

PERSPECTIVES



**Alabama Art
Education Association**

SPRING 2026
NEWSLETTER



First Published in the United States by the Alabama Art Education Association in 1924

Published in 2026 by Tricia Oliver, Editor and Newsletter Chair
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Perspectives is published quarterly in March, June, September, and December. The deadline for submissions is the 15th of the month previous to publication.

Credits for images: AAEA Members
Cover Photo by Kelli Tungay on Unsplash

For more info from this organization please visit

www.myaaea.org

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AAEA

MISSION STATEMENT

AAEA IS....

a Professional Organization dedicated to the Leadership, Advocacy, Professional Development Opportunities, and Support for all Visual Art Educators in Alabama.



AAEA

WHY JOIN?

"I joined AAEA for the professional development opportunities and the chance to network with fellow art educators. Being part of this community has truly filled my cup. I've made meaningful connections with people who understand my work and share my passion. When you're the "island" in your school, it's invaluable to have colleagues you can call, collaborate with, and lean on to talk through lessons and classroom situations that others in your building may not fully understand. The art teachers I've met through AAEA have become some of my closest friends, and I'm incredibly grateful for each of them."

Amanda Knight, President-Elect

"Joining AAEA has been one of the best things I've ever done for myself as an art educator! I initially joined looking for practical and useful professional development, which I've found an abundance of. But, more importantly, AAEA has connected me with a network of teachers across the state who freely share ideas and encouragement. Many of the connections I've made have turned into wonderful friendships with colleagues I can reach out to with questions anytime! If you're looking for solid resources and a wonderfully supportive community, AAEA has a place for you!"

Lacey Basgier, Visual Arts Competition of Alabama (VACA) Chair

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LETTER FROM THE



Being President of the Alabama Art Education Association is something I would have never imagined. At my core, I'm just an art teacher like so many of you. My days are filled with the familiar routines we all know so well: shivering through morning car line, lesson planning, guiding my K-2 students as they create beautiful artwork, and sometimes doing the unexpected tasks—like wiping snotty noses:). But through it all, my goal is simple: to give my very best to my students. And now, I carry that same commitment into serving AAEA. I am truly honored, humbled, and grateful for the opportunity to represent and support this incredible community of art educators.

As I reflected on what I wanted my focus to be during my term as president, I kept returning to one word: Engagement. More than anything, I want to encourage our members and board to become more deeply engaged with our organization and with one another. That's why my mission statement for this term is: ***"All In: All Members Engaged."***

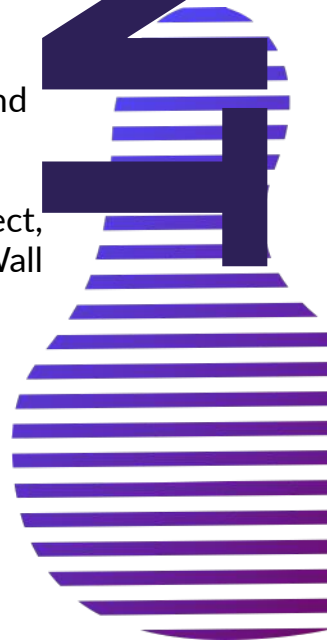
My goal is to foster a community where every member feels welcome, supported, and inspired to participate, whether through events, committees, leadership opportunities, or simple acts of connection. I hope each of us will be willing to step forward just a little bit more: maybe by reaching out to the art teacher who feels isolated, or by being brave enough to attend a regional meet-up or workshop for the first time.

We're all in this together. When we choose to engage, fully and wholeheartedly, we lift each other up and make our community stronger. Finally, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to each of you for the incredible work you do every single day. Your dedication is reflected in the remarkable growth of the arts across our state, and it does not go unnoticed. Thank you as well for choosing to be part of AAEA. Your commitment to this organization helps build a community of confident, empowered educators who are making a meaningful impact, both now and for years to come.

With deep appreciation and respect,
Rebecca Wall



PRESIDENT



GET TO KNOW YOUR BOARD



Amanda Knight- Executive Board President - Elect

Amanda Knight is an accomplished visual arts educator, educational leader, and advocate for arts education with more than a decade of experience teaching PreK-5 students at Pelham Oaks Elementary School in Pelham, Alabama. She has served as the school's Visual Arts Teacher since 2014, where she is recognized for cultivating creativity, student confidence, and a strong sense of community through arts-based instruction. Amanda's commitment to excellence in arts education has been recognized at the state level. In 2022, she was named Alabama's Elementary Art Educator of the Year by the Alabama Art Education Association (AAEA). She currently serves as President-Elect of the AAEA Board. From 2022 to 2026, Amanda served as the Birmingham Area Representative, planning professional development opportunities and networking events for area art educators. She also served as a Fall Conference Co-Chair in 2025, collaborating with Sarah Caroline Padgett and Brooklyn Scoggins. Additionally, Amanda was honored to serve on the Alabama Course of Study Arts Task Force for the 2024 Arts Course of Study. Her students have consistently earned recognition in the Alabama State Superintendent's Art Show, achieving multiple top placements in recent years. At Pelham Oaks Elementary, Amanda is deeply committed to mentoring educators and supporting youth leadership. She serves as an Ambassador Facilitator, Yearbook Representative, and Teacher Mentor. Amanda holds a Master of Education with P-12 Art Certification and a Bachelor's degree in Art from the University of Montevallo (GV!), where she was actively engaged in student government, philanthropy and campus programming. She is currently pursuing an Education Specialist (EdS) degree in TESOL at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Outside of her professional work, Amanda is married to her high school sweetheart, Ryon, and they have two daughters, Avery and Audrey. She coaches youth summer track, has served on her neighborhood HOA board, and remains dedicated to service and community engagement. Through teaching, leadership, and advocacy, Amanda continues to champion the transformative power of art in education.

