

ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

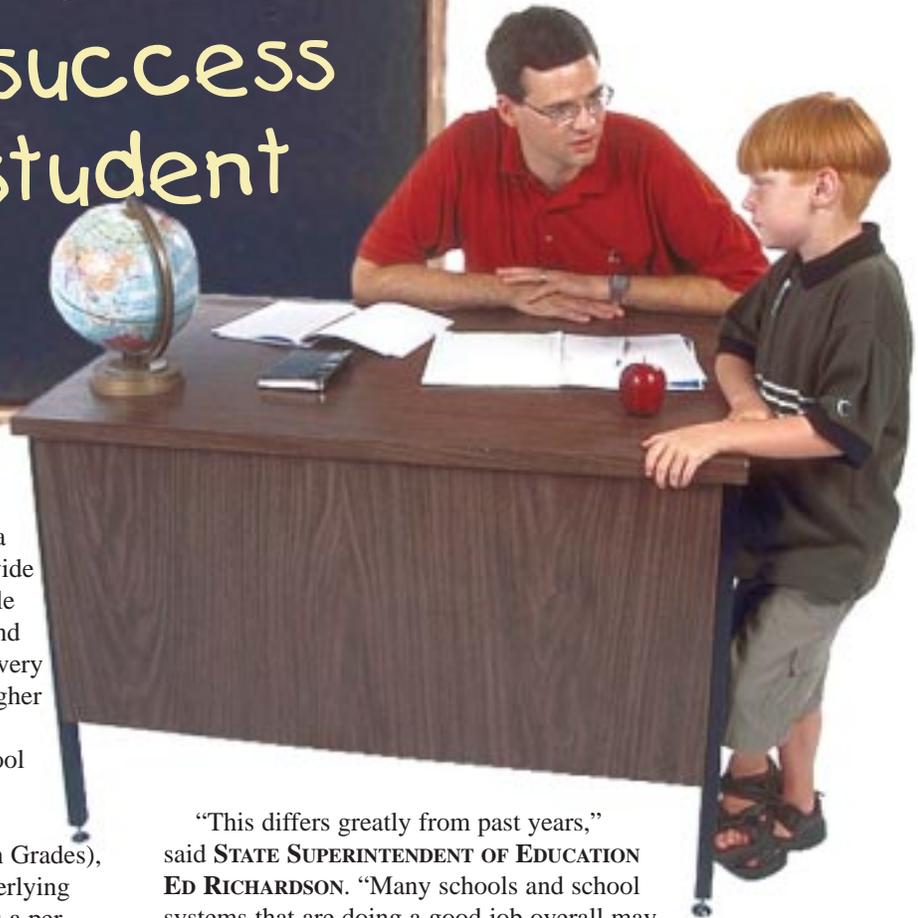
NEWS AND ISSUES IN ALABAMA PUBLIC EDUCATION, K-12

SEPTEMBER 2003

WHAT'S INSIDE ...

- Disaggregated Data
- Teacher of the Year Message
- Statewide Parent Visitation Month
- Section Spotlight: Information Systems Services
- Professional Development & Awards

THE CHALLENGE: Academic success for every student



Results released in August by the Alabama Department of Education indicate statewide student test scores show some measurable increase, but a majority of Alabama schools still find themselves in need of improvement with helping every child in each required demographic group reach higher academic standards.

Assessments administered in the 2002-2003 school year included the *Stanford Achievement Test* (10th edition), *Alabama High School Graduation Exam*, *Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing* (5th and 7th Grades), and *Alabama Alternate Assessment*. Sadly, the underlying theme, common across many of the assessments, is a performance gap among students exists with respect to race and economic status, as well as those with disabilities.

For the second consecutive year, academic statistics were provided to schools in a disaggregated manner. In years past, data had been provided in terms of averages. Last year was the first time the data were provided using a breakdown of performance by demographics.

However, this year's report further utilizes the disaggregated data to determine each school's academic status. In 2002, a school's status was based on the performance of the entire student body. This year, schools and systems are measured by the performance of students in each of nine separate demographics. Additionally, as part of the last step in the state Department of Education's transition to the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) federal law, a school's academic status will reflect both the performance of the entire student body and indicate if there are any subgroups in need of improvement.

"This differs greatly from past years," said **STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION ED RICHARDSON**. "Many schools and school systems that are doing a good job overall may be on a Watch or Priority list because one subgroup fails to meet standards. While some may feel that seems excessive, it is at the heart of *No Child Left Behind*. Holding schools accountable for every student is the law, and will ultimately lead to improved student achievement."

