



Exception for an Orderly Transition: Highly Qualified Teachers

[Recent communications](#) from the USDOE have clarified that section 1119 of NCLB, which requires all teachers of core academic subjects in the State to be “highly qualified,” is among the provisions of the ESEA, as reauthorized by NCLB, that States are **not** required to implement in the 2016-17 school year in order to facilitate an orderly transition to the ESSA. Highly qualified is a term that originated and was defined in NCLB. Information on this definition and how requirements have been implemented in Colorado can be found at http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/tii/a_hqt.

Although States will not be required during the 2016-17 school year to ensure that teachers, including special education teachers, are highly qualified, the ESSA maintains the requirement that a person employed as a special education teacher in elementary school, middle school, or secondary school has:

- obtained full certification as a special education teacher (including certification obtained through alternative routes to certification), or passed the State special education teacher licensing examination,
- holds a license to teach in the State as a special education teacher,
- holds a bachelor’s degree.

States must continue to comply with these certification requirements during the 2016-2017 school year.

Teacher Qualifications in ESSA

There are still several questions, which are listed below, that require answers from the USDOE before we know complete details on how the new teacher qualification requirements in the ESSA will be implemented beginning in the 2017-18 school year. Regulations are expected around October of this year, but we do know that section 1112 of the ESSA requires that LEAs ensure that all teachers and paraprofessionals working in a program supported with Title I funds meet applicable State certification and licensure requirements. Until we know more information, CDE is encouraging LEAs to continue to prioritize the hiring of appropriately licensed teachers who have demonstrated subject matter competency in their teaching subject area during the 2016-17 school year. Charter schools are encouraged to continue to prioritize the hiring of teachers who have demonstrated subject matter competency in their teaching area during this same time.

Data and Reporting

The ESSA, effective July 1, 2017, requires SEAs to annually report to the USDOE the following:

- Information on the professional qualifications of teachers in the State, including information on the number and the percentage of the following teachers:
 - Inexperienced teachers
 - Teachers teaching with emergency or provisional credentials
 - Teachers who are not teaching in the subject or field for which the teacher is certified or licensed.



LEAs will not be required to report the highly qualified status of any teachers to CDE in the 2016-17 school year. In order to ensure an orderly transition to ESSA, the following data elements related to teacher qualifications will continue to be collected through the Human Resources (General Education) and December Count Staff (Special Education) snapshots:

- Teaching subject area
- Grade level
- Subject area of degree
- 24 semester hours in subject area
- Passage of Colorado State Board approved content exam
- License type
- Subject area of endorsement

The following data elements will no longer be collected as they were unique to NCLB HQT requirements and are not applicable to Colorado State licensure requirements:

- Highly qualified for assignment
- Passed HOUSSE provision (elementary, SpEd, rural)
- Passed NCLB approved out-of-state elementary content exam

The above mentioned snapshots will also include a report to assist LEAs in understanding how their teachers will meet State licensure requirements under ESSA.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: NCLB highly qualified requirements required Special Education teachers in elementary schools to pass the Elementary PLACE or PRAXIS. Does this requirement go away too?

A: No. Colorado law requires that Special Education Generalists pass both the Special Education and Elementary Education content exams in order to obtain the Special Education Generalist endorsement on their license.

Q: Do these changes mean that my physical education teacher can now teach secondary mathematics?

A: NCLB highly qualified requirements required teachers to have demonstrated subject matter competency in their specific teaching content area. While our state law outlines that all teachers must have a license, our state laws currently do not include such a requirement for hiring. CDE is currently investigating what changes may be needed to meet the new ESSA requirements. Also note that ESSA will require CDE to report the number and percentage of teachers who are teaching out of their endorsed field beginning in 2017-18. CDE encourages districts to continue to prioritize the hiring of teachers who have demonstrated subject matter competency in their teaching subject area.

Questions for which CDE is Seeking Answers

- How will qualified charter school teachers be identified in annual reports by States that allow these schools to waive teacher licensure requirements?
- How will qualified paraprofessionals be identified in annual reports by States that do not have statutory requirements for these positions?



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- If State statute defines subject matter competency requirements for licensing purposes but not local hiring requirements, will ESSA (or the associated regulations) require that LEAs or schools assisted under Title I, Part A hire only teachers who have met the subject matter competency requirements (i.e. endorsement) for their license in the assigned teaching subject area?

For Additional Information Contact:

Jennifer Simons
303-866-3905
simons_j@cde.state.co.us