

# Teacher Quality



# The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

*As a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Congress passed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. Signed into law by President Bush in January 2002, the legislation brings many significant changes to schools nationwide.*

One of the key features of this legislation is an emphasis on teacher quality. A growing body of research has documented the importance of teacher knowledge and skill in improving student achievement. The NCLB Act includes specific criteria for considering a teacher highly qualified, and other specific requirements regarding timelines for meeting teacher quality standards, alternative routes to certification, and a host of other related issues.

This brochure is designed to provide educators, parents, and community members with a brief overview of NCLB requirements for teacher quality, paraprofessional quality, options for meeting requirements, and answers to other questions about the legislation.

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# Key NCLB Requirements for Highly Qualified Teachers and Paraprofessionals

## All teachers

According to NCLB legislation, in order for any teacher to be considered highly qualified, he or she must hold a bachelor's degree, demonstrate competence in each academic subject he or she teaches, obtain full state certification or pass the state licensure exam, and hold a license to teach. Full state certification may be obtained through an alternative route to certification. Teachers who have certification or licensure requirements waived on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis, however, are not considered highly qualified.

## New elementary teachers

In order for newly hired elementary teachers to be considered highly qualified, they must demonstrate competence by passing a rigorous state test covering subject knowledge and teaching skills in reading, writing, mathematics, and other areas of the core elementary school curriculum.

## New middle or secondary teachers

In order for newly hired middle or secondary teachers to be considered highly qualified, they must, for every academic subject they teach, demonstrate competence by passing a rigorous state academic subject test or by completing an academic major, coursework equivalent to an undergraduate academic major, a graduate degree, or advanced certification or credentialing.

## Experienced teachers

There are also NCLB requirements for experienced teachers. To be considered highly qualified, they must either meet the respective requirements as stated above or pass a high, objective, uniform state standard of evaluation (HOUSSE). For multi-disciplinary teachers, states may offer a single evaluation procedure that assesses a teacher's subject-matter expertise for all of the subjects that he or she teaches. This evaluation may involve multiple objective measures of teacher competency, but it must:

- Be set by the state for both grade-appropriate academic subject-matter knowledge and teaching skills.
- Be aligned with challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards and developed in consultation with core content specialists, teachers, principals, and school administrators.
- Provide objective, coherent information about the teacher's attainment of core content knowledge in the academic subjects taught by the teacher.
- Be applied uniformly to all teachers in the same academic subject and the same grade level throughout the state.
- Take into consideration, but not be based primarily on, the time the teacher has been teaching in the academic subject.
- Be made available to the public upon request.

## Paraprofessionals

The NCLB legislation also contains new requirements for paraprofessionals and delineates the duties they are allowed to perform. Specifically, paraprofessionals working in schools that receive Title I assistance must possess a high school diploma or its equivalent and have completed at least two years of study at an institution of higher education, obtained an associate's degree, or have passed a formal assessment to



show that they have knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics or instructing reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness, as appropriate.

Paraprofessionals working in schools receiving Title I assistance may be assigned various responsibilities, including:

- Providing one-on-one tutoring for eligible students, if the tutoring is scheduled at a time when a student would not otherwise receive instruction from a teacher.
- Assisting with classroom management, such as organizing instructional and other materials.
- Providing assistance in a computer laboratory.
- Conducting parental involvement activities.
- Providing support in a library or media center.
- Acting as a translator.
- Providing instructional services to students under the direct supervision of a teacher or for a program not supported with Title I funds. (For details on particular time specifications, visit [www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg2.html#sec1119](http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg2.html#sec1119).)

Paraprofessionals who act primarily as translators or whose duties consist solely of conducting parental involvement activities are exempt from the qualification requirements listed above.

## Key Questions

### ***When must the NCLB requirements for teachers and paraprofessionals be in place?***

The NCLB Act requires that all teachers in core academic areas (English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography) be highly qualified by the end of the 2005–06 school year. The two exceptions to this are that (1) teachers whose schools participate in the Rural School Achievement Program may have until the end of the 2006–07 school year to meet the highly qualified criteria in each of the core academic subjects they teach; and (2) new teachers whose schools participate in the Rural School Achievement Program would get three years from the date of their hire to meet the highly qualified criteria. However, for teachers teaching core subjects in schools receiving Title I funding, this requirement must already be in place as of the 2002–03 school year. Paraprofessionals hired before the NCLB effective date (January 8, 2002) have four years to meet their qualifications, but paraprofessionals hired after this date already should have met the qualifications. In addition, all paraprofessionals are required to have a high school diploma or its equivalent, regardless of hire date.

