



Archived Information

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Highly Qualified Teachers For Every Child

August 16, 2006

"We know nothing helps a child learn as much as a great teacher. Great teachers are helping us reach our goal of having every child doing grade level work by 2014."

-- Secretary Margaret Spellings

One of the most important factors in raising student achievement is a highly qualified teacher. Research shows that teacher subject-matter knowledge is greatly associated with student learning. In this era of high standards and high expectations, having a highly qualified teacher has never been more important.

The *No Child Left Behind Act [NCLB]* recognizes this. The law requires that all teachers of core academic subjects in the classroom be highly qualified. This is determined by three essential criteria: (1) attaining a bachelor's degree or better in the subject taught; (2) obtaining full state teacher certification; and (3) demonstrating knowledge in the subjects taught.

States have worked hard to meet this goal. Despite notable progress and some innovative ideas, there is still more work to be done. One of the greatest challenges is the need to place good teachers in underperforming schools and high-poverty communities. Studies show that students from low-income families who acquire strong math skills by 8th grade are 10 times more likely to finish college than their peers. But in high-poverty schools, about half of the grade 7-12 math teachers did not major or minor in math in college. Compounding the problem, two-thirds of the nation's K-12 math and science teachers are expected to retire by 2010.¹ As Secretary Spellings has noted, "We don't serve teachers or students well by placing our least experienced teachers in our most challenging environments."

Last fall, the Department of Education announced that states making a good-faith effort to ensure a Highly Qualified Teacher [HQT] in every classroom before the 2006-07 school year may submit a **Revised State Plan** for accomplishing this goal by the *end* of the school year. States were asked to pay particular attention to the staffing needs of schools "in need of improvement" under *NCLB*, as well as those serving high concentrations of poor and disadvantaged students.

Today the Department announces the findings of a Peer Review of the Revised State Plans. A team of 31 respected teacher quality experts and administrators measured the plans against a six-point protocol of success (*see page 2*). This first round of feedback will help determine how close states are to meeting their goal—and what steps the Department can take to assist them.

The Results

The Department, with input from the panel of experts, determined that:

- **Nine states—Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, New Jersey, New Mexico, Nevada, Ohio, South Carolina, and South Dakota**—had plans that were accepted by the peers. All sufficiently addressed the six criteria the peers used in the review; in addition, they received recommendations that need to be incorporated into their plans.
- **Thirty-nine states** partially met the requirements according to the peers. All must revise their plans according to the peer notes, using the nine accepted states as models when appropriate.
- **Four states—Hawaii, Missouri, Utah and Wisconsin**—did not sufficiently meet any of criteria outlined by the peers. All will have to submit new plans and must undergo auditing and monitoring of their teacher quality data.²

¹ Source: National Commission on Mathematics and Science Teaching for the 21st Century

² Total number of states, 52, includes Puerto Rico and District of Columbia

The vast majority of states made a serious effort to develop comprehensive, future-oriented Plans. Some states, such as **Ohio** and **New Jersey**, made great strides in meeting certain goals, such as finding new ways to attract good teachers to serve in low-performing schools. The four states that did not adequately address the six-point protocol, however, will now be subject to strict scrutiny by the Department of Education. For those states, the Department will:

- Provide **technical assistance and support** to assist them in completing their plans by Nov. 1, 2006;
- **Conduct audits** to ensure that state data is comprehensive and adequate;
- Require them to **prepare and resubmit new Revised State Plans** that address all six points, correct deficiencies identified by peer reviewers, and include specific steps to ensure that poor and minority children are not disproportionately taught by less qualified teachers; and
- Expect detailed **monthly progress reports** from the states.

The Six-Point Protocol For A Successful Plan

In evaluating the Plans, the Peer Reviewers examined how states addressed the following six key issues:

- (1) A thorough analysis of the data identifying teachers that do not meet HQT requirements, including trends that the State Plan will address;
- (2) Steps local districts will take to help teachers quickly attain HQT status;
- (3) Technical assistance, programs, and resources the State Education Agency [SEA] will offer to help Local Education Agencies [LEAs] implement their HQT plans;
- (4) Actions states will take if LEAs do not ensure all teachers of core academic subjects are highly qualified;
- (5) The use of an alternative method to ensure that all teachers are highly qualified (i.e., the state's use of HOUSSE [High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation] procedures); and
- (6) Taking steps to ensure that minority students and students from low-income families are not disproportionately taught by inexperienced or unqualified teachers.

Timeline Of HQT Progress

Oct. 21, 2005—Secretary Spellings issued a letter informing each chief state school officer that, despite the substantial progress being made, states were in danger of not meeting the 2005-06 goal for HQT.

March 8, 2006—States submitted their HQT data for the 2004-05 school year to the Department.

March 21, 2006—The Department informed states that they would be evaluated against four “good-faith” criteria:

- 1) The state's definition of Highly Qualified Teacher must be consistent with federal law and universally applied;
- 2) States and districts must provide parents and the public with accurate and complete reports on the number and percentage of classes in core academic subjects taught by highly qualified teachers;
- 3) Reporting of HQT data to the Department must be complete and accurate; and
- 4) States must take action to ensure that inexperienced, unqualified or out-of-field teachers do not teach poor and minority students at disproportionately higher rates than their peers.

March 8 to May 12, 2006—The Department assessed HQT data for 2004-05 and previous years, making determinations about whether the states were on track to meet NCLB's HQT requirements as well as the four “good-faith” elements.

May 5, 2006—The Department notified states in writing of the results of the assessment of their HQT progress and requested them to submit Revised State Plans.

July 7, 2006—Revised Plans due to the Department.

Sept. 29, 2006—Deadline for most states to submit revisions to Revised Plans based on Peer Review recommendations.

Nov. 1, 2006—Deadline for states under strict scrutiny to complete their new Revised State Plans.

Other Support For Highly Qualified Teachers

- **The President's 2007 Budget**—includes \$2.9 billion to help states meet NCLB teacher quality requirements.
- **Title I Funding**—school districts are required to use to 5 percent of their Title I funds for HQT purposes.
- **Teacher Incentive Fund**—funded for the first time in 2006, provides financial incentives to teachers for improved achievement in high-poverty schools.
- **Loan Forgiveness**—Congress and the President made permanent up to \$17,500 in loan forgiveness for highly qualified math and science teachers who choose to serve low-income communities.