

## TEACHERS ANSWER CRITICS OF ALABAMA'S COLLEGE AND CAREER READY STANDARDS

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**CRITICS SAY:** *“The Common Core standards and guidelines, which have been in place since 2011, simply aren’t working for Alabama’s students. While there are some bright spots of local academic success, statewide, test scores have dropped since Common Core was implemented. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress Scores (NAEP), the gold standard of academic evaluation, in 2017 Alabama was: 45th in 4th grade math, 46th in 8th grade reading, and 50th in 8th grade math.”*

### FACT

Alabama is making progress in math and reading.<sup>1</sup> We’re not where we need to be yet, but we’re making progress. Particularly, we are making progress on closing the achievement gap. Alabama teachers and students need more consistency and support, not confusion and uncertainty, to continue this progress on the NAEP. Here’s the breakdown:

#### **Math:**

- **From 2015 to 2017**

- The percentage of Alabama students scoring at or above Proficient on the NAEP in 4th grade math **rose** to 32% from 26%, **faster than the national average**. *4th grade students have had the most exposure to the College and Career Ready Standards.*
- Alabama **reduced the gap** between Black and White students in 8th grade math to 26 points from 28 points.

#### **Reading:**

- **From 2009 to 2017**

- Alabama **increased the percentage** of students scoring at or above Proficient in 4th grade reading to 31% from 29%. *This was **greater than the national average** growth.*
- Alabama’s NAEP scores in 8th grade reading **climbed** to 258 from 255, *tracking the same progress nationwide.*

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/AL?cti=PgTab\\_OT&chort=2&sub=RED&sj=AL&fs=Grade&st=MN&year=2017R3&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single+Year&tss=2015R3-2017R3&sfj=NP](https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/AL?cti=PgTab_OT&chort=2&sub=RED&sj=AL&fs=Grade&st=MN&year=2017R3&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single+Year&tss=2015R3-2017R3&sfj=NP)

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**CRITICS SAY:** *“Only 18% of Alabama’s high school seniors are meeting the college-ready benchmark in all four subjects tested by the ACT.”*

**FACT** Nationwide, only 27% of students taking the ACT meet the college-ready benchmark in all four subjects.<sup>2</sup>

- **Alabama also gives the ACT to 100% of 11th graders to encourage more students to go to college**, but nationwide only about 60% of students take the ACT, so comparisons should be taken with a grain of salt.
- Giving the ACT to all students is beneficial for Alabama students, but it does lower our state’s average scores. It’s misleading to take those numbers out of context.
- In 2018, PARCA found that college remediation for students who graduated from Alabama high schools is down to 28% from 34.6% in 2011.<sup>3</sup>

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**CRITICS SAY:** *“The problem is the State School Board of Education and the Common Core standards, not with the hard-working teachers and local school districts.”*

**FACT** **SB119 would inflict maximum damage on hard-working teachers and local school districts while the State Board of Education could keep acting virtually the same way. Teachers and school systems need stability and support, not chaos and uncertainty from policymakers.**

- SB119 pulls the rug out from under teachers after they have worked hard since Alabama began implementing the College and Career Ready Standards.
- Much of the professional development that busy teachers have attended could be worthless if SB119 passes, **wasting tens of thousands of man-hours and millions of dollars.**
- Cash-strapped school systems could have to replace their textbooks and interim assessment systems, and the future of the new state assessment is in doubt.

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<sup>2</sup>[http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/cccr2017/CCCR\\_National\\_2017.pdf](http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/cccr2017/CCCR_National_2017.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://parcalabama.org/lower-percentage-of-college-freshmen-in-need-of-remedial-education/>

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**CRITICS SAY:** *“These standards are creating unnecessary paperwork for teachers and taking away valuable classroom time.”*

**FACT**

Teachers have always had standards as the foundation of their instruction. The Alabama College and Career Ready Standards are benchmarks outlining what students should know at the end of each grade level. Nothing more. They do not include any paperwork, nor is it right to say they “take away” classroom time.

