



## NJDOE News

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### **DOE Releases NCLB-Required Teacher Content Expertise Data**

The New Jersey Department of Education today released the results of the survey required by the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) to determine the number of teachers in the state's classrooms who meet the federal government's definition of "highly qualified" in every core subject they teach.

"It's important for parents to understand that the NCLB definition of a 'highly qualified teacher' (HQT) is based solely on the attainment of specific credentials to demonstrate content expertise that will soon be required of all teachers by the federal government. It has little to do with the quality of a teacher's performance in the classroom," said Commissioner of Education William L. Librera.

The HQT information is found online here:

<http://www.state.nj.us/njded/data/hqt/>

According to the data collected from each school district in April and May 2004, 96.2% of the elementary school teachers in the state meet the federal government's definition. In middle schools and secondary schools in which all classes are departmentalized (where students change classes and teachers for different subjects), 90% of the teachers meet the definition. In intermediate schools with a mix of self-contained and departmentalized classes, 91.9% meet the definition.

In addition, Librera noted that the survey results indicate that at least half the teachers who did not meet the HQT definition for all core subjects they teach did, in fact, meet the definition for at least one subject taught.

"New Jersey has set its own very high standards for our teachers for the past 20 years, so the results of this first NCLB survey are not surprising," the Commissioner said. "However, since NCLB says that all teachers must meet the HQT definition by the 2005-2006 school year, we have to make sure that the small percentage of teachers that has not yet attained the specific, content-related credentials required under law has every opportunity to do so."

Under NCLB, in order to meet the HQT definition, a teacher must demonstrate content expertise by either passing a required content exam in the subject taught, holding an undergraduate major in the subject content, attaining 30 undergraduate credits (the equivalent of a major) in the content, holding a graduate degree in the content, or holding an advanced credential, such as a National Board Certification, in the content.

"The HQT definition is about quantified expertise in subject matter, so the percentage of teachers meeting the HQT definition is slightly lower in the departmentalized middle and secondary schools, where teachers are sometimes asked to take on an assignment in subjects related to their areas of expertise, but not those in which they hold undergraduate degrees or other specific credentials," Commissioner Librera said.

Under NCLB, elementary school teachers satisfy the content preparation requirement as generalists because they must demonstrate knowledge across the range of subjects taught in elementary schools. Teachers who passed New Jersey's Praxis II Elementary Content Knowledge test, which has been required since 1985, satisfied the HQT definition.

Veteran teachers have the option of demonstrating content expertise through the state's High Objective Uniform State Evaluation (HOUSE) Standard Content Knowledge Matrix, developed in accordance with NCLB, through which teachers receive credit for college coursework, professional development activities or years of content teaching experience.

Special education teachers who provide direct instruction in core academic content - either as replacement teachers in resource settings or in self-contained classes - must meet the requirements of the HQT definition in the same manner as elementary, middle and high school teachers. The level of content they teach, rather than the ages or grade levels of their students, determines the basis on which they satisfy the requirement for content

area expertise.

Librera said the state would closely monitor the progress of districts and schools in ensuring that teachers obtain the credentials necessary to meet the HQT definition. "We need to pay particular attention to particular middle and high schools in Abbott districts and some of the other less wealthy districts, where the demonstrated results need to improve," he said.

"We also want to work with our colleges and universities to increase the professional development programs available to teachers," the Commissioner said.

For more information, please contact the Department of Education Public Information Office at (609) 292-1126.