

Series: 2003-2004  
Circular Letter: C-23

**TO:** Superintendents of Schools  
Regional Educational Service Center Directors  
Charter School Directors, Magnet School Directors

**FROM:** Dr. Betty J. Sternberg, Commissioner of Education

**DATE:** May 17, 2004

**SUBJECT:** New Flexibility in NCLB Concerning “Highly Qualified” Teachers

The U.S. Department of Education recently released three new flexibility provisions under the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* that address particular challenges for teachers who teach more than one subject, especially those in rural districts and science teachers. This flexibility was provided to states after USDOE Teacher Assistance Corp completed visits to 49 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico and identified several common areas with which many states were struggling.

Under NCLB, highly qualified teachers must hold at least a bachelor’s degree, have full state certification or licensure, and have demonstrated competence in their subject area. The law calls for all teachers of core academic subjects to be highly qualified by the end of the 2005-2006 school year. It also requires that all newly hired teachers in Title I schools or programs for economically disadvantaged students be highly qualified immediately.

The newly announced flexibility addresses the following three groups of teachers:

- ***Teachers in small, rural and isolated areas*** – Newly hired teachers and those currently employed in eligible, rural districts will now have three years to become highly qualified in the additional academic content subjects that they teach in the rural school if they are:
  - Highly qualified in at least one subject currently or at date of hire; and
  - Provided professional development, intense supervision or structured mentoring to become highly qualified in additional subjects.

Eligible districts for this flexibility provision are determined by being designated as participating in the 2003-2004 Rural Education Achievement Program’s (REAP) Small Rural School Achievement Program (SRSA) (see attached list for eligible districts). States may permit LEAs that meet the average daily attendance or population density requirements as of March 31, 2004, to continue to remain eligible should they experience any moderate or unexpected changes in average daily attendance or

population density. As long as districts continue to be defined as “rural” by school locale codes of 7 or 8, or as a government agency of the state, they will remain eligible.

- **Science Teachers** – States are allowed to rely on their own teacher certification requirements for science to determine areas in which teachers must have subject matter knowledge in order to be considered highly qualified under NCLB. Some states certify science teachers in the “broad field” of science, rather than the individual fields of science (such as physics, biology or chemistry). Because Connecticut’s *Regulations Concerning State Educator Certificates, Permits and Authorizations* currently requires certification of science teachers by the individual fields in science, this flexibility provision does not apply to districts within Connecticut.
- **Current Multi-Subject Teachers** – Current teachers do not have to return to school or take a test in every “core academic subject” to demonstrate that they meet highly qualified requirements. NCLB expressly defines “core academic subjects” as “English, reading or language arts, math, science, world languages, civics and government, economics, the arts, history, and geography.” This definition includes elementary and middle school teachers, special education, TESOL, early childhood, remedial reading, gifted and talented and bilingual education teachers teaching these subjects. States may now streamline the evaluation process by developing one High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE) for current, multi-subject teachers to demonstrate that they are highly qualified in each of the subjects they teach (e.g., teachers certified in History/Social Studies can demonstrate that they have content area knowledge in economics, civics and government, history and geography in one HOUSSE evaluation process; they no longer need to be evaluated for each subject through a separate HOUSSE evaluation). Districts need to evaluate the subject matter competence, based on the *Common Core of Teaching*, using both foundational skills and competencies, and the discipline-based professional standards of teachers teaching core academic subjects.

Currently, the United States Congress, in the context of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) reauthorization, is considering how the highly qualified teacher provisions of NCLB apply to special education teachers. Existing policy concerning special education teachers is to require only special education teachers who provide students with direct instruction in core academic subject areas to demonstrate that they are highly qualified under NCLB. Special education teachers who provide only consultation to highly qualified teachers in adapting curricula, using behavioral supports and interventions or selecting appropriate accommodations, are not required to demonstrate subject-matter competency.

If you have questions concerning this letter, please do not hesitate to contact Nancy Pugliese, Chief, Bureau of Educator Preparation, Certification, Support and Assessment, at (860) 713-6709 or by email at [nancy.pugliese@po.state.ct.us](mailto:nancy.pugliese@po.state.ct.us).

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Attachment

## **Attachment**

### **Eligible Districts under the REAP Small, Rural School Achievement Program**

Andover  
Ashford  
Barkhamsted  
Bethany  
Bozrah  
Canaan  
Canterbury  
Chaplin  
Chester  
Colebrook  
Cornwall  
Deep River  
Eastconn, Hampton  
Eastford  
Essex  
Explorations Charter School, Winsted  
Franklin  
Hampton  
Hartland  
Kent  
Lisbon  
Norfolk  
North Canaan  
Pomfret  
Preston  
Regional District #1  
Regional District #11  
Salem  
Salisbury  
Scotland  
Sharon  
Sherman  
Sprague  
Sterling  
Union  
Voluntown  
Willington