

Berrien County Considerations for Special Education Teachers

The purpose of this document is to explain/clarify how the term “highly qualified” (HQ), used in the reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004, impacts special education teachers in Michigan. A number of questions and concerns remain on this issue. However, the one fact about which there is absolute certainty is that:

All public elementary and secondary school teachers, including special education, bilingual education, and alternative education teachers who teach core academic subjects, must have met the “highly qualified” requirement by the end of the 2005-2006 school year.*

New special education teachers who teach multiple subjects and are highly qualified in Mathematics, Language Arts or Science at the time of hire, have two years after the date of employment to demonstrate competence in the other core academic subjects to which they are assigned.

***NOTE: An extension through June 30, 2009 has been granted to Michigan Special Education teachers to meet the October 2007 revision in highly qualified requirements.**

What are the Core Academic Subjects?

English/Language Arts
Reading
Mathematics
Science: General Science, Biology,
Chemistry, Earth/Space, Physical
Science, Physics
Social Studies: Social Studies, Civics
and Government, History, Geography,
Economics
Foreign Languages
The Arts: Visual Arts, Instrumental Music,
Vocal Music, Dance and Theatre

What does “Highly Qualified” mean for Special Education Teachers?

“Highly Qualified” means the teacher holds a valid Michigan Teaching Certificate and an appropriate required special education endorsement and can demonstrate competence in each of the core academic areas taught or assigned to teach.

Special Education Teachers who are not required to meet the Highly Qualified requirement for core academic subjects:

- Special education resource room program teachers who provide academic support, but **do not** teach the core academic subjects
- Special education teachers who team teach in a general classroom, **regardless** of which teacher (general education or special education) gives the grade or credit
- Special education teacher consultants who do not provide direct instruction
- Early childhood special education teachers (birth to pre-K)

Criteria

Note: Completing any **one** of these options will be demonstration of being highly qualified to teach one or more core academic subject areas in special education.

Hold a major (or equivalent)

Secondary special education teachers who are providing direct instruction in a core academic area, to students with disabilities, may demonstrate competence to teach that subject in the special education setting by completing the equivalent to a major in that subject. A major is defined as thirty (30) semester credit hours or more.

Pass the Elementary Exam of the Michigan Test for Teacher Certification (MTTC)

This comprehensive examination is designed to cover the spectrum of core subject areas that define the curriculum that a certified elementary or secondary special education teacher can be assigned to teach at the **Elementary level** or to students who are exclusively assessed by alternative achievement standards (such as students taking the MI-Access).

Pass the appropriate subject exam of the Michigan Test for Teacher Certification (MTTC)

Secondary special education teachers who are providing direct instruction to students with disabilities may take and pass a specific subject area MTTC in order to demonstrate competence to teach that subject in the special education setting. The specific subject area test may be the elementary or secondary version for special education teachers.

National Board Certification in Exceptional Needs

This is authorized by the “advanced certification provision” in ESEA/NCLB and would make a teacher HQ across all core academic areas. Nothing additional is required.

HOUSSE Options

Both the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and IDEA allows the state to set High Objective Uniform State Standards of Evaluation (HOUSSE) as a process for teachers to meet the highly qualified requirement. The following HOUSSE options are available to **elementary and secondary special education teachers** to become HQ.

HOUSSE Option #1

A special education teacher may use this option if, since the issuance of the provisional certificate, he/she has completed 18 semester hours in a planned standards-based approved program or a masters or higher degree. The semester hours taken must be shown to reflect knowledge in the core academic subject area(s) being taught. A Masters Degree in the following areas would qualify a special education teacher to be HQ in all content areas: Masters of Arts in Teaching, Masters of Arts in Elementary or Secondary Education, Masters of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction, and Masters of Arts in Educational Technology.

A Masters Degree in Special Education **alone**, will not meet the highly qualified requirement. However, courses taken **toward** a Master's Degree in Special Education may be used to meet the HOUSSE standards, if those courses can be shown to reflect knowledge in the core academic subject(s) being taught. Courses within the master's program may be used towards one's demonstration of being highly qualified. For example, courses supporting the teaching of math, reading, science, social studies, the arts, and so on would be applicable toward meeting HQ requirements. Thus, teachers are urged to review transcripts for all classes which include or support core academic area(s). A special education teacher who meets the requirements of HOUSSE Option 1 becomes HQ in all core academic areas.

HOUSSE Option #2

A special education teacher may use this option if he/she has completed six semester hours in a **specific** core academic area **within the last five years**. Teachers are urged to look at all courses completed during this time period that specify a core subject area in the title/course description and others that reflect knowledge in the core academic subject(s) being taught.

or

A special education teacher may use this option if he/she has completed 90 clock hours of professional development activities in core academic area(s) within the last five years including, for example, special seminars and training in MLPP, Reading First, Project Read, social studies content standards, mathematic instruction and assessment, and so on.

Semester hours can be converted into clock hours (1 semester hour = 15 clock hours) to meet an option objective. Other professional development experiences in the core subject area may be converted as applicable. **See Attachment A.**

HOUSSE Option #3

HOUSSE Option #3 allows for the development and submission of a content area portfolio as a means of demonstrating competence. To structure this process, "Michigan Content Area Portfolio Guidelines" were developed by the Michigan Department of Education and approved by the State Board of Education.

