About the Program

The A+ Student VOICES Team is a student advocacy group comprised of Alabama high school students from different districts across the state. Founded in 2018, we work to ensure that students' voices are heard in spaces where education decisions are being made. Students work together as a team to identify issues within our education system, gather research, and advocate for student-centered improvements.

Important Findings from the 2023 Student Survey

Each year, the A+ Student VOICES Team conducts a student survey to hear student perspectives about their education. This year, we gathered data from 561 Alabama students in grades 9-12 on the impact of the teacher shortage, student representation in schools, and school equity.

Our 2023 survey revealed:

1 **Students have inconsistent experiences in the quality and availability of support they need within their schools.**

2 **Students want more opportunities to give feedback that will improve their schools.**

3 **The teacher shortage is negatively impacting the level of rigor in the classroom and the way that students feel connected to their teachers.**

To learn more about these takeaways, read what Alabama students shared on the following pages.

A+ Student VOICES Team
A statewide advocacy group for Alabama high school students

Student Representation & Consistency in Student Opportunities

Students have few outlets to express feedback within their schools. When feedback is given, students do not see changes. Addressing the concerns of students is crucial to ensure that the changes being made in schools are what's best for students.

Students have inconsistent experiences in the quality and availability of support they need within their schools.

47% of students reported that they do not feel supported by their school's administration.

54% do not feel comfortable speaking to teachers about the support they need.

"They do offer tutoring, but the class I'm struggling in does not offer tutoring after school. So many times, I am unable to attend their tutoring that I need to help my grades."

"We need more counseling staff. One school counselor cannot handle 400 students' needs in addition to administrative needs. Our counselor is not trained in mental health support, nor does she have the time to individually consult with all upperclassmen to discuss steps for their future."

Students want more opportunities to give feedback to improve their schools.

89% feel that their school would benefit from receiving student feedback.

55% of students are not given an opportunity to give their school feedback.

"Teachers don't see the same world we see. And with times constantly changing, I think we are the ones to best say what would be best on our behalf, and give advice that is relatable to the other students."

When feedback is given, students do not see changes within their schools.

79% of students do not see changes in their school when feedback is given.

49% do not feel well represented in their schools.

72% feel that there should be a different student group in addition to the Student Government Association that advocates for student needs.

"So many students feel that there is a lack of care for their mental health, and although we have tried to give feedback, it has been completely dismissed as unrealistic without a second thought."

The Teacher Shortage

Students reported that there were many inconsistencies in instruction, large class sizes, and teachers leaving mid-year. Due to impacts of the teacher shortage, students are not given an opportunity to form the relationships that enrich their learning and are not supported academically.

Over half of the survey respondents have been directly impacted by the lack of teaching staff.

58% *of students surveyed have had a teacher leave mid-year.*

45% *have had a class led by an inexperienced teacher.*

"I didn't learn anything after the teacher left because they placed a teacher who did not teach the subject in my class."

"We were so lost and we had no idea what to do. Half the time we didn't really do anything. When the time came to take a test for the unit we were extremely lost. I was lucky enough to grasp the concept by teaching myself but many of my classmates didn't understand."

Positive classroom relationships are important for learning.

90% *of students reported that positive relationships positively influence their learning.*

"Relationships between faculty and students should be stronger in order to create an effective and comfortable learning environment."

"When changing teachers students are faced with having to acclimate with a different approach to learning the subject matter and losing strong student-teacher relationships."

The majority of students do not want to be educators.

87% *of students do not want to enter the teaching profession.*

"The pay is horrible considering their integral role in society and the amount of work they put in."

"Teachers are undervalued and under-appreciated in the school system and don't get paid as much as they are worth."