All states are required to use nine separate demographic criteria in measuring the academic progress of public schools. For this reporting of academic status in Alabama, the status begins with the All Students category. In addition, the criteria are applied to eight subgroups of students: students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, free and reduced lunch (economically disadvantaged), and major racial/ethnic groups (American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian or Pacific Islander; Black, not Hispanic; Hispanic; and White, not Hispanic). For each assessment, the academic status can be Academic Clear, Academic Priority, or Academic Watch.

(Continued on Page 4)

A "BACK TO SCHOOL" MESSAGE FROM TAMMY RICKARD, ALABAMA'S TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Tammy Rickard, a ninth- and tenth-grade teacher at Spain Park High School in the Hoover City School System, is serving as an ambassador for public education and the teaching profession during the 2003-04 school year.

Once again, students and teachers are headed "Back to School." "Back to school" is a phrase that evokes a variety of responses. To retailers, it means promotional sales and hopes of increased revenues as students and parents shop for that perfect school wardrobe. For students, it means the end of summer vacation. For parents, it means the kids are not at home every day.



As a teacher, "Back to School" has always been a time of great anticipation for me. This year it is especially true as I send my oldest daughter to college and I begin my year as Alabama's Teacher of the Year.

"Back to School" is like New Year's Day for our profession as it is a time for a new beginning. We start all over again – new students, new colleagues, new challenges, and new opportunities. It is even a time for resolutions. I hear students tell me they are going to work harder this year. I hear teachers talk about how they will modify past procedures and methodologies. Even administrators commonly use the beginning of the school year to launch new policies.

As Alabama's Teacher of the Year, I am an advocate for quality teaching in every classroom in our state. As we think about the critical components necessary for student achievement in our schools, research overwhelmingly supports that the single factor having the greatest influence on a student's progress is the quality of that student's teacher. That places enormous responsibility on those of us who are in the classroom.

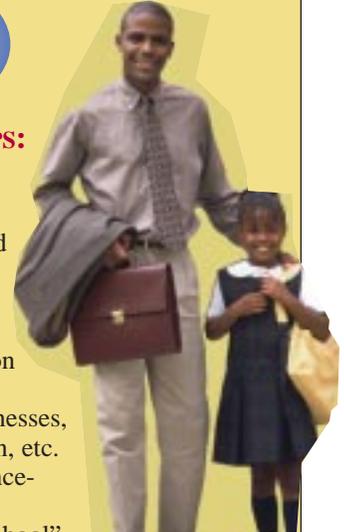
I would like to ask Alabama teachers to join me in making a "Back to School" resolution to provide every classroom in our state with a high-quality teacher. This requires a firm commitment from each of us to continually analyze, reflect upon, and improve our teaching practices.

Over 47,000 teachers are back in over 1,400 schools in Alabama this fall. There are many reasons, barriers, and excuses we could list for not providing our students with a high-quality education. However, Alabama students represent 731,501 reasons why we MUST be high-quality teachers – even in the most difficult of circumstances. Let us be resolved and committed to the task!

Tammy Rickard

OCTOBER – STATEWIDE PARENT VISITATION MONTH

October is Statewide Parent Visitation Month in Alabama public schools. The 2003 theme is Invest in Your Child's Future.



PARENT INVOLVEMENT TIPS:

- ✓ Plan, Plan, Plan.
- ✓ Form a planning committee, including faculty, parents, and community members.
- ✓ Include support staff (custodial, child nutrition, etc.) in planning and execution of events.
- ✓ Partner with PTA, PTO, businesses, civic groups, higher education, etc. Send "Save the Date" announcements EARLY.
- ✓ Celebrate "Lights on After School" on Oct. 9. [CLICK HERE](#).
- ✓ Celebrate Red Ribbon Week, Oct. 23-31.
- ✓ Hold a systemwide open house. Schedule parent-teacher conferences. Display student work.
- ✓ Vary hours of school events to accommodate working parents' schedules.
- ✓ Remember transportation and childcare needs to help more parents attend events.
- ✓ Open school libraries after school hours so students and their families can read together and use computers.
- ✓ Feature school successes and advertise future events. Distribute school information packets.
- ✓ Give updates on *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) and results of Sept. 9 referendum.
- ✓ Publicize school events at local malls, supermarkets, restaurants, pediatricians' offices, etc.
- ✓ Create a newsletter or calendar to send home schedule of events in October.
- ✓ Contact other schools for ideas. Be creative and have fun.
- ✓ Make provisions for non-English speaking parents.
- ✓ Remember media coverage before, during, and after events.
- ✓ Complete and return Statewide Parent Visitation Month survey to Alabama Department of Education as soon as possible following events.
- ✓ Start planning now for October 2004.

