



**District of Columbia  
Office of the State Superintendent of Education**

**LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY  
HIGHLY QUALIFIED (HQ) RESOURCE GUIDE**

**Division of Elementary and Secondary Education  
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## FOREWORD

The purpose of this guide is to provide assistance to local education agencies (LEAs) in meeting the highly qualified requirements for teachers and paraprofessionals outlined in the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

The primary understanding that this Resource Book intends to convey is that all core content teachers must be Highly Qualified at the time of hire in order to comply with requirements found in ESEA. This Resource Guide helps to clarify the processes and options that LEAs have in meeting that requirement.

In addition to providing information on compliance requirements, OSSE has and will continue to provide LEAs and teachers with resources to meet ESEA's requirements. We welcome your feedback and suggestions in these efforts.

## FREQUENTLY USED ACRONYMS

<b>ELL</b>	<b>English Language Learner</b>
<b>ESEA</b>	<b>Elementary Secondary Education Act</b>
<b>HQ</b>	<b>Highly Qualified</b>
<b>HQP</b>	<b>Highly Qualified Paraprofessional</b>
<b>HQT</b>	<b>Highly Qualified Teacher</b>
<b>IHE</b>	<b>Institution of Higher Education</b>
<b>LEA</b>	<b>Local Education Agency</b>
<b>OSSE</b>	<b>Office of the State Superintendent of Education</b>
<b>SBOE</b>	<b>State Board of Education</b>
<b>SEA</b>	<b>State Education Agency</b>
<b>SPED</b>	<b>Special Education</b>
<b>SY</b>	<b>School Year</b>

## I. STATE HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHER DEFINITION

### General Criteria for Highly Qualified Teachers of Record

In March 2008, the D.C. State Board of Education unanimously voted to fully align the state HQT definition with the definition outlined in ESEA § 1119. This decision provides teachers with additional flexibility to demonstrate content knowledge in core subjects being taught (Elementary Education (K-6); Mathematics; English/Reading/Language Arts; Science (including Biology, Chemistry and Physics); Social Studies; Foreign Language; and the Arts (Art, Music, Drama, etc.). For purposes of compliance with the state HQT definition, a teacher:

- 1) Must have a Bachelor's degree; **and**
- 2) Must have a Regular I, Regular II, Standard, or Professional license that has not been waived on a temporary basis (charter LEAs exempted); **and**
- 3) ***Elementary teachers must:***
  - a) Pass the DC Elementary content exam; **or**
  - b) Pass the DC Early Childhood content exam (K-3 teachers only); **or**
  - c) Teachers who were hired into the teaching profession prior to the first day of school during the 2002-2003 school year may achieve HQ status via the High Objective Uniform State Standard Evaluation (HOUSSE) process.

#### ***Secondary teachers (and single subject teachers on the Elementary level, e.g., Art, Music, etc.) must:***

- a) Pass the appropriate DC Praxis content knowledge exam; **or**
- b) Have a major or its equivalent in the content area; **or**
- c) Have an advanced degree in the content area; **or**
- d) Have National Board Certification in the content area; **or**
- e) Teachers who were hired into the teaching profession prior to the first day of school during the 2002-2003 school year may achieve HQ status via the High Objective Uniform State Standard Evaluation (HOUSSE) process.

DC's Regular I license is not considered a waiver or temporary license since it meets ESEA's HQT requirements for those in alternate route or practicing teacher programs. To be deemed highly qualified, these teachers:

- 1) Are enrolled in a state-approved teacher education program; and
- 2) Have passed the Praxis I and II - Content exams; and
- 3) Participate in a program of intensive supervision with structured guidance and regular ongoing support or a teacher mentor program.

### Highly Qualified Special Education Teachers

Pursuant to federal (34 CFR § 300.18(b)(1)) and state requirements (5 DCMR §1601.1) for highly qualified Special Education teachers, resource teachers in DC Public Schools (DCPS) that ONLY push-in/pull-out and/or provide collaborative/consultative services must have a valid DC license in Special Education; and charter LEA teachers must

have a Bachelor's degree.

Newly hired Special Education teachers who teach core subjects have additional flexibility for demonstrating subject proficiency. If a newly hired special education teacher of record is highly qualified in either English Language Arts, Mathematics, or Science, they may use the HOUSSE for an additional 2 years after the date of hire to demonstrate highly qualified status in the other core academic subject areas they teach.

