

Dear Mississippi Educators,

Welcome to a brand-new school year! What a unique profession to be in and start each year with a new perspective and fresh energy! We not only have this amazing opportunity to impact the lives of children of all ages, but we also get the opportunity to build upon our success from the previous year to propel even more achievement in the new year ahead.

At the end of last year Mississippi was proudly recognized as rising to number 30 in education in the nation from being number 48th in 2014. We have made stunning progress. This rise didn't just happen. We had educators, leaders, and support staff all collaborating and working tirelessly to attain this great recognition. We put in long hours, reflected on our shortcomings, and kept looking at the faces of our students and declaring that we could do better.

This year all of us have chosen to continue in this great adventure of education in some role. At the beginning of a new year, we stand surveying the mountain in front of us. We know that we will face limited resources, policy changes, public critique, challenging behaviors in students, and an assortment of demands. We are educators and when we step into our classroom or on our campuses we are stepping up to the challenge of the climb.

As we look towards the year ahead my hope is that we enter this adventure by intentionally choosing our mindsets that will guide our every step forward. When impossible tasks or situations arise, we fit the square peg into the round hole to create innovative solutions. When we look at our students, we see the great potential in who they will become and are determined to do whatever it takes to help them learn and grow. When we are tempted by negativity about education, we steadfastly protect our incredible field and passionately promote our success. When we are faced with differing opinions, we choose to find the "and" in order to welcome other perspectives.

Whether this is your 27th year or you are just joining our esteemed team of educators, welcome to the adventure. If you are an educator with years of wisdom and experience, lend your hard-earned wisdom, lead others, keep learning, and choose joy in the challenges. Your experience and long-standing dedication are a gift. If you are an educator just starting out, build on your strengths, be open to feedback, and choose to learn and grow. Your fresh energy, new ideas, and potential are what bring me hope for the future of education.

Educators, join me in my great pride for what we do every day. Join me in the pursuit of excellence for the sake of our state's children. Join me in being a positive force for our communities. Join me in both nurturing our people and propelling them towards growth. Join me in the climb, Mississippi!

Wishing you a joyful and successful year ahead,

Anita Wansley
Mississippi Administrator of the Year 2024