

MISSISSIPPI

State Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators



Mississippi Department of Education
P.O. Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205-0771

Table of Contents

Section 1: Introduction.....	1
Scan of State-Level Policies and Initiatives.....	2
Enhancing Quality Instruction through the Flexibility.....	3
Critical Teacher Shortage Act of 1998	3
Defining "Excellent" Educators	7
Mississippi Teacher Evaluation System	8
Mississippi Principal Evaluation System.....	11
Mississippi Educator Code of Ethics	13
Section 2: Stakeholder Engagement	15
Section 3: Equity Gap Exploration and Analysis	16
Definitions and Metrics.....	16
Exploration and Overview of Data	17
Equity Gaps.....	19
Section 4: Strategies for Eliminating Equity Gaps	22
Key Strategy 1: Attract, Recruit, and Retain	22
Key Strategy 2: Cultural Competence	25
Key Strategy 3: Teacher Enhancement and Support	27
Metrics and Performance Objectives	29
Section 5: Ongoing Monitoring and Support.....	31
Implementation Timeline.....	31
Section 6: Conclusion	34
Appendix.....	35
Stakeholder Engagement Meeting Invitation.....	36
Stakeholder Engagement Meeting Invitees	37
Stakeholder Engagement Meeting Attendees	62
Stakeholder Engagement Meeting Agenda.....	68
2014-2015 Equity Data	72
Proposed Critical Shortage Subject Areas and Geographical Areas	78

MDE Contact:

Dr. Cerissa Neal

Executive Director

Office of Educator Quality

P.O. Box 771

Jackson, MS 39205

cneal@mde.k12.ms.us

601-359-3631

Mississippi State Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators

Section 1: Introduction

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) is pleased to submit to the U.S. Department of Education the following plan that has been developed to address the long-term needs for improving equitable access to great teachers in Mississippi. This plan describes the steps that the MDE will take to ensure that children from poor and minority backgrounds are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or emergency certified educators teaching outside their areas of certification as is required in section 1111(b)(8)(C) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Although the MDE recognizes importance of leadership in eliminating equity gaps, the proposed strategies are teacher focused in this plan. The plan contains the following components:

1. A description of the steps the MDE took to consult with Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), teachers, principals, pupil services personnel, administrators, staff, parents, and other stakeholders in the development of the plan
2. Identification of equity gaps and an explanation of the calculations and process of identification
3. An explanation of the likely cause(s) of the identified equity gaps
4. An explanation of the steps the MDE will take to eliminate the identified gaps
5. A description of the measures that the MDE will use to evaluate progress toward eliminating the identified equity gaps for both poor students and minority students
6. A description of how the MDE will publicly report its progress

In developing this plan, the MDE sought the assistance of the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL Center), the American Institutes for Research (formerly the Southeast Comprehensive Center), and the Research and Curriculum Unit (RCU) at Mississippi State University. To create this plan, a team of leaders at the MDE, led by the Executive Director of the Office of Educator Quality, took the following steps:

1. Developed and began implementing a long-term strategy for engaging stakeholders in ensuring equitable access to excellent educators.
2. Reviewed data provided by the US Department of Education and our own Office of Technology and Strategic Services (OTSS) to identify equity gaps.
3. Analyzed data and with the input of stakeholder, conducted root-cause analyses to identify the challenges that underlie our equity gaps to identify and target the proposed strategies accordingly.
4. Set measurable targets and created a plan for measuring and reporting progress and continuously improving this plan.

Scan of State-Level Policies and Initiatives

The Mississippi State Board of Education (SBE) has as its vision “to create a world-class education system that gives students the knowledge and skills that will allow them to be successful in college and the workforce and flourish as parents and citizens,” with its mission statement indicating that SBE is “to provide leadership through the development of policy and accountability systems so that all students are prepared to compete in the global community.” With this vision and mission in mind, SBE selected Dr. Tom Burnham as the State Superintendent of Education in November 2009. In January 2010, Dr. Burnham began his tenure as State Superintendent of Education, and his goal was to systemically attack all barriers that impede success for every student in the state. Dr. Carey Wright, named superintendent in October 2013, continues that goal.

