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> reports

National Council on Teacher Quality

by Kate Walsh & Emma Snyder

Searching the Attic

- > How States Are Responding to the Nation's Goal of Placing a Highly Qualified Teacher in Every Classroom

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report, the second in a series published by the National Council on Teacher Quality, examines states' progress in meeting the new federal requirement that by the end of the 2005 - 2006 school year there will be a "highly qualified teacher" in every classroom in the nation.

This new requirement has led to some discomfort in more than a few states. No longer are states able to decide independently what constitutes a qualified teacher; they must also consider a federally imposed standard that addresses the teacher's knowledge of subject matter. In this context, No Child Left Behind has cast a shadow over the integrity and value of the states' teacher certification systems. States are now required to separately assess teachers' subject-matter knowledge, a process viewed by many as an unwanted diversion from long-standing and well-tended certification systems.

This report examines what states are requiring of their practicing teachers in order to comply with the law. As most current teachers were certified before No Child Left Behind was enacted, states must retrofit their old definitions of teacher quality to the federal law's new expectations, to ensure that *all* classrooms—not just the classrooms of new teachers—are staffed with highly qualified teachers.

In the short term, the prospects are dim for making genuine strides in improving teacher quality. The law's clarity on the academic preparation required of new teachers¹ bodes a more promising future, but where veteran teachers are concerned the law is doomed to disappoint, save in a minority of states. The evidence accumulated here suggests that the highly qualified teacher provisions will be brought down by the burden of NCLB's internal compromises and ambiguity and by states' unwillingness to cede control no matter how important the cause.

Even with the 2006 deadline looming, only a handful of states appear willing to comply with the spirit of that portion of the law that seeks to correct the long-tolerated, widespread and inadequate preparation of American teachers in their subject areas. Some states are indifferent or even antagonistic about the prospect of declaring significant numbers of their active teachers unqualified.

Colorado, in fact, stands alone in demanding that all of its practicing teachers meet an objective standard of their subject-matter knowledge. Veteran teachers there have a choice of passing a test in the subject(s) they teach or accumulating coursework nearly equivalent to a college major.

¹There is one glaring ambiguity: the notable absence of a federal definition for the amount of coursework that constitutes a college major or minor. A number of states accept 24 credit hours as a college major, while most of the nation's more selective colleges view 30 credit hours as the norm.

Oregon sets a similarly high standard but only for its newer teachers. Alabama, Pennsylvania, Kansas, Maryland and Hawaii require that all of their teachers, no matter when they entered the profession, and no matter what the certification rules once permitted, should at least hold a college minor in the subjects they teach. Though their standard falls short of NCLB's goal of an academic major for all levels of teaching, this group of states offers a pragmatic response that other states should consider.

Most of the remaining efforts are half-hearted, achieving a gossamer-like quality whereby elaborately crafted state plans reveal themselves to be little more than an elaborate restatement of the status quo. Most common are plans that require veteran teachers to earn a set number of points to be labeled "highly qualified." Thirty states offer teachers a menu of approved activities, each of which has been assigned a point value. In most cases, the range of activities is too many for a district to responsibly oversee. And in most cases the activities connect very loosely to teacher's subject-matter knowledge, such as working on a school committee, participating in educational travel, or mentoring a new teacher. Perhaps out of desire to show flexibility or perhaps in an effort to minimize the disruption and anxiety to teachers, many states have gutted the law's opportunity to achieve meaningful reform.

Most states share neither the urgency nor the single-minded focus of the U.S. Congress in seeking to address the low academic standards required of American teachers, arguably the least rigorous among all developed nations.² Seven states grant teachers highly qualified teacher status by achieving what all but a tiny fraction of teachers routinely achieve: a satisfactory mark on their annual evaluations.

Eleven states insist that their existing certification systems are up to the job, no matter what U.S. Congress has asked them to do differently. Some of these states such as Idaho and Utah already had high academic standards, but also in this group are states such as South Dakota and Washington whose confidence in the adequacy of their certification process for these purposes is misplaced.

Whatever model a state uses for its veteran teachers, few jurisdictions appear to have the political stomach for remedying the impact of substandard, expired certification regulations. Many have exempted large

numbers of veteran teachers, arguing that their current regulations demonstrate the right kinds of policies even though most of these teachers were hired under a different set of rules and markedly lower standards.

> Likely Consequences for Noncompliance

It's not clear what consequences—if any—states will face if they do not meet the highly qualified teacher deadline for either practicing or new teachers. While the law specifies no particular penalty for noncompliance, the Secretary of Education can opt to withhold funding; education officials in the Bush administration have stated that they intend to use this authority.

A likely scenario is one in which the U.S. Department of Education targets a few states for particularly egregious noncompliance. Such an action might prod other states to rethink their approaches. But given the kid-glove approach taken by both the Department of Education and most states toward veteran teachers, it seems most likely that the department will choose to target states found noncompliant on new teachers.

> Recommendations

For both substantive and pragmatic reasons, Congress should revisit the structure of the highly qualified teacher provision. In seeking to raise the bar, the law may actually ask too much in certain circumstances while not demanding enough in others. National standards can and should be raised but premised on firmer ground.

- > The U.S. Department of Education needs to spell out the coursework that represents a college major as being no fewer than 30 credit hours and a college minor as being no fewer than 15 credit hours.
- > All high school teachers should have a major in the primary subject they teach and a minor in any additional related subjects they teach. In a sorry nod to political reality, high school teachers who began teaching before 2001 should be considered highly qualified with only a college minor (15 credit hours). While some might argue this sets the bar too low, it may produce better results than the current mix of high standards and abundant loopholes.

²Wang, A., Coleman, A., Cohen, R., Phelps, R. (2003) *Preparing Teachers Around the World*, Educational Testing Service, www.ets.org/research/pic; Education Directorate, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2004 forthcoming) *Teachers Matter Attracting Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers*. Paris: OECD.

- > Rural schools forced to hire a single teacher to teach multiple unrelated subjects should be permitted to apply for an exemption to this ruling, provided they do so annually and parents are appropriately notified that their school are unable to recruit teachers who meet the federal standard.
- > Absent a research consensus needed to support the assumption that middle school teachers should have a subject-matter major, the law should be amended to allow both new and practicing middle school teachers to have a minor (15 credits) in the subject(s) they teach. Given the numbers of middle school teachers in the United States now teaching without a major (ranging from 51 to 93 percent depending on the subject taught), it is clear that many effective schools do not view an academic major as a requisite for teaching at this level.
- > New elementary teachers trained in undergraduate teacher programs should earn, at minimum, a 30-credit-hour major in the liberal arts, focusing on areas of particular relevance to states' K-5 curricula (mathematics, English, science, social studies, art and music). Practicing elementary teachers who entered the profession before 2001 should satisfy a somewhat less demanding standard of a 24-credit liberal arts concentration (two classes in each of the four principal content areas). Teachers at this level should be permitted to earn these credits through either university-level coursework or the equivalent in content-focused professional development.
- > All practicing teachers who do not want to take additional coursework needed to meet these standards should have one option available to them: passing a subject-matter test.
- > All new teachers should pass a subject matter test regardless of their coursework. In addition, elementary teachers should pass a test in scientifically based early reading instruction.
- > An independent commission appointed by the Institute for Education Sciences, the independent research arm of the U.S. Department of Education, should develop recommendations to states on the appropriate passing scores for the most widely used subject-matter tests, including tests used by states to

assess teachers' knowledge of reading instruction. States would not be required to adopt these recommended scores, but an annual report would describe the state variances.

- > An independent commission appointed by the Institute for Education Sciences should determine the academic rigor (as measured by the estimated grade equivalence of knowledge a teacher needs to pass the tests) of the most widely used subject-matter tests. An annual report would describe the rigor of the tests used in each state.
- > The U.S. Congress should require states to inform their school districts if prospective teachers have been certified but were unable to pass their subject-matter licensing tests under the recommended national guidelines.

Absent the necessary revision to the Department's regulatory guidelines and even amending NCLB where necessary, states should limit their definitions of a highly qualified teacher to a collection of college-level coursework that is equivalent to a college major, minor, or advanced degree in the subject area; appropriate professional development in the content area for elementary teachers only; advanced credentialing such as National Board Certification; or a subject-matter test, particularly the more rigorous tests being developed by the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence. While many teachers take exception to these requirements, there is plenty of precedent in other professions for such a move. Doctors, nurses, accountants, real estate agents and other professionals must continue to prove subject-matter competency through objective measures such as coursework or subject-matter exams.

There is no evidence to draw upon that would justify a state declaring itself immune to the nation's chronic and well-documented shortage of qualified teachers. This said, a number of states can offer constructive models to others on the commitment needed to improve the quality of our children's teachers.

I. INTRODUCTION

> Should you have to know what you do not teach?

It goes without saying that you cannot teach what you do not know. The notion that teachers should have strong knowledge in the subjects they teach is intuitively logical and prompts little argument.

However, this logic may not prove all that helpful when policymakers have to tackle the nitty-gritty, deciding what teachers of all subjects and all levels should know or how to verify that aspiring teachers have acquired such knowledge. While it may be true that you cannot teach what you do not know, should you have to know what you do not teach? Put that way, it is a much harder question to answer.

Good policy has to take into account a range of factors and circumstances that our assumptions do not always consider. Even the research that examines the relationship between teachers' subject knowledge and effectiveness, while quite conclusive for some teaching levels and some subjects, does not offer much guidance for policies that must apply to all grades and all subjects.

More specifically, it may be a "no-brainer" that a high school chemistry teacher ought to know a lot about chemistry and that a college major in chemistry serves as a reasonable verification of that knowledge. But that's as easy as it gets. What about the middle school science teacher who teaches science? How much college-level coursework in each field of science is necessary? What about the special education teacher who is charged with teaching American government to high school students even though the students are only capable of understanding elementary-level principles? Does that teacher need to have been a government major?

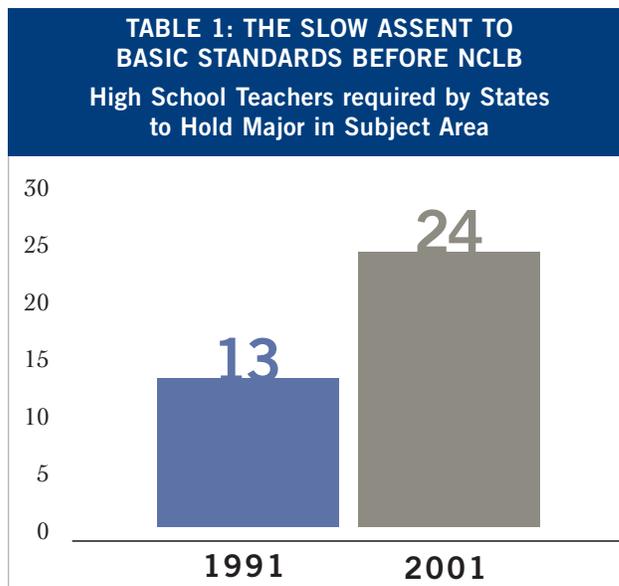
These conundra are the rule, not the exception. There's a decided lack of consensus about what the profession's largest sector, elementary teachers, need to know. Does a first-grade teacher really need to have taken several college-level courses in math to teach addition and subtraction? Or if elementary schools never broach world history, why should a state require a course in world history as a licensure requirement? For many, the answer is not always clear.

II. LEADING UP TO NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND?

> States have long spelled out what teachers need to be able to do, but not what they should know.

While addressing the many facets that affect the quality of the nation's teacher corps—insufficient pay, lack of a career ladder, poor working environments—better academic preparation is one area that is well within states' power to change. However, without discounting the impact of the changing workforce, much of the teacher quality problem has been largely self-inflicted through flawed regulatory policy.

Leading up to No Child Left Behind, it is fair to say that many states gave short shrift to (and in some cases simply neglected) teachers' preparation in their subjects. Compared to other developed nations, the United States asks far less of its teachers as measured by academic benchmarks that aspiring teachers have to meet.³ In 2000, only about half of all states required even their high school teachers to major in the subject they taught. This represented an increase over 1991 when only 13 states required a major, but was hardly indicative of national urgency (see Table 1). Little progress had been made at reaching a national consensus on what middle school

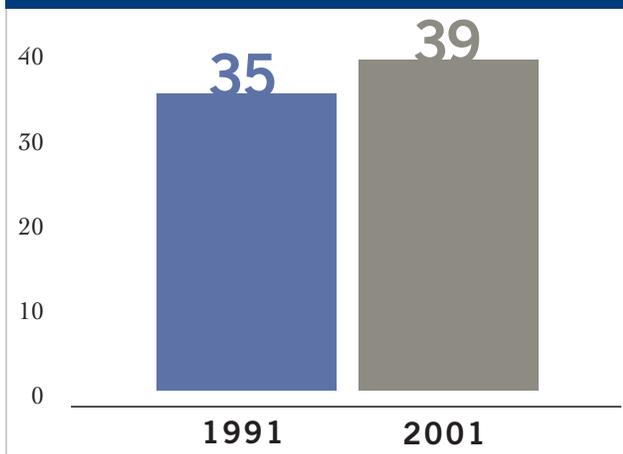


SOURCE: National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC), (1991) *The NASDTEC Manual*. Sacramento, California: National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification: Table C-10.

