



Transcript of NCSET Conference Call Presentation

Highly Qualified Teachers Under *No Child Left Behind*: Implications for Secondary Special Education

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presented by:

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Dr. Jones: Good afternoon and welcome to “Highly Qualified Teachers under *No Child Left Behind*: Implications for Secondary Special Education.” I am on the line from Washington, DC at the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, where I am Project Officer for the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition and the Center on Improving Teacher Quality. I would like to take a moment to recognize Jean Miller, Project Director at the Center for Improving Teacher Quality housed at the Council for Chief State School Officers here in Washington, DC. The Center is cosponsoring this event and Jean will be moderating today’s presentation from South Carolina as well as the question and answer session.

I would like to point out to you that the PowerPoints that accompany today’s presentation are listed on the NCSET website at <http://www.ncset.org/>.

I would like to also extend a special welcome to our Exiting TA Community of Practice members.

Today, we are pleased to welcome Gretchen Slease, Janice Poda, and Susan Durant as our presenters. I will give a short bio for each before we proceed to their presentations. First, Gretchen Slease, representing the U.S. Department of Education, currently works with Deputy Secretary of Education, Gene Hitchcock, assisting him on teacher quality issues. Gretchen has traveled the country, speaking and providing technical assistance regarding the “highly qualified teacher” provisions in the *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001. Gretchen helped to write and edit the *No Child Left Behind* toolkit for teachers which can be found on the Web at <http://www.edpubs.gov/> and

was updated in May 2004. She graduated from Vanderbilt University in 1992 with an English and education studies double major. She received her Masters Degree at Peabody College of Vanderbilt in 1998 in curriculum and instructional leadership. Before coming to Washington in July 2002, Gretchen taught upper elementary and middle school students for 10 years in Nashville. She taught the general curriculum focusing on reading, language arts, and social studies, using an inclusion model for students with disabilities.

From South Carolina we have Janice Poda and Susan Durant. Dr. Janice Poda is the Senior Director of the Division of Teacher Quality at the South Carolina Department of Education. The Division of Teacher Quality provides guidance and technical assistance to teachers in the areas of preparation, certification, and evaluation as well as *No Child Left Behind*. Prior to this position, Dr. Poda served for 10 years as the Director of the South Carolina Center for Teacher Recruitment, now known as the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement. Janice has also served as the Assistant Superintendent for Personnel in Greenwood, South Carolina. She has been a middle school social studies teacher and a high school special educator. She received her BA degree in social studies from the University of South Carolina, her Masters degree from the University of Georgia in special education, and a Ph.D. from the University of South Carolina. Janice has received, from Winthrop University, the Richard W. Riley College of Education Award of Excellence for Educational Leadership as well as the Distinguished Alumni Award from

the University of South Carolina College of Education.

And finally, Susan Durant has 23 years of experience in special education administration. She has been Director of the Office of Exceptional Children, South Carolina Department of Education since July 2000. Prior to this time, Ms. Durant was Executive Director of Special Education in the Richland County South School District #1 in South Carolina.

The format for today's teleconference will be 45 minutes of presentation with a question and answer period afterwards. We ask that you hold your questions until after the presentations are completed. Now I will turn the teleconference over to Gretchen.

Ms. Slease: Hello. My name is Gretchen Slease and I work for the Deputy Secretary and I wanted to, in my part of the presentation, just give an overview of *No Child Left Behind* and the highly qualified teacher provisions and talk a little bit about how they apply to special education teachers. And I will try my hardest not to use acronyms and if I happen to say *NCLB*, then I am referring to *No Child Left Behind* and IDEA of course is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and then if I say HQT which I will try not to, it is "highly qualified teacher."

First of all, as an overview, on the federal level, *No Child Left Behind* defines what it means to be a highly qualified teacher of a core academic subject. Then going down to the state level, states can add to this minimum requirement as to what it means to be highly qualified according to a state's needs and interests and certification in other areas. And then finally, local district leaders, principals, and teachers decide what makes a teacher highly effective in addition to highly qualified. And I say that because as a teacher, I think there is not an intention in this law to equate highly qualified to highly effective. We leave that to local decisionmaking to determine who is highly effective and the law – that's a framework for and a standard for recruiting highly qualified teachers.

