

Higher Standards, Stronger Assessments

Alabama schools are using the new ACT Aspire test to measure whether students are being well prepared for life after high school. This overview addresses typical questions about the new assessment and how it measures student progress.

Alabama's Standards: Higher Expectations

In 2010, the Alabama State Board of Education adopted the Alabama College and Career Ready Standards for math and English language arts. These standards, which are based on the Common Core State Standards, are a set of academic expectations for what Alabama students are expected to learn in math and English each school year.

Here is an example of a 4th grade English standard from Alabama's College and Career Ready Standards compared to an example from Alabama's previous standards from 2007. The state's enhanced standards are clearer and allow Alabama teachers to spend more time diving deeper into the text for improved comprehension than the previous standards allowed. The state's College and Career Ready Standards also require students to show they have a deeper understanding of what they are learning. In other words, gone are the days of only memorizing facts just for a test. Now they have to explain ideas, too.

Alabama College and Career Ready Standards	Alabama 2007 English Standards
<p>Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions). [RL.4.3]</p> <p>Explain major differences among poems, drama, and prose, and refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and drama (e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogue, stage directions) when writing or speaking about a text. [RL.4.5]</p> <p>Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text. [RI.4.1]</p> <p>Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text. [RI.4.2]</p> <p>Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text. [RI.4.8]</p>	<p>Identify literary elements and devices, including characters, important details, and similes, in fourth-grade recreational reading materials and details in fourth-grade informational reading materials.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifying main idea• Identifying author's purpose

Alabama's Standards: Real Learning for Real Life

Alabama's College and Career Ready Standards put in place clear, consistent expectations for students and teachers, and build students' knowledge and skills to take with them long after graduation – *whether starting college or a career.*

By adopting the Alabama College and Career Ready Standards, Alabama is expecting more of our students than memorizing answers and repeating them on a test. Alabama's College and Career Ready Standards emphasize *real-life* critical thinking and applied knowledge skills that today's students will need to succeed in the *real world.*

