

Highly Qualified Info Must Be Requested

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The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires that, at the beginning of every school year, school districts which receive Title I funds must notify the parents of each child attending a Title I school that parents may request information about the qualifications of their child's teachers and paraprofessionals. However, one large problem with this is that many states, including Oklahoma, have not developed the standards needed to determine whether some teachers are highly qualified.

The Act does say that "*parents may request*" certain information about their child's teachers and, "*upon request,*" the District will provide:

1. Whether the teacher has met state qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction.
2. Whether the teacher is teaching under emergency or other provisional status through which state qualification or licensing criteria have been waived.
3. The baccalaureate degree major of the teacher and any other graduate certification or degree held by the teacher, and the field of discipline of the certification or degree.
4. Whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and their qualifications.

In addition to the information that parents may request, an "*individual Title I School must notify parents:*"

1. When their child has been assigned to a teacher who does not meet the highly qualified requirements.
2. When their child has been taught for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who does not meet the highly qualified requirements.

The Act goes on to mandate that information must be collected and disseminated in a manner which protects the privacy of individuals. Therefore, districts must take precautions when collecting information about teachers to ensure that information is not revealed to individuals who do not have a right to know, which may include certain administrators, staff and teachers. Moreover, districts should only notify parents of information when requested or required by law, should only provide information regarding the child's specific teachers, and not provide information regarding teachers that the child does not have.

Hopefully Oklahoma's State Department of Education will soon clarify all the standards for determining who will be considered highly qualified. In the meantime, if you believe your district is not following the requirements of the law, please contact your regional OEA Advocacy Specialist for assistance.