

The following is a message from the Rural School and Community Trust's Rural Forum e-mail list.

Please note: the basic NCLB Highly Qualified teacher requirements are described later in this document.

Modifications to the Highly Qualified teacher provisions of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) were announced Monday by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE). These changes include:

1. Teachers of more than one subject in small rural schools who are Highly Qualified in one of the subjects they teach will have three years to become Highly Qualified in all subjects and must be provided professional development, intense supervision, or structured mentoring to become Highly Qualified in those subjects. **Definition of small rural school:** those schools that are eligible to participate in the Small Rural School Achievement (SRSA) program. SRSA includes districts with average daily attendance under 600 students, OR districts in which all schools are located in counties with a population density of fewer than 10 persons per square mile; AND all schools served by the district are located in a rural area with a school locale code of 7 or 8. Of the 15,944 schools districts in the U.S., 4827 (30%) meet the definition. **3-Year extension.** According to personnel at the Department of Education, the extension runs until the end of the 2006-07 school year. NCLB already required teachers to become Highly Qualified by the end of the 2005-06 school year, so the extension actually pushes out the deadline by one year rather than three years.
2. Newly hired teachers in eligible small rural schools will have three years from their date of hire to become Highly Qualified in all subjects they teach.
3. States may streamline their HOUSSE (High Objective Uniform State Standard Evaluation) processes to enable current teachers who teach in more than one subject area to demonstrate subject matter competency through a HOUSSE that includes all subjects they teach, rather than through separate processes for each subject. This change applies to teachers of multiple subjects in small rural schools and to middle school teachers who have an elementary generalist certification and must demonstrate competency in each core subject they teach.

Changes announced in the Department of Education's September, 2003, Title II Guidance allow states to create separate content area tests for middle and secondary teachers appropriate to the content level taught and to allow one test to cover each of the separate disciplines in science and in social studies, eliminating the need for separate tests in physics, biology, chemistry, and earth/space science and in history, civics, economics, and geography.

Monday's announcement is available at <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2004/03/03152004.html> (includes a link to the Fact Sheet). The Fact Sheet is available at <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/methods/teachers/hqtflexibility.html>. More information about the Highly Qualified teacher requirement is included later in this post.

You can find out if your school is in a qualifying district at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/reapsrsa/eligibility.html> *Note: some districts that meet the criteria may not have applied for SRSA funding and will not appear on the list. Also, states have some limited capacity to designate, with DOE's approval, districts as small and rural; these districts are not listed. If you think your school district should qualify you can contact your State Department of Education to pursue the matter.*

What the changes are likely to mean.

1. By providing teachers in qualifying rural districts until the end of the 2006-07 school year, DOE is providing those teachers a school year to meet the Highly Qualified requirement. While this is significantly less than a three-year extension that could be inferred from the announcement, it will ease somewhat pressure on rural teachers in qualifying districts and could help some districts meet their deadline for having all teachers Highly Qualified. It may also encourage some states to put in place better supports and mechanisms for helping rural teachers meet the multiple requirements that pose much more significant challenges than those faced by teachers of just one subject. Under NCLB, schools and districts are already required to provide professional development and other assistance to

teachers who are not Highly Qualified, so Monday's announcement is not likely to represent significant additional requirements in this regard.

2. The best news in Monday's announcement is the allowance that newly hired teachers, in qualifying districts, who are Highly Qualified in one subject have three years from their date of hire to become Highly Qualified in additional subjects they teach. Without this change, rural schools face the generally insurmountable hurdle of finding new teachers who are not just *certified* in the right combination of subjects, but have also achieved Highly Qualified status in each of those subjects.

3. Title I schools that meet the definition of small and rural will be able to hire new teachers who are Highly Qualified in one subject, rather than all subjects the teacher will teach. These teachers will also have three years from date of hire to become Highly Qualified in all core subjects they teach.

4. Most states have in place HOUSSE procedures designed primarily for those current teachers who are certified and teaching in-field, but who were not required to pass a test or earn a full subject-matter major to obtain certification. It will be some trouble for states to alter or develop new HOUSSE procedures that incorporate more than one subject. However, because the largest pool of teachers who are not Highly Qualified in most states is middle school teachers who have elementary certificates, states have incentives to adapt their HOUSSE process. This should benefit small rural schools even in states where there is little initiative to address the unique needs of rural small schools and should also apply to teachers in small rural schools that are not eligible for SRSA.