aaea.pres.elect@gmail.com

Kerrie Pickle- Appointed

Region 5- Northern Region

Kerrie Pirkle serves as the North Alabama Art Representative for Area 5 with the Alabama Art Education Association. She is a secondary visual art teacher at Austin Junior High School within Decatur City Schools, where she works daily with 8th and 9th grade students to build creative confidence, critical thinking skills, and a lifelong appreciation for the arts. Residing in Walker County, she also represents the 4A area, providing opportunities to support and connect educators across multiple regions of North Alabama.

As an art educator, Pirkle advocates strongly for the vital role visual art plays in developing well-rounded learners and strengthening school communities. She believes that when art educators are connected, supported, and actively involved in the Alabama Art Education Association, their collective voice becomes stronger. In this role, her goal is to recruit and encourage art educators in these areas to join the organization and take advantage of the professional development, grants, networking, and leadership opportunities it offers.

Pirkle emphasizes that increased membership leads to greater participation in student competitions, stronger collaboration among educators, and greater local and statewide visibility for the arts. When more schools showcase student artwork and celebrate creative achievement, it builds public support for art programs and reinforces their value within schools and communities.

She is passionate about building relationships, sharing resources, and advocating for equitable access to quality art education. Pirkle looks forward to working with educators across Areas 5 and 4A to strengthen art education in North Alabama and ensure students' creativity is seen, valued, and celebrated.



aaea.vaca5@gmail.com

VACA 2026

VIRTUAL ART COMPETITION OF ALABAMA 2026 WINNERS

Pre K- 2nd Grades

- 1st Place: J Boykin, "Up Up & Away"
1st Grade, Academy for Academics & Arts
2nd Place: S. Thomas, "The Seacuterie Board"
2nd Grade, Bayside Academy
3rd Place: G. Smith, "Hidden in the Green"
1st Grade, Bayside Academy
Honorable Mention: H. McKinley, "Untitled"
2nd Grade, St. Paul's Episcopal School



3rd & 4th Grades

- 1st Place: F. Rauthsmith
"Cahaba Lily and Darter Fish"
4th Grade, Alabama Waldorf School
2nd Place: M. Loveless, "Dino Dance"
4th Grade, Creekside Elementary School
3rd Place: M. Braud
"Game Fish of Alabama"
4th Grade, Lee-Scott Academy
Honorable Mention: K. Parker
"Tiger Queen", 3rd Grade
Academy for Academics & Arts



5th & 6th Grades

- 1st Place: S. Kimbugwe, "Colorful Climber"
5th Grade, Academy for Academics & Arts
2nd Place: J. Tindle, "Beeutiful Bouquet"
6th Grade, St. Paul's Episcopal School
3rd Place: J. Shan, "Self Portrait"
5th Grade, Creekside Elementary School
Honorable Mention: C. Cahill
"Camp" 6th Grade
Guntersville Middle School



To see the works in detail and all the entries for this year's contest, please visit myaaea.org/vaca

MORE WINNERS



7th - 9th Grades

1st Place: A. Agato, "Untitled"
8th Grade, Barton Academy
2nd Place: F. Conte, "Peace"
9th Grade, Austin Junior High School
3rd Place: E. Determann, "The
Watcher" 9th Grade, Fairhope HS
Honorable Mention: O. Fonesca,
"Shaped by Life's Perspective"
9th Grade, Fairhope High School



10th & 11th Grades

1st Place: P. Clinard, "Girls' Trip"
11th Grade, Lee-Scott Academy
2nd Place: E. Lopez, "Ahnika"
11th Grade, James Clemens HS
3rd Place: R. Benton, "Still Life in
Silver" 11th Grade, Auburn HS
Honorable Mention: M. Pham
"The Market"
10th Grade, Florence High School



12th Grade

1 Place: C. Marlin, "Brendan"
12th Grade, James Clemens HS
2 Place: D. Hoang, "Exquisite
Imperviousness"
12th Grade, Auburn High School
3 Place: G. Snell, "Untitled"
12th Grade, Bayside Academy
Honorable Mention: H. Winter,
"Sanctuary"
12th Grade
Briarwood Christian School



Best of Show

C. Marlin, "Brendan"
12th Grade
James Clemens High School

ADVOCATING

For Your Visual Arts Program: A Professional Guide for Teachers

by Natalie Roig-McKnight

Advocating for your Visual Arts program is not about asking for more materials or additional space; it is about clearly communicating the academic value, cultural impact, and student growth that occur in your classroom every day. As a Visual Arts educator, you provide students with opportunities to think critically, solve complex problems, communicate visually, and develop persistence through process. Effective advocacy ensures that administrators understand that your program is not an "extra," but an essential component of a well-rounded education.

