



A+ Student Voices Team

A statewide advocacy and leadership program for Alabama high school students






The A+ Student Voices Team is a student advocacy and leadership program comprised of Alabama high school students from 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 2026 Student Voices Survey:

Each year, the A+ Student Voices Team conducts a student survey to hear students' perspectives about their education. **This year, we gathered data from 1,171 Alabama students** in grades 9-12 **on student mental health, school culture and quality of instruction and student support.**

Our 2026 survey revealed:

-  Many students report feeling overwhelmed during the school day, and while most have at least one adult they can talk to about their mental health, half still believe that having greater access to mental health professionals would make a meaningful difference.
-  Students report that their motivation is closely tied to their teachers' passion in the classroom, yet many are unsure whether they can approach their teachers with personal concerns — and more than half have experienced instability in at least one class due to frequent teacher absences or turnover.
-  Students report mixed experiences with the quality of instruction and academic support. Many believe that AI tools enhance their learning and most can complete assignments without relying on technology, yet nearly half struggle to access academic or college-and-career guidance, and only 30% feel prepared for the next grade level, college, or the workforce.

Read what Alabama students shared on the following pages to learn more about these takeaways.



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Student Mental Health

When it comes to mental health support in schools, many students report feeling overwhelmed, with 90% saying they leave school feeling mentally and emotionally drained. While most have at least one adult they can talk to about their mental health, half still believe that increased access to mental health professionals would better meet their needs.

90% of students report **feeling burned out or overwhelmed after a school day**.

63% of students have an **adult in their school to talk about their mental health**.

50% of students feel that **more access to mental health professionals in schools would be helpful**.



“While it is important to maintain academic standards, it is equally important to recognize that students are human beings, and when a student approaches a teacher with honesty about feeling overwhelmed, they should not be dismissed or forced to cope without support.”

“Mental health can affect students in many different ways, and some students struggle with it more than others. Sometimes students can’t simply set aside their personal thoughts in order to focus on school work.”

School Culture

When it comes to school culture, many students say their motivation is shaped by the passion their teachers bring to the classroom. Yet a majority are unsure whether they can turn to their teachers or administrators with personal concerns, and more than half have experienced instability in at least one class due to frequent teacher absences or turnover.

56% of students believe that their **teacher’s passion in the classroom affects their motivation to learn**.

60% of students are **unsure if they can speak to their teachers or administrators about personal issues they experience at school** (e.g. bullying, additional academic support, disruptions in the classroom).

52% of students report **instability in at least one classroom due to frequent teacher absences or turnover**.



“Sometimes it feels hard to open up or express myself to my teachers because they can seem uninterested or unapproachable. I feel teachers should be open and willing to listen and reassure students that they are being heard and seen.”





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Quality of Instruction & Student Support

When it comes to the quality of instruction and student support, students report a mix of strengths and challenges. While many say that AI enhances their learning and most can complete assignments without relying on technology, **nearly half struggle to access academic or college-and-career guidance, and only 30% feel prepared for the next grade level, college, or the workforce.**

45% of students report having **difficulty scheduling academic or college and career support meetings with their school counselors.**

60% of students believe that **Artificial Intelligence (AI) enhances their learning experience.** More than **90% of students** report that they **can complete assignments without relying on technology.**

70% of students **report feeling unsure or unprepared to enter the next grade, college, or job after this school year.**



“I feel that my school doesn’t prepare us for college or the workforce very well, since we rarely get real opportunities to explore careers, learn life skills, or talk with someone about our goals. That leaves a lot of us feeling unsure about our future and what steps we’re supposed to take.”

Student-centered recommendations from students



Provide students with more access to mental health resources and services, especially those with more needs, such as students with ADHD, ADD, Dyslexia, and Autism.

Create a statewide mental health curriculum for students that includes how to identify the signs of mental health challenges, how to seek help, and how to access available resources. The curriculum should equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to support their well-being, reduce stigma around mental health, and encourage early intervention.

Provide more funding for mental health professionals in schools.

Increase teacher pay and provide more funding for faculty and staff professional development on creating positive school cultures and building positive relationships with students.

Encourage teachers to utilize more project-based learning activities to support diverse student learning styles and to improve student engagement.