May 25, 2016

MEMORANDUM

TO: City and County Superintendents of Education

FROM: Philip C. Cleveland  
Interim State Superintendent of Education

RE: Changes in Highly Qualified Teachers and Paraprofessionals  
Effective 2016-2017 School Year and Thereafter

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), eliminates the “Highly Qualified Teacher” provisions under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB).

With the enactment of the ESSA, the terms “highly qualified teacher” and “highly qualified paraprofessional” will no longer be in effect in Alabama beginning August 1, 2016. Therefore, effective August 1, 2016, the Educator Certification Section will no longer issue highly qualified teacher status to holders of valid Alabama certificates.

Title I Certification and Licensure Requirements and Parents Right to Know

Under ESSA, Sec. 1112(c)(6), each local educational agency (LEA) supported with Title I funds will ensure that all teachers and paraprofessionals working in a program supported under this part meet applicable state certification and licensure requirements, including any requirements for certification obtained through alternative routes to certification.

Please also note that under ESSA, Sec. 1112(e)(1)(A), at the beginning of each school year, each LEA supported with Title I funds shall notify parents that they may request, and the LEA will provide on request and in a timely manner, information regarding the professional qualifications of the student’s classroom teachers, including:

1. Whether the student’s teacher:
   - Has met state qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction.
   - Is teaching under emergency or other provisional status through which state qualification or licensing criteria have been waived.
   - Is teaching in the field of discipline of the certification of the teacher.

2. Whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications, including state requirements:
   - Secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent.
   - Completed two years of study at an institution of higher education.
   - Obtained an associate’s (or higher) degree.
   - Workkeys Assessment.
3. ESSA, Sec. 1112(c)(1)(B), additional information. In addition to the information that parents may request under subparagraph (A), a school that receives funds under this part shall provide to each individual parent of a child who is a student in such school, with respect to such student:

- Information on the level of achievement and academic growth of the student, if applicable and available, on each of the state academic assessments required under this part.
- Timely notice that the student has been assigned or has been taught for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who does not meet applicable state certification or licensure requirements at the grade level and subject area in which the teacher has been assigned.

The department will provide additional guidance about Section 1112(c)(1)(B) as soon as possible. If you have questions regarding the content of this memorandum, contact your Federal Programs Regional Specialist.

PCC/EM/NJT

cc: Federal Programs Coordinators
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FY16-2063