

**Frequently Asked Questions About  
No Child Left Behind and Highly Qualified Teachers  
Revised April 2007**

The following are common questions about NCLB, specifically as the law applies to teachers and how the law impacts them as they serve in our schools. Their responses define and detail what is meant by the term “highly qualified” teachers. Responses have been adapted from *No Child Left Behind: A Toolkit for Teachers*, U.S. Department of Education (2003) and other federal guidance.

**1) Why is teacher quality such an important issue?**

A major objective of *No Child Left Behind* is to ensure highly qualified teachers for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity or income, because a well-prepared teacher is vitally important to a child’s education. Research demonstrates the clear correlation between student achievement and teacher quality (Whitehurst, 2002).<sup>1</sup> Studies also show that many classrooms and schools, particularly those with economically disadvantaged students, have a disproportionate number of teachers who teach out of field or are not highly qualified (Ingresoll, R., 2002).<sup>2</sup>

**2) According to *No Child Left Behind*, which teachers are required to demonstrate being “highly qualified”?**

Any public school teacher, elementary or secondary, who teaches a core academic subject: English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, history, civics and government, economics, geography, the arts, and foreign language, must be highly qualified. IDEA 2004 requires that all special educators be highly qualified.

**3) What are the deadlines for meeting the “highly qualified” teacher requirements?**

All teachers of core academic subjects (Including English Language Learner teachers) and all special education teachers must currently meet all requirements.

**4) What are the basic requirements in the federal law for “highly qualified” teachers?**

The law requires that teachers meet these three basic requirements:

- Hold a bachelor’s degree,
- Obtain full state certification, and
- Demonstrate subject matter competency in core academic subjects the teacher teaches.

**5) What is full certification in Rhode Island?**

In Rhode Island, full certification for “highly qualified” teachers means they hold:

- Certificate of Eligibility for Employment,
- Professional certification, or
- Life professional certification.

**6) How do I become “highly qualified” if I am a new teacher?**

The law requires that new teachers must hold a bachelor’s degree, full state certification, and demonstrate subject-matter competency. They can do this by passing a rigorous subject test in each of the academic subjects they teach. Middle or high school teachers may demonstrate subject matter competency by having successfully completed, in each of the core academic subjects taught, an academic major or coursework equivalent of 30 credits, a graduate degree, or National Board Certification. New elementary and early childhood teachers may demonstrate the required competency **only** by passing the state test. Middle School educators can take the state test OR demonstrate subject matter competency by having an academic major in each core academic subjects taught.

**7) Which standardized tests can new elementary teachers use to demonstrate they are “highly qualified”?**

Testing Option	Dates required for certification	Tests	Pass Scores
Core Battery of NTE	1987-2000	* Communication Skills	657
		* Professional Knowledge	648
		* General Knowledge	649**
PRAXIS II* Elementary AND PLT	2000-2003	* Elementary Content Knowledge Test #10014	145
		* Principles of Learning and Teaching K-6	167
PRAXIS II Elementary Tests	2003-present	* Elementary Content Knowledge Test #10014	145
		* Elementary Content Area Exercises #20012	148

*\*During the 200-2003 period ONLY the Praxis II was required. In order to use testing to designate as Highly Qualified the Principles of Learning and Teaching K-6 must also be taken and the cut off score of 167 achieved.*

*\*\* A combined score of 1954 with no less than 4 points below the cut off listed above for any test is also accepted.*

**8) Is there a test for early childhood and early childhood special education teachers to demonstrate they are “highly qualified”?**

**Yes, there is a specific test for early childhood educators (below). However, the elementary tests would be acceptable to designate “highly qualified” status.**

Test	Passing Scores
Early Childhood Education Test (0021) AND	171

Early Childhood Content Knowledge Test (00222)	169
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**9) If Middle School educators do not have an academic major in the core academic subject area they teach, which standardized tests can middle school teachers use to demonstrate they are “highly qualified”?**