The highly qualified teacher provisions in *No Child Left Behind* help ensure that our students, regardless of their disability, have access to quality instruction and a challenging curriculum. *No Child Left Behind* did not come out of thin air; it strengthens the work begun in the 1994 version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, called the Improving America's Schools Act, and reflects some of the same research and experience which influenced the 1997 reauthorization of IDEA. And I say that because I think it's important to think about how *No Child Left Behind* and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act can work together. There is a section in the IDEA, Section 601-C5, Sections A, C, D, and E – and it's in my PowerPoint if I

have confused anybody – it says over 20 years of research and experience have demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by having high expectations for such children and ensuring their access to the general curriculum to the maximum extent possible. And I think that's what the goal of *NCLB* in the highly qualified teacher provisions really is – to make sure that kids with disabilities and others have access to the general curriculum.

But they also need to have access to teachers who know that curriculum well and going back to *No Child Left Behind*, the law defines a highly qualified teacher as one who holds a bachelor's degree, full state certification or state licensure, and a highly qualified teacher certainly has demonstrated subject area competence in each of the academic subjects they teach. Now, a bachelor's is a given and no one really argues with that. The full state certification is really up to the state to make that as complex or as streamlined as possible. But it's the subject area competence part that if you imagine a three-legged stool for highly qualified teachers, it's that third leg of the stool that is the most challenging and, I think, has caused the most concern, especially when it comes to special education teachers, who may at any given time teach multiple subjects on the secondary level. Going back to full state certification, federal law doesn't say what type of certification is necessary for which teaching position. That is purely a state decision. The state sets those requirements for certification hopefully with input from others and with consideration for the importance of recruiting people into the teaching profession who might not be traditional candidates, especially when it comes to meeting critical shortage areas. And you could include special education in these types of critical shortage areas. And finally, it's really important for us to share that this is *not* true, that *NCLB* does *not* require special education teachers to re-certify in every subject that they teach. Certification is not the issue. The issue is to make sure that those teachers are able to demonstrate competency in each subject that they teach, not obtain certification in each subject. That's a common fear and mistake that people make.

Moving on to the third leg of the stool, which tends to be the most challenging in the IDEA, is subject matter. Teachers who teach core academic subjects must know the subjects that they are teaching and the core academic subjects are English, reading and language arts, math, science, arts, foreign language, history, geography, economics, and civics and government. So for those core academic subjects, teachers who teach those subjects need to demonstrate that they have knowledge in those subjects.

There are certain deadlines for the highly qualified

teacher requirements. In other words, as districts are hiring and states are supporting the hiring of teachers, there are deadlines for new teachers and then there are deadlines for teachers who are already in the profession. For new teachers of core academic subjects hired after the start of the 02-03 school year which of course has already passed, those teachers need to already meet the highly qualified requirements if they are to teach in a Title I school. If they are not teaching in a Title I school, then they have until the end of the 05-06 school year. And for all the other teachers who are already in the classroom, those teachers have until the end of the 05-06 school year as well to make sure that they meet the highly qualified requirements of their state as influenced by *No Child Left Behind*.

There is a sidenote and I am not going to go into this in detail, but it is on the Department's Web site. There are some flexible deadlines that may apply for multi-subject teachers who happen to teach in small rural schools and that also obviously apply to special ed teachers to teach multiple subjects in small rural schools. And there is a formula to determine whether the school district is eligible as a small rural district. And those teachers have three years from the hiring date basically or three years from this year to meet the highly qualified requirements. They need to be highly qualified in one subject, but then have three years additionally to become highly qualified in the other subjects they may teach.

What do your requirements mean for teachers new to the profession or if you are an elementary school teacher – and I am explaining elementary because sometimes middle school will include elementary grades or grades that use the elementary curriculum. An elementary school teacher who is new to the profession must have a bachelor's degree, full state certification, and demonstrate competence by passing a rigorous state test of subject knowledge in the elementary curriculum. Teachers at the middle and high school levels who are new to the profession must have a bachelor's degree and full state certification and then must demonstrate competency by passing a rigorous test in the subject they teach or hold an academic major or have the coursework equivalent or finally an advanced degree or advanced certification in that subject area. And again, I urge you to go to my PowerPoint to see this for yourself.

