



# The Case for an Education Investment Council in Alabama

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**A+** Education Partnership works as an independent statewide organization to shape policy, improve teaching and learning, and engage communities in ongoing conversations about the best ways to create great schools for every child and build a bright future for Alabama.

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Published by **A+** Education Partnership, August 2012

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## Making the Case for an Education Investment Council in Alabama

by Thomas Rains, A+ Policy Director

This policy brief examines the need for an “Education Investment Council,” or a “P-20 council,” in Alabama. It outlines how P-20 councils are created, who is included in membership, overviews of other states’ plans, and what an Education Investment Council could accomplish in Alabama. The success of every Alabama citizen begins before

he or she enters school and depends on support every step of the way to adulthood. A collaborative partnership of education leaders from pre-school through graduate schools in Alabama (“grade 20”) and the business community is an absolute necessity for the future of Alabama’s workforce and leadership.

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## Introduction and Executive Summary

What do Alabamians want their educational system to accomplish? What are the results we want students to achieve, from pre-kindergarten all the way through Alabama’s graduate schools? In order to have the best educational system in the nation, Alabama must be able to answer these and other questions.

Alabama is one of only a handful of states without a collaborative body convening representatives of public education, state government, and the business community to create a comprehensive view of education from pre-kindergarten through college to the workplace.<sup>1</sup> Many stakeholders of education in Alabama recognize obstacles the state’s students currently face that deter them from success, and the time is right to establish such a body—often called a P-20 council, workforce development council, economic development council, or *education investment council*.

Upon taking office in January 2012, Alabama’s new State Superintendent, Dr. Tommy Bice, began working to develop a common, agreed-upon definition of what it means for high school graduates to exit the K-12 system “college- and career-ready.” This is a foundational step in establishing concrete and measurable goals for Alabama’s educational system, but this itself is difficult to determine. Alabama’s two- and four-year colleges and universities do not have a common definition of what is meant by “remedial” education.

In the summer of 2011, Gov. Robert Bentley created the Alabama Economic Development Alliance, which released a strategic plan called *Accelerate Alabama* in January 2012. One of the strategies, outlined in the plan to develop and retain skilled workers in Alabama, is to “Develop [an Alabama Community College System] strategic plan based on business and student needs aligned with current and

future job opportunities across Alabama.”<sup>2</sup> This proposal is an important step in aligning Alabama’s educational system to meet the state’s needs, but to be effective it must go further and equally include input from representatives across the educational pipeline, not just the community colleges.

Also in January 2012, the State Board of Education’s Career and Technical Education (CTE) Commission of 65 members from local and statewide business and education organizations released its recommendations.

The commission identified as a challenge the lack of coordination and alignment among education, business, and government, as well as a lack of pathways for everyone in school systems. The commission’s first recommendation is to create a high-

level state business/education advisory council that can work to develop a five-year strategic plan for pre-k through “grade 20” education (graduate schools) in Alabama. It recommends this commission

consist of members appointed by the governor and include a cross-section of business leaders from each of the 16 CTE clusters, all levels of public education, and a representative from economic development, among others.<sup>3</sup>

*What will it take to make all Alabama students college- and career-ready?*

<sup>1</sup> (Alabama Commission on Higher Education 2010)

<sup>2</sup> (Boyette Strategic Advisors 2012)

<sup>3</sup> The 16 clusters are: Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources; Architecture and Construction; Arts, Audio-Video Technology, and Communications; Business, Management, and Administration; Education and Training; Finance; Government and Public Administration; Health Science; Hospitality and Tourism; Human Services; Information Technology; Law, Public Safety, Corrections, and Security; Manufacturing; Marketing, Sales, and Service; Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics; Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics.

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In 2009, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) adopted a statewide strategic plan for higher education, *Forging Strategic Alliances: 2009-2014*.<sup>4</sup> One element of that plan was creating a PK-20 council, but in order for such a body to be effective it must include the other parties involved: representatives from pre-k, K-12, and the business community.

These councils are commonly called “P-20” councils because of their focus on the entire education pipeline from pre-kindergarten through graduate school (“grade 20”). They provide excellent opportunities for stakeholders of a state’s economic development work to discuss education and workforce development issues in order to solve large problems for which no one entity is responsible. In short, they facilitate smart investments in education. In Alabama, the Education Investment Council could open the lines of communication among employers, policymakers, educators, and community stakeholders. This encourages stakeholder collaboration and offers opportunities to find solutions and set goals across agencies and sectors.

Broadly, P-20 councils work toward alignment of a state’s educational system and issues related to it, such as identifying “breaks” in the educational pipeline (points where students are more likely to drop out, etc.) and developing consensus around solutions.<sup>5</sup> Specific councils focus on specific issues in their states, but often they address the following areas, among other things:

- Increasing high school graduation rates
- Increasing career and technical education opportunities for high school and postsecondary students
- Reducing remediation rates in postsecondary institutions

- Making the transition from preschool to kindergarten, and from high school into postsecondary life, whether it’s college or a career
- Increasing enrollment in postsecondary institutions
- Increasing completion of associate’s and bachelor’s degrees

Effective P-20 councils bring high-level educational leaders from pre-kindergarten, K-12, higher education, and career / technology programs together with political, business, and community leaders. Generally, councils are created through legislation or an executive order by the governor that outlines the membership and council guidelines. Members set specific goals and work to find ways to meet those goals.

