

Working Toward EXCELLENCE



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[Alabama's 21st Century Schools Are Blazing Trails Through Cyberspace](#)

Using Classroom 2.0 techniques and tools, teachers in ABPC's project are helping students gain skills and abilities that will be highly valued in a world dominated by digital technologies.

[Growing 21st Century Teachers For 21st Century Classrooms](#)

Smart schools and districts are finding ways to accelerate the adoption of technology-infused teaching practices that address 21st Century skills.

[Schools Must Bridge the Digital Divide: Every Student Needs 21st Century Skills](#)

Educators in some high-needs Alabama schools declare their students will not be left behind in an era driven by technology and innovation.

[Classroom 2.0 Alabama Sampler](#)

The 40 schools in the ABPC 21st Century Learning project produced more than 100 web-based projects and activities, small and large. Here's a Digital Dozen representing some of their best work.

[Building 21st Century Schools Requires Top-to-Bottom School District Support](#)

In the Trussville City Schools, administrators, principals and teachers are building a joint commitment to new ways of teaching and learning.



Trussville superintendent's PUBLIC LETTER about 21st Century Teaching & Learning

Dear Citizens of Trussville:

Trussville City Schools are better than ever! However, the world is dramatically changing and it is our obligation and desire to prepare all students to learn at high levels so that they are prepared to live and work in an ever-changing world.



For all students to achieve at higher levels, teachers must have a clear understanding of content, and use creative and innovative ways to make learning meaningful and relevant for students. Therefore, our core business is to *design engaging and intellectually rich schoolwork that results in students learning content at high levels.*

Several key factors guide our work with students. First, our teachers work collaboratively to clearly define what students need to know and be able to do at each grade level and in each course. We do this so that students are spending their valuable time on the right content. Second, we also know that if the work that we provide students has **meaning and value** to them, they will persevere even when the work is difficult and thus learn at higher levels. Third, **profound learning** (beyond rote or superficial learning) occurs when students **apply** previous or newly acquired learning to new situations, **analyze** and **synthesize** data and information, and **evaluate** information and new learning for accuracy.

We are increasingly emphasizing mathematical reasoning and understanding to increase student confidence in mentally computing and solving complex mathematical problems with a variety of solutions. Truss City Schools' math teachers realize that **thinking mathematically requires more than memorizing the rules and procedures** to obtain the correct answer. Deep mathematical instruction equips students to understand numbers, patterns, and relationships to make sense of data and information in life and work.

Intense science instruction results in **inquiry-based learning** that builds on students' natural curiosity about how and why things work. Authentic science education is more than just reading a book and looking at pictures of experiments. Students-as-scientists required opportunities to collaborate with peers to explore, verify, extend, or discard various concepts and questions. Students conduct investigations by **handling materials and observing, measuring, and recording data**. Of equal importance is the ability to communicate research outcomes through a variety of methods, such as journals, reporting, drawing, graphing, and charting. Students experience authentic science instruction by making connections to previous knowledge and analyzing and synthesizing information with new

OTHER stories

[It's Spooky Out There](#)

How do educators balance Internet safety with the need to tap into the Web's powerful learning technology? Some Alabama schools and districts are getting proactive.

[Learning "Out of Africa"](#)

How do you teach global awareness? In this story, a group of excited and caring fourth graders create their own lesson plan.

[Purposeful Fun: Field Trips that Advance Learning](#)

This inner-city elementary school doesn't waste time with field trips. Instead, it uses them to accelerate language development and push students to analyze and synthesize their experiences in the real world.

[Student Discussions Beat the Clock](#)

Two innovative high school teachers team up to engage their students in a 24/7 conversation about contemporary events - all outside the school day.

[A School Day without Paper](#)

Teaching without textbooks and handouts? Why not? A fourth-grade teacher talks about her "paperless day" experiment.

[Broadcasting Authentic Learning](#)

Activities that promote higher-order thinking and 21st Century skills aren't always a part of the official curriculum. Just ask the kids at WPIN.

[Classroom 2.0 Glossary](#)

Wiki? Podcast? Social networking? Here are a few definitions that can help you decipher the jargon.

[Educating Kids for the Flat World: An Interview with Suzanne Freeman](#)

Suzanne Freeman, superintendent of the Trussville City Schools, is determined to make her school district a national leader in 21st Century learning.

[Alabama State Resources for](#)

knowledge.

Literacy involves reading, writing, and speaking. Reading and writing go hand-in-hand. Improving one improves the other. Reflective literacy instruction requires **daily reading and writing in a variety of formats and in each subject**. Authentic reading goes beyond just *calling words* and **seeks meaning and purpose within the words in works of fiction and non-fiction**. Effective strategies enable students to expand their vocabulary to comprehend at high levels, to express ideas, thoughts, and information, to synthesize and evaluate for accuracy, to draw conclusions, and to apply new knowledge to other situations.

The goal in the area of social sciences is for students to learn about various cultures, historical events, economic trends, current events, and patriotism. **Thoughtful social science instruction is more than memorizing dates and facts, and applies critical thinking to historical and contemporary cultural, political, and social issues and events to understand life experiences**. Substantive learning experiences equip students of every age to assume their civic responsibility, to improve the quality of life for others, and to provide leadership within and beyond their community.



We must prepare our students to live and work in the 21st Century and thus be able to learn and adapt to ever-changing technologies. Technology must be integral in all areas to make learning meaningful and engaging. Hence, we must teach students to conduct research using the internet and other sources so that they develop the skills of analyzing, integrating, and evaluating information for accuracy. Teachers and students must constantly develop their skills to use various forms of media to communicate, dialogue, and exchange information, thoughts, and ideas that enhance their learning. One way to do this is by utilizing social networking tools to enhance student and teacher learning through the creation or use of a blog (interactive website in which one can read comments posted by others and then post their comments for others to read), a wiki (collaborative website which allows readers to add, remove and/or edit the content of the website), or a podcast (multimedia on the internet which can be played back on mobile devices and/or a computer).

I hope this overview provides insight into how we are attempting to educate our students through core subject areas; however, we also value the arts, world languages, vocational education, physical education, and extra-curricular activities. Our promise is to provide students with the very best environment to develop their skills of leadership and innovation. We take seriously our responsibility for providing high quality and authentic learning opportunities for all of our students and we thank you for your strong support of Trussville Schools in this endeavor!

Sincerely yours,

Suzanne Freeman, Ph.D.
Superintendent
Trussville City Schools

(2006-07 school year)

[21st Century Learning](#)

The Alabama State Department of Education offers a fully array of resources and support services to advance 21st Century teaching and learning.