Finally, our next requirements for teachers who are not new to the profession, current teachers who are not new to the profession and have been teaching since before the start of the 02-03 school year must have the same requirements, the bachelor's degree and full state certification. But when it comes to demonstrating competency,

they have all the options as a new teacher plus something that Congress read into the law called the High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation and bureaucrats call this the HOUSSE. The HOUSSE is a way, basically, for veteran teachers, those who have been in the profession, to use their knowledge and experience and coursework and professional development opportunities garnered over the time that they have been in the profession to show and demonstrate their subject matter competency. And the law sets criteria for a state to consider when they are creating their HOUSSE system. The HOUSSE has basically six requirements and can consist of a lot of multiple measures. It can look like a rubric, it can look like, you know, steps A, B, C, or D. It can look a lot of different ways, but basically it has to reflect the six criteria.

1. It has to be set by the state for great, appropriate, academic subject matter knowledge and teaching skills.
2. It should be aligned with the challenging state academic content and achievement standards and developed in consultation with core content specialists, teachers, principals, and administrators.
3. It should provide objective – and that's a very key word here – coherent information about the teacher's attainment of core content knowledge in the academic subjects they teach.
4. It should be applied uniformly to all teachers in the same academic subject and at the same grade level throughout the state. In other words, Brown Elementary cannot have a different HOUSSE standard than Blue Elementary.
5. It takes into consideration but is not based primarily on the time the teacher has been teaching in the academic subject.
6. And finally, it's made available to the public upon request.

So those are the HOUSSE criteria and that is written in the law (and is in my PowerPoint) and I will give you some resources at the end of this presentation so that you can go and review, if some of this has been run through too fast. It's interesting to note that many states have adopted the HOUSSE option, but some states have not quite made it there yet. And so we as a Department are really encouraging states, especially for multi-subject teachers and for teachers who have been in the profession for a long time and may have been asked to teach subjects for which they do not have an academic nature or did not take a praxis or another test. We are encouraging states to develop a HOUSSE that objectively measures their subject matter knowledge and gives credit

honestly for the professional development opportunities and the training that they have had throughout the profession as they have often volunteered to take on new subjects or new responsibilities.

Another HOUSSE-keeping note: the HOUSSE in *NCLB* allows veteran teachers to teach core academic subjects. They have a variety of ways to show that they have demonstrated that they know their subject and states may choose to provide a few ways or a variety of ways or one way and that's really a state decision, but the law allows the flexibility for the state to decide how to do that themselves. And just to review in terms of all the highly qualified provisions, *NCLB* requires states to ensure that all the teachers that are teaching core academic subjects – including special education teachers – meet the same high standards and that's a tough issue because for the first time really we are making sure that not only does the teacher have the teaching skills necessary to teach students with disabilities or to teach diverse learners, but also that those teachers must also have the content knowledge to deliver the instruction to those students in the content area.

And some other information that I think is interesting, we would like to look at data and surveys and how teachers are feeling, and one of the Department surveys that I thought was interesting that was done a couple of years ago found that fewer than 36% of current teachers feel very well prepared to implement curriculum. Only 36%, and less than 20% feel prepared to meet the needs of a diverse student population or those with Limited English Proficiency and you could probably say that about general ed teachers that have students with disabilities in their classes too. There is a real fear and a real frustration in really knowing how to reach those students and that's where it's important on the state and local and federal level that we look at ways to provide that kind of professional development support for those teachers. There has been some guidance that has been offered in addition to what the law says about highly qualified that I think is helpful for folks to look over. In general, the question I have taken from some excerpts in my PowerPoint presentations from Title II, Part A non-regulatory guidance which is the part of the law, the chapter that deals with improving teacher quality. The Department issues non-regulatory guidance on helping interpret and provide more information than what the law says in Title II and that guidance often deals with teacher issues, how they handle highly qualified and Title II grants and things like that.