The most efficient way to move forward in Alabama would be for Gov. Bentley to charge an education investment council with defining goals for the P-20 education system. This group should adopt the ultimate goal of aligning Alabama’s educational

system from pre-kindergarten through technical and graduate schools to best offer students the opportunities to fulfill their goals.

*The Alabama Education Investment Council could open the lines of communication among employers, policymakers, educators, and community stakeholders.*



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<sup>4</sup> (Alabama Commission on Higher Education 2009)

<sup>5</sup> (Zinth, What defines “success” for a P-20 council? 2010)

## Alabama's Need for an Education Investment Council

Alabama faces challenges in adapting its educational system to prepare tomorrow's citizens adequately for the changing global economy, and this provides the ideal time for the state to create an education investment council. In 2010, the state took an important step to increase the rigor of Alabama's K-12 standards through the Alabama College and Career Ready Initiative (ACCRI). However, in order to fully implement the new ACCRI standards and prepare students for college and/or a career, all stakeholders across the education spectrum must collaborate and be involved to make decisions that will affect the welfare of students. An education investment council provides this opportunity.

In order to remain competitive, Alabama's educational, governmental, and business leaders must collaborate to ensure a more effective and efficient educational future for students. It is past time for Alabama to have a seamless system for evaluating and supporting the effectiveness of education from pre-k through graduate school. This will include fully implementing the ACCRI, in addition to numerous other initiatives to improve the overall educational pipeline in Alabama. The education investment council could lead that effort.

*Among the 40 occupations expected to see the highest increase in demand in Alabama, only 8 call for low skill levels.*

### A Changing Global Economy

According to one analysis, in order for the United States as a whole to return to full employment by 2020, it must become more competitive globally and become more effective matching its citizens to jobs. Under current trends the U.S. will not have enough workers with the right education to fill new jobs created.<sup>6</sup>

The global economy demands that public schools and colleges be acutely aware of and receptive to employers' needs so that Alabama remains economically competitive. To ensure the success of its future, Alabama must look forward and prepare its students for the economy and job market of their future, not the economy of the present or their parents' past.

Low-skilled jobs are disappearing from Alabama, and employers are looking for highly skilled workers. Among the 40 occupations expected to see the highest increase in demand in Alabama from 2008 to 2018, only 8 are low-skill occupations.<sup>7</sup> The vast majority of occupations expected to decline in demand in Alabama are low-skilled jobs.<sup>8</sup> The top five occupations listed in Table 1 that are expected to see the largest increases in need are high-skill occupations.

Creating a sufficient supply of workers to meet the demand for these growing high-skill industries will require a concerted effort on behalf of educators, policy-makers, and employers. An education investment council can ensure all partners are aware of Alabama's economic needs so that students have access to the classes, workshops, internships, and educational opportunities they need in order to acquire the necessary skills to fill these roles.

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<sup>6</sup> (Maniyika, et al. 2011)

<sup>7</sup> (Alabama Department of Industrial Relations, Labor Market Information Division 2009)

<sup>8</sup> (Alabama Department of Industrial Relations, Labor Market Information Division 2011)

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**Table 1: Alabama's Changing Economy: Top 5 Jobs with the Largest Expected Percent Gains and Losses, 2008-2018. All gaining occupations are high-skill positions that require an associate's degree or higher.<sup>1</sup>**

Gaining Occupations	% Gains Expected	Losing Occupations	% Losses Expected
Computer Software Engineers, Applications	+44.48%	Photographic Processing Machine Operators	-43.48%
Network Systems and Data Communications Analysts	+44.44%	File Clerks	-39.51%
Computer Systems Analysts	+25.32%	Textile Knitting and Weaving Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	-39.09%
Computer Software Engineer, Systems Software	+25.53%	Textile Winding, Twisting, and Drawing Out Machine Operators	-38.86%
Management Analysts	+22.72%	Textile Bleaching and Dyeing Machine Operators and Tenders	-37.18%

## Alabama's College Graduation Rates

Given the increasing proportion of high-skilled jobs that make up Alabama's economy, raising the percentage of college graduates must be a part of the state's preparation for the changing global economy. **Only 23.1% of students who enroll in Alabama's public four-year colleges and universities graduate on time with a bachelor's degree (within a 100% timeframe, or four years), and only 12.1% of two-year college students seeking certificates finish on time.**<sup>9</sup> As Table 2 shows, graduation rates are still low for 150% of the normal time (six years for a bachelor's degree, and three years for an associate's degree) required to obtain a degree or certificate, respectively.

The majority of these dropouts occur among freshmen who enrolled in Alabama's public institutions (both two-year and four-year) in Fall 2010, only 62% remained a year later, and only 6% of those students transferred to another public institution in Alabama.<sup>10</sup>

The 17% rate for two-year colleges includes all students who enrolled, many of whom may not have intended to pursue a degree and are enrolled through employment certificate programs.

A possible cause of these low retention rates is discussed on page 9.

