

**THE ALABAMA MODEL  
FOR IDENTIFYING  
HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS**

**IN ACCORDANCE WITH CRITERIA PROVIDED BY  
*THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND (NCLB) ACT OF 2001***

**ALABAMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**ED RICHARDSON  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION**

**DECEMBER 2002**

**Background Information:**

1. Alabama issues teacher certificates at three levels to persons who have completed a state-approved teacher education program (through a traditional or alternative approach) and earned a degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education: Class B at the baccalaureate level; Class A at the master's level; and Class AA at the sixth-year or education specialist level. Certificates issued at the Class A and Class AA levels are considered to be advanced certificates.
2. Alabama issues an Emergency Certificate that does not meet the NCLB criteria for "full state certification." Alabama issues three alternative route certificates that do meet the NCLB criteria for "full state certification," namely, the Alternative Baccalaureate-Level Certificate, the Special Alternative Certificate, and the Preliminary Certificate, each of which requires at least a baccalaureate from a regionally accredited institution of higher education. The Alternative Baccalaureate-Level Certificate is not issued at the elementary level except in the arts, foreign languages, and physical education. Only persons with certificates may be employed to teach in Alabama's public schools; an alternative route certificate may be requested to employ teachers of the visual and performing arts.
3. In December 2002, functioning under strict court monitoring, Alabama will begin to administer a statewide test for all new teachers seeking initial certification through traditional or alternative approaches. The test will measure competence in basic skills (reading, writing, and mathematics) needed by all teachers to protect the interests of the public school children of Alabama. By September 2005, Alabama intends to have subject matter tests available to be taken on a voluntary basis by teachers who have not otherwise been able to document that they are highly qualified. As soon as possible, Alabama intends to administer content-area tests for all new teachers seeking initial certification in a discipline through traditional or alternative approaches.
4. Alabama does not have any charter schools.
5. In this document, "teacher" refers to elementary school teachers and to middle and secondary school teachers of "core academic subjects" as defined in NCLB to include "English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography." The NCLB definition does not appear to be applicable to teachers of driver education, health education, physical education, or career technical education unless the latter are teaching embedded credit mathematics or science courses.
6. There is no common definition of an "academic major" in Alabama or elsewhere. Among Alabama's 29 bachelor degree-granting institutions, the average minimum number of semester hours required in an academic major is 33, the average number of required upper division hours (junior level or above) is 19, and the average required minimum grade point average (GPA) is 2.0 on a 4-point scale.
7. Primarily to meet the needs of small schools, Alabama provides middle/secondary certification in three cross-discipline areas: English Language Arts, General Science, and General Social Science. A teacher who holds certification in one of those broad areas; meets the definition indicated in #6, above, for one of the categorical subjects included in the broad area; and has earned credit in another categorical subject(s) included in the broad area will be deemed highly qualified to teach the other subject(s). For example, a teacher certified in General Social Science who holds an academic major or the equivalent in history and has earned credit in civics and government (political science) will be deemed highly qualified in both history and political science.

**Teachers New to the Profession (employed for the first time in an Alabama public school after the first day of school, 2002-2003):**

1. A new elementary teacher, including a teacher of special education students, holds at least a valid Class B Professional Educator Certificate, Special Alternative Certificate, or Preliminary Certificate in Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, or an area of Special Education<sup>1</sup> that includes elementary grades and is assigned to a grade(s) covered by that certificate; AND
  - a. Has passed a state test (either the Alabama Initial Teacher Certification Test [1981-1988] or the Alabama Prospective Teacher Test) covering subject knowledge and teaching skills in reading, writing, mathematics, and other areas of the basic elementary school curriculum; OR
  - b. Has earned at least 12 semester hours of credit in each of four disciplines: English language arts including reading and writing, mathematics, science, and social studies; OR
  - c. Holds a Class A or Class AA Professional Educator Certificate in Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, or an area of Special Education that includes elementary grades; OR
  - d. Has 5 years of full-time teaching in the discipline and holds a valid National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certificate in the specific discipline or in a broad category appropriate to the specific discipline.

NOTES:

1. Reauthorization of *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* may alter Alabama's NCLB requirements pertaining to special education.
2. A teacher of Grades 4-6 in a departmentalized school may meet the highly qualified teacher criteria applicable to elementary teachers or the criteria applicable to highly qualified middle/secondary teachers.
3. A teacher who holds certification in early childhood education, elementary education, collaborative teacher, or reading is highly qualified to teach reading for any part of a day or all day.
4. A teacher who is employed full time in an elementary school to teach art, dance, English as a Second Language, foreign language(s), music, physical education, or theatre must hold a certificate in that discipline that includes elementary grades.

