Business Education Alliance Unveils “Teachers Matter” Report at BCA 2015

The Business Education Alliance of Alabama reported to Business Council of Alabama members that the high school graduation rate is improving and that a well-qualified, motivated teacher is the most important factor in a student’s success.

Two new BEA reports highlight gains made in the high school graduation rate and outline a new strategy to ensure that the best teachers are recruited and remain in the classroom.

The reports were presented Aug. 15 at the BCA’s Governmental Affairs Conference by BEA Chairman and President Joseph B. Morton, Ph.D., and BEA Finance Chairman Jay Love.

“The 2014 BEA research report on achieving a 90 percent high school graduation rate in Alabama by 2020 outlines the high-quality programs that have the greatest promise for success,” Dr. Morton said.

The report, Plan 2020, Obstacles Into Opportunities, summarized that a 90 percent graduation rate is the economic equivalent of landing a mega-industrial project every year.

Dr. Morton said the graduation rate increased to 86 percent last year from 72 percent in 2011. The report’s recommended elements deemed critical to success received $29.2 million in new dollars in the 2014-15 Education Trust Fund budget to address those needs.

“The focus now is on teacher quality,” Dr. Morton said, referring to the 2015 BEA report, Teachers Matter: Rethinking How Public Education Recruits, Rewards, and Retains Great Educators.

The report focuses on teachers and how to recruit, retain, and reward the best teaching corps possible for Alabama’s public schools by reviving successful initiatives and creating
new ones, and the need for an investment of $15.1 million.

“This important report advocates key ways to establish a teacher recruitment and mentoring program to ensure that high-quality teachers prepare our children for their adult lives in the world of business and their further education,” said BCA President and CEO William J. Canary.

Dr. Morton said roadmaps provided in the 2014 and 2015 research pieces give Alabama its best chance in history to take a giant step forward in achieving unparalleled success in public education by focusing on teacher quality.

The report said that a legislative investment of $15.1 million will revive and revise the Alabama Teacher Recruitment Incentive program, renew support for the Alabama Teacher Mentoring Program that pairs experienced teachers with beginning teachers and provides a $1,000 stipend for mentors, sponsor development of new teaching roles to allow for career growth, and reinstate Exceeding the Challenge awards for the top 10 percent of Alabama’s K-12 schools in improvement or achievement on state assessments.

“The roadmaps provided in the 2014 and 2015 research pieces give Alabama its best chance in history to take a giant step forward in achieving unparalleled success in public education,” Dr. Morton said.

The report summarizes by recognizing the importance of sponsoring pilot programs that create new roles for and which motivate teachers, create pathways to professional growth and advancement, and restore funding for a rewards program that recognize schools and faculties making significant performance improvements or consistently delivering excellent results.

“It is an important conclusion with ramifications for Alabama’s economic and social future,” Canary said.

Teachers Matter was produced by the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama for the BEA. The report was released the same week that the state school board approved higher standards for teacher preparation programs.

The BCA’s Annual Conference
Informed, Challenged, and Entertained

The Business Council of Alabama’s 2015 Governmental Affairs Conference included updates on important education efforts, legislative action, a national economic report, and an entertaining and heartwarming keynote speech by former Notre Dame football player Daniel “Rudy” Ruettiger, the inspiration for the film Rudy.

The conference at the Marriott Grand Hotel and Spa in Point Clear held Aug. 14 to Aug. 16 was the latest in the annual conferences hosted by the BCA for members, elected officials, and honored guests.

Aug. 14 was a business day for the BCA’s ProgressPAC board of directors, the BCA executive committee, and a board of directors meeting presided over by BCA Chairman Marty Abroms, President and Managing Shareholder of Abroms & Associates P.C. in Florence.

The board of directors’ program included board members, Abroms, BCA First Vice President Tommy Lee, President of Vulcan Inc., in Foley, who is also the ProgressPAC chairman, BCA President and CEO William J. Canary, and BCA staffers.

The board of directors for ProgressPAC, the political action committee of the BCA, announced its endorsement of two statewide judicial candidates.
who are up for election in 2016 - Alabama Supreme Court Associate Justices Michael F. Bolin and Kelli Wise.

The BCA recognized Birmingham attorney Eason Balch Jr. and former BCA Chairman and ProgressPAC Chairman T. Keith King with Distinguished Leader Awards. Retired BCA Vice President for Public Policy, Victor Vernon, was honored with a Distinguished Service Award. Canary recognized 15-year-old Austin Andrews of Orange Beach, founder and president of Sporty Citrus, as the BCA’s Distinguished Young Entrepreneur of the Year for 2015.

Canary announced the release of the BCA’s annual book of activities titled The Next New Start, which chronicles the BCA’s year-in-review including the 2015 legislative session and key positions taken by the BCA on behalf of the Alabama business community.

Moore Hallmark, executive director of the southeast region of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, presented U.S. Reps. Robert Aderholt, R-Haleyville, and Mo Brooks, R-Huntsville, with the chamber’s Spirit of Enterprise Award. Rep. Martha Roby, R-Montgomery, who could not attend, also received the award.

Former Maine Gov. Jock McKernan, a senior adviser to and past president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, and Dr. J.D. Foster, deputy chief economist with the U.S. Chamber, spoke on the Foundation’s report, The Growth Imperative: How Slow Growth Threatens Our Future and the American Dream.

Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson, the BCA’s 2010 chairman, delivered a message of hope, faith, and respect. TBADV
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