

2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8 SYNOPSIS: Existing law requires the State Board of  
9 Education and all local boards of education to  
10 develop and implement a comprehensive character  
11 education program in grades K-12.

12 This bill would require a comprehensive  
13 character education program to be taught in grades  
14 K-12 in each public school, consisting of  
15 instruction provided five times a week during the  
16 school year, for a duration of not less than 40  
17 minutes per day.

18 This bill would also require the  
19 comprehensive character education program to  
20 address methods of discouraging bullying and  
21 violent acts against fellow students.

22  
23 A BILL  
24 TO BE ENTITLED  
25 AN ACT  
26

1           To amend Section 16-6B-2, Code of Alabama 1975,  
2 relating to the core curriculum for public K-12 education; to  
3 require the comprehensive character education program to be  
4 taught in grades K-12 in each public school at least five  
5 times each week during the school year for a length of time of  
6 not less than 40 minutes per day; and to require the program  
7 to also address methods of discouraging bullying and violent  
8 acts against fellow students.

9 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

10           Section 1. Section 16-6B-2, Code of Alabama 1975, is  
11 amended to read as follows:

12           "§16-6B-2.

13           "Every Alabama student shall be given instruction in  
14 grades kindergarten through twelve to prepare him or her to  
15 enter the world of work and/or to complete course work at the  
16 postsecondary level. In addition to a comprehensive core  
17 curriculum of academics, each local board of education shall  
18 offer a program of vocational/technical education.

19           "(a) The following words and phrases used in this  
20 section shall, in the absence of a clear implication  
21 otherwise, be given the following respective interpretations:

22           "(1) REQUIRED COURSES. Courses which are required to  
23 be taken by every student enrolled in public schools in the  
24 State of Alabama.

25           "(2) ELECTIVE COURSES. Courses which are neither  
26 mandatory nor required to be taken by any student enrolled in  
27 public schools in the State of Alabama.

1           "(b) The Legislature finds that students must become  
2 more literate in the basic skills needed to earn a living or  
3 to continue their education. The Legislature further finds  
4 that the English language is a common bond that holds our  
5 society together. It is necessary that the State Board of  
6 Education adopt curriculum policies to ensure that Alabama  
7 students have a command of the spoken and written English  
8 language. The Legislature further finds that in Alabama  
9 schools, students earning a standard high school diploma are  
10 only required to earn two credits of mathematics after they  
11 enter the ninth grade prior to graduation. The Legislature  
12 further finds that special attention must be given to the  
13 Alabama courses of study. The State Board of Education shall  
14 establish a rigorous and meaningful core curriculum including,  
15 but not limited to, all of the following courses for grades  
16 nine through twelve in public schools to be phased in  
17 beginning with students entering ninth grade in the 1996-97  
18 scholastic year:

19           "(1) Four years (equivalent of four credit units) of  
20 English.

21           "(2) Four years (equivalent of four credit units) of  
22 mathematics, including but not limited to material designed to  
23 ensure that no high school student fails to learn basic  
24 mathematical skills and computer literacy.

25           "(3) Four years (equivalent of four credit units) of  
26 science.

1           "(4) Four years (equivalent of four credit units) of  
2 social studies with an emphasis on history, music history,  
3 fine arts history, geography, economics, and political  
4 science. History courses shall include material on the history  
5 of the United States and the Constitution of the United  
6 States. The Legislature further requires that the curriculum  
7 content of American history shall include the teaching of  
8 important historical documents including the Constitution of  
9 the United States, The Declaration of Independence, The  
10 Emancipation Proclamation, The Federalist Papers, and other  
11 such documents important to the history and heritage of the  
12 United States.

13           "(c) It is the intent of the Legislature that credit  
14 for required basic core academic courses may be earned in  
15 conjunction with vocational courses and/or programs. It is the  
16 intent of the Legislature that local boards of education offer  
17 and schedule students into vocational programs.

18           "(d) It is the intent of the Legislature that, in  
19 addition to the required courses, elective courses including,  
20 but not limited to, foreign languages, fine arts, physical  
21 education, wellness education, and vocational and technical  
22 preparation be available to all students as determined by the  
23 local board of education. For purposes of this section,  
24 American Sign Language is a foreign language; a public school  
25 may offer such a course; and a student who successfully  
26 completes the course is entitled to receive credit for the  
27 course toward satisfaction of a foreign language requirement,

1 pursuant to rules and regulations adopted by the Alabama State  
2 Board of Education. Beginning with the 2005-2006 school year,  
3 the preceding sentence shall apply to hearing-impaired  
4 students; and beginning with the 2006-2007 school year, and  
5 each school year thereafter, the preceding sentence shall  
6 apply to all students. Nothing in this chapter shall be  
7 construed to diminish the current requirements of the State  
8 Board of Education with respect to health and physical  
9 education instruction in grades K-12 or to reduce the effect  
10 of Section 16-40-1 regarding health and physical education.

