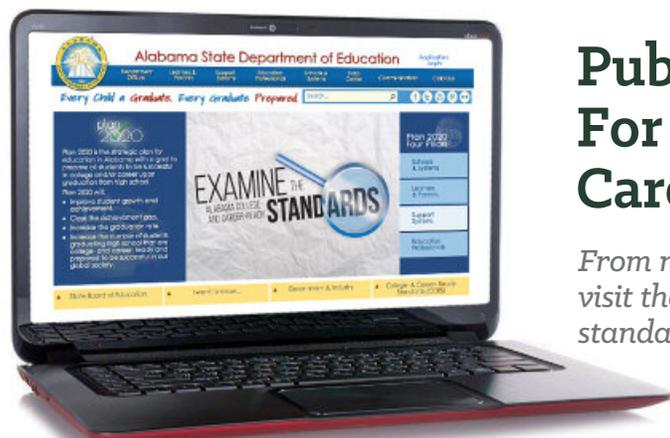


# Alabama Education News

THE ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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

From now through the week of December 15, 2014, the public can visit the [Standards Review Homepage](#) and offer feedback on each standard for English/Language Arts and Mathematics by grade.

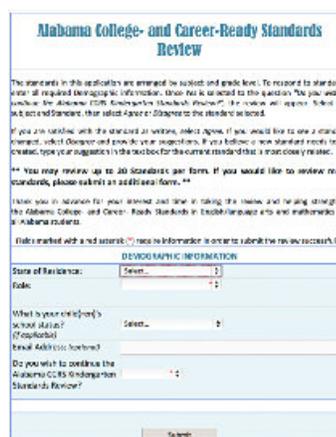
**The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE)** is asking for public input specifically related to the Alabama College- and Career-Ready Standards (CCRS) in an effort to maintain the highest level of rigor and challenge for the state's K-12 public school students.

From 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, beginning with Kindergarten.

**State Superintendent of Education Dr. Tommy Bice** said the goals of the [review](#) are 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.

"The [review](#) of the Alabama College- and Career-Ready Standards will help raise awareness of what the standards actually require students to learn and provide the Alabama State Department of Education with invaluable input on how the standards can be improved," Bice said. "Upon completion of the review, we will take the feedback we receive and strengthen the standards where needed as we work to continually ensure that all students graduate with the knowledge and skills they need for college and career."

The standards in the application are arranged by subject and grade level. To respond to standards,



[www.alsde.edu](http://www.alsde.edu)

participants must enter all required demographic information.

Review participants can select *Agree* if they are satisfied with the standard as written or *Disagree* if they would like to see a standard modified. If *Disagree* is selected, participants will be

able to provide suggestions for rewriting or changing the standard.

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.

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## Five Alabama Schools Recognized As 2014 Blue Ribbon Schools

[Five Alabama public schools](#) were recognized today based on their overall academic excellence or for making progress in improving student academic achievement levels. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recognized 337 national schools as 2014 Blue Ribbon Schools.

The USDE will honor approximately 287 public and 50 private schools at a recognition ceremony on November 10-11 in Washington, D.C. In its 32-year history, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program has bestowed this coveted award on nearly 7,900 of America's schools.

The [National Blue Ribbon Schools Program](#) honors public and private elementary, middle, and high schools where students either achieve very high learning standards or are making notable improvements in closing the achievement gap. The award affirms the hard work of students, educators, families, and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging content.

### Alabama 2014 Blue Ribbon Schools

System Name	School Name	Principal
Winfield City	Winfield Elementary School	Roy Gilbert Williams
Dothan City	Heard Magnet School	Peggy Maddox
Dothan City	Beverlye Magnet School	Maria Johnson
Tuscaloosa City	Tuscaloosa Magnet School - Elem.	Jean Burkhalter
Mountain Brook City	Mountain Brook Junior High School	William Donald Clayton

All schools are recognized in one of two performance categories based on all student scores, subgroup student scores, and graduation rates:

- **Exemplary High-Performing Schools** are among their state's highest performing schools as measured by state assessments or nationally normed tests. Student subgroup performance and high school graduation rates are also at the highest levels.
- **Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools** are among their state's highest performing schools in closing achievement gaps between a school's subgroups and all students over the past five years. Student subgroup performance and high school graduation rates for each subgroup are at high levels.

