



Fact Sheet for Georgia Special Education Teachers

Certification and Highly Qualified Teacher Requirements



This Fact Sheet provides a summary of changes for Special Education (SpEd) teachers in Georgia as a result of the highly qualified (HiQ) teacher requirements of NCLB and IDEA. These changes are being implemented during the 2005-06 school year along with the state certification rule changes that became effective August 15, 2005. This is not an exhaustive explanation of all requirements and changes but hopefully provides a helpful summary.

Special education teachers are encouraged to discuss requirements and concerns with their system level administrators. These administrators receive frequent updates and technical assistance, and should be considered the best sources of information. Some systems have requirements for their teachers in addition to state and federal requirements.

HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHER REQUIREMENTS

Federal law requires that all special education teachers, including special education teachers in Title I and non-Title I schools, be “highly qualified” on or before August 31, 2006 just as all other teachers of core academic content subjects.

- ❖ NCLB “highly qualified” teacher requirements refer specifically to the qualifications and certification of teachers who assigned to teach core academic **content** courses.
- ❖ Certified Special Education teachers are highly qualified to offer expertise in teaching students with disabilities and to provide opportunities for those students to be successful academically in inclusive classroom settings or in pull-out, resource delivery models. Although highly qualified in the area of special education, IDEA and NCLB now require that all teachers, including special education teachers, provide evidence that they are highly qualified and certified in the content subjects that they teach.
- ❖ Core academic concentrations in Reading, Language Arts, Math, Science, and/or Social Studies must be listed on the Special Education teacher’s teaching certificate in order for the teacher to serve as the **teacher of record** for any of these subjects. Special Education teachers may meet the highly qualified requirements by meeting the certification requirements to teach the core academic subjects at the required cognitive level **and** by being assigned to teach the content area listed on their certificate.
- ❖ Core concentration areas are acquired by (a) having a combination of college course work and/or PLUs totaling 15 semester hours (5 quarter hours or 5 PLUs = 3 semester hours) OR (b) a major in the content area, OR (c) passing the appropriate PRAXIS II ECE, Fundamental Subjects: Content Knowledge test or individual Middle Grades or Secondary subject tests, OR (d) obtaining, at a minimum, 100 points on the Special Education HOUSSE evaluation (veteran teachers only). Core concentrations at the secondary cognitive level are acquired by (a) having a major or 21 semester hours and/or PLUs (3 semester hours = 5 PLUs), OR (b) passing the appropriate Praxis II subject test(s), OR (c) obtaining, at a minimum, 100 points on the Special Education HOUSSE rubric (veteran teachers only.)
- ❖ Special Education teachers are *not* required to meet highly qualified requirements if they are not providing core academic content instruction as the teacher of record. However, **all** students enrolled in grades K – 12 must be provided core academic content instruction by either a Special Education teacher or one who is certified in the content area.

CERTIFICATE CHANGES

- ❖ The names of most SpEd certificates have changed. Many were changed by adding “Consultative Special Education” to the beginning of the certificate title. Some that were given completely new names include:
 - (a) Interrelated is now *Special Education General Curriculum*
 - (b) Mental Retardation is now *Special Education Adapted Curriculum* and *Special Education General Curriculum*
 - (c) Hearing Impaired is now *Special Education Deaf Education*
 - (d) Orthopedically Impaired is now *Special Education Physical and Health Disabilities*
- ❖ These certificates allow teachers to provide Special Education support to students with disabilities within a “consultative” or co-teaching model. In other words, the Special Education teacher can work with another teacher who holds certification in the core content concentration area as a co-teacher or as a consultant, providing special education expertise for students in an inclusive classroom setting.
- ❖ These certificates do *not* allow Special Education teachers to be the **teacher of record** for core content subjects (including English/Language Arts, Reading, Math, Science, Social Studies), unless the teacher has a core academic concentration on his/her certificate for the subject.

CORE ACADEMIC CONTENT CONCENTRATIONS

- ❖ The PSC has evaluated transcripts for teachers who have renewable certificates in Special Education and who were employed by Georgia school systems during the last two years. Core academic content concentration areas were added to their Special Education certificates during the conversion to the new titles. The concentrations were identified based on 15 semester hours

of core academic content credit on any available college transcripts. These content areas were added at the P-5 and 4-8 cognitive level only.

