

Inspire...
Challenge...
Partner...



It's what we do



A+EDUCATION
PARTNERSHIP
GREAT SCHOOLS FOR EVERY CHILD

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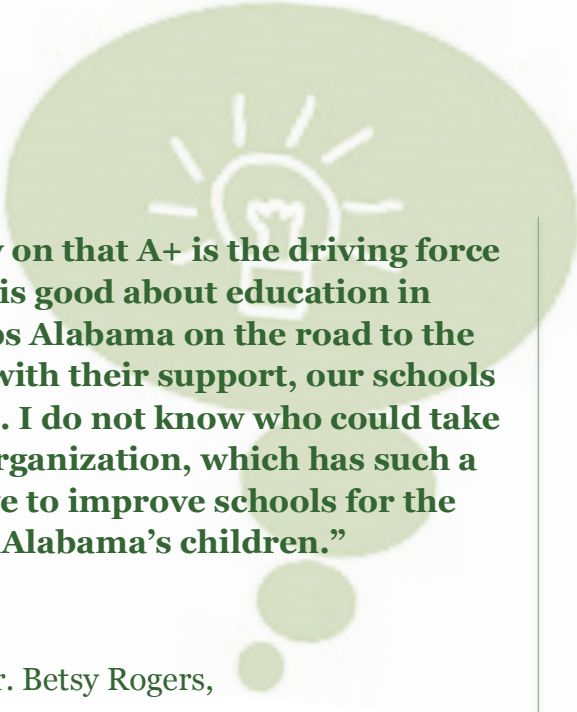
Home of the
Alabama Best Practices Center
and
A+ College Ready

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A+ EDUCATION

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GREAT SCHOOLS FOR EVERY CHILD



“I understood early on that A+ is the driving force behind all that is good about education in Alabama. A+ keeps Alabama on the road to the cutting edge, and, with their support, our schools are being reformed. I do not know who could take the place of this organization, which has such a passion and drive to improve schools for the benefit of Alabama’s children.”

Dr. Betsy Rogers,

2003 National Teacher of the Year
and
Chair - Teacher Education, Samford University

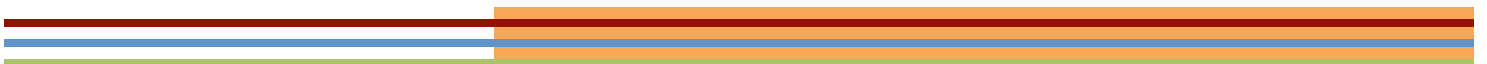
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A+ Partnership

Effective public education is necessary for a democratic, prosperous and civil society. Alabama's employers need a highly qualified workforce to sustain the state's economic growth. At the same time, we live in a global society where digital technologies are rapidly redefining jobs, communities and opportunities for students.

While Alabama is making great progress, too many students leave high school unprepared. All Alabama students must read well, write well, and be able to think critically to problem-solve.

To meet these challenges, A+ shapes policy, and through its two divisions, the Alabama Best Practices Center and A+ College Ready, supports educators across the state to ensure students gain the knowledge and skills to be productive, creative citizens.

A+ Education Partnership was founded in 1991 to address the unequal educational opportunities for Alabama students. Its sole purpose and overall goal is to inspire, challenge, and partner with Alabama education stakeholders ... ***and to do whatever it takes to insure that every Alabama student graduates college- and career-ready.***

Our sole reason for existing is to do whatever it takes to move Alabama's students forward and upward for the sake of our great state.

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“We cannot put a dollar amount on the value of an organization that is independent ... working in tandem with us to advance common goals to improve educational outcomes in Alabama. Together we accomplish so much more than we can individually.”

Sherrill Parris,
Deputy Alabama State
Superintendent of Education

A+ has earned credibility and influence through the years:

- ✓ Always focusing on what is best for Alabama's students
- ✓ Staying on top of new information about what works
- ✓ Working on policy and practice at the same time



Historic Milestones

Raising Expectations

In the early '90s, **A+ began to raise expectations for public education** with a blueprint for education reform discussed in 22 town hall meetings across Alabama. Over 23,000 Alabamians participated. By advocating for what is best for students and for researched strategies, **A+ changed the conversation about public education.**

A+ assembled a network of talented and committed people from a range of backgrounds and constituencies who continue to work for **better opportunities for students – no matter where the students live.**

Improving Instruction

A+ developed the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) with the State Department of Education, and A+ plays an ongoing role in adaption and expansion. A+ advocated for funding to spread the initiative to every K-3 classroom by 2003. Alabama began to see dramatic gains on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), and in 2007 Alabama led the nation in gains in 4th grade reading. In 2011 Alabama met the national average in 4th grade reading for the first time in our history.

