

# The Highly Qualified Special Education Teacher

On December 3, 2004, the President signed the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004). IDEA requirements related to ensuring special educators are highly qualified by August 1, 2006, are included in the reauthorization.

Most districts struggle to determine the highly qualified status of special education teachers under IDEA which is aligned with No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Highly qualified (HQ) means that a teacher is fully certified and has demonstrated an appropriate level of knowledge in the core subject they are teaching.

## **What's special about special education?**

All teachers in core academic subjects must have a bachelor's degree, full state certification, and demonstrate subject competency to be highly qualified. For special education teachers, their state certification must be in special education and they must demonstrate subject competency in each core academic subject for which they are the teacher of record. The new standards provide more flexibility and options in demonstrating subject competency for special education teachers, but it remains a challenge to meet HQ standards in all core subjects taught for self-contained classrooms.

## **June 2006 is the deadline for teachers and paraprofessionals to meet the highly qualified status.**

The deadline is approaching for teachers and paraprofessionals to be deemed "highly qualified" under the provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act. All Title I paraprofessionals who have any instructional support duties must satisfy one of the following criteria:

- (1) Completed two years of study at an institution of higher education;
- (2) Obtained an associate's (or higher) degree; or
- (3) Met a rigorous standard of quality and be able to demonstrate, through a formal state or local academic assessment, knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading, writing and mathematics (or, as appropriate, reading readiness, writing readiness and mathematics readiness).

The ESC has three dates scheduled to provide the internet-based Para Pro test:

Friday, November 11, 2005, Monday, February 20, 2006, and Saturday, April 29, 2006

Times for all test dates are 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. There are only 12 computers available; therefore, you must reserve a space by calling (740) 393-6767.

For further information on Highly Qualified Teachers go to:

[http://www.ode.state.oh.us/esea/Highly\\_Qualified\\_Teachers/Default.asp](http://www.ode.state.oh.us/esea/Highly_Qualified_Teachers/Default.asp)