[CLICK HERE](#) to find a guidebook for Statewide Parent Visitation Month and other materials. For more information on Statewide Parent Visitation Month, [CLICK HERE](#) to contact Anne Graham, Communication, or call 334-242-9950.

Section Spotlight

INFORMATION SYSTEMS SERVICES

When it comes to compiling the massive amount of assessment data, the Alabama Department of Education is fortunate to have assistance from the qualified data technicians of the section of Information Systems Services (ISS).

This high-tech section, led by director **MARK DOKAS**, is responsible for all programming, technical, production control, and application development operations within the Department. Primary responsibilities include database management, software development, technical support, data management and analysis, functional analysis, and project management. Additional responsibilities involve development and maintenance of the State Department of Education's Web site, coordination of data systems services to school systems statewide, and report preparation and distribution in response to internal and external requests for information. Activities of this section include technical assistance, employee training, inventory and disposition of equipment, and equipment repair and maintenance.

"Given the vast amount of data collected, compiled, and analyzed from various sources, our staff has done an exemplary job of producing data and reports to support decisions affecting student achievement," explained Dokas. "For the first time ever, the Alabama

Department of Education has provided data by subgroup rather than as a whole, affording local school system staff the opportunity to track student achievement at a more detailed level, identifying achievement gaps among student populations."

The ISS section is positioning itself to better support the state Board of Education's goals and initiatives regarding accountability and student achievement at every level. 🍏



ALABAMA SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS NAMED FOURTH BEST PUBLIC SCHOOL IN AMERICA!

Newsweek magazine named the Alabama School of Fine Arts (ASFA) in downtown Birmingham the fourth best public school in the country in its June 2003 issue. The ranking is based on the number of high school seniors who take the Advanced Placement (AP) exam. ASFA has a higher percentage of seniors who take the AP exam each year compared to seniors at other public high schools across the country. The ranking was created by Newsweek's contributing writer Jay Mathews as an indicator of which schools across the country offer the greatest challenge to students.

The ranking marks the second time ASFA has made Newsweek's Top 10 list in three years. Newsweek named the school #10 in March 2000. Congratulations!

Perhaps the most important benefit of disaggregating – or breaking apart – student assessment data is that it provides a clearer picture of performance that is often missed by simply reporting averages. “This information is providing important detail allowing our teachers and administrators to make truly data-based decisions rather than having to rely on anecdotal information or perceptions,” said **DEPUTY STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION DR. JOE MORTON**. “These results will help our schools provide the programs each student needs to reach his or her potential. The problem lies in the lack of resources needed to meet these challenges. We must provide the resources necessary to every teacher so all children can learn at a higher level.”

