FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 12, 2015

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ACT ASSESSMENTS SHOW SOME PROGRESS STATEWIDE
Aspire Assessment Shows Increases in Math; Reading Holds Steady

Montgomery, Ala. – Alabama public schools students have completed the second year of ACT assessments and the results show promise and progress toward learning achievement—particularly in math. Although assessments are just one factor in determining college- and career-readiness, recent ACT scores show Alabama students are gradually moving toward being better prepared for life after high school, whether that involves enrolling in an institution of higher learning or delving into the workforce.

In spring 2015, a total of 329,233 students in Grades 3-8 took the second year of ACT Aspire assessments, which are aligned with the Alabama College- & Career-Ready Standards (CCRS). The ACT Aspire assessment is administered in late spring during the closing weeks of the school year to ensure student learning continues as long as possible. The assessments, which can be administered in computer-based or paper/pencil format, have scores that are shown in levels of “Exceeding, Ready, Close, or In Need of Support” for students in Grades 3 through 8 for reading and mathematics, and in Grades 5 and 7 for science.

![ACT Aspire 2014-2015 Math Comparison](chart)

*Chart shows percentage proficient -more-
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The 2015 math results show that students in Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 increased their proficiency in math – some student subgroups by as much as five percentage points – from last year. Grade 8 math results saw a slight decrease in proficiency. In reading, scores remained level from last year’s results.

This is Alabama’s first year assessing science using ACT Aspire so there is no year-to-year comparison; however, students show proficiency levels for 5th and 7th Grade at 37% and 33% respectively.

The ACT Aspire represents a significant change from how student achievement has been defined in the past and helps to showcase student and school academic performance. The expectation of what students must know and be able to do on state assessments has become more rigorous.

“We are encouraged by the progress being made, particularly in earlier grades, as reflected by the ACT assessment results. The challenge, however, is making sure our students maintain that momentum through their middle and high schools years, where the ability to be proficient in all subject areas and have a firm educational foundation are pivotal,” Dr. Tommy Bice, State Superintendent of Education, said.

Dr. Bice continued, “The middle school years are where we traditionally see test scores start to decrease. It is in these crucial years that we must diligently stoke the flames of learning in our young people and keep their intellectual curiosity at full tilt. From funding the necessary teacher units to providing differentiated support in the classroom, we must be persistent in improving the quality of education for all of our students.”

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Alabama assesses students at a high level in a way that provides meaningful information to teachers, parents, and students, helping to make sure they are on track to graduate college- and career-ready. The assessments are based on the expectations found in the CCRS and aligned with goals of our two-year colleges and universities, as well as the business community. In 2013, the Alabama State Board of Education adopted the ACT suite of assessments, which are designed to encourage a trajectory of progress and, ultimately, success after graduation.

ACT Plan, given in 10th Grade, measures achievement in English, math, reading, and science, and helps students build a solid foundation for success on the ACT in 11th Grade. The ACT Plan score report helps identify a student’s strengths and areas where the student needs improvement. The last administration of ACT Plan was in Fall 2014, with 52,552 students tested. ACT Plan will transition to the ACT Aspire for 10th Grade to be given in Spring of 2016.

The ALSDE compared the average score of the 2013-14 ACT Plan assessment (students in 10th Grade) to the 2014-15 ACT (taken by same group of students when in 11th Grade). Positive growth was seen from year to year.

![ACT Plan 2013-2014 to ACT 2014-2015 Comparison](image)

*Chart shows actual scores

Additional information on the results can be found at the ALSDE Data Center - Statewide Reports (Click tab for 2014-15 data) and Data Center School Level Reports. Please contact ALSDE Communications with questions or comments at 334-242-9950 or via e-mail at comm@alsde.edu.

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