Illinois Certification Requirements Related to NCLB Definition of Highly Qualified Teacher  
DRAFT September 11, 2002

After the first day of the 2002-2003 school year, all newly hired teachers in programs supported with Title I funds must be “highly qualified” according to the definition set forth in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). By the end of the 2005-2006 school year, all teachers in core academic subjects must be “highly qualified” in areas of teaching assignment. Core academic subjects are: English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history and geography.

Under the NCLB, teachers are considered “highly qualified” if they have a bachelor’s degree, have full State certification and have demonstrated subject matter competence in the areas taught. In providing a definition of “highly qualified” for teachers who already hold current Illinois certificates, ISBE is offering guidance on what is considered full State certification and is setting the “high objective uniform State standard of evaluation” necessary to determine competency in the subject matter taught as required by the federal law.

The following general guideline is provided to assist local school districts in determining whether current teachers in Illinois meet the federal definition of “highly qualified” teacher.

Teachers who meet the state criteria for certification in early childhood, elementary or secondary education or in areas requiring a special (or special pre-K through age 21) certificate, and are providing instruction in the grade level and subject area for which they are certified meet the definition of “highly qualified.”

Application to those teachers who hold current Illinois teaching certificates (early childhood, elementary, secondary, special K-12 and special pre-K through age 21):

1. Each early childhood, elementary, middle level and secondary teacher who teaches a core academic subject shall hold a valid certificate for the grade level(s) and subject matter to be taught.

2. Each elementary teacher shall have formal training through university coursework in each basic instructional area to be taught.

3. Each middle grade level teacher certified on or after July 1, 1997, who teaches in a departmentalized setting must have 18 semester hours in the major subject s/he is assigned to teach and 6 semester hours of specified coursework related to teaching middle grade students. If a middle grade level teacher is assigned to teach in more than one area, additional coursework is required in the second teaching area as identified in Section 1.720 of Title 23 of the Illinois
Administrative Code. Each middle grade or junior high level teacher certified before July 1, 1997 must meet the requirements specified in Section 1.720 of Title 23 of the Illinois Administrative Code for the time period applicable the date of certification or endorsement.

4. Teachers who currently hold an elementary certificate need not have endorsements in each subject taught if the teacher is teaching in a self-contained classroom at the elementary level. Teachers assigned to departmentalized grades 5-8 must meet the requirements for teaching in the middle grades.

5. Secondary teachers must have the requisite number of semester hours in the subject matter area and specific coursework preparation in any individual subject area that the teacher may be assigned to teach as identified in Section 1.730 of Title 23 of the Illinois Administrative Code. For example, most areas require 24 semester hours, but foreign languages require 20 semester hours and reading requires 18 semester hours. Additional coursework in specific subject matters are required to teach certain areas. For example, a teacher with an endorsement in general science would need to obtain additional coursework in physics or chemistry in order to be highly qualified in either of those areas.

6. Teachers with endorsements on certificates may teach additional subjects covered by the endorsement. These endorsements require specific coursework depending on the subject matter endorsement as described in Part I of 23 Illinois Administrative Code. Teachers are evaluated with a uniform state standard of transcript review to determine eligibility for endorsements at the time of issuance.

7. Teachers who do not have endorsements on their certificates may meet the federal requirement by: (a) having an academic major in the subject matter taught, (b) passing a subject matter examination in each academic subject taught, or (c) satisfying the requirements for an endorsement through a transcript review conducted by the school district. School districts must verify that teachers without endorsements or who have not passed the subject matter examination have completed coursework that satisfies the requirements for their teaching assignment.

8. Teachers with special K-12 certificates have specific subject matter endorsements and may teach only that subject, unless the teacher holds additional certificates. The subject area endorsement requires preparation in the area of specialization with specific course requirements outlined in Section 1.730 of Title 23 of the Illinois Administrative Code.

9. Teachers with special pre-K through age 21 certificates have specific endorsements for teaching students with disabilities, as listed in Part 28 of ISBE’s administrative rules. Teachers with the LBS I/limited endorsement may be assigned to teach only those students with disabilities for which they held a pre-existing credential until the limitations expire, except that teachers may serve
students with one additional disability in a cross-categorical setting. Teachers with the LBS I endorsement may be assigned to teach students with any of the disabilities covered under the LBS I credential.

10. Since 1988, all teacher candidates must have successfully completed a test of content knowledge related to their subject matter concentration, along with the Basic Skills test.

Application to teachers who are new to the profession: (early childhood, elementary, secondary, special and special pre-K through age 21):

1. Teachers must hold a bachelor’s degree.

2. Teachers must obtain an early childhood, elementary, secondary or special certificate with an endorsement for the particular subject matter taught, if applicable.

3. All teacher candidates seeking Initial Illinois teacher certification must pass the basic skills test. Teachers in early childhood programs must pass the early childhood certification test, elementary teachers must pass the elementary certification test, and secondary and special area teachers must successfully complete a test of content knowledge related to their subject matter concentration.

4. Beginning October 2003, in addition to successfully completing tests of basic skills and content knowledge, teacher candidates will also need to successfully complete a test of “common-core knowledge” which will assess them on the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards (which include special education standards and pedagogy), and language arts and technology standards. This test will be known as the Assessment of Professional Teaching or APT.

Application to other certificates:

1. Persons who hold a valid teaching certificate from another state and receive a provisional certificate in Illinois are not considered highly qualified for purposes of the federal law. After persons with a provisional certificate satisfy any deficiencies necessary to meet the requirements for a comparable Illinois certificate and pass any applicable examinations they will be considered highly qualified.