### ***How can experienced teachers who do not hold undergraduate degrees in the subjects they teach demonstrate that they are highly qualified?***

Experienced teachers who do not meet the current requirements have several options for demonstrating that they are highly qualified. If they do not hold a degree in a subject they teach, they can take coursework equivalent to an academic major or pass a subject-area test. States can create other options, as long as they meet the HOUSS standards. These options might include advanced certifications (such as those offered through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards or the American Board for the Certification of Teacher Excellence), portfolios, or other alternative assessments. As described in the nonregulatory guidance published by the U.S. Department of Education, the states are expected to assess the degree of rigor and technicality of the subject matter a teacher needs to know in relation to the state's content and student achievement standards for subjects in middle grades. These decisions are left to the states.



***In what ways does the NCLB Act provide funding to help teachers become highly qualified?***

Not only does the act authorize an increase in Title II funding for professional development for this purpose, it also allows states and districts to combine funding from various Title I programs to help teachers meet the quality requirements. The U.S. Department of Education encourages the states to use the flexibility available under the new Title II regulations to assist experienced teachers in meeting the standards required. This includes using Title II funds for tuition, testing fees, professional development, stipends, and other approaches to meeting the requirements. In any case, substantial funding may be required to help experienced teachers who do not meet NCLB standards become highly qualified.

***How are states and districts held accountable for meeting the highly qualified teacher and paraprofessional requirements?***

The NCLB Act requires that state education agencies and local education agencies (LEAs) develop plans to attain established, measurable goals that demonstrate progress in increasing the number of highly qualified teachers teaching core subjects. In addition, at the beginning of each school year, LEAs are required to notify parents that they may request information regarding the qualifications of their child's teacher and, if applicable, paraprofessional. Also, Title I schools are required to notify parents if students are assigned to a teacher who is not highly qualified or are taught for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who is not highly qualified.



States are required to report to the U.S. Department of Education the number of teachers who are highly qualified and the number who are not. States are also required to assess the extent to which teachers who are not highly qualified are disproportionately assigned to teach students of color and low income, and to develop plans to remedy the problem.

***In what ways does the definition of teacher quality vary by state? What are the implications of this for teacher mobility?***

While the federal definition of teacher quality is constant across states, certification requirements vary by state, as do testing requirements. Because different states use different tests and cut scores for passing, a teacher's qualifications could conceivably meet the requirements in one state but not in another. Movement toward a uniform set of certification credentials across all states would address this issue and help ensure that all students are taught by a highly qualified teacher.

***What are the implications of the NCLB requirements for teacher preparation and higher education?***

Although the law does not directly address teacher education, its requirements have implications for teacher preparation programs. Changes in teacher preparation will most likely come through changes in certification requirements at the state level, and by Congress with the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

The NCLB requirement that middle-grade teachers have a major in the subject area they teach may result in changes at the preparation level. Currently many teachers in K-8 schools with undergraduate degrees in elementary education teach specific subjects to sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students. These teachers do not meet the NCLB requirements to be highly qualified.

Issues of definition also may be a problem. In one teacher preparation program, a major might be called *elementary education with a minor in math*, and at another school, a similar major might be called *middle grades math*. Also, the NCLB language does not define *major* in terms of credit hours or address the difference between semester versus quarter hours.

### ***How does the legislation address alternative routes to certification?***

Many states have created alternative routes to certification that enable midcareer changers and others who have content knowledge to obtain certification through a shortened preparation period. Teachers in alternative certification programs are considered highly qualified if the programs satisfy specific requirements, including the provision of sustained, intensive professional development and intensive supervision with structured guidance and ongoing support. Teachers in alternative programs are required to demonstrate satisfactory progress toward full certification and cannot teach while participating in such programs for more than three years.

### ***How do the NCLB teacher quality requirements affect charter schools?***

Charter school teachers must have an undergraduate degree and demonstrate competence in the subject area they teach; however, they are not required to be fully certified by the state. The decision about whether or not to require charter school teachers to obtain full certification is left to the states, as it was before NCLB. Similarly, regulations regarding private schools are left to the states.