Your Message

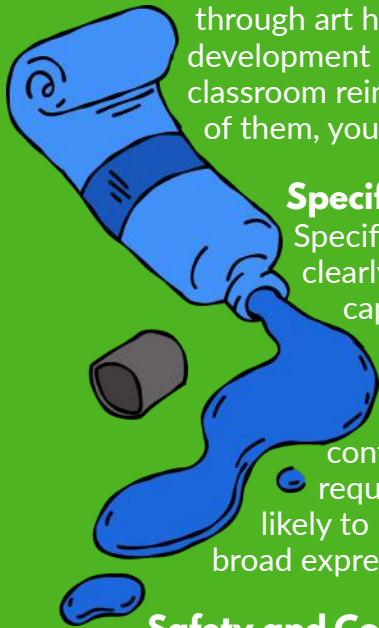
The first step in advocacy is grounding your message in evidence rather than emotion. Administrators are responsible for making decisions based on student achievement, safety, enrollment, compliance, and alignment with district priorities. Come prepared with enrollment trends, examples of standards-based assessments, portfolio growth over time, exhibition participation, interdisciplinary projects, and student testimonials. When you shift the conversation from "We need more supplies" to "Our enrollment has grown by 22%, and students are producing portfolio-quality work aligned to state standards," you position your request within the framework of student impact and accountability. It is equally important to align your advocacy with district and school goals. Study your district's strategic plan, academic priorities, and equity initiatives. Visual Arts education supports literacy through critique and artist statements, strengthens mathematical reasoning through proportion and measurement, enhances historical understanding through art history, and builds college and career readiness through portfolio development and creative industry pathways. When you articulate how your classroom reinforces district objectives, rather than operating independently of them, you become a partner in advancing the broader mission.

Specificity

Specificity strengthens credibility. Instead of making general requests, clearly outline what is needed and why. If class sizes exceed safe capacity due to equipment and storage limitations, document those numbers. If outdated tools pose safety concerns, provide manufacturer recommendations and replacement timelines. If students require access to digital media tools to meet contemporary art standards, connect the request to curriculum requirements and workforce relevance. Administrators are more likely to respond positively to clear, solution-oriented proposals than to broad expressions of need.

Safety and Compliance

Safety and compliance should also be part of your advocacy strategy. Visual Arts classrooms often include cutting tools, kilns, chemicals, printmaking equipment, and heavy materials. Proper ventilation, storage, and supervision ratios are not luxuries—they are safety requirements. Documenting these needs professionally communicates that your requests are rooted in student wellbeing and responsible instruction.



Visibility



Visibility is another powerful advocacy tool. Invite administrators to exhibitions, critiques, and studio days. Encourage them to observe the creative process in action, not just the final product. When leadership sees students engaged in problem-solving, reflection, and revision, they gain a clearer understanding of the rigor embedded in the arts. Regular communication, sharing photos of student work (when appropriate), competition results, scholarship achievements, or cross-curricular collaborations, helps maintain awareness and appreciation throughout the year.

Partnerships

Building partnerships strengthens your influence. Collaborate with English teachers on visual storytelling, with history teachers on cultural studies projects, or with career tech educators on design applications. When other departments can speak to the value of your program, advocacy becomes collective rather than isolated. Engaging families and community arts organizations also demonstrates that your classroom extends beyond the school walls and contributes to community culture.



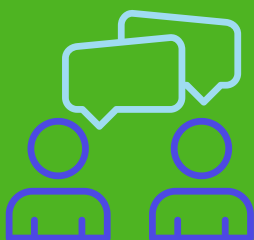
Timing matters

Budget conversations, master scheduling, and strategic planning cycles provide natural opportunities to advocate. Rather than waiting for a challenge to arise, proactively present a brief annual program overview that highlights enrollment, achievements, needs, and future goals. Consistent, professional communication builds trust and positions you as a leader within the building.

Students

Most importantly, center your advocacy on students. Share how art fosters a sense of belonging for students who may not find connection elsewhere. Highlight how the creative process builds resilience, focus, and confidence. Explain how portfolio development opens scholarship opportunities and post-secondary pathways. When the conversation consistently returns to student growth and opportunity, your advocacy reflects its true purpose.

Advocating for your Visual Arts program is an extension of your instructional leadership. It requires preparation, professionalism, alignment, and persistence. When you clearly communicate the rigor, relevance, and impact of your work, you help ensure that students continue to have access to high-quality visual arts experiences that enrich both their education and their lives.



Are you interested in writing for the Perspectives Newsletter? Submit your 300-500 word submission to Tricia Oliver, Newsletter Chair, at aaeanewsletter796@gmail.com by May 15th to be considered.

Around the State

Southern Region 1

I am honored to serve as Region 1 Representative for the next two years, and I am deeply grateful to Rikki Rhodes for the excellent work she has done and for making this transition so seamless.

In celebration of Youth Art Month, Region 1 will host a Student Art Show at USA Marx Library, March 6 through the closing reception on April 2. If you would like to participate, please sign up here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScldmQil-nBUuTQx8_JYMn30qaJMWXLXGmBqepEVCoja0vSCg/viewform?usp=dialog

One of my primary goals is to grow AAEA membership within our region and to offer at least two professional workshops each year, with a special focus on serving educators in our region's northern counties. If you have ideas for workshops, know an educator who would like to get involved, or see opportunities for growth in our region, I would love to hear from you at aaea.vaca1@gmail.com.

