
Transylvania County Board of Education Planning Retreat

Monday, February 1, 2010

Exceptional Children Licensure and OCS Program Update

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PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

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Information Related to Exceptional Children Licensure

(Praxis 0511 and HOUSSE)

Background

With the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2001 the United States Department of Education (USED) initiated regulations regarding teaching credentials in the “core content” areas of English, reading, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, civics and government, economics, foreign languages, arts, history, geography, Exceptional Children, and Elementary Education.

All schools are required to report the number of teachers who are “highly qualified (HQ)” each year. LEAs with schools over a certain percentage of non-highly qualified teachers may be directed to use their Title II dollars toward increasing teacher quality. Title I schools are required to notify parents of students who are being taught core subjects by non-highly qualified teachers for four weeks or more.

Monitoring Results

In a recent Title II monitoring, USED staff determined that the Praxis 0511 Fundamental Subjects: Content Knowledge test **does not** satisfy HQ requirements for special education teachers teaching core subjects in middle and high schools, grades 6-12. Teachers of core content for special education in middle and high schools must be held to the same standard as general education core content teachers. This ruling **does not prevent** special education teachers from providing curriculum assistance in the core subjects as long as the assistance is **in addition to** regular instruction with a HQ teacher who is the teacher of record. **Elementary** special education teachers who have passed the Praxis 0511 are HQ to teach core content as well as provide curriculum assistance. This ruling **does not** apply to teachers instructing students on the Extended Content Standards (assessed with Extend 1) at any grade level.

NCDPI Findings:

The Education Testing Service concurs that the Praxis 0511 is not the same standard to which North Carolina secondary core content teachers are held.

Inquiry by the Office of Representative Bob Etheridge concurred that North Carolina was not holding its middle and high school special education core content teachers to the same standards as its general education core content teachers.

Up until April 2007, teachers who were not new to the profession could be designated "Highly Qualified" through the NC HOUSSE (High, Objective, Uniform, State-Standard of Evaluation).

Findings indicate that North Carolina's HOUSSE process for special education core content teachers was not as rigorous as the general education HOUSSE process.

The Task Force composed of personnel administrators and exceptional children directors, that was convened during the implementation of NCLB requirements, determined that HOUSSE and Praxis 0511 were not rigorous enough to warrant general education core content credentials. Consequently, special education teachers who took the 0511 had "special education" English, math, etc. designated on their licenses. Therefore, special education core content teachers (licensed through HOUSSE and Praxis 0511) are not being held to the same standard as general education core content teachers.

Resolution

Special education teachers may not be the teacher of record in secondary core content subjects covered under NCLB unless the teachers hold the **same core content license** as general education core content teachers.

NCDPI will treat licensure for secondary core content areas and special education as **separate entities**.

The licensing of special education teachers **will not change**. **All teachers who were covered by this finding remain highly qualified special education teachers.** It is unreasonable to expect special education teachers to pass Praxis tests in subjects for which they did not study or in which they have no proclivity. Special education teachers provide a very valuable service in their own field. Special education students are entitled to a teacher not only highly qualified in content, but also a teacher highly qualified in instructional modifications offered through special education.

All teachers of secondary core content will be licensed and deemed highly qualified through the same processes. Teachers may be highly qualified in core content subject areas in which they earn 24 hours with a "C" average or better, through successful scores on Praxis II, or through National Board Certification. (Although National Board Certification cannot be used for the "highly qualified" requirements for special education.)

Most special education students will receive core content instruction through a co-teaching model between special education and general education. The Exceptional Children Division at NCDPI will be providing technical assistance to directors of exceptional children, directors of general curriculum, and principals of middle and high schools to assist with training staff and implementation of this model.

The NC Virtual Public School should be a viable option to **partner** with special education in providing appropriate core content instruction to special education students.

NCDPI will examine systems (SAR report, etc.) that need to be adjusted to reflect this new model of instructional delivery.

LEA/School Required Actions

Letters should have been sent to parents in Title I schools in situations where children are being taught core content subjects by a non-highly qualified teacher.

For the **2009-2010** academic year, all middle and high schools principals should not count as highly qualified any special education teacher demonstrating core content qualification through the Praxis 0511 if that teacher is delivering core content instruction in core content courses covered by NCLB.

For the **2010-2011** academic year, all middle and high school principals should not count as highly qualified any special education teacher of core content unless that teacher has been licensed in that core content area through the same process as general education teachers. (A list of teachers who were licensed in core content through HOUSSE and hold only special education core content qualifications will be forwarded to personnel administrators in the spring. Those teachers will no longer be highly qualified to deliver core content at the secondary level.)

Conclusion

Since the implementation of NCLB, North Carolina has attempted to address the delivery of core content to special education students through a licensure solution. Because the standard for secondary core content delivery is so high for one person to satisfy - both special education requirements and core content requirements - it is the finding of the NCDPI that a licensure solution is not likely. In most instances, the solution will rest in a different instructional delivery model in which core content specialists work together with special educators to provide appropriate instruction for students.

Some special educators may feel they can meet core content licensure requirements in some subjects, and IDEA and Title II dollars may be used to support them through that process. However, NCDPI discourages LEA central office and school administrators from placing the burden of this content requirement on individuals who did not choose to study core content in their preparation programs. These individuals provide a very valuable service through special education, and that value should not be diminished. Special education teachers impacted through Praxis 0511 and HOUSSE are still highly qualified. Their employment status **should not** be impacted through these findings.

As secondary schools transition to new instructional delivery options, there will be many questions. The Licensure and Exceptional Children Divisions are preparing a Question/Answer document that will continue to be updated as new questions from the field are considered. That document will be available in January. If you have additional questions regarding licensure status, please contact Nadine Ejire at NEjire@dpi.state.nc.us. If you need instructional delivery assistance, please contact Susan Davis at sdavis@dpi.state.nc.us.