



DeKalb County BOE

If we want more for our students, we need to expect more

In Alabama, we have raised our expectations and are taking a more honest look at student achievement. Five years ago, we adopted Alabama's College and Career Ready Standards, which are based on the Common Core State Standards, to raise the bar for all students and set the foundation for better teaching and learning.

Students are no longer being asked to memorize just enough to pass a standardized test. They are now being required to think critically, collaborate with each other and explain their answers in order to *show they truly understand what they are learning*.

As students are challenged to reach higher standards, we may initially see their test scores drop. This is because what we define as "acceptable" or "proficient" is much higher than it used to be. Research shows that, with the right support and encouragement, students can and will reach these high expectations. When we expect more from Alabama students, we will see them achieve more.

This year's scores are being used as a benchmark for teachers and parents to know exactly where each student is excelling and where he or she needs more help.

If there's one great thing that has come from the debate around academic standards, particularly Common Core State Standards, it's that more people than ever are talking about the importance of education. Having a high quality system – and knowing that our students are being challenged to learn more and are being held accountable for doing so – matters for my children and grandchildren, neighbors, and our community's prosperity.

Our teachers say they are finally getting to teach the way they have wanted to be teaching all along – in ways that ensure student learning, not just rote memorization. Alabama's new testing and accountability systems no longer tie their hands and limit their creativity in their classrooms. The new tests will take much less time away from them and will help teachers and parents get a more honest measurement of how close each student is to meeting or exceeding these higher expectations.

I trust the teachers in our system, and I ask you to continue to support the tough work they have ahead of them.

It's a new day in Alabama for education, and I truly believe we are on the right track. For more information on why Alabama's test scores are lower call your child's principal or teachers. We can all tell you how these higher standards and new testing program are helping students learn.