One is the question, do the highly qualified teacher provisions apply to special education teachers and again,

the answer is yes, if the teacher who teaches students with disabilities teaches the core academic subject, she must be highly qualified in that subject. However, if special education teachers do not directly instruct students in a core academic subject, they don't need to be highly qualified in that. That kind of opens the whole umbrella to how do you determine whether the special education teacher is directly instructing or is not directly instructing. And if they are directly instructing students, they need to be highly qualified in the subject that they are teaching. But if they do not, what roles are they able to play as teachers of the students in order to not have to be highly qualified. So, there is another question in the guidance after that first question that deals with that issue. What activities may special education teachers carry out if they are not highly qualified in the core academic content areas being taught? The question, I am going to just read part of it. It basically says, there are activities that special education teachers can carry out that do not require them to be highly qualified in the particular subject:

- Consultation on the adaptation of curricula,
- Consultation with teachers on using behavioral supports and interventions or selecting appropriate accommodations,
- Assisting students with study and organizational skills, and
- Reinforcing instruction that was given previously by a teacher who was highly qualified.

Now, obviously special education teachers do so many different things. They are so involved in the life of their students. But when it comes to teaching those core academic subjects, that curriculum, it needs to be taught by somebody who knows that well and that is where you draw the line, the direct instructor must be a teacher who is responsible for teaching that curriculum to that student. They need to meet the highly qualified provision of the state and that's the law.

In general, a couple of ways that I believe that we have seen that *NCLB* can really be a catalyst for change is in general collaboration, general educators and special educators working together to reach all children – sharing ideas, sharing strategies, sharing content knowledge and knowledge of disabilities and that kind of collaboration is really critical, especially if you have a highly qualified teacher who might not have a background around special ed and you have a special education teacher who might not have a background in the subject area. It's really important for that collaboration to occur. *No Child Left Behind* has really taken a stand on accountability, disaggregating data and looking at a specific group of students and their achievement and helping schools and

districts target resources to help those students achieve if their scores or their achievement levels happen to be far below another student group's achievement levels. And especially with students with disabilities who tend to perform lower in a lot of areas, we want to make sure that those students are given what they need and are taught by teachers who can really move them forward regardless of their disabilities. And finally, decisionmaking and using funds in showing that resources are available to train all teachers to meet the need for diverse learners and we have seen around the country that not only do we need to look at how special education teachers can get the support they need and hopefully be able to have some professional development if they are lacking in knowledge of the content areas that they are teaching. They also need to focus on the general ed teachers and teaching the general ed teachers about students with disabilities and how to meet their needs through inclusion models or other models. That's really critical. So it's not just about what do special education teachers need to do more of. It's also about how can we have the general educators who are teaching the core subjects help the special education teachers learn from them and have a collaborative relationship. So ensuring that teachers are involved in that process of decisionmaking and spending professional development funds and what types of professional development are available and these kinds of things, that's very critical.

A few other things: in terms of middle school teachers, it's important to know that secondary teachers have to have specific subject knowledge and elementary teachers have to have knowledge of the general elementary curriculum. Middle school teachers, it's really on a class-by-class basis. In other words, the school and the district need to make the decisions about, for example, the 6th grade science classes, that's taught by a subject specialist or a content specialist or an elementary generalist. The 8th grade biology class, I would probably argue that that's taught by a content specialist and not an elementary generalist. I urge you to go to the Title II guidance or the teacher toolkit for some of the questions and answers on middle level teachers.

Distribution for children with disabilities is basically 80% of students with disabilities have specific learning disabilities or physical health impairments and then 10% have significant cognitive disabilities. So when we look at the significant cognitive, the teacher to teach those students and not teach the grade level curriculum, we're talking about 10% of those students. But it is important to note that Congress is looking, through IDEA reauthorization, at the highly qualified requirements for teachers, the students with the most significant cognitive

disabilities and there may be some flexibility there when Congress is finished reviewing IDEA. But for those other 80% of students with disabilities, the stress is to really have those students be working towards non-grade level. And my PowerPoint has some ideas and some things that around the nation we are seeing states and districts do to help special education teachers gain content knowledge and also help general ed teachers with some things.

And then finally I wanted to give you a couple of resources, *No Child Left Behind*, the toolkit for teachers is, I think, a great overview of the law and what it means for teachers and you can go onto the ed.gov website and download that or order it. And then Title II Guidance is another thing that's also on the ed.gov website. And I will stop there and if there is anything else I didn't cover, I am happy to answer questions at the end.

