Special Education and The Highly Qualified Teacher Provisions of No Child Left Behind
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• Federal – *NCLB* defines what it means to be a highly qualified teacher of a core academic subject.
• State – States can add to this minimum requirement according to state needs and interests.
• Local – District leaders, principals, and teachers decide what makes a teacher highly effective, in addition to highly qualified.
Opportunity Knocks . .

- The HQT provisions in *NCLB* help ensure that all students, regardless of their disability, have access to quality instruction and challenging curriculum.

- *NCLB (ESEA in 2001)* did not come from out of thin air. It strengthens the work begun in the *Improving America’s Schools Act (ESEA in 1994)* and reflects some of the same research and experience which influenced the 1997 reauthorization of *IDEA*. 
“Over 20 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by having high expectations for such children and ensuring their access in the general curriculum to the maximum extent possible; coordinating the Act with other local, educational service agency, state, and federal school improvement efforts in order to ensure that such children benefit from such efforts and that special education can become a service for children rather than a place where they are sent;
IDEA continued
providing appropriate special education and related services and aids and supports in the regular classroom to such children whenever appropriate; supporting high quality intensive professional development for all personnel who work with such children in order to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge necessary to enable them to meet developmental goals and to the maximum extent possible, those challenging expectations that have been established for all children. . .”
NCLB Defines Highly Qualified Teacher:

1. A *highly qualified* teacher holds a minimum of a bachelor’s degree.
2. A *highly qualified* teacher holds full state certification or state licensure.
3. A *highly qualified* teacher has demonstrated subject area competence in each of the academic subjects the teacher teaches.
Full State Certification:

• The federal law does not say what type of certification is necessary for which teaching position. This is a state decision.

• States set certification requirements, hopefully with input from others, and with consideration for the importance of recruiting people into the teaching profession who are “non-traditional candidates” to meet critical shortage areas.

• *NCLB* does not require special education teachers to recertify in every subject, but rather to demonstrate competency in each subject they teach.
Subject Matter Matters:

• Good teachers... need to know—deeply—the subject they teach... You can't teach what you don't know well."
  - Sandra Feldman, President of the American Federation of Teachers

• Through IDEA reauthorization, Congress is currently considering how the highly qualified teacher provisions should apply to special education teachers.

• All teachers deserve to know where they stand in terms of meeting their state’s highly qualified teacher standards for the subjects they teach.
Core Academic Subjects:

• English
• Reading/language arts
• Math
• Science
• Arts
• Foreign language
• History
• Geography
• Economics
• Civics/government
Highly Qualified Requirement

Deadlines:

• **New Teachers** – of core academic subjects, hired after the start of the 2002-2003 school year, need to meet the highly qualified requirements if they are to teach in a Title I school.

• **All Teachers** – of core academic subjects need to meet the highly qualified requirements at the end of the 2005-2006 school year.

• **Note** – Flexible deadlines may apply for multi-subject teachers in small, rural schools.
What do these requirements mean for teachers **new** to the profession?

Elementary school teachers who are **new** to the profession must have a bachelor’s degree, full state certification, and demonstrate competency by passing a rigorous state test of subject knowledge and teaching skills in reading, language arts, writing, mathematics, and other areas of the basic elementary curriculum.
New teachers, continued:

Middle and high school level teachers who are new to the profession must have a bachelor’s degree, full state certification, and demonstrate competency by:

Passing a rigorous state test in each subject they teach, or holding an academic major or coursework equivalent, or an advanced degree, or advanced certification or credentials.
What do these requirements mean for teachers who are not new to the profession?

Current teachers, those who are not new and have been teaching since before the start of the 2002-03 school year, must have a bachelor’s degree, full state certification (no emergency or provisional certificates allowed), and must demonstrate subject matter competency in each core academic subject they teach.

Current teachers have the same options as new teachers, PLUS . . . . .
High, Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation:

NCLB recognizes that current teachers have been in the classroom, and have valuable experiences that can translate into object demonstrations of subject matter knowledge. In addition to the ways the law allows new teachers to demonstrate they know the subject they teach, the High, Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE) may be developed by states to determine subject matter competence for current teachers.
Criteria for the HOUSSE:

The law sets criteria for a state to consider when creating their HOUSSE:

1. Is set by the state for both grade appropriate academic subject matter knowledge and teaching skills;

2. Is aligned with challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards and developed in consultation with core content specialists, teachers, principals, and school administrators;

3. Provides objective, coherent information about the teachers attainment of core content knowledge in the academic subjects in which a teacher teaches;
4. Is applied uniformly to all teachers in the same academic subject and the same grade level throughout the state;

5. Takes into consideration, but not based primarily on, the time the teacher has been teaching in the academic subject;

6. Is made available to the public upon request; and

*The HOUSSE may involve multiple, objective measures of teacher competency.