Specifically, for the 2013-2014 award year, the Department strengthened the focus of both categories' performance criteria around subgroups within a school and improving graduation rates for all students. A list of the 2014 National Blue Ribbon Schools is available [HERE](#).

## Alabama School Bus Safety Week

*National School Bus Safety Week is scheduled for October 20-24, 2014.*

**This special emphasis** is an active, continuing public education program designed to promote school bus safety. Alabama has a school bus safety record of which we can all be proud; however, maintaining this excellent record requires the combined efforts of the entire education family including school staff, students, parents, and other citizens. A resolution recognizing this very important week was approved by the Alabama State Board of Education for its meeting on October 8, 2014. The resolution is be posted on the ALSDE Web site.

During this week, the ALSDE encourages all schools to actively support activities and communities that will emphasize school bus safety and also recognize school bus drivers and other transportation personnel who help ensure that our children are transported safely. An activity booklet for School Bus Safety Week and other school bus safety information can be found on the Pupil Transportation Web site.



## Hundreds of High School Students Gather for 11th Annual Alabama Youth Council



**Nearly 800 high school students** from across the state gathered at the Montgomery Performing Arts Center recently to promote healthy behaviors among teens as part of the 11th Annual Alabama Youth Council (AYC).

The AYC is an off-shoot of the FOCUS Program, which promotes school and community partnerships for the prevention of adolescent risks behaviors and assists students in becoming active participants in the process. Approximately 250 high schools throughout the state have implemented a FOCUS course through the Health Education/Peer Helping elective curriculum or as an extra-curricular activity.

Alabama Secondary Teacher of the Year Chris Payne delivered opening remarks. Payne is a past Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) National President and current advisor for Dothan High School's SADD chapter, the largest in the state.

"As a teenager, it is often a struggle to do what is right," Payne told participants. "But you are not alone – you have peers sitting right next to you who are here to support and encourage you. I urge you to rise up to the challenge and be the best you that you can be!"

Renowned motivational speaker Kyle Scheele, who delivered the keynote address, encouraged the teenagers to make a difference in their classrooms, schools, communities, and, ultimately, the world.

"You must take ownership of the problems in your lives, assume leadership, and set the example for others to follow," Scheele said.

The AYC is a collaboration between FOCUS, the Alabama State Department of Education, the Alabama Department of Public Health, Blue Cross Blue Shield, and the Alabama Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. This year's theme was "We Are MAD (Making A Difference)."

## Alabama College Application Campaign Week

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

**The Alabama College Application Campaign Week** will be held November 3-7, 2014 at participating high schools. All high schools interested in participating are asked to complete a registration form to indicate their interest in joining **the Alabama College Application Campaign (ALCAC)** as a host site in 2014.

The ALCAC coordinator will follow up with your school upon receipt of a completed registration form to confirm your school's participation in the program.

### Responsibilities of Participating High Schools:

- Host a program during the school day that is open to any student interested
- Ensure that students are prepared to participate in the event
- Engage the local community, families, and others
- Create a college-going culture within the school
- Collect data as requested by the State Coordinator
- Follow up with students after the event to ensure applications submitted are complete

For questions about Alabama College Application Campaign Program, contact [Willietta Ellis Conner](mailto:Willietta.Ellis@alsde.edu), Education Specialist, Alabama State Department of Education at 334-353-1607.



334-353-1607.