National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC), (2001) *The NASDTEC Manual*. Dubuque, Iowa: National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification: Table B-10.

³Wang et al. (2003)

TABLE 2: BEFORE NCLB
States Mandating ANY Content for
Elementary School Teachers



SOURCE: National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC), 1991. *The NASDTEC Manual*, 1991. Sacramento, California: National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification, 1991: Table C-10
National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC), 2001. *The NASDTEC Manual*, 2001. Dubuque, Iowa: National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification, 2001: Table B-10.

training than their academic preparation. For example, states have long prescribed a specific number of credit hours in education coursework that teachers had to complete for a license. They delineated the specific areas in education that teachers needed to study (e.g., social foundations, methods of teaching reading, cultural diversity). And every state has a formal process for approving the programs delivered by schools of education, which includes reviewing individual syllabi for each required course.

By comparison, many states have displayed remarkable flexibility or ambiguity (depending on one’s view of the proper role of government) toward teachers’ content preparation. Valid arguments can be made that flexibility is in order and that excessive regulation causes too many problems and unintended consequences, but attributing such philosophical motive to states is off the mark. It doesn’t explain why states would choose to exercise such firm control in one area of preparation (professional training) and so little in another (content).

> The Impact of Substandard Regulations

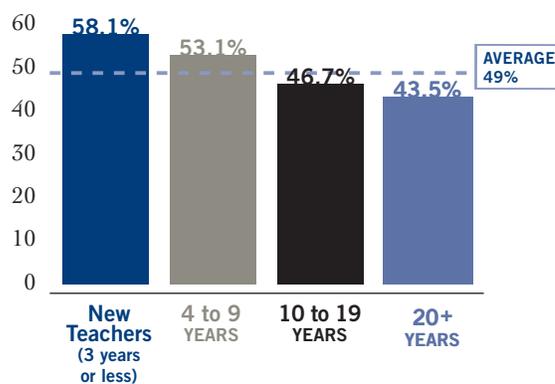
Reflecting states’ generally low standards and slow pace of reform, by 2000 only 47 percent of secondary teachers in the United States held an academic major in the subject(s) they taught. And that figure masks the much lower percentages teaching in high-poverty schools and in subject-shortage areas (see Table 3). The percentage of newer teachers who had an academic major was not substantially higher at 58 percent. Furthermore, when teachers are required to take tests of their academic preparedness, the results are consistently disappointing even when they are only tested on basic skills.⁴

teachers should know. Although assigned to teach discrete subject areas, most states permitted middle school teachers to teach under an elementary generalist certificate.

Not surprisingly, regulations for elementary teachers have been the least rigorous and least consistent from state to state. Ten years ago, a quarter of all states failed to articulate any academic requirements for elementary teachers (see Table 2). Many states left it up to teacher preparation programs to decide what, if any, content courses teachers ought to take. This disinterested position suggests an inappropriate abdication of public responsibility, since there is little incentive for teacher preparation programs to relinquish course fees by sending students outside the department to take courses. Where states did impose academic requirements, they were minimal and ambiguous, such as Iowa’s former requirement of “a field of specialization in a single discipline or a formal interdisciplinary program of at least twelve semester hours.”⁴

For many different reasons, states have traditionally shown more interest in overseeing teachers’ professional

TABLE 3: PERCENTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS WITH AN ACADEMIC MAJOR IN THEIR SUBJECT AREA



SOURCE: NCES, *Condition of Education* (2002), Table 32.2, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2002/section4/tables/t32_3.asp

⁴ See recent examples in Massachusetts, New York, Chicago and Pennsylvania of low performance of practicing teachers on tests of basic skills or subject-matter knowledge. “When Teachers Flunk the Test,” Kelly Patricia O’Meara, *Insight Magazine*, September 22, 2003; “3,000 Teachers Flunk Out of Jobs,” *New York Post*, August 28, 2003, <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/nypost/389503211.html>; “Teachers Struggle like Pupils” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 4, 2004, <http://www.post-gazette.com/localnews/20030111teachertest2.asp>; “Failing Teachers: A Sun-Times Investigation,” http://www.suntimes.com/special_sections/failing_teacher/index.html.

III. ENTER THE FEDS

> Moving Toward a National Standard for Teachers' Subject-Matter Knowledge

For good or ill, No Child Left Behind signals a national impatience over slow reform in the states. States have had to cede to the federal government a great deal of their authority over the credentials teachers need to be considered a highly qualified teacher.

In fashioning the No Child Left Behind teacher provisions, Congress essentially passed a vote of no confidence on state certification processes, adding a new teacher quality check for teachers' subject competency that is wholly distinct from certification. Important for this discussion, Congress rejected any sort of grandfather clause by deciding that new teachers and experienced teachers alike must achieve highly qualified status.

While new teachers can earn highly qualified status only by majoring in a subject area or passing a content exam, the law offers experienced teachers a third option. Acknowledging the political difficulty of demanding that people who have been in the workforce for years meet a brand new set of requirements, Congress developed the framework for the *High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation*, or HOUSSE.

Not unlike their unique certification systems, each state is allowed to construct its own customized HOUSSE plan to assess a teacher's content knowledge. These HOUSSE plans have to comply with seven general guidelines (see box). The framework for the plans is designed to allow greater flexibility in determining how experienced teachers can prove they are highly qualified while maintaining the semblance of a "high standard for evaluation."

What is a HOUSSE?

According to NCLB teachers, teachers must meet a set of standards for subject matter knowledge that is based on the following criteria:

- > Be set for grade appropriate subject matter knowledge and teaching skills.
- > Be aligned with standards.
- > Provide objective, coherent information on teachers' subject matter competency.
- > Be applied uniformly.
- > Take into consideration, but not be based primarily on, the time a teacher has been teaching a subject.
- > Be made available to public.
- > (Optional) Involve multiple, objective measures of teacher competency.

> The Framing of HOUSSE

With the end-of-school-year 2006 deadline for teachers to achieve highly qualified status approaching, all 50 states have now indicated how they intend to confer highly qualified status on their practicing teachers. This number represents some progress from NCTQ's last look at states' progress six months ago, when only half as many had released a plan. As the law permits—and encourages—the plans vary in form and stringency.

States largely chose one of three models of a HOUSSE plan:

- > **Thirty states** use some version of a point system in which teachers accumulate points toward highly qualified status. Almost all states allow points to be earned retroactively, meaning that the teacher has to unearth evidence of participating in a HOUSSE-approved activity at some point in his or her career. Successful completion of a college course might be worth 15 points, while having attended a professional development weekend workshop might be worth 10 points and having mentored another teacher might earn 5 points. Almost all states require teachers to earn 100 points.
- > **Seven states** use some version of the traditional teacher performance evaluation. To earn highly qualified status, a teacher is observed and evaluated based on a series of teaching criteria that include a strand for the teacher's content knowledge. Generally speaking, these instruments serve as only crude measures of content knowledge: first, because content knowledge is only one of many factors that a principal has to consider in a single evaluation; and second, because annual classroom visits may not be suitable venues for assessing the depth and breadth of a teacher's knowledge.
- > **Eleven states** are asserting that their current certification systems on their own are sufficient to use as HOUSSE plans. The rationale of these states is that their certification process already contains rigorous subject requirements, at the level that No Child Left Behind requires.
- > **Two remaining states**, Colorado and Oregon, essentially decided not to offer their veteran teachers a HOUSSE option and instead are requiring teachers to achieve highly qualified status through the same two paths as new teachers: coursework, the equivalent hours in professional development or testing. Accordingly, these two states are the most likely to substantively address teacher quality problems in their schools, though Oregon exempts its more veteran teachers.

TABLE 4: HOW STATES ARE BUILDING THEIR HOUSSE

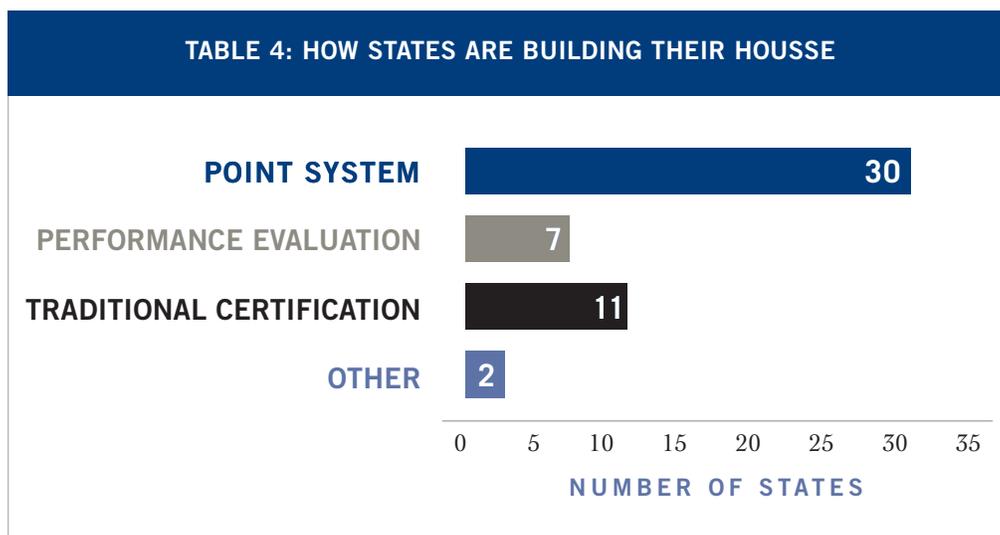
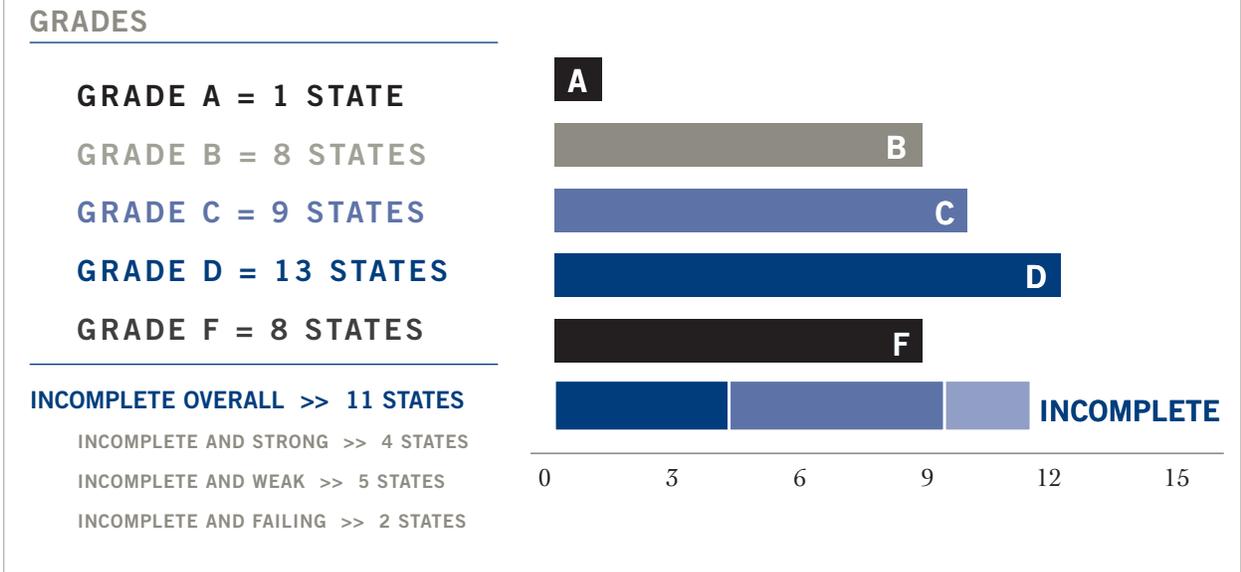


TABLE 5: STATE GRADES



NOTE: "Incomplete" states are those states that decided to use their certification process for declaring teachers highly qualified.

