



E-School Experiment Deemed Successful

After a series of severe weather events during the 2010-2011 school year, Mountain Brook Schools, like other school systems in Alabama, had a dilemma. During the course of the year, weather had forced the school system to close school early and start late on a few occasions. Late starts and early dismissals usually do not have to be made up. But when an entire day is missed, the school system is required by law to make up those days.

“We had two days we had to make up,” said Superintendent Dicky Barlow. “Given our school calendar, we appeared to have no choice but to add those days to the end of the school year, which would have required bringing students back for two days after Memorial Day. Once we got into the second semester, we began to think about piloting a program for making up these days via something we called e-School.”

According to Barlow, the school system sought permission from the Alabama Department of Education to pilot e-School in the Mountain Brook school district. Once that was secured, key school leaders had a short period of time to plan and then implement e-School. Two Saturdays in the spring were designated as the official make-up days, but students would not be required to attend school. Rather, on those days they would gain access to e-School lessons, prepared by their teachers, and then have 10 days to complete the work for each e-School “day.” Principals at each school met with their faculties and outlined the program. “I did this with some trepidation,” said Crestline Elementary principal Laurie King. “I know how busy teachers are and I knew they were going to have to prepare their e-School lessons in a very short period of time. I was impressed, however, by how positive they were. They understood the concept and embraced it.”

Sammye Davis, who teaches kindergarten at Brookwood Forest Elementary, looked forward to the challenge. “I was immediately drawn to learning more about this opportunity and exploring how to make it work for my students,” said Davis. “Of course, a plethora of questions also popped into my head. ‘What will this look like? How much preparation will this require?’”

“I thought it sounded like a very innovative way to make up time given the fact so many of our

“Using e-School days is a way of making up missed days and missed instruction time that is fun for the students.”

– Julie Tuck, Mountain Brook Elementary

students have access to high speed Internet,” said Fred Major, who teaches in the math department at Mountain Brook High School.

Jennifer Mueller, a first-grade teacher at Crestline Elementary, was “excited and intrigued.” “It was an opportunity for the teachers to collaborate on a technology-based learning project for all the students in their respective grade,” Mueller added. “It was an opportunity for parents to work with their children on specific standard-based lessons which would give them insight to their children’s various levels of thinking and knowledge.”

This concept turned out to be more than just a novel way of making up missed school days. Donna Williamson, Director of Technologies for the school system, pointed to other potential benefits. “We have been involved in much discussion about education for the 21st century learner. We all know that educational needs are shifting and we knew this was an opportunity to examine a different approach to instruction. Not one that would replace more traditional instruction, but which could become one of many ways that we deliver instruction to students.” In fact, the school system’s technology coordinators at each school played an important role in helping teachers plan and implement their e-School lessons.

The experience also led to thinking about how it might be improved. “I think the process needs some tweaking,” commented Wendy Gray, Mountain Brook High School math teacher. “We need to work inter-departmentally so the whole experience for the student is productive and practical.”

The e-School days were completed toward the end of the school year and, with little time remaining, the school system conducted an online survey of teachers, parents, and students. “We had a good level of participation by teachers and parents,” said Dale Wisely, Director of Student Services, “but, un-

fortunately, because of the timing and the fact that we couldn’t conduct the survey at school, we have too little participation by students to have meaningful data.” Wisely said that students who did respond were divided on their opinions about e-School. Many students, and some parents and teachers, felt that too much work was assigned, particularly coming so close to the end of the academic year.

In spite of that, the opinions expressed by parents and by teachers on the survey were positive and supportive. “The overwhelming majority of both parents and teachers agreed that e-School days are a worthwhile approach to learning for days when classes are not physically held in our schools,” said Superintendent Barlow. “Feedback was highly positive on the ease with which students were able to access the lessons technologically. Both parents and teachers felt that the lessons were of high educational value.”

“The e-School approach forced many of us out of our comfort zone and required that we take a new approach to student learning. I kept in the forefront of my mind that this was a great opportunity for us to challenge our 21st century learners. As with anything else, the more you experience new things, the easier it will come with time.”

– Tiffany Marron, Brookwood Forest

“Looking back, I see how instrumental e-School experiences were for my students’ learning,” said Katie McLure, one of whose e-School lessons focused on Tennessee Williams. “These lessons allowed for a unique learning environment that stretched the students even further, causing them to work a different set of skills than what they typically do.”

What about the future of e-School? “We learned from this pilot that e-School is indeed a



An e-School Sampler

“My fourth grader was asked to plan a trip to a place she wanted to visit, New Orleans. She had to plan a vacation budget, research attractions she wanted to see, find a hotel, map out the drive, and rent a car. It was a very good lesson, incorporating math, writing, reading, and other skills.”