In 1999, **A+ established the Alabama Best Practices Center** during a time the state of “professional development” in Alabama was abysmal. Today, the Alabama Best Practices Center successfully serves 61 districts and 123 schools across the state through its series of networks. Additionally, the Alabama State Department of Education partners with ABPC for its own professional development and support.

In 2008, **A+ received the largest private sector grant in Alabama’s history** from the National Math and Science Initiative to create A+ College Ready. A+ College Ready has dramatically increased the number of students in Alabama earning qualifying scores on Advanced Placement exams to earn college credit using the Advanced Placement Training and Incentive Program (APTIP).

Encouraging Investing Where It Matters Most – Teacher and Leader Development

Effective teaching and school leadership have the greatest impact on student achievement. **A+ has helped secure a significant funding increase** in the state education budget for teachers to receive relevant, effective, and just-in-time professional development. In 1999, professional development allocations represented only 0.2% of Alabama’s total education budget. In 2008, 2.8% of the budget was devoted to professional development – \$113 million more than in 1999. And we have successfully protected those investments from significant cuts in the recent downturn.



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A+ Practice

The **Alabama Best Practices Center (ABPC)** connects educators to cutting-edge and proven education practices and provides intentional opportunities for these educators to learn together and from each other.

The quality of instruction in schools cannot exceed the knowledge and skills of their teachers. Yet, in the U.S., we don't invest nearly as much in the development and ongoing learning of employees as in the fields of business and medicine. We don't question the need for doctors to be at the top of their trade, or for corporations to invest millions in ongoing training and development of their employees. We need to do the same with our teachers and administrators.

Because the largest investment in education is on salaries, we believe we need to maximize that investment by ensuring that educators possess the knowledge and support needed to teach all students well.

As teachers implement Alabama's new, more challenging academic standards, it is even more essential to provide them with ongoing training and support. The ABPC networks of educators, which range from the Superintendent Leaders Network to our schools' Powerful Conversations Network, are focused on successful implementation of Alabama's new College-and-Career-Ready Standards. These new standards provide us with two choices: We can continue allowing textbooks to guide learning, or we can invest in building teachers' knowledge and skills so they can engage students in deeper, more

“We believe A+ support is a wise investment in Alabama's future. The Alabama Best Practices Center's work with teachers, district and school administrators to connect them with research and best practices helps ensure ongoing quality improvement in schools and in quality teaching for Alabama's children.”

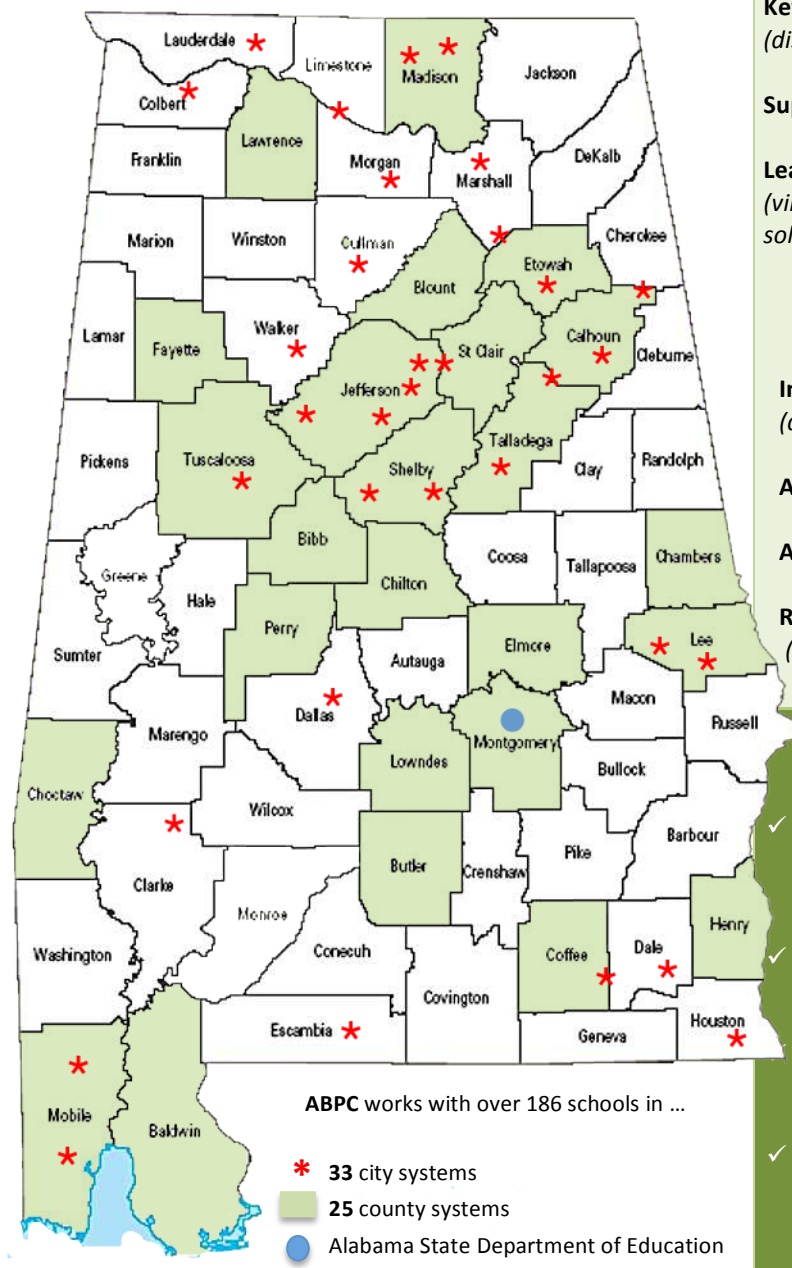
**Fred McCallum, President,
AT&T Alabama**

