



NEWS RELEASE

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ARKANSAS PLAN FOR HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS RECEIVES FEDERAL APPROVAL

The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) received notice today that its plan for ensuring that core classes in Arkansas public schools are taught by "highly qualified teachers" has been fully approved by the U.S. Department of Education

"This is outstanding news," said Dr. Ken James, Arkansas Commissioner of Education. "I appreciate all the hard work my staff has put in to developing an excellent plan. I also know that this will help us achieve our goal in Arkansas to have the best quality teachers leading our students through the learning process. Good teachers, research clearly shows, are key to student achievement."

ADE submitted the final revisions to its plan on November 30. U.S. Department of Education Assistant Secretary Henry L. Johnson wrote in a letter informing ADE of the approval that, "In the judgment of the Department, the plan submitted on November 30, 2006 meets all six requirements and is now approved. I would like to congratulate you and your staff for this excellent work."

The requirements in the plan were to (1) provide a detailed analysis of the core academic subject classes in the State that are currently not being taught by highly qualified teachers; (2) provide information on HQT status in each school and the steps the state will take to ensure that each school and school district has plans in place to assist teachers who are not highly qualified to attain HQT status as quickly as possible; (3) provide information on the technical assistance, programs and services that the state will offer to assist schools in successfully completing their HQT plans, particularly where large groups of teachers are not highly qualified, and the resources the schools will use to meet their HQT goals; (4) describe how the state will work with schools that fail to reach the 100 percent

HQT goal by the end of the 2006-2007 school year; (5) explain how and when the state will complete the process for teachers not new to the profession who were hired prior to the end of the 2005-2006 school year; and (6) and describe how the SEA will discontinue the use of those procedures for teachers hired after the end of the 2005-2006 school year. The revised plan also had to include a copy of the state's written "equity plan" for ensuring that poor or minority children are not taught by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers at higher rates than other children.

The Arkansas plan stated that 85 percent of classes requiring a highly qualified teacher met those criteria, with a fairly equal distribution between poor and high minority schools. Math is the subject in Arkansas with the lowest percentage of classes being taught by highly qualified teachers. The Arkansas plan also has revised procedures for requiring teachers who do not have highly qualified status to meet the criteria within a given point of time.

"We really believe as we improve our data collection system that we will find that more of our classes are actually taught by highly qualified teachers," said Beverly Williams, ADE assistant commissioner for human resources. "This was the first year of true data collection through our Arkansas Public Schools Computer Network, and we've found some ways to improve coding and collection."

Areas requiring highly qualified teachers include: English, mathematics, science, social studies, art, music, foreign languages, pre-kindergarten through fourth grade, middle level grades, special education and alternative learning classes (for subject content areas being taught).

Highly qualified teachers are those with an Arkansas teaching license who demonstrate mastery of their subject areas by meeting one of the following criteria:

- Have passed the appropriate Praxis exam for subject content they teach
- Hold National Board Certification for the subject area in which they teach
- Have majored in or have a majority of college credit hours in the subject in which they teach
- Meet the qualifications of AR HOUSSSE, which takes into consideration years of experience, professional development, college/university courses taken as well as professional leadership roles – all of which must be in the content area.

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The Arkansas Department of Education strives to ensure that all children in the state have access to a quality education by providing educators, administrators and staff with leadership, resources and training.