

## Colorado's Definition of a "Highly Qualified" Teacher as Required Through NCLB (Updated October 2007)

### Basic Definition

In accordance with Sec. 1119 of the *No Child Left Behind* Act (NCLB), Colorado defines "Highly Qualified" Teachers as teachers that are fully licensed, hold at least a Bachelor's degree, and are able to demonstrate subject matter competency in all core academic areas in which they are assigned.

### Details on the Definition

#### Core Academic Areas

NCLB defines core academic areas as:

- English, Reading, or Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Science
- Foreign Languages
- Social Studies (Civics, Government, History, Geography, Economics)
- The Arts (Visual Arts, Drama, Music)

#### Fully Licensed \*

A fully licensed teacher holds a current valid license in Colorado. This includes:

- Initial Licenses
- Interim Authorizations
- Professional Licenses
- Master Teacher Licenses
- Alternative Teaching Licenses
- Teacher in Residence Authorizations
- 5-Year Sub Authorization

To obtain a valid license in Colorado, a teacher must:

- Hold at least a Bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited university  
AND
- Complete an approved teacher preparation program. This includes
  - Completion of a Colorado State Board of Education approved teacher preparation program in elementary education or secondary education at a regionally accredited university, or
  - Completion of an approved out-of-state teacher preparation program, or
  - Participation in an Alternative Teacher Licensing preparation program or a Teacher In Residence alternative preparation program.

\* Charter schools may be waived from the licensure requirement by the State Board of Education; however, they must still meet the degree and subject matter competency requirements. Special Education teachers in charter schools cannot be waived from the licensing requirement.

## Subject Matter Competency

In addition to being fully licensed, teachers must demonstrate content knowledge in all assigned core academic areas. How this demonstration occurs depends on the school level: elementary (K-6) or secondary (6-12).

### *Elementary*

To demonstrate subject matter competency, elementary teachers (grades K-6) must:

- Pass the adopted Elementary Education **content assessment**. This assessment must reflect the adopted Elementary Education Teacher Preparation Standards in English/ Language Arts, Science, Mathematics, Social Studies, Humanities, Wellness and Physical Education. Colorado offers the PLACE or Praxis assessments. The National Board Certification assessment is also accepted. Teachers coming to Colorado from other states may consult the list of approved state assessments on the CDE website: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/NCLB/tiaa.asp>.  
OR
- Be a **Nationally Board Certified Teacher** for the elementary level.  
OR
- Pass the Elementary HOUSSE provision. Available to experienced Colorado teachers that have not taken the elementary content test, this HOUSSE provision outlines some alternative ways that teachers can provide evidence of subject matter competency (e.g., previous elementary teacher experience, coursework, professional development). To meet the eligibility requirements, a teacher must have:
  - A valid teaching license on or before July 1, 2006 (in or out of state), and
  - One or more years of teaching experience (in or out of state)

### *Secondary*

To demonstrate subject matter competency, secondary teachers (grades 6-12) must:

- Have at least a **Bachelor's degree** that matches the subject area assignment.  
OR
- Pass the subject area **content assessment** that matches the subject area assignment.  
OR
- Obtain a matching **endorsement** in the subject area assignment.  
OR
- Be a **Nationally Board Certified Teacher** in the subject area assignment.  
OR
- Acquire a minimum of **24-semester hours of coursework** or professional development in subject area assignment.  
OR
- Pass a **secondary multi-subject HOUSSE** provision (if eligible).

### *More Detail on Determining 24 Semester Hours*

- College/University credit
  - Coursework must be relevant and applicable to the subject area assignment.
  - College/University credit must be awarded by a regionally accepted two- or four-year institution of higher education.
  - Verification of the teacher's successful completion of this requirement is the responsibility of the educator's employing school district or BOCES.
- Professional development activities
  - The activities must be relevant and applicable to the subject area assignment.

- Credit may be awarded for district and other district approved professional development activities, inservices, workshops and education reform, such as curriculum review and development/design.
  - The teacher must provide documented evidence that the professional development activities were relevant and applicable to the acquisition of knowledge and skills in the subject area assignment.
- Relevant travel
    - The teacher must have approval from the LEA, certifying that the travel is applicable to the enhancement of skills and knowledge in the subject area assignment.
    - One-semester hour of credit may be awarded for each 15-clock hours of documented travel, up to a maximum of 6-semester hours. Travel time to and from the intended destination cannot be included.