meaningful learning. Educators in the Networks are working with each other across districts to create innovative and relevant lesson plans that both challenge students and help them adapt what they are learning to real life.

The ABPC is also working to enhance the work of the State Department of Education, under the leadership of Dr. Tommy Bice, as it repurposes state-funded Reading Coaches to provide greater flexibility and reach across the curriculum and across grades. The results are already impressive. Schools with newly trained “Instructional Partners” report that more students are engaged in active and high-level learning, and teachers are more focused and better prepared to implement Alabama's new standards. This promises to make Alabama more competitive with other states and other countries in years to come.

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**ALABAMA
BEST
PRACTICES
CENTER**



Programs ...

- Powerful Conversations Network**
(school-based teams; school districts and schools served by ABPC)
- Key Leaders Network**
(district and school leaders)
- Superintendent Leaders Network**
- Learning Networks**
(virtual community for educators to exchange ideas, solve problems, and celebrate successes)

Partnerships ...

working with the Alabama State Department of Education

- Instructional Partners Program**
(developing school-based coaches)
- Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative**
- Alabama Reading Initiative**
- Regional Support**
(customized support to school districts)

Impact ...

- ✓ ABPC Networks report higher graduation rates, increased test scores, increased student engagement, and learning at higher levels.
- ✓ Provision of just-in-time, relevant learning information and materials
- Approximately 400,000 students reached through Networks
- ✓ District and school leaders report that their involvement in ABPC results in greater focus and coherence in their efforts to improve teaching and learning

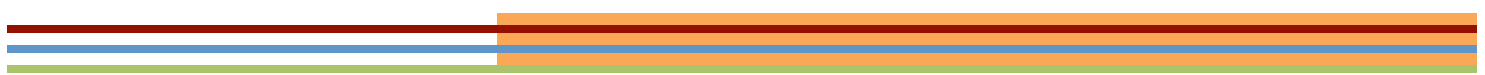
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A+ Preparation

A+ established **A+ College Ready (A+CR)** with the mission to improve student achievement in math, science and English by implementing a proven program called the Advanced Placement Training and Incentive Program (APTIP). APTIP is designed to dramatically increase the number of students in Alabama taking math, science and English Advanced Placement (AP) courses, earning qualifying scores on AP exams and ultimately attending and succeeding in college.

A+ College Ready helps schools better prepare students for college and careers by providing professional development for all Advanced Placement and Pre-AP teachers in the state. As a state affiliate of the “National Math & Science Initiative (NMSI) Teacher Training / Laying The Foundation” program, Alabama teachers in 3rd through 11th grades gain training and access to more rigorous courses through A+CR.

Because of A+CR’s work as a “STEM initiative” (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), Alabama leads the nation in percent growth of qualifying AP scores over the last five years. Also, the College Board and the (NMSI) often use the program as an exemplar for other states. A+CR is opening doors of tremendous opportunity, no matter where students live.

“This program is opening doors to college for many more students, which is essential to our country’s future. In today’s highly competitive world, the next generation of leaders and innovators simply must have a mastery of science, technology, engineering and math.”

