Public Feedback Sought For Alabama College- and Career-Ready Standards

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) is asking for public input specifically related to the Alabama College- and Career Ready Standards (ACCRS) in an effort to maintain the highest level of rigor and challenge for the state’s K-12 public school students.

Please share this information with your education stakeholders by posting the link on your system’s website and social media pages. The purpose of the review is to engage the general public, parents, educators, business and industry, and civic leaders in a general review of the standards, and to increase the depth of understanding of the standards.

Now through the week of December 15, 2014, the public can go to the Standards Review Homepage and offer feedback on each standard for English Language Arts and Mathematics by grade. Each week, standards for each grade are available for review and comment. While the 4th Grade review is featured this week, participants can still access all available review forms by clicking here.

The standards in the application are arranged by subject and grade level. To respond to standards, participants must enter all required demographic information.

Participants will be able to review up to 20 standards per form; however, they will have the option of submitting an additional form if they want to review more standards.

At the conclusion of the public review, the feedback generated will go to the state Mathematics and English Language Arts Course of Study (COS) teams. The only comments that will be considered for action will be those of academic substance that are tied to a specific standard. The COS teams may then provide recommendations to the Alabama State Board of Education.

Survey of Non-Instructional Areas Can Help School Systems Set Benchmarks

The School Superintendents of Alabama (SSA) has teamed up with LEAN Frog to sponsor the first ever statewide survey of non-instructional areas of K-12 public schools in Alabama.

Designed to link practices to performance, the surveys address such areas as expenditures, processes, personnel levels, organizational structures and common practices. Schools that complete the surveys will have access to an exclusive white paper on each functional area outlining survey results that are suitable for benchmarking and identifying best practice opportunities.

The deadline for completing the surveys is Monday, December 1, 2014. Click here to view answers to Frequently Asked Questions about the surveys.

Mark Your Calendar: November 16-22 is American Education Week

American Education Week — November 17-21, 2014 — presents school systems with a wonderful opportunity to celebrate public education and honor individuals who are making a difference in ensuring that every child receives a quality education.

The weeklong celebration features a special observance each day of the week.

To help you plan these celebration days, the National Education Association has developed an online toolkit with background information, activity ideas, and tips for working with the media, as well as downloadable resources, templates, and promotional materials.

Resource: Alabama CCRS Messaging Toolkits

The Alabama GRIT website has a wealth of information that can help you as you develop talking points about the Alabama College- and Career-Ready Standards and the state’s new assessments. The latest addition to GRIT’s resource library is a Business Toolkit that outlines how the CCRS will help strengthen the state’s workforce.

• Monday, November 17: Kickoff Day
• Tuesday, November 18: Parent’s Day
• Wednesday, November 19: Education Support Professionals Day
• Thursday, November 20: Educator for a Day
• Friday, November 21: Substitute Educators Day
Best Practices

Be There Promotes Message that Parents Are Child’s Best Teacher

Judging from the emails and social media posts the Alabama State Department of Education received, schools across the state were successful in engaging parents and the community during Parental Involvement and Visitiation Month in October.

At this time of the year, schools are encouraged to invite parents to visit and learn how they can become partners in their child’s education. This year’s theme was Homes and Schools: Building Futures Together.

A great example of the work to engage parents is Montgomery County’s participation in the Be There Campaign. Be There is a research-based campaign that has been used around the country to increase parental involvement. A series of donated billboard space, radio and TV announcements, newspaper stories and placement of posters in schools, libraries, doctor’s offices, and other places where parents gather, will help to promote the message that parents are a child’s first and best teacher.

Recently, ALSDIE Education Specialist Dr. Carolyn Townsend and MPS Public Information Manager Mona Davis appeared on the WSFA Alabama Live news program to discuss the Be There Campaign and the importance of ongoing, meaningful parental involvement.

Tools You Can Use:

Keep Your Favorite Blogs Organized

Are you an avid reader of education-related blogs? To keep the blogs you read organized, try using a tool like Pocket to save articles that you see online and want to read for later. Or, check out Feedly, which allows you to store all of your favorite blogs and receive a notification when there are updates.

Also, consider visiting Teach100 to see a daily ranking of the top 100 education blogs. It’s a good way to stay up-to-date with what people are talking about in the education sector.

Resource:

Communication E-Kit for Superintendents

Superintendents are responsible for all aspects of a school system, and that includes how the district listens to and shares its community. In this free, downloadable e-kit from the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA), superintendents can quickly pereuse tips to ensure their district is at the forefront of successful communication.

The toolkit provides a variety of practical tips, including learning how to defend the need for public relations, how to find the right school PR practitioner, and how to use the public relations function to help support learning and instruction.

Tip of the Month:

5 Ways to Maximize Your Brand Presence on Instagram

With more than 55 million photos shared daily and almost 9,000 likes happening each second, Instagram is among the most engaging social networks and changing the way that brands are engage with their consumers and influencing their purchasing decisions, according to Ali Lundberg of J Public Relations.

Here are some tips and tricks Lundberg shared on PRSA’s ComPrehension Blog to help you get the most out of your Instagram social strategy:

1. Use hashtags: Grow your followers by researching relevant, popular hashtags and engage with photos from anyone already sharing about your brand. You’ll also want to create a dedicated hashtag for your brand and include it in all marketing materials to encourage other users to tag you. Make sure you check hashtags before you adopt your permanent one to ensure it’s not already being associated with another meaning.

2. Value picture quality over quantity: Not all pictures garner the same amount of engagement. Interesting angles, weird perspectives, bright colors and high quality images will always perform better. Consider utilizing a camera with Wi-Fi to take a higher quality photo and import into Instagram, instantly making your photos stand out from the crowd. Also, spend some time playing with different filters and editing tools within the app to perfect the picture before sharing.

3. Captions matter: Sometimes a less than perfect photo can be salvaged by a creative caption. The key is to keep captions fun and short and steer away from anything that could be misinterpreted as marketing copy. Since users are scrolling through these images on their phones you want to make the caption easily digestible.

4. Identify influencers: Both locally and industry wide, you can find influencers who have many followers, so you’ll want to know who these people are and work to build a relationship with them. Engage with their pictures, follow their followers, and closely monitor their content to see what you can learn from them.

5. Watch frequency: It’s important to remember that ultimately the average user is using the app to see photos from their friends and family. As a brand, you want to walk the fine line of staying top of mind without over-running their streams. A good rule of thumb is 1 post a day (2 at most) to maximize engagement.

Alabama School Public Relations Association Seeking New Members

The Alabama School Public Relations Association is a statewide coalition of professional school communicators. Members come from various organizations including local school systems and professional state-level education organizations.

ALSPRA is a chapter affiliate of the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA).

ALSPRA’s purposes and objectives include serving the citizenry of Alabama by promoting the understanding of the goals, aims, accomplishments and needs of public schools within the state; and providing professional development for its members.

Learn more about ALSPRA and the benefits of membership here!

Save the Date:

ALSPRA Winter Meeting Set for December 12

Speaking of ALSPRA, make plans to attend the Winter Meeting on December 12, 2014. The meeting will take place at one of Huntsville most exciting attractions – the U.S. Space and Rocket Center! As always, attendees will receive great information about how to promote the best of public schools. More details to come soon!