- **For example:**
  - One 6th grade math standard says, “Understand the concept of a ratio, and use ratio language to describe a ratio relationship between two quantities. [6-RP1].”<sup>4</sup>
  - One 4th grade reading standard says, “Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text. [RL.4.2].”<sup>5</sup>

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**CRITICS SAY:** *“Since 2012, funding for the Education Foundation Program has increased over \$600 million while the number of public students in K-12 has actually dropped. The current Education Trust Fund (FY20) is \$6.63 billion, the largest education budget since 2008.”*

**FACT**

Since 2010, when the last Census was done and the current leadership took control of the State Legislature, Alabama’s population growth has lagged the rest of the nation. As a result, Alabama may lose a Congressional seat after the 2020 Census<sup>6</sup>. Meanwhile, Alabama’s population is getting older. As a result, there are fewer students.

- **Alabama is spending 15% less on per-pupil funding and teacher pay now than before the Great Recession in 2008** when adjusted for inflation, according to an analysis of state budgets and Census data by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.<sup>7</sup>
- **According to a 2015 study done by Augenblick, Palaich & Associates, Alabama underfunds its education system by roughly \$1,618-2,719 per child.**<sup>8</sup> Alabama would need to increase education funding by more than \$1 billion, using conservative estimates, to provide an adequate education for all students

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<sup>4</sup> <https://alex.state.al.us/standardAll.php?grade=6&subject=MA2015&summary=2>

<sup>5</sup> <https://alex.state.al.us/standardAll.php?grade=4&subject=ELA2015&summary=2>

<sup>6</sup> <https://amp.montgomeryadvertiser.com/amp/2342509002>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/12-states-spend-less-on-schools-now-than-before-the-recession/>

<sup>8</sup> APA Consulting, “Equity and Adequacy in Alabama Schools and Districts,” Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, 2015.

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**CRITICS SAY:** *“The replacement standards would have to be adopted pursuant to the Alabama Administrative Procedure Act which means future changes must go through Legislative review. Local teachers and superintendents will be involved in every step of the process to create new, more effective standards for Alabama’s schools.”*

**FACT** **The Republican-led State Board of Education is legally obligated to include Alabama teachers and other educators in its process of updating the Courses of Study.<sup>9</sup>**

- Everyone involved with developing state standards and courses of study is an Alabama citizen.
- Each member of each Course of Study Committee is selected by Alabama’s public officials elected to oversee Alabama education policy.
- **The current process for updating Alabama’s standards mandated by state law entrusts this process to Alabama educators. Why would we want to give this authority to part-time legislators?** That opens the door to political influence from people who may have no professional experience in education.

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**CRITICS SAY:** *“SB119 protects Alabama’s control over its own educational standards by prohibiting education entities and state officials from joining consortiums or other organization, when participation in the entity would cede any measure of control over any aspect of Alabama public education to that group.”*

**FACT** **The language of SB119 is so broad and unclear (even after being amended) that it could have vast and scary unintended consequences for all of Alabama’s education community, not just K-12.** According to Section 1(g) of SB119: “Any education entity or any state official shall not join any consortium or any other organization when participation in that consortium or organization would cede any measure of control over any aspect of Alabama public education to any such entity.”<sup>10</sup> Fewer than 24 hours after SB 119 was amended, Alabamians have already identified the possible consequences of the amended version of SB119:

- **NCAA:** The NCAA has certain requirements that its members must adhere to in order to maintain order in intercollegiate athletics. Does this mean Alabama’s universities and colleges would not be allowed to join the NCAA and participate in college sports? This could jeopardize the ability Auburn, Alabama, Troy and others from competing nationally. (continued on next page)

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<sup>9</sup> Alabama Code Title 16. Education § 16-35-1

<sup>10</sup> <http://alisondb.legislature.state.al.us/ALISON/SearchableInstruments/2019RS/PrintFiles/SB119-eng.pdf>

- **AdvancED:** School systems and colleges across the country are accredited through an organization called AdvancED, which sets certain minimum quality standards that schools must comply with in order to maintain accreditation. Does this mean Alabama school systems and colleges and universities would be forbidden from maintaining their accreditation? If school systems are unable to become accredited, it would jeopardize their graduates' chances of being accepted to college and damage the reputation of Alabama's schools and colleges.<sup>11</sup>
- **AHSAA:** The bill doesn't just affect membership in national organizations, it says "any organization." Like the NCAA, the Alabama High School Athletic Association has certain standards that schools must adhere to in order to participate in high school sports. Does this mean schools would not be allowed to participate in its sporting events?
- **Other Unintended Consequences:** It's likely there are other consortia or organizations that Alabama schools are members of that SB119 would have an impact on, but without time to study this issue, SB119 risks generating numerous unintended consequences.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/29/education/29clayton.html>