2. A new middle/secondary teacher who teaches a “core academic subject” (“English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography”) holds at least a valid Class B Professional Educator Certificate, Alternative Baccalaureate-Level Certificate, Special Alternative Certificate, or Preliminary Certificate *for every core academic subject the teacher teaches*; AND
- a. Has passed a state academic subject test (either the Alabama Initial Teacher Certification Test [1981-1988] or the Alabama Prospective Teacher Test) in each of the academic subjects she/he teaches; OR
  - b. Has completed, in each of the subjects she/he teaches, an undergraduate academic major as verified on a college/university transcript (must be in mathematics, for example, rather than in mathematics education); OR
  - c. Has earned a graduate degree in each of the subjects she/he teaches (again, not a degree in education); OR
  - d. Has completed coursework equivalent to an undergraduate academic major (33 semester hours in the academic area with at least 19 upper division hours) in every subject she/he teaches; OR
  - e. Holds a Class A or Class AA Professional Educator Certificate endorsed in every subject she/he teaches; OR
  - f. Has 5 years of full-time teaching in the discipline and holds a valid National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certificate in the specific discipline or in a broad category appropriate to the specific discipline; OR
  - g. Is teaching one or more English language arts (ELA) courses, holds certification in ELA, has an academic major or the equivalent (33 semester hours in the academic area with at least 19 upper division hours) in an area included in ELA and is teaching courses in another area of ELA for which the teacher has earned credit; OR
  - h. Is teaching one or more science courses, holds certification in General Science, has an academic major or the equivalent (33 semester hours in the academic area with at least 19 upper division hours) in an area of science and is teaching courses in another area of science for which the teacher has earned credit; OR
  - i. Is teaching one or more social science courses, holds certification in General Social Science, has an academic major or the equivalent (33 semester hours in the academic area with at least 19 upper division hours) in an area of social science and is teaching courses in another area of social science for which the teacher has earned credit.

NOTES:

- 1. Criteria for middle/secondary teachers are applicable to teachers of embedded credit courses and may be applicable to teachers of special education students, depending on the reauthorization of IDEA.
- 2. Criteria for middle/secondary teachers may be applied to elementary teachers of Grades 4-6 who teach in a departmentalized school.

**Teachers Not New to the Profession (employed in an Alabama public school before or on the first day of school, 2002-2003):**

1. A not-new elementary teacher, including a teacher of special education students, holds at least a valid Class B Professional Educator Certificate, Special Alternative Certificate, or Preliminary Certificate in Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, or an area of Special Education<sup>1</sup> that includes elementary grades and is assigned to the grade(s) covered by that certificate; AND
  - a. Has passed a state test (either the Alabama Initial Teacher Certification Test [1981-1988] or the Alabama Prospective Teacher Test) covering subject knowledge and teaching skills in reading, writing, mathematics and other areas of the basic elementary school curriculum; OR
  - b. Has earned at least 12 semester hours of credit in each of four disciplines: English language arts including reading and writing, mathematics, science, and social studies; OR
  - c. Holds a Class A or Class AA Professional Educator Certificate in Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, or an area of Special Education that includes elementary grades; OR
  - d. Holds Class A or Class AA certification in an area closely related to elementary education and has ten or more years of full-time teaching experience at the elementary level; OR
  - e. Has 5 years of full-time teaching in the discipline and holds a valid National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certificate in the specific discipline or in a broad category appropriate to the specific discipline.

NOTES:

1. Reauthorization of *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* may alter Alabama's NCLB requirements pertaining special education.
2. A teacher of Grades 4-6 in a departmentalized school may meet the highly qualified teacher criteria applicable to elementary teachers or the criteria applicable to highly qualified middle/secondary teachers.
3. A teacher who holds certification in early childhood education, elementary education, collaborative teacher, or reading is highly qualified to teach reading for any part of a day or all day.
4. A teacher who is employed full time in an elementary school to teach art, dance, English as a Second Language, foreign language(s), music, physical education, or theatre must hold a certificate in that discipline that includes elementary grades.

2. A not-new middle/secondary teacher who teaches a “core academic subject” (“English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography”) holds at least a valid Class B Professional Educator Certificate, Alternative Baccalaureate-Level Certificate, Special Alternative Certificate, or Preliminary Certificate *for every core academic subject the teacher teaches*; AND
- a. Has passed a state academic subject test (either the Alabama Initial Teacher Certification Test [1981-1988] or the Alabama Prospective Teacher Test) in each of the academic subjects she/he teaches; OR
  - b. Has completed, in each of the subjects she/he teaches, an undergraduate academic major as verified on a college/university transcript (must be in mathematics, for example, rather than in mathematics education); OR
  - c. Has earned a graduate degree in each of the subjects she/he teaches (again, not a degree in education); OR
  - d. Has completed coursework equivalent to an undergraduate academic major (33 semester hours in the academic area with at least 19 upper division hours) in every subject she/he teacher teaches; OR
  - e. Holds a Class A or Class AA Professional Educator Certificate endorsed in every subject she/he teaches; OR
  - f. Holds Class A or Class AA certification in an area closely related to the subject(s) she/he teaches and has ten or more years of full-time teaching experience in the subject(s) the teacher teaches; OR
  - g. Has 5 years of full-time teaching in the discipline and holds a valid National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certificate in the specific discipline or in a broad category appropriate to the specific discipline; OR
  - h. Is teaching one or more English language arts (ELA) courses, holds certification in ELA, has an academic major or the equivalent (33 semester hours in the academic area with at least 19 upper division hours) in an area included in ELA and is teaching courses in another area of ELA for which the teacher has earned credit; OR
  - i. Is teaching one or more science courses, holds certification in General Science, has an academic major or the equivalent (33 semester hours in the academic area with at least 19 upper division hours) in an area of science and is teaching courses in another area of science for which the teacher has earned credit; OR
  - j. Is teaching one or more social science courses, holds certification in General Social Science, has an academic major or the equivalent (33 semester hours in the academic area with at least 19 upper division hours) in an area of social science and is teaching courses in another area of social science for which the teacher has earned credit.

NOTES:

- 1. Criteria for middle/secondary teachers are applicable to teachers of embedded credit courses and may be applicable to teachers of special education students, depending on the reauthorization of IDEA.
- 2. Criteria for middle/secondary teachers may be applied to elementary teachers of Grades 4-6 who teach in a departmentalized school.