IV. WHERE STATES TRIP UP

A handful of states have implemented rigorous systems that settle for nothing less than objective evidence of a teacher's subject-matter knowledge. Colorado insists that practicing teachers meet the same objective standards as new teachers by taking a subject-matter test or fulfilling a relatively demanding 24-credit coursework requirement (or its equivalent in content-focused professional development). A number of states, including Alabama, Texas, Kansas, and Hawaii, are making good use of the HOUSSE option to ensure that all teachers are equipped with at least a minor in their fields. Maryland requires the most credit hours in a content area of any state's HOUSSE plan, though the state does let many practicing teachers slip through the cracks. Oregon's plan establishes a high standard for its younger teachers but, in a weaker revision, changed the plan to require less of the state's more experienced teachers.

At the other end of the spectrum are 21 states whose plans add no value. In some instances they rely too heavily on old systems of certification or evaluation, and in other instances they consist of elaborate plans that have little to do with content knowledge.

Then there are a number of states that fall in the middle. Clearly, most of these states put more thought into their HOUSSE plans than those that failed, but for many reasons still fall short of reaching the federal law's goals. Most problematic are those plans that with new, intensive paperwork requirements place huge burdens on districts, schools, and most unfortunately, on teachers, who are asked to unearth evidence that they have at some point in their careers participated in legitimate, HOUSSE-approved activities.

When teachers are allowed to tally up conferences, committee work and mentoring from years past, HOUSSE becomes a method for proving inflated competency rather than a tool for constructively improving subject knowledge. Such plans conjure up images of teachers across the country rummaging through their attics, sorting through old papers looking for evidence that they participated in some activity worth a few highly qualified points in the distant past.

HERE ARE THE MOST COMMON PROBLEMS.

1: Chinese Menus

Teachers are offered too many options. Arizona's plan is a good example of this problem. Arizona teachers can earn points for years of experience, university-level coursework, professional development, professional activities, awards for teaching excellence, publications in the content area, service to the profession, and presentations related to content. Then, within each of these categories, there are subcategories. Service to the profession can be acting as a department chair, mentoring another teacher, serving in a professional organization, making presentations at district meetings...and more. Professional development includes serving on curriculum committees, going to national workshops, going to district workshops, being involved in standards development, being involved in standards realignment...and more.

Some of the other states that have too many options: Alaska, Arkansas, California, Kansas, Indiana, Maine, Rhode Island and Virginia.

PROGRESS REPORT – Winter 2004

Ms. Williams, 11th grade math teacher

EXPERIENCE

Taught 8th grade math, ten years 40 points
Taught 11th grade math, one year 10 points

EDUCATION

M.A. in education 10 points
Six months student teaching, 1992 5 points

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

"Math Counts" team sponsor, 1997 3 points
Mentored by Mrs. Smith, 1994 3 points
Gave feedback on state math grant, 1993 2 points

RELATED ACTIVITIES

Judged "Math Counts" competition, 1997 5 points
Sponsored new teacher, 1996 5 points
Taught math skills in the after school program, 1999 5 points
Presented at "Maine Learning Technology Initiative," 1998 5 points
Taught "The Mathematics of Art," 1998 5 points
Attended IEP workshop, 1996 3 points

TOTAL: 101 POINTS

Highly Qualified

2. Putting the "C" in Content

The options available to teachers have little or nothing to do with content knowledge. States give points for pursuing a whole array of activities that have little relevance, or at best indirect relevance, to subject-matter knowledge: membership in national education organizations; mentoring new teachers; serving as a team leader. For example, Alaska offers any teacher, not just foreign language instructors, 5 points for being fluent in another language. In Maine, a teacher can sponsor a club. In Tennessee a teacher earns points for serving as a grade-level chair.

One of the more baffling manifestations of this problem are plans that encourage teachers to take coursework but then allow courses in pedagogy. An elementary teacher in Nevada, for example, who has taken no courses in any content area during college can be declared highly qualified by providing evidence of three or four pedagogy courses.

Some of the other states that appear confused by the HOUSS focus on teacher subject-matter knowledge: Arizona, Delaware, Kentucky, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island and Virginia.

By allowing teachers to count work done retroactively, some states are setting the bar very low. The catch-22 result is that teachers who initially fail to meet a state's standards can still meet them without having to do any further work.

In Wyoming, the state HOUSSE plan requires only three courses in a subject for a teacher to be declared highly qualified. Because the plan also allows the teachers to use courses they took in the past, the result is entirely illogical. A high school math teacher with substandard credentials of only three college courses in mathematics (a minor would have required at least five courses) is simultaneously found both deficient and highly qualified by virtue of those same three courses. The transcript deficiency which led to the activation of the HOUSSE is the same transcript that the teacher uses to be found highly qualified.

Retroactively counting coursework would be fine if state standards were reasonably high – that is, an expectation that every teacher must be working toward the national standard of a college major or at least a college minor.

Some other states in this category: New Jersey, Alaska, Kentucky, Arizona, Minnesota, North Dakota and Tennessee.

4: A Point Here, a Point There

Points don't properly reflect the value of each activity.

In those state HOUSSE plans that require teachers to amass a certain number of points, the number of points earned for any given activity should ideally correspond to its relevance to teacher's subject-matter knowledge. However, many states have done a poor job of assigning the appropriate values to activities.

An example from Massachusetts illustrates the two most common pitfalls of these point systems: point inflation and misplaced sense of value. Massachusetts teachers earn 45 points (out of a 120 points needed) for a typical 3-credit-hour course, 30 points for serving on an accreditation team, and 30 points for publishing a journal article in their field. The generous number of points awarded for a course results in teachers only needing 3 courses to be highly qualified, not even equivalent to a college minor. The state also assigns as much value to serving as a member of a committee as to producing a scholarly work.

Some other states having difficulty assigning appropriate value: Alaska, Arkansas, Georgia, Maine, Illinois and Tennessee.

5: EZ-Pass

Plans include gaping loopholes. Even in states that have developed substantive paths to achieving highly qualified status, there is often an optional path that provides an easy out. For instance, in Washington teachers can become highly qualified in one subject, but then teach in an entirely different content area as long as they write up a plan and their district determines that they have "the competencies to be effective teachers in other areas." In Kentucky, elementary school teachers can become highly qualified by participating in an induction program that is described in a report as having "a minimum content-specific focus." In South Dakota, any teacher holding a reading specialist endorsement is automatically considered highly qualified.

Other states with loopholes: Nebraska (elementary/middle); Washington (elementary/middle), Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, North Dakota, New York, Louisiana (for teachers of multiple subjects), Missouri (elementary), Montana (elementary/middle) and Utah (elementary).

6. Misplaced Confidence

States don't think they need to find better ways to identify and support teachers who are weak in subject-matter knowledge.

A number of states repackage their existing evaluation instruments or certification systems and call them a HOUSSE plan. Evaluation instruments, which always involve multiple criteria and are completed by an evaluator observing the delivery of a lesson, do not provide an appropriate way to judge the breadth and depth of a teacher's knowledge. But in states like Connecticut a teacher can produce a satisfactory evaluation as proof of content proficiency.

Certification systems could certainly do a better job of ensuring teacher competency, and many of them do match the national standard of an academic major and passing a subject-matter test. However, some states that don't meet that standard still insist that a certified teacher is highly qualified. For instance, South Dakota's certification system requires teachers only to earn a minor in their teaching field (12 to 18 credit hours), even high school teachers, but the state insists that these teachers meet the highly qualified definition.

Other states which rely on existing system and evaluation instruments: Florida, Connecticut, South Dakota, Tennessee, Nebraska, Mississippi, Montana, Michigan, South Carolina, North Carolina, New Hampshire, Idaho, Iowa, Washington, Wisconsin, Utah, West Virginia and Missouri.

7: Redundancy

Experience counts twice. The purpose of HOUSSE is to ensure that teachers know their content, not to count the number of years in the classroom. All teachers who use HOUSSE to meet highly qualified status are already experienced teachers. It is an exercise in redundancy to give them credit for being, well, experienced teachers. Yet every state that uses a point system does just that.

In fairness to states, the federal regulations that describe the HOUSSE open the door for these state practices. The language states that standards may "take into consideration, but not be based primarily on, the time a teacher has been teaching a subject." Even states like Hawaii and Kansas, which otherwise have taken the HOUSSE provision very seriously, allow nearly half of a teacher's points to be earned by experience.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As the states reviewed drafts of this report, many officials questioned its focus on teachers' subject expertise, arguing that "there is more to teaching than subject-matter knowledge." It is safe to assume that this same criticism is also being directed at the federal law. This charge, however, is a red herring. The evidence is clear that teacher's subject knowledge has been woefully neglected both in undergraduate teacher preparation programs and in states' certification processes.

While groups may undoubtedly continue to debate what should or should not be emphasized about teacher preparation, it may be more productive to ask whether the new federal standards will improve teacher quality? Will NCLB lead to a stronger corps of teachers?

NCLB's basic description of the credentials needed to earn 'highly qualified' status certainly seems sensible: earn a major or pass a test. But the degree to which these two credentials impact teacher effectiveness remains largely untested and may ultimately impede the law's efforts to produce a stronger teaching force.

CAVEAT EMPTOR I: LICENSING TESTS

Little is known about the relationship between teacher performance on these tests and actual teacher effectiveness, since every state sets its own minimum passing score and no one has studied the impact of these varying scores on student achievement. The companies that own these tests avoid scrutiny by preventing the release of test results to the public or to researchers. To avoid the inevitable flurry of lawsuits from aspiring teachers who do not pass, they also require every state to set its own passing score. When states set passing scores for these tests, they are largely hazarding guesses about where to draw the line. Some states set the passing score low enough to allow themselves to remain competitive with neighboring states (though one might question why states want to compete for those teachers who perform relatively poorly on these tests), not necessarily because they have thoughtfully established a minimum knowledge base that they expect of their teachers. For example, of the 20 states using the Praxis social studies test, there are 15 different passing scores.⁵ *And if the bald truth be known, no one really knows which state has it right.*

REMEDY: Given states' reluctance to agree upon a single score for passing these tests, the Institute for Education Sciences, the independent research arm of the U.S. Department of Education (or a private commission designated by this agency), should be charged with recommending a passing score on each of the most widely used subject matter tests, as well as confer its "seal of approval" on their content rigor. Establishing a recommended passing score by an independent body at the national level would encourage a cleaner decision-making process, devoid of those considerations that keep states from holding the bar high.

To avoid federal intrusion on states' rights, states would not be required to use only those tests that have won a federal seal of approval, nor would they require states to adopt the nationally recommended passing score. However, the federal government would publish relevant state testing policies and decisions in an annual teacher quality report. These data would confirm whether a state is using a test that has been reviewed but that has been found to be insufficiently rigorous at any level or whether the state is using a sufficiently rigorous test but with a passing score that is lower than what has been recommended.

Congress should require states to notify school districts if a teacher has been certified by the state but has not passed the subject-matter test under the nationally recommended passing score.

⁵ U.S. Department of Education, *The Secretary's Third Annual Report on Teacher Quality*, 2004. Appendix 2.

CAVEAT EMPTOR II: ACADEMIC MAJORS

As for the requirement that all teachers earn a major in the subject(s) they teach, there is almost no research below the high school level that supports this provision of the law. Specifically, it is not known if middle school teachers with a major are any more effective than middle school teachers with only a minor. The law may not be wrong on this point (and its ambition is commendable) but the notion has not been studied. Most middle school teachers in the United States, even those who are teaching in more affluent schools, do not have a subject-matter major (see Table 7). One could argue that if high-performing, affluent schools are willing to hire teachers without a major, as these data indicate, their collective wisdom may suggest a more practical NCLB standard.

Surprisingly, there is no national consensus on the number of credit hours that make up a college major or minor, meaning states can say they require a college major, but in fact are many credit hours short of what others would consider a college major. The U.S. Department of Education should establish in its regulatory guidelines a definition commensurate with the standard used by the nation's more selective colleges: 30 credit hours for a major and 15 credit hours for a minor.

BROAD RECOMMENDATIONS

- > The Institute for Education Sciences should oversee the development of recommended passing scores on the most widely-used subject matter tests.
- > The Institute for Education Sciences should report on the rigor, as judged by the grade-level equivalent of knowledge needed to pass, of the most widely used subject matter tests.
- > The U.S. Department of Education should produce an annual report listing the minimum passing scores set by each state and the variance between those scores, as well as provide a nationally-recommended passing score.
- > The U.S. Department of Education should issue regulatory guidance that establishes a national standard for college majors and minors. A major would require 30 credit hours of coursework; a minor would require 15 credit hours.
- > The U.S. Congress should require states to include a statement on the certification paperwork of all new teachers indicating whether the teacher has met the nationally-recommended passing score on the state's subject matter exam.
- > Rural schools forced to hire a single teacher to teach multiple unrelated subjects should be permitted to apply for an exemption to this ruling, provided they do so annually and parents are appropriately notified that their school are unable to recruit teachers who meet the federal standard.