– Crawford Bumgarner, parent

“The students investigated two websites about Pascal and Pascal’s triangle and discoveries within the triangle. Then, they took a short Moodle quiz that assessed their basic understanding of the triangle and its possibilities. The students also watched a short online video that described a binomial expansion using Pascal’s triangle. I allowed the students to submit the homework through picture mail...”

– Wendy Gray, math teacher, MBHS

“We created lessons that integrated the content areas: Math, Science, Social Studies, and Language Arts. The first e-School lesson explored the geographic, economic, and environmental impact a population of 7 billion is having on Earth. The lesson focused on a National Geographic online cover story about the new geologic epoch called the Anthropocene, or Age of Man. Students were asked to read and analyze data and reflect and write on what they learned.”

– Missy Cunningham,
6th grade teacher,
Mountain Brook Elementary

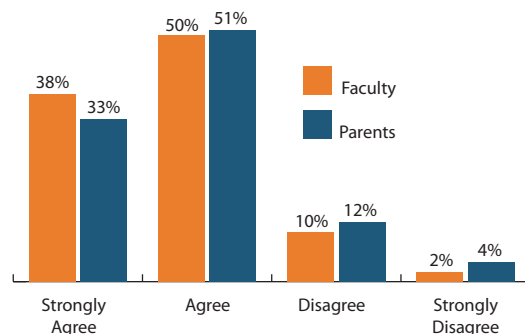
“One of second grade’s topics is biological life cycles. The students had activities on the life cycle of the frog. Some watched a PowerPoint or movie on the frog’s life cycle. Others used an interactive game on the Internet. There were also some optional activities involved, making a Venn diagram of the differences between frogs and toads. Teachers in Spanish, PE, art, and music also developed a lesson on frogs.”

– Julie Tuck,
2nd grade teacher,
Mountain Brook Elementary

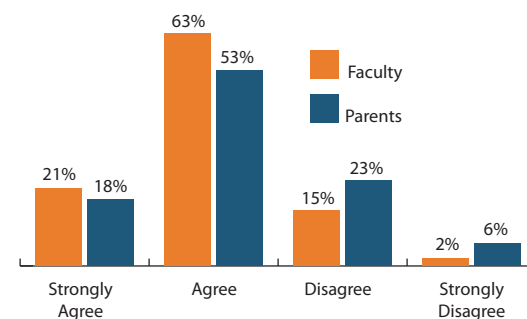
“My elementary school child had very appropriate assignments that related to their study of Vulcan and Sloss Furnace. He did a lot of reading on the Internet about the history of these local landmarks and enjoyed sharing his new knowledge with us. He also had math assignments that incorporated the information he learned in the social studies unit...”

– Nicky Barnes, parent

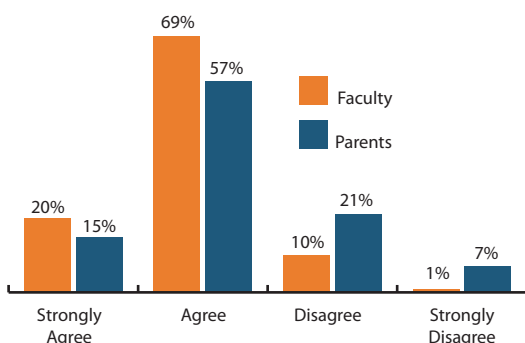
“E-School Days are a worthwhile approach to learning for days when classes are not physically held in our schools.”



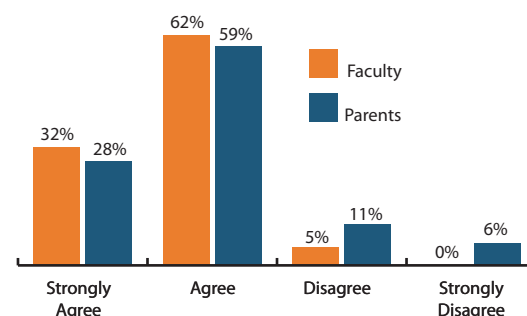
“E-school Lessons Were Reasonably Enjoyable And Engaging.”



“E-school Lessons Were Challenging But Not Overwhelming.”



“E-school Lessons Were Technologically Easy To Access.”



meaningful and practical way to provide instruction when students are not physically present,” commented Barlow. “In our survey, 84% of parents and 88% of our faculty agreed that this is a worthwhile approach to providing instruction under certain conditions. We learned some important ways to improve the process for any future use and we are hopeful that without as much time constraint, we can correct some of the problems. But, we are grateful to our teachers and staff for the work they did to make it a success and we are grateful to faculty and parents for their positive comments.”