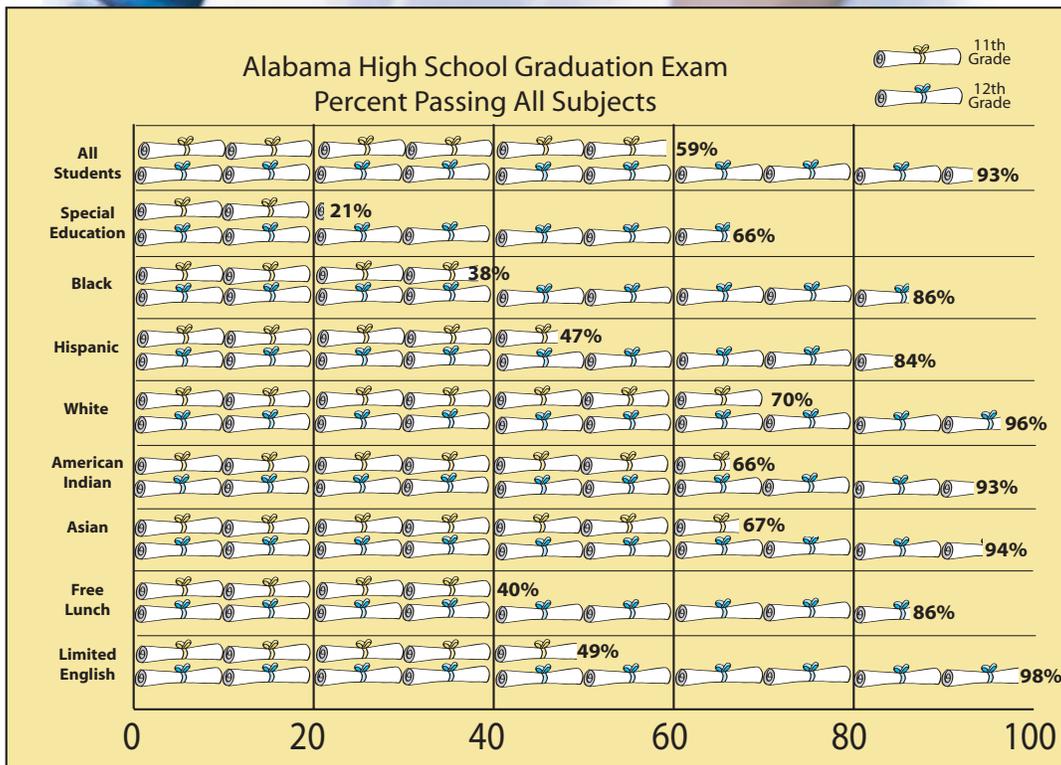
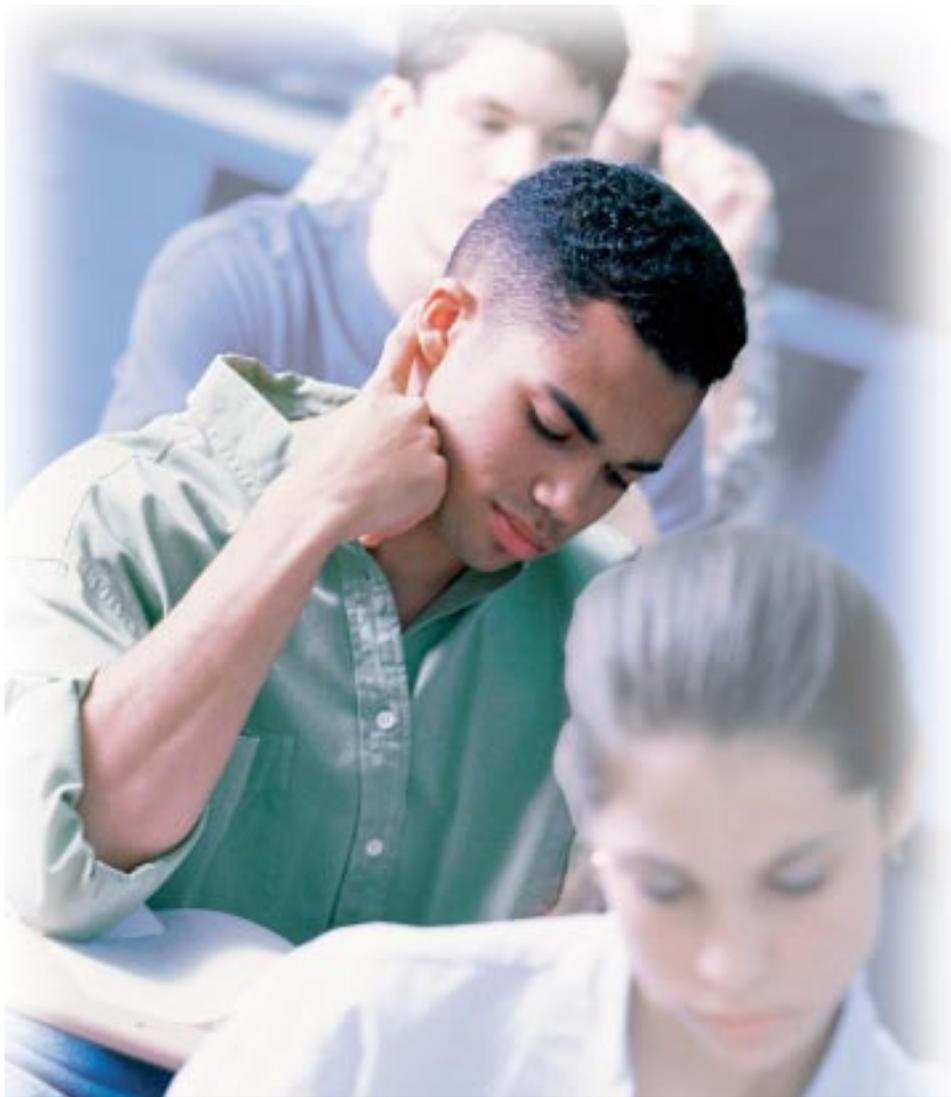
The cut-points for establishing the Academic Watch status for the *Stanford Achievement Test*, the *Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing: Grades Five and Seven* are based on the state average for free-lunch students.

The cut-point for establishing the Academic Watch status for the *Alabama High School Graduation Exam* is based on the National Education Goals Panel’s goal of a 90 percent graduation rate.

