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Math and Science Teachers Across Alabama Benefit from AMSTEP Program

Federal Loan Repayment Program Provides Incentive for Math and Science Educators

Montgomery, Ala. – Many educators across the state who teach math or science courses are eligible for financial assistance to pay off their federal student loans. A new initiative established by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) and the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) seeks to incentivize teachers, and potential teachers alike, with the Alabama Math and Science Teacher Education Program (AMSTEP).

AMSTEP was developed as encouragement for those currently in, or seeking, a career teaching math or science in Alabama, with an emphasis on those working primarily in Alabama’s Black Belt areas. AMSTEP is funded by ACHE and is not a scholarship, but rather a repayment incentive that pays back a significant portion of the tuition costs these teachers incur while pursuing their teacher degrees from any of Alabama’s 26 in-state colleges and universities approved by the Alabama State Board of Education to prepare teachers.

AMSTEP pays qualifying individuals $2,500 per semester for up to four consecutive years. For teachers who teach in school systems in the targeted school systems, the amount increases to $3,000 per semester for up to four consecutive years. Attainment of these funds for federal loan repayment was first made available to teachers who earned their initial (first-time) degree and certification Spring of 2018 or thereafter. State Superintendent of Education, Dr. Eric Mackey, said the AMSTEP program is designed to assist the teachers who are desperately needed across the state.

“Teacher shortages is certainly not a problem unique to Alabama. Nationally, teacher recruitment and retention are serious concerns,” Mackey said. “Programs like AMSTEP are necessary to make sure we are able to recruit our best and brightest – particularly in the areas we need them in the most.”

So far, 37 Alabama school systems have teachers receiving AMSTEP funds. A total of 72 teachers have qualified for the loan reimbursement; 47 math teachers and 25 science teachers. The program is not restricted to those who are or aspire to be teachers with a traditional Class B teaching certificate. Individuals, who decide to go into teaching as a second career by completing an Alternative Class A program can also qualify.

Currently, there are 35 Alabama educators with a Class B certificate taking advantage of the program, and 37 who completed an Alternative Class A program.

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“AMSTEP pays tremendous dividends for both our educators and educational system,” said ACHE Executive Director Jim Purcell. “Public high school teachers in math or science are able to get financial assistance for federal loan repayment and Alabama’s educational level is enhanced with certified classroom teachers.”

To make sure eligible educators take full advantage of this opportunity, local school districts and human resource professionals are encouraged to identify qualified individuals and make sure they fill out the appropriate applications and acquire the superintendent’s signature. Local school systems then send applications to ALSDE where each applicant is vetted to make sure they qualify and are teaching in the field of math or science. Once approved, the application is forwarded to ACHE personnel who contact the teacher.

All areas of the state can qualify for the repayment program, however, the targeted systems with higher reimbursement amounts are:

- Barbour County
- Bullock County
- Butler County
- Choctaw County
- Conecuh County
- Dallas County
- Eufaula City
- Hale County
- Lamar County
- Lowndes County
- Macon County
- Marengo County
- Montgomery County
- Perry County
- Phenix City
- Pickens County
- Pike County
- Randolph County
- Russell County
- Selma City
- Sumter County
- Troy City
- Washington County
- Wilcox County
- Winston County

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