperative that educators, as the first line of support to students, and community members, as constituents and important education stakeholders, have a voice in this process. Your MAE is working at the local level to ensure that both groups have a seat at the table and are included in the decision-making progress.

At the state level, your MAE State President, Erica Jones, and other MAE representatives attended on a teacher pay hearing held by the senate education committee on September 15. This hearing focused on analyzing the effect of teacher pay on teacher recruitment and retention, and student success. Despite focusing on the effect that pay has on teachers, students, and our public schools as a whole, we were shocked to see that our elected officials held this hearing without having a single teacher testify on how Mississippi's lowest ranking salaries affect themselves, their students, and their families. Educators were asked to provide written testimony, but we know that live testimony among perspective from policy experts and officials from the Department of Education would have had a far more profound impact. It is unacceptable to make decisions affecting educators without including an in-person educator voice in the process.

In partnership with local leaders and educators just like you, we are beginning to engage members all across the state in a historic effort to leverage these opportunities to improve our public schools for our students in Mississippi. In the next month, your MAE will hold four educator pay townhalls to have an honest discussion on how pay affects our educators and our students, and what we can do to change the status quo for the better. We will ask you to share candidly as we uplift these stories to our elected officials in an effort to act for what is best for our students. Additionally, MAE will invest in supporting members to partner with their school boards to shape an allocation plan for the American Rescue Plan (ARP) that will put students and educators first.

This is just the beginning steps towards a brighter day for public schools in our state, and we're honored to be your partners in this crucial work.

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# In your corner: MAE Member Advocacy

Kenneth Grigsby | Member Rights Advocate

For almost 18 months, COVID-19 has radically altered and transformed education in ways society could have never imagined. The crisis has had a chilling affect not only on those directly involved in the education community but upon the entire nation. To combat the societal challenges in education and other segments of society, President Joe Biden proposed an approximately 1.9 trillion dollar American Rescue Plan (“ARP”). After considerable legislative debate, on March 11, 2021, Congress enacted this bill into law. To highlight the importance of the obstacles posed to education by the coronavirus, an estimated 130 billion dollars was designated with the primary goal of safely reopening schools.

The ARP is inclusive of many components designed to address a plethora of problems spanning the entire educational spectrum. To be sure, MAE appreciates the varying needs demanded by individual districts. Yet, it seems beyond debate that some COVID-19 issues demand a measure of synchronicity. One such matter surrounds the need for paid COVID-19 leave for all school district employees.

While thoughtful, well-intentioned minds can disagree about how educational ARP funds should be apportioned, the unequivocal need for paid sick leave should not up for debate. The number of deaths and hospitalizations resulting from the pandemic are both alarming and humbling. However, this data alone does not fully explain the toll the pandemic has taken on educators. Teachers and school staff are not only saddled with the responsibility of implementing prophylactic measures that not only protect themselves and their students but are also burdened the emotional toll of caring for their own family members.

In March 2020, Congress acknowledged the unequivocal strain placed on teachers with the passage of the Families First Coronavirus Relief Act (FFCRA). While the FFCRA incorporated many important provisions, one aspect of particular importance was the mandatory ten (10) days of paid leave offered to most employees affected by COVID-19. The paid leave condition was obviously not exclusive to educators, but its importance for those working in the education sector cannot be understated.

Although the FFCRA's paid leave mandate expired on December 31, 2020, ARP funds provided districts with the financial latitude to extend paid sick leave for school district employees. An overwhelming number of districts exhibited an initial reluctance to offer paid sick leave although some school boards in the state have recently decided to change course. However, unfortunately, an unacceptable number of school districts still exhibit an inexplicable level of reticence. For these school districts, their intransigence is both baffling and dangerous. Paid sick leave is not a “reward” for school employees; it is, instead, a measure which is inextricably intertwined with the universal goal of keeping schools open for in-person learning.

Since the American Rescue Plan effectively eliminates the primary argument against paid COVID leave, financial resources, other arguments against providing education employees paid leave must be viewed suspiciously. School districts and most individual schools have continuity of instruction plans should a teacher need to be out for any length of time. If school districts have been taught anything the previous two academic years, all have learned how to be flexible when unforeseen staffing and instructional needs arise. So why the reservations?

