



Education Brief

Highly Qualified Teachers And The Bridge Certificate Program

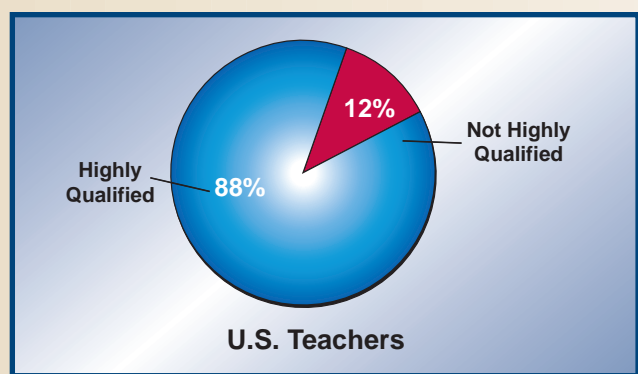
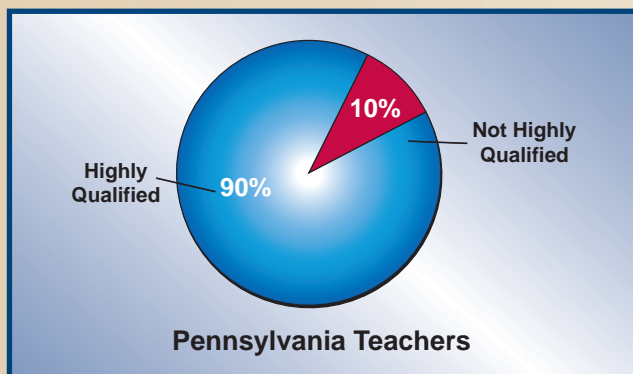
Senator James J. Rhoades

OVERVIEW

The federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) requires that all secondary level teachers who teach core academic subjects (English, reading/language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, foreign language) be “highly qualified” by the end of the 2005-2006 school year. To be “highly qualified,” most teachers must:

- Be fully certified by the state in which he or she will teach and not be teaching on a temporary, provisional or emergency basis;
- Hold at least a bachelor’s degree; and
- Demonstrate subject matter competency in each academic subject area, as determined by the state in which he or she will teach.

In Pennsylvania, approximately 90% of public school teachers are currently considered “highly qualified.” Nationally, approximately 88% of teachers are considered highly qualified.



Under these general parameters, states are required to create a process to determine whether existing teachers are highly qualified under NCLB. In Pennsylvania, the vast majority of teachers have met this standard, because they are properly certified in the content area in which they teach.

The federal law also allows states to create an alternate evaluation process for teachers who teach in multiple content areas and who may not meet the general definition of highly qualified teachers.

Alternate Pathways to Highly Qualified Teacher Status

Under federal law and regulations, teachers who teach multiple content areas and who are not certified in each of the content areas they teach may use an alternate process to reach highly qualified status.

ELIGIBLE TEACHERS

- Middle school level teachers;
- Special education teachers who teach multiple content areas to students at or above the seventh grade level;
- Alternative education teachers who teach multiple content areas to students at or above the seventh grade level; and
- ESL teachers who teach outside of their original instructional certification.

Federal regulations allow states to establish a Highly Objective Uniform State System of Evaluation (HOUSSE), for eligible teachers to reach highly qualified status.

The State Board of Education and the Department of Education have recently approved a HOUSSE process for Pennsylvania teachers. This process is known as the Bridge Certificate Program.

Bridge I – Pennsylvania’s Alternate HQT Process for Single Content Areas

On June 18, the State Board of Education approved the Bridge I certification program. Bridge I is a process through which current, certified teachers who are teaching in content areas outside of their certification can earn additional certification in one additional content area and so achieve highly qualified status.



The Bridge I program allows eligible teachers to combine experience, additional coursework and other means to demonstrate that they are highly qualified.

Under Bridge I, a teacher must attain twelve “points” in a content area by July 1, 2005 in order to qualify for the program. Once qualified, the teacher will have until July 1, 2008 to complete an additional eighteen “points” in that content area.

BRIDGE I POINT SYSTEM				
Criteria	Phase 1 Points (Total of 12 Needed)		Phase 2 Points (Total of 18 Needed)	
	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
Satisfactory Teaching – 2 pts. per year	2	6	2	6
Act 48 Hours (Content only)– 1 pt./30 hours	0	6	0	9
College/university Credits – 1 pt./1 semester hour credit	0	10	0	12
Academic Scholarship	0	6	0	6

Bridge II – Pennsylvania’s Alternate HQT Process for Multiple Content Areas

On January 20, the State Board approved the Bridge II certification program. Bridge II is designed for teachers who teach in multiple content areas outside of their certification. For example, a teacher certified in special education may teach several subject areas in a self-contained classroom.

These teachers would complete the Bridge I process in a single content area and then begin the Bridge II process in each of the remaining content areas in which they teach.



Under Bridge II, a teacher who has completed the Bridge I process in one content area would:

- Show that the teacher has at some point completed a core course in the content area they teach; and
- Pass the PRAXIS exam of fundamental content knowledge; or
- Receive a satisfactory classroom evaluation.