**Table 2: Low Higher Education Retention: 150% of Normal Time Graduation Rates in Alabama Public Universities and Colleges, 2009<sup>1</sup>**

	6-year Graduation Rates for 2003 Cohort in four-year colleges and universities	3-year Graduation Rates for 2006 Cohort in two-year institutions
<b>All Students</b>	47.5%	17.0%
White	55.4%	21.7%
Black	30.3%	17.1%
Hispanic	49.8%	21.4%
Asian	51.3%	23.4%

<sup>9</sup> (Marks 2011)

<sup>10</sup> (Alabama Commission on Higher Education 2012)



## Remediation Rates in Postsecondary Institutions

In 2010, one out of three Alabama high school graduates who enrolled in the state’s public colleges and universities was not prepared for college-level work (see Table 3). Among students enrolled in the state’s two-year colleges, nearly one out of two was not prepared. In order to compensate for this, these students had to enroll in remedial classes to master material they were supposed to learn in high school. However, “remedial” classes vary in Alabama’s two- and four-year colleges and universities, and there is no commonly accepted definition across the state for what should be considered “remedial” education. Each school determines its own definition, which can lead high school teachers and students to receive mixed messages about what is an adequate level of course mastery, since students are still subject to the admission and retention standards at the institutions they choose.

The cause of the high remediation rate can be debated (generational poverty, poorly trained teachers, lack of parental involvement, accepting under-prepared high school graduates into post-secondary institutions, low expectations of students, etc.), but if higher education institutions can communicate more clearly academic expectations for entering freshmen, high schools can better prepare them for the next step. Otherwise, everyone pays the price.

Remediation forces taxpayers to pay for the same job twice, but research also shows that students who take remedial classes tend to earn less over the course of their lives. Further, it makes it more difficult to graduate when students have to play catch-up with their peers. From the 2003-04 school year to the 2008-09 school year, the rate of both associate’s and bachelor’s degrees awarded by Alabama’s public and private colleges and universities slipped. For bachelor’s degrees it dropped to 82.2% from 82.5%, while for associate’s degrees the drop was worse—to 85.7% from 86.8%.<sup>11</sup>

In 2008, remediating students in Alabama cost the state \$51 million in reduced earnings.<sup>12</sup> With budget deficits becoming perennial problems, and searches for cost savings becoming annual quests, there are few public investment options safer than increasing the effectiveness of existing programs through greater communication across the educational systems.

This persistent need for remediation at the college level indicates a disconnect in the path from high school to postsecondary institutions. Generally, there is no widespread effort to align high school courses to college curricula. While Advanced Placement tests and International Baccalaureate programs provide the only clear connection, these programs typically do not reach the 80% of high school

**Table 3: Percentage of Alabama Public High School Graduates at State's Public Colleges Enrolled in Remedial Classes, Fall 2011 Semester<sup>1</sup>**

	Two-Year Colleges	Four-Year Colleges	Total
<b>Math Remediation Only</b>	21.15%	10.26%	16.07%
<b>English Remediation Only</b>	8.32%	3.93%	6.27%
<b>Both Math and English Remediation</b>	20.10%	3.29%	12.26%
<b>Total</b>	<b>49.57%</b>	<b>17.48%</b>	<b>34.60%</b>

<sup>11</sup> (Marks 2011)

<sup>12</sup> (Alabama School Readiness Alliance n.d.)

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students who do not attend four-year colleges.<sup>13</sup>

Further, recent reports highlight the ineffectiveness and costliness of remedial classes and suggest that colleges need to rethink remediation. Less than 10% of community college students nationwide who started in remedial classes complete requirements for a degree within three years.

In four-year colleges and universities, only slightly more than one third of students who begin in remedial classes complete a bachelor's degree in six years.<sup>14</sup> Despite this, many of these students are still saddled with debt, even if they do not graduate. More students borrow money today than a decade ago, and, among those who borrow, a larger percentage drops out without completing a degree. Borrowers who drop out of college are four times more likely to default on their loans.<sup>15</sup>

Additionally, the need for remediation highlights a lack of teachers sufficiently prepared by higher education to be successful in their careers. A P-20 council would have the ability to take a broad look at the educational pipeline in Alabama to find weaknesses and breaks in it, and determine ways to address them, which will pay dividends in the long run.

## High School Graduation Rates

In the 2010-11 school year, just over two out of every three Alabama high school students graduated (on time), with a four-year cohort graduation rate of 72%.<sup>16</sup> Among Alabama's peer states in the region, this was higher than Georgia's rate of 67% and Louisiana's rate of 71%.

However, Alabama lagged behind Arkansas (74%), North Carolina (78%), and Virginia (87%) among southern states that have reported their new four-year cohort graduation rate.<sup>17</sup> Under a different calculation in the 2008-09 school year, Alabama's Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate was 69.9%, while the national rate that year was 75.5%.<sup>18</sup> Among all 16-member states of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), the rate was 74.6%.<sup>19</sup>

Students prepare for high school in middle school, but middle schools are failing to prepare their students for success in high school. A recent SREB report examining the causes of low graduation rates calls for middle grades to prepare students for rigorous high school courses instead of serving as a "weigh station for adolescents."<sup>20</sup> According to SREB's survey of 10,000 middle-grade teachers, only 53% said that preparing students with knowledge and skills for college preparatory courses is a "very

important goal," and only 8% of local school board members consider preparing students for college as their schools' top priority.