One frequent, albeit, often unspoken, argument against paid leave is the belief some employees would unnecessarily abuse this benefit. Yet, a thorough review casts significant doubt on the validity of this contention. First, individuals making this argument have, to date, been unable to cite any credible data to support the argument of widespread abuse. Without any evidentiary basis for this belief, most claims are simply relegated to pure conjecture or a conclusion premised on isolated incidents. Akin to this, to the extent districts are realistically concerned about fraudulent leave requests, districts have the unequivocal autonomy to implement sensible procedural safeguards to ferret out bogus requests for paid COVID leave.

Finally, I believe this claim of potential fraud is premised on a complete lack of understanding regarding the reasons individuals enter the teaching profession. Teachers commence their careers with a thorough understanding of the sacrifices that accompany this profession. They perform their work not simply to fulfill the obligations delineated in their written employment contracts but, more importantly, to positively transform the lives of the students and communities they serve.

# In your corner cont;d

Advocating for COVID leave is not intended to create avenues for educators to contrive ways to be “off” of their job but, conversely, to ensure their physical health is at a point which allows them to be “on” their job.

While educators readily acknowledge that well-intentioned parties can differ on the mechanics of paid COVID-19 sick leave, the necessity of such a measure should never be debated. School districts are certainly permitted the flexibility to institute measures that may tie paid COVID leave to an employee’s vaccination status or limit the amount of time an employee can be out as was done by the FFCRA. Such measures showcase a district’s rightful contemplation of how, not if. In the end, the issue of paid COVID-19 leave is one where form should never outweigh substance.



We know that navigating public service loan forgiveness and finding an affordable repayment plan can be tricky, which is why all NEA members get a free year of the NEA Student Debt Navigator, powered @bySavi. Check it out here: [neamb.com/getnavnea](https://neamb.com/getnavnea)

- **ICYMI:** The NEA Student Debt Navigator can assist you in planning for and managing your student loan debt. Check it out for help with repayment plans, loan forgiveness as you’re starting out the new school year! [neamb.com/getnavnea](https://neamb.com/getnavnea)
- **Lower student loan payments:** NEA Member Benefits is here to help you navigate the student debt. Check out the NEA Student Debt Navigator powered @bySavi here: [neamb.com/getnavnea](https://neamb.com/getnavnea)

# JOIN NOW

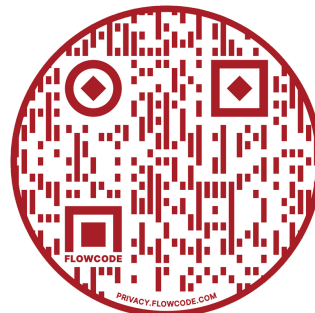
For over 100 years, the Mississippi Association of Educators has provided support, protection, and strength to those who spend their careers nurturing Mississippi’s children.

Today, we continue to build upon that legacy: providing benefits, protection, and leveraging our collective voice to advocate for our members and for all public educators across Mississippi.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** | We are proud to offer our members the opportunity to continue their education throughout their entire career. Comprised of educators in all seasons of their careers, ESPs, and retired educators, our Professional Development Advisory Committee identifies each year’s professional development priorities in order to provide a full slate of continuing education workshops.

**PROTECTION** | MAE knows that being an educator is a noble profession, and one that carries with it a certain amount of legal risk. No one is immune, and that’s why we provide a comprehensive legal safety net for our members.

**POWER** | Being an MAE member means that your voice will join thousands of others rallying in support of public education. We have helped school districts avoid state takeover, and kept control of public schools in the hands of the communities that support and attend them. Incremental pay raises and health insurance for educators? MAE’s advocacy work has led to those victories and more. We’re proud of those legislative achievements, but know that the fight for Mississippi educators isn’t over, and that’s why we need you.



Scan this QR code and join Team MAE today!