## Flat Stanley Travels the World



**Students at the Learning Center** have multiple disabilities, but that doesn't stop them from connecting with students all across the United States and the world! This year is the 50th

anniversary of Flat Stanley. Teachers, Robin Payant and Lori Bush, at the Blount County Learning Center in Cleveland, Alabama (Principal, Mr. Dewon Farmer) have started the Flat Stanley Project with their classes. The teachers use the News 2 You Program, which is an online newspaper. It connects the classroom to the world with news stories that provide new information on reader-friendly themes. It is a specially designed curriculum for students with disabilities.

The Flat Stanley Project was started in 1995 by Dale Hubert and is meant to facilitate collaboration among students from across the world. Students color cut-outs of Flat Stanley to mail, email, tweet, and even post pics on Instagram! Students are learning the value of digital learning! Students in Ms. Robin's and Mrs. Lori's classes will mail their cut-outs to students across the country and world. It will be a year-long journey for the students and Flat Stanley!



## Alabama Students Continue to Show Gains in Participation and Success on AP Exams

**Alabama's continued commitment** to expand access to challenging course work for students across the state has once again resulted in an increase in the number of Alabama public school students who take and excel on Advanced Placement® (AP) exams according to data recently released by the College Board.

The number of participating students who took the test in the 2013-2014 school year was 22,515, a **13 percent gain** over the previous year. In addition, all minority groups rose in participation, with Mexican American students showing the largest rise in participation with 332 students, an increase of **25.8 percent more** than last year.

AP is a rigorous academic program that offers high school students the chance for college-level study in more than 30 courses in a wide variety of subject areas. Success on an AP exam is defined as a score of 3 or higher – a score research shows is indicative of college success and graduation. The typical student who receives a score of 3 or higher on two AP exams has the potential to save, on average, more than \$1,800 at a public four-year college in Alabama and \$3,900 at a private institution.



ALABAMA PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS' AP GAINS		
	2012-2013	2013-2014
<b>Total Number of Test Takers</b>	19,927	22,515
<b>Total Number of Exams Given</b>	36,126	41,167
<b>Number Scoring 3-5 on Exams</b>	13,654	14,710

MINORITY STUDENTS' PROGRESS			
		2012-2013	2013-2014
<b>African Americans</b>	<b>Test-Takers</b>	4,607	4,826
	<b>3-5 Exam Scores</b>	728	810
<b>Asian</b>	<b>Test-Takers</b>	930	1,035
	<b>3-5 Exam Scores</b>	592	646
<b>American Indian</b>	<b>Test-Takers</b>	190	216
	<b>3-5 Exam Scores</b>	66	70
<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Test-Takers</b>	601	686
	<b>3-5 Exam Scores</b>	240	259

Approximately 7.5 percent of Alabama's public high school 11th and 12th graders scored a 3 or higher on an AP exam in 2013-2014, **up from 2.8 percent a decade ago**, the report shows. In addition, 10.3 percent of high school juniors and seniors who scored a 3 or higher were from low-income households, compared to 1.9 percent in 2004.

A strong partnership between the Alabama State Department of Education and A+ College Ready offers schools multiple resources to encourage and maintain AP classes.

## ALSDE Teams Up With Regions Bank to Roll Out Civil Rights History DVD

On September 15, 1963, the world as we knew it changed forever. Dynamite blasted through the basement of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, killing four little girls and bringing the Civil Rights Movement to an international audience.

Fifty years later, Regions Bank hosted an esteemed panel to recount memories of the day; the struggle; and how Alabama, the U.S., and the world were impacted.

The forum was part of the city of Birmingham's commemoration of the Civil Rights Movement. Led by Dr. Condoleezza Rice, a Birmingham native and former U.S. Secretary of State, and moderated by *CBS This Morning* co-anchor and *O Magazine* editor-at large Gayle King, the result was a candid and provocative discussion.

That discussion and an accompanying study guide, *Beyond Suffering and Suffrage: The Past, Present and Future of International Civil and Human Rights*, are now [available to schools across Alabama](#). Teachers and administrators can [request a free copy](#) of the DVD and the study guide by contacting the Alabama State Department of Education's [Communication Division](#) at 334-242-9950.