Tom Luce,
National Math & Science Board Chair

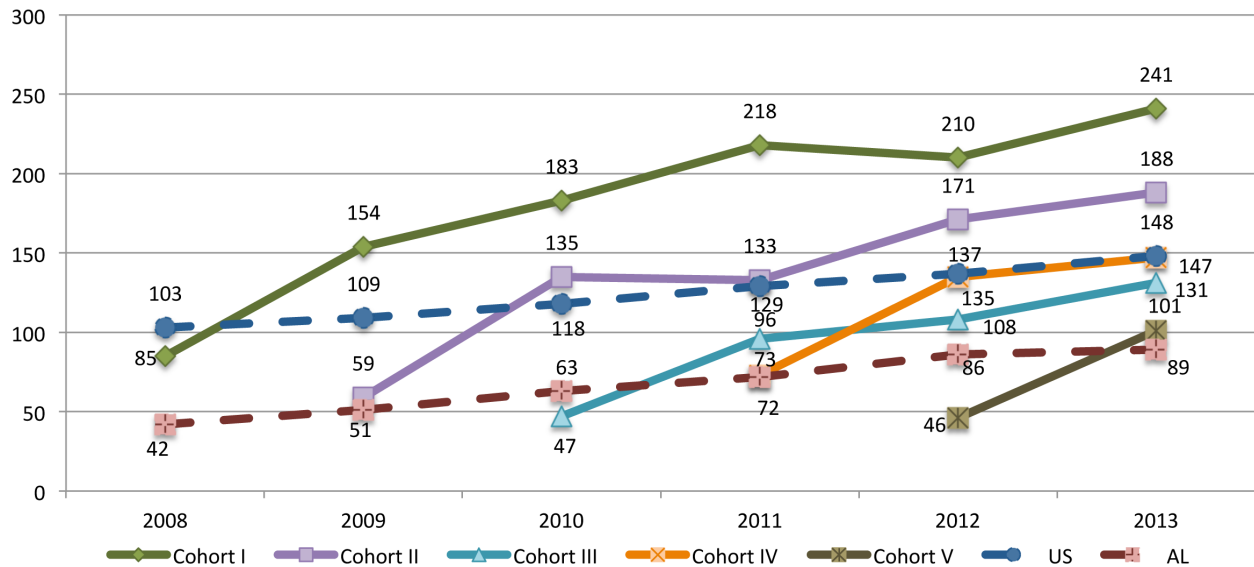
With incredible public/private-sector investments from NMSI, ExxonMobil, Alabama Power Foundation, Boeing, Regions Bank, businesses and foundations in Huntsville, Dothan, and Birmingham, and the Alabama Legislature, A+ College Ready continues to leverage resources from its partners to reach more schools every year. The return on all these investments has been nothing short of remarkable.

A+ believes that when we expect more from students, they will rise to meet those expectations and achieve more. And, there’s even more potential among Alabama’s more than 743,000 students.

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A+ COLLEGE READY

AP Math, Science, & English Qualifying Scores per 1000 Juniors & Seniors



Source: NMSI & College Board

What we do ...

Teacher Support

- ✓ Provide AP and Pre-AP training
- ✓ Train and support AP lead teachers
- ✓ Host vertical team meetings

Student Support

- ✓ Pay exam fees
- ✓ Pay for equipment and supplies
- ✓ Provide Saturday study sessions

Program Management

- ✓ Have a competitive process for school selection
- ✓ Provide subject matter experts in math, science & English

Awards & Incentives

- ✓ Provide financial awards & stipends to administrators, teachers, and students

Impact ...

- ✓ A+ College Ready has dramatically increased the number of students taking Advanced Placement math, science and English courses, with over 47,000 students served in five years.
- ✓ Alabama ranks #1 among all 50 states in the percent growth in qualifying AP scores over the last five years.
- ✓ After one year in the program, 76 Alabama high schools showed an average 101% increase in AP qualifying scores – 14 times the national average.
- ✓ Over five years, A+ College Ready students earned 14,006 qualifying scores. If students earn 3 credit-hours per score - with an average value of \$1,806 per course - **savings to Alabama families would exceed 25 million dollars.**

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A+ Policy & Engagement

Sound policy is necessary as a foundation to having the best education system in the country.

A+ has been the force behind many of the most effective reform initiatives in Alabama, including the Alabama Reading Initiative, and most of the strategies included in the State Board of Education's new blueprint for moving Alabama schools forward – Plan 2020.

