

Funding to Raise Average Salary

Governor Musgrove signed HB 1134 into law on May 1. This legislation provides for a \$337.9 million plan to raise Mississippi teacher pay to the Southeastern average by the 2005-2006 school year. Mississippi's teachers will start seeing larger paychecks during the 2001-2002 school year. Mississippi's teacher pay average will go from the present \$31,900 to the predicted Southeastern average of approximately \$41,000 by the 2005-2006 school year. This is an approximate 30% raise.

Debt/Tuition Relief

See discussion of scholarships for students willing to teach in geographical area of the state where there is a critical shortage of teachers as approved by the State Board of Education below.

Mentoring and Compensation for Mentoring

Senate Bill No. 3034 (1995 Regular Session) authorized the establishment of a beginning teacher support program to provide eligible beginning teachers in Mississippi with continued and sustained support from a formally assigned mentor teacher during the first full year of teaching. However, this was an unfunded mandate. The Mississippi Teacher Center received \$150,000.00 during fiscal year 1999-2000, and used these funds to sponsor three statewide workshops specifically designed for schools serving grades K-12. The workshops empowered teams made up of the Superintendent, Personnel Director, Principal, a Prospective Mentor Teacher, and a beginning teacher to understand the total concept of teacher mentoring and induction. The Legislature provided \$75,000.00 for fiscal year 2000-2001 for mentoring and induction. The Mississippi

Teacher Center will use the funding to sponsor teacher induction focus groups and to develop a *Teacher Induction Guidebook*.

Subject/Location Bonus

Mississippi's Critical Needs Teacher Scholarship Program is available to both full-time and part-time students. Students enrolling on a full-time basis may receive a maximum of four annual awards. At the beginning of the first school year in which a recipient is eligible for employment as a licensed teacher, recipients shall begin to render service as a licensed teacher in a public school district in a geographical area of the state where there is a critical shortage of teachers as approved by the State Board of Education. Any person who received four annual awards shall render three years' service as a licensed teacher. Any person who received fewer than four annual awards shall render one year's service as a licensed teacher for each year that the person receive a full-time student scholarship or for the number of academic hours equivalent to one school year for those who received scholarships as part-time students. 778 students participated in the program in FY 2000.

The University Assisted Teacher Recruitment and Retention Grant Program strives to attract additional qualified teachers to those geographical areas of the state where there exists a critical shortage of teachers and to retain the qualified teachers already serving as licensed teachers in geographical critical teacher shortage areas by making available scholarships to persons working towards a Master of Education degree or an Education Specialist degree at an institution of high learning whose teacher education program is approved by the State Board of Education. The financial

scholarship shall be applied to the total cost for tuition, books, materials and fees at the institution in which the student is enrolled, not to exceed an amount equal to the highest total cost assessed during that school year. Teachers who relocate within Mississippi from out-of-state in order to participate in the program are classified as residents of the state for tuition purposes. Students may receive awards for a maximum of four school years. A teacher agrees to employment in a critical needs district for a period of not less than three years, which shall include those years of service rendered while obtaining the Master of Education degree or Educational Specialist degree. 125 students participated in this program in FY 2000.

State Reimburse for Teaching Supplies

Mississippi's Education Enhancement Fund (1992 sales tax increase legislation), provides funds to local districts for classroom supplies, instructional materials and equipment, including computers and computer software, to be distributed to all school districts in the proportion that the average daily attendance of each school district bears to the average daily attendance of all school districts within the state. Funds may not be expended for administrative purposes. Local school districts allocate classroom supply funds equally among all classroom teachers in the district.

Mortgage/Rental Assistance

The Mississippi Employer-Assisted Housing Teacher Program is a special home loan program for eligible licensed teachers who render service in a geographical area of the state where there exists a critical shortage of teachers. The State Department of Education administers the loan program in conjunction with the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae). Any person who receives a loan under the program

is required to purchase a house and reside in a county in which the school district for which the teacher is rendering service, or any portion of the school district, is located. The maximum amount of a loan that may be made under the program to any person is \$6,000. 40 teachers received housing loans in FY 2000.

Reimbursement for National Certification

For public school teachers with at least three years of teaching experience, the state will reimburse the \$2300 fee on completion of the process (whether or not certification is achieved)

Technology Training

Education Enhancement Funds provides funds to local districts for classroom supplies, instructional materials and equipment, including computers and computer software.

Tech Prep is a series of educational programs and activities that address the needs of high school students preparing to enter the twenty-first century. Tech Prep integrates itself throughout the academic and vocational curricula with emphasis on applied learning strategies (hands-on activities) and integrated projects. Support activities in the Tech Prep Initiative include Career Centers in each high school (Tech Prep site), Career/Educational Plans for all students, work-based learning programs, and assessment of student progress. Professional development is provided for school personnel including academic and vocational/technical teachers, counselors, Career Center technicians, and administrators. Business and industry partnerships are actively sought to improve community involvement and curriculum validity. During the 1999-2000 school year,

3,019 academic and vocational teachers were trained (initially or through follow-up sessions) in the integrating of academic and vocational skills, 847 secondary and postsecondary administrators attended professional development related to Tech Prep and vocational-technical education, and 177 academic and vocational teachers participated in internships through the Tech Prep consortia or Professional Development Institute

Governor Musgrove created the Governor's Task Force for Classroom Technology via Executive Order 831 in order to accomplish his goal of placing an Internet-accessible computer in every public elementary and secondary classroom in Mississippi by the end of 2002. To date, no other state has accomplished such an endeavor. The task force is comprised of representatives of teachers, school administrators, state agencies, private foundations and interests, and professional associations. The task force is charged with supporting administrative initiatives to fund the project, raising private sector awareness and financial support of the project, and executing the initiative.

Compensation for National Certification

Mississippi had 349 National Board Certified teachers in FY 2000. Any licensed teacher who has met the requirements and acquired a Master Teacher certificate from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and who is employed by a local school board or the State Board of Education as a teacher and not an administrator shall receive an annual salary supplement of \$6,000, plus fringe benefits.

In-state Effort to Equalize Salaries

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Pension Enhancements

HB 1281 (2000 Regular Session) established a new retirement option to allow a member of the retirement system who has at least 28 years of creditable service at the time of retirement, or who is at least 63 years of age at the time of retirement, to receive a partial lump sum distribution. The lump sum distribution shall be equal to the maximum monthly benefit multiplied by 12, 24 or 36. The member's benefit shall be reduced to reflect the payment selected and shall be computed to result in no actuarial loss to the system.