*Beyond Suffering and Suffrage: The Past, Present and Future of International Civil and Human Rights* is divided into three sections: Tragedy in "Bombingham," Civil and Human Rights in America Today, and Education and a Better America. The study guide includes questions to accompany each segment that are intended to push the discussion beyond mere conversation of historical facts.

In the nearly 90-minute DVD, the panelists discuss the past, present, and future of Civil and Human Rights. In addition to Rice and King, also featured on the panel are:

- **Judge U.W. Clemon** – Clemon led the boycott of downtown Birmingham businesses in 1962 and became a foot soldier for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., during the Civil Rights Movement. In 1980, he became the state of Alabama's first black federal judge.
- **U.S. Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson** – Johnson, an 11-term congresswoman from Texas, is founder and co-chair of the Diversity and Innovation Caucus and of the House Historical Black Colleges and Universities Caucus. In 2010, she became the first black and female ranking member of the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology.
- **Doug Jones**, former U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Alabama – Jones, as U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Alabama, reopened the criminal case of the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church. As lead prosecutor, he brought closure to one of the most horrific acts of the Civil Rights Movement, successfully prosecuting two former members of the Ku Klux Klan for their role in the crime.



The 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years coincide with milestone commemorations for seminal events in Alabama and United States history, making the discussion featured in the DVD and other lessons centered around the Civil Rights Movement even more meaningful during this time. Among them are:

- **The 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964**, which abolished legal segregation. The 16th Street Baptist Church bombing, viewed as a critical turning point in the Civil Rights Movement, largely influenced the passage of that Act.
- **The 50th anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery March**, also known as "Bloody Sunday," which led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
- **The 60th anniversary of the start of the Montgomery Bus Boycott**, which resulted in a U.S. Supreme Court decision that declared Alabama and Montgomery laws requiring segregated buses to be unconstitutional.

For more information, or to request a free copy of the DVD and the study guide, contact the Alabama State Department of Education's Communication Division at 334-242-9950 or [rsmith@alsde.edu](mailto:rsmith@alsde.edu). Additional copies of the study guide may be downloaded [here](#).

## Bright Spot Spotlight: Houston County High School

*Editor's Note: Nine Alabama high schools have been identified as Bright Spot Schools. Alabama Education News will highlight each school, beginning with this month's spotlight on Houston County High School.*

**Houston County High School's mission** is to provide students with diverse educational opportunities to enable them to become lifelong learners and productive citizens. With strong leadership, a commitment to student success, and a focus on community engagement, Houston County High is doing just that.

The school is one of nine high schools that have been selected by the Alabama State Department of Education as a Bright Spot School, high-poverty schools that are beating the odds by achieving graduation rates that are higher than the state average of 80 percent.

In addition, Bright Spot Schools have low absenteeism (less than 5 percent of the total student population), low suspension rates (less than 5 percent of the total student population), and a school culture that supports student achievement.

Like most educators, teachers at Houston County High are invested in their students' education. School leaders encourage staff to take time out to ride the bus with their students to see where they live.

The goal of these "field trips" is to enable teachers to get a sense of the environment from which their students come, and in turn recognize that their

*Bright Spot Schools are high poverty schools that are beating the odds by achieving graduation rates that are higher than the state average of 80 percent*

jobs extend beyond just teaching in the classroom. Through both academic and emotional support, staff continually strive to encourage students by letting them know they can overcome adversity and achieve success through education. One of the ways teachers nurture that belief is through Houston County High's mentoring program. Each teacher "adopts" at least three students who they regularly meet with through freshman to senior years.

If a student becomes discouraged and reveals they are contemplating dropping out of high school, they are counseled not only by their mentor, but other teachers and district office personnel, including the superintendent. The school has had much success with this approach, which includes involving parents in the counseling sessions, as invariably there is a staff member who can encourage the student to stay in school.

