



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 second annual survey required by the federal *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* to determine the number of teachers in the state's public school classrooms who meet the federal government's definition of "highly qualified" in every core subject they teach.

At the elementary level, where all classes are self-contained, 95.6 percent of the teachers meet the federal definition. At the departmentalized middle and high school levels, where students change classes and have different teachers for different subjects, 93.4 percent and 94.9 percent of the teachers, respectively, meet the federal definition.

"New Jersey has set its own very high standards for teachers over the past 20 years, so the results of the survey are not surprising," said Commissioner of Education William L. Librera.

"However, it's important for parents and the public to understand that the *NCLB* definition of a 'highly qualified teacher' (HQT) is based solely on the attainment of specific credentials as a demonstration of subject content expertise. It has little to do with the quality of a teacher's performance in the classroom," the Commissioner said.

Under *NCLB*, teachers have until the end of the 2005-06 school year to satisfy the requirements of the HQT definition, although there are no consequences in terms of job loss if teachers fail to meet the deadline. All new and newly-hired teachers in schools receiving Title I funding must satisfy the definition when they are hired.

"And while a district faces no federal sanctions or loss of federal funds if less than 100 percent of its teachers meet the HQT requirements, DOE believes that districts have a responsibility to support and monitor their teachers as they work to attaining the credentials they need," Commissioner Librera said.

During the coming school year, department officials will provide technical assistance to the 58 school districts and 22 charter schools in which less than 90 percent of the teachers have met the definition to help them set benchmarks for meeting the 100 percent goal.

"We need to pay particular attention to the middle and high schools in the Abbott districts and some of the other less wealthy districts, where it is clear that the results must improve," Commissioner Librera said.

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 he or she teaches, holding an undergraduate major in the subject, attaining 30 undergraduate credits (the equivalent of a major) in the subject, holding a graduate degree in the subject or holding an advance credential, such as a National Board certification, in the content.

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

Veteran middle and high school teachers have the option of demonstrating content expertise through the High Objective Uniform Standard Evaluation (HOUSE) Content Knowledge Matrix, developed by the state in accordance with *NCLB* rules, under which teachers receive credit for professional development activities, college course work and 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 classrooms, must meet the same HQT requirements as other teachers.

The 2004-05 survey indicates that 93.5 percent of the state's public school classes are taught by HQT. This is

consistent with the 2003-04 survey results (94.3 percent), although there is a slight decrease in the number of K-8 classes taught by HQT and a slight increase in the number of high school classes.

However, precise direct comparisons between the 2003-04 and 2004-05 results are difficult to make because different methods were used to collect the data from the districts.

The 2003-04 data was a summary of HQT status prepared by each district for each school. It did not include individual teacher information. The 2004-05 survey was compiled from the Certificated Staff Report, a statewide, school-based data collection system that includes every teacher, his or her certifications and class assignments and HQT status.

Other findings from the 2004-05 report:

- **More elementary school teachers meet the definition than do middle and high school teachers.** In many cases, often because of situations such as staffing shortages, teachers in departmentalized middle and high school settings are asked to undertake teaching assignments in areas other than those in which they hold an undergraduate degree or the specific NCLB-required credentials.
- **Low poverty schools have the highest percentage of HQT.** Low poverty schools are defined as the 25 percent of the schools in the state with the smallest percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch; high poverty schools are the 25 percent of the state's schools with the largest percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch.

At the elementary level, 97.2 percent of the teachers in low poverty schools meet the definition, compared to 91.5 percent in high poverty schools. At the middle school level, the numbers are 94.8 percent versus 86.6 percent, and at the high school level, the percentage of HQT in low poverty schools is 96.6 percent and 90.0 percent in high poverty schools.

- **Classes with the lowest percentage of HQT are special education and ESL (English as a Second Language), particularly in middle and high schools.** This reflects the federal expectation that all teachers be highly qualified in each content area they teach, and special education and ESL teachers in self-contained settings are often responsible for teaching several subjects to students at different levels.

[Click here for the 2004-05 HQT information, including school- and district-level reports and accompanying charts.](#)