Alabama’s standard of education must keep pace with increased global competition.

Today’s high school graduates are entering a world that demands greater in-depth knowledge, mastery of higher thinking skills, and adaptation to ever-changing technologies.

In other parts of the world, the need for advanced mathematics is being addressed, and Alabama students are beginning to face greater competition than ever in our global society.

We have to better prepare our students to graduate from high school and be prepared to succeed once in college, going directly to work, or both.

That’s why the Alabama State Board of Education created First Choice.

First Choice strives to enable every high school student to reach his/her full potential. It strengthens the curriculum for Alabama high schools and provides numerous safeguards to assist those who struggle academically. Such measures help guide students toward a quality education and obtaining a high school diploma.

First Choice was created to:
1. Increase the level of expectation and learning for Alabama high school students, tapping their utmost potential and better preparing them for more education, the work force, and life in the 21st Century.
2. Help those students who have successfully completed all of their curriculum requirements, but have been unable to pass all five sections of the Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE), complete high school with a recognized diploma.
3. Improve Alabama’s high school graduation rate and decrease the amount of high school drop outs by providing effective intervention through graduation coaches and academic flexibility that removes barriers between students and high school graduation.

Whether Alabama students pursue additional education after high school or take advantage of the many workforce opportunities in the computer, manufacturing, industry, health, or other fields – a solid educational foundation is essential.

Joseph B. Morton, State Superintendent of Education August 2008

No person shall be denied employment, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in any program or activity on the basis of disability, sex, race, religion, national origin, color, or age. Ref: Sec.1983, Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S.C., Title VI and VII, Civil Rights Act of 1964, Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Sec. 504, Age Discrimination in Employment Act, Equal Pay Act of 1963, Title IX Coordinator, P.O. Box 302101, Montgomery, Alabama 36130-2101 or call (334) 242-8444.

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ALABAMA’S “FIRST CHOICE” AND SUPPORTING PROGRAMS
There are two high school diploma options in Alabama.

These options include the Alabama High School Diploma and the Alabama Occupational Diploma. The Alabama High School Diploma is available with various endorsements:

### DIPLOMA OPTION 1: THE ALABAMA HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENDORSEMENT</th>
<th>REQUIREMENTS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Academic Endorsement (FIRST CHOICE)</td>
<td>Requires passing all standard coursework, including Algebra II w/Trig. and two foreign language credits, and passing 5/5 sections of the AHSGE. (Graduating Class of 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Career and Technical Endorsement</td>
<td>Requires passing the same coursework as the Advanced Academic Endorsement with the exception of foreign language and passing three career and technical courses (or two career and technical courses and another course related to the student’s career choice). In addition 5/5 sections of the AHSGE also must be passed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career and Technical Endorsement</td>
<td>Requires passing all standard coursework, passing three career and technical courses, and passing 5/5 sections of the AHSGE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Endorsement</td>
<td>Requires passing all standard coursework and passing 5/5 sections of the AHSGE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit-Based Endorsement</td>
<td>Requires passing all standard coursework and passing 3/5 sections of the AHSGE, including Reading and Mathematics. Beginning with the 9th-grade class of 2009-10, students must take and pass at least one career and technical course prior to graduation. Alabama Administrative Code Rule 290-3-1-.02(8)(g)(4) applies to this endorsement for students with disabilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All of the diplomas above are recognized as completion of state requirements as established by the State Board of Education. (May 2008)*

### DIPLOMA OPTION 2: THE ALABAMA OCCUPATIONAL DIPLOMA

The Alabama Occupational Diploma (AOD) may be required through the general education curriculum or an alternative that is aligned with the Alabama courses of study. The recipients of this diploma are students with some form of a learning disability. Those who receive the AOD must take the AHSGE but are not required to pass. The AOD is recognized by non-degreed certification programs and some community colleges.

Under First Choice, all students entering high school beginning with the 9th-grade class of 2009-2010, will be automatically enrolled to pursue the Advanced Academic Endorsement. Having the Advanced Academic Endorsement puts all students in position to strive for a higher standard.

For students who choose to opt out of the Advanced Academic Diploma Endorsement (First Choice), there are no consequences. The choice to opt out can be made at the end of any semester in any grade as long as the student and his or her parent(s) agree. Students who opt out of First Choice can pursue an Alabama High School Diploma with a Career and Technical Endorsement or the Alabama High School Diploma (no endorsement). For any of these options, the student must complete all coursework and pass all five sections of the AHSGE.

For the very small group of students who have not been successful at passing all five sections of the Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE), the Credit-Based Endorsement Diploma is available. This fully recognized high school diploma endorsement is available to those students who have completed all of their course work and passed three out of five sections of the AHSGE, including Reading and Mathematics.

Along with First Choice, new academic tools are being implemented to help guide students through their high school process with the most efficient use of time and ability.

- **CREDIT RECOVERY** allows students to prove they are knowledgeable on a segment of a course and receive course credit or earn promotion without retaking the entire course.

- **CREDIT ADVANCEMENT** allows students in-school and out-of-school educational opportunities to meet course requirements in nontraditional ways.

- **GRADUATION COACHES** serve as counselors for “at-risk” students, advising them on course work and other issues to keep them on task and increasing their odds for graduation.

- **PREPARING ALABAMA STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS** (PASS) is a comprehensive and broad-based initiative geared toward students in Grades 6-12 who are at risk of failure in school.

These new policies in Alabama education, together with the First Choice plan, are better preparing today’s youth for the opportunities and responsibilities of tomorrow.