Happy artin',
Amanda

Southern Region 2

Greetings from AAEA Region 2 new representatives, Alicia Hames and Sarah Goodling! We'd LOVE to get in touch with at least ONE person in each of our 24 counties. We are working on some PD opportunities for late summer/early August and value your input for needs/suggestions. Check with us at aaea.Region2@gmail.com

In the Lee County area:

Auburn City Schools art teachers are busy with fun field trips such as the local Jule Collins Smith Museum by Woodland Pines K-2 students to study the quilt galleries and East Samford Middle school enjoyed a walking field trip to Pine Hill Cemetery to capture photographs combining history and art! ACS held their Superintendent Art Show and had one Drake Middle School student Amy Zhao place 2nd in the State Superintendent's Show.

All ACS school's art programs are participating in a rotating monthly art show at the Auburn Public Library.

Many of the elementary schools are preparing for their Spring school art shows and all schools are preparing for the ACS K-12 Annual Jan Dempsey Art Show this spring.

Lee Scott Academy is preparing for their local K-12 art show this spring and a state level competition soon following.

Opelika City Schools participated in the Superintendent Art Show in their district and had one high school student place 3rd in the State Superintendent's Show.

Around the State con't

Western Region 3

Spring is upon us and the Western Region can't wait for warm weather! Winter was busy and we did not have a get-together, but I am hoping to remedy that with a Spring Social event in April. Stay tuned for details! I can't wait to see many of you in Chicago for NAEA! Ready or not, here comes Alabama! - Molly Brook Threadgill

Central Region 4

I hope everyone is diving into their spring semester! It was great to gather with District 4 teachers at the BMA Educator Night on Feb 6th to view the Monet to Matisse exhibit. The exhibit will be in place until May 2026 and the BMA has many opportunities for school trips - so be sure to check it out! Congrats to all the students selected for the Superintendent Art Show including those from some of our District 4 schools such as Pelham Oaks and Edgewood Elementary! Also, shout out to Paige Belgaonkar of Greystone Elementary for an upcoming Mother's Day Art Lesson feature in the Bluff Park Reader. You can check out Paige's instructional resources video (Make Art With Heart) on TikTok, TPT, Pinterest and Instagram! Remember to take care of yourself in the busy spring season and enjoy the Youth Art Month celebrations!



Northern Region 5

The art teachers of Decatur City Schools were truly blessed to receive a private viewing and personal talk from Wendy Rodrigue, widow of the legendary George Rodrigue, at the Carnegie Visual Arts Center here in Decatur.

The current "Mardi Gras" exhibition includes several works painted during George's final months before he succumbed to cancer. Hearing Wendy share the intimate stories behind each piece was incredibly moving. Many of the paintings are from their personal collection and have never been displayed publicly, which made the experience even more special.

Wendy spoke with such warmth and authenticity. As she lovingly pronounced his name in her Louisiana accent — "Jarge" — she did exactly what she hoped to do: remove George from being a distant "myth" and bring him fully to life. She shared his optimism, his hope-filled spirit, and his constant celebration of Mardi Gras and Carnival through the vibrant colors and joyful presence of the Blue Dog.

It was more than an art viewing — it was a reminder of the heart behind the canvas. We left feeling closer to George Rodrigue and with an even deeper appreciation and love for his work.





What's the **WORD** from Grade Level Chairs?

Elementary Level Division:



Hello Elementary Art peeps, spring is approaching and we have some wonderful things in store. A survey has gone out to you in hopes to get some helpful advice from you as we plan out the next couple of events. There will be a Lesson Plan Swap at the end March (submissions due March 20), submitting one lesson plan gets you access to the other lessons submitted by your peers. We are also finalizing a date for our second Hybrid Mini Conference, PD day for this summer. More information to come. An email was sent out for those interested in presenting. Submissions are due March 30. We are looking forward to seeing everyone's art show pictures!!!

If you would like any more information about the events above or you would like to shout out a fabulous elementary art teacher, please email me @aaeaelem@gmail.com.

Brooklyn Scoggins, Elementary Division Chair

Middle Level Division:

Hello amazing middle school teachers! My name is Laura Wilkerson, and I am thrilled to introduce myself as your new middle school representative. I teach visual arts at Springville Middle School and have been inspiring and learning alongside students through art for nine years—four years of that with 7th and 8th graders.

Teaching middle school art is a joyful, chaotic, and transformative experience. When I began teaching middle school, I felt a tad lonely as I was the only middle school art teacher in my district. Joining AAEA allowed me to connect with wonderful art teachers like you, and it changed everything from my teaching approach to my classroom strategies, to dreams-turned-lesson-plans, and a storeroom-turned-creative-oasis.

My goal in this role is to provide what I have received to all of you: encouragement, resources, ideas, and community. Through this position, I would love to connect with our fellow middle school art educators and hear about what is happening in your classrooms or programs: the wins, challenges, exciting projects, and/or resources you have found valuable while also celebrating both your accomplishments and the accomplishments of the incredible students you teach!

If you are looking to share ideas, brainstorm, or if you are not yet on our email list for middle school art teachers, please reach out to join. Let us inspire each other! Laura Wilkerson, Middle Level Chair- aaeamiddleschoolrep@gmail.com



Secondary Level Division:



As I was typing my list of teachers who wanted to join our brand new AAEA Secondary Teachers Facebook page, I was reflecting on all the wonderful teachers I have met through AAEA over the past 34 years. Teachers who surrounded me as a first-time teacher with support, knowledge and encouragement. Teachers who have become dear lifelong friends. Teachers we have sadly lost over the years. Teachers who are now looking to me for guidance and advice. The magnitude of how AAEA has shaped me and continues to build into me is profound! I consider myself to be highly blessed! This organization is more than a professional group, it is family!