11 "(e) The State Board of Education shall adopt  
12 necessary policies, procedures, rules, regulations, and  
13 standards to require that:

14 "(1) The required courses set forth in this section  
15 shall be taken by every student enrolled in grades nine  
16 through twelve of public schools to be phased in beginning  
17 with students entering the ninth grade in the 1996-97  
18 scholastic year. The State Superintendent of Education after a  
19 hearing in which he or she determines there exists just cause  
20 may grant a one-time delay of one year for a school system  
21 from implementation of any one of the required courses.

22 "(2) The required courses set forth in this section  
23 shall be successfully passed by a student enrolled in grades  
24 nine through twelve of public schools prior to such student's  
25 graduation or receipt of a diploma, phased in beginning with  
26 students entering the ninth grade in the 1996-97 scholastic  
27 year. Students identified as eligible for special education

1 services as provided by federal and state law shall be  
2 required to meet the provisions set forth in the individual  
3 education plan prescribed to meet their individual needs as  
4 required by law. The State Board of Education shall continue  
5 to set graduation requirements; however, such graduation  
6 requirements shall not provide less in the way of requirements  
7 in the areas of English, math, science, and social studies as  
8 provided in this chapter.

9 "(3) In addition to the required courses, a number  
10 of elective courses shall be successfully passed by a student  
11 enrolled in grades nine through twelve of public schools prior  
12 to such student's graduation or receipt of a diploma, phased  
13 in beginning with students entering the ninth grade in the  
14 1996-97 scholastic year. The State Board of Education shall  
15 determine the number and classification of units of credit  
16 required for high school graduation.

17 "(f) The State Board of Education, on the  
18 recommendation of the State Superintendent of Education, shall  
19 prescribe the minimum contents of courses of study for all  
20 public elementary and high schools in the state. In every  
21 elementary school there shall be taught at least reading  
22 including phonics, spelling, handwriting, arithmetic, oral and  
23 written English, geography, history of the United States and  
24 Alabama, elementary science, hygiene and sanitation, physical  
25 education, the arts, including musical and visual arts,  
26 environmental protection, and such other studies as may be  
27 prescribed by the local board of education. Instruction in

1 handwriting shall include cursive writing so that students are  
2 able to create readable documents through legible cursive  
3 handwriting by the end of the third grade. Moreover, the State  
4 Board of Education shall require the following courses for  
5 grades one through eight in all public schools to be phased in  
6 beginning with students entering grades one through eight in  
7 the 1995-96 scholastic year: English, social studies,  
8 mathematics, and science shall be taught each year in grades  
9 one through eight. English shall include, but not be limited  
10 to, material designed to develop language arts, such as  
11 reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Social  
12 studies shall emphasize geography and history of the United  
13 States and Alabama.

14 "(g) The State Board of Education shall adopt  
15 necessary policies, procedures, rules, regulations, and/or  
16 standards to require college and university departments of  
17 education to review their existing educational programs for  
18 all prospective teachers in order to ensure that they are  
19 properly prepared to teach the courses required by law.

20 "(h) The State Board of Education and all local  
21 boards shall develop and implement ~~within ninety (90) days of~~  
22 ~~July 7, 1995~~ commencing with the 2018-2019 school year, a  
23 comprehensive character education program for ~~all~~ grades K-12  
24 to consist of ~~not less than ten minutes~~ instruction ~~per day~~  
25 provided five times each week during the school year, for a  
26 length of time of not less than 40 minutes per day for each  
27 class. The instruction shall focus on ~~focusing upon~~ the

1 students' development of the following character traits:  
2 Courage, patriotism, citizenship, honesty, fairness, respect  
3 for others, kindness, cooperation, self-respect, self-control,  
4 courtesy, compassion, tolerance, diligence, generosity,  
5 punctuality, cleanliness, cheerfulness, school pride, respect  
6 for the environment, patience, creativity, sportsmanship,  
7 loyalty, and perseverance. Each plan of instruction shall  
8 include the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag. The  
9 program shall also address methods of discouraging bullying  
10 and violent acts against fellow students.

11 "(i) The State Board of Education shall adopt  
12 necessary policies, procedures, rules, regulations, and/or  
13 standards to ensure quality vocational/technical education  
14 programs.

15 "(j) Each local board of education shall certify on  
16 an annual basis to the State Board of Education that the  
17 applicable schools in the school district are meeting the  
18 cursive writing requirements under subsection (f) and the  
19 comprehensive character education program requirements under  
20 subsection (h). The State Board of Education may adopt rules  
21 to implement this subsection."

22 Section 2. This act shall become effective on the  
23 first day of the third month following its passage and  
24 approval by the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.