

# **Meeting Montana's Federally Approved Definition for "Highly Qualified Teachers"**

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) October 2006**

**This document contains general questions and answers directly related to the requirements for "Highly Qualified Teachers" as defined by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Sections 1119 and 9101(11 and 23). The answers are based on the most recent information available as of September 2006. For specific information about Montana teacher licensure and endorsement requirements please contact the Montana Educator Licensure Unit at the Office of Public Instruction Web site at [www.opi.mt.gov/cert](http://www.opi.mt.gov/cert) or by telephone at (406) 444-3150.**

### **1. What does the term "Highly Qualified Teacher" mean?**

"Highly Qualified Teacher" is a term defined in the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and focuses on three characteristics: 1) possession of a bachelor's degree; 2) holds a teaching license (some exceptions apply); and 3) has demonstrated content knowledge in each subject taught.

Under the NCLB, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) requires each state to define a "Highly Qualified Teacher" based on statute and guidelines developed by USED. USED requires states to file a definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher," accompanied by data to demonstrate that each teacher meets the state's approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher." The USED has approved Montana's definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher."

### **2. What is Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?**

Montana teachers who hold a Montana license and are teaching in their endorsed subjects, in most instances, meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher." The requirement that teachers be "Highly Qualified" applies to all public elementary and secondary school teachers who teach a "core academic subject" and are employed by Montana school districts. Specific instances for which exceptions may apply include: secondary teachers teaching multi-subjects in "core academic subjects" (questions 12 and 13) and special education teachers (questions 14-18).

The term "core academic subjects," as defined by NCLB, means English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography.

**3. If I hold an active Montana teaching license effective prior to July 1, 2006, do I meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?**

If you hold an active Montana teaching license effective prior to July 1, 2006, and are teaching in your endorsed area(s), in most instances, you meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher."

**4. I will complete a Montana educator preparation program on or after July 1, 2006, and plan to seek a Montana license. Will I meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?**

**Elementary Teachers New to the Profession**

**If**, as an elementary teacher new to the profession and licensed effective on or after July 1, 2006, you:

- hold at least a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university; and
- complete a Montana Board of Public Education accredited professional educator preparation program;
- earn a minimum combined score of 8 based on a multi-dimensional content test\* embedded in the educator preparation program as a condition for recommending new teachers for licensure; and
- obtain a Montana license (recommendation for licensure and endorsement by an accredited professional educator preparation program),

**Then**, you meet Montana's federally approved definition of "Highly Qualified Teacher."

*\*The test includes:*

- 1) *grade-point average on at least 30 hours of postsecondary content course work;*
- 2) *performance-based assessments of content knowledge and skill conducted by a highly qualified supervisory teacher and university supervisor; and*
- 3) *performance on the Praxis II.*

**Secondary Teachers New to the Profession**

**If**, as a secondary teacher new to the profession and licensed effective on or after July 1, 2006, you:

- hold at least a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university;
- complete a Montana Board of Public Education accredited professional educator preparation program; and
- obtain a Montana license, with endorsement based on course preparation related to the subject to be taught (recommendation for licensure and endorsement by an accredited professional educator preparation program),

**Then**, you meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher."

**5. Will I meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher" if I complete an approved teaching minor in a "core academic subject" on or after July 1, 2006?**

**If**, you are recommended by an accredited professional educator preparation program for endorsement in a "core academic subject" based on completion of an approved teaching minor, **Then**, you meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher."

**6. As an experienced teacher, do I meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher" if I have a minor in a "core academic subject"?**

**If**, you are an experienced\* teacher and

- hold an academic teaching major, and
- hold a minor in the endorsed "core academic subject" you are teaching,

**Then**, you may meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher" on the same basis as a new teacher, as described in the answer to question 5. Alternatively, experienced teachers may satisfy the definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher" by completing the so-called HOUSSE procedure, which stands for a High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation, specifically through our Teaching Endorsement Internship Program.

*\*"Experienced" means, a teacher with one or more years of successfully teaching that "core academic subject."*

*For teachers who hold endorsements in Broadfield Social Studies (question 12), Broadfield Science (question 13) or Special Education (questions 14-18) refer to specific sections concerning your endorsed area.*

**7. What is the role of the school district in meeting Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?**

By the end of the 2006-07 school year, school districts must meet the requirement that 100 percent of the teachers they hire to teach "core academic subjects," including elementary school teachers who teach those subjects, meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher."

**8. If I hold National Board Certification, do I meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?**

National Board certified teachers who hold a Montana license and are teaching in their endorsed area(s) meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher."

**9. If I meet another state's approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher," do I automatically meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?**

Teachers who meet another state's approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher" also meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher," provided they also meet Montana's licensure requirements. For more information, contact the Montana Educator Licensure Unit of the Office of Public Instruction on the OPI Web site at [www.opi.mt.gov/cert](http://www.opi.mt.gov/cert) or by telephone at (406) 444-3150.

**10. If I meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher," what do I need to become "Highly Qualified" in another state?**

Contact the specific state education agency for "Highly Qualified Teacher" requirements of that state.

