

National Council on Teacher Quality

Recommendations for the Definition of Highly Qualified Teachers in the Upcoming Reauthorization of No Child Left Behind

For the most part, NCTQ considers the “highly qualified teacher” regulations for new teachers to be sensible. However, we would recommend two smaller strategies for strengthening these provisions:

1. The Department of Education should require elementary teachers new to the profession to pass a test in the science of reading instruction in order to be considered “highly qualified.”

- States should consider adopting or adapting the tests found in California and Massachusetts, rather than simply adopting a popular test from the PRAXIS series. The latter assessments have been shown to be ineffective at testing knowledge of scientifically based reading instruction.
- If states adopt a more general pedagogy test that includes reading instruction, they should be sure that this test has a sub-score indicating whether the teacher passed in that area. Some general pedagogy tests allow teachers to pass even if they miss all of the items related to scientifically based reading instruction.

2. Congress should convene a panel to make recommendations to states regarding appropriate cut scores for popular licensing assessments.

The current subject matter testing requirements in NCLB are sensible (the shortcomings of many teacher licensing tests notwithstanding). However, a set of national recommendations would improve transparency regarding this important issue, and hopefully encourage states to gradually raise their expectations regarding prospective teachers’ subject matter knowledge.

With regard to veteran teachers, NCTQ still contends that too many states’ HOUSSE routes have failed to adequately verify veteran teachers’ content knowledge. Accordingly,

3. The Department of Education should require states to either phase out or improve their HOUSSE routes by the end of the 2006-2007 school year.

- The improved HOUSSE routes should be simple in structure, requiring either a subject matter *minor* or a passing score on a subject matter test in each teaching area.
- The only teachers eligible to participate in more flexible HOUSSE routes should be rural teachers of multiple subjects, foreign teachers teaching in the United States on a temporary basis, and new secondary special education teachers.