Test	Passing Scores
Middle School English Language Arts (0049)	162
Middle School Mathematics (0069)	158
Middle School Science (0439)	154
Citizenship Education Content Knowledge (0087) (Social Studies)	160

**\*\* Note: There is no test for Middle Level Foreign Language teachers. Therefore, their only option is to show Highly Qualified status through an academic major (30 credits)**

**10) Is there a test for teachers of the severely profoundly handicapped to demonstrate they are “highly qualified”?**

**Yes. The test below is specifically for teachers of the severely and profoundly handicapped. However, the elementary tests indicated above would also work for teachers of the severely profoundly handicapped to demonstrate Highly Qualified status.**

Test	Passing Scores
Fundamental Subjects: Content Knowledge (0511)	160

**11) How do I become “highly qualified” if I am an experienced teacher?**

Experienced teachers must meet all three basic requirements by the end of the 2005-06 school year: To

be “highly qualified”, teachers:

- must have a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education;
- hold a Rhode Island provisional, professional, or life professional teaching certificate; and
- demonstrate subject matter competency in the core academic subject that is the current teaching assignment.

For the third requirement, there are multiple ways for experienced teachers to demonstrate subject area competency. Experienced teachers may opt for taking a subject matter test or demonstrate competency through the state system of “high, objective, uniform state standard of evaluation (HOUSSE).” In addition, middle and high school teachers may demonstrate competency if they have a major (or 30

credits), a graduate degree in the content they teach, National Board Certification in the content area of the teaching assignment, or a passing score in a rigorous content examination identified by RIDE.

## **12) What is the “high, objective, uniform state system of evaluation” (HOUSSE)?**

HOUSSE is the system by which RI Department of Education can determine that an experienced teacher meets the subject matter competency requirements in the law. NCLB sets criteria for the state to follow when it designs this system for experienced teachers. The criteria:

1. Are set for grade-appropriate academic content knowledge and teaching skills.
2. Are aligned with challenging academic content and student achievement standards and developed consultation with core content specialists, teacher, and school administrators.
3. Provide objective, coherent information about the teacher’s attainment of core content knowledge in the academic subjects he or she teaches.
4. Are applied uniformly to all teachers in the same academic subject and same grade level.
5. Take into consideration the time (up to 12 years total) a teacher has been teaching the academic subject.
6. Give credit for content specific professional experiences.

## **13) How does a veteran teacher demonstrate that he or she is “highly qualified” under Option 1 of HOUSSE?**

The teacher demonstrates that he or she meets ONE of the following criteria:

- Holds an academic major or 30 credits in the content area of each teaching assignment.
- Holds a graduate degree in the content area of the teaching assignment
- Holds National Board Professional Certification in the content area.
- Has passed a rigorous content examination identified by RIDE as acceptable for the teaching assignment.

If the teacher is a special educator and IS NOT the teacher of record then holding the appropriate special education certification would make him/her highly qualified.

## **14) How do veteran teachers demonstrate they are “highly qualified” under Option 2?**

The teacher completes the Rhode Island HOUSSE Content Rubric which assigns points for experience and professional development activities that focus on content area expertise they must:

- achieve at least 100 points across the five categories on the rubric; and
- demonstrate experiences through at least three of the five areas.

## **15) Do “highly qualified” teacher requirements apply to special education teachers?**

Yes, all special educators must be highly qualified for their teaching assignment. Special education teachers who are the teachers of record must be “highly qualified” in the content area they teach. Special educators who are not the teacher of record

meet the “highly qualified” requirements by holding the appropriate special education certification.

**16) What does it mean to be the “teacher of record”?**

The teacher of record is the teacher responsible for content instruction and determining student grades.

**17) Do the “highly qualified” teacher requirements apply to teachers of English language learners?**

Yes, if teachers of English language learners are the teachers of record for core academic subjects, they must meet the requirement for “highly qualified” teachers. Additionally, teachers of English language learners who teach in instructional programs funded under Title III must be fluent in English and any other language in which they provide instruction, including written and oral communication skills.