## **KEY SOURCES**

For the complete definition of a highly qualified teacher, see Section 9101(23) of the ESEA of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. 107-110, 115 Stat. 1425 (2002). Available online at [www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg107.html#sec9101](http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg107.html#sec9101)

For complete qualifications and permissible duties of paraprofessionals, see Section 1119, subsections (c) through (g), of the ESEA of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. 107-110, 115 Stat. 1425 (2002). Available online at [www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg2.html#sec1119](http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg2.html#sec1119)

For implementation and accountability requirements for improving teacher quality, see Section 1119, subsections (a) and (b), of the ESEA of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act, Pub. L. 107-110, 115 Stat. 1425 (2002). Available online at [www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg2.html#sec1119](http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg2.html#sec1119)

For information about flexibility policies pertaining to highly qualified teachers in rural schools, veteran teachers of multiple subjects, and science teachers, see *Key Policy Letters Signed by the Education Secretary or Deputy Secretary* at [www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/secletter/040331.html](http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/secletter/040331.html)



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## KEY RESOURCES

**American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE):** [www.aacte.org](http://www.aacte.org)

AACTE is a national voluntary organization of higher education institutions that collectively prepare educators; it represents the institutional interests of its members through conducting its own research.

**American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE):** [www.abcte.org](http://www.abcte.org)

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, ABCTE offers a new but rigorous and reliable approach to teacher certification through its Passport to Teaching certification and Master Teacher certification.

**Association of Teacher Educators (ATE):** [www.ate1.org](http://www.ate1.org)

ATE is the only national, individual membership educational association that works to improve teacher education.

**Education Commission of the States (ECS) Teaching Quality and NCLB Web Sites:**

<http://www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/ProjectbySubject.asp?issueID=129> and  
[http://nclb2.ecs.org/Projects\\_Centers/index.aspx?issueid=gen&IssueName=General](http://nclb2.ecs.org/Projects_Centers/index.aspx?issueid=gen&IssueName=General)

These Web sites provide important state-level information on teaching quality and No Child Left Behind geared toward state policymakers.

**Holmes Partnership:** [www.holmespartnership.org](http://www.holmespartnership.org)

The Holmes Partnership is an alliance of universities and national professional organizations devoted to the reform and enhancement of teacher education in the United States.

**Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC):** [ccsso.org.red.doceus.com/projects/interstate\\_new\\_teacher\\_assessment\\_and\\_support\\_consortium](http://ccsso.org/red.doceus.com/projects/interstate_new_teacher_assessment_and_support_consortium)

A project of the Council of Chief State School Officers, INTASC is a consortium of state education agencies and national education organizations that work together to develop model policies for teacher preparation, assessment, licensing, and professional development.

**Learning Point Associates Teacher Quality Web Site:** [www.ncrel.org/quality/](http://www.ncrel.org/quality/)

This Web site provides information on certification, retention and recruitment, professional development, mobility, and quality.

**National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS):** [www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org)

NBPTS is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that has developed rigorous teaching standards and a system to certify teachers who meet these standards.

**National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF):** [www.nctaf.org](http://www.nctaf.org)

In addition to providing research-based reports, NCTAF partners and works with states and districts to inform policy decision making and encourage the development of initiatives to improve teaching quality.

**National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE):** [www.ncate.org](http://www.ncate.org)

NCATE is a coalition of specialty professional associations dedicated to teacher quality and is recognized as the paramount accreditation system for schools, colleges, and departments of education.

**National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ):** [www.nctq.org/index.html](http://www.nctq.org/index.html)

NCTQ is a nonprofit organization dedicated to teacher quality, providing a clearinghouse that contains the latest policy and research on key teacher quality issues.

**Southeast Center for Teaching Quality (SECTQ):** [www.teachingquality.org](http://www.teachingquality.org)

The SECTQ promotes the advancement of high-quality teaching in the southeastern United States through conducting research, developing and supporting teacher leadership networks, and identifying and supporting effective policy.

**Teaching Quality (TQ) Source:** [www.tqsource.org](http://www.tqsource.org)

*TQ Source* is a new Web-based teacher quality resource provided by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory and the Education Commission of the States.