Houston County High School has also seen results with a billboard campaign that was part of the school's Truancy Diversion Program. The campaign strategically placed billboards all over the county that incorporated a photo featuring the Houston County School System and Dothan City School System superintendents and the Houston County District Attorney urging students to be in school. In addition, the district attorney and district judges held town hall



meetings to create awareness and show support for the Truancy Diversion Program.

Another shining example of Houston County High School leadership providing opportunities for students to succeed is Hope School. Hope School is a nontraditional online school for students who are at risk of dropping out of school due to work schedules, teen pregnancy, sickness, or other family constraints.

Hope School is accredited, and the school system pays the enrollment fees for students enrolled in the school. Students enrolled in the program, which is staffed with a principal and math teacher, attend school half a day and work half a day. Hope School graduated 30 students last year. This program has been extremely helpful for students who would have otherwise dropped out of school, and it is credited with helping at-risk students to complete their high school education.



## Partnership Yields Half-Million Books for Alabama Students



**A half-million brand-new books** will soon be in the hands of children in Alabama schools and across the region, thanks to a partnership between the Alabama State Department of

Education, First Book, Montgomery Public Schools (MPS) and the business community.

More than 200,000 free books will be distributed from MPS to public schools, childcare centers, afterschool programs, and community organizations that work with underserved children. The goal is to increase access to high quality reading materials for children in high-poverty schools and communities.

According to the National Assessment for Educational Progress, children who score highly on reading achievement tests tend to have an abundance of books in public libraries, easy access to books in the community at large, and greater numbers of textbooks per student. In addition, the availability of reading materials in a child's home is a stronger predictor of later academic achievement than socioeconomic status.

"By partnering with First Book, our schools will be able to provide reading materials that will help our students improve literacy skills, spark creativity and imagination, and broaden their vocabularies," said MPS Superintendent Margaret Allen. "Books are fundamental in helping a child develop the skills they need to create their own best future. I hope this partnership will help us fill our school libraries and classroom shelves to capacity while fostering students' love of reading."

**State Superintendent Dr. Tommy Bice** said the collaboration was an important one for Alabama teachers, too. "We are supplying educators serving children in need with an easy-to-use, sustainable resource for free books and educational materials. That makes the important work they are doing for our students a little easier."

First Book is a national nonprofit organization that has



distributed more than 118 million books and educational resources donated by corporate sponsors and publishers to more than 100,000 programs and schools serving children from low-income families throughout the United States and Canada.

The partnership was made possible due to the efforts of local businessmen Greg Calhoun, CEO of Calhoun Enterprises, and Dr. Alfred Seawright, President and CEO of The Medical Place. The two worked with State Board of Education Vice President Ella Bell and MPS board member Mary Briers to bring First Book to Alabama, and then approached MPS to serve as First Book's regional book bank.

First Book staff and volunteers are filling nearly 1,000 requests for new books with an estimated retail value of \$4 million to schools and community organizations in Alabama and across the nation.

*Source: Montgomery Public Schools*



## Prudential Seeks Applicants for the 2015 Spirit of Community Awards

**Applications are now being accepted** for the 2015 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, the largest youth recognition program based exclusively on volunteer community service in the United States.

The program's goals are to applaud young people who already are making a positive difference in their towns and neighborhoods and to inspire others to think about how they might contribute to their communities.

For nearly two decades, more than 370,000 young Americans have participated in the program, which is sponsored by Prudential Financial and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). More than 100,000 students have been officially recognized for their volunteer efforts.

The process begins at the school level. After students fill out applications online and submit them to their principals, schools select their top youth volunteers. The top applicants receive the President's Volunteer Service



Award and are evaluated by a state-level judging panel, which selects the top middle-level and high school candidate in each state and the District of Columbia.

