



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

April 8, 2009

Ms. Denise Juneau
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Montana Office of Public Instruction
1227 11th Avenue
Helena, MT 59620-2501

Dear Superintendent Juneau:

On June 17, 2008, the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) 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 provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act 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 July 14, 2008; September 8, 2008; November 14, 2008; November 23, 2008; March 4, 2009; and March 23, 2009, satisfactorily addresses the findings identified in the monitoring report. The corrective actions agreed to by the OPI, many of which have already been completed, are presented below.

Critical Element I.1 -- Corrective Action Required:

The State must submit a plan and timeline to ensure that all secondary teachers complete a subject matter major or coursework equivalent to a major in their primary assignment area, as established in the ESEA. The State must also provide evidence that it is taking this corrective action.

Corrective Action the OPI Has Already Taken Regarding Critical Element I.1

Since the monitoring visit, the OPI has conducted regional training on highly qualified teacher requirements; disseminated guidance to LEA administrators, teacher college faculty, and others indicating that a minor is not an adequate demonstration of subject matter competence; notified teacher colleges and districts that teachers relying on minors for highly qualified status must take a Praxis test in April, 2009; and, through a teacher survey, identified the number of teachers in each district who are currently deemed highly qualified to teach subjects based on having completed only a minor.

Since the monitoring visit, the OPI has submitted to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) documentation and some analysis of the survey of teachers and has described how it is

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contacting individual districts to direct them to notify affected teachers to take the subject matter test in April 2009.

Teachers in Small Rural School Achievement (SRSA) districts have 3 years from the date of hire to ensure that multi-subject teachers are highly qualified in each of the core subjects they teach, if they are highly qualified in one subject at the time of hire. As part of its regular, on-going monitoring process, the OPI has agreed to monitor the progress of SRSA districts in getting teachers with minors to highly qualified status within the 3-year grace period.

Corrective Action the OPI Will Take in the Future Regarding Critical Element 1.1

By April 2009, the OPI will arrange for the administration of the new content tests to teachers currently in their first year of teaching, teacher candidates, and others.

By May 30, 2009, the OPI will submit to ED its summary analysis of the survey data received from the LEAs, verified by the OPI, and supplemented by the results of the April testing. This summary will include data on the number of teachers with a minor in a subject they teach and, of these teachers, how many are highly qualified in those subjects through HOUSSE or testing, and how many are not highly qualified. This evidence will include OPI generated reports and documents. The submitted evidence will also include the letters sent to the LEAs and to the Deans and Licensure Officials regarding their need to notify teachers and prospective teachers about the need for subject matter testing.

By May 30, 2009, the OPI will also submit to ED any documents it distributed to LEAs eligible for SRSA to inform them of the need to track multi-subject teachers and get them highly qualified in every subject they teach by the end of each teacher's grace period. The OPI will also submit documentation showing that it is monitoring the progress of SRSA districts in getting these teachers to highly qualified status within the grace period.

By August 2009, the OPI will submit to ED the cut scores the OPI has established to determine whether multi-subject teachers teaching with a minor are highly qualified as well as any other subject matter competence measures that the OPI has decided to adopt. The OPI will also submit a copy of the notification the OPI sends to districts, Deans of Education, Licensure Officials, and teachers regarding the cut scores and measures and their relevance to classifying a teacher as highly qualified for data collection purposes.

By December 2009, the OPI will also submit final highly qualified teacher data for the 2008-09 school year in the Consolidated State Performance Report (CSPR) to the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE)—these data must include accurate information concerning all core subject classes taught by teachers with a minor in the subject they teach.

Critical Element I.2 -- Corrective Action Required:

Within 30 business days, the State must submit a plan and timeline establishing uniform corrective action procedures to ensure that the highly qualified status of special education teachers who teach core classes is correctly determined as quickly as possible in a manner approved by statute and that the status of these teachers is included in the State's reported HQT data. The submitted plan and timeline must be written to include the required reports and deadlines described below.

Corrective Action the State Has Already Taken Regarding Critical Element I.2

Since the monitoring visit, the OPI has taken a number of steps to respond to this finding, including the development and implementation of procedures to gather the number and percentage of core academic classes taught by special education teachers. It has also notified districts, teacher college faculty and others about the highly qualified requirements for special education teachers, and it has begun to analyze and verify the survey data submitted by the LEAs.

The OPI has submitted documentation of the guidance it has provided districts regarding the need to notify parents of students being taught by special education teachers who are not highly qualified. It has also submitted documentation showing the preliminary results of the teacher survey, but those results do not indicate the number and highly qualified status of special education teachers in non-Title I schools.

Corrective Action the OPI Will Take in the Future Regarding Critical Element I.2

The OPI is currently collecting additional data regarding special education teachers through another survey.

By May 30, 2009, the OPI will submit its analysis of the data collected from the school districts to determine the number of core academic classes taught by special education teachers. The analysis will also report on the number and percentage of such classes taught by highly qualified teachers. This submission will include OPI-generated reports and documents.

By May 30, 2009, the OPI will also submit a summary of its review of statements of assurance regarding parental notification from LEAs and a copy of a signed and dated parent notification letter. The supporting documents will include a sample of statements of assurance from LEAs.

By December 2009, the OPI will revise its procedures related to on-site accreditation reviews (monitoring) to ensure the accuracy of the assessment of the highly qualified status of each special education teacher teaching core academic subjects and the notification of parents of teachers' highly qualified status.

