Our Vision

Every child in Alabama has the opportunity and the support to succeed in school and become a contributing member of society.

#GreatSchoolsForEveryChild
A+ Family,

As we continue to celebrate our 30th anniversary, we are reflecting on our past impact and looking ahead to the future for A+ Education Partnership, our programs, and Alabama students. We continue to thoughtfully adapt and build on the strong foundation that has been developed throughout A+’s many years.

As our state and communities emerge from the pandemic, there is new energy to redefine what it means to be informed, engaged citizens, giving us a tremendous opportunity to shape our state into what we know it can be: one with systems that equitably invest in our students, support our educators, and ensure every child has the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their zip code.

Here is what we know is possible for the future:

• We will become a model for good educational practice and smart investment of tax dollars. In passing legislation guided by data, such as the 2019 Alabama Literacy Act and the 2022 Alabama Numeracy Act, along with strategic state budgets, our state will invest in student success and the work it takes to get them there. This impact will be seen for generations.

• We will ensure that every Alabama student has a well-prepared and supported teacher in their classroom and well-equipped leaders in their schools. Our Alabama Best Practices Center and A+ College Ready programs work to equip and empower educators to do what it takes to improve student learning. As a result, we will see schools centered around creativity, best practices for students, and a drive for success that starts at the top.

• Our communities will use good information to engage thoughtfully with the educational process, creating great schools for every child. We will continue to build a statewide coalition of families, schools, and community leaders that is centered on the needs and success of our students.

Thank you for your support of our work and advocacy for Alabama’s students. A+ is committed to making a strong future for Alabama possible. We look forward to partnering with you to make it happen!

Mark E. Dixon, President
A+ Education Partnership drives improvements in public education for every Alabama student. We set and deliver high expectations by advocating for policies, practices, and investments that advance learning and by partnering with schools to build the capacity of teachers and leaders.

As the only statewide organization focused on education reform, we believe:

- All children deserve an excellent education, regardless of where they live.
- We must make sure money is spent on what we know improves learning and invest more in student-centered efforts.
- All children need support and guidance from caring adults in their families, at schools, and in their communities.
- All students should be challenged in the classroom with intellectually-stimulating curricula that teach them real-world skills.
- Every child can learn at high levels with effective teaching and support.
- Thriving communities ensure that their schools prepare all students for work, college, and citizenship.
- All families should have the opportunity to choose the right educational path that meets the needs of their children.
- Schools should meet each child where they are by continuously innovating and adopting best practices to improve student outcomes.

High-performing schools for every child are within our reach. We know what works, and when we act on what we know, both teachers and students excel. **Principals, teachers, and communities must summon the will to do what works.**
Our role in the state serves many purposes, including:

- **Researching** the best policy and programmatic choices that will improve outcomes for all students.
- **Serving** as a trusted voice and resource for education officials and advocating for best practices and good policy, while centering student needs.
- **Empowering** teachers and school leaders through high-quality, cutting-edge professional development.
- **Educating** the public on sound education policy, while keeping them up-to-date on the day-to-day happenings in the spaces where policy is made.
- **Building Coalitions** across the state comprised of students, families, educators, business leaders, and community members to create great schools for every child.
The A+ Approach: Advocacy and Practice

**A+ Education Partnership is Different**

With one foot in the statehouse and one foot in the schoolhouse, we advocate on behalf of all Alabama public school students.

A+ Education Partnership works with elected and appointed officials in Montgomery and beyond to promote policies and investments that move public education in the right direction.

**BUT THE WORK DOESN’T STOP THERE.**

A+ also works in schools. While good policy moves education in the right direction, real change happens at the school level. So, we operate two programs that drive policy implementation and inform future policy work.

**The Alabama Best Practices Center**

The Alabama Best Practices Center supports teachers, principals, and superintendents with cutting-edge, network-based professional development.

**A+ College Ready**

A+ College Ready partners with middle and high schools to increase access to and preparation for Advanced Placement courses by training teachers to raise standards in grades 6-12.
Thirty years later, the core of our work continues, serving as the only voice solely for students in the Legislature and across the state, advocating for policies and investments that advance learning for every Alabama student.

Founding members of A+ saw the biggest challenge facing our state: the lack of quality education for Alabama students. This challenge affected all areas of life for Alabamians from personal success to the economy at large.

The work began with interviews of over 50 key Alabamians with a stake in public education—from parents to CEOs—to talk about their aspirations for our public schools. Then, A+ held Town Meetings around the state. The first town meeting was in Tuscaloosa, with over 2,000 community members in attendance. As the tour continued, over 22,000 Alabamians turned out for A+-sponsored town meetings in 22 cities. This showing immediately proved one thing to A+ and our stakeholders: parents, community members, business leaders, and educators all shared a common goal— an education system that adequately and equitably serves all of Alabama’s students.

