

Alabama Education News

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Graduation Rate Increases to 86%

PLAN 2020

Increasing the Graduation Rate



Alabama's Graduation Rate Hits Unprecedented Heights

*Alabama Department of Education Announces **86 Percent** Graduation Rate Years Ahead of Schedule*

Four years ahead of the predicted schedule, the [Alabama State Department of Education](#) announces the high school graduation rate in Alabama has risen to a new record high – 86 percent. In accordance with PLAN 2020, the state's plan for public education reform, the state ambitiously expected to reach a graduation rate of 86 percent by 2018. One of the plan's primary goals is to reach a graduation rate of 90 percent by the year 2020. For every one percent increase in the graduation rate, approximately 600 additional students graduate from high school. The graduation rate has increased from 72 percent in 2011, to 75 percent in 2012, to 80 percent in 2013, rounding out at 86 percent in 2014.

State Superintendent of Education Tommy Bice said the news of Alabama surpassing its previous record-breaking graduation rate of 80 percent, is further validation that teachers and students are working harder than ever.

"We are absolutely delighted to see the graduation rate making these kinds of unprecedented gains. It is the result of teachers focusing on identifying the specific needs of students, removing barriers to learning, and helping students meet their goals."

"Also, students are taking responsibility for their own academic success and putting in the hard work that is required to graduate from high school," Bice said. "In an era of more rigorous academic standards, greater accountability, and higher expectations of our teachers and students, Alabama educators and the students they serve continue to demonstrate what steadfast resolve and hard work garners."

Bice said increasing the graduation rate to 90 percent by the year 2020 is a goal that will not only keep youth on the path to becoming college- and career-ready, but will be an economic boon for the state as well.

A [recent report](#) commissioned by the [Business Education Alliance](#), an independent organization, showed that reaching a 90 percent graduation rate by 2020 would have an economic impact on the state of \$430 million greater that year than if the graduation rate remained at its current level.

In fact, each year Alabama sustains the 90 percent graduation rate, each class of graduates would be 5,643 larger, with 3,564 of them going into the workforce, resulting in a net addition of 1,167 more people employed. Each class graduating at 90 percent

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Best Practices: Promoting Perfect Attendance

Kesia Smith, the guidance counselor at the School of Discovery, Selma City Schools, wrote a grant sponsored through Walmart to buy prizes to give to students for having perfect attendance.

Smith came up with the idea during September, which the Alabama State Department of Education recognizes as Attendance Awareness Month.

But knowing the impact school attendance has on a student's success, both behaviorally and academically, Smith decided to extend her efforts beyond September.

Each month, students who have not been absent, tardy or checked out have their names placed in a basket. At the end of the month, three names are drawn for a prize. The first name selected is given the grand prize, and the two other students are given a monetary donation from different community sponsors.

At the end of the semester, all students who have maintained perfect attendance will get an opportunity to participate in a pizza party or ice cream party. Smith said parental involvement is also key to making the incentive program a success.



Applications Being Accepted for Summer 2015 Holocaust Education Scholarships

The Birmingham Holocaust Education Center is now accepting applications for the BHEC 2015 Scholarship Program.

The Brenda and Fred Friedman Teacher Scholarships are available to teachers attending specific scholarships during summer 2015 (a listing is available [here](#)).

Applications are open to Birmingham-area teachers only until December 22, 2014; after this date, applications will open to teachers from throughout Alabama.



Two scholarships are also available for middle or high school Social Studies or English teachers for the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous summer institute. This is an advanced study program, and teachers must have taught for at least five years; be more than four years from retirement; currently teach the Holocaust in the classroom; and have completed at least one Holocaust-related professional development program.

The summer scholarships cover 100% of registration fees, travel, lodging and per diem as determined by the BHEC. Recipients are expected to include Holocaust studies in their classroom curriculum for a minimum of three years.

The application deadline is January 16, 2015. For more information, or to apply, click [here](#).

ACCRS Standards of the Week

Feel free to promote on your website, newsletter, and social media sites! [Here's the link](#) to the page for all ACCRS Standard of the Week images.



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Keynote Speaker: Denise Trimm

*Mountain Brook High School
3650 Bethune Drive
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COST: \$45, includes light
breakfast, lunch, conference, Six
hours of PD credit, and ACTE

Annual Membership Dues
Contact/Info: Katie Ray
rayk@mtnbrook.k12.al.us

Saturday
February 21, 2015
8:30-3:30

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- 2-Day Initial Training
- 2-Day Immersion in Talents Unlimited Demonstration Site
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For More Information: Kelly Lomax, Talents Unlimited Supervisor
251.221.5178 ■ klomax@mcpss.com
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**Location: Mobile County Public
School System Central Office Campus**

Conference Registration:

Early Bird (12/31/14) Full Conference \$699.00

Full Conference: \$799.00

Day 1 and 2 Initial Training: \$350.00

Day 3 and 4 Immersion: \$350.00*

Day 5: Technical Assistance: \$150.00*

*For qualified educators who have
received TU initial training

Lunch will be provided each day.

Administrator is FREE with five-person teams!

Conference Rates available at

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Please contact Stan Thomas at 334.271.5330 or stthomas@asf.net to make a reservation.

Student tickets are \$16 to \$18.



KING LEAR

April 7, 9, 16, 17, 22, 24

Recommended for 9th - 12th grade



The Importance of Being

EARNEST

April 28, 29, 30

Recommended for 7th - 12th grade

Copies of 2015 African American History Calendar Still Available

The **2015 edition** of the Alabama Africa American History Calendar highlights social justice advocates, medical pioneers, artists, athletes and military heroes whose contributions have made a lasting impact on Alabama and beyond.

The Alabama State Department of Education and AT&T have once again teamed up for the publication, which was created to identify role models for youth and honor notable African American achievers with ties to Alabama.

The calendar is distributed to schools across the state as a resource tool for educators and students. Previous editions are accessible [online](#), as are links to additional helpful [study materials](#).

To learn more or to request a copy, contact Social Sciences Education Specialist Nettie D. Carson-Mullins at 334-353-1191 or ncarson-mullins@alsde.edu.



Ms. Gloria Merriman, Midfield City Schools, enjoying her AT&T Alabama African American Calendar.

Alabama's Graduation Rate Hits Unprecedented Heights

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would collectively earn \$68 million more than a class graduating at the most recent graduation rate of 80 percent.

Previously, varying methods of determining graduation rates from state to state made it difficult to determine how one state compared to another. However, in 2005, the National Governors' Association (NGA), consisting of all 50 governors, signed the Graduation Counts Compact, an initiative that implemented a common formula for calculating all states' high school graduation rates based on a four-year cohort. This made it possible for states to uniformly track their rates.

Despite the trajectory Alabama's graduation rate is on, Bice said it is important to remember this is not a time to rest on past laurels. As Alabama grows in the number of students graduating, it is equally important to make sure that every single graduate not only finishes high school, but does so with a quality education that will allow him or her to transition seamlessly into college without the need for remediation or into the workforce with a credentialed skill set.

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