Like remediation rates in postsecondary education, a low high school graduation rate exemplifies breaks in Alabama's educational pipeline. A P-20 council could work to solve this, and help Alabama's educators define "what it means for students to be ready at the end of the eighth grade to begin challenging high school courses," which the SREB says its states have not done.<sup>21</sup>

*In 2008, remediating Alabama students cost the state \$51 million in direct costs and \$29 million in reduced earnings.*

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<sup>13</sup> (Kirst and Usdan 2009)

<sup>14</sup> (Adams 2012)

<sup>15</sup> (Nguyen 2012)

<sup>16</sup> (Bice 2012)

<sup>17</sup> (Bice 2012)

<sup>18</sup> (Lenard 2011)

<sup>19</sup> SREB states include: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

<sup>20</sup> (Bottoms 2011)

<sup>21</sup> (Bottoms 2011)

## Early Childhood Education and the Achievement Gap

For many children in Alabama, the achievement gap may begin before students enter kindergarten. However, unlike other states, Alabama does not currently collect or report statewide data on school readiness. Additionally, while many Alabama schools conduct kindergarten-readiness assessments to inform instruction, there is not a uniform process for this.

Numerous reports show that high quality early education significantly reduces the achievement gap at school entry and beyond. Pre-k for “disadvantaged children can greatly increase their cognitive abilities, leading to long-term increases in achievement and school success,” according to one report. “In addition, programs can have positive effects on children’s long-term social and emotional development.”<sup>22</sup>

Science confirms what common sense tells us: a child’s experiences during the first five years of life can sow the seeds for school success (or failure). While 90% of brain development occurs before the age of six, few public dollars are invested in programs that reach young children.<sup>23</sup> As a result, research has clearly documented that at-risk children begin kindergarten with significantly lower cognitive skills than their more advantaged counterparts.<sup>24</sup>

*Alabama’s state-funded, voluntary pre-k program only reaches 7% of the state’s 4-year-olds.*

Despite this, Alabama’s state-funded pre-k program, First Class: Alabama’s Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program, only reaches 7% of the state’s four-year-olds, and no three-year-olds are included in the program.<sup>25</sup> Other early learning programs exist in Alabama and vary from high-quality pre-k to local daycare centers. These are provided through a variety of sources that include federally funded Head Start programs, local school district-provided pre-k programs, and private programs run either as a business or through organizations like churches and community centers.<sup>26</sup>

Alabama cannot properly identify students who may need extra help in elementary classrooms—or those who might benefit from interventions to prevent them from dropping out in high school—without accurate information. A P-20 council in Ala-

bama could address the issue of school readiness by advocating for a statewide school-readiness assessment that sheds light on the need for additional state investments in early childhood education

and helps teachers and policy makers better understand what they must do to serve students who come into school at a disadvantage.

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<sup>22</sup> (Molnar, et al. 2002)

<sup>23</sup> (Lombroso 1998)

<sup>24</sup> (Burkam and Lee 2002)

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<sup>25</sup> (Alabama School Readiness Alliance n.d.)

<sup>26</sup> (Hume 2011)



## Fundamental Elements of an Education Investment Council

An education investment council, or a P-20 council, is a body of representatives from education, government, business, and the community. It is convened to increase a state's ability to properly and successfully educate students. States handle the purview and specific goals of councils differently, but the overall concept remains the same.

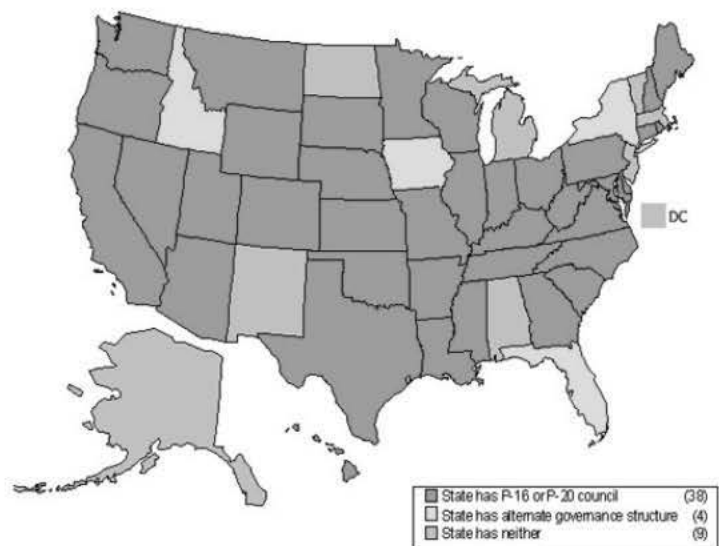
### Scope

The scope of education included in the council often determines the name. Some states include pre-kindergarten (P, or PK), while others begin at kindergarten (K). On the upper end, some councils include only college ("grades" 13-16), while others extend their focus through graduate and professional schooling (through "grade" 20). For example, a P-20 council covers pre-k through graduate school, but a K-16 council would focus only on kindergarten through college.

Currently in Alabama, the State Board of Education (SBOE) is similar to a "K-14" since it has authority over both K-12 schools and the two-year college system under the Department of Postsecondary Education. However, this is not equivalent to a P-20 council and does not provide a sufficient alternative.