As Secondary Chair, my job is to take care of my Secondary Teachers. Competitions, Exhibitions, NAHS Chapters, YAM Celebrations, AP Courses, Lesson plans, Supplies, Budgets....ALL of the things Secondary. Please reach out to me if you would like to join our AAEA Secondary Teachers Facebook Group. This will be a place to nurture and support each other.

Felicia Olds- St. Paul's Episcopal School
aaeasecondarychair@gmail.com



What's the **WORD** from the Chairs?

Museum Division:

Spring is finally here, flowers are starting to pop up, and AAEA Museum Division members are shaking off the winter cold. We met in January to talk about the ups and downs in museum education, what is inspiring us recently, and shared the projects we are working on at our art museums. And with that, a few of us wanted to share some of the exciting programs at our museums that just might be appealing to AAEA members.

The Wiregrass Museum of Art is celebrating their 35th Anniversary Youth Art Month this year, so Janin Wise created four additional classes around the exhibition. These classes are offered for a variety of K-12 ages and topics range from Read A Little Art A Lot One Day to a Children and Teen Open Mic Night. As many of us are aware, literacy is a priority for Alabama curriculum, so art classes and workshops incorporating literacy skills is a great opportunity. That's not the only exciting thing happening at the WMA this spring. Alex Turner is kicking off a series of interesting topics for Studio 126: After School Art Program. This program was created just for teens to explore, create, and grow as artists. Scan the QR code to find these programs and more.

Over here at the Birmingham Museum of Art, I first want to thank so many AAEA members for coming to our Monet to Matisse: French Moderns Educator Night. It really filled my cup. I wanted to shout out two programs coming up at the BMA that will be unique and great opportunities for AAEA meetups. The evening of Thursday, March 6 we will host No Longer Silent: French Silent Films, where you can enjoy early French cinema brought to life through live music and community dialogue. Saturday, April 11, we are hosting our annual Holi celebration. Come to the BMA for Indian classical and Bollywood performances, art activities, tours, and to spend the afternoon throwing color while dancing to music spun by a Bollywood dj.

As a reminder, I am here for not just AAEA Museum Division members, but also all AAEA members. Shoot me a message for any art museum questions or ideas. My email address is aaea2museum@gmail.com. - Angie May



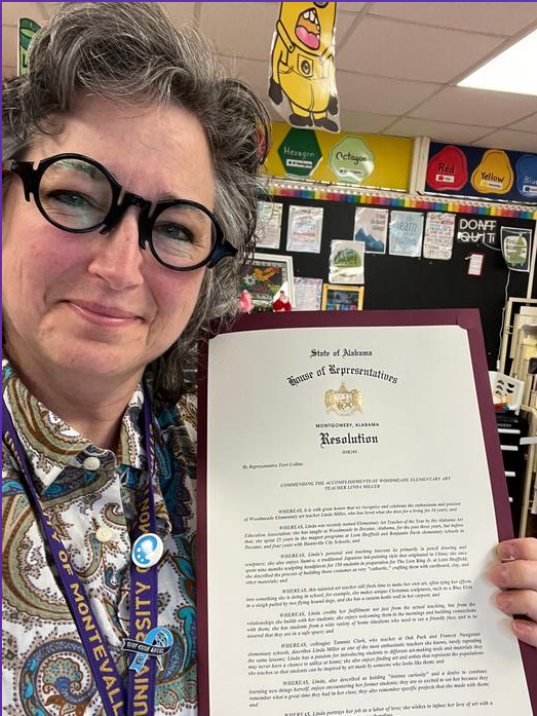
Wiregrass Museum of Art



ArtsBMA.org

Other NEWS

Alabama State Senate District 3 Author Orr and Representative Terri Collins, House District 8, Morgan County both declared a Formal Senate Proclamation, one Nationally and one at the State level, recognizing Linda Miller for being named the AAEA Elementary Art Teacher of the Year!



SWAG DESIGN CONTEST



Threadless Merchandise Sales
To Benefit the Louise B Marsh
Scholarship Fund

 **Deadline:**
May 10, 2026

Winners receive a
T-shirt and Sticker
with their winning
design

Your design will need to incorporate the
new AAEA logo. Links to the logos are in
the entry form heading. Designers must
be a current AAEA/NAEA member.



ENTER

Other NEWS

Color the Concepts!

2025-2026

The Economics Illustration Contest

Sponsored by



Illustration by a student from Nichols-Lawson Middle School



Teachers—Give your students the opportunity to learn and demonstrate their knowledge of economic concepts in a creative and fun way! Students may illustrate any economic concept in the Alabama Course of Study. **Winners are awarded in two divisions: K-5 and 6-8. The "Top Ten Student Winners" will receive a cash award.** Participating teachers will receive a curriculum resource for their classrooms and **a \$25 gift card if at least 20 student entries are submitted in the CTC competition!**

Suggested Economic Concepts

- Buyers and Sellers
- Opportunity Cost
- Specialization
- Goods vs. Services
- Budget
- Supply and Demand
- Free Market
- Private Property
- Spending and Saving
- Profit and Competition
- Using Natural, Capital, or Human Resources
- Trade
- Incentives
- Scarcity
- Credit
- Inflation
- Taxes
- Investing
- Circular Flow

Rules

Submission must be the student's original work!