**Many states have adopted a HOUSSE option.
Important “HOUSSE keeping”:

The HOUSSE provision of *NCLB* allows all veteran teachers who teach core academic subjects to show that they have acquired subject matter knowledge in various ways over the years they have taught.

*NCLB* requires states to ensure that all teachers of core academic subjects (including special education teachers) meet the same high standards.
A Recent Department Survey:

- Found that fewer than 36 percent of current teachers feel “very well prepared to implement curriculum”

AND

- Less than 20 percent feel prepared to meet the needs of diverse student populations, or those with limited English proficiency
Do the highly qualified teacher provisions apply to special education teachers?

Yes. If a teacher teaches any core academic subject, he or she must be highly qualified. However, special education teachers do not have to meet the requirements if they do not directly instruct students in a core academic subject. (Toolkit, p.21)
What activities may special education teachers carry out if they are not highly qualified in the core academic content areas being taught?

Special education teachers often carry out activities that would not, by themselves, require them to be highly qualified in a particular subject. Special educators do not have to demonstrate subject-matter competency in core academic subjects if they do not directly instruct students in those subjects, or if their role is limited to providing highly qualified teachers with consultation on the adaptation of curricula, the use of behavioral supports and interventions, or the selection of appropriate accommodations. In addition, they do not need to meet highly qualified requirements in a subject if they assist students with study or organizational skills and reinforce instruction that the child has already received from a teacher who is highly qualified in that core subject. (Toolkit, p. 22)
Using *NCLB* as the Catalyst for Change:

- **Collaboration**: General educators and special educators working together to reach all children – sharing ideas, strategies, content knowledge, and knowledge of students with disabilities.

- **Accountability**: Disaggregating data on student achievement will help schools and districts target resources to help all students achieve.

- **Decision Making/Using Funds**: Ensuring that resources are available to train all teachers to meet the needs of diverse learners. Teachers need to be involved in decision making regarding professional development and using funds.

(Condensed from *Toolkit*, p. 44)
Will the new ED regulations concerning the assessment of children with the most significant cognitive disabilities affect the qualification requirements for teachers of such children?

_NCLB_ does not carve out an exception for teachers of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Through _IDEA_ reauthorization, Congress is currently looking at the HQT requirements for teachers of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.
Disability Distribution for Children Ages 6-21

- About 80% of students with disabilities have specific learning disabilities or physical or health impairments.

- About 10% have the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Note: The all other disabilities category includes orthopedic impairments (1.24%), hearing impairments (1.21%), developmental delay (0.98%), visual impairments (0.44%), traumatic brain injury (0.36%), and deaf-blindness (0.03%).

Data for U.S. and Outlying Areas as of July 15, 2003.
The vast majority of students with disabilities can achieve to high academic standards. . .

When considering the challenges, and more importantly the potential that these students have to achieve academically, it is critical that teachers who instruct these students know the subjects they are teaching and are able not only to provide support for these students according to their disability, but also provide quality instruction in the general curriculum.
Recruitment/Retention of All Teachers

- Offer Merit/Difficult Assignment Pay (Public Agenda Report)
- Provide Alternate Routes- especially for critical shortage areas (special education, math, science)
- Provide Mentor Teacher Programs - States and districts recognize that new teachers who have experienced teacher mentors stay in the profession longer.
- Reform District Hiring Practices (New Teacher Project)
Vermont’s Act 117 provides special education training for general education teachers.

New Mexico encourages the inclusion model and provides professional development for special educators (Teaching Enhancement Grant).

Some IHE’s require both a content major and an education major (including special education) for their teacher candidates. (KS)

Alabama and Virginia require all elementary teachers (including special educators) to have reading training.

Virginia requires teachers to take the Virginia Reading Assessment (VRA).

Many states and districts offer summer academies to provide focused content professional development. (PA, MS)
Title II Funds – Improving Teacher Quality Grants

• Use money differently. Use data to inform decision making.

• Pool Resources: End the “silo approach” and target resources for all teachers (Title II funds, IDEA funds).

• Districts can create professional development plans for all teachers.

• Changing the way instruction is delivered; exploring different models (inclusion, consultation)

• Provide content-based professional development (Cohen & Hill, 2000)
High Quality Professional Development

- Involves collaboration between teachers and administrators
- Addresses the needs of students
- Provides training to improve classroom management
- Provides guidance to enhance parental involvement
- Provides training on how to use data to inform classroom decision making
Resources:

- **No Child Left Behind: A Toolkit for Teachers** – (To order, call 1-877-4-ED-PUBS or go to [www.edpubs.org](http://www.edpubs.org)).
- Title II, Part A Non-Regulatory Guidance (revised January 16, 2004) - new revision out soon!
- Go to [www.teacherquality.us](http://www.teacherquality.us) for interesting state initiatives geared toward improving teacher quality and support teaching and learning.
- Go to [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov) to find the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services web site.