

Questions and Answers About Teacher Quality

Q: What are the new teacher-quality provisions in ESEA?

A: Title II of ESEA provides grants to state and local educational agencies (LEAs), state agencies for higher education, and eligible partnerships for improving teacher and principal quality. States are authorized to use the funds for professional development initiatives that include: implementing mentoring programs; teacher retention and recruitment programs; promoting reciprocity of teacher certification or licensure between or among states; supporting the training of teachers to better integrate technology; and providing assistance to teachers to meet certification, licensure or other requirements--including the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. States may also use the funds to reform teacher and principal certification or licensure requirements and tenure. States have great flexibility in what their professional development programs will include. Although tenure reform, development of merit-based performance systems, and teacher testing are specifically mentioned as allowable uses of funds, there is no federal requirement.

Q: How will the money be distributed?

A: States will receive grants under a formula that is based 65 percent on poverty and 35 percent on student population. No state will receive less money than it currently gets. States must send 95 percent of the money allocated to LEAs under a formula that is based 80 percent on poverty and 20 percent on student population. Programs that can be funded through these grants include mentoring, reforming teacher and principal certification, recruitment and retention initiatives, and technology programs.

Q: Is the LEA required to target its Title II, Part A funds?

A: Yes. LEAs must assure in their Title II plan to the state that funds are targeted to schools that have the lowest proportion of highly qualified teachers, have the largest average class-size, or are identified for school improvement under Title I.

Q: What happened to the class-size program?

A: A number of programs, including the class-size initiative, are being combined into the Title II "Teacher" title. State and local educational agencies still may use money under Title II to hire teachers, but there is no dedicated funding stream. State and local plans will have to be monitored carefully to ensure that professional development and teacher hiring needs are well balanced.

Q: Are there any new requirements for Title I teachers? What about non-Title I teachers?

A: Beginning with the 2002-03 school year, each LEA receiving money under ESEA must ensure that all teachers hired and supported with Title I funds are “highly qualified.” Each state must develop a plan outlining how it will achieve the goal of **all** teachers meeting the definition of “highly qualified” by the 2005-06 school year. The plan requires an annual increase in the percentage of highly qualified teachers in each LEA and school as well as an annual increase in the percentage of teachers receiving professional development. It calls for an end to emergency credentialing and out-of-field teaching but does not require testing of veteran teachers, which some had sought.

The law requires that to be considered “highly qualified,” any public elementary school or secondary school teacher must have:

- obtained full state certification as a teacher (including alternative certification); or
- passed the state teacher licensing exam; or
- hold a license to teach in a state; and
- not had certification or licensure requirement waived on an emergency, temporary or provisional basis.

Elementary and secondary school teachers who are new to the profession must hold at least a bachelor’s degree and demonstrate a high level of competence by passing a “rigorous state test.” Elementary teachers must demonstrate subject knowledge and teaching skills in reading, writing, mathematics, and other areas of the basic elementary school curriculum. Middle and high school teachers must demonstrate a high level of competency in each of the academic subjects they teach by passing a subject matter test in each subject **or** by successfully completing (in each of the academic subjects in which the teacher teaches) an academic major, graduate degree, coursework equivalent to an undergraduate major, or advanced certification or credentialing. **(For both elementary and secondary school teachers, state required licensing exams in subject areas count toward meeting this requirement.)**

Teachers not new to the profession must hold at least a bachelor’s degree and be licensed by the state. These teachers must also meet the requirements for new teachers or demonstrate competence in each academic subject they teach based on a high, objective, and uniform standard of evaluation that is set by the state.

These requirements apply to ALL, not just Title I, teachers by the 2005-06 school year. Both Title I and Title II professional development money can be used to help teachers become highly qualified.

Q: What happens to districts that do not meet the teacher-quality requirements?

A: LEAs that fail to meet their annual teacher-quality goals for two consecutive years will be required to develop improvement strategies. After three years, LEAs must implement state-developed strategies to meet the requirement.