



State seeks comments on revised English standards

March 20 is the deadline for comments on revised English language arts from educators and members of the public. The revised standards will affect public schools in Alabama.

The 2016 Revised Alabama Course of Study: English Language Arts course can be viewed at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y2zsw7h>. Select the English Language Arts tab to view the information.

Comments related to specific grade-level content may be sent via the form at <https://tinyurl.com/v9vfq3r>.

Questions regarding the public input process may be directed to Cathy Jones at cjones01@alsde.edu or 334.694.4768.

Compare award letters to find best college deal

Most high school seniors headed for college will soon be receiving financial aid award letters. Seniors and their parents should read those letters carefully.

The letter will usually show the total cost of attendance for one year, including tuition, fees, room, meals, books, supplies, transportation and personal expenses.

It may also show how much the student's family is expected to pay toward those costs, the expected family contribution (EFC). The EFC is subtracted from the total cost of attendance to get a student's financial need. The letter will then list various sources of financial aid offered to cover that need. Students can accept or reject any or all of those proposed sources.

Students can also appeal the awards if their family's financial circumstances have changed.

One thing to consider is how much being offered consists of federal student loans, which have to be repaid. If the package includes federal loans and isn't enough to pay all expenses, students may have to turn to a private loan. Comparison shopping is a must in that case.

But students shouldn't choose a school based simply on cost. A more expensive college can be a better choice than a less expensive one that isn't a good fit.



Over 100,000 state students earn Microsoft certification

Students in Alabama have earned over 100,000 Microsoft office specialist and Microsoft technology associate certification, according to the Alabama State Department of Education and Certiport.

Alabama was the third state in the nation to launch the Microsoft Imagine Academy program in 2012. More than 223 school sites are now registered as Certiport Authorized Testing Centers to deliver Microsoft certifications, and 200 teachers have received professional development training to utilize the Microsoft Imagine Academy with great success. The 100,000th certification was delivered to Arwen Holland at Headland High School of Henry County Schools.

“The certifications delivered through the Microsoft Imagine Academy help high school students earn recognized credentials for job attainment and college and career success,” said Niketa Dean, ALSDE’s Microsoft Imagine Academy program manager. “We are so proud of our students and teachers for reaching this impressive milestone and we look forward to continuing to grow the program in the future.”

The milestone was recognized at the February Alabama State Board of Education Meeting with a resolution in support of congratulating the Alabama Microsoft Imagine Academy on exceeding 100,000 certifications. A celebration was held at Headland High School on February 27.

Alabama schools have aligned their career and technical education courses to include the MOS and MTA credentials as a way to validate student Microsoft skills. Classroom and online learning, hands-on labs and preparation resources are available for any school participating in the Microsoft Imagine Academy program.

Certiport provides curriculum, practice tests and IT certification exams in more than 125 countries.



Scholarship Spotlight

Stonewall Jackson Memorial Fund Repayable Scholarship

Eligibility: The applicant must:

- be an Alabama high school senior.
- submit an application
- submit a 1,500- to 2,000-word essay on a topic or issue related to the life of Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson. The essay must include a bibliography, which is not included in the word count.

Award: \$3,000, first place; \$2,000, second place; \$1,000, third place. The award is a no-interest loan that must be repaid after graduation.

Number: 3

Deadline: April 8

Contact: Stonewall Jackson Memorial Fund, P.O. Box 300100, Montgomery, AL 36130; 334.353.3288



Cutting intangible costs can help with college expense

When it comes to comparing the costs of various colleges, remember that on the broadest level, costs can be tangible or intangible.

Tangible costs include tuition, fees, room and board.

Intangible costs include everything else: textbooks and supplies; computers; and personal items, such as shampoo, clothes, entertainment, laundry and other expenses.

Students can save money, sometimes a significant amount, by controlling the discretionary costs of their lifestyle. That doesn't mean skimping on shampoo, soap, food and doing laundry. But they can cut costs by finding sales or using coupons. Students should always be looking out for buy one, get one free deals.

They can also save quite a bit of money by cutting back on treats such as entertainment and dining out. Doing those things less often will make them even more special when they do treat themselves.

Remember: The less students spend on the intangibles, the less they'll need to take out in student loans. That means that after they graduate, they can afford more of the things they enjoy.

Lexile, Quantile measures to be reported in spring 2021

The Alabama State Department of Education will report Lexile and Quantile student measures, beginning with the spring 2021 administration of the Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program.

The Lexile and Quantile Frameworks place the student and material on the same scale to match learners with reading and math resources at their ability level.

Alabama educators will have free access to the premium version of the Lexile & Quantile Hub, an online platform that ties the student's measures directly to learning and planning resources. Featured on the Hub are the Lexile and Quantile Growth Planners, tools to help Alabama meet its ambitious goal of ensuring all students graduate ready for success in college and careers.

With the Growth Planners, students, teachers and parents can forecast growth toward college and career readiness, identify the reading and math demands needed for entry into hundreds of careers, and explore job market data at the national and regional levels.

High school planner

Seniors

- Let your counselor know which school you're going to so the school can send in final grades, class rank and proof of graduation. Send in any deposits that are required.
- Send thank-you notes to counselors, teachers and others who helped you through the process.
- Prepare a budget for the coming school year.