# Advocacy update

Hannah Orlansky | Director of Public Affairs

In the spring of this year, President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan (ARP) into law. In addition to providing most Americans with some much-needed financial relief, this massive piece of legislation provided for the largest investment in public education in the nation's history.

Thanks to the ARP, Mississippi will receive approximately \$1.6 billion in federal funding. To put the significance of this dollar amount into perspective, the annual education appropriation from the state legislature totals roughly \$2.2 billion.

The vast majority of the funding will go directly to districts (cited in the chart as LEAs) with about \$40 million remaining to be addressed by the state.

Here's a detailed breakdown of what those dollars will address:

Minimum grants to LEAs \$1,423,798,250  
Minimum learning recovery grants: \$81,359,900  
Summer enrichment: \$16,271,980  
After-school programs: \$16,271,980  
Administrative costs: \$8,135,990  
Remaining state funding: \$40,679,950  
Homeless students: \$10,672,355

Total: \$1,627,198,000  
Per-pupil spending: \$3,401,90

We're, of course, thrilled to see this level of investment by the federal government. K-12 schools and the educators within them have been hit disproportionately hard by the pandemic and we desperately need this funding to address immediate needs and what we anticipate in the near future.

Here's where you come in: In order to ensure that this funding is spent in a way that most benefits your district and your students, we need to hear what needs you have in your building. Share your thoughts with our staff, your district leaders, and keep an eye out for the surveys your district may be circulating for input.

In the coming months, it will be more crucial than ever for you and your colleagues to use your educator voice. Engaging with your district leaders and asking for transparency in how this money is being spent is critically important. No one knows the needs of our schools and our students better than you and your colleagues.

We have said this many times but it always bears repeating: The pandemic did not create new problems; it simply exposed and exacerbated the systemic issues that have long plagued Mississippi public schools. These federal dollars will help us right the ship while addressing emergent, pandemic-related challenges as well as set us up to more proactively address the needs of our students.

# Mid-State Unit update

Lisa Wilson | UniServ Director

Yvonne Hairston is the head varsity girls basketball coach at Columbus High School and was recently inducted into the East Mississippi Community College Hall of Fame.

Coach Hairston has been the girls' basketball coach at Columbus High School for 14 years. She credits her experience at EMCC for the development of her passion for education and working with kids as well as the development of her relationship with basketball.

"EMCC opened so many doors for me," Hairston said. "It's a great thing for me to have played the game and know the game, but now to coach the game is very special."

Hairston led the Falcons to their only state championship in 2020.

"It was just a great opportunity to be at EMCC with all the things they've done, and it's great to see how it's grown and developed over the years," Hairston said. "It's a great honor to have had the opportunity to play there. It opened a lot of doors for me academically as well as athletically."

According to the Columbus School District Facebook page, CMSD is lucky to have such a decorated athlete teaching and coaching in the district as she "transforms and enhances" lives of her students and the student-athletes.

Mississippi of Association of Educators is proud to have Coach Yvonne Hairston as a member. Congrats, Coach!





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## South Unit update

Pam McLendon | UniServ Director

***WE SEE YOU BEHIND THE MASK: YOUR EYES DISCLOSE YOUR RESILIENCE TO STAY FOCUSED NO MATTER THE CIRCUMSTANCES OR CHALLENGES.***

"Although masks are not mandated in our district, our staff feels overwhelmed as we continue to educate our children." - DA

***WE SEE YOU BEHIND THE MASK: YOUR EYES REVEAL THE EXHAUSTION FROM THE HOURS YOU ARE PUTTING IN FOR YOUR STUDENTS; MAKING SURE YOUR LESSONS ARE PLANNED, THE ROOMS ARE CLEANED AND SAFE, THAT YOU'RE KEEPING UP WITH THE MANDATES FROM HIGHER-UPS, AND TRYING TO BALANCE HOME AND SCHOOL LIFE.***

"In some ways this year is even more stressful. We are just waiting. I'm frustrated at the lack of people in my school vaccinated. I'm frustrated at some of the expectations from our district – we are ALL trying to figure out life during a pandemic. But I'm also very grateful to be in-person teaching with my precious group of kids. I'm going to pray, teach, and clean!" - WC