**11. What do middle school teachers have to do to meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?**

If a middle school teacher holds a Montana teaching license effective prior to July 1, 2006, and is teaching in an endorsed area(s), in most instances, that teacher will meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher."

**12. If my active Montana educator license includes an endorsement in Broadfield Social Studies, do I meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?**

Teachers, with a Broadfield Social Studies endorsement meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher," with regard to teaching social studies and, based on

preparation in course content in these areas, with regard to the specific disciplines of social studies including history, civics and government, geography, and economics.

**13. If my active Montana educator license includes an endorsement in Broadfield Science, do I meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?**

Teachers, with a Broadfield Science endorsement meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher," in Science. Science is considered a core academic subject according to the NCLB Title IX Section 1901 (11).

**14. What are the general requirements to meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher" for special education teachers hired after July 1, 2006?**

A public elementary or secondary school special education teacher meets Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher" if the teacher holds an active Montana license as a special education teacher or is participating in the Montana Special Education Teacher Endorsement Project. The general requirements apply to all special education teachers including teachers providing consultation and collaborative services, those teaching core academic subjects to state standards, and those teaching alternate achievement standards to students with significant cognitive disabilities. Those special education teachers who teach core academic subjects also must meet the content knowledge requirements that apply to other teachers of core academic subjects.

**15. As a special education teacher, I will not be teaching core academic subjects, but instead, I will exclusively provide consultation or collaborative services with general education teachers who meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher." What is necessary for me to meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?**

Any public elementary school or secondary school special education teacher teaching in Montana, who is not teaching a "core academic subject," meets Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher" if the teacher holds an active Montana license as a special education teacher or is participating in the Montana Special Education Teacher Endorsement Project.

**16. As a special education teacher, I teach "core academic subjects" to students with significant cognitive disabilities who qualify for taking the Criterion Referenced Test-Alternate (CRT-Alt). What is necessary for me to meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?**

A special education teacher who teaches "core academic subjects" exclusively to children who are assessed against alternate achievement standards meets Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher" if the teacher holds an active Montana license as a special education teacher or is participating in the Montana Special Education Teacher Endorsement Project, provided that the teacher meets the content knowledge requirements applicable to an elementary school teacher, or, if the level of instruction is above that level, has subject matter knowledge appropriate to the level of instruction provided.

**17. I am a secondary level Special Education teacher new to the profession and I teach multiple "core academic subjects" exclusively to children with disabilities. What is necessary for me to meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?**

A secondary level special education teacher who is new to the profession and teaches multiple "core academic subjects" exclusively to secondary students with disabilities meets Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher" if he/she holds an active Montana teaching license endorsed in Special Education or is participating in the Montana Special Education Teacher Endorsement Project, and the teacher meets Montana's definition of highly qualified in mathematics, language arts, or science.

The new federal regulations effective October 13, 2006, implementing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Information Act of 2004 (IDEA) provide guidance to states' HQT requirements for multi-subject special education teachers. Following a review of the new regulations, the OPI will establish a High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE) for Special Education teachers consistent with federal regulatory guidance. To maintain "Highly Qualified Teacher" status special education teachers will be required to complete the HOUSSE within two years. Teachers working in a rural district who qualify under the Small Rural School Achievement Program (SRSA, Title VI, NCLB) must complete the HOUSSE within three years.

**18. I am an elementary level Special Education teacher and I exclusively teach children with disabilities. What is necessary for me to meet Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher"?**

A special education teacher who teaches exclusively to children with disabilities at the elementary and middle school levels meets Montana's federally approved definition of a "Highly Qualified Teacher" if he/she holds an active Montana teaching license endorsed in Special Education and, with regard to teachers new to the profession, meets the requirements applicable to new regular elementary school teachers described under question 4 or, for veteran teachers, meets the HOUSSE standards.



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Linda McCulloch  
Superintendent

October 17, 2006

Dear Friends:

Good news! After four years of working with the U.S. Department of Education, I am pleased to tell you that we have reached agreement on the "Highly Qualified Teacher" requirements as contained in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). There are many issues involved in the agreement we reached, but I believe there are two very important issues of interest to all of us. First, most teachers who held a Montana certificate and endorsement in the area(s) in which they teach meet the Montana federally approved definition of "Highly Qualified Teacher." Exceptions to this rule for veteran teachers include some special education teachers.

The other important issue in the agreement is that multiple measures will be the basis our teacher education programs will use to recommend new elementary teachers for Montana Educator Licenses. These measures include a grade point average on content course work, professional evaluation of student teaching, and a grade on the Praxis II content test. I believe these multiple measures are better predictors of educator knowledge than a single test score.

Today we have posted on the OPI Web site a document containing frequently asked questions concerning the "Highly Qualified Teacher" requirements. You will find these questions and answers at the following link:  
<http://www.opi.mt.gov/pdf/FEDPrgms/HQT/06OctFAQ.pdf> .

I believe this document will answer your questions concerning the implementation of this NCLB requirement. Questions about educator qualifications for specific licenses and endorsements should continue to be directed to my Educator Licensure staff. If you have additional questions concerning the "Highly Qualified Teacher" requirements of NCLB, do not hesitate to contact my office.

I hope the school year is going well for you and Montana's students.

Warm regards,

Linda McCulloch  
State Superintendent