**18) Do charter school teachers need to be “highly qualified”?**

Yes. Charter school teachers who teach core academic subjects are covered by the requirements for “highly qualified” teachers, and must comply with any provision in RI’s charter school law regarding certification.

**19) Do substitute teachers need to meet the highly qualified requirements?**

If a substitute is the teacher of record for a core content class for more than 30 consecutive days, he/she must be highly qualified.

**20) Can teachers who are “highly qualified” to teach one subject area teach additional subjects, and still be considered “highly qualified”, if they have an emergency certificate to teach those subjects?**

No. Teachers must have full state certification and must demonstrate they are “highly qualified” for each core academic subject he or she teaches.

**21) For the purposes of demonstrating subject matter competency for teachers in the middle grades, does a middle school teacher follow the designated guidelines for elementary or secondary teachers?**

All teachers of sixth grade whether in an elementary school or a middle school need to use the Elementary HOUSSE.

All teachers of seventh and eighth grade need to use the Secondary HOUSSE.

**22) Do special education teachers in private education facilities receiving federal/state funding need to meet the federal definition of a “highly qualified” teacher?**

No, special education teachers in private education facilities that receive federal/state funding do not need to meet the requirements of “highly qualified” teachers.

**22) Do special education teachers delivering instruction in public schools through a regional collaborative need to meet the federal definition of a “highly qualified” teacher? (11/03)**

Yes, special education teachers delivering instruction in public schools through a regional collaborative need to meet the definition of “highly qualified” when they are assigned to teach any of the core academic subjects.

**23) Do Title I teachers who provide supplemental instruction to students need to meet the federal definition of “highly qualified”?**

Yes, according to SEC.1119 Of Title I Part A of the No Child Left Behind Act, each local educational agency receiving assistance under Title I Part A shall ensure that all teachers hired after the first day of the 2002-2004 school year—and those hired subsequent to that date—and teaching in a program supported with Title I funds are “highly qualified”. Furthermore, to meet the federal definition, each local educational agency receiving Title I funds shall require that the principal of each Title I participating school attest annually in writing as to whether such school is in compliance with the requirements of this section, retain such documentation at the school and district level and make the attestations available to members of the public upon request.

**24) Do summer school teachers need to be “highly qualified”? (12/03)**

Yes, summer school teachers who teach core subjects, must be “highly qualified” for their teaching assignment.

**25) Can teachers earn points for service on the HOUSSE Rubric for years of substitute teaching if they have worked the required 135 days? (12/03)**

Yes, 135 days of substitute teaching experience is equivalent to a year’s teaching experience on the HOUSSE Rubric.

**26) If teachers have been designated “highly qualified” in other school districts or states for the same teaching assignment, are those teachers “highly qualified” in Rhode Island for the same teaching assignment?**

Yes, teachers deemed “highly qualified” by other RI school districts or by other states can be considered “highly qualified” in Rhode Island when they provide documentation from the prior school district that they meet the subject matter competency for the same teaching assignment.

**27) What is the process of appeal in determining teachers’ “highly qualified” status?**

Teachers may appeal decisions in determining their status as “highly qualified” for their teaching assignment by filing a request for appeal with their school principal, district superintendent, school committee, and then the RI Department of Education, sequentially.

**28) How may teachers obtain a copy of their NTE scores?**

NTE scores may be in teachers’ personnel files in at the district business offices. Also, NTE scores may be in teacher certification files at the RI Department of Education. Teachers may request scores by mail or in person with appropriate identification.

**29) How do elementary science itinerant teachers qualify using the HOUSSE rubric?**

Elementary teachers who teach science only can demonstrate they are "Highly Qualified" by using the Elementary Option #2 HOUSSE Rubric and listing the teaching assignment as elementary science only. Teachers then would complete at least 3 columns of the rubric for the science teaching assignment and demonstrate a minimum of 17 points. Elementary teachers of the other three core subjects would need to demonstrate at least 33 points in Language Arts, 33 in math, and 17 in social studies, for a minimum total of 83 across at least 3 of the columns.