Credentials Held by Middle School Teachers, 1999–2000

Subject	Middle grades (5–8)	
	No major and certification	No major, minor, or certification
	1999–2000	1999–2000
English	58.3%	17.4%
Foreign Language	60.7	13.8
Mathematics	68.5	21.9
Science	57.2	14.2
Biology/Life Science	64.2	28.8
Physical Science	93.2	40.5
Chemistry	—	—
Geology/Earth/Space Science	—	—
Physics	—	—
Social Science	51.1	13.3
History	71.0	11.5
ESL/Bilingual Education	72.9	36.1
— Not available		

NOTE: Middle-level teachers include teachers who taught students in grades 5–9 and did not teach any students in grades 10–12.

SOURCE U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS).

THE HOUSE PROVISION AS IT CURRENTLY STANDS SHOULD BE DISCARDED, AND MORE PRACTICAL STANDARDS ADOPTED FOR ALL TEACHERS – BOTH NEW AND VETERAN.

High School Teachers

- > High school teachers should have a major (30 credit hours) in the primary subject they teach and a minor (15 credit hours) in any additional related subjects that they teach.
- > Teachers who entered the field before 2001 should be allowed to continue teaching with the coursework equivalent to a college minor (15 credits) or be provided the option of passing a subject-matter test. While some might argue this sets the bar too low, it may produce better results than the current mix of high standards and abundant loopholes. If NCLB were to diminish the current rate of one out of four secondary teachers teaching a class without a major or minor, the highly qualified provision might be declared a resounding success.
- > All new high school teachers should pass a subject-matter test.

Middle School Teachers

- > Absent the consensus research needed to support the assumption that middle school teachers should have a major, middle school teachers should only be required to have a minor (15 credits) in the subject(s) they teach.
- > New and practicing middle school teachers who do not have a minor should pass a subject-matter test. It is appropriate for this passing score to be set lower than the passing score for high school teachers.

Elementary Grade Teachers

- > New elementary teachers who are trained in an undergraduate teacher program should acquire a liberal arts major, concentrating on coursework that bears some relevance to the four K-5 content areas as well as art and music.
- > New elementary teachers should pass both a subject-matter test, as well as a test in scientifically-based early reading instruction.
- > Elementary teachers who entered the profession before 2001 and do not have 24 credits divided among the four content areas should be given two options: 1) taking a subject-matter test; 2) fulfilling 24 credit hours through university-level coursework or content-related professional development.

Absent amending NCLB to accommodate these revisions, states should emulate Colorado's strategy and employ a no-loophole policy. The options would be limited to a focused collection of college-level coursework equivalent to a college major, minor, or advanced degree; appropriate professional development in the content area; advanced credentialing such as National Board certification; or a subject-matter test, particularly the more rigorous tests being developed by the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence. While many teachers take exception to these requirements, there is plenty of precedence in other professions for such a move. Doctors, nurses, accountants, and even real estate agents must continue to prove subject-matter competency through objective measures such as coursework or subject-matter exams.

In too many states, subject knowledge has been devalued, however unintentionally. The insistence that "there is more to teaching than subject-matter knowledge" has often been taken to an illogical extreme, resulting in too many certified teachers who

are inadequately prepared to teach their core discipline in the classroom—in rural, urban and suburban areas alike. The imbalance becomes even more pronounced over the course of a teacher's career, since teachers often gain deeper insights into the craft of teaching through experience, professional development and advanced degrees but are much less likely to have opportunities to achieve comparable growth in their academic discipline.

Teaching is a craft, and to excel at it a teacher needs the raw components for that craft. Central among those components is content knowledge. By creating the HOSSE standard, federal lawmakers have allowed states and teachers to shrink from this truth. Revising or eliminating this compromise will establish clearly that high content standards are not open to wide interpretation. And as long as this increase in standards is implemented with a constructive spirit, schools, teachers and students will all be well served.

VI. INDIVIDUAL STATE ANALYSES AND GRADES

> The 39 States That Approved a HOUSSE

Last spring NCTQ released a preliminary report analyzing the quality of 20 states' HOUSSE plans. This broader report also analyzes the quality of these HOUSSE plans, but considers as well the extent to which these plans will be needed, as determined by which teachers are exempted. This consideration has led to a number of states' grades changing from the last report to this report even though the plans themselves may not have changed. While at first glance, states may have produced rigorous HOUSSE plans, this rigor is often tempered by states' decisions to declare all of their certified teachers highly qualified.

B+ Alabama

The HOUSSE plan in Alabama is a terrific example of a point system, demanding that a teacher have at least 18 credit hours (a college minor) in the academic subject area before he or she can accumulate points through participation in professional development or other professional activities. Add on to this the fact that the state restricts the number of points that can be earned via experience, professional activities, and awards, and, voila, a good set of high standards. The one blemish is that any teacher who is certified at the "master's level" or beyond is exempt from having to complete a HOUSSE plan. While Alabama has strong content requirements for certification, the state does have reciprocity agreements with other states which may have much lower academic standards provided they "meet the NCATE standards." Since NCATE does not spell out specific content requirements, teachers from out of state might not have the content knowledge that's needed.

D Alaska

A basic point system that misses the mark. First, Alaska awards too many points for activities having nothing to do with teacher's content knowledge (mentoring, committee work, fluency in another language, etc.). The payoff for service and loosely defined professional development is much better than it is for taking a course. Five points are awarded for any single activity but only three points for a credit hour earned in a university course. Bottom line is that it is possible to generate all of the needed points while doing very little to improve one's subject-matter knowledge.

D Arizona

A basic point system that also misses the point with its disregard for the value of academic coursework in the teacher's subject area. Up to half of a teacher's points can be earned through experience and all of a teacher's points can be earned through professional development—which would be fine if the professional development was specific to a teacher's content area, but the state doesn't say that needs to be the case. Instead HOUSSE-related professional development can include such irrelevant activities as committee work. Elementary and middle school teachers are allowed to count any coursework they took in methods, child development, or child psychology in place of content coursework. One plus is that the system places a limit on the number of points a teacher can earn through some of the less content-related activities (professional service, awards and presentations), but given all of the other ways to pile up points, these limitations may not sufficiently strengthen the plan.

C - Arkansas

Conventional point system that shows some promise by limits on the number of points teachers might have earned through having participated in some of the more irrelevant activities — but the limitations don't end up ensuring a very meaningful path to highly qualified status. To its credit, the plan allows experience to count for only 40 percent instead of the 49 percent that NCLB allows. It also states that any professional development that a teacher counts is supposed to have “some connection to improving student achievement.” That rhetoric sounds good but it may not be mean much in practice since all professional development, no matter how poorly executed, in theory is geared to improving student achievement. Overall the plan loses its backbone by not putting a minimum on the coursework teachers must have taken and not sufficiently limiting the points that can be awarded from the less rigorous options. In fact it's possible to accumulate all the needed points for highly qualified status without ever earning a single course credit in the content area.

F California

Point system for the masses. Offers an endless array of options including the possibility of earning 90 percent of the required points by having assumed leadership and service roles over the years (e.g. mentoring, serving as department chair or supervising teacher). These are all worthwhile activities, but what do they have to do with subject-matter knowledge? And if the menu of options isn't enough to satisfy all teachers, there's also the possibility of earning highly qualified status by providing evidence of a positive classroom observation or submitting a “successful portfolio assessment.”

A + Colorado

Top of the pack. When it comes to embracing the spirit of NCLB, not just the letter, Colorado's program does exactly that. In effect Colorado doesn't let its teachers use the HOUSSE option, but unlike other states that didn't develop a HOUSSE, the Rocky Mountain State insists that every teacher either have 24 credits in the subject or its equivalent in content-focused professional development — not quite a major but more than most states are doing — or pass a subject-matter test. The state is even developing the means to award highly qualified status on the basis of longitudinal student achievement data. There are a few cracks in the plan: teachers who are highly qualified in one area, but are teaching out of field, may substitute professional development activities and “relevant travel” for coursework in the new content area. Still these options are fairly limited and insignificant in light of the state's willingness to stand firm.

F Connecticut

The Nutmeg State deserves commendation for maintaining a rigorous certification system that has demanded its teachers pass a content-specific test since 1988 and hold a content major since 1993. This system helps to ensure that the state's teaching corps is well-prepared overall. Unfortunately, the HOUSSE that exists for those teachers who didn't meet these standards (those who might have been certified prior to 1988, those who transferred in from another state, those who have majored in content areas in which they do not teach) is among the least effective plans in the nation. Taking a subject-matter test is an option the state provides for teachers who lack the requisite content coursework, but if a teacher doesn't want to take the test (and weak teachers probably won't want to), the teacher can opt to “retroactively activate” a satisfactory district evaluation. Connecticut claims its evaluation considers teachers' content knowledge. While the overall certification standard in the state is high, the HOUSSE plan does not do what it needs to do.

D+ Delaware

This point system approaches credibility, but has two worrisome flaws: 1) teachers don't have to have taken any coursework in their content area to achieve highly qualified status and 2) if a teacher does take a class, the state doesn't distinguish for these purposes between pedagogy and content. Both pedagogy and content coursework are considered equally valid even though HOUSSE plans are directed at improving teacher content knowledge. On the other hand, Delaware does limit the usual array of freebie options eligible for points, and compared to most states, there's a relatively low limit on how much teacher experience can count, up to 32 percent of points needed. Most commendable, the state options for professional development insist that these efforts be sustained over a year's time, increasing the likelihood that they're high quality efforts.

F Florida

Recycles its teacher evaluation instrument—essentially a one-shot annual observation by the principal—with the intention of accurately measuring teacher knowledge of subject matter. Teachers must receive a satisfactory evaluation in order to be considered highly qualified but content knowledge is only one of seven different indicators included in the evaluation. It's not hard to imagine that teachers could fail on the one criteria relating to subject-matter knowledge, do well on the other six, and end up slipping through the cracks. Even if that were not the case, the instrument is just too broad for these purposes.

C Georgia

A fairly rigorous point system that demands at least two content courses in order to achieve highly qualified status. Most importantly, the state grants points to any teacher that can show data-driven documentation of student achievement. On the downside, however, Georgia still allows teachers to accumulate points via the usual set of largely irrelevant options, and it barely caps the points that these options are worth so teachers have little incentive to pursue more meaningful options. A 3-credit class earns the same number of points as any other option on the menu. Overall, Georgia is headed in the right direction, but a higher coursework minimum and larger limits on service and activities could make a more effective plan.

B+ Hawaii

Great effort from the "Aloha" state. Nearly half of Hawaii's points must come from teachers who have taken coursework in the subject area or having participated in rigorous professional development that is approved by the state's Professional Development and Educational Research Institute. The bulk of the courses demand weeks of class time as well as outside assignments. If a teacher does activate less demanding single-day conferences, they receive substantially less credit (one point for a minimum of five hours). Well laid out with extremely easy web access for teachers, the plan is one of the few that restricts any points that can be awarded to those activities and service components that took place after 2001. The only downside to this plan is that almost half of the points can be earned through experience, a feature NCLB permits but that doesn't really make sense given that the HOUSSE plans are only available to experienced teachers.

C Illinois

Illinois received an A last time around, but low standards for elementary teachers coupled with a later addendum to their plan makes that grade a goner. To begin with, Illinois essentially exempts elementary teachers from meeting its more stringent HOUSSE standards, requiring only that they have ever taken one course in each of the four central content areas, including those taken in college. High school and middle school teachers have to complete 18 to 24 credit hours in their content area in order to be declared highly qualified. In addition, in an inadvisable move, Illinois decided that teachers with fewer than five years of experience must use a different route to highly qualified status by earning 100 points. In this point system, experience can count for up to 60 percent of the total—breaking one of the few explicit rules for HOUSSE—and the point values attached to other activities are inflated: for instance, a three-hour workshop earns 15 points.

D Indiana

Indiana has approved a half-hearted point system. The HOUSSE plan imposes no minimum on coursework, which means that a teacher who has been teaching for a number of years can rack up all of the necessary points through committee work, in-services and awards. On a positive note, the number of points given for most activities is fairly low: two points per conferences, two points per committee, two points per award. However, the pattern for apportioning points is inconsistent since mentoring a new teacher (an activity that is at best indirectly related to subject-matter knowledge) is worth 15 points, the same as a 3-credit course.