The criteria are not applied to a subgroup that has less than 40 students. If the group size for a system/school in the All Students category is less than 40 students, the system/school will receive a status for the All Students category with a notation indicating the system/school did not have the minimum number of 40.

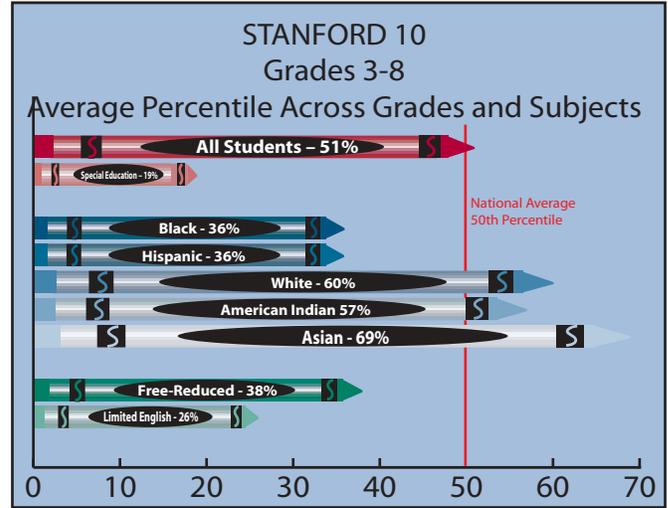
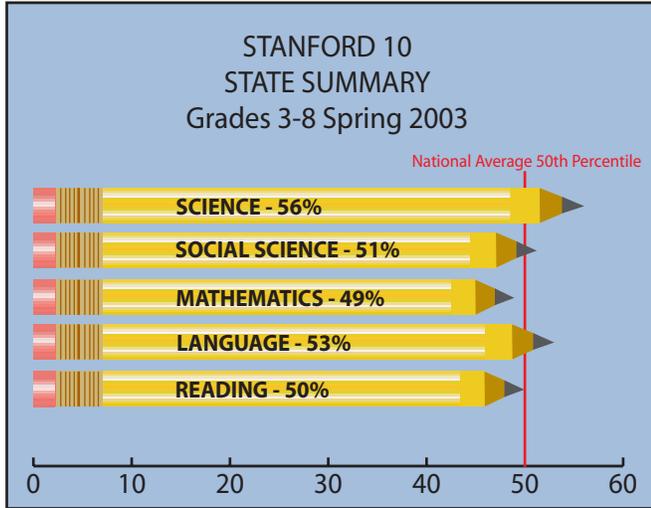
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A C A	CLEAR STATUS	<p><i>Alabama High School Graduation Exam</i> – At least 90% of Grade 12 students passing all required subject-area tests (reading, language, mathematics, and science) or less than 90% but more than or equal to 80% of Grade 12 students passing all required subject-area tests (reading, language, mathematics, and science) and drop-out rate less than or equal to 15.59 (the state average)</p> <p><i>Stanford Achievement Test</i> – Average percentile at least 40</p> <p><i>Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing: Grade Five</i> – At least 20.11% of students meeting academic content standards (Levels III and IV)</p> <p><i>Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing: Grade Seven</i> – At least 24.77% of students meeting academic content standards (Levels III and IV)</p>
	WATCH STATUS 514 SCHOOLS	<p><i>Alabama High School Graduation Exam</i> – Less than 90% but more than or equal to 80% of Grade 12 students passing all required subject-area tests (reading, language, mathematics, and science) and drop-out rate greater than 15.59 (the state average)</p> <p><i>Stanford Achievement Test</i> – Average percentile less than 40 but greater than or equal to 30</p> <p><i>Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing: Grade Five</i> – Less than 20.11% of students meeting academic content standards (Levels III and IV)</p> <p><i>Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing: Grade Seven</i> – Less than 24.77% of students meeting academic content standards (Levels III and IV)</p>
	PRIORITY STATUS 68 SCHOOLS	<p><i>Alabama High School Graduation Exam</i> – Less than 80% of Grade 12 students passing all required subject-area tests (reading, language, mathematics, and science)</p> <p><i>Stanford Achievement Test</i> – Average percentile less than 30</p> <p><i>Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing: Grade Five and Grade Seven</i> – No students meeting academic content standards (Levels III and IV)</p>
<p>Once the Clear, Watch, and Priority criteria for academic status are applied to the All Students category and to each applicable subgroup, the criteria below are used to assign a system/school one of these seven interim accountability statuses.</p>		
INTERIM ACCOUNTABILITY ACADEMIC STATUS		
<p>CLEAR – Accountability status if the All Students category and all applicable subgroups have an academic status of Clear</p>		
<p>CLEAR with WATCH – Accountability status if the All Students category is Clear and all applicable subgroups have an academic status of Clear or Watch</p>		
<p>CLEAR with PRIORITY – Accountability status if the All Students category is Clear and all applicable subgroups have an academic status of Clear or Priority</p>		
<p>CLEAR with WATCH and PRIORITY – Accountability status if the All Students category is Clear and all applicable subgroups have an academic status of Clear, Watch, or Priority</p>		
<p>WATCH – Accountability status if the All Students category is Watch and all applicable subgroups have an academic status of Watch or Clear</p>		
<p>WATCH with PRIORITY – Accountability status if the All Students category is Watch and all applicable subgroups have an academic status of Watch, Priority, or Clear</p>		
<p>PRIORITY – Accountability status if the All Students category is Priority regardless of the status of subgroups</p>		



