

Series 2007-2008

Circular Letter C-7

TO: Superintendents of Schools
Executive Directors, Regional Educational Service Centers
Directors, Magnet and Charter Schools

FROM: Mark K. McQuillan
Commissioner of Education

DATE: October 12, 2007

SUBJECT: Discontinued Use of Districts' High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation and Five Areas of Exception

As many of you are aware, as of July 1, 2007, the United States Department of Education (USDOE) strongly encouraged that states discontinue the use of the High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE) process to determine that a veteran teacher is "highly qualified" under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). In order to satisfy this requirement, the Connecticut State Department of Education recommended three areas of exception to this discontinuation policy that were approved by the USDOE. These three exceptions, combined with the two areas of exception included in NCLB, provide districts with five areas for which the HOUSSE plan may still be used to determine that a person is "highly qualified." Those five exceptions are:

Exceptions in NCLB

1. Newly hired special education teachers who provide primary instruction to one or more students must be "highly qualified" in one of the three specified content areas (English/language arts, math or science) upon hire. However, once hired, districts may use the HOUSSE plan for two years to "highly qualify" special education teachers in other content areas for which they serve as the primary instructor of core academic content knowledge for one or more students; and
2. In rural, Regional Education Applicant Program (REAP) districts (identified as rural by the USDOE), newly hired teachers who teach multiple subjects must be "highly qualified" in one core academic content area upon hire. Once hired, the district may use the HOUSSE plan for two years to "highly qualify" these teachers in other core academic content areas that they will teach.

Exceptions Approved by USDOE

1. Districts may use the HOUSSE plan to “highly qualify” veteran employees who were working in an administrative position prior to July 1, 2007, and returned to teach in a core academic content area for which they were appropriately certified;
2. Districts may continue to use the HOUSSE plan to “highly qualify” an individual who returns to the profession from a long-term medical, maternity or family-rearing leave after July 1, 2007, to teach in a core academic content area for which they are appropriately certified; or
3. Districts may continue to use the HOUSSE plan to “highly qualify” a veteran teacher who is transferred into another core academic content area for which they held a separate endorsement prior to July 1, 2007.

These are the five approved exceptions to the discontinued use of the HOUSSE plan. Individuals who do not fall into one of these five identified exceptions must be determined to be “highly qualified” through either gaining a major or master’s degree in the core academic content area they will be teaching or successfully passing the state-approved test of content knowledge in the core academic content area they will be teaching.

I hope that this memorandum clarifies issues regarding the exceptions under which the HOUSSE process may continue to be used by districts to ensure that all teachers teaching core academic content are “highly qualified” under NCLB.

Any questions regarding this issue may be directed to Nancy Pugliese at (860)713-6709 or via email at nancy.pugliese@ct.gov.

MKM:nlp

cc: Nancy L. Pugliese