

ELEMENTARY LEVEL: SPECIAL EDUCATION

Special Education certified teachers providing core content area instruction to elementary level (K-6) special education students or to special education students taking an alternative assessment:

To satisfy the definition of a Highly Qualified Teacher, elementary-level special education teachers must:

- 1) Hold at least a bachelor's degree; **and**
- 2) Hold a valid Pennsylvania Special Education teaching certificate (e.g., Instructional I, Instructional II or Intern certificate but **not** an emergency permit); **and**
- 3) Demonstrate subject matter competency for the core content areas they teach by:
 - o Passing a rigorous state test (i.e., the PRAXIS Fundamental Subjects: Content Knowledge test or the previously used PRAXIS Elementary Education: Content Knowledge assessment)

Note: Elementary level teachers who hold a Special Education certificate and have passed the PRAXIS II Fundamental Subjects: Content Knowledge test or the previously used PRAXIS II Elementary Education: Content Knowledge test are Highly Qualified to teach elementary level core content to special education students (K-6) and to special education students taking an alternative assessment (PASA).

Note: PA's HOUSSE procedures (i.e. Bridge Certification Program, State-level HOUSSE and HOUSSE HQT designations) closed on July 2006 and June 30, 2007 to all educators except for (1) educators who developed an Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP) prior to June 30, 2007 in conjunction with his/her school district have until December 31, 2008 to attain a highly qualified teacher designation ([\(HOUSSE HQT Requirements and Rubric\)](#) (pdf) and (2) new (first year) special education teachers who teach multiple core content subjects in middle level or secondary settings as provided for under the IDEA and NCLB have up to two years from the date of hire to demonstrate content expertise in the remaining core academic subject(s) they teach.

Additional Flexibility for Special Education Teachers

Traditionally, Pennsylvania's certification standards have long permitted special education teachers to be the teacher of record in teaching any core content to special education students enrolled in grades K-12; however, NCLB, as clarified by IDEA 2004, requires that special education teachers who are the teachers of record of any core content area at any grade level demonstrate subject matter competency in each of the academic subjects in which the teachers teach. Special Education teachers of core content must demonstrate subject matter competency in the same way as other teachers of core content at the relevant grade level(s).

Whether in a resource room or regular classroom, or some other type of classroom, a special education student who will take the PSSA must have a Highly Qualified Teacher in each of the subject areas/grade level for which they will be assessed. Students taking alternative assessments must receive instruction from a teacher that meets elementary education HQT requirements.

Those teachers holding a Pennsylvania Special Education certificate who are not the teacher of record providing instruction in core academic content may continue to provide the following services and supports to special education students without obtaining HQT status:

- **consultation and support services,**
- **adapting curricula,**
- **assistance in the use of behavioral supports and interventions,**
- **co-teaching and itinerant support.**

Flexibility for Charter School Teachers

In Pennsylvania, 75% of professional staff must be certified and 25% can be non-certified. However, under NCLB requirements, all charter school teachers of core content subjects at all grade levels must hold at least a bachelor's degree and demonstrate subject matter competence in each core academic area and at the grade level at which they teach. Therefore, all teachers of core content subjects in charter schools must be Highly Qualified.

Flexibility for Rural Teachers

USDE permits **veteran teachers who are employed in certain rural school districts (those that are eligible to participate in the USDE Small Rural School Achievement "SRSA" program) and teach multiple subjects and are Highly Qualified in at least one core content subject that they teach** (but do not meet all the criteria for a Highly Qualified Teacher in all of the core academic subjects they teach) to have until the end of the 2006-07 school year to become Highly Qualified in each subject that they teach.

Additionally, **newly hired teachers** in these eligible rural districts have three years from the date of hire to become Highly Qualified in each core content subject that they teach.

In order to use this flexibility, covered rural school districts must: (1) ensure that all teachers in core academic subjects are Highly Qualified in at least one core content subject they teach; (2) provide high-quality professional development that increases the teachers' content knowledge in the additional subject areas they teach; and (3) provide mentoring or a program of intensive supervision that consists of structured guidance and regular, ongoing support so that teachers become Highly Qualified in the additional core academic subject(s) they teach.

There are currently only twelve Pennsylvania school districts that fall within the USDE definition of rural school district.