



Learning 2025  
**LEARNER-CENTERED  
FUTURE-DRIVEN  
EDUCATION**



# LEARNING 2025 LIGHTHOUSE DEMONSTRATION SYSTEM

## AASA Learning 2025

### Lighthouse Demonstration System Vignette

## Talladega County School District

Recognized Fall 2024

### Focus Area: Technology-Enhanced Learning

According to leaders of the Talladega County Schools, the district is known for its visionary culture and student-focused innovation, which provides an equitable education for all students: “We strive for continuous improvement by employing highly qualified professionals who provide and enhance exceptional instruction, authentic learning experiences, supportive relationships, and community partnerships to prepare students for a successful future.”

The district has an outstanding reputation for its incorporation of AASA’s Learning 2025 Accelerator A3: Technology-Enhanced Learning. In 2009, Talladega County Schools became one of the first school systems in the state of Alabama to initiate a 1:1 digital device-to-student program. Beginning as a pilot, the program is now system-wide, providing 1:1 instructional coaching in meaningful technology integration. According to the Alabama Educator Technology Survey, 95% of educators indicated that they are able to attend a sufficient number of professional learning sessions to help them successfully integrate technology and digital resources into their classrooms.

Talladega County is at the forefront of integrating computational thinking into the curriculum by developing and implementing Computational Thinking Pathways. This innovative approach equips students with essential problem-solving skills such as algorithmic thinking, data analysis, and model building, critical for success in today’s technology-driven world. By the time students reach high school, they are engaging in sophisticated projects involving coding, robotics, and the application of computational methods to solve real-world challenges.

## District Demographics at a Glance

Talladega County Schools (located 60 minutes from Birmingham, Alabama) is a highly diverse system with 70% of students identified as rural/high poverty, receiving Free or Reduced Lunch. Serving approximately 7,000 students across 16 schools, the district is dedicated to providing an engaging and rigorous curriculum that empowers all students to be college and career ready.

The student body reflects the community's diversity, including 32.31% African-American, 62.52% Caucasian, 3.44% Hispanic, and 1.73% from multinational backgrounds. All students receive free lunch through the Community Eligibility Provision, with over two-thirds living in poverty.

## District Priorities

In response to the needs of Talladega County students, the district is dedicated to future-driven education, integrating cutting-edge technology and innovative learning methods. The district's recent National Technology Education Plan recognition underscores its commitment to making computational thinking an essential part of all students' education.

Project-based learning includes a range of student options, such as:

- tiny house construction projects
- a mobile virtual lab
- ZIP (Space Immersive Playground)

in addition to other options for students to explore a variety of STEM fields.

Another unique component of the district's commitment to technology integration includes options for students to explore its Cybersecurity Program (launched in partnership with Digital Promise) to provide students with industry-recognized credentials.



**7,000**  
Students



**16**  
Schools



Identify as Rural/High  
Poverty

## Professional Development & Training Programs

To support its emphasis upon technology-driven instruction, Talladega County Schools offers a range of training and professional development programs.

Compass on Demand, for example, involves opportunities for teachers to open their classrooms to colleagues across the district, showcasing effective teaching strategies and best practices. This approach fosters a culture of shared expertise and supports the ongoing growth and development of all educators in the district.



The district's "Expert Down the Hall" (EDTH) program has been instrumental in developing and nurturing teacher leadership across the district. Each school has identified an "EDTH" to serve as an instructional technology mentor. These leaders play a crucial role in implementing the district's customized Computational Thinking Pathway, aligning it with Alabama's Digital Literacy and Computer Science Standards. EDTH mentors provide embedded professional development, model lessons, co-plan with teachers, and support technology integration in classrooms.



Another focus area for Talladega County Schools is the integration of Artificial Intelligence. Since the release of ChatGPT in November 2023, multiple AI applications have been created and disseminated within the marketplace. Talladega is committed to leveraging AI for both teacher productivity and student learning. District leaders assert that it is imperative that educators stay abreast of best practices, including teaching students how to effectively evaluate AI-generated content and how to leverage AI to personalize learning, accommodate different learning styles, and foster collaboration.

## A Commitment to the Whole Learner

Another key component of the district's success involves its commitment to supporting the whole learner. The district has implemented Tier 1 frameworks for behavior and academics across grades K-12 designed to provide clear, consistent expectations that support students in all content areas and social-emotional growth and development.

The district has developed standards-based pacing guides and assessments crafted by teachers. The result is a well-aligned curriculum that clearly specifies pacing and standards expectations. Consequently, all schools offer a rigorous and equitable course of studies. Additionally, the district celebrates voice and empowerment through an annual Culture Day that fosters a collaborative atmosphere where teachers and students unite to strategize and implement initiatives that enhance school culture.

Academically, the district's focus on project-based learning reinforces student proficiency in key skills such as communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking.

Students are involved in real-world and meaningful projects, preparing them for future academic and career success. Similarly, central to the district's vision for supporting the whole learner is its Compass for Educational Excellence, which outlines strategic goals and initiatives. This framework guides the district's efforts to provide a well-rounded educational experience that supports students' academic, personal, and career development.

## **Emphasizing Social Emotional Cognitive Growth**

Talladega County Schools is deeply committed to addressing the social-emotional needs of its students. It recognizes that emotional well-being is foundational for academic success. As a result, the district has implemented the Zones of Regulation program that is led by dedicated school counselors to help students develop self-regulation and emotional control. The program provides students with tools to identify their emotions and apply strategies to manage them, fostering a healthier and more supportive learning environment. Additionally, the district has appointed a Student Wellness and Social Services Coordinator to oversee the impact of these efforts, ensuring that all students will have access to necessary resources and interventions.

The district's commitment to social and emotional well-being and cognitive growth of all learners is strengthened through strategic partnerships with community organizations such as the AltaPointe Mental Health Services and the Sylacauga Alliance for Family Advancement. These collaborations bring additional mental health support and services directly to students, addressing the varied needs of the district's rural, high-poverty population.

Also, the district's long-standing collaboration with the Talladega County Sheriff's Department ensures that every school in the district has a School Resource Officer who enhances safety and builds positive relationships with students. The result is a secure and nurturing school environment.