

Guidance Document:
Payment on Advanced Leadership Degrees
O.C.G.A. §20-2-212 (HB 455 modified by HB 923)

**In Reference to the Adoption of House Bill 455 during the
2009 Session and Modified by HB 923 of the 2010 Session
of the Georgia General Assembly**



Georgia Professional Standards Commission

10/20/2010

**GUIDANCE DOCUMENT:
PAYMENT ON ADVANCED LEADERSHIP DEGREES
(O.C.G.A. §20-2-212 as modified by HB455 in 2009 and HB923 in 2010)**

A. OVERVIEW

The procedures for placement on the State Salary Schedule are now significantly different for educators holding advanced degrees in leadership. The Georgia General Assembly added language to O.C.G.A. §20-2-212 (through HB455 in 2009 and HB923 in 2010) that would place restrictions on paying educators salary increases based on their earning advanced degrees in educational leadership. Specifically, the State will pay on advanced leadership degrees only if the educator holding the degree is employed in a leadership position as defined by the State Board of Education. Implementation of these legislative changes impact individual educators, Local Education Agencies (LEAs), the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and the Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC).

This document addresses PSC's role in providing leadership degree information for determining *whether* these changes in law affect an individual's placement on the salary schedule. GaDOE is responsible for providing information on *how* an individual is actually placed on the appropriate salary schedule. Please refer to GaDOE guidance on using the leadership degree information to determine actual salary schedule placement.

1. What has changed as a result of this law?

The GaPSC assigns one level (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, or 7) to all certificates held by an educator. Previously, that certificate level (combined with the type of certificate held) automatically determined placement in the appropriate column on the State Salary Schedule. Effective July 1, 2010, placement on the State Salary Schedule for educators earning an advanced leadership degree will now depend on whether the educator is employed in a leadership position as defined by the State Board of Education.¹

The certificate level, which reflects the highest accepted degree held, no longer "automatically" designates salary schedule placement if that degree is a leadership degree earned after July 1, 2010. The bottom line change: 1) LEAs will now have to individually review data on employees holding leadership degrees to determine salary schedule placement rather than automatically using the certificate level; and 2) some educators holding certain advanced leadership degrees will not be paid on that degree level unless they are actually employed in a leadership position.

2. When did the changes to the law become effective?

July 1, 2010.

3. Why was this change in law made?

In 2009, in part as a result of the economic downturn, the General Assembly looked at the costs associated with paying salary increases based on educators earning advanced degrees. A review of FY 2008 data for salary increases based solely on advanced degrees in leadership indicated that \$68 million in tax dollars was spent for advanced leadership degrees to educators not assigned in leadership positions. This raised concerns about the relevancy of advanced degrees in disciplines in which the educator was not directly employed, which in turn raised questions with existing laws and policies governing educator salaries. This became commonly referred to as the "unused leadership degree" problem. The intent of the law was to obtain a better return on the state funding invested in advanced leadership degrees by limiting the salary increases to those individuals serving in leadership positions.

House Bill 455 (passed by the General Assembly in 2009) and House Bill 923 (passed in 2010) limit salary increases paid for advanced degrees in leadership by requiring that the degree-holder be employed in a leadership position, as defined by the State Board of Education, in order to be compensated for the leadership degree. The law changes included grandfathering provisions for educators already holding advanced leadership degrees and for those already enrolled in a leadership degree program. Payment on leadership degrees earned outside the grandfathering provisions, however, will be dependent on employment in a leadership position.

¹ See Overview Question 4 below for details on exemptions and grandfathering provisions.

4. Who is / is not required by the new law to hold a leadership position to be paid on the leadership degree?

- a. If you earned a leadership degree from a GaPSC-approved or accepted institution prior to July 1, 2010, then you will be paid on the degree level regardless of position assignment.
- b. If you were enrolled in a GaPSC-approved or accepted leadership degree program prior to April 1, 2009, and complete the masters degree by July 1, 2012, or complete the specialist degree by July 1, 2013, or complete the doctoral degree by July 1, 2014, then you are grandfathered AT THE LEVEL OF THAT DEGREE and you will be paid on that degree level regardless of position assignment.