Per the requirements of IDEA and ESEA, self-contained special education elementary education teachers (grades K-6) and special education core subject teachers of record must:

- 1) Have a valid DC license in Special Education (DCPS only); charter LEA teachers must have a Bachelor's degree;  
**AND**
- 2) Meet the content knowledge demonstration requirements for the core subject(s) being taught as outlined in the HQT definition. In addition:
  - SPED teachers of students who take the DC-CAS ALT may demonstrate content knowledge as Elementary Education teachers do (Elementary or Early Childhood Praxis or HOUSSE).
  - New, multi-subject SPED teachers who are highly qualified in either English/Language Arts, Math, or Science may use the HOUSSE to demonstrate subject proficiency for the other two subjects. Teachers teaching under these conditions have an additional 2 years after the date of hire to demonstrate highly qualified status in the other core academic subjects they are teaching.

## **Highly Qualified English Language Learner Teachers**

Similar to the requirements for Special Educators, teachers of English Language Learners (ELL) must demonstrate competence in serving this population of students, as well as demonstrate content knowledge of any core subjects they may teach. Per the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (5DCMR §1601.1), ELL resource teachers in DC Public Schools (DCPS) that ONLY push-in/pull-out and/or provide collaborative/consultative services must have a valid DC license in English as a Second Language (ESL). ELL resource teachers in public charter schools must have a Bachelor's degree and be able to demonstrate they are qualified to teach ELL students. Some examples of how a charter school teacher may demonstrate ELL expertise or qualifications: by passing the English as Second Language Praxis Specialty test; having a state certification in ESL; or completing coursework required for ESL certification.

Self-contained ELL/elementary education teachers (grades K-6) and ELL core subject teachers of record must:

- 1) Have a valid DC license in English as a Second Language (DCPS only);  
A Bachelor's degree and be able to demonstrate qualifications to teach ELL students (Charter LEA teachers);  
**AND**
- 2) Meet the content knowledge demonstration requirements for the core subject(s) being taught as outlined in the HQT.

**Documentation verifying a teacher's HQ status must be kept on file at the LEA and/or school for monitoring and auditing purposes.**

## **II. HIGHLY QUALIFIED PARAPROFESSIONALS**

LEAs may not employ paraprofessionals that have not attained Highly Qualified status in an instructional capacity. Any paraprofessional that is not HQ must be assigned to a non-instructional position. Note that the LEA may, at its discretion, reassign paraprofessionals who do not meet HQ requirements to non-instructional duties. If a paraprofessional who does not meet the qualification requirements is re-assigned, evidence must be provided that the paraprofessional will not perform instructional duties.

In compliance with section 1119 of ESEA, to meet highly qualified requirements, instructional paraprofessionals/educational aides must:

- 1) Have a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma (GED), **and**;
- 2) (a) Possess an Associate's degree from an accredited college/university, **or**;  
(b) Have completed two years of full-time study (minimum of 48 credit hours) at an accredited college/university, **or**;  
(c) Have successfully completed the ETS ParaPro Assessment with a passing score of 461.

For more information on types of paraprofessionals, requirements for those serving in school-wide programs, etc., please see the Frequently Asked Questions in the OSSE website. Per Title I-A requirements, paraprofessionals who only serve as translators or who only conduct parental involvement activities must have a secondary school diploma or its equivalent but do not have to meet the additional educational or testing requirements. In addition, individuals who work in food services, cafeteria or playground supervision, personal care services, non-instructional computer assistance, and similar positions are not considered paraprofessionals.

All instructional paraprofessionals serving in Title I schools that elect to operate a school-wide program must meet the requirements above – **whether their salaries are funded by Title I or not**. Instructional paraprofessionals whose salaries are funded by Title I in targeted assistance programs must also meet highly qualified requirements. Documentation verifying a paraprofessional's HQ status must be kept on file at the LEA and/or school for monitoring and auditing purposes. LEAs must be prepared to provide proof that all instructional paraprofessionals are supervised by a highly qualified teacher.

### **III. STATE HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHER EVALUATIONS AND HIGH OBJECTIVE UNIFORM STATE STANDARD OF EVALUATION (HOUSSE) RUBRICS**

OSSE has created standard evaluation forms for LEAs to use to evaluate and keep record of a teacher's HQT status. These forms and supporting evidence must be kept on file at the LEA and/or school for monitoring purposes. It is always a good practice for teachers to also keep a copy of their HQT status documents. Based on the difference in HQT requirements for various teachers, OSSE has created four HQT Evaluation Forms and HOUSSE Rubrics:

- 1) Early Childhood (Kindergarten-3) and Elementary Education (K-6)
- 2) Middle - High School (6 - 12); Art and Music (K-12)
- 3) Special Education (K-12)
- 4) English as a Second Language/Bilingual Education (K-12)

**The use of the HOUSSE is an option for teachers of core subject areas to show they meet HQT subject proficiency requirements. The HOUSSE is only available for general education teachers who were hired into the teaching profession prior to the first day of the 2002-2003 school year.**

New, multi-subject SPED teachers who are highly qualified in either English/Language Arts, Math, or Science may use the HOUSSE to demonstrate subject proficiency for the other two subjects. Teachers teaching under these conditions have

an additional 2 years after the date of hire to demonstrate highly qualified status in the other core academic subjects they are teaching.