(Continued on Page 6)

THE TESTS



In 2003, Grades 3-8 were given selected portions of the new *Stanford 10*. Reading, language, and mathematics were assessed in Grades 3-8; science was assessed in Grades 5 and 7; and social science was assessed in Grade 6.

Since the *Stanford 10* is a new test, it cannot be *directly* compared to previous years' results. However, Harcourt Educational Measurement (the author of the Stanford tests) conducted a study comparing the *Stanford 10* to the *Stanford 9*. Using the information from this research study, test scores on the *Stanford 10* were equated to what they would have been had students taken the *Stanford 9*.

Criterion-referenced tests are different from norm-referenced tests, such as the *Stanford 10*. These tests are based on Alabama's Courses of Study and developed by the state Department of Education. The scoring categories are Level 1 (does not meet academic content standards), Level 2 (partially meets academic content standards), Level 3 (meets academic content standards), and Level 4 (exceeds academic content standards). Both the writing assessments and the *Alabama Alternate Assessment* are reported using these categories. The end results of these and other efforts are greater accountability and clearer measures of how well our students are learning and our teachers are teaching. This year's comprehensive data release is the first step in that process.

STANFORD 10

- Aligns more closely with state and national standards, and National Assessment of Educational Progress.
- Requires students to use higher order thinking skills to answer questions.
- Engages students more actively in the testing process.
- Helps students focus and encourages them to complete the test.
- Poses questions in "real-life" situations.

ALABAMA HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION EXAM

- Aligns with Alabama's Courses of Study.
- Is required for graduation.
- Is the primary measure of academic performance used for students in Grades 11 and 12.

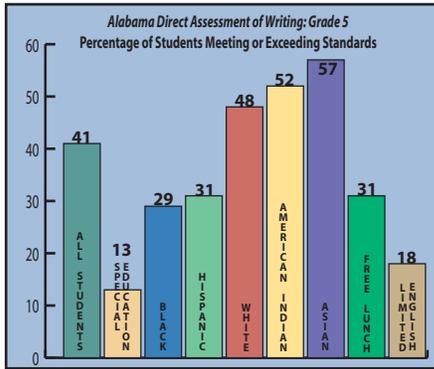
The class of 2001 was the first class required to pass the reading and language tests on the AHSGE, and the class of 2002 was the first class required to also pass mathematics and science. The class of 2004 will be the first class required to pass all five subject-area tests of the AHSGE, including the social studies test.

Alabama must provide each student at least an adequate education.

