Education in Alabama is changing for the better. However, sometimes opinions of Alabama’s public schools are based on wrong or outdated information. It is your right to know the truth. The fact is, your involvement will determine the level of success we achieve.

If you have children in school, make sure they do their homework. Talk to their teachers and principals. Attend as many PTA meetings as you can. Talk to your children about school and encourage them to always do their best.

Even if you don’t have children in public schools, the quality of our state’s education system has an affect on every business, community, and individual in Alabama. There are ways for you to get involved. School board meetings are open to everyone. Visit schools near you. If you can, volunteer to read to children, help in the first aid room, or in the school’s library. And when you are asked to vote for local school support, get all the information you need to make an informed decision.

This is an exciting time for education in our state. Despite funding problems, Alabama schools continue to improve. Student achievement continues to climb. This year, our high school students faced the challenge of one of the nation’s toughest graduation requirements and passed with flying colors. Our program to improve literacy, the Alabama Reading Initiative, is being copied by other states. Dropout rates are low while our expectations for our students rise.

Our motto is higher standards mean brighter futures. These aren’t just words. The state Board of Education is committed to raising standards and improving education in Alabama.

We need your help.
Education Facts

Know the facts about K-12 public education improvements in Alabama.*

High Achievement

- In 2003, Alabama's college-bound students outscored their counterparts in neighboring states on the ACT test for the seventh consecutive year. Students in Alabama averaged a score of 20.3. The Southeast regional average is 20.5. (source: ACT data)
- A second national survey of public and private school seniors (31,448) took the American College Test (ACT), representing 7.9% of the class of 2003. They reported that Alabama students who took the ACT scored an average of 19.9, well above the national average of 19.6. (source: ACT data)
- In 2003, Alabama students taking the NAEP's Reading Assessment (450) once again scored above the national average for the fifth consecutive year. (source: The College Board)
- Alabama's NAEP test takers continue to outscore the national average in verbal and math scores. Alabama average verbal score is 540 and 552 in math. National averages are 507 verbal and 510 in math. (source: The College Board)
- Approximately two-thirds of Alabama high school students plan to continue their education after high school. (source: National Center for Education Statistics)
- When compared nationally, the state of Alabama ranks its K-12 educational spending at 45th and, with its results, (source: NAEBXRankings of the States and Stanford Achievement Test data)
- Schools participating in the Alabama Reading Initiative continually outscore on state and national exams. This is due in no small part to the effective efforts of the Reading Initiative Program to improve reading achievement in Alabama schools. (source: National Board for Professional Teaching Standards)
- For three years, outside evaluators have testified to the effectiveness of the Alabama Reading Initiative Program in raising schools test scores. It is a model for other states, including Massachusetts, Florida, and Connecticut.
- Math and science test scores of students attending Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative schools are higher in most cases than students enrolled in non-AMSI schools. (source: The Impact of AMSI on Student Academic Performance 2002-2003)
- Alabama has the highest graduation requirements in the United States. Public high school students are required to pass a minimum of 24 credits. This includes four years of mandatory English, mathematics, social studies, and science – eleven on the first four by curriculum. Students are tested on fundamental concepts of core courses using the Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE). It is designed to measure students' ability in core course work, including logic, and other problem-solving skills.
- Since the first four by curriculum was introduced by Alabama high school classrooms in 1996, average student achievement has increased every year.
- In 2003, over 50% of all high school seniors passed all four subjects (reading, language, math, and science) on the AHSGE by the end of the 12th grade.
- For the fifth consecutive year, Alabama students are among the top states in the nation with the most National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs). (source: National Board for Professional Teaching Standards)
- In 2003, 31,449 took the American College Test (ACT), representing 7.9% of the class of 2003, up two percentage points from last year's total of 30,955. (source: ACT data)
- In 2003, Alabama was the first state to annually issue report cards for schools, school systems, and the state at large, which gives letter grades from A to F for the nation's educational initiatives.
- At 13.2%, Alabama has the lowest projected dropout rate into the state's history and the lowest in the South. (source: National Center for Education Statistics)
- The Thomas Fordham Foundation ranked Alabama as one of the top five states for understanding achievement gaps and accountability in public education. (source: 1999 Annual report from Thomas Fordham Foundation)
- Alabama is the only state that holds teacher education institutions accountable for the on-the-job performance of their graduates. (source: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education)
- In 2003, students taking the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) once again scored above the national average for the 5th consecutive year. (source: The College Board)
- Ninety-four percent of Americans say higher academic standards are important for students to succeed in college or on the job. (source: The Impact of AMSI on Student Academic Performance 2002-2003)
- Math and science test scores of students attending Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSI) schools are higher in most cases than students enrolled in non-AMSI schools. (source: The Impact of AMSI on Student Academic Performance 2002-2003)
- Twenty-five percent of current teachers and educational employees have had their academic teaching credentials evaluated and reevaluated at least once. (source: Workforce 2020: Work and Education Facts)
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Standards and Accountability

- Test results for every public school and school system are being reported in a color-coded (red/yellow/green) manner. Student assessment data for the Stanford Achievement Test (Stanford 9), the Alabama Reading and Math Test, the Alabama High School Graduation Exam, the Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing for English (R, S, I, T), and the Alabama Alternate Assessment are now reported for gender, race, migrant status, special education status, English language proficiency, and economic level – based on free or paid lunch status.
- Alabama is one of only twenty-eight states that have or will have high school exit exams based on standards. Nine states with “minimum competency” exit exams are “upgrading” these tests to reflect 10th-grade standards or higher. (source: a 1999 American Federation of Teachers report, “Tracking Standards Matter”)
- Nearly four percent of Americans say higher academic standards are important for students to succeed in college or on the job. (source: a 1999 Council for Basic Education report, “Making Standards Matter”)
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- At 13.2%, Alabama has the lowest projected dropout rate into the state's history and the lowest in the South. (source: National Center for Education Statistics)
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- Alabama is the only state that holds teacher education institutions accountable for the on-the-job performance of their graduates. (source: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education)

Job-related

- Workers who have a record of high academic achievement, as measured by achievement test scores, are unemployed less and earn more than workers with lower scores. (source: National Center for Education in the Economy and the Employment: An Indicators Report)
- College graduates generally earn nearly twice as much as high school graduates and approximately 2.5 times more than high school dropouts. (source: U.S. Census Bureau's Educational Attainment in the United States, 2001)

* These are just a few education-related facts; there are many more. If a fact does not have a “source” listed, it has been verified by the Alabama Department of Education. (Revised July 2004)