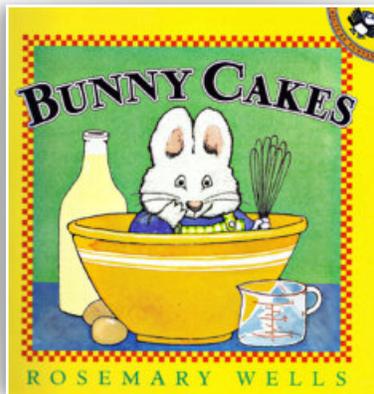
The online application form is available [HERE](#) and [HERE](#). Students must submit their application and accompanying materials to his/her principal or designated school official by November 4, 2014. The top youth volunteers and distinguished finalists in each state will be announced in February 2015.

The state winners will receive a \$1,000 award; an engraved silver medallion; and a trip to Washington, D.C., for the program's national recognition events.

## Educators and Students All Over the State Celebrate Reading

Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) staff and local educators are participating in Jumpstart's Read for the Record campaign, which mobilizes millions of people to celebrate literacy by participating in the largest shared reading experience.

**Join us on October 21, 2014**, as we read together the children's book *Bunny Cakes*, a comical story of sibling bonding and birthday shenanigans, by bestselling author and illustrator Rosemary Wells. The book will be read in Alabama classrooms and homes in an effort to put children first by shining a spotlight on the importance of high-quality early education.



## Schools Across the State Participate in International Walk to School Day

**Southlawn Elementary School** in Montgomery was one of several schools across the state that participated in International Walk to School Day this month.

International Walk to School Day is a global event that involves communities from more than 40 countries walking and biking to school on the same day. It began in 1997 as a one-day event.



Over time, this event has become part of a movement for year-round safe routes to school.

## Montevallo Elementary Students Hold Egg Drop Competition

**Gifted students from Montevallo Elementary School (MES)** participated in the Second Annual MES Egg Drop Competition! Students used engineering skills, the design process, creativity, and laws of physics to create their devices! The egg drop structures were judged on weight of the final product, engineering thought and creativity, ease of inserting the egg into the device, and survivability of the egg upon impact.

Students gathered at the side of the football field to watch as their devices were dropped from the top of the stadium onto the concrete below! Gifted teacher Mrs. Tolbert stated it is a joy to serve the students and families at MES, and it is a blessing to serve administrators who welcome activities involving innovation, creative and critical thinking, problem solving, and thinking out of the box. All students had a great time and are looking forward to the Third Annual MES Egg Drop Competition! MES is proud of its future engineers and problem solvers!

The administrators of MES include Principal, Dr. Allison Campbell and Assistant Principal, Haley Franks. The three-way tie winners for first place were: Pruitt Franks, Gabe Haynie, and Aiden Glenn. The second place winners were Olivia Gilbert and Kathryn Bragg. Judges this year were Amanda Harrison, Diane McKinnon, Dr. E. L. Duren, and Stephanie Herring.



## The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards Accepting Submissions



### The annual Scholastic Art & Writing

**Awards**, the nation's longest-running, most prestigious scholarship and recognition initiative for students in grades 7–12, is now open for submissions and invites all aspiring teen artists and writers to share their work. Over the past five years alone, the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers, the nonprofit presenter of the Awards, has received more than one million original works from public, private, and homeschooled students. The program provides top-winning artistic and literary teens with exhibition and publication opportunities, as well as access to millions of dollars in scholarships, while continuing its legacy of identifying the early promise of some of our nation's most exceptional visionaries.

To learn more about the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, visit [www.artandwriting.org](http://www.artandwriting.org).

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### AEN EDITORIAL STAFF

Managing Editor: Dr. Michael O. Sibley  
Contributing Editors: Ed Crenshaw | Erica S. Pippins  
Malissa Valdes-Hubert, APR  
Graphic Artist: Charles V. Creel

Contact **Alabama Education News**  
334-242-9950 (p) · 334-353-4682 (f)  
[aen@alsde.edu](mailto:aen@alsde.edu) (e) · [www.alsde.edu](http://www.alsde.edu) (w)

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