***WE SEE YOU BEHIND THE MASK: YOUR EYES SHOW THE FRUSTRATIONS OF THE DEMANDS BEING PLACED ON YOU.***

"This school year has made me – for the first time – question my choice of being a teacher. The new expectations of being a classroom teacher and a distance learner teacher at the same time, constantly worrying about students catching or spreading COVID by moving around in the classroom and just being kids. The ridiculous amount of paperwork and trainings that are expected from us with a 50-minute planning time – not to mention planning and preparing. It's just not enjoyable anymore!" - ML

"The wearing of masks is hindering my teaching, because my special needs students need to see my mouth as I say words and I need to see theirs." - CM

***WE SEE YOU BEHIND THE MASK: AS TEARS LEAK FROM YOUR EYES DUE TO THE LOSSES OF COWORKERS, STUDENTS, AND PARENTS. WE OFFER OUR CONDOLENCES, SUPPORT, AND LOVE.***

***WE SEE YOU BEHIND THE MASK: YOUR EYES UNVEIL THE TRUE HERO INSIDE OF YOU AS YOU CONTINUE TO PRESS FORWARD DAILY, TO NOT ONLY FACE THE UNKNOWN, BUT TO CONQUER IT!***

## Professional Development

Felicia Dixon IPD Fellow

As we embark on this school year, we will renew our dedication to excellence in all that we do, as we seek to provide world class instruction daily knowing that all students can learn and succeed. We will continue to provide students with opportunities to address academic deficiencies, to build numeracy and literacy skills, and to be college or work force prepared. We will continue to implement initiatives to promote teaching and learning, and to engage all stakeholders in the process of educating our students. It is going to be an amazing year!

Nothing Runs on Empty: An Educator's Guide to Resilience resumed this month. This CEU-accredited series provides life-changing benefits as educators begin to understand the importance implementing a self-care plan. It's essential to practice self-care, especially if you want to live a healthier and more fulfilling life. Register for this series today and keep an eye out for future registration information.

Our quarterly member advocacy series, designed so that educators stay abreast of your rights, will host another session this month. This workshop, which took place on October 14 was member-led, and facilitated by MAE member rights advocate Kenneth Grigsby.

On October 16, 2021, Zone 2 hosted its Early Career Educator Virtual Conference with the theme Recharge, Reflect, and Refresh. The conference is intended for all NEA active members in their first five years of teaching, but all are welcome. Interactive sessions will focus on integrating technology with instruction, innovation in the classroom, addressing educational bias, stress management, and others.

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# Capital/Southwest update

Chasiti Paige | UniServ Director

As we head into the third month of the school year, we want to express our appreciation for your dedication to your work and your students during this continued challenging time.

And that's why it is with great joy that we announce our upcoming Fall Blitz and work site visits in the Jackson area.

Member organizers will be coming to schools in the next few weeks to engage with current members and potential members. It is vital that you encourage your colleagues to stop by and visit the member organizers. Hear about new member benefits deals, make changes to any personal information, and swing by to just say hello! We've missed you and can't wait to catch up!

## UPCOMING: WORK SITE VISITS

10/12 Spann  
10/13 Peebles  
10/19 Wingfield  
10/20 Key  
11/2 Whitten, Obama, and Clausell  
11/3 Green  
11/4 Blackburn  
11/9 Gallaway  
11/10 Bates and Cardoza  
11/11 Raines

Please be on a look out for MAE to be in a school near you soon!

# North Unit update

Teri Rounsaville | UniServ Director

MAE North's unit and MAE are proud to partner with the Clarksdale Municipal School District New Teacher Academy!

CMSD Curriculum Coordinators Holly Blackwell and Cornishee Brice Sims, along with UniServ director Teri Rounsaville, are planning quality, monthly professional development opportunities intended for early career educators.

These sessions include assistance with bullying, dealing with difficult behavior, effective technology in teaching, and knowing state testing procedures.

Checking in with these new educators is key to their success and student success. We can't wait to see what these amazing new educators do next!



*Pictured speaking to the Academy is CMSD superintendent Dr. Joe Nelson.*