B Kansas

Solid point system, including a coursework standard of at least 15 credit hours (a minor) in the content area. Professional activities are limited to those that took place within the past six years, a sensible interpretation that most states don't make. The number of points given for awards (rarely content related) is also limited. On the other hand, Kansas awards the maximum number of points allowed in NCLB for classroom experience and sets no limit on the number of points that can come from less relevant activities such as mentoring, presenting at conferences and other forms of service. Still, the decision to require evidence of 15 credit hours in content does ensure that teachers in need of HOUSSE are addressing subject-matter weaknesses.

D- Kentucky

Point system that starts off with a bang but ends with a whimper. Pedagogy coursework is ineligible. Teachers earn points for producing impressive student achievement data. Still, Kentucky does not set a minimum on the content coursework that teachers should have to earn highly qualified status nor does the state set a maximum on the points that teachers can earn through less relevant activities such as awards or loosely defined professional development. However, it looks like most teachers in Kentucky won't need the HOUSSE since the state has been requiring teachers to take a subject-matter test toward licensure since 1985 and are therefore automatically highly qualified. For those teachers who do need a HOUSSE, the plan could still use some work.

C Louisiana

Hats off to Louisiana for eliminating a loophole that was a part of their last HOUSSE proposal, a plan that earned it a grade of D- last spring. A vague portfolio option has since been removed, leaving behind a point system that asks teachers to accumulate 90 "Continuing Learning Units" (CLUs) by 2006. Teachers can only earn these CLUs by providing evidence of content-related coursework and professional development. Most notably, Louisiana is one of few states that isn't letting teachers meet highly qualified status retroactively by counting activities they may have done years previously. However, the 90 credit minimum is a low bar—the equivalent of only two courses—and there is little oversight of what qualifies as a CLU. Districts are left to decide what constitutes a legitimate CLU, and accordingly it won't be surprising to learn that teachers in some districts are meeting highly qualified status just by participating in a few day-long workshops and meetings. Meanwhile, teachers responsible for more than one subject don't have to earn 90 CLUs for each subject, but for all subject areas combined. For example, this means that teachers who teach three subjects become highly qualified by taking only two credit hours in each of the three subjects they teach, and fall far short of obtaining any meaningful academic credential.

D- Maine

Elaborate point system that provides an incredibly detailed rubric of options that unfortunately add up to little substance. Credit is given for having engaged in activities that have little to do with content—grant-writing, sabbaticals, mentoring—and no maximum is placed on the number of points that can be claimed in any area (other than experience). Add to the mix no minimum coursework requirement and it's highly unlikely that the plan will strengthen any teacher's subject knowledge. Finally, there's the puzzling requirement that a teacher must earn points through at least three different point options, a decision that creates obstacles for teachers when it come to using content coursework as the primary route to subject-matter expertise.

B+ Maryland

For any teacher who must activate a HOUSSE, this plan is tough. The state limits the number of points that can be earned from having participated in professional development or earned awards. It also sets an ambitious 40-credit-hour minimum for subject-matter coursework—far more than a college major. But there's a catch: Maryland grants highly qualified status to a significant number of teachers who hold an Advanced Professional Certificate, which means teachers have been in the classroom for at least three years and have taken two post-graduate courses in their subject area. This exemption works for the state's newer teachers since they had to earn an academic major to get certified, but there are many teachers in Maryland who were certified before the state began requiring academic majors. Eliminating this loophole would leave Maryland with a stellar plan.

D+ Massachusetts

A complicated "Individual Professional Development Plan" that makes a good choice when it requires that teachers only use current activities and coursework to meet highly qualified status—no retroactive allowances which most states make. On the downside, points are doled out too generously (a teacher achieves one-third of the points needed for a single 3-credit course) and many points for activities with no direct relevance to content knowledge (e.g., preparation for an accreditation visit). Most contrary to the goals of NCLB, Massachusetts insists that only 80 percent of the points must be in the "subject area taught": the rest can be in teaching practices and related subjects.

F Michigan

Starts off great but fizzles. There are three options available to teachers to achieve highly qualified status. The first encourages teachers to reach an 18-credit-hour standard of content coursework, equivalent to a college minor. The second option is somewhat easier, where the teacher develops a professional development plan that requires the documentation of 90 contact hours (or just six credits) of content area coursework. The third option undercuts the rigor of the first two entirely. In this option, a teacher only has to produce documentation of a satisfactory teacher evaluation. It's not hard to figure out which options struggling teachers will choose.

C Minnesota

The Land of 10,000 Lakes offers a rigorous point system that also includes a unique option. Teachers have the option of becoming highly qualified by showing that their students achieved two years of academic growth in one year (worth 100 points), one and half years of growth (75 points) and one year (50 points). The only avenues available to teachers when it comes to proving highly qualified status are coursework, professional development or significant awards earned in the past ten years—no service to the profession or committee work in sight. Unfortunately, the plan falters by not establishing a minimum number of courses that teachers need to take, and it fails to distinguish between content methods coursework and pure content coursework. In addition, the number of

points given for each course credit (15 points for a 3-credit course) is high enough that a teacher could earn highly qualified status with only three classes and a few hours of professional development—not up to the standard of a minor. Finally, Minnesota exempts any teacher with full content-area licensure from this plan—an ineffective choice since older licensing regulations may not have insisted on the equivalent of a content major as a requirement.

D Nevada

Misses the boat. Plan is predicated on teachers having accrued 150 “contact hours” which are the equivalent of three to four courses. On the positive side, the only way to accrue contact hours is through college coursework or professional development—there is no credit given to service or awards. On the negative side, however, there is no distinction between pedagogy and content coursework. Meanwhile, it’s not at all clear that HOUSSE-eligible professional development has to meet any specific state standards.

C New Jersey

A decent effort for the Garden State, creating a point system that’s based on a 10-point scale versus most states’ 100-point scale, dismissing credit for any activities that offer freebie points. Strict criteria are used to apportion the points and activities worthy of credit are limited to those with a serious content focus. On the downside, the coursework minimum is very low, demanding only two classes in order to earn highly qualified status (including college classes a teacher may have taken years back). Although teachers still need to complete the remaining points via reasonably rigorous methods, having a base of two courses is an insufficient standard. New Jersey should boost their coursework minimum up to the equivalent of a minor if it wants to get serious about teacher quality. Of note: the plan includes an innovative option in which the teacher pairs with a content specialist to design a specialized unit of study for their classroom.

D New Mexico

Teachers can pick one of two paths to become highly qualified. The first is clear cut: provide evidence of taking substantial content coursework (between 18 and 24 credit hours—an ample-sized equivalent to a college minor). The second path allows teachers to earn points for flexibility, but it looks like it may be offering weaker teachers a way out of the necessary hard work. It’s not unlike what New Hampshire offers, in that a teacher presents evidence of subject-matter knowledge to an administrator and another who the teacher selects. It is unclear what happens to teachers when this panel identifies them as needing help. Certainly this targeted effort may work better than using the generic evaluations that Connecticut, North Carolina and Indiana have adopted, but there is a potential for uneven application of the plan by relying on an oral interview to assess a teacher’s knowledge of the subject. In theory, there’s nothing that says this plan can’t work but New Mexico has made it harder than it needs to be.

F New York

Bottom-rung point system that is all too eager to hand out credit for years spent in the classroom, as well as for largely irrelevant activities such as mentoring and education coursework. For instance, certified teachers who have completed a bachelor’s degree “with a general education component” automatically earn nearly a third of the points necessary to prove they are highly qualified. Meanwhile, professional development is worth an overly generous ten points for every five contact hours and only need be “aligned with the Regents learning standards,” which doesn’t guarantee an appropriate emphasis on content. The Empire State’s derision for NCLB’s content goals becomes even clearer when the HOUSSE actually caps the points that can be earned through graduate courses in a teacher’s subject area. And finally, one of the options for earning 50 of the required 100 points is “a formal review of subject knowledge,” otherwise known as the yearly administrative evaluation. In this evaluation, content knowledge is only one of eight general criteria.

F North Carolina

A recycling of its existing teacher evaluation instrument, which is generally too clumsy to reliably gauge teacher's subject-matter knowledge. It's slightly more likely that state's evaluation instrument will identify some teachers struggling with content. North Carolina's evaluation systems give more prominent consideration to teacher knowledge of subject matter and student achievement than in other states. However, any time guidelines are based primarily on a subjective evaluation the real determination of success is left entirely within the hands of the evaluators and offers no guarantee that teachers in need of help will be identified.

D- North Dakota

Sub-par plan that lets elementary educators off the hook. The state gives a freebie to teachers who hold a degree in elementary education—it confers automatic “highly qualified” status—while instituting a middle-of-the-road point system for secondary educators. On the positive side: the point-based portfolio that secondary teachers must furnish as evidence of being highly qualified cannot include pedagogy coursework and the state does set good limits on the usual array of irrelevant options most states allow. However, that's where the rigor ends. Secondary teachers are required to take only one content course (or 75 continuing education hours), and can earn the rest of their points by participating in other activities. Even less impressive, while high school teachers must meet the usual demand of 100 points, the number of points necessary to meet highly qualified status is cut in half when it comes to the middle school content requirement. This lowering of standards for middle school educators, coupled with a gaping loophole on the elementary level, leaves North Dakota with a truly ineffective plan.

D Ohio

This point plan starts off well, placing a limit on the more extraneous options usually available to teachers for accumulating points. This limit means teachers must provide evidence of having taken at least 21 credit hours of coursework to achieve highly qualified status. However, the plan heads south by granting points for “pedagogy coursework related to the content area,” a description that can be loosely defined and interpreted by schools and teachers. The plan continues in the wrong direction by downgrading the value of coursework: teachers receive only one point for each credit, but multiple points for activities like mentoring or assessment writing. Finally, Ohio's plan reaches futility status by permitting teachers to avoid HOUSSE by drafting a plan that includes 90 hours of professional development to be completed by 2006. While requiring teachers to be engaged in professional development is terrific, the Buckeye State specifically dictates that these hours can't be spent only in content but must include teaching skills.

C- Oklahoma

Run-of-the-mill point system with three big problems. First, a significant number of points can be earned outside of coursework—including largely irrelevant options like mentoring or having a student place well in an academic competition. Second, there's no minimum on the number of courses required. Third, while the number of points a teacher can earn under each option is limited, the limits are so generous they prove themselves ineffective. The one somewhat positive feature is the state's choice to grant teachers points for raising student achievement; however, there's no explanation as to how the system determines an appropriate “increase in student test scores” and the number of points offered is minimal.

B- Oregon

A standout version of this plan earned an A in our first report, but has been downgraded just a bit this time due to a revision. The plan is essentially a straight shooter requiring Oregon teachers to either pass a subject-matter test (the Praxis II) or provide evidence of 16 credit hours of coursework in the content area (the equivalent of a college minor).

Upon review, the U.S. Department of Education urged the state to give teachers more flexibility, so Oregon instituted a sliding scale. The more years teachers have been teaching, the fewer courses they need to take in order to reach highly qualified status. This choice honors seniority but may not reflect a genuine understanding of the problem. Newer teachers, closer to their college years, in theory may not be as much in need of retooling as more veteran teachers, who are farther from their college experience and entered the field when academic standards were at their lowest. To its great credit, Oregon is requiring that high school teachers must earn certification in any subject area they teach within the next three years or lose highly qualified status, a policy that ought to be considered for other teachers as well.

B+ Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania's approach to highly qualified status has taken a few well-publicized twists and turns, but the end result is still quite good. To begin with, most teachers cannot use the HOUSSE to become highly qualified; they must either have a major in their subject or pass the Praxis subject-matter test, regardless of whether they are certified. The HOUSSE option—under the name “Bridge Certificate”—is available only to middle school, ESL and special education teachers. To be eligible to use the Bridge Certificate to reach highly qualified status, a teacher must first document 12 points in the content area (mixture of experience, coursework or professional development and must include at least three college credits or 90 hours of professional development in content). Teachers must then earn at least the equivalent of 15 credits in the content area (or a substitution of 30 professional development hours for each credit). Any professional development used to earn points must be current, taking place within the next three years. There is no retroactive credentialing allowed, with the exception of college-earned credits. The only other way to earn points is through exceptional achievements like authoring books or winning district, state or national teaching awards. End result? All teachers have at least a minor in the subjects they teach.

