



New “Highly Qualified” Flexibility

U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige announced three new policies yesterday that will give teachers some additional flexibility to meet the No Child Left behind (NCLB) highly qualified teacher requirements.

These policies will primarily help teachers in rural areas, veteran teachers teaching multiple subjects, and science teachers teaching multiple science-related subjects.

RURAL TEACHERS: Teachers in rural areas often teach multiple academic subjects and grade levels. Previously, NCLB mandates required core rural teachers to hold a credential in each subject and grade taught, effective immediately in Title I schools and by the end of the 2005-06 school year for non-Title I schools. Under the new policy, teachers in eligible rural areas who are highly qualified in at least one subject area will have three years to become highly qualified in each additional subject they teach. In order to achieve this goal, these teachers must be provided professional development, intensive supervision, or structured mentoring.

Independent study charter schools are often in the same situation as the rural schools in that their teachers must often teach multiple subjects and grade levels. CSDC is currently inquiring of state and federal officials whether independent study charter schools not located in the eligible rural areas may be granted the same flexibility as are the rural schools.

VETERAN TEACHERS: Under NCLB, teachers must demonstrate subject matter competency in each of the subjects they teach. Veteran teachers can opt to use the High Objective Uniform State Standard Evaluation (HOUSSE) to satisfy the competency requirements instead of meeting the testing and coursework requirements that new teachers must meet. The new policy streamlines the HOUSSE process to allow multi-subject veteran teachers to complete the process only once, rather than going through the process for each subject taught. Thus, the new guidance will significantly shorten the amount of administrative paperwork required for veteran teachers to meet the competency requirements.

SCIENCE TEACHERS: Science teachers, like rural and independent study teachers, often teach multiple science subjects. Under the new federal policy, states may decide, based on their current certification requirements, whether science teachers must demonstrate that they are highly qualified in “broad field” (i.e. general) science or in the individual science subjects (physics, biology, etc.).

This policy provides no new flexibility for California, which already has a clearly defined program for science teachers to meet the credentialing and subject area competence demonstration under the “highly qualified” requirements. According to California’s requirements, teachers of grades K-8 may teach science with a multiple subject credential and demonstrate subject area competence through a multiple subject exam (or HOUSSE for veteran teachers). Grade 9-12 science teachers must hold a credential in each specific science subject and demonstrate subject area competence in each subject taught through an exam or coursework (or HOUSSE or National Board Certification for veteran teachers).

For more details about these recent federal policy changes, see the U.S. Department of Education’s press release at www.ed.gov/nclb/methods/teachers/hqtflexibility.html. For other recent updates on credentialing flexibility, see CSDC’s website at www.cacharterschools.org/whatsnew.html. For more in-depth analysis of the credentialing requirements under NCLB, please refer to the recently published article in the Winter 2004 issue of *Charter Currents* entitled “No Way Out? NCLB Teacher Credentialing Requirements.” If you have any questions, please contact us at (916) 278-6069.

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