By December 2009, the OPI will also submit final highly qualified teacher data for the 2008-09 school year in the CSPR to the OESE—these data must include all core subject classes taught by

special education teachers. The OPI will also submit the written procedures it has developed for on-site LEA accreditation reviews (monitoring).

Critical Element I.3 – Corrective Action Required:

The State must, within 30 business days, submit to the Department a written plan with specific procedures and a timeline the State will implement ensuring that elementary teachers employed on a Class 5 Alternative License are required to demonstrate subject matter competency prior to being counted as highly qualified for their classroom assignments. The State must provide the Department with evidence that it is taking this corrective action.

Corrective Action the State Has Already Taken Regarding Critical Element I.3

Since the monitoring visit, the OPI has disseminated guidance regarding the need for teachers with Class 5 licenses to show subject matter competence before being assigned to teach the elementary curriculum. This guidance was sent to school districts, teacher college faculty, and others. The OPI also notified districts that Class 5 Alternative Licensed teachers teaching elementary education must meet the ESEA highly qualified teacher requirements by passing the Praxis II subject area test.

Corrective Action the OPI Will Take in the Future Regarding Critical Element I.3

By April 2009, the OPI will arrange for the administration of the Praxis II for elementary teachers who hold a Class 5 Alternative License.

By May 30, 2009, the OPI will submit a summary analysis of the data it has collected on teachers teaching with a Class 5 Alternative License. This summary will include data on the number of teachers with a Class 5 Alternative License, how many of these teachers are highly qualified through HOUSSSE or testing, and how many are not highly qualified. This evidence will include OPI generated reports and documents. The evidence will also include a copy of the notification the OPI was required to issue by March 2009 to the districts concerning the need for Class 5 Alternative License teachers to take the Praxis test.

By December 2009, the OPI will also submit final highly qualified teacher data for the 2008-09 school year in the CSPR to the OESE—these data must include accurate information regarding all core subject classes taught by teachers with a Class 5 Alternative License.

Critical Element III.A.1 Corrective Action Required:

Within 30 days, the State must provide a written plan and a timeline for determining any LEAs that currently have not met annual measurable objectives for two consecutive years. Within 30 days, the State must also provide a plan and a timeline for ensuring that these LEAs have the required improvement plans in place. The plan submitted must also address how the SEA will provide technical assistance to the LEAs in formulating and implementing their required plans.

Corrective Action the State Has Already Taken Regarding Critical Element III.A.1

Since the monitoring visit, the OPI has compiled a list of districts subject to section 2141(a), and it has indicated that these districts have fulfilled an improvement plan that complies with section 2141(a).

Corrective Action the OPI Will Take in the Future Regarding Critical Element III.A.1

By April 10, 2009, the OPI will submit to ED samples of the plans these districts have developed and fulfilled.

By May 2009, the OPI will identify LEAs subject to 2141(a) based on 07-08 and 08-09 highly qualified teacher data and notify them of the need to develop a 2141(a) plan by a date certain.

By June 2009, the OPI will submit to ED the list of LEAs subject to 2141(a) and a copy of the notice sent to them regarding the need to develop a 2141(a) plan.

By September 2009, the OPI will submit a list of all LEAs with 2141(a) plans along with a sampling of such plans.

Critical Element III.A.2 Corrective Action Required:

Within 30 days, the State must provide a written plan and a timeline for determining any LEAs that currently have not made progress on meeting their HQT annual measurable objectives for three consecutive years and have also failed to make AYP for three years. The State must also provide a plan and a timeline for ensuring that the SEA enters into the required agreements on the use of funds with any LEAs not meeting these objectives for three consecutive years.

Corrective Action the State Has Already Taken Regarding Critical Element III.A.2

Since the monitoring visit, the OPI has submitted evidence that there are no districts subject to section 2141(c) at the present time, based on 2005-2008 data.

Corrective Action the State Will Take in the Future Regarding Critical Element III.A.2

By September 2009, the OPI will identify LEAs subject to 2141(c) based on 06-07, 07-08, and 08-09 highly qualified teacher and adequate yearly progress data and notify them of the need to enter into a 2141(c) agreement by a date certain.

By September 2009, the OPI will submit to ED the list of LEAs subject to 2141(c) and a copy of the notice sent to them regarding the need to develop a 2141(c) plan.

By October 2009, the OPI will submit a list of all LEAs with 2141(c) plans along with a sampling of such plans.

Critical Elements I.4, II.A.1, and II.B.1

Because of the highly qualified teacher definitional issues discussed above in I.1, I.2, and I.3, Montana was unable to ensure that all teachers hired in Title I schools are highly qualified or that the highly qualified teacher data in the CSPR or the annual report cards were accurate, as required by the ESEA. Since the monitoring visit, the State has committed to ensure that the actions described above will result in full compliance with these requirements. The OPI has assured ED that the highly qualified teacher data it reports in the CSPR in December 2009 and in the 2009 annual report card, reflecting the 2008-09 school year, will be accurate. Similarly, the OPI has assured ED that, beginning with the 2009-10 school year, all teachers hired in Title I schools will be highly qualified.

The Department will follow up with the OPI to ensure that progress is being made on these issues and that all agreed upon deadlines are met.

During the State agency for higher education (SAHE) portion of the monitoring review, the program team determined the SAHE was in full compliance with Title II, part A of the ESEA.

We commend your work in responding to 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 Montana.

Sincerely,



James Butler
Group Leader, Teacher Quality Programs

cc: Jan Clinard
Patricia Johnson
Nancy Coopersmith
Linda Peterson