

What It Means To Be Highly Qualified

October 2010

We want so much from our teachers. To be well trained in educational best practice. To know the subjects they teach and be full of enthusiasm to share that knowledge. To be good at sharing that knowledge, lighting the thirst for more. To be excellent classroom managers, too, of course, as well as behavior experts in their own right. Not a job most of us could take on.

This webpage focuses on what it means to be a **highly qualified teacher**. We mean “highly qualified teacher” as the nation’s two main education laws use the term and define it. Those two laws are NCLB and IDEA.



In 2001, Congress passed the [No Child Left Behind](#) (NCLB), the nation’s general education law and historically known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The special focus of NCLB has been to close the gap between high- and low- performing children, especially the achievement gap between minority and non-minority children, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers. The term “highly qualified teacher” (HQT) is found and defined in NCLB.

The term’s also found the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#) (IDEA), as of its reauthorization in 2004. IDEA is the nation’s special education law. It uses the exact same definition of “highly qualified teacher” as NCLB and adds its own definition of what it means to be a highly qualified **special** educator.

Use the links below to explore the meaning of the term **highly qualified** as used in these two laws, and to locate sources of assistance and more information.

[How NCLB Defines “Highly Qualified”](#)

The definition of HQT found in NCLB guides teacher qualifications around the country and served as the model for the HQT definition used in IDEA.

[IDEA’s Definition of “Highly Qualified”](#)

IDEA now requires that the special educators who teach our children with disabilities meet standards of “highly qualified teachers,” a term it defines. Find out how—here.

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Here are six commonly asked questions about HQT, drawn from Module 7 of NICHCY’s *Building the Legacy* training curriculum on IDEA 2004.

[Training Materials on HQT](#)

Module 7 of NICHCY’s *Building the Legacy* training curriculum on IDEA 2004 focuses exclusively on HQT in both laws. The module includes a slideshow presentation, a trainer’s guide, and handouts for those participating in training on HQT.

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