- Submit only one entry per student.
- Let the picture tell the story—**AVOID LENGTHY TEXT. CORRECT SPELLING ONLY!**
- **Make sure student name, teacher name, school, and grade are on back of each illustration.**
- 8 1/2 X 11 paper in **LANDSCAPE** format required.
- Pictures should be in color.
- The **economic concept** should be written in large letters at the top of the illustration.
- **Do not reference public or private companies.**
- Students may use any of the economic concepts listed in the Alabama Course of Study.
- Do not fold entries.
- **Each teacher should submit one cover sheet with the set of classroom entries. Please include teacher name, email, grade level, school system, school name, school address, and phone number.**

ENTRIES MUST BE POSTMARKED BY THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2026
mail to: ACEE, 120 19th Street North, Suite 200-2521, Birmingham, AL 35203

Resources

For lesson plans, free materials, workshops and updates, visit www.EconAlabama.org.
 Any questions, email council@EconAlabama.org or call 205-528-9580

All entries become the property of the Alabama Council on Economic Education and may be used with names of entrants for publicity purposes. Submission of entry constitutes permission of the teacher, student, and parents. Color the Concepts! is used with the permission of the Illinois Council on Economic Education.

The Alabama Council on Economic Education (ACEE) invites you to give your students the opportunity to showcase their artistic creativity while making real-world connections using course of study standards! The Color the Concepts competition (Grades K-8) provides a unique opportunity for students to illustrate economic concepts and have their artwork published and distributed throughout Alabama. The Top Ten students and teachers win cash prizes. In addition, teachers receive \$25.00 for submitting at least 20 entries.

Please visit the website below to view previous winning illustrations. The attached brochure provides contest guidelines. All entries must be postmarked by April 16, 2025.

<https://www.econalabama.org/color-the-concepts.html>

We look forward to receiving 2025 Color the Concepts entries from your school!

Sincerely, Wanda McAbee

Other NEWS

#CreateConnectCare
CREATIVE VISIONS

Empower students to champion mental health and share their stories!

Educators play a vital role in student well-being. Your classrooms are often where young people begin to feel seen, heard, and understood—and creative expression can help students build self-awareness, empathy, and connection.

The #CreateConnectCare Challenge invites students ages 11–18 to share creative expressions that explore care, connection, and self-expression. It's an opportunity to reduce stigma, uplift youth voices, and create an open space for honest conversations about mental health.




Deadline to submit is March 31st, 2026!




- 1 Choose a Focus Area:** Students explore mental health resources and choose a focus area, such as awareness, stigma, connection, or self-care.
- 2 Create a Piece:** Students use literary, visual, performing, film/video, or digital arts to create an original work that expresses their ideas, emotions, and lived experiences.
- 3 Share:** Students submit their creative work to #CreateConnectCare. All participants will receive a digital #CreateConnectCare Certificate of Participation and be considered for the 2026 Awards.

How To Use #CreateConnectCare With Students:

#CreateConnectCare can be integrated into classrooms and youth development programming in several ways:



As a teacher-guided activity that aligns with existing curriculum across various subjects.



As a facilitator-administered activity in extracurricular or after-school programming.



As a self-guided activity that allows students to complete their projects on their own time.

#CreateConnectCare is an excellent opportunity for students to learn about mental health and to express themselves creatively. By encouraging your students to participate, you can help them to develop important life skills and to make a difference in their community.

Visit www.createconnectcare.org to learn more!


Young people today are navigating an overwhelming reality. As an educator, you are often the first to notice when a young person is struggling. As youth mental health challenges reach unprecedented levels, your role has never been more vital. By joining #CreateConnectCare, you become part of a network of educators who believe in the healing power of creativity and the importance of prioritizing student wellbeing. Launched by Creative Visions in 2023, #CreateConnectCare is a ready-to-use resource for youth mental health and well-being. The initiative provides tools to empower your students (ages 11-18) to share their stories, build empathy, and spark positive change through creative expression. By integrating this initiative into your curriculum, you can facilitate meaningful discussions, raise awareness, and inspire students to take creative action for their own well-being and that of their peers. The 2026 Challenge is open until March 31, 2026! Support your students in submitting – and celebrate their creative courage.



Free Teacher Resource

The Soul, Sound, & Voice: The Art of Jerry Pinkney Teacher Resource was created by a team of educators who combined their creativity and commitment to provide meaningful learning experiences for students through the art of Jerry Pinkney. All six lessons align with K–12 National Standards in social studies, music, art, and language arts..

SOUL, SOUND, AND VOICE
 THE ART OF JERRY PINKNEY



TEACHER RESOURCE

WOODMERE
THE ERIC CARLE MUSEUM OF PICTURE BOOK ART

Masterpiece MEMBER



Our newest spotlight article will shine a light on our long time members- why they joined AAEA and why they continue to be members of our amazing organization!

This spring edition will spotlight

SHARON CHRISTMAN

I moved to Birmingham from Pennsylvania as a newly certified art teacher, knowing no one. My first friend was another art teacher in the same school system. Rebecca Doremus, scooped me up and told me I had to attend a NAEA conference with her.

