



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
ACADEMIC IMPROVEMENT AND TEACHER QUALITY PROGRAMS

August 13, 2008

Ms. Anne Bordonaro
State Department of Education
120 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

Dear Ms. Bordonaro:

On February 22, 2008 the Vermont Department of Education (VDE) submitted a response to the monitoring report that resulted from a program review conducted by the Academic Improvement and Teacher Quality Programs office of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. The program office team reviewed your State's progress in meeting the highly qualified teacher (HQT) provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, and your State's administration of the ESEA Title II, Part A Improving Teacher Quality State Grants program. Thank you for sending this response to the monitoring report.

This response, in combination with additional information submitted on April 2 and 15, May 8 and 13, and July 18, 2008, satisfactorily addresses the findings identified in the monitoring report. In response to the monitoring findings, VDE has revised its HQT requirements for middle school teachers, including those with provisional endorsements, by requiring them to either pass the appropriate middle level or secondary Praxis II content exam or to have a major or its equivalent in the applicable content area in order to hold the middle school endorsement.

In addition, VDE updated its 2008-2009 Consolidated Federal Programs (CFP) Application to include an assurance that all teachers hired to teach in Title I positions and all teachers paid with Title II, Part A program funds for the purpose of class size reduction are highly qualified. The State will also add these requirements to its monitoring documents.

VDE has also developed a plan and timeline that the State will implement to ensure that all determinations of the highly qualified status of special education teachers who teach core academic subjects are made based on the students' grade level and level of assessment, rather than on the level at which the students are instructed. VDE has also revised its data reporting procedures to report data on special educators by class, rather than by student. The State has also revised its annual report card to include special education data, reported by class, in the state totals.

The State is implementing a plan to ensure that local educational agencies' (LEAs) annual report cards include the required teacher information, for both the LEAs and the schools they serve, in the required format by providing each LEA with a model template that is pre-populated with two

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of the required data elements. The State will ensure LEA compliance with the reporting requirements via superintendent assurances on the annual CFP application and through the monitoring process.

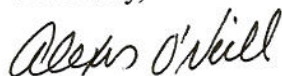
Finally, VDE developed a plan and timeline by which it will ensure that districts that have not met the 100% HQT annual measurable objective for two consecutive years have approved improvement plans in place. VDE also revisited its plan to ensure that poor and minority students are not taught at higher rates than other students by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers. VDE identified one LEA that has multiple schools that serve the same grade level and whose school-level data indicates an inequitable distribution of teachers and will work with that LEA to address the problem.

During the State agency for higher education (SAHE) portion of the monitoring review, the program team determined the SAHE was not using the required Census data to determine the high-need status of LEA partner districts. The SAHE took steps to ensure that each grantee includes a high-need LEA as an official partner and updated its grant application to include an assurance that all grantees include a high-need LEA as an official partner.

The Department will follow up with VDE to ensure that progress is being made in the areas outlined above and that all agreed-upon deadlines are met.

We commend your efforts to address the concerns raised by the monitoring report. We look forward to continuing to work with you and your staff to ensure that all teachers meet the highly qualified requirements and to help improve the delivery of ESEA Title II, Part A services in Vermont.

Sincerely,



Alexis O'Neill

cc: Marta Cambra
Carol Duley