



FACT SHEET



NEW *NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND* FLEXIBILITY: HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS March 2004

States are now preparing to meet the 2005-06 deadline for ensuring all of their teachers are highly qualified. Ahead of that deadline, the Department is providing three new areas of flexibility for teachers to demonstrate that they are highly qualified. This flexibility will benefit teachers, local and state administrators, and most importantly—students.

NEW FLEXIBILITY

I. Rural Teachers

Approximately one-third—or almost 5,000—of all school districts in the United States are considered rural. As Department officials have traveled the country listening to teachers and state and district officials, they frequently have heard that the highly qualified teacher provisions of the *No Child Left Behind* law don't adequately accommodate the special challenges faced by teachers in small, rural districts. Often, the teachers in these areas are required to teach more than one academic subject. This new flexibility is designed to recognize this challenge and provide additional time for these teachers to prove that they are highly qualified.

- Under this new policy, teachers in eligible, rural districts who are highly qualified in at least one subject will have three years to become highly qualified in the additional subjects they teach. They must also be provided professional development, intense supervision or structured mentoring to become highly qualified in those additional subjects.

II. Science Teachers

Science teachers, like rural teachers, are often needed to teach in more than one field of science. Some states allow such science teachers to be certified under a general science certification, while others require a subject-specific certification (such as physics, biology or chemistry). In science, where demand for teachers is so high, the Department is issuing additional flexibility for teachers to demonstrate that they are highly qualified.

- Now, states may determine—based on their current certification requirements—to allow science teachers to demonstrate that they are highly qualified either in “broad field” science or individual fields of science (such as physics, biology or chemistry).

III. Current Multi-subject Teachers

Current teachers do not have to return to school or take a test in every subject to demonstrate that they meet highly qualified requirements. *No Child Left Behind* allows states to create an alternative method (High, Objective, Uniform State Standard of Evaluation or HOUSSE) for teachers not new to the field—as determined by each state—to certify they know the subject they teach. But, for multi-subject teachers, this alternate process could become unnecessarily protracted and repetitive as they go through the HOUSSE process for each subject.

- Under the new guidelines, states may streamline this evaluation process by developing a method for current, multi-subject teachers to demonstrate through one process that they are highly qualified in each of their subjects and maintain the same high standards in subject matter mastery.

EXISTING FLEXIBILITY

A common theme emerged from frequent meetings, visits and listening sessions with teachers and state and local officials across the country: States haven't been taking full advantage of flexibility (in requirements and in funding) already at their disposal through No Child Left Behind. Outlined below are some of these untapped areas:

I. HOUSSE for Current Teachers

No Child Left Behind does not require current teachers to return to school or get a degree in every subject they teach to demonstrate that they are highly qualified. The law allows them to provide an alternate method (HOUSSE) for experienced teachers to demonstrate subject-matter competency that recognizes, among other things, the experience, expertise, and professional training garnered over time in the profession.

II. Middle School Teacher Requirements

Importantly, states have the authority to define which grades constitute elementary and middle school. States may determine, by reviewing the degree of technicality of the subject matter being taught and the rigor of knowledge needed by the teacher, whether demonstrating competency as an elementary or as a middle school teacher is appropriate. In addition, states may approve rigorous content-area assessments that are developed specifically for middle school teachers aligned with middle school content and academic standards.

III. Testing Flexibility

NCLB provides flexibility in developing assessments for teachers to demonstrate subject-matter competency. States may tailor teacher tests to the subjects and level of knowledge needed for effective instruction.

IV. Special Education Teachers

The highly qualified teacher requirements apply only to teachers providing direct instruction in core academic subjects. Special educators who do not directly instruct students in core academic subjects or who provide only consultation to highly qualified teachers in adapting curricula, using behavioral supports and interventions or selecting appropriate accommodations, do not need to demonstrate subject-matter competency in those subjects.

Congress, in the context of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) reauthorization, is considering modifying how the highly qualified teacher provisions of NCLB apply to special education teachers. The Department looks forward to working with Congress in addressing this need.

TERMS TO KNOW: HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS

- **Highly Qualified Teachers:** To be deemed highly qualified, teachers must have: 1) a bachelor's degree, 2) full state certification or licensure, and 3) prove that they know each subject they teach.
- **State Requirements:** NCLB requires states to 1) measure the extent to which all students have highly qualified teachers, particularly minority and disadvantaged students, 2) adopt goals and plans to ensure all teachers are highly qualified and, 3) publicly report plans and progress in meeting teacher quality goals.
- **Demonstration of Competency:** Teachers (in middle and high school) must prove that they know the subject they teach with: 1) a major in the subject they teach, 2) credits equivalent to a major in the subject, 3) passage of a state-developed test, 4) HOUSSE (for current teachers only, see below), 5) an advanced certification from the state, or 6) a graduate degree.
- **High, Objective, Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE):** NCLB allows states to develop an additional way for current teachers to demonstrate subject-matter competency and meet highly qualified teacher requirements. Proof may consist of a combination of teaching experience, professional development, and knowledge in the subject garnered over time in the profession.