Pre-k programs are provided both by the Office of School Readiness in the Department of Children's Affairs and also through some public K-12 school systems. Respective boards of trustees govern Alabama's various four-year institutions.

A P-20 council typically is larger than Alabama's eight-member SBOE, includes members who represent different interests, does not determine membership through elections, and—significantly—lacks governing authority over specific government departments and agencies. Often, P-20s function best when they include decision-makers from different agencies who can return to their offices and implement recommendations of the P-20 council.<sup>27</sup>



<sup>27</sup> (Zinth, Does a P-20 council need to have authority to enact policy changes? 2010)  
--US map chart from *Education Week*, "States with P-16 or P-20 Councils," Stats of the Week, May 12, 2010, [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org)

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## Goals

Alabama's education investment council would need to set its own specific goals and indicators of success. However, it is important for members to enter the meetings with similar expectations. The most effective councils focus on troubled areas, set challenging but achievable goals to solve the problems, and use the following guidelines:

- **Stay focused.** Determine five areas or fewer of activity on which the council will focus.
- **Be ambitious, but realistic.** Choose areas that are clear challenges to students' success, but solvable, (e.g. remediation rates in two-year colleges).
- **Leverage the group's ability.** Focus on work that an individual entity, department, or organization could not address in isolation from other state-level actors, (e.g. employers cannot find enough workers with skills needed to fill entry-level jobs).
- **Be data-informed.** Use data to direct attention to areas identified through the use of longitudinal data, (e.g., creating a longitudinal data system is a task of many P-20 councils).
- **Set measurable goals for state progress with ambitious yet achievable timelines.** Focus on state-level progress, and use data to set goals, (e.g., "Increase the graduation rate by 15% by 2015").
- **Measure and report progress.** Set incremental goals tied to the overall agenda, (e.g., "Increase the graduation rate by 5% annually over the next three years").
- **Ensure members are collaborative and accountable.** Set expectations and incentives to ensure that members participate, collaborate, add value, and avoid duplicative work.<sup>28</sup>

Research shows that P-20 councils succeed when members set agendas and goals while focused on the following question: **"What can I do through this convening of systems that I would be unable to do within my own agency or institution?"**<sup>29</sup> Some popular areas of focus common among P-20s are:

- Transitions from high school to postsecondary institutions
- Workforce development/planning
- Teacher development (Often in specific areas, such as STEM fields)
- Creating P-20 data systems
- School readiness (pre-k) to prepare for transitions from early childhood programs into kindergarten and the early grades
- Teacher shortages and retention
- Eliminating achievement gaps
- Reducing remediation in postsecondary institutions<sup>30, 31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> (Dounay, State P-16 and P-20 Council Considerations 2008)

<sup>29</sup> (Dounay, Landmines P-16/P-20 Councils Encounter 2008)

<sup>30</sup> (Dounay, Key Features of P-16 and P-20 Councils in Midwestern States 2008)

<sup>31</sup> (Zinth, What are some examples of policy areas in which coordinating entities have achieved success/been effective in their efforts to align across systems? 2011)

## Indicators

In order to measure success, the council must be data-informed to set priorities and make decisions. There are a variety of indicators an education investment council could use, and some are already in use at the local level by the Mobile County Education Commission discussed below.

Indicators can be identified from reliable sources of information, and—as a whole— should accurately reflect the entire P-20 spectrum. Some possible examples of indicators for Alabama and their sources are outlined in Table 4, but council members should determine specifics.

**Table 4: Possible Indicators for an Alabama P-20 Council, and Respective Sources of Data**

Possible Indicators	Sources of Data
Rate of 4-year-olds enrolled in high-quality pre-k programs	Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE), Office of School Readiness, Alabama School Readiness Alliance (ASRA)
Kindergarten-readiness	National Conference of State Legislators
Achievement rates in 4 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> grades compared to the nation	National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)
Achievement gaps between different socioeconomic groups	NAEP, Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (PARCA)
Rate of high school students receiving passing scores on Advanced Placement tests.	The College Board, ALSDE, A+ College Ready
High school graduation rate	ALSDE, PARCA, Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)
Rate of remediation in two-year and four-year colleges	Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE)
Two-year and four-year college retention rates	ACHE
Two-year and four-year college graduation rates	ACHE
Two-year college transfer and licensure rates	ACHE, Alabama Community College System
State employment rate of Alabama’s college graduates in major field of study	ACHE, Department of Industrial Relations

An important aspect of convening an education investment council is that it can identify other data that are not currently collected and sources of data that are readily available. In Alabama, this may include data on the numbers of bachelor’s degrees awarded in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields, or the number of high school graduates each year who enter the job market with specific career certifications.

