

A+ Legislative Priorities

1

Literacy: Support the Alabama Literacy Act to help all students read on grade level by the end of 3rd grade.

According to the American Education Research Association, a student who can't read on grade level by third grade is 4x less likely to graduate high school. Add poverty to the mix, and a student is 13x less likely to graduate than their wealthier peers. By contrast, 96% of 3rd graders who are reading on grade level will graduate from high school. Continued investment and renewed dedication will support expanded training in the science of reading, reading interventions for struggling students, additional reading coaches, and summer programs.

2

Math: Define & implement a statewide strategy to improve math instruction & achievement in Alabama's elementary schools.

Math in Alabama is facing a crisis, with only 22% of Alabama students showing proficiency on the 2021 ACAP results, including only 11% of low-income students and 7% of Black students. It's time for a comprehensive state strategy to build the capacity of our instructional leaders & elementary educators as well as increase support to our youngest students who are struggling with math.

3

High-Quality Instructional Materials: Ensure that Alabama's textbook adoption process supports the selection & implementation of high-quality curriculum in all classrooms.

Research shows that one of the best ways to quickly and cost-effectively improve student achievement is to give teachers high-quality instructional materials and support their classroom implementation through curriculum-based professional development. Alabama needs to adjust its textbook adoption process to better identify high-quality instructional materials that are effective, rigorous, and closely aligned with state standards.

4

Workforce Development: Build strong classroom to career pathways so that all students are ready for college, career, and life.

While 92% of students graduated from high school in 2020, only 76% were defined as college & career ready. Alabama can begin to address this gap by creating a credential registry to ensure programs are preparing students for in-demand jobs, instituting a credential review process to ensure quality, and requiring students to earn one or more college and career readiness indicators before graduation. In addition, it's critical that Alabama improves our data infrastructure to help state leaders spend taxpayer money wisely and identify which investments in the classroom to career pathway are making an impact on student outcomes and which are not.

5

First-Grade Readiness: Ensure all Alabama students are ready for First Grade.

If a child enters first grade without the foundational skills to be successful, it immediately sets them back and can have a lasting impact on their long-term success in school and life. Alabama students entering first grade should either successfully complete kindergarten or pass a readiness assessment to ensure they are prepared. More than 3,000 kindergarten-age children did not show up to school for the 2020-21 school year due to COVID-19, making this need more important now than ever.

6

Student Mental Health: Expand access to student mental health support for students that need it the most.

After three years of disrupted learning, more students are bringing complex mental health problems to school, creating behavioral challenges in the classroom. Schools don't have the mental health resources they need and teachers don't have the training or the bandwidth to support their struggling students. Alabama should ensure that all school systems have a mental health coordinator and establish statewide guidance on Multi-Tiered Support Systems (MTSS) to ensure schools are providing support to students that need it the most.

7

Public Charter Schools: Support practical updates to Alabama's public charter school law.

High-quality public charter schools offer an opportunity to reimagine public education. Seven years after passing a charter law, Alabama has seen some innovative charter schools that meet the diverse needs of students and challenge traditional models. There are some common-sense updates needed to simplify the commission appointment process, increase commission expertise, and provide clarity on funding to support the development and operations of high-quality charter schools.

A+ ETF Budget Priorities

\$1.5 M

new program

Summer and Afterschool: Provide high-quality summer and afterschool learning opportunities to students.

Research shows that every \$1 invested in out-of-school programs saves at least \$3 by increasing students' earning potential, improving students' performance in reading and math, and reducing crime and juvenile delinquency. To combat the COVID slide and accelerate learning for our most vulnerable students, Alabama should create a state grant program to expand high-quality, community-based summer and afterschool learning.

Department of Early Childhood: \$1.5 million (new program)

\$2 M

increase

Advanced Placement: Continue expanding access to Advanced Placement courses for all students.

Students who take an AP course and exam are more likely to graduate from college. Since 2008, Alabama has increased the number of qualifying scores on AP exams from 7,260 to 18,430 per year. The number of AP tests taken by students of color and students in poverty has increased by 135% and 340%, respectively. Continued funding for Advanced Placement will prepare more Alabama students for college, career, and life.

State Department of Education: \$2 million increase

\$1 M

increase

Computer Science: Increase funding to support Alabama's nationally-recognized computer science education expansion.

With the passage of the 2019 Computer Science Bill, Alabama became a national leader in expanding computer science education. Increased funding is needed to expand training for Alabama teachers to teach this important subject matter and meet the goals of this legislation.

State Department of Education: \$1 million increase

\$22.5 M

increase

Pre-K: Continue Expanding Alabama's First Class Pre-K program.

Children who have access to Alabama's high-quality Pre-k are more likely to be proficient in reading and math and are less likely to have discipline infractions later in school. Continued expansion would ensure more 4-year olds have access to this nationally-recognized program.

Department of Early Childhood: \$22.5 million increase

\$34 M

new program

Professional Development: Provide funding for targeted, high-quality professional development for teachers.

In lieu of adding two extra professional development days for every teacher, Alabama should create a more targeted professional development program at the state level to ensure quality and develop the competencies and content knowledge of teachers in critical areas, including literacy, math, student mental health, technology for instruction in the classroom, and high-quality instructional materials. LEAs can apply for funding for professional development, either from a list of state-vetted, high-quality professional development opportunities for fast-tracked approval or other professional development opportunities, which will require additional validation to qualify. Priority shall be given to districts or schools that have low academic performance or serve students living in poverty.

State Department of Education: \$34 million (new program)

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