

MEMORANDUM

To: Prospective Mississippi Local Superintendents of Education

From: Dr. Cory M. Murphy, Executive Director
Office of Teaching and Leading

Date: Friday, March 5, 2021

Subject: Temporary Guidance Regarding Certain Qualifications for Appointment of
Prospective Mississippi Local Superintendents of Education

Mississippi Code Ann. § 37-9-13(1), selection of school district superintendent, requires that in addition to all other criteria outlined therein, criterion (1) (a), (b), or (c) shall be met prior to appointment. The law reads as follows:

“(1) Each school district shall have a superintendent of schools, selected in the manner provided by law. No person shall be eligible to the office of superintendent of schools unless such person shall hold a valid administrator's license issued by the State Department of Education and shall have classroom or administrative experience of not less than six (6) years which shall include at least three (3) years of administrative experience as a school building principal **(a)** in a school with an “A” or “B” accountability rating, or **(b)** in a school that increased its accountability rating by a letter grade during the period in which the principal was employed as principal at the school, or **(c)** in a school with comparable accountability rating or improvement in another state which shall be verified by the Mississippi Department of Education.”

Due to the unique circumstances arising as a result of COVID-19, such as statewide school closures that had occurred during multiple testing windows, it was not feasible for the MDE to administer any of the required state or federal assessments for the 2019-2020 school year. Therefore, the MDE did not have sufficient data to produce accountability determinations as required by state and federal law for the 2019-2020 school year.

On March 19, 2020, during its regularly scheduled meeting, the State Board of Education granted approval for districts and schools to maintain the same accountability designation in the 2020-2021 school year as assigned in the 2019-2020 school year with no cumulative impact for cases where multiple years with the same designation may lead to a more severe consequences. As a result of the MDE not possessing sufficient data to produce accountability determinations, prospective Mississippi superintendents of education are unable to provide evidence of having met the accountability criteria required by state law.

Therefore, absent accountability results, on February 25, 2021, during its regular meeting, the State Board of Education granted approval to the MDE to temporarily allow prospective Mississippi superintendents of education meeting all other qualifications except the accountability rating documentation requirement, to be deemed eligible to receive an initial District Superintendent License by way of the State Board of Education approved Alternative Qualifications for Prospective District Superintendent of Education to begin practicing in that role should a Mississippi local School Board approves the appointment of the candidate.

Furthermore, the MDE requested and received approval to grant a one-time, one-year extension to a three (3) year initial alternative District Superintendent License, at the point of license expiration, for holders of this license currently serving in a Mississippi local school district as Superintendent of Education. The one-time, one-year extension is subject to the request being made by the local School Board by which the initial license request was made and granted.

Should you have questions related to the licensing process, please contact Dr. Cory M. Murphy via email at cmurphy@mdek12.org. The MDE will provide further guidance as necessary in the days and weeks to come. As always, we appreciate the opportunity to serve you.

Attachment

c: Dr. Paula A. Vanderford

**MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
ALTERNATIVE QUALIFICATION FOR
PROSPECTIVE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION**

Initial Three-Year District Superintendents License Criteria:

1. Holds at least a Master's degree or higher from an institution of higher education that was accredited at the time the degree was conferred;

AND

2. Have a minimum of six (6) years of documented successful leadership experience, as determined and verified by the appointing local school board (examples include, but are not limited to, for profit or not for profit organizations, state agencies, business, industry, K-12 education – district level senior/executive leadership direct report to local superintendent of education, higher education or law, senior leadership position such as CEO, Commissioned Officers – Pay Grade 03 or above);

AND

3. Obtain a position as district superintendent and submit local board resolution of appointment to that position.

Note: The Initial Three (3) Year District Superintendent License is non-renewable but, may be converted to a Standard Five-Year District Superintendent License if the following pre-conditions are met.

The Initial Three-Year District Superintendent License may be converted to the Standard Five-Year District Superintendent License upon completion of the following:

1. Successful completion of ongoing professional learning aligned to the responsibilities of Mississippi local school district superintendents as outlined in Miss. Code Ann. § 37-9-14. The professional learning activities must be completed during the three (3) year validity of the license while actively employed as district superintendent. This would include the completion of Mississippi Department of Education approved professional growth opportunities such as Superintendent's Academy or Executive Leadership Institute or Educational Administration/Leadership degree program or any other professional growth opportunity approved by the Mississippi Department of Education. If one or more of the specific aforementioned professional growth opportunities were completed prior to obtaining the initial District Superintendent License, the district superintendent shall not be required to complete again;

AND

2. Demonstrate evidence that the district increased its accountability rating by a minimum of one performance classification during the three (3) year period in which the license holder was employed as district superintendent if placed in a local school district that was rated a "C" or lower at the time of appointment as district superintendent or maintain the "A" or "B" rating in a local school district rated as such at the time of appointment;

AND

3. The district superintendent shall earn a successful evaluation rating consistent with the assessment components defined in Miss. Code Ann. § 37-7-301 and as outlined in the current edition of the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards*.

Note: The Standard Five (5) Year District Superintendent License is renewable. Five-Year District Superintendent License holders must meet current State Board approved license renewal requirements prescribed for Standard Career Level Administrator License. Current license renewal requirements may be found in the Guidelines for Mississippi Educator Licensure K-12.