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Ms. Elizabeth Ann Witt  
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U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, AITQ  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Room 3W251  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear ~~Ms.~~ Witt:

Thank you for the telephone discussion in which you engaged last week; the information provided was most helpful. Pursuant to this conversation, I am writing to convey Maryland's modification to the HOUSSE section of *Maryland's Plan for Meeting the Highly Qualified Teacher Goal*, submitted on July 7, 2006. As I indicated when we spoke, we have discovered design and implementation issues that require adjustment to the planned phase-out of Maryland's HOUSSE (pp. 14-15 of the *Plan*).

As you know, the plan submission and review process occurred during the summer of 2006. By the time plans (including Maryland's) were approved, the 2006-2007 teacher hiring season was completed, and the school year was under way. Plan details, including procedures and timelines for phasing out the HOUSSE in Maryland, were shared with local school system Superintendents and human resources directors in September, 2006. As this school year concluded, it became apparent that one component of the planned HOUSSE eligibility restrictions created issues of equitability and timeliness for school systems and for teachers hired as the plan was being reviewed.

Specifically, we initially limited HOUSSE eligibility for elementary and secondary teachers in regular education assignments to those "who were hired prior to the end of the 2005-2006 school year." It has since become evident that clarification and revision is required based on: (a) wording that is potentially confusing; and (b) time requirements to disseminate and operationalize the plan. The phrase "hired prior to . . ." is inconsistent with language used elsewhere in policy and guidance regarding HOUSSE eligibility. The intent can be more clearly conveyed by replacing these words, using "with experience prior to . . ." Secondly, the limitation of using the 2005-2006 school year as a closing threshold for eligibility has proven both confusing and inequitable, since school systems were proceeding in good faith prior to the fall of 2006 in implementing existing HOUSSE policy. Thus, we are revising the experience threshold to include experience prior to the 2006-2007 school year. We believe that these revisions provide clarity and equity for all involved.

I am submitting a revised *Plan* via email as an electronic attachment. I am also providing a marked copy of the pertinent section with this correspondence so that you may see the changes referenced above. As always, I appreciate the continuing collaboration of you and your colleagues at the U.S. Department of Education as we strive to ensure high quality educational services for every student in Maryland and the country. Please let me know if you have any questions regarding the revised *Plan* or desire additional information.

Sincerely,

John E. Smeallie, Ed.D.  
Assistant State Superintendent  
Certification and Accreditation

# HOUSSE

MSDE has developed a High, Objective, Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE) for elementary and secondary teachers in regular education assignments; elementary and secondary teachers in special education assignments; and K–12 teachers in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) assignments. Specific rubrics for these categories, five in all, have been adopted by the Maryland State Board of Education for use in determining teacher qualifications for core academic subjects in accordance with the No Child Left Behind Act. The rubrics and procedures for applying them are contained in *Achieving “Highly Qualified” Status Under No Child Left Behind (NCLB): A Guide for Maryland Teachers—Using Maryland’s HOUSSE* ([http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/FCB60C1D-6CC2-4270-BDAA-153D67247324/5317/HOUSSEInstructionsRevMarch2005\\_Final.pdf](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/FCB60C1D-6CC2-4270-BDAA-153D67247324/5317/HOUSSEInstructionsRevMarch2005_Final.pdf)).

All of Maryland’s HOUSSE rubrics represent a rigorous standards-based approach to the determination of teacher quality. Based on a 100-point scale, the rubrics emphasize advanced certification as well as content depth, with a maximum of 50 points attainable through experience. Minimal point values may be attained through continuing professional development (non-content-specific) or activities, service, awards, and presentations related to the core academic assignment. For special educators and teachers of English language learners, the HOUSSE may be used for multiple subjects with recognition that significant content acquisition is infused in special education and ESOL preparation programs, professional development, and experience.

The HOUSSE for regular education teachers has been in place for more than two years; the special education HOUSSE has been in use for one year; and the ESOL HOUSSE was adopted in November 2005. Based on the variable nature of the differing HOUSSE applicability and availability, teachers have had limited opportunities, in some cases, to employ them. Additionally, teaching assignments vary from year to year. Finally, and perhaps most critically, special education is uniquely positioned in Maryland. Available through initial preparation programs and for initial licensure, special education is primarily pedagogical. The elements of the special education HOUSSE are critical tools in assessing teacher quality, particularly for special education teachers of multiple subjects. A review and revision of special education certification is being initiated in Maryland through a broad-based work group that will build upon the work of a 2003 special education task force. During the transition period to new teacher preparation programs in special education and amended licensure requirements, the special education HOUSSE is an essential tool for assessing teacher quality.

The Department recognizes that the HOUSSE process will necessarily be limited and ultimately phased out. Accordingly, MSDE will allow the HOUSSE to be used only by elementary and secondary teachers in regular education assignments not new to the profession with experience prior to the end of the 2006-2007 school year. Additionally, the HOUSSE process for these teachers will be completed as MSDE develops and implements enhanced data collection and maintenance. Use of the regular education HOUSSE will end at the conclusion of the 2013–14 school year, even for educators with experience prior to the 2005–06 school year.

The HOUSSE process for (1) elementary and secondary teachers certificated in special education and teaching core academic subjects in special education assignments and (2) K–12 teachers in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and teaching core academic subjects in ESOL assignments has been implemented only recently in Maryland. For these teachers, in consideration of the factors noted above, the HOUSSE will be available only to teachers with experience prior to the 2010–11 school year; thus, it will remain as an available option during teacher preparation program transition. The use of HOUSSE for these educators (excepting multi-subject special educators who are highly qualified in language arts, mathematics, or science at the time of hire) will end at the conclusion of the 2013–14 school year regardless of prior experience.

During the period that Maryland’s HOUSSE for teaches not new to the profession is being completed, significant data-systems development will take place to ensure that LEA partners and MSDE staff have the ability to capture, analyze, record, and assess the qualifications of experienced teachers using the HOUSSE.