Dr. Jones: Thank you, Gretchen. We are now going to move to Janice Poda, the Director of Division of Teacher Quality at South Carolina Department of Education and Susan Durant, the State Director at the Office of Exceptional Children, South Carolina Department of Education.

Dr. Poda: Thank you. This is Janice Poda and I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you this afternoon. I'm going to talk from the state perspective and Susan is going to join in with me. Very fortunately, we have been able to work together to come out with our state's definition of a highly qualified special education teacher. And I guess the way that we have tried to look at it is that even though this is one of the most challenging aspects of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation, it also gives us an opportunity to make some changes in special education and to focus on all teachers and what they need to know in order to work with students with disabilities and as Bonnie told you earlier, I have a background in teaching high school special ed and so this is really near and dear to my heart.

So what we looked at when we were trying to determine how to define this in South Carolina is, first of all we had a meeting with Teacher Assistance Corps. They sent a team of people, and Gretchen happened to be one of those members from the U.S. Department of Education that came to South Carolina. And after our discussions with them and discussing what they had seen around the country, we decided to look at the role of the special education teacher and to determine what that person had to do in order to be highly qualified. And if you are following along on our PowerPoint presentation, you'll see we broke it down basically into resource and itinerant teachers and then self-contained teachers and the different roles that those individuals play.

And I think what we have found to be the most challenging would be those self-contained teachers who are teaching students that may have high cognitive ability but need a special placement like DH are emotionally stable student. And that one, I think, is still one that we are completely satisfied that we have come up with a great definition for. But we had made some decisions. We have looked at the role of the resource teacher in particular and if they are not providing initial or primary instruction and if they are not the person who assigns the grade in the core academic subject and they are not the teacher of record for that particular content subject, then we are not requiring that that teacher would be highly qualified. They will have to meet our full state certification and not have any waivers. And frankly, just eliminating the waivers is going to be a huge challenge for us because like most other states, one of our greatest shortages is in special education. Of all the out-of-field permits that our state issues, about 65% of them are in special education. So, just eliminating those is going to be a huge challenge for us in addition to trying to find teachers that are highly qualified.

So we looked at the resource and itinerant teachers first and then we looked at the self-contained teachers. And for self-contained, we are requiring those teachers to have passed the praxis exam in elementary education in order to be considered highly qualified. And we believe that that's one way that they can achieve, that we also have a HOUSSE plan that Gretchen referred to earlier in place that allows a team of people who have been trained at the state level for – our teacher evaluation system, we have a statewide teacher evaluation system that's based on the in-task core principles and that evaluation system looks at the teacher actually performing in the classroom and teaching specifically the content area in which they want to be considered highly qualified. If they are found not to be qualified through that system then they will have to go back and choose one of the other options which will either be the exam or coursework, you know, it can't go through HOUSSE on two occasions.

Also something that made our development of a HOUSSE plan a little more challenging is that, we have had for many, many years a requirement for re-certification for teachers that relies on professional development in graduate coursework. And that re-certification system has undergone change in the last couple of years and we now require that the teacher become re-certified based on the professional growth and development plan. So in other words, whatever they submit to us for re-certification has to be based on a need that has been identified by their evaluation team. So, we feel like we will find

the teachers who are struggling to teach students with disabilities more likely to have their re-certification come through that area. And we are very hopeful that we are going to see even greater results in that area.

We still think that we need to resolve the issues of the self-contained teacher at the high school level that is teaching students who are taking courses to meet graduation requirements and how we will be able to address that. (Except that student can also meet the Adequate Yearly Progress requirements.) Also, we need to look at professional development and accountability for all teachers who teach students with disabilities and not just special education teachers. And then we need to look at professional development to help teachers understand the role of working as the member of the team and not just in their own classroom, but a team of the special ed teacher with the general ed teacher and perhaps even a paraprofessional. So I think those are still things that we need to work on in our state. And we will be reviewing our standards for new teachers to try to ensure that all teachers do have competencies in working with students with disabilities. And we will continue to emphasize preparing candidates in all subject areas to teach students with disabilities through a state standard that we have and then we review that when we revisit our teacher education programs through the NCATE process. But Susan may be able to speak more specifically about some of the challenges that we have and then the opportunities that we are trying to take into consideration as we move forward.

