

# ALABAMA



## State Highlight

**Middle Grades Innovative Grant.** Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) created a grant opportunity to provide CTE experiences for 5th-8th grade students, recognizing that CTE in middle grades can expose students to college and career options and equip them with transferable skills needed to plan for and succeed in high school and beyond.



## VISION



**Alabama Achieves.** ALSDE's Alabama Achieves Strategic Plan includes a strategic priority to engage, challenge, and support every student in relevant, impactful instruction that equips them with the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully enter college, career, or workforce. One strategy used to achieve this is to encourage and support the integration of career and college exploration beginning in 5th grade and continuing throughout the K-12 experience and encourage local schools to participate in “Worlds of Work” events sponsored by regional workforce councils.

Alabama has yet to codify the definition of career exploration.



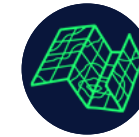
## POLICY



**Career Course Offerings.** Students in grades 6-8 can take a Career Exploration Course designed to provide opportunities for students to explore career opportunities and become aware of the importance of basic technology, work ethic, communication skills, the value of work, leadership skills, and basic employability skills. ALSDE also provides plans of instruction to guide the implementation of this course.

The state also offers Career Preparedness, a course for 8th-grade students that focuses on three integrated areas of instruction: academic planning and career development, financial literacy, and technology.

Alabama has yet to connect career exploration requirements to high school or formally include middle school career exploration in state or federal accountability systems.



## INFRASTRUCTURE



**Career Development Model.** Alabama's Career Development Model is designed to provide all K-12 students with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be college and career ready and prepare to enter postsecondary education or the workforce. The model specifies that middle school students, with the help of their counselor(s) and a career coach, explore the 16 career clusters to discover which pathways and careers best align with their interests.

**Career Coaches.** ALSDE allocates funds for career coaches, whose duties include assisting students in Grades K-12 with career exploration activities and career assessments.

Alabama has yet to include middle school career exploration into data collection processes.



Full Report



# ALABAMA • VISION

Category	Status	Description
<b>Leadership</b> Does the state leadership include career exploration as a valued or prioritized component of students' middle school experience?	 Building Emerging Advanced	ALSDE's <a href="#">Strategic Plan</a> contains a priority area for students to be College, Career, and Workforce Ready and encourages and supports the integration of career and college exploration beginning in 5th grade and continuing throughout the K-12 experience. ALSDE allowed school districts to apply for a <a href="#">CTE Middle Grades Innovative Grant</a> to establish, expand, start up, or reinvent CTE experiences for middle school students. Governor Ivey's <a href="#">Strong Start, Strong Finish Initiative</a> benchmarks include career exploration and discovery, where all students understand how to connect their interests and aptitudes with academic skills.
<b>Career Exploration Definition</b> Does the state formally define career exploration for middle school students?	 Building Emerging Advanced	Within AL's <a href="#">Career Development Model</a> , career exploration is defined as an integrated collection of assessments, skill sets, and services intended to define students' areas of interest aligned with core academic, technical, and employability skills.
<b>Advocacy</b> Are there organizations within the state that are advocating for middle school career exploration?	 Building Emerging Advanced	The <a href="#">Business Education Alliance</a> (BEA) was created to stimulate the thoughtful study and constructive discussion of key policy issues facing AL. BEA strongly supports efforts to transform career courses throughout middle schools and high schools in AL.



# ALABAMA • POLICY

Category	Status	Description
<b>Standards</b> Does the state have policies that establish standard practices for career exploration in middle schools?	 Building Emerging Advanced	ALSDE's office of Career and Technical Education/ Workforce Development provides <u>Plans of Instruction</u> for a Career Explorations course, which can be taken in grades 6-8.
<b>Accountability</b> Does the state integrate career exploration into their accountability systems?	 Building Emerging Advanced	The state does not integrate career exploration into its ESSA state plan. The state does include goals within its <u>Combined State Plan</u> to provide work-based learning activities, including career exploration in middle grades.
<b>Student Requirements</b> Does the state have policies that require middle school students to complete career exploration activities?	 Building Emerging Advanced	The state does not require middle school students to complete career exploration activities but has a Career Preparedness course, which may be taught in Grade 8. However, high school students are required to complete a Career Preparedness course in Grades 9-12. The state <u>requires</u> students to have a 4-year plan prior to Grade 9. However, there are no middle school-required activities that would ensure that all students are prepared for high school.
<b>Incentives</b> Does the state have policies that incentivize career exploration in middle schools?	 Building Emerging Advanced	ALSDE allowed school districts to apply for a CTE <u>Middle Grades Innovative Grant</u> to establish, expand, start up, or reinvent CTE experiences for middle school students.



# ALABAMA • INFRASTRUCTURE

Category	Status	Description
<p><b>Funding</b></p> <p>Does the state use state or federal funding sources to support career exploration for middle school students?</p>		<p>ALSDE allowed school districts to apply for a CTE <a href="#">Middle Grades Innovative Grant</a> to establish, expand, start up, or reinvent CTE experiences for middle school students. ALSDE also invested in an online platform to support students' career planning called the <a href="#">Alabama Career Planning System</a>. The Department of Education allocated state funds to support <a href="#">Career Coaching positions</a> for grades K-12.</p>
<p><b>Professional Development</b></p> <p>Does the state support the training of school counselors (and other school staff) in career exploration?</p>		<p>ALSDE provides educators with links to training and <a href="#">professional development resources</a> connected to the Career Preparedness course that is listed as a high school graduation requirement. Through the AL Career Planning System, <a href="#">training and resources</a> are provided through a third-party platform called Kuder.</p>
<p><b>Material Supports</b></p> <p>Does the state provide material supports on the implementation of middle school career exploration?</p>		<p>ALSDE's Office of Career and Technical Education/ Workforce Development created a <a href="#">Career Development Model</a> to prepare all students to be college and career ready and prepared to enter postsecondary education or the workforce. The <a href="#">Alabama SUCCESS Counselor Guide</a> is provided through the Department of Education to ensure counselors can work with students and help them obtain access to career learning experiences.</p>
<p><b>Data Collection</b></p> <p>Does the state collect data on middle school career exploration opportunities in the state?</p>		<p>ALSDE collects and publishes <a href="#">college and career readiness data</a>; however, that information is not connected to middle school career exploration.</p>
<p><b>CTSOs</b></p> <p>Does the state support student participation in career and technical student organizations?</p>		<p>AL <a href="#">supports</a> CTSOs and values them as an integral part of students' CTE experience; however, they do not have any known middle school chapters.</p>
<p><b>Organizations</b></p> <p>Are there organizations within the state that support career exploration in middle schools?</p>		<p><a href="#">Junior Achievement of Alabama (JA)</a> is a nonprofit that educates K-12 students about workforce readiness, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy. JA's approach allows volunteers from the community to deliver their curriculum while they share their personal and professional experiences and skills with students. Volunteers help students connect what they are learning in school and what they will need to succeed in work and life.</p>