5. Unfortunately the changes will not apply to many rural schools that do not meet the definition of small and rural that DOE is using. These include schools and districts that have more than 600 students, small schools in more densely populated rural areas or in districts with multiple schools, and schools in the Rural and Low Income Schools program which serves many geographically large rural districts, especially in the south and west.

For example, it appears that Nebraska will have 440 districts that qualify, Missouri will have 255, Arkansas will have 135, Wisconsin will have 129, and Maine will have 126. Yet Nevada will have only 12, Vermont will have 6, Louisiana will have 4, West Virginia will have 1, and Alabama and South Carolina will have no qualifying districts--despite the fact that all of these states have small rural schools. Rural schools in states with decentralized school governance systems appear to benefit far more than schools in states with highly centralized governance systems.

Monday's announcements do not address the issue of out-of-field teaching in schools that are not part of SRSA. Out-of-field teaching is a huge acknowledged problem in many urban hard-to-staff schools; yet almost all schools have some out-of-field teaching due to scheduling difficulties or an unusual number of classes or students in a particular subject in a particular year.

Special education is also not addressed in Monday's announcements other than to say DOE looks forward to working with congress on the Highly Qualified teacher requirements for special education teachers as part of the re-authorization of IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

NCLB Highly Qualified Teacher Requirements. No Child Left Behind requires that all teachers of core academic subjects be Highly Qualified by the end of the 2005-06 school year. To be Highly Qualified teachers must hold a Bachelors degree, have a full state certification, and demonstrate subject matter competency. To demonstrate subject matter competency new elementary teachers must pass a test and new middle and secondary teachers of core academic subjects must either complete a major or pass a rigorous test in each core subject he or she teaches. Core academic courses include Language Arts, Science, Math, Civics, Economics, History, Geography, and the Arts--as defined by the state. Veteran teachers have the additional option of completing a HOUSSE (High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation) process to demonstrate subject matter competency in each subject. Most states' HOUSSE processes involve some combination of experience, professional development, professional involvement and service, student test scores, observations/evaluations by peers and or administrators, and portfolios. In most states, new teachers in Title I schools must be Highly Qualified in order to be hired. States, districts, and schools must increase annually the percentage of classes taught by Highly Qualified teachers until all core classes are taught by Highly Qualified teachers beginning in the 2006-07 school year.

Many teachers who are fully certified in their states do not meet all requirements to be Highly Qualified in each subject they teach.

General HQ Challenges to Rural and Small Schools. The Highly Qualified requirements pose unique challenges for small rural schools.

- Teachers are often needed to teach more than one subject and must meet Highly Qualified requirements in all core subjects they teach.
- Rural schools are often far from colleges, regional service centers, and other points of delivery for the courses and test preparation classes teachers need to complete a major or pass a rigorous test, therefore rural teachers often lack access to the primary means of becoming Highly Qualified.
- Small enrollments and/or low local wealth often mean fewer state, federal, and local resources with which local districts can develop their own professional development for the varying content area needs of teachers who do not meet the Highly Qualified requirements. Unless states coordinate efforts to develop and deliver professional development targeted to the subject areas needs and locations of teachers who are not Highly Qualified, rural teachers are left largely on their own to negotiate a path to Highly Qualified status, a task that is daunting and in some cases impossible.
- Most pre-service preparation programs, both traditional college-based programs and alternative certification programs, do not emphasize rural teaching and do not direct prospective teachers toward rural schools. Graduates are not certified in more than one subject area, have not had opportunities for clinical (student-teaching) experience in rural schools, receive little or no training in the use of high quality distance learning technologies, and are not trained to identify and make innovative use of non-traditional resources (for example, community resources used in place-based educational approaches) but to rely on traditional material resources that many low-wealth rural schools do not have. Therefore, new graduates are less likely to seek employment in rural schools.
- Rural teachers on average earn significantly lower salaries, in all phases of their careers, than their urban and suburban counterparts. Lower salaries, along with demands to become Highly Qualified in more than one subject and non-rural pre-service and in-service training, compound difficulties that many rural districts have in recruiting and retaining teachers.

Periodically the U.S. Department of Education issues updated guidance, through its Title II Improving Teacher Quality program, on NCLB's Highly Qualified teacher requirements. The latest version, issued January 16, 2004, is available at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/teacherqual/guidance.doc>.

To unsubscribe from this list, send a blank email to leave-ruralforum-22236Y@lists.ruraledu.org
Formatted wrong? Other issues? E-mail webmaster@ruraledu.org