After listening to a cross-section of Alabamians, and with the help of experienced experts, A+ drafted a plan to improve our public schools, called A Blueprint for Successful Alabama Schools, which later turned into legislation called the “Alabama First Plan.”

While the Alabama First Plan failed in the Legislature in 1994, A+ learned from this and adapted our approach to build on the momentum and support of the town hall meetings for creating great schools for every child. Since then, our work has evolved to recognize that students and their needs must be at the center of our advocacy efforts, and policy decisions should be driven by data. From defending high academic standards, to the creation and implementation of statewide early literacy programs, to promoting the right of families’ choices in their children’s education, A+ has tirelessly worked to give each child the support they need to succeed in college, career, and life.

This advocacy work was made even more impactful by the creation of our two direct-service programs. A+ recognized the need to support change at the school level in order to create proof points for improving outcomes for students. The Alabama Best Practices Center, established in 1999, was created to address the lack of high-quality support and professional learning for teachers and education leaders. A+ College Ready was founded through a national partnership in 2008 to address the challenge of low expectations and rigor in the classroom and lack of access to Advanced Placement coursework for students. Together, these programs help uniquely drive the advocacy work at the core of A+ by giving us firsthand experience with the day-to-day reality in Alabama’s schools. In 2018, the A+ Student VOICES Team was founded to empower students to advocate for positive change in their schools and across the state at large.

This growing and evolving statehouse-schoolhouse approach makes A+ different from our peers and better equips us to rise above the challenges facing all of us as we work to create great schools for every child.

“We must recognize that our children must achieve at higher levels—that’s a given now. The real question is, how do we move forward so they don’t get discouraged? We must understand that children, regardless of their background, can achieve. We have to challenge those children and bring parents into this discussion in a very active way. We should accept no throw-away children.”

- Co-Founder of A+ Education Partnership, Bill Smith - 1996

April 1993 - More than 2,000 community members attended a community meeting in Tuscaloosa, AL to discuss education reform.
Proven Record of Student-Centered Advocacy

A+ works to improve education through strategic, student-centered advocacy initiatives. Over the last 30 years, A+ has adapted our approach to meet each challenge, relentlessly working until solutions are created. We’ve taken a targeted approach with each of our policy goals: intentionally facilitate public-private partnerships, create replicable pilot initiatives to provide a “proof point,” and advocate for state funding to expand those “proof points” and ensure the policy impacts all students equitably.

1

CHALLENGE: LITERACY

One of A+’s most important advocacy efforts is ensuring every child has the fundamental literacy skills they need to succeed. In 1998, with the help of A+, the state created the Alabama Reading Initiative, which provided a trained literacy coach to every elementary school in the state. In 2002, at the urging of A+, the state committed to increased funding for the initiative, along with a statewide focus on literacy. As a result, Alabama students successfully met the national average in reading in 2011, proving that aligned leadership, strong investments, and providing resources directly to schools works. Unfortunately, the economic downturn and increased turnover in state educational leadership caused the state to lose ground in literacy, falling once again to 49th in reading in the nation in 2019. That year, A+ worked tirelessly to pass the Alabama Literacy Act, recommitting the state to literacy. With increased focus on K-3 reading, providing reading coaches to schools who need them most, interventions for struggling readers, and teacher training in the science of reading, Alabama can again gain the needed momentum to ensure every child can read.

2

CHALLENGE: LACK OF ACCESS TO AP

Research shows that access to Advanced Placement courses increases a student’s chance of attending and completing college. Prior to the creation of A+ College Ready, few students had access to these rigorous courses and college preparation - especially students of color and students in poverty. In 2008, A+ earned a $13.2M grant to create A+ College Ready to improve the access and success of students in Advanced Placement (AP) courses in math, science, & English. This work has expanded to increase rigorous coursework in grades 6-12 to create a pipeline of students prepared for AP in high school. The Alabama Legislature and the State Department of Education fund A+ College Ready - an exemplar public/private partnership. A+ College Ready made an immediate impact. Alabama led the country for 8 years for growth in students achieving a qualifying score on an AP exam. In 2020, despite the pandemic, students of color earned the highest number of qualifying scores in Alabama history. Additionally, the number of low-income students taking AP tests has increased by over 340% since 2008.
### CHALLENGE: LACK OF ACCESS TO FIRST CLASS PRE-K

Research shows that access to high-quality Pre-K can change the trajectory of a child’s life, from being better prepared for K-12 school, to decreasing the likelihood of incarceration, to even increasing their lifetime earnings later in life. In 2006, A+ helped establish the Alabama School Readiness Alliance to increase access to the state’s nationally-recognized, high-quality First Class Pre-K program, which at the time was only available to 5% of Alabama’s 4-year-olds. In 2020, a statewide study showed that this program had lasting effects on student achievement in reading and math through at least the 8th grade. Since 2006, the state has consistently committed to increasing access to this program statewide with the goal of ensuring access to 70% of 4-year-olds by 2026. In 2022, over 45% of 4-year-olds will have access.