## Frequency of Meetings

P-20 councils need to meet often enough to maintain momentum for progress. In the states with councils, 29 states meet at least quarterly. Likewise, in Alabama, the Mobile County Education Commission meets quarterly. Allowing too much time to pass between meetings can lead to members losing a sense of urgency to accomplish tasks and possibly forgetting what was addressed at a previous meeting.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> (Dounay, Landmines P-16/P-20 Councils Encounter 2008)





## Members of an Education Investment Council

### Council Size

P-20 councils vary in size, from seven (North Carolina) to 52 (California), but most are in the range of 25-35 members.<sup>33</sup> Too few members can mean key players in the state's educational system are not involved, which can lead to ineffectiveness of the council or duplicative efforts due to a lack of communication with the entire educational community. Too many members can cause problems defining the mission and vision of the council, and this creates more opportunity for conflicting points of view that could slow the council's work.<sup>34</sup>

### Choosing the Right Members

While members would determine the council's specific mission, a council's success depends on having the right members in the right roles on the council. All members should focus on recommending policy changes to the Legislature and other governing bodies, but specifics differ. Public sector leaders are generally responsible for ensuring recommended changes are carried out, while business and community leaders can use their voices to identify issues on the ground and advise on possible solutions.<sup>35</sup>

Effective councils include high-level decision-makers, not their representatives. A council with only proxies of decision-makers cannot be as effective as a council with the actual leaders involved. Further, the council should have a balanced mix of representatives from different areas: pre-k, K-12, postsecondary, higher education, the executive and legislative branches, and business and community leaders.<sup>36</sup>

In order to ensure proper focus, some councils include an executive council with permanent *ex offi-*

*cio* members. These executive members can then add and remove provisional members with specific interests in the issues being studied. Possible members of an Alabama education investment council executive committee include the following:

- Governor
- State Superintendent
- A selection of presidents of Alabama's four-year colleges, *including representatives of the state's historically black colleges and universities*
- Chancellor of the Department of Post-Secondary Education
- Selected members of the State Board of Education
- Executive Director of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education
  - Commissioner of the Department of Children's Affairs
  - Selected representatives of the business community
- Speaker of the Alabama House of Representatives
- President Pro Tem of the Alabama State Senate
- Chairs of the following legislative committees:
  - *House Education Ways and Means Committee*
  - *House Education Policy Committee*
  - *Senate Education Finance and Taxation Committee*
  - *Senate Education Committee*

*An effective P-20 council has a balanced mix of representatives, and includes high-level decision-makers—not their representatives.*

<sup>33</sup> (Education Commission of the States 2008)

<sup>34</sup> (Dounay, Landmines P-16/P-20 Councils Encounter 2008)

<sup>35</sup> (Dounay, Landmines P-16/P-20 Councils Encounter 2008)

<sup>36</sup> (Dounay, Landmines P-16/P-20 Councils Encounter 2008)

# Alabama Education Investment Council

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Provisional members of an education investment council could be appointed to work on specific issues in which they have a vested interest. Some of these members might include:

- Executive Director of Alabama Association of School Boards
- Executive Director of the School Superintendents of Alabama
- Executive Secretary of the Alabama Education Association
- President of the Alabama Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
- Representatives from community organizations
- Representative of the Armed Forces
- Representative of the Department of Corrections
- Representatives of Metropolitan P-20 councils (e.g. the Mobile County Education Commission)
- Representatives of education and economic coalitions
- Other education and economic experts, such as representatives of the Alabama Mathematics, Science, Technology, and Engineering Coalition (AMSTEC)

If the Alabama Education Investment Council included an executive committee, it would be important to ensure permanent members of the council are high-level decision-makers looking at broad issues across the education spectrum, not members focused on special interests issues.

Further, some councils include tiers of decision-makers and on-the-ground workers. Georgia's council includes two tiers like this. The top tier includes CEO-level members, and the second tier includes two representatives from each agency.<sup>37</sup> This keeps decision-makers involved, but adds on-the-ground representatives who focus on implementation.

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<sup>37</sup> (Dounay, Landmines P-16/P-20 Councils Encounter 2008)

## Creation of an Education Investment Council

### Methods of Creation

Education investment councils, or P-20 councils, are formed typically by either legislation or an executive order by the governor.<sup>38</sup> However, it is up to a state's political system to determine the best method. (For example, Kentucky's State Board of Education and the Council on Postsecondary Education created that state's P-16 State Council.<sup>39</sup>) Depending on the political climate, one method may be more effective than the other.

Due to the power of many special interests in Alabama, an executive order to create an education investment council would likely be more successful than legislation, as the previous attempts discussed below have shown. However, when created by executive order, councils can struggle to survive when the creating governor leaves office unless involved parties make a concerted effort to maintain the council. In Colorado (discussed below), the outgoing governor dissolved the P-20 council his administration created by executive order, and the new governor created a new council by executive order on his first day in office.

*P-20 members focus on the question: "What can I do through this convening of systems that I would be unable to do within my own agency?"*

### Staffing and Funding

Councils work best when supported by dedicated staff. This should be addressed at the creation. About half of the states with P-20 councils provide funding through the legislature, but other councils are funded from business or foundation support.<sup>40</sup> Some use a combination of both, and others have no allocated funding.<sup>41</sup>

Given the amount of preparation needed for successful meetings and execution of plans, there is

an advantage to having one or more staff members dedicated to handling the work of a council after a meeting adjourns. Research shows that having one full-time employee dedicate half of his or her time to a P-20 council prevents the council's work from being delayed or put off.<sup>42</sup>

Additionally, there are opportunities for funding portions of a P-20 council's work. For example, under the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010, state councils can apply for grants that would fund the development of a P-16 data system.<sup>43</sup>

### Previous Efforts in Alabama

In the 2011 legislative session, Sen. Del Marsh introduced legislation to create a P-20 council that was unsuccessful.<sup>44</sup> This bill thoroughly outlined the membership of a council and could serve as a model for an executive order. However, the bill allowed for several high-ranking members to send their designees on their behalf. Best practice suggests that the key members who hold authority must attend council meetings, rather than send their designees or vote by proxy. This helps to ensure council effectiveness.