C- Rhode Island

Teachers won't find it too arduous to earn highly qualified status in Rhode Island. Teachers can earn most of the points they need by participating in loosely defined professional development or service activities. The plan doesn't insist on a minimum amount of coursework, while options with only a tangential relation to content—like mentoring or membership in a professional organization—receive substantial credit. However, there are three significant pluses. First, the state limits points for experience (allowing only up to 25 percent for experience). Second, the only professional development that can be counted for highly qualified credit must have been completed within the past five years. Third, elementary teachers must divide their HOUSSE points up over all of the four major content areas—an important acknowledgment of the broader subject matter expertise needed by elementary teachers yet—something a lot of states didn't think about.

F South Carolina

Recycles the state's teacher evaluation instrument to serve double duty as measure of highly qualified status. These instruments relegate subject-matter knowledge to only one of five criteria used by the principal to evaluate a teacher during a classroom observation. It's highly unlikely that the principal can isolate content knowledge and make an accurate assessment of a teacher's subject-matter knowledge during one classroom observation.

D- Tennessee

Another plan offering any number of ways to achieve highly qualified status, including the sure-fire route of earning a positive teacher evaluation rating. All the options allow teachers to avoid taking content coursework. A couple of provisions manage to undermine the point of the federal law: awarding the same value to short-term Professional Development activities and semester-long university-level credits, and awarding points for pedagogy and education policy coursework. One positive is that teachers can bypass the point system altogether if they can prove they consistently raise student achievement from year to year, uniquely possible with the state's value-added system.

B Texas

An impressive point system that places serious limits on the weaker options so popular in other states. Instead of evaluating teachers on a 100-point scale, Texas has opted for a 24-point system in which every point earned represents significant work accomplished. While experience still counts for half the necessary points, no credit can be earned through documentation of service, awards, mentoring or any similar activities. Professional development is one of the approved options, and the state school board has instituted a general standard for professional development activities that can be counted toward becoming highly qualified. Provided the board insists on the sufficient rigor and content, it's a highly sensible approach.

B- Vermont

Vermont very nearly "gets it" with a serious emphasis on content knowledge. Elementary teachers become highly qualified by proving they have taken coursework and/or professional development in each of the four basic content areas. Science teachers must engage in science and social studies teachers must engage in history and economics. Plain and simple. Teachers can also go for highly qualified status in a sub-discipline, preferring to concentrate on physics rather than all sciences. A range of 60 to 75 percent of the points needed must come from coursework, professional development or college teaching. Experience and professional service can help meet the standard, but not surprisingly considering the emphasis on coursework, these activities are given far fewer points. Secondary level teachers must complete at least a minor in their content area (five courses). There is only a four-course minimum necessary to reach highly qualified status for middle grade teachers resulting in some teachers becoming highly qualified without meeting college minor requirements, but it's still a relatively strong effort.

D Virginia

An abundance of options and little rigor. Teachers need to take only two approved classes to become highly qualified. But to its credit teachers can't draw upon courses taken in the past, but rather must beef up their knowledge with coursework taken now. Theoretically the approved coursework is in the teacher's subject area, but several types of education courses are also permissible. The plan also provides all sorts of options available that have little to do with subject-matter knowledge, like 'classroom management staff development' and 'educational travel.'

F West Virginia

To prove highly qualified, West Virginia developed a draft of a point system but has recently scrapped it in favor of using the state's Teacher Evaluation System. While the point system wasn't a particularly rigorous option, the performance evaluation seems less likely to identify teachers struggling with content knowledge. The evaluation process has seven criteria and only one of these briefly mentions content knowledge: within "programs of study" there is an indicator referencing the teacher's "accurate and current knowledge in subject field." With that as the only direct reference made to content knowledge, it's highly unlikely weak teachers will be identified.

C Wyoming

All the makings of a good point plan for its emphasis on teachers taking content-related coursework and activities as well as a 15 percent cap on the usual array of fluffier activities. However, the plan is overly generous with points for coursework (15 points for a 3-credit course), with the consequence being that a 10-year veteran teacher (experience worth 50 points) would have to document only three courses in content area (45 points) and have served on one committee (five points) in order to earn highly qualified status. While the plan's stringent requirements on what proves competency are great, it looks as though teachers who don't have a content minor will still end up labeled highly qualified.

> The 11 States Using Their Certification Systems to Identify Highly Qualified Teachers

Eleven states decided not to develop a separate HOSSE plan, declaring their existing certification system to be up to the job. In some of these states, the decision was largely defensible; their academic standards for certification meet or exceed the federal standards. However, the certification systems in many of these states do not meet the federal standards, particularly at the elementary and middle school levels.

Whether or not a state's academic standards appear adequate, there are still two significant problems that are not addressed when a state declares that a certified teacher is automatically highly qualified:

1. The wide-spread practice of assigning teachers outside their certification area
2. Addressing the needs of those veteran teachers who entered the profession when standards were not sufficient.

First, when states equate certification with highly qualified status, the teacher's status does not change regardless of what he or she is assigned to teach. There is little to deter districts from assigning teachers to teach one or two classes a day in which they would not be considered qualified. As researcher Richard Ingersoll has shown, the out-of-field phenomenon has long managed to evade current state regulations. There's no reason to believe that the practice will stop if states continue to use certification as the sole indicator of whether or not a teacher is qualified in a particular subject. States are missing an opportunity to help veteran teachers use the HOSSE provision to achieve highly qualified status in every subject they teach, not just those for which they hold a license.

Second, the fact that a state has revised its certification standards, as many have in the past ten to fifteen years, does not ensure that every teacher meets these new standards. Many teachers were certified under an older set of regulations that were likely to have underplayed the importance of content knowledge. In 1991, only 13 states required that every secondary teacher have a content major in their prescribed teaching area. If teachers certified under this system automatically receive highly qualified status for their certification, it is likely that they do not meet the federal standard.

THE CRITERIA FOR ANALYZING THESE STATES

The states that do not have a separate HOSSE plan were judged against somewhat different criteria than other states.

1. Does the state certification system require an academic major (30 credits) in the teacher's field?
2. Has the state established appropriate content standards for all teachers: elementary, middle and high school?

Those states that chose not to develop a separate HOSSE plan were given a grade of incomplete. Based on the above criteria, and the extent to which the lack of a HOSSE may impact teacher quality in the state, the incomplete grade includes one of three descriptors:

- > **INCOMPLETE BUT STRONG**
- > **INCOMPLETE AND WEAK**
- > **INCOMPLETE AND FAILING**

IDAHO >> INCOMPLETE AND STRONG

> An extremely rigorous certification system now also being used to determine highly qualified status, although it falters a bit when it comes to middle school teachers. Idaho requires that secondary teachers (grades 6-12) have at least 30 semester hours in their primary content area with an additional 20 hours in another content area, which automatically allows for two secondary teaching fields. Elementary teachers (K-8) too face a tough standard of 44 credits spread out over six core content areas. All levels exceed NCLB requirements with one major exception. Because of the overlap for grades 6-8, a teacher can maintain elementary generalist certification and still be judged “highly qualified” for a middle school content area. While the elementary standard is very high for a comprehensive classroom setting, its lack of content specificity may make it an inadequate method of evaluation for departmentalized teachers. In addition, reliance on certification as the sole standard raises other concerns in light of that fact that in 2000, 26 percent of Idaho’s teachers were recorded as teaching a subject without a major or minor in the field.⁶ Idaho should extend the rigor of its system to both middle school and multi-area teachers, by either insisting that they earn an additional endorsement, or providing a subject-matter test to verify competency.

IOWA >> INCOMPLETE AND WEAK

> HOUSSE plan is essentially a tweaked version of the state’s existing certification system. On the upside, Iowa maintains rigorous standards for both secondary and middle educators: they all must have a minimum of 30 credit hours in a primary teaching field, and at least 24 hours in any additional field they teach. On the downside, however, the standards for elementary educators aren’t nearly as rigorous: the only specifications are a series of “elementary” content courses, as well as 12 hours in one content area. In addition to these basic requirements, Iowa has also, in recent years, added two complementary requirements to their existing teacher certification processes: 1) periodic evaluations and 2) individualized professional development plans that are aligned with Iowa’s new teaching standards. However, neither does an adequate job of ensuring content knowledge.

MISSISSIPPI >> INCOMPLETE AND WEAK

> A troubling choice that Mississippi is equating certification with highly qualified status since even its high school teachers still don’t have to earn an academic major to get certified. Teachers only need to complete the approximate of a college minor, 18 credit hours. All teachers do have to pass the Praxis II subject area exams so technically speaking Mississippi is meeting the federal law. But this 10th-grade-level exam is better used as a check on the minimum rigor of higher education institutions, not as a replacement for better academic benchmarks. Mississippi has one of the highest rates of out-of-field teaching in the nation with 30 percent of its secondary teachers in 2000 reporting that they are teaching a subject without a major or minor.⁷ The state does depart from its certification system in one area of teaching: because many middle school teachers are certified with only an elementary generalist license, they can also achieve highly qualified status by attending a Middle School Professional Development Institute targeted at the teachers’ subject areas. This is a good idea that would be likely helpful at all levels.

MISSOURI >> INCOMPLETE AND WEAK

> Missouri is sticking with its certification system to determine highly qualified status, a decision that is sensible for its high school teachers as long as they entered the profession after Missouri began requiring an academic major. Unfortunately, the state doesn’t seem to have a plan for teachers who entered prior to this requirement. For highly qualified purposes, its certification system also comes up short for elementary and middle school teachers who need to earn only 21 credit hours in a content area(s), still nine credit hours short of a major. This may explain why Missouri has a high rate of out-of-field teaching—24 percent of secondary teachers who report teaching a subject without a major or a minor.⁸ Given the state’s many revisions to its regulations in the past decade, there may be quite a few teachers who don’t meet an acceptable academic standard.

⁶ The Education Trust, 2004, *EdWatch Online 2004 State Summary Reports: Education Watch Idaho*, <http://www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/summaries2004/Idaho.pdf>, 9 December 2004.

⁷ The Education Trust, 2004, *EdWatch Online 2004 State Summary Reports: Education Watch Mississippi*, <http://www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/summaries2004/Mississippi.pdf>, 9 December 2004.

⁸ The Education Trust, 2004, *EdWatch Online 2004 State Summary Reports: Education Watch Missouri*, <http://www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/summaries2004/Missouri.pdf>, 9 December 2004.

MONTANA >> INCOMPLETE AND WEAK

- > Montana's certification system, now serving double duty for determining highly qualified status, imposes rigorous academic requirements at the high school level but is among the weakest in the nation for elementary and middle school teachers. The state continues to offer a broad K-8 certification that leaves the determination of elementary standards up to individual credentialing programs. This means that 1) there's no explicit state standard for elementary teachers and 2) middle grade teachers in a specific content area can receive highly qualified status based on a general elementary standard. This policy of accepting elementary certification in middle school classrooms was probably a large contributor to the 2000 report that listed 20 percent of Montana's secondary teachers as having neither a major nor minor in their field.⁹ It's a problem that could be easily remedied with a required exam in the content area, but unfortunately Montana doesn't offer that option.

NEBRASKA >> INCOMPLETE AND WEAK

- > Certified teachers are highly qualified in Nebraska. Like most states, Nebraska requires its high school teachers to earn a major in their academic field. But like most states, Nebraska has yet to set higher academic standards for the credentials that elementary or middle school teachers must earn. Middle school teachers still only have to earn 18 credit hours (a little over a college minor), or they can opt to teach with an elementary certificate even though content standards for elementary teachers are extremely vague. NCLB language clearly doesn't allow this practice, but Nebraska's only answer to this is insisting that teachers with elementary certification either complete six credit hours towards a middle-grades endorsement OR complete some local staff development—a provision that rings fairly hollow. Nebraska needs a real HOUSSE.

NEW HAMPSHIRE >> INCOMPLETE AND STRONG

- > Any teacher with New Hampshire certification is automatically deemed highly qualified status, a reasonable standard since the Granite State demands a rigorous minimum of 30 credit hours in a content area (a major) in order to earn this credential. In addition, New Hampshire offers a collaborative, non-threatening option to teachers struggling to meet the highly qualified minimum: a teacher can partner with either a principal or experienced educator in order to complete a self-assessment that evaluates his/her content proficiency. This self-assessment takes into account coursework, professional development, portfolios and test scores. If the assessment criteria aren't successfully met, the teacher drafts a Highly Qualified Teacher Plan that targets professional development and content-area goals.

