



## Dr. Barbara Cooper, Secretary



Dr. Barbara J. Cooper was appointed Secretary of the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education by Governor Kay Ivey on July 1, 2020. She has served the Department of Early Childhood Education since 2018, directing the nationally recognized high-quality Alabama First Class Pre-K program. She previously served as the department's Director of the Office of School Readiness and is the Birth to Grade 12 Advisor for the Alabama Governor's Office of Education and Workforce Transformation.

Dr. Cooper's administrative career is extensive, as she previously served as Deputy State Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer of the Alabama State Department of Education, Chief Administrative Officer for the Montgomery Public Schools Intervention, Deputy Superintendent of Huntsville City Schools, Chief Equity and Engagement Officer of Aurora Public Schools (Colorado) and a Principal with Denver Public Schools. She has teaching experiences ranging from early childhood education through post-secondary.

### Transition Committee

A transition committee was established to ensure a smooth leadership change in the department. Governor Kay Ivey chaired the committee with Representative Terri Collins serving as the Co-Chair. The Hunt Institute coordinated the effort and provided valuable leadership. Committee members included lawmakers, agency heads, and education stakeholders. The Committee has just completed its work and expects to release a final report in February. Themes that have emerged through the process are:

- Eliminating programmatic silos for increased collaboration and coordination across Alabama's early childhood programs
- Addressing generational poverty and mitigating its negative effects on young children and families
- Increasing program access, with an emphasis on vulnerable populations
- Supporting and uplifting Alabama's early childhood workforce
- Strengthening data collection and systems
- Increasing developmental screening and access to early intervention services
- Supporting early literacy

*"I believe we must start with data-informed, short term goals that facilitate long term priorities. This places us on a trajectory of continuous quality improvement which will result in Alabama's youngest learners receiving an equitable education."* – Dr. Barbara J. Cooper

### Educational Philosophy and Beliefs

My educational philosophy is rooted in the following beliefs which support my work as the agency leader at the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education:

- I believe every Alabama education agency must be led by a courageous, visionary leader capable of bringing people together to collaborate around goals that support us in meeting the needs of every student we impact in our great state.
- I believe in high expectations and standards for all employees, stakeholders, parents, and students.
- I believe we must lead others daily through our actions and by modeling expectations for equity and excellence.
- I believe all children can and will learn, regardless of special needs, when provided opportunities to work with highly qualified, well trained educators. Educators must hold the same high expectations for the students they touch, as they would for their children or relatives.
- I believe a student's educational attainment should not be defined nor predicted by their demography or personal circumstances, and an exemplary, highly trained teacher in every classroom is the number one predictor of student success.
- I believe our parents, community, agency leads, legislators and education leaders are partners in education, and we must work together, while encouraging multiple perspectives in supporting the unique needs of every Alabama county.



# Budget Request Summary Education Trust Fund Budget, FY 2022

Budget Line Item	FY21 Allocation	FY22 Request	Increase
Office of School Readiness	\$126,798,645	\$151,215,130	\$24,416,485
HIPPY-First Teacher Home Visiting Program	\$3,135,000	\$5,000,000	\$1,865,000
Strong Start Strong Finish	\$1,400,440	\$3,000,000	\$1,599,560
Alabama Family Central	\$500,000	\$500,000	-0-
Operations and Maintenance	\$381,045	\$500,000	\$118,955
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$131,715,130</b>	<b>\$160,215,130</b>	<b>\$28,500,000</b>

## Office of School Readiness/Pre-K

### Increase of \$24,416,485 will:

- Increase Pre-K access from 37% to 44% of 4 year old children
- Provide access for the 3,000 children currently on waiting list
- Address learning loss by providing summer programs and wrap-around services to support working families and ensure student success during the pandemic and beyond
- Ensure pay parity between teachers in First Class Pre-K classrooms and K-12 classrooms

## HIPPY - First Teacher Home Visiting

### Increase of \$1.8 million will:

- Support parents in the education of their young children
- Increase the quality of existing programs
- Serve the 400 children and their families currently on waiting lists

## Strong Start Strong Finish: Pre-K – 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade

### Increase of \$1.6 million will:

- Provide opportunities to maintain and expand access to the Pre-K – 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade initiative
- Incorporate the most successful parts of Pre-K – 3<sup>rd</sup> initiatives in order to narrow the achievement gap and establish a strong foundation of early learning experiences that promote student success.

## Alabama Family Central Database

### Sustained funding of \$500,000 will:

- Provide continued funding for the Alabama Family Central website which connects Alabama families to much needed resources

## Operations and Maintenance

### Increase of \$118,955 will:

- Cover our increase in staffing and the rising costs of grant administration and data system building
- Ensure accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness by increasing accounting and staffing needs of the department
- Continue match for vital federal Head Start funding

## Total Budget

### Increase of \$28.5 million will:

- Expand access to high quality early learning
- Positively impact more children and families

## Access to First Class Pre-K