In 2008, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, led by its executive director, began its push for a P-20 Initiative and unsuccessfully sought \$1.5 million in funding from the Legislature. This amount was projected to fund an electronic transcript system that would unite all levels of education in real-time application. This initiative would have included both a council and a longitudinal data system to track student progress from pre-k through graduate school and create electronic transcripts.<sup>45</sup> The longitudinal data system would have expanded

<sup>38</sup> (The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education 2009)

<sup>39</sup> (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education 2011)

<sup>40</sup> (Dounay, Landmines P-16/P-20 Councils Encounter 2008)

<sup>41</sup> (Dounay, Key Features of P-16 and P-20 Councils in Midwestern States 2008)

<sup>42</sup> (Dounay, Landmines P-16/P-20 Councils Encounter 2008)

<sup>43</sup> (Public Law 110-69 America Competes Act Text of legislation 2011)

<sup>44</sup> (Marsh 2011)

<sup>45</sup> (Whisenhunt 2008)

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ACHE's ability to collect and access data beyond its current capabilities of 9<sup>th</sup> grade through graduate school. After its creation, which would include nominations and selections of council members, the P-20 council would have met with the State Board of Education, ACHE, and other interested bodies as it determined its direction and goals to improve data collection, create electronic transcripts, and increase cooperation between school districts and colleges.<sup>46</sup> The following year, ACHE adopted its five-year plan, *Forging Strategic Alliances: 2009-2014*, which includes establishing a P-20 council as one of its five priorities.<sup>47</sup>

In the late 1990s, University of Alabama System Chancellor Thomas Meredith and Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs Charles Nash initiated interest in the idea of an Alabama P-20 council.<sup>48</sup>

State Superintendent Ed Richardson was also a leader in this move to establish a council. After examining how a council might benefit the state, Meredith and Nash convened key stakeholders for meetings, but the political environment at the time was not conducive to the creation of a P-20 council.

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<sup>46</sup> (Alabama Commission on Higher Education 2008)

<sup>47</sup> (Alabama Commission on Higher Education 2009)

<sup>48</sup> (Nash 2012)

## State and Local Examples

Examples abound of P-20s, and below are sketches of four states' P-20 councils, followed by a summary of Colorado's former P-20. Additionally,

Mobile has created a successful P-20 council on a local level, exemplifying what can be done in Alabama.

**Table 5: Examples of P-20 Councils Origins and Compositions**<sup>49</sup>

	Arizona	Connecticut	Indiana	Missouri
<b>Name:</b>	The Governor's P-20 Council	Connecticut's PK-20 Council	Indiana's Education Roundtable	Missouri P-20 Council
<b>Created by:</b>	<i>Executive Order</i>	<i>Statute</i>	<i>Statute</i>	<i>Statute</i>
<b>Notable Membership Requirements:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governor</li> <li>• Supt. of Public Instruction</li> <li>• State Board of Ed. member</li> <li>• Board of Regents member</li> <li>• Pres. of 3 state universities</li> <li>• Chancellor of a community college</li> <li>• Tribal representatives</li> <li>• Business representatives</li> <li>• At least 2 reps. from the early childhood education community</li> <li>• Not more than 4 legislators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sec. of Education</li> <li>• Pres. of the State Board of Education</li> <li>• Pres. (or their designees) of public institutions of higher education</li> <li>• Chairs of the House and Senate Ed. Committees</li> <li>• Rep. from the governor's office</li> <li>• Rep. from the state's Chamber of Commerce</li> </ul>	<p>The number of reps. from P-12 and postsecondary institutions must equal the number of business and community reps.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commissioner of Education</li> <li>• Commissioner of Higher Education</li> <li>• State Board of Ed. President</li> <li>• Chair of Coordinating Board for Higher Ed.</li> <li>• Director of Economic Development</li> </ul>

<sup>49</sup> (Education Commission of the States 2008)

## Colorado and its Accomplishments

The state of Colorado had a P-20 Education Coordinating Council under Gov. Bill Ritter from 2007-2010 that succeeded on many fronts in reforming the education system and aligning it for the global economy.<sup>50</sup> Gov. Ritter created the council by executive order to fulfill campaign promises on education. At the outset, the governor charged the council with turning recommendations into “concrete legislative action,” and members were selected from throughout the educational systems and the state.

The council included six subcommittees focused on different aspects of pre-k through graduate school education: P-3, Educator, Dropout, Data & Accountability, Preparation & Transitions, and Systems Accountability. Its victories were multifaceted:

- **Early Childhood:**

The council’s work helped include in the state’s pre-k program an additional 6,000 children and expand full-day kindergarten across the state. Additionally, the P-3 subcommittee supported the work of creating unique student identifiers (dis-

cussed below) for each enrolled child. These identifiers follow students through the public education system using a longitudinal data system, while protecting their identities and allowing for greater analysis of the education system.