**30) Which HOUSSE Rubric does a secondary special education intensive resource teacher follow to demonstrate he/she is "Highly Qualified"?**

When the secondary special education intensive resource teacher is the teacher of record for a content area(s) the teacher follows the Secondary HOUSSE Rubric UNLESS all students are on an alternative assessment. If all students are on an alternative assessment the Elementary HOUSSE can be used.

**31) Which HOUSSE Rubric does a severe/profound disabilities secondary teacher follow to verify if he/she is "Highly Qualified"?**

The secondary teacher of a severe/profound self-contained class follows the Secondary HOUSSE Rubric UNLESS all students are on an alternative assessment. If all students are on an alternative assessment the Elementary HOUSSE can be used.

**32) Under which circumstances, if any, does an elementary teacher have to re-verify that he/she is "Highly Qualified"? Must teachers demonstrate again that they are "Highly Qualified" if they transfer to another elementary school in the district, or if they change grade levels?**

Once an elementary teacher demonstrates being "Highly Qualified" for an elementary teaching assignment, the teacher does not need to verify being "Highly Qualified" again as long as he/she stays, in a similar elementary teaching position.

**33) Is the two-year Special Professional certificate considered FULL certification for purposes of being "highly qualified"?**

Yes. It is considered an appeal certificate for renewal and is considered FULL certification for purposes of being "highly qualified".

**34) When do parents need to be informed by letter that their child's teacher is not designated as Highly Qualified?**

If a teacher is not Highly Qualified and teaching in a Title I school then parents MUST be informed by letter. This includes any substitute teachers in the class more than 30 consecutive days. If a teacher is not in a Title I school, then parents do not need to be informed by letter.

**35) What do I do if I am not Highly Qualified?**

If an educator is not Highly Qualified he/she MUST complete a plan to become Highly Qualified. This is the last section of the HOUSSE plan. This plan must be shared with and approved by a district representative, often times the building principal. The plan should be followed as written and periodically reviewed for progress.

**36) Does the public have access to my Highly Qualified information?**

Yes, the public can go to <https://www.ricert.ride.ri.gov/RIDE/> and search educators by school. They can access certifications held and Highly Qualified status.

**37) What do I do if the information on <https://www.ricert.ride.ri.gov/RIDE/> is incorrect?**

That information comes from the Personnel Assignment Process completed by the building principal. If it is incorrect, notify the principal and ask for it to be changed.

**38) What happens to a district/school if I am not Highly Qualified?**

A district must show a “Good Faith Effort”. Each district that is not at 100% compliance must complete an LEA Plan for Highly Qualified Teachers and submit it to RIDE for approval. This details all teachers not Highly Qualified and allows the district to present the plan to get to 100% compliance. The district is responsible for insuring that educators are continually moving forward as detailed in their plans. If there is continual progress districts are considered putting in a “Good Faith Effort” and continue their plan.

**39) Do pre-school teachers need to show Highly Qualified status?**

All teachers of core content in Rhode Island public schools must demonstrate Highly Qualified status. If the pre-school is in a public/charter school the teacher must use the Elementary HOUSSE. See question 8 for specific Early Childhood tests.

**40) Do “home-bound” teachers have to demonstrate Highly Qualified status?**

IF the teacher is the “teacher of record” of a core content area and is recorded in the Personnel Assignment Process then he/she must demonstrate Highly Qualified status.

**ENDNOTES**

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<sup>1</sup> Whitehurst, G. (2002). *Research on Teacher Preparation and Professional Development*. Washington,DC: White House Conference on Preparing Tomorrow’s Teachers.

<sup>2</sup> Ingersoll, R. (January, 2002) *Out of Field Teaching, Educational Inequality, and the Organization of Schools: An Exploratory Analysis*. University of Washington center for Study of Teaching and Policy.