



STATE OF ALABAMA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Michael Sentance, J.D., LL.M.  
State Superintendent of Education

February 1, 2017

Alabama  
State Board  
of Education

**MEMORANDUM**

**This memorandum should be provided to all certified employees.**

Governor  
Robert Bentley  
President

**TO:** City and County Superintendents of Education

Jackie Zeigler  
District I

**FROM:** Michael Sentance *MS*  
State Superintendent of Education

Betty Peters  
District II

**RE:** Memorandum #2: Act #2016-198 and Provisions Regarding Compensation for Earned Advanced Degrees

Stephanie Bell  
District III

On April 26, 2016, Governor Robert Bentley signed Act #2016-198 (House Bill 121), also known as the Pay Raise Bill. A portion of the act includes provisions regarding compensation for earned advanced degrees. The Act may be viewed at the following link <http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0011357.PDF>.

In a previous memorandum dated October 11, 2016, one provision of Act #2016-198 was addressed. That provision pertains to individuals who earned initial graduate credit towards an advanced degree **prior to July 1, 2017**.

Yvette M. Richardson, Ed.D.  
District IV  
Vice President

This memorandum is to advise you of additional provisions of the Act regarding compensation for earned advanced degrees, the implementation of those provisions, and to provide some examples. **The following is applicable to individuals who earn initial graduate credit toward an advanced degree on or after July 1, 2017.**

Ella B. Bell  
District V

I. An excerpt from Section 1, Subsection (7)f., of the act states:

*Commencing at the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, additional compensation for an advanced degree shall only be provided if the advanced degree is earned in the same field of study as the subject matter the person is teaching, unless: (i) the advanced degree is in education administration or counseling; or (ii) the person teaches a subject that is in critical shortage, as defined by the local school system and approved by the State Department of Education; or (iii) the teacher is required to transfer to another area or subject.*

Cynthia McCarty, Ph.D.  
District VI

II. The following provides the framework for implementation of the above provisions:

Jeff Newman  
District VII

A. *Commencing at the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year will mean beginning July 1, 2017, and thereafter.*

B. Advanced degrees recognized for salary purposes must have been earned from an institution of higher education that was regionally accredited at the:

1. Level of the degree earned
2. Time the degree was earned

Mary Scott Hunter, J.D.  
District VIII  
President Pro Tem

C. Additional compensation for an advanced degree shall be provided if the advanced degree is earned in the field of study in which the educator is:

1. Teaching/serving
- or
2. Properly certified.

Michael Sentance, J.D., LL.M.  
Secretary and  
Executive Officer

**Example:** An individual is certified in history and English (Grades 6-12). The individual is teaching English and earns an advanced degree in history. The individual would be compensated for the advanced degree.

- D. Additional compensation for an advanced degree shall be provided if the advanced degree is earned in or the major for the degree is indicated to be:
1. Counseling
  2. Education Administration
  3. English for Speakers of Other Languages
  4. Languages Other than English
  5. Library Media
  6. Reading
  7. School Psychology
  8. School Psychometry
  9. Special Education
  10. Speech-Language Pathology
  11. STEAM: Science, Technology, Engineering, Art (dance, music, theatre, visual arts), Mathematics
  12. Teacher Leader
- E. Additional compensation for an advanced degree shall be provided for a teacher of a critical shortage area. Each scholastic year, the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) will provide a list of critical shortage areas that are applicable statewide. The ALSDE will also create a procedure that a local education agency (LEA) must use to request ALSDE approval for a subject, teaching field, or position that does not appear on the statewide list.
- F. Additional compensation for an advanced degree shall be provided for a holder of an alternative approach certificate. *At this time*, the alternative approach certificates are the Provisional Certificate in a Teaching Field, Provisional Certificate in a Career and Technical Teaching Field, Provisional Certificate in Library Media, Provisional Certificate in School Counseling, and Interim Employment Certificate.
- G. If the employing LEA requires the person to transfer or be reassigned to another area or subject, then additional compensation for an advanced degree shall be provided if the advanced degree is earned in an area for which the educator is properly certified.

III. Section 1, Subsection (7)h., of the Act states:

*The requirement that an advanced degree be earned in the same field of study as the subject matter being taught shall be liberally construed to include self-contained teachers who teach all subjects at a particular grade level.*

The statement above is interpreted to mean additional compensation for an advanced degree shall be provided if the advanced degree is earned in a field of study in which the educator is properly certified. This includes early childhood, elementary, early childhood special education, collaborative K-6, special education Alternative Achievement Standards, and middle school generalist.

IV. Implementation Guidelines

Once an educator has earned an advanced degree and it is recognized by the ALSDE for additional compensation, the educator will continue to be eligible for compensation at that degree level, according to the state minimum salary schedule.

Information will be disseminated in the near future regarding the:

1. Degree correlation information
2. Documentation LEAs must submit for recognition of advanced degrees

**City and County Superintendents of Education**

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Each person who serves as a teacher or in an instructional support personnel position in the public schools of the state is required to hold a valid Alabama certificate as prescribed in *Ala. Code §16-23-1 (1975)*. The certificate must be proper certification for the teaching field(s) and/or area(s) of instructional support in which the person is assigned throughout the school day. The current edition of the *Subject and Personnel Codes* of the ALSDE, which is updated annually, shall be used to determine whether a person holds proper certification for his or her assignments throughout the school day.

If you have questions or comments about the contents of this memorandum, you may contact [payforadvanceddegrees@alsde.edu](mailto:payforadvanceddegrees@alsde.edu).

MS/JAM

cc: Deans of Education and Certification Officers  
Chief School Financial Officers  
Dr. Sally Howell Smith  
Dr. Earl Franks  
Dr. Eric Mackey  
Mrs. Amy Marlowe  
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