June 25, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: County and City Superintendents of Education
    High School Principals
    High School Guidance Counselors

FROM: Joseph B. Morton
      Interim State Superintendent of Education

RE: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Accreditation

The issue of the transfer of students from accredited and non-accredited schools to Alabama’s public schools has been an issue for some school systems for the past several years. In order to bring clarity to the topic, I asked representatives from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) office in Atlanta, Georgia, to make a presentation to the State Board of Education in a recent work session so that everyone could hear the latest developments by SACS on accreditation. It was a thorough presentation with many questions from members of the State Board of Education.

Following the presentation, questions and answers, and discussion, the following represents how the Department of Education will interpret the existing Alabama Administrative Code (AAC) rule (copy attached) on this topic:

- Accredited schools in Alabama are those that are accredited by SACS through all of its stated accreditation recognition methods.
- Any school accredited by an agency that is not recognized by SACS is not considered an accredited school in Alabama by the State Board of Education or the State Department of Education.
- Any student transferring to an Alabama public school from a private or public school that is SACS-recognized as being accredited shall have all credits and current class/grade placement accepted without validation upon the receipt of an official transcript(s).
- Any student transferring to an Alabama public school from a private or public school that is not SACS-recognized as being accredited shall follow the AAC procedures for credit transfers of students from non-accredited schools.
- The State Superintendent shall obtain annually a list of all schools in Alabama, both public and private, that are SACS-accredited and have it posted on the Department’s Web site for easy access by public schools seeking to implement students’ credit transfers under the AAC rules.
The overall goal of this effort is to ensure that the State Board of Education/Department of Education recognizes as accredited schools only those public and private schools that are recognized by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The State Board of Education has no desire to return to the days of trying to evaluate accrediting agencies other than SACS, nor does it have a desire to return to a system of State Department of Education accreditation. The prevailing feeling is that SACS is the best available organization by which schools should be recognized for accreditation. With that said, if SACS is to be the vehicle, we must accept the rules and methods SACS employs in their entirety, and it is my belief this is a sound approach to resolve accreditation dilemmas facing some of you. I appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Ms. Cynthia Brown in the Classroom Improvement Section at telephone number 334-242-8059 or via e-mail at cbrown@alsde.edu.