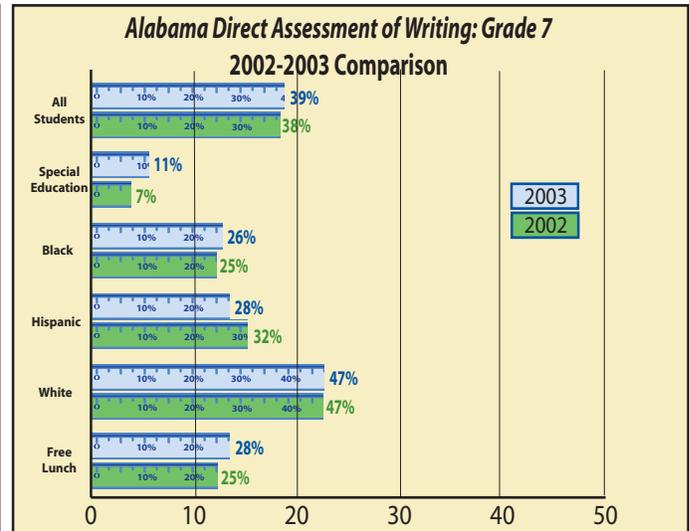
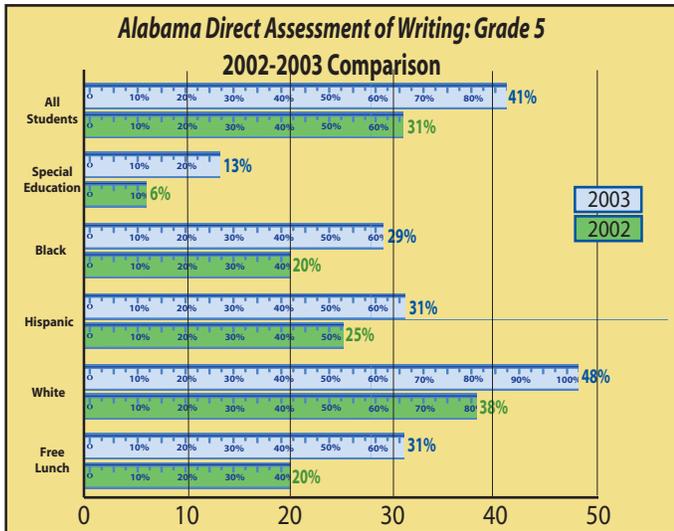
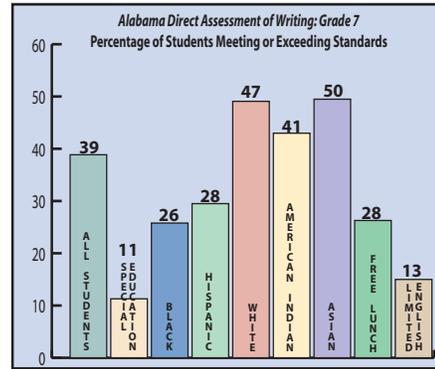
ALABAMA'S MISSION:

To provide a system of public education that is committed to *high academic standards* with *accountability* and to provide *every school student* an opportunity for graduation and an opportunity to *obtain the necessary skills* to be prepared for the 21st century.

Grade 5



Grade 7

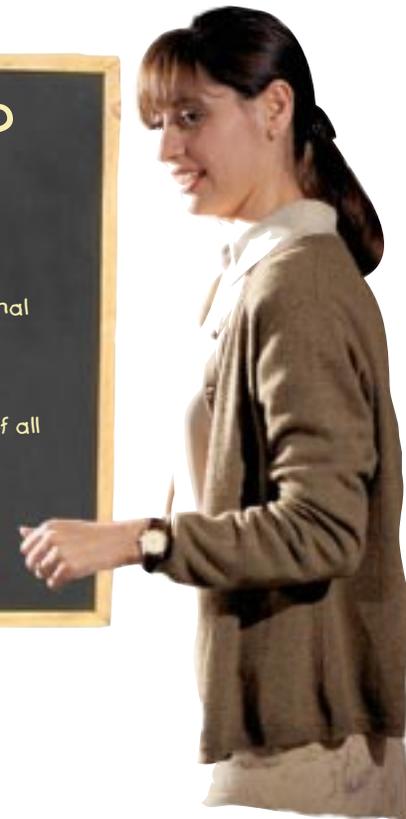


Writing scores in Alabama also showed marked improvement, reflecting the increased emphasis placed on writing this past school year as a result of the inclusion of writing scores in accountability reports. A tenth-grade writing assessment was pilot-tested this past year and will be administered statewide in spring 2004.

Results for the *Alabama Alternate Assessment (AAA)* continue to improve. The AAA is designed to measure a special education student's mastery of his/her goals and benchmarks in the Individualized Education Program (IEP). This assessment is designed for a student whose IEP Team determines that the student cannot participate in the regular statewide assessments. Over 68 percent of the special education students taking the AAA met or exceeded academic standards as defined in their IEP in 2003, up from approximately 66 percent last year. 🍏

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

- Assign selected local-school-contracted and Department of Education personnel to as many Academic Priority Schools as possible.
- Collaborate with Regional In-Service Centers to present regional training on data evaluation and the development of improved instructional techniques for at-risk students.
- Work with local school systems to ensure maximum utilization of all local, state, and federal revenues to serve at-risk students.
- Work with local school systems to improve professional development plans for teachers and administrators.