In 1980, we attended the NAEA conference in Atlanta, Georgia, and I was blown away by the huge number of art teachers from around the country. I came home with new ideas, and new friends. I attended the National conference each year and about year three Rebecca informed me there was also a local Alabama conference each fall.

WHAT?! It became my goal to attend both every year.

My school never helped me financial - I was only given a substitute - so I put away \$100 each month in savings to be sure I could attend.

In 1993, we opted to skip the NAEA Chicago conference and instead attended the International Society for Education through Art (INSEA) in Montreal, Canada.

WOW!! I'd highly recommend attending one.

I have been retired for over 20 years but continue as a NAEA/AAEA member. I have served on the board, presented at both National and State conferences and been honored with several awards (including National Retired Educator, 2012).

WHY NAEA/AAEA?

Because this is where my friends are - the people who understand me, the people I love to be with. I see my role shifting from a young teacher with several wonderful mentors, to retired and now serving as cheerleader to those fresh new teachers just starting out, and to those who have been teaching for years and just need an ear to listen.

Hope I'll see you in the fall in Birmingham for AAEA Conference!

BIG THANKS TO OUR VENDORS & SPONSORS



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Thanks for helping to make our conference

Amazing!

LESSON *plans*

SPRING ART SHOW: TIPS & TRICKS

We asked several AAEA members to offer ideas and tips for putting on a memorable art show at your school!

"I partner with Artomé for my shows, and that setup has been a great fit for my program. They handle the framing and gallery-style display, which instantly elevates the space. When students see their artwork presented professionally, it changes how they view their own work. Families feel like they're walking into a real exhibit, not just passing by artwork on cinderblock walls. That energy shift is powerful.

That said, this is just what works for me. Every school is different. Every community is different. You have to find the structure, format, and scale that fits your time, your support system, and your goals.

A few steady truths no matter the format: start earlier than you think you need to. Label everything clearly as you go. Promote the event often so families know it's coming. Pay attention to lighting and layout. Make it feel intentional. Communicate show details clearly, simply, and often.

Lean on your team! Administration support, coworkers, volunteers, even family behind the scenes — you'll need them. You will be surprised by how many are willing to step in and help you. Do not be afraid to lean on your school community for support.

At the end of the day, it's more than a fundraiser. It's a confidence builder for your students. However you run it, create a space where students feel seen and celebrated. That's the part that lasts." - [Jack Vest](#)



LESSON

plans **SPRING ART SHOW: TIPS & TRICKS Con't.**

I have organized art shows for elementary, middle, and district-level events. All of them have had their own challenges, but here are some things I've learned along the way.

Get Volunteers Involved

Ask for Help: Organize a team of volunteers—parents, other teachers, and even students—to help with tasks like setting up, hanging artwork, and hosting the event. In the past, I've asked local high schools for student help by offering volunteer hours for Key Club and Beta Club. PTO is also an excellent resource, and parents usually enjoy helping.

Create a System for Hanging Artwork

Use a Consistent Method: Choose an easy system for hanging artwork. I've used several different methods. I usually mount student work on railway board or construction paper. If it's a smaller show, I will mat the pieces. I label the works with adhesive labels and stick them to whichever material I've chosen for mounting. For elementary shows, I use bird-block netting and hang the artwork along it. For middle school, I had prints made for our art show that people could purchase as a fundraiser for our art department. I hung those prints with painter's tape. For matted works, I prefer using command strips or displaying them on tables with easels.

Plan the Layout: Consider grouping artwork by theme, style, or medium. I've taught at multiple schools and have done this in many ways. You have to decide what works best for you. One year, I hung all the artwork in one long hallway because we didn't want everyone scattered throughout the school. Another year, I hung the pieces outside each teacher's classroom so parents and students could find their work easily.

Pick a Show Theme (Optional)

Give the Show Focus: A theme can guide students' artwork and give the show a cohesive feel.

Give a hallway or room a theme: In my last art shows, I turned my classroom into a glow gallery. It was a huge hit.

Make Labels for the Artwork

Easy to Read: Make sure the text on the labels is clear, easy to read, and consistent. I use stick-on labels with the student's name, project/medium, the teacher's name, and grade (for elementary).

For middle school, I include a title if a student has one.

Pair the Art Show with a Fine Arts Night

Create a Larger Event: Hosting the art show alongside a fine arts night (music, drama, dance, etc.) attracts more attendees and creates a fuller arts experience. Last year, we paired the art show with our school talent show. Parents loved seeing the artwork along with the performances.

Cross-Promote: Encourage different art departments to collaborate—this can include performances, interactive stations, and even food or refreshments.

Interactive Activities: Add hands-on art stations where attendees can make their own art.

Incorporate an Auction or Sale

Raise Funds: You can auction or sell select pieces to raise money for future art programs or school initiatives.

Offer Extra Credit

Give Credit Where It's Due: Provide extra credit for attending the art show. This encourages students to show up and support their peers.

-Laura Wilkerson



Calendar of Events



NAEA WEBINARS

FREE for NAEA members; \$49 for nonmembers

Mindful Creativity in the Art Room: Simple Practices to Support Well-Being and Authentic Expression

Wednesday, May 13, 2026

Riding the Creative Wave: Visual Journaling Techniques to Spark Artmaking All Year Long

Wednesday, July 15, 2026

NAEA OPEN STUDIO CONVERSATION

NAEA Open Studio Conversation: Art Room Management 101

Thursday, March 26, 2026 | 7pm ET

New!