- **Data & Accountability:** The council spearheaded the creation of a P-20 data system allowing all state agencies to link their education data. This allowed for a longitudinal view of each student’s progress, while protecting students’ privacy. In addition to having the ability to track students’ progress, a longitudinal data system also allows for greater analysis of Colorado’s education system to ensure it is serving taxpayers effectively.

*The Colorado P-20 Council spearheaded the creation of a longitudinal data system linking all state agency education data, allowing greater analysis to ensure the state’s educational system serves taxpayers effectively.*

- **Educator and Education Workforce Development:** The Educator subcommittee focused on “recognizing, increasing and rewarding Colorado’s more effective educators.” It revised the state’s performance-based teaching standards to include the use of socioeconomic and cultural diversity of students, the needs of English language learners, and special needs students in teacher evaluations. Additionally, it consolidated alternative teacher preparation routes into a single alternative route.

- **Post-Secondary Access and Success:** A key component of most P-20 councils is a focus on transitioning from high school into post-secondary education, and Colorado was no exception. The council recommended making post-secondary preparation a key purpose of the P-12 system, while defining

“post-secondary options” as including career and technical training, community colleges, and four-year colleges. Additionally, the council pushed to increase the number of college and career counselors in low-income schools.

- **Dropout Prevention:**

The council’s work led to the creation of the Office of Dropout Prevention and Student Re-Engagement in the Colorado Department of Education. It brought increased attention to the dropout rate and convened the first Colorado Conference on Dropouts that included more than 400 experts, policymakers, and stakeholders.

- **Comprehensive P-20 Alignment:** The council’s work culminated in the passage of the Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K), which passed both the state Senate and House overwhelmingly with only a handful of nay votes. Among its successes, CAP4K led to the creation of descriptions of what it means to be school-ready, post-secondary-ready, and workforce-ready.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> (Lopez 2010)

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<sup>51</sup> (Lopez 2010)

After Ritter's council was dissolved following the end of his term in January 2011, Colorado's new Governor, John Hickenlooper, created a new P-20 called the Governor's Education Leadership Council as one of the four executive orders he signed on his first day in office.<sup>52</sup> Members of the new P-20 council were named in the fall of 2011 and include legislators, the lieutenant governor, early learning representatives, K-12 and postsecondary leaders.<sup>53</sup> At least seven members appointed to Hickenlooper's council previously served on Ritter's council, and the new council adopted similar goals. The new council will measure its success based on its ability to:

- Improve school readiness for all children
- Reduce dropout rates
- Close achievement gaps and degree attainment gaps
- Reduce remediation rates for higher education students
- Increase student retention and graduation rates
- Increase the number of degrees and certificates awarded
- Remove barriers for entry into college and the performance of graduates<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> (Zinth, A new P-20 council in Colorado 2011)

<sup>53</sup> (Zinth, Colorado: The "P" is represented on new P-20 council appointments 2011)

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<sup>54</sup> (State of Colorado 2012)

# Alabama Education Investment Council

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## Mobile County Education Commission

Mobile has a version of a local P-20 council, the Mobile County Education Commission. Created and supported with the help of the Mobile Area Education Foundation, the Education Commission is made up of community members who monitor and report progress in the school system with a mission of “ensuring that every child is prepared for entrance into college or a career upon high school graduation.”<sup>55</sup> The Commission has three areas of focus:

- **Readiness:** Every child enters school ready to successfully learn in the K-12 system
- **K-20:** Students are prepared for post-secondary education and the workforce
- **Educator Preparation/Professional Development:** Teachers, counselors, and administrators are well prepared and educated to work successfully in initiatives of Readiness, K-12, and Disconnected Youth.

To measure their progress in these three areas, the Commission uses 14 indicators, which include literacy rates for kindergarten students, standardized test scores for 3<sup>rd</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades, Advanced Placement rates in high school, high school graduation rates, post-secondary enrollment, remediation, first-year retention, and completion rates, among others.<sup>56</sup>

Commission members meet quarterly and bring their respective data to meetings for the group to track progress. Among the members are representatives from:

- AT&T
- AUSTAL
- The Southwest Alabama Workforce Development Council
- Alabama Power
- Mobile County Public School System
- Mobile County Educators Association
- University of South Alabama College of Education
- Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce
- Bishop State Community College
- The City of Mobile
- United Way of Southwest Alabama
- The Boys & Girls Club

The work of this Commission provides a perfect example of what Alabama could do on a state level, and what other communities can do on a local level. A state-level P-20 council in Alabama would benefit from smaller, locally focused P-20 councils around the state, addressing more detailed issues in those areas.

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<sup>55</sup> (Mobile County Education Commission 2011)

<sup>56</sup> (Mobile County Education Commission 2011)



## Conclusion

Alabama has made significant progress over the last decade and has numerous educational strengths. Moving forward, the state is ready for an education investment council to build upon these strengths while addressing past educational shortcomings in order to prepare the future workforce for the global economy.

By bringing together representatives of the educational systems, state government, and the business community, an education investment council could address problems too big for any one group of stakeholders. This will help Alabama create a more effective and efficient educational system and move the state closer to preparing all students to be successful and responsible citizens.





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Published August 2012  
by  
**A+** Education Partnership

P.O. Box 4433  
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