Teachers may document their years of teaching experience, college coursework, professional development opportunities, service, and leadership activities that are directly related to the core subject area they are currently teaching to meet HQT requirements via the HOUSSE process. The credits being counted should consist of at least 18 higher level classes (level 200 and above). Elementary level teachers are limited to counting a maximum of 12 credits per core subject area (English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies). Elementary Education majors/degrees are not eligible to be used as evidence of Highly Qualified status in a HOUSSE evaluation.

**The State HQ Teacher Evaluations and HOUSSE rubrics are available on the OSSE website.**

## **IV. PARENT NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS**

There are two LEA parent notification requirements regarding teacher and paraprofessional quality outlined in ESEA section 1111(h)(6). These require:

- A timely, annual notification to all parents regarding their right to request information regarding a teacher or paraprofessional's professional qualifications; **and**
- A notification to parents of students being taught by a non-highly qualified teacher for four weeks or more.

The first notification is often part of the Parent Handbook or other parental involvement information. Please note that the second notification must be sent out no later than four weeks after the beginning of the school year, and any time during the year that a new hire or teacher assignment change results in a core content class being taught by a non-HQT teacher for four weeks. The LEA must maintain records documenting compliance with parent notification requirements.

**Sample parent notifications are available at the OSSE website.**

## **V. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **1. Who is required to be HQ?**

All District of Columbia Public School Teachers of Record (includes Public Charter School teachers), Instructional Paraprofessionals and Teacher's Aide are required to meet Highly Qualified status.

### **2. Who is the teacher of record?**

- If you have multiple teachers in a classroom, one of them is usually designated the teacher of record.
- The teacher of record usually assigns the final letter grade to the student.
- If someone is not a teacher of record, they are excluded from the Highly Qualified process for that classroom.
- This does not apply to Special Education teachers, ESL teachers, or Paraprofessionals
- This does not apply to classrooms with only one teacher.
- It's possible to have 2 co-teachers, 2 teachers of record.

### **3. What are the core content subject areas?**

- Art
- Elementary Education
- English
- ESL
- Foreign Languages
- Mathematics
- Music
- Social Studies
- Science

### **4. Are Early Childhood Teachers required to be Highly Qualified?**

PreSchool and PreK teachers are not required to be Highly Qualified. However, the children in grades Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade are required to be taught by a highly qualified teacher.

### **5. Are Special Education Life Skills Teachers required to be Highly Qualified?**

Teachers whose instruction consists of Life skills courses and not core academic subjects are not expected to be Highly Qualified. This distinction takes into account that the instruction is not meant to serve academic purposes. Rather, the skills are intended to develop skills intended to support the students' independence.

### **6. Are Long Term Substitute Teachers s required to be Highly Qualified?**

Long Term Substitute teachers are considered teachers after 4 consecutive weeks assigned to teach the same students in a core content area. After 4 weeks of service in that capacity, the teacher is then subject to the same HQ requirements that any other core content subject teacher must meet.

### **7. What is the proper documentation that is needed to demonstrate HQ status?**

Primarily, there are four (4) types of documents that are accepted to demonstrate satisfactory evidence of subject matter proficiency. These document types include the following:

A "valid" D.C. Regular I or Regular II teaching credential

Official transcripts issued from an accredited college or university located in the United States

Official foreign credential evaluation report(s) issued by an evaluation agency recognized by OSSE for individuals who completed their education at institutions outside of the U.S.

Copies of all pages of the teacher's examinee score report(s) verifying passing scores for applicable subject content exams required by the District of Columbia

Official transcripts from an accredited college or university verifying a completed degree major or a minimum of 30 semester credit hours of coursework in the teaching assignment subject area

- An acceptable mailed physical transcript is one that is submitted to the employing LEA that has been accepted by the appropriate school official received in a sealed unopened mailer.. We accept original official transcripts or student-issued transcript, but the transcript must be sealed in an unopened mailer.
- An acceptable e-transcript (via electronic submission) must be forwarded directly to the e-mail address of the appropriate school official from the official institution’s delivery service. Typically, this requires the student/teacher to initiate a request to their institution’s (Registrar) delivery service requesting that an e-transcript be sent to another party. The student would provide the name and e-mail address of the transcript recipient. The service would then send an email to the recipient containing the required passwords and other applicable information required to access and download the respective transcript

## POINTS OF CONTACT

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