Curated Collections

NAEA is thrilled to introduce its Curated Collections, a dynamic new resource designed to provide members with easy access to topic-specific resources. Through Curated Collections, educators can explore relevant materials, best practices, and tools organized around key themes in art education.

Highlights include the Curriculum and Standards Collection, which helps educators seamlessly align lessons with state and national guidelines, and the Back-To-School Tips Collection, filled with strategies to start off the school year with confidence and creativity. Each collection is thoughtfully designed to deliver practical, up-to-date resources in a format that's both intuitive and ready to use, making it an invaluable resource for art educators at every level! - NAEA Website

Calendar of Events con't.



Alabama Arts Alliance
Alabama Arts Summit

RED MOUNTAIN THEATRE ARTS CAMPUS

ALABAMA ARTS SUMMIT 2026

APRIL 13-14

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MEMBERS GET
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VISIT [ALARTSALLIANCE.ORG](https://alartsalliance.org)

The Alabama Arts Alliance invites you to the 2026 Alabama Arts Summit at Red Mountain Theatre!

Join artists and educators from across Alabama for two days of artistic discovery and learning. Register TODAY!



2026 AAEA Call for Award Nominations Form

Nominate a deserving Art Educator today! Deadline April 15, 2026

Questions: Amanda Youngblood, AAEA Past President and Awards Chair, aaepastpres@gmail.com

Please note that Elected Board Members are NOT eligible to receive an award. There is also a five year period before a previous award winner is eligible to win in the same category as their previous award. Please review [AAEA Past Award Winners](#)

Award Winners and Eligible Nominees will be recognized at the AAEA Fall Conference Awards Dinner, Friday night, November 6, 2026 at the Birmingham Museum of Art. The Awards Dinner theme is "BMA Gala."

Nomination Reminders:

- Nominate an art educator actively involved with AAEA/NAEA (e.g., board service past or present, workshops, committee service, or convention participation).
- The nomination letter must address the nominee's AAEA/NAEA involvement; nominations submitted without a letter will not be accepted.
- We recommend contacting the nominee before submitting, as they will be notified and must complete additional steps after nomination.
- Review the [AWARDS RUBRIC](#) for guidance and talking points.
- NAEA Membership Numbers are required for both the nominator and nominee; forms submitted without membership numbers will not be accepted. Ask your nominee for their number prior to submission. Membership numbers can be found by logging into your [NAEA login](#)

List of Awards and Award Descriptions

- Elementary Art Educator of the Year
- Middle School Art Educator of the Year
- Secondary Art Educator of the Year
- Museum Art Educator of the Year
- Higher Education Art Educator of the Year
- Supervision /Administration Award
- Retired/Emeritus Art Educator of the Year (ideally retired for three years)
- New Professional Art Educator of the Year
- Pre-Service Art Educator of the Year
- Rising Stars Award for Outstanding Secondary Art Student interested in Art Education
- Outstanding Service Outside the Profession Award
- The Mac Arthur Goodwin Award for Distinguished Service within the Profession
- Marion Quin Dix Leadership Award
- Agent of Change in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Award
- Alabama Art Educator of the Year



AAEA AWARDS



Do you know an outstanding AAEA Member who deserves recognition for their dedication to arts education and AAEA?

The nominations for the 2026 AAEA Awards are now open!

[SUBMIT YOUR
NOMINATION HERE](#)

Deadline to submit nominations is April 15, 2026!

The Board

Executive Board

	Name	AAEA Email
President	Rebecca Wall	aaeapres@gmail.com
President-elect	Amanda Knight	aaea.pres.elect@gmail.com
Past-President	AmandaYoungblood	aaeapastpres@gmail.com
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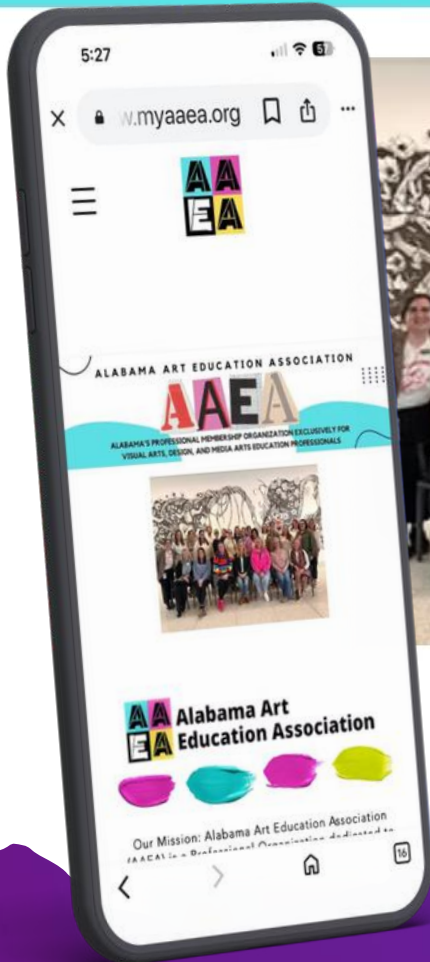
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ALABAMA ART EDUCATION ASSOCIATION



ALABAMA'S PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATION EXCLUSIVELY FOR VISUAL ARTS, DESIGN, AND MEDIA ARTS EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS



Have an idea for an article or a calendar event to share?

[Contact Us!](#)