No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Highly Qualified Teacher Information for Special Education Teachers

Do special education teachers need to be Highly Qualified (HQ)?
Yes. All special education teachers must be HQ in special education. Special education teachers are HQ in special education if they are certified* in special education. In addition, some special education teachers must also be HQ in the subject(s) they teach.

- Special education teachers who do not have primary responsibility for delivering instruction in a core subject, such as SETSS (resource room and consultant teachers) and CTT (special education teachers working with an appropriately certified/licensed general education teacher in a collaborative team teaching class), must be HQ in special education.
- Special education teachers who teach special (self-contained) classes in common branch subjects in Grades K-6 or in classes composed exclusively of students, regardless of age, who are eligible for the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) must be HQ in special education and common branch subjects.
- Special education teachers who teach special (self-contained) classes in Grades 7-12 must be HQ in special education and each core academic subject they teach.

*Teachers who hold an equivalent license issued by the NYC Board of Examiners are considered certified.

What are the core academic subjects?
English, reading, language arts; mathematics; sciences; social studies (history, geography, economics, civics and government); foreign languages; the arts (art, dance, music, theater including public speaking, and drama).

How can special education teachers demonstrate that they are HQ for various classroom teaching assignments?
- Elementary – Certified special education teachers of special classes in common branch subjects in Grades K-6 and of classes composed exclusively of students, regardless of age, who are eligible for the NYSAA, are HQ for their assignments if they are certified in Special Education and have passed the LAST, the NYC Board of Examiners test or the HOUSSE.
- Secondary - Teachers certified in special education who teach one or more core academic subjects to a special (self-contained) class for students with disabilities in grades 7 – 12 or the age equivalent (or teach a special subject such as languages other than English, the arts or reading/literacy in a special class in Grades K-12) can demonstrate that they are HQ in each core academic subject by:
  - Holding a NYS teaching certificate in the core academic subject; OR
  - Having an undergraduate major or graduate degree or equivalents in the core academic subject; OR
  - Passing a Content Specialty Test (CST) in the subject or a NYC Board of Examiners test in the subject; OR
  - If beyond the first year of certification or teaching, using the HOUSSE (High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation) in the core academic subject; OR
  - If in the first year of certification or teaching AND if teaching multiple core academic subjects AND if highly qualified in math, science or language arts, using any of the above methods to demonstrate subject matter competency in the core academic subject within 2 years from the date of employment.

What is the HOUSSE (High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation)?
HOUSSE is an evaluation that enables teachers to demonstrate that they have subject matter competency in each core academic subject they teach using education, credentials, teaching experience and professional development. HOUSSE is available at http://www.nycenet.edu/offices/dhr/housey/.

How can a special education teacher demonstrate subject matter competency in multiple core subjects?
Most certified special education teachers teaching special classes in multiple core academic subjects may use the HOUSSE or other means to demonstrate subject matter competency for EACH core subject they have been teaching. Once a teacher has passed the HOUSSE in a subject, they do not need to take the HOUSSE again in subsequent years in that subject.

Should special education teachers use the HOUSSE for core subjects they may be asked to teach in the future?
Yes. Since there is a shortage of special education teachers that are also HQ in core subject areas, particularly at the middle and high school levels, we suggest that teachers take HOUSSE for those core subjects they may teach in the future. This may expand a teacher’s teaching options in the future.

Can teachers certified only in general education use the HOUSSE to demonstrate that they are HQ to be the teacher of record for a students with disabilities class? Can teachers certified only in special education use the HOUSSE to demonstrate that they are HQ to be the teacher of record for a general education class?
No. HOUSSE is used to demonstrate “subject” matter competency, not competency in teaching different student populations. Therefore, HOUSSE cannot be used by certified general education teachers (elementary, middle school generalist, content area) to teach special education students in a special (self-contained) class and HOUSSE cannot be used by special education teachers to teach a general education class.

Can special education teachers teach one period per day outside of their certification (incidental teaching) in a general education class and vice versa?
No. It is not permissible to assign special education teachers to teach a general education class on an incidental basis because incidental teaching is permitted for a “subject” that is outside of the teacher’s certification area, but not for different student populations. In the same way, teachers certified in general education cannot teach special classes on an incidental basis because IDEA requires teachers of special classes to be certified in special education. Incidental teaching doesn’t override that requirement.

How can principals help their special education teachers become HQ?
We ask HR Partners to work with principals to advise them of the options available to helping the teacher become Highly Qualified. Options include:
- Assigning teachers to their area of certification AND encouraging teachers to take the HOUSSE in other core subjects they may teach in the future, if appropriate. Teachers should be reassigned- if appropriate- for the next possible semester to areas for which they are HQ.
- Using Title I funding (if available) to help teachers become HQ, either through exams or the HOUSSE.