NOTE: Grandfathering under these provisions is for the specific degree level held at the time of the prescribed cut-off date. Future leadership degrees earned by grandfathered educators will be governed by the new law provisions; payment for subsequent leadership degrees will be dependent on employment in a leadership position.

- c. Unless grandfathered under paragraph 4.b. above, if you earn a leadership degree from a GaPSC-approved or accepted institution after July 1, 2010, then you MUST BE EMPLOYED in a leadership position to be paid on the advanced leadership degree.

To assist in determining whether an educator will be paid only if they are employed in a leadership position, please refer to Appendix A below.

B. IMPLEMENTATION

1. Data / Information Required to Determine Salary Placement

(a) Definitions:

- (1) Leadership degree: Any GaPSC-approved or accepted masters, specialist, or doctorate leadership degree that leads to a Georgia Leadership (L, PL, NL, NPL) Certificate. (See PSC Rules 505-2-.22 and 505-2-.300 for details on what constitutes “approved” and “accepted”.)
- (2) Leadership position: Defined by the State Board of Education and O.C.G.A. §20-2-942. Any professional school employee certificated by the GaPSC who is required to hold a leadership certificate and is assigned to a leadership position pursuant to rules of the State Board of Education, Department of Education, GaPSC, or requirements of local policy or job description. Any educator assigned to a leadership position for any portion of his/her work schedule will be considered to be in a leadership position for purposes of implementing the new law revisions.

(b) Data Required:

- (1) Certificate type
- (2) Certificate level
- (3) Degree(s) held [name/subject]
- (4) Date the degree was awarded
- (5) Date the individual enrolled in the degree program
- (6) Employee job assignment (whether or not the individual is employed in a leadership position)

(c) Data Sources:

- (1) LEAs will assign/report employment positions on CPI to GaDOE.
- (2) GaDOE will provide CPI data to GaPSC and LEAs.
- (3) GaPSC will provide certification / degree information to LEAs and GaDOE.

- (4) GaPSC will provide a comprehensive Leadership Degree Report twice a year (following CPI collection) to LEAs. GaPSC will also provide districts with the ability to generate weekly reports reflecting changes of employee certificate/degree status.²

(d) Agency Roles:

- (1) State Board of Education and GaDOE

The State Board will: establish a State Salary Schedule; define leadership positions; and establish rules/procedures to determine placement on State Salary Schedule.

The GaDOE will: compile CPI data and make it available to GaPSC; and provide state-wide guidance concerning how to determine placement on the salary schedule.

- (2) GaPSC

Continue to approve degree programs for Leadership Certificates.

Continue to issue Georgia Leadership Certificates.

Continue to assign certificate levels.

Verify leadership certificates / degrees to LEAs and GaDOE.

Make the data files / reports noted above available to each LEA through the www.gapsc.org web portal.

- (3) LEA

Identify system positions designated as leadership positions.

Review data from PSC on leadership degrees to determine if position is required for placement.

Determine individual assignment to leadership position.

Appropriately place certified employees on the salary schedule.

Assign / report employee positions to GaDOE through the CPI collection process.

Periodically review assignment / degree status for those impacted the new law revisions.