### CHALLENGE: THE NEED FOR HIGH-QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS

One of the strongest indicators of student achievement is access to a highly-trained, supported teacher. In 1997, A+ established the Task Force on Teaching and Student Achievement to tackle low student achievement. This task force produced a report that outlined a major challenge in the state: every child needs a “well-prepared, capable and caring” teacher to help them succeed. In order to improve classroom instruction, the state needed to prioritize high-quality professional development for teachers to hone their craft and meet students where they are. From this recommendation came the creation of the Alabama Best Practices Center in 1999. The ABPC manages professional learning networks of teachers and school and district leaders to strengthen teaching and leadership practices proven to boost student learning. Participants value connecting with other educators across the state to share challenges, brainstorm strategies, and celebrate successes. In 2020, an external evaluation of the Alabama Best Practices Center showed that participating schools had higher student achievement in math and reading compared to their peers. This new data further proves that supporting educators and improving classroom instruction is critical to increasing student achievement statewide.
In 1999, A+ launched the Alabama Best Practices Center (ABPC) to increase the capacity of teachers, instructional coaches, principals, and superintendents by connecting and equipping them with proven resources and best practices in instruction and leadership and providing an outlet to network and learn from their peers. The APBC is a dynamic program proven to improve student achievement in math and reading at participating schools, according to an external study completed in 2020.

The Alabama Best Practices Center

Higher
student achievement in reading and math for participating schools

112
school districts served since 1999

14
regional networks serving educators statewide

27,000
educators impacted in 2022

~400,000
of Alabama’s 740,000 students impacted in 2022

School Districts Served by Both Programs since 1999
In 2007, A+ was awarded a $13.2 million grant from the National Math and Science Initiative, Exxon, Dell, and the Gates Foundation to create A+ College Ready (A+CR) to improve access in STEM and English Advanced Placement courses and grow student success. It continues to open the door for all middle and high school students in Alabama to reach their academic potential. A+CR provides training for 6th through 12th grade teachers in 26 courses in math, science, English, social studies, Spanish, psychology, art, and computer science. A+CR works to develop a diverse pipeline of students prepared for life after high school by increasing rigor in classrooms, providing students and teachers with support, and subsidizing the cost of AP for low-income students.

Since 2012, A+CR has also created the state's premier, high-quality computer science teacher training, increasing access to high-quality computer science education to all students.

- 200 schools served since 2009
- 167% increase in students receiving qualifying scores on AP exams since 2009
- 336% increase in students of color receiving qualifying scores since 2009
- 340% increase in students in poverty taking AP courses since 2009
- 96% increase in participating middle school students meeting the college-readiness benchmark in math
- 20,000+ students taking a high-quality computer science course
- $270,417,000 in potential college tuition savings for AL students
THE A+ STUDENT VOICES TEAM

Students’ perspectives should be heard anywhere important policy decisions are made. Founded in 2018, the A+ Student VOICES Team is a student-led leadership program that prepares and supports K-12 students to advocate for ways to improve their education system both with government officials and within their schools. Alabama students learn to collect and gather information and research, develop effective communication skills, grow their knowledge of the governmental process, and more. The goal of this program is to increase student involvement in the policy process, ensuring that decisionmakers have more information to make student-centered policy decisions.

Preparing & Supporting Student Advocates

STUDENT PRIORITIES

Students have conducted school climate surveys across Alabama and identified their own policy priorities. Survey results revealed:

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT - Students want and need a statewide, comprehensive plan to address student mental health.

COVID-19 RECOVERY - Teachers need more support to help students recover from COVID-19 and all of its effects.

STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL - Students want an officially-recognized, statewide student advisory council for decision-makers.

Meeting with Alabama’s Leaders

In 2022, students met with members of the Alabama House Education Policy Committee to discuss the pressing issues revealed in their annual student survey. The Team traveled to Washington D.C. to meet with Senator Tuberville and represented students throughout the state. Additionally, students have had an opportunity to meet with education officials, including State Superintendent Dr. Eric Mackey to share personal experiences with mental health amid COVID-19 recovery and more. The group is working to encourage the state to create and codify a student advisory council for all elected officials to consult on education policy decisions.
Advocating for Great Schools for Every Child

As we look to the future of A+, our number one priority remains the same: Alabama’s students. Since our founding, we have known that building broad coalitions of stakeholders who are united around the common goal of an equitable education system is imperative for statewide change. As such, we will continue building strong relationships with critical stakeholders. This is even more important as our state recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic. There has never been a better time to reimagine our education system and enact smart policies and investments that center on the needs of our students. Our upcoming policy priorities will do just that as we expand our outreach to students, families, educators, and other important stakeholders.