- ❖ An appeals procedure to request consideration of additional core content concentration areas at the middle grade cognitive level is available until August 31, 2006. Send an e-mail message to spedappeal@gapsc.com with the following information:
 - Your name and Social Security number or Certificate number
 - The specific Core Academic Content Concentration for which you think you qualify
 - The specific college transcript/s (15 sem hr) or PLU transcript(s)* (25 PLUs) or combination of the two that reflect the content courses (not methods courses) you think will qualify. The specific content course numbers and titles must be listed along with the institution/s from which they were earned.
 - If you believe that you qualify for a Cognitive Level that is not reflected on your certificate. Please reference in your e-mail the **specific content area exam** that you think will qualify **in addition to ALL the information above** that is requested for the Concentration.

- ❖ Although PLUs were not considered in the transcript analysis that was completed before August 15, 2005, PLUs will be considered with proper documentation that they are content and not pedagogy courses. A combined total of the equivalent of 15 sem. hours (5 PLUs = 3 sem. hrs.) is required to add a content concentration at the middle grades level. A combined total of the equivalent of 21 sem. hours (5 PLUs = 3 sem. hrs.) is required to add a content concentration at the secondary level.

- ❖ In addition to the transcript analysis described above, there are other ways to add content concentration areas:
 - *Content Assessment(s), OR
 - Recommendation from Approved Provider (approved under the new rules), OR
 - Transcript showing a major in a content field, OR
 - HOUSSE Criteria (for veteran Special Education teachers teaching content)

*The currently applicable content tests and cognitive levels are provided on the Testing Options Table, which is available at www.gapsc.com/nclb/home.html, Section 8.

All options above except the transcript analysis option will continue to be available after August 31, 2006.

DEFINITIONS

Consultative is used to refer to the specific roles that special education teachers have when they are providing services in their area(s) of exceptionality(ies). The term incorporates references such as inclusion, mainstreaming, collaborative or co-teacher.

The "**teacher of record**" is defined as the teacher who is responsible for direct instruction of core academic content subjects. Students being taught core academic subjects must be taught by a teacher who is highly qualified to teach that content area and grade level. For special education students this may be either a general education or special education teacher who is certified to teach the subject and grade level.

Core academic content concentration areas for special education teachers include language arts, mathematics, science, reading, and social science. Eligibility for a concentration is based on five content courses (15 semester hours/25 PLUs) or completion of the appropriate content area exam (Praxis II, etc.). Eligibility for concentration at the secondary **cognitive level** is based on seven content courses (21 semester hours/35 PLUs) or completion of the appropriate content area exam (Praxis II, etc.) or completion of HOUSSE.

Cognitive level refers to the grade level of instruction provided to Special Education students and is based on a description of how well the student is performing on the curriculum being provided, as described in the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Cognitive levels included grades P-5, 4-8, and 6 – 12 and parallel certification grade spans except for P-12 certificates.

HOUSSE is an assessment that may be used to verify a veteran teacher's competency if the teacher has not met either the content or testing requirement in a specific core academic content area. A score of 100 points or more on the Georgia Content Area Rubric is required to determine that a veteran regular education teacher or special education teacher is "highly qualified," and/or to add core academic content concentrations to special education teachers' certificates. Since HOUSSE is not time limited, it will remain available for teachers in Georgia. A **veteran teacher** is one who is not new to the profession and is defined as a teacher in a public school who has been teaching a total of three or more complete school years. The document and instructions for its completion can be found at www.gapsc.com/nclb/Admin/Files/HOUSSE.pdf.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Specific information regarding these changes can be found at the following web sites:

Georgia Professional Standards Commission	Title II, Part A: Improving Teacher Quality
http://www.gapsc.com/	http://www.gapsc.com/nclb/home.html
Certification Rules, Testing Information	Highly Qualified Requirements
	<i>GA Implementation Guidelines (Section 8), HOUSSE Rubric & Instructions, Special Education Testing Chart, Frequently Asked Questions for Special Educators</i>