

By: Representatives Arnold, Boyd, Turner,  
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To: Education;  
Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 582

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-21-7, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO  
2 INCREASE THE BASE SALARIES OF ASSISTANT TEACHERS BY THE AMOUNT OF  
3 ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS BEGINNING WITH THE 2015-2016 SCHOOL YEAR, TO  
4 A TOTAL OF THIRTEEN THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS IN ADDITION TO  
5 THE ONE PERCENT INCREASE TO THE BASE SALARY ESTABLISHED FOR  
6 ASSISTANT TEACHERS FOR EACH ONE PERCENT THAT THE SINE DIE GENERAL  
7 FUND REVENUE ESTIMATE GROWTH EXCEEDS FIVE PERCENT; AND FOR RELATED  
8 PURPOSES.

9 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

10 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-21-7, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
11 amended as follows:

12 37-21-7. (1) This section shall be referred to as the  
13 "Mississippi Elementary Schools Assistant Teacher Program," the  
14 purpose of which shall be to provide an early childhood education  
15 program that assists in the instruction of basic skills. The  
16 State Board of Education is authorized, empowered and directed to  
17 implement a statewide system of assistant teachers in kindergarten  
18 classes and in the first, second and third grades. The assistant  
19 teacher shall assist pupils in actual instruction under the strict  
20 supervision of a licensed teacher.



21           (2)   (a)   Except as otherwise authorized under subsection  
22   (7), each school district shall employ the total number of  
23   assistant teachers funded under subsection (6) of this section.  
24   The superintendent of each district shall assign the assistant  
25   teachers to the kindergarten, first-, second- and third-grade  
26   classes in the district in a manner that will promote the maximum  
27   efficiency, as determined by the superintendent, in the  
28   instruction of skills such as verbal and linguistic skills,  
29   logical and mathematical skills, and social skills.

30           (b)   If a licensed teacher to whom an assistant teacher  
31   has been assigned is required to be absent from the classroom, the  
32   assistant teacher may assume responsibility for the classroom in  
33   lieu of a substitute teacher. However, no assistant teacher shall  
34   assume sole responsibility of the classroom for more than three  
35   (3) consecutive school days. Further, in no event shall any  
36   assistant teacher be assigned to serve as a substitute teacher for  
37   any teacher other than the licensed teacher to whom that assistant  
38   teacher has been assigned.

39           (3)   Assistant teachers shall have, at a minimum, a high  
40   school diploma or a High School Equivalency Diploma equivalent,  
41   and shall show demonstratable proficiency in reading and writing  
42   skills. The State Department of Education shall develop a testing  
43   procedure for assistant teacher applicants to be used in all  
44   school districts in the state.



45           (4)   (a)   In order to receive funding, each school district  
46 shall:

47                       (i)   Submit a plan on the implementation of a  
48 reading improvement program to the State Department of Education;  
49 and

50                       (ii)   Develop a plan of educational accountability  
51 and assessment of performance, including pretests and posttests,  
52 for reading in Grades 1 through 6.

53           (b)   Additionally, each school district shall:

54                       (i)   Provide annually a mandatory preservice  
55 orientation session, using an existing in-school service day, for  
56 administrators and teachers on the effective use of assistant  
57 teachers as part of a team in the classroom setting and on the  
58 role of assistant teachers, with emphasis on program goals;

59                       (ii)   Hold periodic workshops for administrators  
60 and teachers on the effective use and supervision of assistant  
61 teachers;

62                       (iii)   Provide training annually on specific  
63 instructional skills for assistant teachers;

64                       (iv)   Annually evaluate their program in accordance  
65 with their educational accountability and assessment of  
66 performance plan; and

67                       (v)   Designate the necessary personnel to supervise  
68 and report on their program.

69           (5)   The State Department of Education shall:



70           (a) Develop and assist in the implementation of a  
71 statewide uniform training module, subject to the availability of  
72 funds specifically appropriated therefor by the Legislature, which  
73 shall be used in all school districts for training administrators,  
74 teachers and assistant teachers. The module shall provide for the  
75 consolidated training of each assistant teacher and teacher to  
76 whom the assistant teacher is assigned, working together as a  
77 team, and shall require further periodic training for  
78 administrators, teachers and assistant teachers regarding the role  
79 of assistant teachers;

80           (b) Annually evaluate the program on the district and  
81 state level. Subject to the availability of funds specifically  
82 appropriated therefor by the Legislature, the department shall  
83 develop: (i) uniform evaluation reports, to be performed by the  
84 principal or assistant principal, to collect data for the annual  
85 overall program evaluation conducted by the department; or (ii) a  
86 program evaluation model that, at a minimum, addresses process  
87 evaluation; and

88           (c) Promulgate rules, regulations and such other  
89 standards deemed necessary to effectuate the purposes of this  
90 section. Noncompliance with the provisions of this section and  
91 any rules, regulations or standards adopted by the department may  
92 result in a violation of compulsory accreditation standards as  
93 established by the State Board of Education and the Commission on  
94 School Accreditation.



95           (6) In addition to other funds allotted under the Minimum  
96 Education or Adequate Education Program, each school district  
97 shall be allotted sufficient funding for the purpose of employing  
98 assistant teachers. No assistant teacher shall be paid less than  
99 the amount he or she received in the prior school year. No school  
100 district shall receive any funds under this section for any school  
101 year during which the aggregate amount of the local contribution  
102 to the salaries of assistant teachers by the district shall have  
103 been reduced below such amount for the previous year.

104           For the \* \* \* 2015-2016 school year and school years  
105 thereafter, the minimum salary for assistant teachers shall  
106 be \* \* \* Thirteen Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$13,500.00).

107           In addition, for each one percent (1%) that the Sine Die  
108 General Fund Revenue Estimate Growth exceeds five percent (5%) in  
109 fiscal year \* \* \* 2015, as certified by the Legislative Budget  
110 Office to the State Board of Education and subject to the specific  
111 appropriation therefor by the Legislature, the State Board of  
112 Education shall revise the salary scale in the appropriate year to  
113 provide an additional one percent (1%) across the board increase  
114 in the base salaries for assistant teachers. The State Board of  
115 Education shall revise the salaries prescribed above for assistant  
116 teachers to conform to any adjustments made in prior fiscal years  
117 due to revenue growth over and above five percent (5%). The  
118 assistant teachers shall not be restricted to working only in the



119 grades for which the funds were allotted, but may be assigned to  
120 other classes as provided in subsection (2)(a) of this section.

121 (7) (a) As an alternative to employing assistant teachers,  
122 any school district may use the allotment provided under  
123 subsection (6) of this section for the purpose of employing  
124 licensed teachers for kindergarten, first-, second- and  
125 third-grade classes; however, no school district shall be  
126 authorized to use the allotment for assistant teachers for the  
127 purpose of employing licensed teachers unless the district has  
128 established that the employment of licensed teachers using such  
129 funds will reduce the teacher:student ratio in the kindergarten,  
130 first-, second- and third-grade classes. All state funds for  
131 assistant teachers shall be applied to reducing teacher:student  
132 ratio in Grades K-3.

133 It is the intent of the Legislature that no school district  
134 shall dismiss any assistant teacher for the purpose of using the  
135 assistant teacher allotment to employ licensed teachers. School  
136 districts may rely only upon normal attrition to reduce the number  
137 of assistant teachers employed in that district.

138 (b) Districts meeting the highest levels of  
139 accreditation standards, as defined by the State Board of  
140 Education, shall be exempted from the provisions of subsection (4)  
141 of this section.

142 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
143 and after July 1, 2015.