Ms. Durant: Yes, Janice, I thought I would talk just a little bit about the practical strategies and approaches that we are implementing in order to help us move from where we are to where we need to be. And first I want to just reiterate how critical it was for us to work together to tackle this problem, because when we first started looking at what does highly qualified mean under *NCLB* for special education teachers, we began to think that no one, regardless of their training and background and experience, would meet those standards. But as we moved forward and held hands and got guidance, we think we have come up with a pretty practical approach to this.

One of the issues for South Carolina with regard to highly qualified at the high school level interfaces with the fact that we are a high stakes state – we have one standard diploma and everyone who graduates with a diploma in our state must meet the standards for that diploma. And so, for our high school students who are receiving core content instruction, then it needs to either come from the core content trained teacher, or the self-contained teacher if those children are in a self-contained program, has to also be highly qualified in the core content. When you are

looking at one of the issues that Gretchen was discussing and that is 80% plus students with disabilities are intellectually intact which means with appropriate accommodations and modifications, they should be able to access the core content, then that becomes a real challenge for us in our state when so many of our children currently are served in a more restrictive environment. It's okay for students to be self-contained at the high school level, perhaps, if they are not a candidate for the standard diploma and with special education certification that elementary praxis, most of our teachers would be able to provide the appropriate content to move those students through their IEP process. Some of our districts do have what we call an occupational diploma, but it's not recognized statewide. So it's very high stakes for a high school student and to get that 80% moving to graduation is a big challenge for us.

Another issue for us in terms of just practical application is, how do we assist our teachers in moving from where they are to where they need to be, and in our state, Janice mentioned the 65% of our teachers who are on out-of-field permit are special education teachers. With this coming school year, that's 460 of our teachers and then in our state by January 2006 no one will be issued an out-of-field permit. So we have developed, in collaboration with four of our institutions of higher education, something that we call Project Create which is a way for us to help those teachers move from where they are with their out-of-field permit to highly qualified by that date and we are using a combination of funds and resources to provide the coursework, to provide that in that cost to teachers to provide textbooks for them, to get districts to sign onto paper their practices and to get teachers to agree once they have moved to highly qualified to at least work in those districts for a period of three years to help us deal with our shortage. In getting those people on out-of-field, we feel like that has been a real practical strategy and it's something that's really assisting us in getting those teachers where they need to be.

For self-contained teachers at the elementary level, we are doing some practice sessions for those people who have to take a new test and haven't done that in awhile.

The other issue, I think Gretchen mentioned in her PowerPoint, that we have about 36% of our teachers who don't feel like they are fully prepared and we are doing a tremendous amount of technical assistance in training for general ed and special education teachers in terms of strategies that will assist them in meeting the needs of diverse learners in their classrooms, looking at those same issues of collaboration and accountability and decisionmaking and we are focusing some of our IDEA professional development funding toward the accomplishment of that.

So it's an uphill battle for us, I guess, as it is in all states. We talked about all rural schools and maybe some sort of flexibility there as we have looked at that, even though we have a lot of small rural districts in our state, we don't think that any of them meet that criteria. So, we are moving fast forward trying to get to where we need to be to ensure that all of our children do indeed have access to highly qualified teachers. And we will entertain questions related to that, but those are just some practical kinds of approaches that we are using in order to move us where we need to be.

One more thing: as Janice said, our big concern in terms of looking at balanced accountability for all students is not only making sure that our special education teachers meet the highly qualified standards, but also that our general ed teachers have the tools in order to meet the needs of the students as we move more and more into the general ed classroom.

Dr. Jones: Thank you, Janice and Susan. I am going to turn now to Jean Miller. So if you have a question, please announce your name to Jean and the state you are calling from before asking a question. Jean.

Ms. Miller: Okay. Are there any questions out there?

Ms. Loose: This is Fran Loose calling from Michigan. I have a question about teachers in the high school or middle school, looking at students with significant cognitive impairment, am I hearing correctly that in South Carolina, you are saying that they are exempt from the highly qualified requirement? By virtue of saying that the elementary praxis, does that mean nothing else need apply?

Dr. Poda: We require them to have full certification, so they have to have demonstrated that they have competence in – by passing the praxis exam for severe disabilities as well as the elementary praxis exam.