2. Persons who hold alternative certificates in Illinois are considered highly qualified given that they have passed the required examinations.

3. Persons who hold resident teacher certificates in Illinois are considered highly qualified given that they have passed the required examinations.
4. Persons who hold transitional bilingual teaching (Type 29) certificates are not considered to be highly qualified. ISBE will propose a change to the current law as follows: (a) the Type 29 certificate would be valid for four years with a two-year extension; (b) persons seeking a Type 29 would be required to pass the language proficiency test and the basic skills test; (c) after two years’ time, the person must be enrolled and making progress in an approved program leading to full certification; and (d) at the end of four years’ time, the person must take the content area test and the Assessment of Professional Teaching (APT).

If the person passes the tests and completes the required program, then he or she would be issued an Initial teaching certificate. If the person does not pass the content area test and APT, he or she could apply for a two-year extension on the certificate as long as progress is being made in the approved program.

Teachers who are currently teaching on a Type 29 certificate must obtain full state certification by the end of the 2005-2006 school year. Teachers whose Type 29 certificates are valid after June 30, 2006 may still retain their certificate but they will not be considered “highly qualified” teachers for purposes of the federal law.

Teachers who currently hold transitional bilingual teaching (Type 29) certificates may become “highly qualified” for purposes of federal law by passing the basic skills test and the applicable content area test. After October 2003, teachers will also have to pass the APT. Teachers who pass these examinations still have to complete an approved program to qualify for receipt of an Illinois certificate when their Type 29 certificate expires.

5. Special education teachers who are teaching on approvals, PZZs, or short-term emergency certificates meet the definition of highly qualified as long as they hold a certificate that is valid for the grade level taught. However, teachers who received the short-term emergency certificate based on holding a transitional bilingual certificate do not meet the “highly qualified” definition. Illinois is still seeking guidance on the continued applicability of the federal regulations implementing IDEA that permit a person to teach with less than full certification for three years as long as the district is unable to locate a fully certified teacher.

6. Persons who hold a substitute teacher’s certificate (Type 39) are not considered highly qualified for purposes of the federal law. Those persons who substitute teach and hold early childhood, elementary, secondary, special or special pre-K through age 21 certificates are considered highly qualified if they provide instruction in the grade level and subject area for which they are certified.

**Notice Requirements**

- Schools receiving Title I (Part A) funds must give parents "timely notice" that their children have been assigned or taught, for four or more consecutive weeks, by a teacher who is not "highly qualified." For example, if a person with only a substitute
teacher’s certificate teaches a class for longer than four consecutive weeks, the notice must be sent. On the other hand, if the same substitute teacher teaches for three weeks, the regular teacher (who is considered highly qualified) returns for a week, and then the substitute takes over for the next week, the notice is not required. If the substitute teacher has the proper credentials for teaching that classroom and is considered highly qualified, then the notice requirement is not applicable. Please see the following page for a sample notice.

- School districts that receive Title I funds must also annually inform parents that they may request information regarding the professional qualifications (e.g., certification, endorsements, degree or other information related to teaching credentials) of their children's classroom teachers. This does not include disclosing transcripts or employment evaluations. This notice must include the parent's right to request, at a minimum, information about:

  o whether the teacher has met state qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas taught.

  o whether the teacher is teaching under emergency or other provisional status.

  o the baccalaureate degree major of the teacher and any other graduate certification or degree held by the teacher, and the subject area of the certification or degree.

  o whether the child is provided service by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

Please see the following page for a sample notice.

If you have questions, please contact:
Patricia L. Ryan
Teaching and Leadership Department
Illinois State Board of Education
pryan@isbe.net <mailto:pryan@isbe.net>
217-782-4123
Parents Right to Know
Educator Qualifications
School Information Form

Dear Parent(s):

A new federal law called the No Child Left Behind Act requires teachers to meet certain qualifications by the end of the 2005-2006 school year. This federal law also requires us to let you know when a teacher who does not have a certain set of credentials teaches your child for four consecutive weeks or longer.

We are writing to tell you that your child has been taught [insert subject or grade level] from [insert date] through [insert date] by a teacher [insert “teachers” if applicable] who does [“do” if plural] not have [insert required degree, academic major, certification, endorsement, test, or other qualification].

We are working diligently to ensure that teachers are assigned to classrooms for which they hold applicable credentials and we will assist teachers in completing requirements to satisfy the federal law.

We are dedicated to meeting the educational needs of our students and we are working to ensure that your child receives the best possible education. If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact {name of principal or other contact}, at [insert telephone number or e-mail address].

Sincerely,

Building Principal XXXX
School Name OOOO
Parents Right to Know
Qualifications of Educators
Information Form

Dear Parent:

A new federal law called the No Child Left Behind Act requires us to let you know that you may ask for information about the professional qualifications of any teacher that is instructing your child.

We are writing to tell you that you may request information regarding the following:

- Whether or not your child’s teacher has met state certification requirements;
- Whether or not your child’s teacher is teaching under emergency or provisional status;
- The bachelor’s degree major of your child’s teacher, any other certification or degrees held by the teacher and the subject areas of the certification or degrees; and
- Whether your child is provided services by teacher aides/paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

You will receive a response to your request for information within XX days.

[Optional] You may also access information concerning teachers’ professional qualifications at [insert name of school or district] on our website at www. [insert districts’ web site].

We are dedicated to meeting the educational needs of our students and we are working to ensure that your child receives the best possible education. If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact {name of principal or other contact}, at [insert telephone number or e-mail address].

Sincerely,

Superintendent XXXX
School District OOOO