SOUTH DAKOTA >> INCOMPLETE AND FAILING

- > Meeting highly qualified status is a breeze. Certified teachers who may have taken as few as 12 credit hours in their academic field are considered highly qualified status. South Dakota is also one of a handful of states still not requiring high school teachers to have a major in their field (at least 30 credit hours). The state automatically confers highly qualified status on any teacher who has a graduate degree, regardless of whether it is in the teacher's academic field. In a baffling move, any teacher who holds an endorsement in reading is automatically highly qualified. There appears to be little buy-in by South Dakota for working towards the national standard of an academic major. It's estimated that 22 percent of all secondary teachers in the state are in the classroom without meeting this standard, and with a continuation of the current policies it's unlikely that number will go down.¹⁰ Whereas a number of states have sufficiently strong academic standards to justify equating certification with highly qualified status, South Dakota is not one of them.

⁹ The Education Trust, 2004, *EdWatch Online 2004 State Summary Reports: Education Watch Montana*, <http://www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/summaries2004/Montana.pdf>, 9 December 2004.

¹⁰ The Education Trust, 2004, *EdWatch Online 2004 State Summary Reports: Education Watch South Dakota*, <http://www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/summaries2004/SouthDakota.pdf>.

UTAH >> INCOMPLETE AND STRONG

> For determining highly qualified status, Utah is relying on its state certification process, which has a tradition of tough academic standards at the secondary level, but less rigorous ones on the elementary level. Secondary teachers (grades 7-12) are required to complete a content major in their primary subject to get certified and a minor plus professional development in any other subject they teach. In spite of this standard, 19 percent of the states' teachers still reported in 2000 that they were teaching at least one subject without a major or minor. Elementary teachers who hold an elementary education major need only to have met NCATE standards, which are an ambiguous set of guidelines that can allow for variance between teacher preparation programs and which don't necessarily require that the teacher earn the equivalent of a content major. On the upside, education preparation programs in Utah reliably demand at least 36 content hours spread over the core content areas for elementary educators. While this is a good trend, it's the result of commendable choices being made by teacher preparation programs in conjunction with the state's licensing agency, rather than the result of an explicit standard. The state decided to make this standard explicit for teachers who do not hold an elementary education major—they must earn at least 36 credits in content—but Utah's policy would be better if this minimum benchmark was a non-negotiable regulation for every teacher, no matter of his/her major. Possibly this issue will be dealt with when the state presents a new HOUSSE for elementary teachers in January of 2005.

WASHINGTON >> INCOMPLETE AND FAILING

> A certified teacher is highly qualified in Washington, a great move at the high school level which requires teachers to earn between 30 and 40 credit hours in their field. Unfortunately the standards are not as clear for other levels of teaching. Middle school teachers are highly qualified if they hold either a secondary content endorsement or a generalist elementary endorsement, even though the elementary endorsement is based upon a series of elementary-level competencies that do not ensure a minimum number of credit hours in any given field. Most problematic, teachers who are teaching outside their certification area can be granted a waiver (and deemed highly qualified) if the school district determines that they have "the competencies to be effective teachers in other areas," without offering an explicit description of how to determine these competencies. While mentoring, coursework and extra planning time might be components of the waiver, there is no defined system. Also troubling is a decision to allow the 17 percent of Washington's teachers certified before 1987 (when no specific content-area endorsement was required) to use a satisfactory teacher evaluation as evidence of subject area proficiency in any given field.¹¹ These evaluations are based on seven general criteria, only one of which judges a teacher's subject area knowledge.

WISCONSIN >> INCOMPLETE AND STRONG

> To be found highly qualified in the Badger State, a teacher need only be certified which is understandable (if imperfect) in a state with such rigorous standards. Since 1983, Wisconsin has required high school teachers to have an academic major of 36 credits and a minor of 24 credits. The system has also demanded a mandatory 22 hour content minor for any middle school teacher working in a departmentalized system. Even on the elementary level the state demands a 24-hour minor in one of the four core content areas, and an additional 12 content hours to be completed in the remaining three (for a total of 60 required content hours across the core subjects). In addition, Wisconsin has recently focused on the development of an evaluation instrument for new teachers that is linked to student achievement—something more experienced teachers are encouraged to pursue. While the lack of a HOUSSE fails to specifically address the concern of out-of-field teaching, with standards like these the likelihood of inadequate subject-matter knowledge is low.

¹¹ The Education Trust, 2004, *EdWatch Online 2004 State Summary Reports: Education Watch Utah*, <http://www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/summaries2004/Utah.pdf>, 9 December 2004.

APPENDIX 1 >> Computation of State Grades

Indicator:	Principle I 20%			Principle II 70%						Principle III 10%			Bonus						Total
	A	B	Final	A	B	C	D	E	Final	A	B	Final	A	B	C	D	E	Final	Grade
Alabama	1	1	2/3	3	1	2	2	1	9/10	1	1	2/2	.25	.5	0	0	0	.75/2	87.1% B+
Alaska	2	1	3/3	0	1	1	1	0	3/10	1	1	2/2	0	0	0	0	0	0/2	51.0% D
Arizona	2	1	3/3	0	1	1	1	.5	3.5/10	1	1	2/2	0	0	.25	0	0	.25/2	54.8% D
Arkansas	2	1	3/3	.5	1	2	1	.5	5/10	1	1	2/2	0	0	0	0	0	0/2	65.0% C-
California	2	1	3/3	0	.5	0	0	0	.5/10	.5	1	1.5/2	.5	.5	.5	0	0	1.5/2	32.8% F
Colorado	2	1	3/3	3	2	2	2	1	10/10	1	.5	1.5/2	0	0	0	0	0	0/2	97.5 A+
Conn.	2	1	3/3	0	0	0	0	0	0/10	1	.5	1.5/2	0	0	.25	0	0	.25/2	27.8% F
Delaware	2	1	3/3	.5	1.5	0	1	1	4/10	1	1	2/2	0	0	0	0	0	0/2	58.0% D+
Florida	2	1	3/3	0	0	0	0	0	0/10	1	.5	1.5/2	.25	0	.5	0	.5	1.25/2	28.8% F
Georgia	2	1	3/3	.5	1.5	1.5	1	.5	5/10	1	1	2/2	0	0	.25	0	.5	.75/2	65.8 C
Hawaii	2	1	3/3	3	1	2	1	1	8/10	1	1	2/2	.25	.5	0	.5	.5	1.75/2	87.8% B+
Idaho	INCOMPLETE BUT STRONG																	Incomp.	
Illinois	0	1	1/3	1	2	2	1	1	7/10	.5	.5	1/2	0	0	0	0	0	0/2	67.4% C
Indiana	1	1	2/3	0	1	2	1	0	4/10	1	1	2/2	0	0	0	0	0	0/2	51.3% D
Iowa	INCOMPLETE and WEAK																	Incomp.	
Kansas	2	1	3/3	3	1	1	1	1	7/10	1	1	2/2	.5	.5	.25	0	0	1.25/2	80.3% B
Kentucky	2	1	3/3	.5	1	1	0	0	2.5/10	1	1	2/2	0	0	.25	.5	.5	1.25/2	48.8% D-
Louisiana	2	1	3/3	1	1	1	2	1	6/10	.5	.5	1/2	.25	.25	.25	0	0	.75/2	67.8% C
Maine	2	1	3/3	0	1	0	1	0	2/10	1	1	2/2	.5	.5	.25	0	0	1.25/2	45.3% D-
Maryland	1	1	2/3	3	1	2	2	1	9/10	1	1	2/2	0	0	0	0	0	0/2	86.3% B+
Mass.	2	1	3/3	1	1	1	1	0	4/10	1	1	2/2	.5	0	.5	0	0	1/2	59.0% D+

	Principle I			Principle II						Principle III			Bonus						Total
Indicator:	A	B	Final	A	B	C	D	E	Final	A	B	Final	A	B	C	D	E	Final	Grade
Michigan	2	1	3/3	0	0	1	0	0	1/10	.5	1	1.5/2	.5	.25	.25	0	0	1/2	35.5% F
Minn.	1	1	2/3	.5	2	1	1.5	1	6/10	1	1	2/2	.5	.25	.25	0	.5	1.5/2	65.3% C
Miss.	INCOMPLETE and WEAK																		Incomp.
Missouri	INCOMPLETE and WEAK																		Incomp.
Montana	INCOMPLETE and WEAK																		Incomp.
Nebraska	INCOMPLETE and WEAK																		Incomp.
Nevada	1	1	2/3	1	1	0	1	1	4/10	1	1	2/2	0	0	0	0	0	0/2	51.3% D
New Hamp.	INCOMPLETE and STRONG																		Incomp.
New Jersey	2	1	3/3	.5	1	1	2	1	5.5/10	1	1	2/2	0	0	0	0	0	0/2	68.5% C
New Mexico	2	1	3/3	1	1	2	0	0	4/10	.5	.5	½	0	0	.5	0	0	.5/2	53.5% D
New York	0	1	1/3	0	.5	1	1	0	2.5/10	.5	1	1.5/2	0	.25	.25	0	0	.5/2	32.2% F
North Carolina	2	1	3/3	0	0	1	0	0	1/10	1	1	2/2	0	0	.25	0	0	.25/2	37.3% F
North Dakota	1	1	2/3	0	1	1	0	1	3/10	1	1	2/2	0	.25	0	.5	0	.75/2	45.1% D-
Ohio	2	1	3/3	0	1	0	1	1	3/10	1	1	2/2	.5	.5	.25	0	0	1.25/2	52.3% D
Oklahoma	2	1	3/3	0	1	2	1	.5	4.5/10	1	1	2/2	0	0	0	0	.5	.5/2	62.0% C-
Oregon	2	1	3/3	0	2	2	2	1	7/10	1	1	2/2	0	0	0	0	0	0/2	79.0% B-
Penn.	2	1	3/3	2	2	2	2	.5	8.5/10	.5	.5	1/2	0	0	.25	0	0	.25/2	85.3% B+
Rhode Island	2	1	3/3	.5	1	2	1	0	4.5/10	1	1	2/2	0	.25	.25	0	0	.5/2	62.0% C-
South Carolina	2	1	3/3	0	0	0	0	0	0/10	1	1	2/2	0	0	.25	0	0	.25/2	30.3% F
South Dakota	INCOMPLETE and FAILING																		Incomp.
Tennessee	2	1	3/3	.5	.5	0	1	.5	2.5/10	1	1	2/2	0	0	.25	0	.5	.75/2	48.3% D-
Texas	2	1	3/3	1	2	2	2	.5	7.5/10	1	1	2/2	0	0	0	0	0	0/2	82.5% B
Utah	INCOMPLETE but STRONG																		Incomp.

	Principle I			Principle II					Principle III			Bonus					Total		
Indicator:	A	B	Final	A	B	C	D	E	Final	A	B	Final	A	B	C	D	E	Final	Grade
Vermont	2	1	3/3	.5	1	2	2	1	6.5/10	1	1	2/2	.2 5	.5	0	0	0	.75/2	76.3% B-
Virginia	2	1	3/3	1	.5	1	1	0	3.5/10	.5	1	1/2	.2 5	0	.2 5	0	0	.5/2	50.5% D
Washington	INCOMPLETE and FAILING																	Incomp.	
West Virginia	2	1	3/3	0	0	0	0	0	0/10	1	.5	1.5/2	.2 5	0	.2 5	0	0	.5/2	28.0% F
Wisconsin	INCOMPLETE and STRONG																	Incomp.	
Wyoming	2	1	3/3	.5	1	2	1	1	5.5/10	1	1	2/2	0	0	0	0	0	0/2	68.5% C

**THE FOLLOWING GRADING SCALE WAS USED TO CONVERT
PERCENTAGES INTO LETTER GRADES:**

95 - 100: A+; 90 - 95: A; 85 - 90: B+; 80 - 85: B; 70 - 75: C+;
65 - 70: C; 60 - 65: C-; 55 - 60: D+; 50 - 55: D; 45 - 50: D-; BELOW 45: F.