GOLF TOURNAMENT

MBSC Raises \$60,000 for MBHS/MBJH Athletic Programs

Mountain Brook Sports Corporation (MBSC), a charitable organization formed to help fund the boys and girls athletic programs at Mountain Brook High School (MBHS) and Mountain Brook Junior High School (MBJH), is pleased to announce that it raised \$60,000 at its Thirteenth Annual Golf Tournament at Highland Park Golf Course in May. Over 140 golfers participated in this Golf Tournament, including coaches, administrators, former players, parents and several avid golfers. Congratulations are extended to Mike Morrison, Thomas Twitty, Hunter Twitty and Tom Twitty for winning the Golf Tournament. MBSC wishes to thank all of its corporate sponsors for the Golf Tournament.

The proceeds of the Golf Tournament will be used by MBSC to purchase equipment, build facilities and otherwise support the boys and girls athletic programs at MBHS and MBJH. Recently, MBSC purchased equipment for the volleyball, football, basketball, wrestling, track, baseball, soccer, golf and tennis programs at MBHS and MBJH. Since it was formed, MBSC has spent approximately \$3,000,000 on facilities and equipment at MBHS and MBJH.

In addition to the annual fundraisers, MBSC accepts charitable contributions from the public. Also, MBSC has started an Endowment Fund to provide long-term financial stability to the athletic programs, similar in purpose to the Mountain Brook City Schools Foundation. We are hoping to raise a six-figure Endowment Fund, so the interest can be used to help fund the athletic programs. MBSC allows the donor to designate the boys or girls sport that will benefit from the contribution. If you would like further information about Mountain Brook Sports Corporation, please contact Mike Morrison at 870-3257 or Doug Centeno at 278-8000.



Gary London Reflects on Board Tenure

By William Thorton, Birmingham News Staff writer. Reprinted by permission of the Birmingham News



Mountain Brook Board of Education President Gary London called his 15 years on the board a “fantastic” time.

“I got a lot more out of it than I ever put in,” London said. “To be able to serve the local community and feel like I was making a real difference in the lives of these kids was a very rewarding experience.”

London rotated off the board June 1, after serving three terms. He said he had originally intended to serve only two terms, but stayed on for a third to help with the transition when Charles Mason retired as superintendent.

“We had several new board members and we were going to have to select a new superintendent, and I was asked to stay on to provide some institutional memory,” he said. “When I was named to the board I never expected to stay on as long as I did.”

Once Mason retired, the board selected

Dicky Barlow, now completing his second year as superintendent. London said the selection of Barlow was the most important decision the board made during his time.

“He (Mason) was such an excellent, highly respected superintendent, that the board felt a great responsibility to make the right choice for a successor,” London said. “I felt very strongly at the time that we made the right choice and everything since then has confirmed we did.”

The biggest challenge has been navigating through education budget proration. School systems in Alabama have had three straight years of budget proration alone, not to mention other instances during London’s tenure. He said Mountain Brook is more equipped to handle some budget stress because of the level of local support the system enjoys, as well as the ability of staff and faculty to deal with tighter bud-

gets. However, continued years of shrinking budgets will take their toll statewide, he said.

“You can’t keep cutting and cutting because you’re going to run out of fat,” London said. “At some point, you’re going to start cutting muscle. The fact is that school systems are operating with considerably less than they were just a few years ago, and they are paying the price.”

London said he will miss the relationships he made with board members, staff members, administrators and others.

“I consider all of the other board members I’ve served with close, personal friends, as well as Dr. Mason and Dicky,” he said. “Their friendships are what has been so rewarding.”

Tommy Luckie Joins School Board

By William Thorton, Birmingham News Staff writer. Reprinted by permission of the Birmingham News



Thomas George “Tommy” Luckie is the newest member of Mountain Brook’s board of education.

The City Council named Luckie in May 2011 to replace Gary London, whose term expired June 1. London had served as board president and has been a board member for 15 years.

Luckie, 57, has been president and CEO of Luckie & Co., a marketing and communications firm, for the past 10 years.

“There has been a long legacy of board members in Mountain Brook who have been devoted to maintaining a high quality in our schools,” Luckie said. “I’m honored and humbled that I have been selected. If I can make even a small contribution, I’ll be satisfied.”

Luckie is a graduate of Mountain Brook High School and Auburn University, with a degree in business marketing. He also earned a master’s degree in business from Samford University.