Ms. Loose: In content?

Dr. Poda: Yes.

Ms. Loose: Okay. So the answer is that they have to have the content demonstrated at the elementary level, and they also have to pass the test for severe – at the high school level. That's right?

Dr. Poda: Correct.

Ms. Miller: Does that answer your question?

Ms. Loose: Yeah. And then the other part is for the 80% plus working toward a regular diploma, you are working on a strategy for all of those teachers to meet secondary content expertise, if they are providing the direct instruction?

Dr. Poda: If they are providing the direct instruction, they would also have to pass the elementary praxis or – we have also had some discussions about if it's for

a graduation requirement that they would have to meet some other requirement that we had not defined yet. It could be the full praxis exam, it may be professional development in that area, but we have not determined that. Those are rare cases for us where the person is all in a self-contained classroom and getting the high school diploma, as Susan explained.

Female Speaker: Can I add something to that?

Dr. Poda: Yeah, sure.

Female Speaker: I think the biggest challenge is you have students who are now required to take the grade level assessments. It is truly important that you make sure you have teachers who can teach to the standards required on the grade level assessments. And I think that's where a lot of teachers are trying to figure out how to...

Ms. Slease: That's all I was just saying that that's just a really – I know that and I said that their models already involved, I think, a lot of inclusion and models that really didn't have students in self-contained classrooms. But just looking at collaboration models and models where you have general ed teachers teaching content alongside special education teachers, just in terms of looking at models where you can involve grade level teachers who know the content along with special education teachers since those students are going to be required to take the grade level assessment with accommodations.

Female Speaker: I think that's going to be one of the biggest challenges that every state has and certainly the higher education and local schools districts have, because it's really teaching how to team teach and take advantage of everybody's skills appropriately. It's going to be a big challenge. And, I think, it's one of the opportunities, if we take advantage of it, to really revamp the delivery system – education of students. But it is going to be a challenge to figure out all the logistics and to not do it just for the name only, but to really have collaboration between our general education teachers and our special education teachers.

Ms. Douglas: My name is Sue Douglas, I am with the CF committee in state of Arizona. This is exactly the area that I'm concerned about and I think that most educators are concerned about today. And I don't see in *No Child Left Behind* the wiggle room that I hear you talking about in terms of high school level self-contained children, we have to presume that the majority of them are moving towards graduation, a high stakes task. Where are we finding the wiggle room in *NCLB*? I am not reading it. I am not finding it. By wiggle room what I am talking about is that we are saying it's all right to call a teacher highly qualified if they are only qualified on an elementary level, however they're suppos-

edly teaching students who will be taking a high stakes graduation test in one of those core subjects.

Ms. Durant: This is Susan Durant. That's not what we are saying in South Carolina. If a student is headed toward a high school diploma, then our requirement is that the student be taught in the core content areas by a core content highly qualified teacher that's maybe a general ed teacher or that may be the self-contained teacher. What we are saying is for our students with more severe cognitive disabilities who are not headed toward a high school diploma, then we are accepting the combination of the elementary praxis and the special education certification. So I don't think we are saying anything different than what I just heard you state nor do I think that we see that flexibility for the awarding of the -- unit.

Female Speaker: I understand, I think, the big question that we are having, at least I have is, what are we doing with the child that does not have the severe cognitive disability who requires that placement, that more restricted placement such as an [emotionally disturbed] child, are there any options other than a teacher being certified on high school certification in every core subject?

Female Speaker: I think the only answer to that right now is that they are going to have to team teach.

Female Speaker: Yeah, we are still struggling with that here. We don't have that answer.

Female Speaker: And we are not talking about re-certification on every subject, we are talking about a demonstration of subject matter knowledge and there are multiple ways to do that. That's where I see the flexibility. Not that I am saying, it makes sense for one teacher to have to take 10 tests, but I think that there can be kind of a meeting in the middle and it's possible that teachers who are in self-contained classrooms with kids with disabilities need to be those who bridge the gap between where the students are and where we want them to be on grade level standards and have some specific subject matter knowledge in a few subjects and then look at some collaborative activities or some team teaching for the other subjects.

