



STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Joseph B. Morton
State Superintendent
of Education

Alabama
State Board
of Education

March 3, 2006

MEMORANDUM

Governor Bob Riley
President

TO: County and City Superintendents

Randy McKinney
District I
President Pro Tem

FROM: Joseph B. Morton
State Superintendent of Education

Betty Peters
District II

SUBJECT: Procedure for Verifying Higher Degrees

Stephanie W. Bell
District III

Enclosed is a revised **Verification of a Higher Degree** form for advanced degrees earned after March 1, 2006. A Local Education Agency (LEA) must submit the revised form for all teachers and instructional support staff members who earn an advanced degree after March 1, 2006, from a regionally accredited institution without regard to whether the advanced degree leads to a higher certificate. The revised form is designed to facilitate the timely payment of teachers and instructional support staff members who have earned an advanced degree recognized by the State Superintendent.

Dr. Ethel H. Hall
District IV
Vice President
Emerita

A teacher or instructional support staff member whose pay is based on the state minimum salary schedule is entitled to be paid for the highest recognized degree earned at a regionally accredited institution, regardless of whether an advanced degree does or does not lead to a higher certificate. See *Alabama Administrative Code* Rule 290-2-1-.01(1)(a)2.(i)(II). In interpreting that rule and other applicable statutes, the Attorney General opined as follows:

Ella B. Bell
District V

“Local boards of education must pay teachers for the highest degree earned from a regionally accredited institution after the advanced degree is recognized by the State Department of Education. The rules of the State Board of Education do not require an advanced degree recognized by the State Department of Education be obtained in an education field of study. Local boards of education have no authority to refuse to pay a teacher at the highest degree recognized by the State Department of Education.”—Opinion of the Attorney General, February 9, 2006. (Copy enclosed.)

David F. Byers, Jr.
District VI

Sandra Ray
District VII
Vice President

Teachers and instructional staff members are entitled to receive pay for a higher degree no later than the first pay period that begins after the State Superintendent recognizes the advanced degree. Those teachers and instructional staff members who complete the requirements for a degree in the summer, after completing the working days for the scholastic year, will be entitled to the higher pay for a recognized advanced degree in the first pay period of the new scholastic year. Rules of the State Board of Education also require that employees whose pay is based on the state minimum salary schedule advance to the next step of the salary schedule on the anniversary date of experience.

Dr. Mary Jane Caylor
District VIII

Joseph B. Morton
Secretary and
Executive Officer

The revised form must be sent to the address on the form and will not be returned. The Teacher Certification database, *Glink*, will indicate the degree, the date the degree was recognized, and the date the degree was earned by employees holding a valid Alabama Teacher Certificate. Additional revised forms are available under the Teacher Education and Certification Section at www.alsde.edu.

JBM/JAM/SG
Enclosure