



STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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**ALABAMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ACKNOWLEDGES INACCURATE
GRADUATION RATE AFTER USDE REVIEW**

Department Working to Ensure Accuracy and Accountability

Montgomery, Ala. – The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) is involved in a review of recent graduation rates by the Office of Inspector General, which resides within the United States Department of Education (USDE). The ALSDE has determined, after completing an initial audit, that the graduation rate was misstated to the people of Alabama – policymakers, educators, parents, students, all citizens – and to the USDE.

There are two components that were factors in the misstated rate:

1. The counting of the Alabama Occupational Diploma (AOD) - This diploma was not anchored to the standards required for graduation and students who received the AOD could not be counted by the USDE as a graduate in the USDE Four-Year Cohort graduation rate.
2. Low Oversight of Local School Systems' Awarding of Credits - The ALSDE did not increase oversight as needed of local school systems' awarding of earned class credits. In some cases, local school systems misstated student records and awarded class credit, resulting in diplomas that were not honestly earned.

“We are accountable to all people of this state and deeply regret the misstating of our graduation rate. We are now undergoing a meticulous review to ensure that all monitoring and data collection is performed with fidelity,” said Superintendent of Education Michael Sentance.

The ALSDE did not monitor local systems with the necessary scrutiny. This was an internal, administrative oversight and the ALSDE is now in the process of addressing all related areas. The ALSDE has reviewed related protocols, increased training of staff, and is organizationally restructuring. Sentance continued, “We will be establishing an internal audit unit to ensure protocols and procedures are followed. We will also continue to work within the USDE.”

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