BOARD BRIEFS

AUGUST Agenda Items Included:

- ✍ Took a Roll Call Vote to Indicate or Not Indicate Support for Amendment One
District 1, VACANT District 5, E. Bell – Yes
District 2, Peters – No District 6, Byers – Yes
District 3, S. Bell – No District 7, Ray – Yes
District 4, Hall – Yes District 8, Caylor – Yes
- ✍ Passed Resolution Recognizing and Expressing Gratitude to Dana Lee Tatum, Huntsville, Madison County
- ✍ Passed Resolution Honoring Julise Clement, DeKalb County Technical Center, DeKalb County Schools
- ✍ Passed Resolution Commending Daphne High School, Baldwin County Schools, Agriscience Technology Education Program, as 2003-04 Outstanding Program of the Year
- ✍ Passed Resolution Commending Talladega Career Tech Center, Talladega City Schools, Business Education Program, as 2003-04 Outstanding Program of Year
- ✍ Passed Resolution Commending Huntsville Center for Technology, Huntsville City Schools, Health Science Program, as 2003-04 Outstanding Program of the Year
- ✍ Passed Resolution Commending DeKalb County Technology Center, DeKalb County Schools, Jobs for Alabama Graduates (JAG), as 2003-04 Outstanding Program of the Year
- ✍ Passed Resolution Commending Brewbaker Technology Magnet High School, Montgomery County Schools, Career/Technologies Education Program, as 2003-04 Outstanding Program of the Year
- ✍ Passed Resolution Commending Demopolis High School, Demopolis City Schools, Electronics Technology Program, as 2003-04 Outstanding Program of the Year
- ✍ Passed Resolution Commending Lawrence County Center of Technology, Lawrence County Schools, Electronics Technology Program, as 2003-04 Outstanding Program of the Year
- ✍ Passed Resolution Commending W.A. LeCroy Technical Center, Chilton County Schools, Single Parent/Single Pregnant Women Program, as 2003-04 Outstanding Program of the Year
- ✍ Passed Resolution Commending the Staff of *Alabama Education News*
- ✍ Approved Teacher Education Programs, Spring Hill College, Mobile

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCES

2003 Annual Alabama Reading Association Fall Conference, Oct. 8-10, Montgomery Civic Center. [CLICK HERE](#) for conference information.

The Alabama Arts Rural Touring School Program provides opportunities for rural schools to schedule performances by an Alabama group or artist. [CLICK HERE](#) to contact the Arts in Education program manager.

The Alabama Wildlife Federation (AWF) Outdoor Classroom/Schoolyard Habitat Planning Guide is now available for use in developing and maintaining a hands-on outdoor education and conservation habitat on school grounds. To order a copy, call AWF at 1-800-822-9453.

AWARD AND GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

DisneyHand American Teacher Awards honor creativity in teaching. Nominate a teacher online at by [CLICKING HERE](#) or call 1-877-282-8322. **Deadline: Oct. 3**

Teacher of the Month Award for K-12 public school teachers awards \$1,000 to each teacher selected and \$1,000 to each teacher's school. Application instructions and eligibility criteria are available from local superintendents and principals and online ([CLICK HERE](#)), or [CLICK HERE](#) to contact Anne Graham, Communication, or call 334-242-9950. **Deadline: Oct. 15**

The Fulbright Memorial Fund Teacher Program is open to full-time teachers and administrators in Grades 1-12. The 2004 competition offers a fully funded three-week study visit to Japan. [CLICK HERE](#) to apply online or request an application packet, or contact Jaime McQueen at 1-888-527-2636. **Application deadline: Dec. 10**

Toyota's Investment in Mathematics Excellence (TIME) grant is available to K-12 math teachers for innovative projects enhancing mathematics education within a school. Call 1-888-573-8463 or contact by e-mail by [CLICKING HERE](#). **Proposal deadline: Jan. 7, 2004**

SEPTEMBER

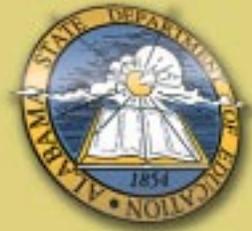


PTA MEMBERSHIP MONTH	
9/6-14	AMERICAN CHARACTER WEEK
9/9	AMENDMENT ONE VOTE
9/11	ALABAMA BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
9/22-25	AHSGE ADMINISTRATION
9/25	ALABAMA BOARD OF EDUCATION WORK SESSION

OCTOBER



STATEWIDE PARENT VISITATION MONTH	
10/9	ALABAMA BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
10/15-17 & 10/20-22	ALABAMA READING AND MATHEMATICS (PILOT TEST)
10/18-25	NATIONAL SCHOOL BUS SAFETY WEEK
10/23	ALABAMA BOARD OF EDUCATION WORK SESSION
10/23-31	RED RIBBON WEEK
10/29-30	PREVENTION & SUPPORT SERVICES WORKSHOP



ALABAMA Education News

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