



Highly-qualified Teacher (HQT) and Paraprofessional Requirements:

Beginning in the 2016-17 school year, districts are no longer required to identify and document highly qualified status of teachers and paraprofessionals. In the coming months, districts will finalize highly qualified reporting requirements for the 2015-16 school year. ESSA includes assurances that teachers and paraprofessionals meet state policies and licensure requirements:

State Board of Education 0520-01-02-.03 EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS.

- (1) A teacher or principal shall hold a valid Tennessee teacher license with an endorsement covering the work assignment as provided in T.C.A. Title 49, Chapter 5.
- (2) A teacher may teach up to two sections of one course outside the area of endorsement. For a teacher to teach more than one course or more than two sections of one course outside the area of endorsement, an employment standard waiver must be requested and approved. Teachers assigned two or more sections of a course outside the area of endorsement before June 30, 1976 may continue to teach those courses until a new assignment is made by the local school officials.

T.C.A. 49-5-101. Basic requirements.

- (a) No person shall be employed as principal, teacher or supervisor of any public elementary or high school by any local school district, or receive any pay for such services out of the public school funds of the local school district until the person presents to the director of schools a valid license as prescribed in this part.

T.C.A. 49-5-111. Educational assistants.

- (a) Educational assistants shall have, at a minimum, a high school diploma or a GED(R) equivalent and shall show demonstrable proficiency in reading and writing skills.
- (b) If a licensed teacher to whom an educational assistant has been assigned is required to be absent from the classroom, the educational assistant may assume responsibility for the classroom in lieu of a substitute teacher. However, no educational assistant shall assume responsibility for the classroom for more than three (3) consecutive school days.

NOTE: ESSA also includes a requirement that low-income and minority children are not taught at disproportionate rates than other children by ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers. This requirement remains in effect for the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years for all states. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) will provide additional information on this new requirement in the future. (ESSA § 1111(g)(1)(B))

LEAs may verify the courses teachers are eligible to teach using the Correlations of Course and Endorsement Codes document found [here](#).

Contact Education.Licensing@tn.gov with questions related to the correlations document.



Reporting Requirements – Highly-Qualified:

A state and its LEAs must continue to comply with § 1119 of the ESEA, as amended by NCLB, through the 2015-16 school year, including the requirement that a state and LEA report information related to HQT based on the 2014–15 and 2015–16 school years. In the coming months, districts will finalize highly qualified reporting requirements for the 2015-16 school year.

ED is not requiring states to comply with the requirements in § 1119 of the ESEA, beginning in the 2016-17 school year, which set forth requirements for highly qualified teachers, the qualifications and duties for paraprofessionals, and use of funds to support compliance with the highly qualified teacher requirements. ED has identified the following data elements that a state or LEA **need not** report to *EDFacts*: highly qualified teacher data files based on data from the 2016-17 school year (file specification numbers: N063, N064).

Contact Education.Licensing@tn.gov for questions related to the final reporting requirements.

Special Education Teachers:

The ESSA amended the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) by removing the definition of “highly qualified” and the requirement that special education teachers be “highly qualified.”

A state is no longer required to ensure that special education teachers are “highly qualified” as defined in the ESEA beginning with the 2016-17 school year. The state must ensure that they meet the requirements of the IDEA (§ 602(10); 602(10)(B); 612(a)(14)(C)) by incorporating the requirement that an individual employed as a special education teacher in elementary school, middle school, or secondary school must meet the following:

- 1) have obtained full certification as a special education teacher (including certification obtained through alternative routes to certification), or passed the state special education teacher licensing examination and hold a license to teach in the state as a special education teacher;
- 2) not have had special education certification or licensure requirements waived on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis; and
- 3) hold at least a bachelor’s degree. Each state must continue to comply with these certification requirements during the 2016-17 school year.

It is recommended that Students with Disabilities, to the extent possible, be placed in general education courses with teachers who hold the appropriate academic or occupational endorsement.

Contact Theresa Nicholls (Theresa.Nicholls@tn.gov) with questions related to Special Education Teachers or Students with Disabilities.



Parent Notification:

Schools will no longer be required to provide notice to parents related to the highly qualified status of their child's teacher. NOTE: Under ESSA § 1112(e)(1)(A), at the beginning of each year, an LEA shall notify parents that they may request and the LEA will provide certain information regarding the professional qualifications of the student's teachers and paraprofessionals. This includes information about whether the student's teacher:

- 1) has met state qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction;
- 2) is teaching under emergency or other provisional status through which state qualification or licensing criteria have been waived;
- 3) is teaching in the field of discipline of the certification of the teacher; and
- 4) whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

In addition, Title I schools must notify parents if their student(s) has/have been taught for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who does not meet the applicable state certification requirements at the grade level and subject area in which the teacher has been assigned. [ESSA 1112(e)(1)(B)(ii)]

Contact Debby Thompson (Deborah.Thompson@tn.gov) for general questions related to changes in the highly qualified and parent notification requirements.