APPENDIX 2 >> Options provided by states for achieving highly qualified status

	Student Achievement	Course-work in Subject	In-Service in Subject	Portfolios	Professional Service	Awards Publications	Experience	Observation by Admin.	Mentoring	In-Service not in Subject	Coursework not in subject	Option Unique to State*	Total # of options
Alabama		X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X		8
Alaska		X	X		X	X	X		X			1*	7
Arizona		X	X		X	X	X		X				6
Arkansas		X	X		X	X	X		X				6
California		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				8
Colorado	X	X	X									1*	4
Connecticut		X						X					2
Delaware		X	X		X	X	X				X	1*	7
Florida	X							X					2
Georgia		X	X		X	X	X		X				6
Hawaii		X	X		X	X	X		X				6
Idaho		X	X							X	X		4
Illinois		X	X				X					2*	5
Indiana		X	X		X	X	X		X				6
Iowa		X	X					X		X	X	1*	6
Kansas		X	X		X	X	X		X				6
Kentucky	X	X	X		X	X	X						6
Louisiana		X	X										3
Maine		X	X		X	X	X		X			1*	7
Maryland		X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X		8
Mass.		X	X		X	X			X	X	X		7
Michigan		X	X	X	X		X	X	X				7
Minnesota	X	X	X		X	X	X						6
Mississippi		X	X									1*	3
Missouri		X						X				1*	2
Montana		X	X							X	X		4
Nebraska		X	X									1*	3
Nevada		X	X				X			X	X		5
New Hampshire	X	X	X	X									4
New Jersey		X	X		X	X	X					1*	6
New Mexico	X	X	X	X			X	X				1*	7
New York		X	X		X		X		X			5*	10
North Carolina	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X				8
N. Dakota		X	X		X	X	X		X		X		7
Ohio		X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X		8
Oklahoma	X	X	X		X	X	X		X				7
Oregon		X											1
Pennsylvania.		X	X			X	X					1*	5
Rhode Island		X	X		X	X	X		X				6
S. Carolina								X					1
S. Dakota		X									X	1*	3
Tennessee	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X		9
Texas		X	X				X						3
Utah		X	X				X						3
Vermont		X	X		X		X		X			1*	6
Virginia													
Washington		X						X					2
West Virginia		X	X		X	X	X		X				6
Wisconsin		X		X				X			X		4
Wyoming		X	X		X	X	X		X				6

APPENDIX 3 >> Principles and Indicators for Grading the States

Principle I: Effective Identification

As a first step, the state identifies teachers who lack academic credentials.

INDICATOR A: State isolates a teacher’s academic qualifications to determine suitability for HOUSSE.

EXPLANATION: It’s in the best interest of each state to accurately determine the academic qualifications of any teacher at work in its system. In fashioning NCLB, Congress decided state certification systems were not adequate for determining the level of a teacher’s content knowledge, and set distinct standards as evidence of subject matter competency: a content major, a content exam, or HOUSSE. Allowing certification to serve as an alternative to HOUSSE defeats the purpose of the provision.

GRADING:

- > **2 POINTS:** All teachers without an academic major or who have not passed a subject-matter test must complete the HOUSSE.
 - > **1 POINT:** Certain forms of certification exempt teachers from HOUSSE. Current certification regulations are demanding enough to allow this, but older certification systems may or may not have demanded sufficient coursework.
 - > **0 POINTS:** State exempts all certified teachers from HOUSSE even when the state does not require, or may not have required, a major or a subject-matter test for certification.
-

INDICATOR B: State offers a HOUSSE option regardless of the academic rigor of its current certification regulations.

EXPLANATION: Many state certification systems have not properly ensured that teachers have an adequate level of preparation in their content areas. Even those states that currently have excellent credentialing requirements (those that demand at least a content major) are not as likely to address content weaknesses in their teaching corps. State regulations undergo constant revisions, and the standards in place in the 1980s and 1990s—when many practicing teachers were earning their certification—were generally lower. While it’s possible that all of these teachers have an equivalent to the major, it’s up to the state to prove this standard, and simply calling certification “highly qualified” does not provide this assurance.

GRADING:

- > **1 POINT:** HOUSSE option is available.
- > **0 POINTS:** HOUSSE option is not offered.

Principle II – Rigor

Standards should be consistently rigorous and focus on providing clear and objective evidence of a teacher’s subject-matter knowledge.

INDICATOR A: State has an expectation that highly qualified teacher at minimum possesses the equivalent of a college minor (or 225 hours of targeted, rigorous professional development program) in the subjects he/she teaches or can pass a subject-matter test.

EXPLANATION: A college minor, or the equivalent of 15 credits, is an attainable goal for practicing teachers. It constitutes a practical compromise between the optimal goal of a content major and the practical reality of a system in which many certified teachers do not have sufficient academic backgrounds. Working within the HOUSSE program, states can create plans like those in Pennsylvania and Hawaii, where teachers are given a period of time to accumulate the coursework they need and where specific guidance is offered on what kinds of courses should be taken.

GRADING:

- > **3 POINTS:** State requires teacher to present evidence of coursework equivalent to a college minor (15 credit hours) or pass a subject matter test to become highly qualified.
 - > **1 POINT:** State does not require teacher to earn a college minor or pass a subject matter test but does not allow teachers to count professional development or activities retroactively.
 - > **.5 POINT:** State does not require teachers to earn a college minor/pass a test but establishes a limit on how long ago professional development or activities occurred.
 - > **0 POINTS:** State does not require teachers to earn a college minor/pass a test and allows teachers to count their minimal coursework requirements retroactively.
-

INDICATOR B: Standards compel teachers to employ only objective measures of subject matter competency (student achievement, graded coursework, targeted and rigorous professional development, and subject matter tests¹²) instead of less objective measures (professional awards, professional service, professional activities etc.).

EXPLANATION: Many states offer options that have little or nothing to do with demonstrating subject matter knowledge—from “effective communication” to having a student who wins first, second, or third place in an academic competition.

GRADING:

- > **2 POINTS:** Standards compel teachers to employ only objective measures of subject matter competency.
- > **1 POINT:** Standards compel teachers to employ some objective measures of subject matter competency.
- > **0 POINTS:** Standards do not compel teachers to employ any objective measures of subject matter competency.

¹² The HOUSSE provision is technically a route that teachers with three or more years of experience can use in lieu of taking a test to prove they know their subject matter. Therefore, states generally don’t include a testing option in the alternative standards. Thus, we have not included the use of a test as an indicator. Nevertheless, states that create more rigorous standards compel teachers to take an exam instead of using the more often more time-consuming HOUSSE route.

INDICATOR C: State gives credit toward subject matter competency only for coursework or targeted, rigorous professional development in the subject area(s) (or in a related subject area) to which a teacher is assigned.

EXPLANATION: Several states give credit for taking courses in areas outside of their subject matter. For example, in Alabama teachers can earn up to 35 points for courses in learning theory and learning styles. This is exactly what this aspect of the law was trying to prevent: evaluating subject matter knowledge based on pedagogical coursework.

GRADING:

- > **2 POINTS:** State gives credit toward subject matter competency only for coursework or professional development in the subject area(s) (or in a related subject area).
 - > **1 POINT:** State is either unclear with regards to whether or not it gives credit towards subject matter competency for coursework or pd outside of subject area(s) or limited credit is given for any non-content specific coursework including subject area pedagogy.
 - > **0 POINTS:** State gives credit toward subject matter competency for coursework outside of subject area(s).
-

INDICATOR D: The state has a single minded focus on the need to address subject matter knowledge.

EXPLANATION: Some states offer so many options that only indirectly relate to subject matter knowledge that the quality of the standards will likely be negatively impacted by their increasing complexity.

GRADING:

- > **2 POINTS:** State only allows teachers to pursue paths that focus on building content knowledge.
 - > **1 POINT:** State permits teachers to choose options that may be related to the teacher's subject area but which are not likely to build content knowledge.
 - > **0 POINTS:** State permits teachers to pursue multiple paths, some of which are unlikely to build content knowledge.
-

INDICATOR E: State limits the value of less objective and less rigorous measures for meeting highly qualified status.

EXPLANATION: Many states do not impose any limit on the amount of content competency a teacher can prove through subjective measurements. For instance, Alaska qualifies teachers based on a 100 point scale. Half of these points can be earned through experience. The other half can be earned through "service to teaching" and "awards." Teachers can earn highly qualified status without undergoing any sort of objective measurement of their content level.

GRADING:

- > **1 POINT:** State places strict limitations on the amount of credit given to more subjective measurements of content competency (experience, service to teaching, professional development that is not specifically targeted to building knowledge, awards, professional activities).
- > **.5 POINT:** State places small limitations on the amount of credit given to more subjective measurements of content competency.
- > **0 POINTS:** State places no limitations on the amount of credit given to more subjective measurements of content competency.

Principle III: Clarity and Accessibility

Standards should be presented in a manner that permits both teachers and the general public to easily understand what is expected of teachers.

INDICATOR A: It is clear what activities can be used to meet the standards.

EXPLANATION: Some states list the standards but provide little or no clear explanation of how the standards can be met. The state's processes and expectations are streamlined when specific examples of acceptable service, awards or professional development activities are included within the guidelines.

GRADING:

- > 1 POINT: Clearly explains how standards can be met¹⁵.
 - > .5 POINT: Somewhat clear how competencies will be demonstrated.
 - > 0 POINTS: Unclear how competencies and knowledge will be demonstrated.
-

INDICATOR B: Standards are easily located on the state's department of education website.

EXPLANATION: States that have accessible standards and guidelines make it easier for teachers to use HOUSSE productively, in order to determine their subject competency.

GRADING:

- > 1 POINT: Standards easily located on the website.
- > .5 POINT: Standards found after some searching.
- > 0 POINTS: Standards were not found on the website.

¹⁵ States are given one point if their standards are so clear no explanation is needed. In Oregon for example, you must have 16 semester hours in the subject matter. It is obvious how a teacher meets such a standard.

BONUS PRINCIPLE: Support and Collaboration

BONUS POINTS ONLY

Standards should offer collaborative support that helps teachers improve subject matter competency.

Note: Ideally, an effective HOUSSE system should also elucidate how support will be provided to teachers who need it. However, because HOUSSE does not require states to explain such a support plan within their standards, it is unfair to mark states down for not offering a support plan. For this reason, states not meeting the following indicators are not penalized and states that did meet them are awarded a small number of bonus points.

INDICATOR A: State explains in their standards how support will be provided for teachers who need subject matter help.

EXPLANATION: New Hampshire, for example, clearly explains the process by which teachers in need of support meet with a principal and devise a plan to get the help they need.

GRADING:

- > .5 POINT: Support system is explained.
 - > .25 POINT: Support system is alluded to but not explained.
 - > 0 POINTS: No support system is mentioned.
-

INDICATOR B: State explains in their standards that after assistance is provided, state has a plan for assessing teachers to verify that they now meet highly qualified status.

EXPLANATION: In New Mexico, for example, teachers must present documentation to a local panel, which in turn makes a recommendation to the state department of education. It remains unclear however, what happens to teachers who are deemed not sufficiently knowledgeable.

GRADING:

- > .5 POINT: Post-support assessment is clearly explained.
- > .25 POINT: Post-support assessment is not explained.
- > 0 POINTS: No post-support system is mentioned.

INDICATOR C: Standards state that the principals (or master teachers or instructional leaders) will play an important role in the process of identifying and supporting teachers in need of subject matter support.

EXPLANATION: Standards should stress that the idea of the HOUSSE is to identify and support, not find and punish, teachers in need of subject matter support. Thus, principals (or master teachers or instructional leaders) who usually know better than states which teachers need help, must be involved in the process.

GRADING:

- > **.5 POINT:** Standards require a large degree of involvement by a principal, master teacher, or instructional leader beyond just administering annual performance evaluations.
- > **.25 POINT:** Standards require some degree of involvement by a principal, master teacher, or instructional leader.
- > **0 POINTS:** Standards do not require any involvement by a principal, master teacher or instructional leader.

INDICATOR D: State offers an accessible online presentation of its program that allows teachers to quickly identify their level of qualification and learn what course of action they need to take in order to achieve highly qualified status.

EXPLANATION: Some states have gone above and beyond basic federal demands of accessibility by creating teacher-friendly HOUSSE websites. For example, both Hawaii and Utah have created interactive online HOUSSE evaluations for teachers. By answering a short series of “yes-no” questions, teachers in these states can learn their qualification status and be directed towards the proper web-resource for submitting documentation or finding guidance in their on-going content development.

GRADING

- > **.5 POINT:** State provides an interactive web-based tool that allows teachers to determine HOUSSE status on-line.
- > **0 POINTS:** State doesn't provide an interactive web-based tool that helps teachers to determine HOUSSE status.

INDICATOR E: The state includes a student achievement data option within its HOUSSE plan.

EXPLANATION: The motivating goal at the base of all teacher-quality initiatives is to improve student achievement. In acknowledging this fact, several states have included an option in which teachers can provide documentation of student achievement or “teacher effect” as shown through state test scores. Certainly any teacher that is getting good results in the classroom is meeting the ultimate definition of a “highly qualified” teacher, and therefore these trailblazing states, like Tennessee and Minnesota, deserve a bonus.

GRADING

- > **.5 POINT:** Teachers can earn highly qualified status (or a significant number of points) by providing data-driven documentation of exceptional student achievement.
- > **0 POINTS:** State doesn't include a student-achievement option.