He has served as president of the Mountain Brook Schools Foundation and serves on several boards, including the Bell Center, the Club, Mountain Brook Sports Corp. and the Rotary Club of Birmingham.

He and his wife, Cathy, have two children in the system. Their daughter Ginny graduated this past May. Jack is an 11th grader and Caroline a 9th grader.

Luckie said his and his family’s experiences growing up in Mountain Brook give him perspective on the school system’s importance to the city.

“One of the great prides of this community is its schools,” Luckie said. “I’m delighted to be a part of this, that some would think I’m worthy of this. If you talk to people who have served on the board, they have nothing but pride in having served and warm memories.”

Because of three years of state education budget proration, Luckie said, funding will be paramount.

“Anything that relates to financial stewardship will be,” he said. “Obviously, the board has been doing a good job. But from my time on the schools foundation, I know the importance of funding.”

Career Tech Course Offerings

Mountain Brook High School offers six career tech courses in the areas of business administration and finance: Business Technology I and II, Accounting, Business Law, Management Principles, and Business Finance. Mountain Brook Junior High offers Career Explorations as a semester elective for eighth and ninth grade students. No student will be denied admission to these courses or discriminated against based on race, sex, color, religion, national origin, disability, or limited English proficiency. Persons seeking further information about career technical offerings and specific pre-requisites should contact Dr. Missy Brooks, Director of Instruction, 32 Vine Street, Mountain Brook, AL 35213 (205) 871-4608 (wildman-brooksm@mtnbrook.k12.al.us). Inquiries regarding discrimination policies should also be directed to Dr. Brooks.

NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION

It is the policy of the Mountain Brook Schools that no person within the district shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or subject to discrimination on the basis of race, sex, color, religion, national origin, disability or age in any program, activity, or employment practice. The following persons have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies:

Dr. Dale Wisely, *Director of Student Services (Title VI)*

Mrs. Sylvia Harper, *Personnel Director (Title IX)*

Dr. Missy Brooks, *Director of Instruction (Title II)*

Mrs. Shannon Mundy, *Special Education Director (Section 504)*

Contact Information: 32 Vine Street, Mountain Brook, AL 35213
205-871-4608



Mountain Brook City Schools Foundation



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Pictured are participants in a two day workshop held this summer on 21st century learning. Administrators and teachers are working together to build capacity to understand the needs of 21st century students. They also explored practical strategies for teaching these skills to our students.

2011-2012 Funding Approved for Mountain Brook Schools

The Program and Needs Committee of the Mountain Brook City Schools Foundation met in April to consider a request for funding from the Mountain Brook Schools. The total amount of the request was \$472,000. All of the items on the list were discussed by the committee and given careful consideration. Since the foundation is restricted each year in the amount that can be disbursed in order to protect the endowment's principal, the committee was limited to a total of \$362,192 to allocate to the schools. Because of the limitation on the funding, the committee had to make tough choices. The decisions were based on need, greatest impact on the most students, and potential for the enhancement of learning.

The following allocation was recommended to and approved by the Board of Directors:

2011-2012 Funding Approved

Library Enhancement

Books, Magazines,
 Software & Supplies \$ 12,000

Professional Learning:

Two Math Coaches \$120,000
 Summer Professional Learning \$ 80,000

Technology

Year 2 Pilot of Promethean Interactive
 White Boards in K-1 \$ 20,000
 Laptop Replacements \$130,192

TOTAL: \$362,192

Congratulations to Phillip Holley

– Margaret Spencer Ragland Award Winner

In addition to making decisions regarding funding to the schools, the Program and Needs Committee also makes a recommendation for the winner of the Margaret Spencer Ragland Award each year. This award goes to a staff member in recognition of meritorious or superior contributions above and beyond the call of duty to benefit the life of the students. The school system has a process in place for determining annual service awards. That process determines a nominee whose name is submitted to the Program and Needs Committee for approval. The award has become one of the most prestigious awards given in the school system. This year's winner is Phillip Holley who is a science teacher at Mountain Brook Junior High. Mr. Holley has a long record of outstanding performance and is a National Board Certified Teacher, recipient of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching and a finalist for NASA's Educator Astronaut Program.

You Can Make a Difference

The impact of ongoing pro-ration and the reduction in property tax revenue associated with lower real estate values have put financial pressure on the schools.

Each Mountain Brook resident has the opportunity to help the situation by contributing to the Mountain Brook City Schools Foundation.

Your investment in our schools will **MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

Please contribute TODAY.

Three easy ways to help:

1. Fill out and mail the enclosed pledge card.
2. Download a pledge card:
www.mtnbrookschooolsfoundation.com
3. Call us: (205) 414-0042