2. Procedures for Determining Placement on the Salary Schedule

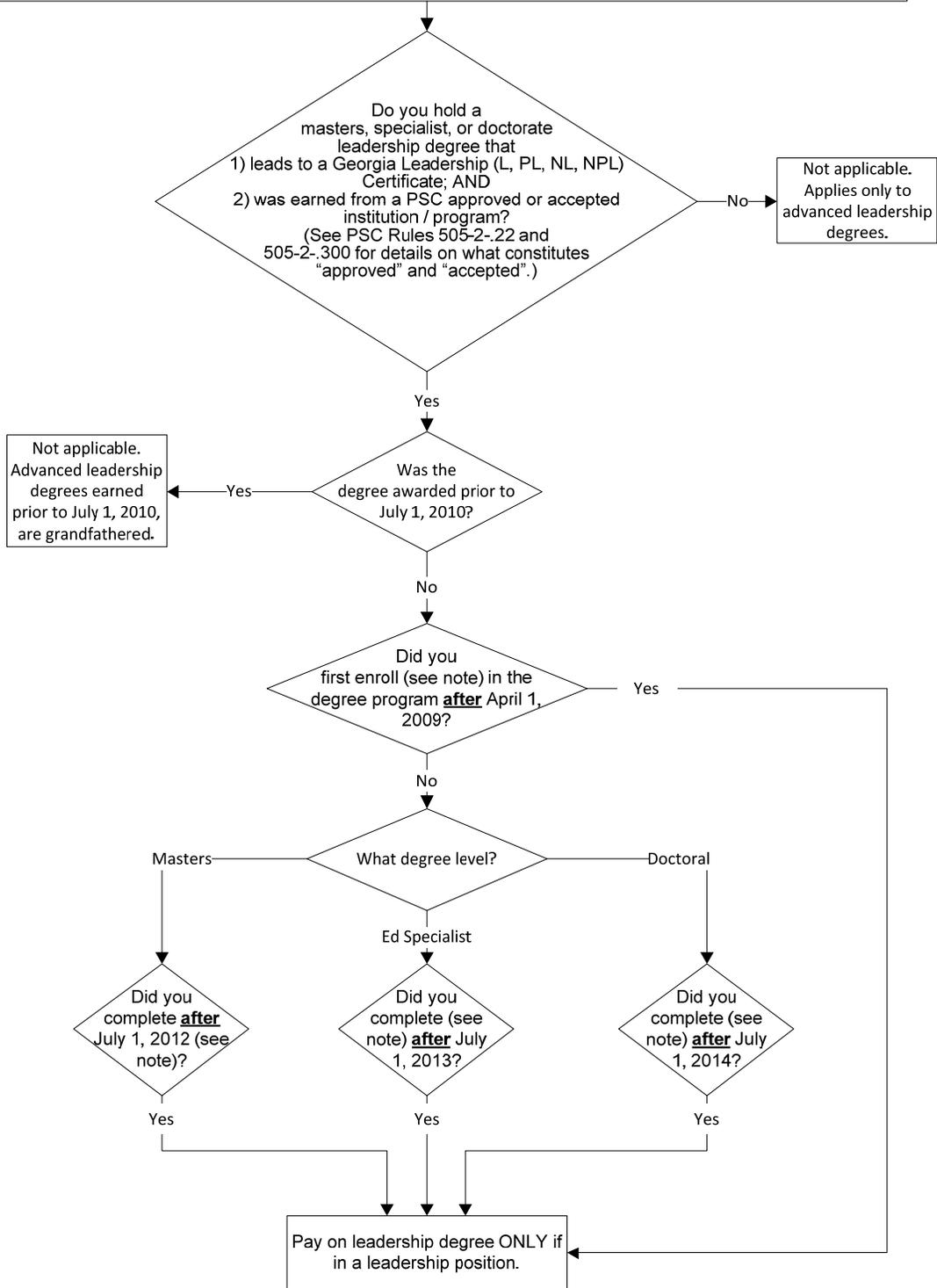
The degree information maintained and provide by GaPSC is for: 1) determining whether the differential salary schedule placement is applicable to a specific educator; and 2) determining actual placement on the salary schedule. While GaPSC makes these data available, specific rules and guidelines for actual placement on the state salary schedule fall under the purview of GaDOE.

Please refer to GaDOE guidance for specifics on how to use the degree information to determine appropriate salary schedule placement for educators..

² GaPSC is currently developing these reports and expects completion by the end of December, 2010. Detailed information on accessing these reports will be provided as soon as possible.

APPENDIX A: Is employment in a leadership position required for payment on an advanced leadership degree?

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NOTE

- "Enrolled date" = Date of earliest course, as recorded on the official transcript, taken as part of the performance-based leadership degree program.
- "Degree completion date" = Date the degree was awarded / conferred as recorded on the official transcript.