A+ POLICY PRIORITIES

1 EARLY LITERACY
A+ will continue our efforts to support and fully implement the Alabama Literacy Act, which we helped pass in 2019. This year, A+ supported two bills that made common sense updates to the Literacy Act, like a two-year delay of the retention component in light of COVID-19. We will continue to push for strong implementation, including training teachers in the science of reading, interventions and support for struggling readers, and getting more funding and aligned resources to teachers so that all of Alabama’s students are reading on grade level by the end of third grade.

2 IMPROVING EARLY MATH ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL STUDENTS
Improving Alabama’s last-in-the-nation math achievement is a top priority. This year, A+ helped to write and pass the Alabama Numeracy Act, which is a comprehensive plan to improve math achievement for all students by providing math coaches in all K-5 schools, high-quality training for principals and teachers, better-aligned instructional materials or curriculum, interventions for struggling students, and more. A+ has been asked to serve on the Elementary Math Task Force, which will guide the early implementation of the Numeracy Act and will be instrumental in the success of this legislation.

3 HIGH-QUALITY, COMMUNITY-BASED SUMMER & AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS
The learning loss caused by the pandemic will not be solved during the school day alone, and high-quality summer and afterschool programs are critical to getting students caught up. In partnership with the Alabama Extended Learning Alliance and Summer Adventures in Learning, A+ helped to secure $1.5 million in the Education Trust Fund for a pilot state grant program to incentivize summer programs through partnerships between schools and community organizations to raise quality and expand access long-term.

4 HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS
Research shows that one of the best ways to quickly and cost effectively improve student achievement is to give teachers high-quality instructional materials to use in their classroom and support their use of these materials through curriculum-based professional development. As a first step, A+ helped pass a bill that will revise the textbook adoption process to support these efforts.

5 EXPANDING ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY CHARTER SCHOOLS
A+ believes that Alabama families need more opportunities to choose the right education for their children. A+ will continue to advocate for equitable funding and the expansion of effective public charter schools that have the autonomy to innovate and ensure students have the support they need.
Engaging Stakeholders in Education Policy

A+ knows that parents, families, and community members are important advocates for students. In order to equip all stakeholders with the information and tools they need to advocate for great schools for every child, we launched the A+ Policy Portal and A+ COVID School Spending Tracker. These tools provide Alabamians with up-to-date education data and smart education policy solutions in an easy-to-understand format.

The A+ Policy Portal

Education policy can be complicated, so we have created a tool to make student-centered, evidence-based policy solutions easy to understand. We know that solving our state’s biggest education challenges is going to require an engaged and knowledgeable broad coalition of students, families, and communities demanding better for all children. The Policy Portal provides accessible information on education policy solutions broken down into 6 categories:

- Equitable funding, resources, and support
- Highly effective leaders and teachers
- Rigorous curriculum and engaging instruction
- Strong foundation
- Transformational Schools and Systems
- Transparency, Accountability, and Continuous Improvement

The A+ COVID School Spending Tracker

Alabama schools have received 3 rounds of funding from the federal government totaling over $3 billion. In order to bring transparency and ensure that families are part of the decision-making process, we created the A+ COVID School Spending Tracker. The Tracker highlights how the state and all 143 Alabama districts are spending these relief funds by breaking down district allocations into 9 categories. It also provides information on district demographics and student outcomes, so that advocates can be well-informed when discussing COVID relief spending. A+ also created the A+ Advocate Toolkit for families, educators, and communities to use alongside the Tracker. It includes information about COVID relief funding for schools, successful strategies that we know work for student recovery, and ways to get involved with your district’s planning.
Our core funding comes from

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<tr>
<td>Corporate, Foundation, &amp; Donor Contributions</td>
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<td>Government Grants &amp; Contracts</td>
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*FY 21 Total Expenses – $831,081 Administrative (10%) $7,173,392 Programming $8,004,473 Total

A+ changes the way public dollars are spent on education in the state of Alabama. Through a public-private partnership with the Alabama State Department of Education, A+ manages the legislative allocation for Advanced Placement. Additionally, at the request of the state, A+ provides Computer Science teacher training, Math and English course of study training, professional development for teachers and school leaders, and rigorous curricula in middle schools. In fact, every dollar we receive from our donors generates over sixteen dollars from state grants and program fees.
Champions of Education

$50,000+

Regions Foundation
Mike and Gillian Goodrich Foundation

$25,000-$49,999

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