Female Speaker: I would like to add that one of the other challenges, I think, that we really haven't addressed and perhaps Congress will have to take another look at this, but the law provides lots of flexibility for the alternative certification route and lots of flexibility for international teachers, but there are no degrees of being highly qualified, you either are or you aren't according to the way the law was written. I think that's really going to have a huge impact on our special education teaching population because there will be teachers who are in the process of becoming highly qualified and who have

the knowledge and the skill in the area of disability but perhaps not the subject area, but it may be more financially feasible for a school to go out and hire a substitute teacher than it will be for us to have a special education teacher who is not highly qualified in every subject area and I think that really is a concern – that as a country we have to address that issue.

Ms. King-Sears: This is Peggy King-Sears from Maryland and I wanted to comment and provide feedback on, I guess, two levels here. One is in terms of initial teacher preparation and the notion of core academic subject expertise for beginning educators and specifically for special educators, there is already a lot to teach for beginning educators for them to get their certification and I am concerned that there are incentives for general ed and special ed teachers to acquire highly qualified in whatever core academic subjects they are teaching. But I am fearful that the focus of current special ed teaching preparation programs is going to be watered down to get a core academic subject expertise in there and that the incentive for folks to go back for deeper knowledge and skills after they have been a beginning special educator is going to be minimized or lost.

Female Speaker: I think you raise a very legitimate question. But I say to you this, we are not just looking at how we work with the special ed teachers but also how we work with the general ed teachers and prepare to teach which means that the preparation program is going to have to be totally revisited on both sides of the point, so to speak, about how much is enough and how much is not enough, both for the general ed to know enough about teaching the special ed population and for special ed to be able to absorb some of the talents for core subject areas. And that's not to say we have got the answer to it, but I think the answer is it's going to have to be a major revisiting of a preparation program.

Female Speaker: Well. I mean, I think that actually highly qualified went along with core academic subjects plus pedagogy, that they are getting closer to what you were saying.

Female Speaker: That's right.

Female Speaker: The other comment I have is in terms of special educational teachers whether they are co-teaching or self-contained at whatever level is that they can be somewhat of a moving target and that one year or several years, they maybe teaching three or four core academic subjects and that's not what they are teaching the remainder of their career -- nor are those the areas in which they are highly qualified, necessarily, the subject that they're placed in to teach.

Female Speaker: You are beginning to describe a bit

of the complexity of the problem and reform because it's not just individual teacher quality, but it's also how the system reacts, schedules tasks, etc.

Female Speaker: And I think the important focus is to really look at what is best for that student. What does that student need from year to year and are we serving them well if we provide somebody who can instruct them and knows a lot about their disability but might not have the knowledge of the content that they are assessed on at the end of the year. Or should we look at other models that really get at both of those. A general ed teacher and a special ed teacher working together or a special ed teacher that focuses on a subject like math or really knows her reading. I think it really involves looking at different models and you had mentioned the (IAT's) before the higher education institutions that are playing around with the idea of having a content major and a special education major kinds of things. Kansas, when we went there on our teacher assistance core visit, I did not go, but the team that went was really interested in what the higher education institutions in Kansas were doing in terms of requiring a content major, but not sacrificing the important pedagogy classes first, dealing with students with disabilities and teaching them well. So that might be something to look at. We were really excited to go around the country and be able to get a lot of different ideas. And in my PowerPoint at the end, there are some Web sites that have a lot of those ideas catalogued on this.

Female Speaker: In fact there are 10 states now that require dual certification at elementary level and special ed, if you are going to be a special ed teacher, you also have to have an elementary certification. So the hole is how do we deal with middle school and high school?

Dr. Jones: Okay. I would like to thank Gretchen, Janice, and Susan for sharing their time and expertise with us, and Jean Miller for her expertise in moderating your questions. In closing, if you are interested in learning more about the Center for Teacher Quality, there is a link on www.ncset.org. If you are interested in learning more about transition, secondary education issues, and helping youth graduate and achieve successful post-school outcomes, we invite you to join OSEP's Exiting Community of Practice, <http://www.tacomunities.org/>. Anyone who is interested in that issue is welcome to join. The next NCSET Exiting Community Teleconference is scheduled for Tuesday, July 27 at 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Loujeania Bost of the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities will be our featured presenter. Thank you and looking forward to hearing from you on July 27.

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