Our methods are simple and effective; we work to build strong stakeholder relationships, research what works best for students, schools and systems, and communicate this information as often as needed to generate support.

All A+ policy efforts are focused on equitable and excellent education opportunities for Alabama students. A+ is an independent, non-profit and non-partisan organization, and is the respected, trusted source of education information in Alabama.

“A+ and the State Department of Education’s partnership is an example of the value of the public/private partnership that can advance innovation and best practice, and most importantly student success.”

**Dr. Tommy Bice,
Alabama State Superintendent**

Sound policy is necessary, but in itself not sufficient. It must be put into practice. Therefore, A+ employs all three strategies – ***inspiring practice, challenging college- and career-ready preparation, and forming partnerships for effective policy and community engagement*** – to result in the best possible public schools for all Alabama students.



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Recent Policy Accomplishments & Engagement Efforts

- ✓ **Supported the State Board of Education's adoption of Plan 2020** – a framework for preparing all graduates in Alabama for college and the workplace
- ✓ **Advocated for school district flexibility resulting in legislation** that allows schools and districts to develop innovation plans in order to best meet the needs of local students
- ✓ **Published and disseminated a policy brief** supporting alignment across Alabama's educational system (pre-k through the workforce) **that resulted in creation of the Governor's College and Career Ready Task Force** comprised of officials from across the educational spectrum collaborating to identify systemic issues in Alabama's education system
- ✓ **Protected or increased funding for what works in the state K-12 budget:** Investments in **Advanced Placement**, the **Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI)**, the **Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI)**, and the **First Class pre-k** program
- ✓ **Increased public charter school awareness**, informing citizens of critical elements necessary to create effective public charter schools and to provide flexibility for traditional schools
- ✓ **Increased awareness of expanded learning time**, informing citizens about the need for extended student learning time after school and in the summer
- ✓ **Supported the State Board of Education's adoption of new, higher achievement standards; Alabama's College- and Career-Ready Standards**
- ✓ **Conceived of and established Alabama GRIT – Graduate Ready. Impact Tomorrow.**, a coalition of parents, educators, business leaders, military personnel, and other civic leaders collaborating to help Alabama's children graduate prepared for real life
- ✓ **Promoted development of increased summer learning opportunities** in Birmingham and Montgomery
- ✓ **Continued communication of success stories about Alabama schools and systems** through a variety of media

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Our Work

Every graduate ready for college and work



A+ Goals

With the help of our contributors, A+ will continue to push forward with initiatives to improve Alabama's education system. Our key strategic goals include:

Expanding What Works

- **Extend** the reach of the Alabama Best Practices Center networks.
- **Expand** A+ College Ready to offer more students rigorous Advanced Placement classes.
- **Prepare** more students for Advanced Placement by expanding Laying the Foundation training for teachers to develop honors-level pre-AP courses with the College and Career Ready Standards.
- **Advocate** for increased investments in pre-k, Advanced Placement, ARI and AMSTI.

Encouraging Innovation

- **Partner** with the Woodlawn Foundation to establish the Woodlawn Innovation Network (WIN) to inspire, challenge and partner with educators to rethink traditional classrooms and schools in order to prepare students for college or a career.
- **Assist** schools that want to innovate for planning and implementation.
- **Encourage** innovation at the school and district level as schools develop innovation plans to receive waivers from state laws and policies that inhibit effective school management.

Raising the Bar

- **Promote** a focus on teacher recruitment and preparation.
- **Support** teachers implementing the new College and Career Ready Standards in math and English language arts.
- **Support** implementation of the State Board of Education's Plan 2020 that includes:
 - New student assessments
 - New accountability systems
 - New reports on school progress
 - New educator evaluations using student achievement data

Partnering for Progress

- **Advocate** for continuing the work of the Governor's College and Career Ready Task Force comprised of officials from across the educational spectrum (pre-k through graduate school and workforce) as they collaborate on solving systemic issues in Alabama's education system.
- **Increase** access and quality of pre-k through the Alabama School Readiness Alliance.
- **Expand** the opportunity for all students to graduate ready for real life through Alabama GRIT – Graduate Ready. Impact Tomorrow.

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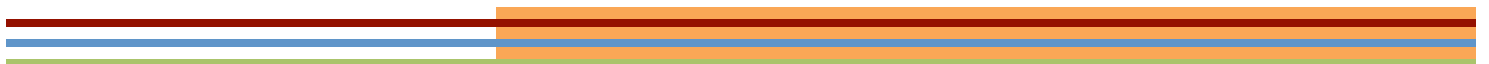
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