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## NEWS RELEASE

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### ***A+ Education Partnership program leads to major improvements in schools across Alabama Wells Fargo presents Alabama Best Practices Center with \$100,000***

**BIRMINGHAM** – Wells Fargo has given \$100,000 to the Alabama Best Practices Center, a division of A+ Education Partnership, to expand its Key Leaders Network in Alabama. The Key Leaders Network provides relevant and timely professional development to district and school leaders across the state.

Sherlene McDonald, principal of Tarrant Elementary School -- a high poverty school with more than 96% of their students living in poverty -- believes the professional development provided by the Alabama Best Practices Center played a key role in the school's outstanding success. Last year, 98% of the students met or exceeded standards in reading and 97% met or exceeded standards in math.

Alabama is one of the 48 states that adopted new standards to help students prepare academically for college and careers after high school graduation. The Key Leaders Network is focused on helping school leaders effectively implement the new standards and rigorous curriculum.

A report released in mid-September by Achieve, a nonprofit, bipartisan education reform organization, clearly supports the idea that "only faithful implementation [of the new standards] can improve student achievement." Therefore, the innovative and impactful professional development that the Key Leaders Network offers can go a long way in improving education.

"Alabama school and district leaders taking part in the Key Leaders Network are on the cutting edge of 21<sup>st</sup> century, student-centered learning as they work collaboratively to improve their schools," said Cathy Gassenheimer, Executive Vice President for the Alabama Best Practices Center. "Thanks to Wells Fargo's generous donation and additional support over the years, we have been able to double the number of our Key Leaders Network districts across Alabama."

The Key Leaders Network has 30 districts across Alabama; six in the Birmingham area, including Jefferson and Shelby County, Homewood City, Mountain Brook City, Bessemer City, and Tarrant City.

"Our schools face challenging times in today's world and school leaders need professional development to become more effective," said Paula Beck, Wells Fargo Southeast Community Affairs Manager.

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“Through our long-term investment in A + Education Partnership, we think the state will reap the benefits of more prepared students in the future. Helping eliminate achievement gap in K-12 public education continues to be one of Wells Fargo’s primary focus areas.”

#### **ABOUT ALABAMA BEST PRACTICES CENTER**

The Alabama Best Practices Center, a division of A+ Education Partnership, was founded in 1999 to fulfill a recommendation of the statewide Task Force on Teaching and Student Achievement. A place where educators can turn for assistance, inspiration and information, the Center’s purpose is to help teachers and administrators develop the **competence, commitment, and courage** to do whatever it takes to improve student learning. Along with the Key Leaders Network, the Center also facilitates collaboration and learning to educators through its Powerful Conversations Network, and to education leaders through it Superintendent Leaders Network. More information can be obtained from its website:

[www.bestpracticesdcenter.org](http://www.bestpracticesdcenter.org).

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