



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PO Box 500
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0500

JAMES E. MCGREEVEY
Governor

WILLIAM L. LIBRERA
Commissioner

January 30, 2004

TO: Chief School Administrators
Charter School Administrators

FROM: Jay Doolan, Director
Office of Academic and Professional Standards

Barbara Gantwerk, Director
Office of Special Education

SUBJECT: Highly Qualified Teacher Requirements for Special Education Teachers

Please be advised that teachers who hold standard certifications in special education are not required to obtain additional subject area certifications in the content area(s) they teach in order to satisfy the Highly Qualified Teacher requirement.

In order to satisfy the Highly Qualified Teacher requirement, a special education teacher must:

1. Hold at least a bachelor's degree;
2. Hold standard certification for which no requirements have been waived ("Teacher of the Handicapped" is an appropriate standard certification for a special education teacher as are the other special education certificates); and
3. Show content area preparation in the academic subject or subjects for which the teacher is the primary provider of direct instruction (either as a replacement teacher in a resource setting or as a teacher in a self-contained class).

A special education teacher (resource/replacement in grades K-5 or self-contained in grades K-8) demonstrates content area preparation at the elementary level as an elementary generalist by having passed the Praxis II Elementary Content Knowledge Exam or by accruing ten points on the NJ HOUSE Standard Content Knowledge Matrix. It is not required that a teacher certified in special education also be certified in elementary education in order to satisfy the Highly Qualified Teacher requirement. Special education teachers who hold dual certification as elementary teachers will have already passed the Praxis II exam if certified since 1985.

A special education teacher providing direct instruction in core academic content at the middle and secondary grade levels demonstrates content area preparation for each academic subject he or she teaches by either:

- a. Passing a state test in the academic content area; or
- b. Having an undergraduate major in the academic content area; or
- c. Having thirty credits equivalent to a major in the academic content area; or
- d. Having a graduate degree in the academic content area; or
- e. Holding National Board certification (or other advanced credential) in the academic content area; or
- f. Accruing ten points on the NJ HOUSE Standard Content Knowledge Matrix in the academic content area.

Teachers may take the appropriate content area Praxis II exam(s) without having the college credits that would lead to certification in that academic content. The test would serve to satisfy the third element of the requirement to be identified as a highly qualified teacher by showing "content area preparation" while the teacher's standard certification in Special Education would satisfy the second element of the requirement to be identified as a highly qualified teacher, that of holding standard certification. Once again, special education teachers do not need to have subject area certification in order to satisfy the highly qualified teacher requirement. What they must have is evidence that they have the content area preparation to teach the core academic subject(s) they are teaching.

Please remember that regardless of the age or grade-level assignment of students, it is the level of the content instruction that determines the level of the content preparation required for special education teachers.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Jan Niedermaier in the Office of Academic and Professional Standards at 609-943-5397 or send an email to HQTEACHERS@doe.state.nj.us.

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