In summary, a portfolio developed to comply with the following guidelines is the purposeful collection/documentation of experiences, activities, events and opportunities that support professional learning and demonstrate competence in one or more of the core academic areas specified in ESEA/NCLB.

The secondary special education teacher must demonstrate competence in **each** core academic area assigned to teach. Competence in each of the areas may be demonstrated in different ways (within these guidelines). Each experience, activity or event included in the portfolio must be documented and the required report form must be used where applicable.

Following are the components that must be used by special education teachers to develop a portfolio to demonstrate competence in one or more core academic areas. The teacher must provide documentation of each component used.

Teaching Experience – See Attachment B

The teacher must have up to five years of successful teaching and/or co-teaching experience in at least one of the four appropriate core academic areas of English/language arts, math, science, and social studies. Teaching experience must be documented by a valid Michigan teaching certificate **and** an experience report.

Co-Teaching Definition:

When two (or more) educators or other certified staff contract to share instructional responsibility for a single group of students primarily in a single classroom or workspace for specific content (objectives) with mutual ownership, pooled resources, and joint accountability (from Lynn Cook, California State University).

Co-teaching has been defined as an instructional delivery approach in which general and special educators share responsibility for planning, delivery and evaluation of instructional techniques for a group of students; general and special educators work in a coactive and coordinated fashion, which involves the joint teaching of academically and behaviorally heterogeneous groups of students in integrated settings. Either teacher can give the grade in a co-teaching or team teaching environment.

College Level Course Work – See Attachment C

The teacher must have successfully completed a minimum of 30 semester hours with at least 6 semester hours in **each** of the core academic areas of English/language arts, math, science, and social studies. These 30 semester hours must include at least 3 semester hours in the core academic area of reading, which is required for a Michigan secondary level teaching certificate. All course work may have been completed anytime during the teacher’s collegiate preparation program. Successful completion of course work must be submitted on required report form and documented by official transcript.

Content Specific Professional Development Activities – See Attachment D, D-1

As defined by ESEA/NCLB, the term professional development includes activities that:

- Improve and increase teachers’ knowledge of the core academic subjects they teach and enable them to become highly qualified;
- Are an integral part of broad school-wide and district-wide educational improvement plans;
- Give teachers and other members of the educational team knowledge and skills to enable students to meet and achieve state academic standards; and
- Involve many other experiences, activities and opportunities that are “not one-day or short-term workshops or conferences.”

The teacher must list at least **five** professional development experiences in which he/she has participated within the last five years that support teaching and learning in the core academic areas. This might include participation:

- To develop, select or evaluate content standards;
 - To align local content standards with state standards;
 - To develop, validate or evaluate content assessments;
 - At local, regional or state professional development seminars/workshops;
 - In action research study groups;
- or**
- In the completion of the portfolio assessment for National Board Certification.

In keeping with the State Board approved guidelines for a content area portfolio, this content specific professional development activities section of the multidisciplinary portfolio must also include a reflection statement on how the combination of professional activities has improved/impacted your teaching practice/classroom instructional strategies. See Attachment D-1.

Some activities classified as “professional development” may also be classified as “service to the profession in the content area” and may be interchanged to demonstrate competence for either component. **Note:** A given activity **may not** be used for both “professional development” and “service to the content area.”

Service to the Profession in the Content Area – See Attachment E

The sharing of content knowledge and pedagogical skill, and the application of principles and practices acquired by experience to the teaching and learning for the continuous improvement of schools is a critical means by which the teaching profession is sustained. For this reason, “Service to the Profession in the Content Area” is one of the four categories of the multisubject portfolio process.

Service to the Profession within the last five years must relate to the core academic areas. Experience and opportunities that may be used to demonstrate competence in this category may include, but is not limited to serving as:

- A department chair or team leader;
- A mentor teacher;
- A cooperating teacher for student teacher;
- An officer in a regional, state, or national professional content organization;
- A content instructor at an institution of higher education;
- A recognized content specialist at the district level;
- A National Board assessor;
- A member of a district/building school improvement team;
- An author/publisher of professional literature related to core academic areas;
- A participant in the development, selection, validation, or evaluation of standard in any of the core academic areas;
- A participant in the development, pilot, evaluation of curriculum, instructional or assessment tools/procedures, etc., in any of the core academic areas; and
- A participant in the development/validation of state/national assessments.

Additional Information

The highly qualified mandate is not a “we/they” issue for teachers and management. Rather, it should be viewed as a collaborative partnership to meet a federal law. It is expected that elementary and secondary special education teachers and district personnel will work together to determine one’s highly qualified status, based on Michigan’s Definition for Identifying Highly Qualified Teachers.

Teachers must understand that they are ultimately responsible for making sure they are highly qualified, similar to their obligation of meeting all certification requirements and maintaining a valid state certificate. Teachers should first consult with their local administrative contacts. If more information is needed, the following people are resources:

For clarification of Michigan’s Definition for Identifying Highly Qualified Teachers, please contact:	
Frank Ciloski, Michigan Department of Education 517-373-6791 or CiloskiF@michigan.gov	Krista Ried, Michigan Department of Education 517-373-0699 or RiedK@michigan.gov

This document was submitted to the Michigan Department of Education in March 2008. On April 2, 2008 an email was received from Krista Reid at the Michigan Department of Education indicating that the document may be used.

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