#### *More Detail on Multi-Subject HOUSSE Provisions*

Because of the challenging circumstances certain populations of teachers face, CO has developed HOUSSE provisions for (1) secondary teachers in rural settings that teach multiple subjects and (2) secondary special education teachers that teach multiple subjects. Note that these HOUSSE provisions are not portable if the teacher no longer meets the eligibility requirements (e.g., rural teacher goes to an urban district, special education teacher becomes a general education teacher).

Secondary HOUSSE Rubric for Multi-Subject Teachers in Rural Schools. Candidates must meet all of the following criteria to be eligible for the HOUSSE provision:

- District is eligible for the most recent Small Rural School Achievement Program (SRSA).
- Candidate has been assigned to teach two or more core content classes in a secondary grade (i.e., 6th through 12th grade).
- Candidate has a valid Colorado license and at least one year of teaching experience (in or out of state). If hired in a charter school where licenses have been waived, candidate has at least a Bachelor's degree.
- Candidate is already highly qualified in at least one core content subject without the use of this HOUSSE provision.

Secondary HOUSSE Rubric for Multi-Subject Special Education Teachers. Candidates must meet all of the following criteria to be eligible for the HOUSSE provision:

- Candidate is the sole provider of instruction for two or more core content classes in a secondary grade (i.e., 6th through 12th grade).
- Candidate has a Colorado license with the proper special education endorsements.
- (New Teachers: If licensed on or after July 1, 2007 only) Candidate is already highly qualified in at least language arts, math or science without the use of this HOUSSE provision.

#### *Middle Schools*

Because there is not a middle school license in Colorado, middle school teachers are considered to be secondary teachers. Sixth grade teachers are somewhat of an exception since they are sometimes housed within elementary schools. If the 6th grade teacher is teaching general elementary, she/he must meet the elementary requirements to be highly qualified. If she/he is teaching a content area, she/he may meet either the elementary or the secondary requirements to be highly qualified.

Seventh and eighth grade teachers that act as generalists (e.g., in a K-8 school) are another exception. If a middle school teacher teaches more than three core content area classes, then he/she can be considered a generalist. In this case, these teachers may meet the elementary requirements to be considered HQ. If a teacher is in a 7th or 8th grade generalist setting, then he/she must be coded as a "middle self-contained" classroom on the HR Collection.

#### *K-12 Specials (i.e., art, music, foreign language)*

These are specialists in art, music or foreign language and often working in both elementary and secondary settings. Secondary specials teachers must meet the secondary requirements. Specials teachers working in an elementary setting may meet the elementary or the secondary requirements for subject matter competency, including: elementary content test, elementary HOUSSSE, content test in the assigned area, degree in the assigned area, endorsement in the assigned area, or 24-semester hours in the assigned area. CDE strongly encourages districts to ensure that these teachers still develop an understanding of the other content areas to facilitate an interdisciplinary approach to teaching.

#### *Special Education Teachers*

Special education teachers need to be highly qualified if they are providing core content instruction for students. To meet the IDEA qualifications requirement, all special education teachers (and special providers) must also be properly endorsed.

- All elementary level special education teachers must meet NCLB HQ requirements:
  - A valid license,
  - All relevant sped endorsements, and
  - To demonstrate elementary subject matter competency
  
- All secondary level special education teachers that are sole providers of content must meet NCLB HQ requirements
  - A valid license,
  - All relevant sped endorsements, and
  - To demonstrate subject matter competency in all assigned core subjects.

If it is determined that a secondary teacher is working exclusively with students that are working toward alternate standards at the elementary level (e.g., CSAP A eligible students), then that teacher must be elementary qualified.

A teacher is considered the sole provider of content if she/he introduces core content and provides full lessons on key concepts to students. This teacher is the exclusive instructional decision-maker for students (e.g., assessments, curricular design). In contrast, a teacher who co-teaches with another HQ teacher; provides consultation; pre-teaches or re-teaches concepts; or provides additional practice opportunities (e.g., second dip) would not be considered the sole provider of content.

#### **District Documentation**

LEAs are required to keep all evidence that demonstrates that a teacher highly qualified -- electronically or in hard copy. This may include, but not be limited to, evidence that the teacher has a current license, has passed a content assessment, college transcripts and district transcript review, professional development and supporting evidence of its relevance, and completed HOUSSSE rubrics.