



STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Michael Sentence
State Superintendent of Education

October 11, 2016

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of Education

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MEMORANDUM

TO: City and County Superintendents of Education

FROM: Michael Sentence 
State Superintendent of Education

RE: Act #2016-198 and the Provision Regarding Compensation for Earned Advanced Degrees

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. We are in the process of analyzing the provisions relevant to the compensation for earned degrees. The act may be viewed at the following link: <http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0011357.PDF>.

This memorandum is to advise you of one provision regarding compensation for earned advanced degrees and its implementation. An excerpt from Section 1, Subsection (7)f., of the act states:

A teacher who has made progress toward earning an advanced degree before the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, as determined by parameters established by rule of the Department, upon earning that advanced degree, shall be entitled to the additional compensation without regard to the field of study for which the advanced degree was earned.

The following provides the framework for implementation of the above provision:

1. *A teacher who has made progress toward earning an advanced degree* is a person who has received graduate credit for a graduate level course with a grade of C or higher and that:
 - a. Graduate credit was not used for conferral of a previous degree.
 - b. Graduate credit was earned at an institution of higher education that was regionally accredited at the time the credit was earned.
2. Advanced degrees recognized for salary purposes must have been earned from an institution of higher education that was regionally accredited:
 - a. At the level of the degree earned.
 - b. At the time the degree was earned.

3. *Before the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year* will be interpreted as **prior to July 1, 2017**.
4. If credit for a graduate course is earned prior to July 1, 2017, the date (month, day, and year) must be clearly stated on the individual's official transcript. If the month, day, and year are not clearly stated on the transcript, a letter from the registrar of the institution confirming the date must be submitted to the Alabama State Department of Education.

No changes are expected at this time to the current Verification of Higher Degree process. Please remind your employees that advanced degrees earned based on graduate credit having been earned from a regionally accredited college or university **before July 1, 2017**, will continue to be recognized, without regard to the field of study for which the advanced degree was earned, as long as the employee holds a valid Alabama educator certificate. You should continue to forward those requests to the Office of Teaching and Leading.

This memorandum should be forwarded to each employee of your school system so they may be aware of these requirements. Information will be disseminated later this year regarding implementation of additional provisions of the act.

If you have questions or comments about the contents of this memorandum, you may contact payforadvanceddegrees@alsde.edu.

MS/JAM

cc: Deans of Education and Certification Officers
Chief School Financial Officers
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Dr. Earl Franks
Dr. Eric Mackey
Dr. Pamela Fossett
Mrs. Juliana Dean
Mr. Andy Craig
Dr. Mark Kirkemier
Dr. Linda Felton-Smith
Mrs. Shanthia Washington
Mr. Ethan Taylor
Mr. Dennis Heard
Dr. Jayne A. Meyer
Mrs. Shavon H. Cummings

1 e. Local Chief Executive Officers. The pay increase
2 provisions of this section shall not apply to superintendents
3 of education of any school system or institution. Any pay
4 increase given to the superintendent shall be by majority
5 recorded vote of the governing body or authority.

6 f. Commencing at the beginning of the 2017-2018
7 school year, additional compensation for an advanced degree
8 shall only be provided if the advanced degree is earned in the
9 same field of study as the subject matter the person is
10 teaching, unless: (i) the advanced degree is in education
11 administration or counseling; or (ii) the person teaches a
12 subject that is in critical shortage, as defined by the local
13 school system and approved by the State Department of
14 Education; or (iii) the teacher is required to transfer to
15 another area or subject. A teacher who has made progress
16 toward earning an advanced degree before the beginning of the
17 2017-2018 school year, as determined by parameters established
18 by rule of the department, upon earning that advanced degree,
19 shall be entitled to the additional compensation without
20 regard to the field of study for which the advanced degree was
21 earned. The State Department of Education, by rule, shall
22 establish parameters defining the field of study to which a
23 particular advanced degree correlates for the purposes of this
24 paragraph.

1 g. Subdivision f. to the contrary notwithstanding,
2 additional compensation for an advanced degree where progress
3 toward the degree is initially commenced after the beginning
4 of the 2017-2018 school year, shall only be provided if the
5 advanced degree is earned at an accredited institution of
6 higher education.

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

11 i. By October 1 of each year, the State Department
12 of Education shall submit a report to the Speaker of the House
13 of Representatives, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate,
14 the Chair of the House Ways and Means Education Committee, and
15 the Chair of the Senate Finance and Taxation Education
16 Committee, listing the number of advanced degrees earned by
17 teachers during the preceding school year, the type of
18 advanced degrees earned, and the number of advanced degrees
19 earned in the field of study as the subject matter being
20 taught by teachers earning advanced degrees.

21 Section 2. The pay increases granted in Section 1
22 shall begin in fiscal year 2016-2017 and continue in
23 subsequent years. Nothing in Section 1 shall authorize
24 additional pay increases in subsequent years.