Further, Mississippi’s Governor Phil Bryant adopted Rising Together as his 2012 inaugural theme. Through his inaugural address, he identified education as one of the four opportunities for his work in Mississippi:

... And if we are to rise together, we must do so with the inherent characteristics of Mississippi. We are a people of character who value hard work and treasure loyalty to our families, state and country.... every Mississippian should have the opportunity to actually learn from the best educational system we can offer...

For the first time in recent memory, policy makers across the state agree on the importance of education and the need to support comprehensive reform efforts. The unification of the legislative body, Governor’s office, and the heads of the education sectors has presented a unique opportunity for Mississippi to work toward a common goal: Ensuring a bright future for every child.

To accomplish this goal, the MDE identified and addressed barriers to learning across the state:

- strong, consistent leadership at the district and building level;
- college and career readiness;
- sound literacy and numeracy for students by the end of third grade;
- instructional quality for all students; and
- safe and appropriate learning environments in all schools.

All of these barriers were focal points for the improvement strategies being implemented under the State Superintendent of Education’s leadership. The educational leadership of decision makers at the school and district level is crucial to overcoming these barriers. To that end, MDE asked a variety of stakeholders, advocates, and educators to give input on these barriers and other areas of education that needed to be addressed through the ESEA Flexibility Waiver Request (the Request). Dr. Wright continues to address these issues through regular meetings with her Superintendent’s Advisory Council, the SBE, and briefings with stakeholders around the state.

Enhancing Quality Instruction through the Flexibility

Through the various areas of input and support, specific strategies emerged:

- Redesigning teacher and leader preparation programs and linking the redesign to the evaluation of practitioners;
- Devoting appropriate resources to implementation of the Mississippi's College and Career Readiness Standards, assessments, and multiple opportunities for high school completion;
- Identifying those schools with the greatest needs and then providing differentiated interventions to meet those needs; and

Intentionally restructuring the services offered by MDE to ensure that accountability and improvement are at the forefront of expectations and to reduce duplication and redundancy.

Through the flexibility of the Request, MDE will hold schools more accountable for addressing learning gaps while providing high quality, differentiated, on-going interventions, technical assistance, and support to ensure that practitioners have the knowledge and skills needed to meet the needs of a growingly diverse student population. By increasing the focus on quality instruction through the redesign of practitioner preparation and the evaluation of implementation, while increasing content and performance standards to align with career and college-ready standards, Mississippi will meet Governor Bryant's education goal: every Mississippian will have the opportunity to actually learn from the best educational system we can offer. On March 31, 2015, the Mississippi Department of Education submitted a three-year renewal request, revising Mississippi's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Request.

Mississippi Critical Teacher Shortage Act of 1998

In accordance with the "Mississippi Critical Teacher Shortage Act of 1998", the purpose of which is to attract qualified teachers to those geographical areas of the state and subject area shortage school districts as designated by the State Board of Education, the criteria outlined below shall be used to designate those areas.

1. Mississippi public school districts with 60 or more teaching positions having 10% or more of their teaching staff inappropriately licensed shall be declared a geographic shortage area. Inappropriately licensed shall include teachers teaching out of field, teachers teaching with no certificate, and long term substitutes.
2. Mississippi public school districts with less than 60 teaching positions having 15% or more of their teaching staff inappropriately licensed shall be declared a geographic shortage area.
3. Mississippi public school districts having 30% or more of their teaching staff with 25 or more years of experience shall be declared a geographic shortage area.
4. Mississippi public school districts that were named as geographical shortage areas for two or more years preceding enactment of this methodology shall continue to be named as geographical shortage areas.

