May 6, 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: County and City Superintendents of Education

FROM: Joseph B. Morton
State Superintendent of Education

SUBJECT: Highly Qualified Status for Teachers of Reading

Following a Title II, ESEA monitoring visit, we were informed that we have incorrectly indicated that teachers who hold valid certificates for early childhood education, elementary education, or collaborative special education teacher (Grades K-6) and meet highly qualified teacher (HQT) criteria to match the certificate held are considered HQ to teach reading to students through Grade 12. Rest assured that we have appealed that finding. To date, no response has been received.

Remember that teachers who are HQ for English language arts (Grades 4-8 or 6-12) are properly certified to teach reading. Members of my staff have determined that during this 2009-2010 school year, approximately 300 teachers are not HQ for teaching reading according to the monitoring visit report. The Teacher Certification staff member assigned to each LEA that has one or more teachers on the list of 300 will contact the appropriate person on the LEA staff to provide each teacher’s name. Examples include the following:

1. A teacher who is HQ for early childhood education (Grades P-3) and who is teaching reading to students in Grade 4 or above.

2. A teacher who is HQ for elementary education (Grades K-6 or 1-6 or 1-9) and who is teaching reading to students in Grade 7 or above.

3. A teacher who is HQ for special education: core academic subjects including reading (Grades K-6) and who is teaching reading to students in Grade 7 or above.

4. A teacher who was deemed HQ for reading only and is teaching reading at a grade level for which certification is not held.
While we wait to receive a response to our appeal, members of my staff have been reviewing the file for each of the 300 teachers. For some of the 300 identified teachers, especially those whose elementary certificate includes Grades 1-9, we will be able to issue new HQT letters for elementary education and English language arts (Grades 4-8). For teachers who hold middle-level generalist certificates, we will make every effort to deem them HQ for English language arts (Grades 4-8). For some of the teachers, we may need to request additional information such as a HOUSSE portfolio. We are also working to create a special Preliminary Certificate option for teachers who taught reading during the 2009-2010 academic year under the circumstances indicated in 1-4 above.

We will send a follow-up memorandum as soon as we receive a response to the waiver request. Meanwhile, PLEASE DO NOT assign any teacher to teach reading who is in one of the four categories indicated above. I have issued a directive to members of our staff to begin the process of updating our certification database, GLink, to indicate that teachers who were given HQ status for reading above the grade level for which they are certified will no longer be considered HQ.

I know you find this disturbing, as we do. We feel very strongly that the HQ status should remain in place for those teachers currently assigned to teach remedial reading above the grade level of their certificates. Members of our staff are committed to assisting you to determine how we can accomplish that goal. Two related options under consideration are a special Preliminary Certificate for Reading (Grades 4-12) and a special HOUSSE option. We will send more information about the options as soon as possible.

JBM/JAM/SG

c: Dr. Eddie R. Johnson
   Dr. Thomas R. Bice
   Mrs. Sherrill W. Parris
   Dr. Deann K. Stone
   Mr. Gary E. Weatherly
   Dr. Jayne A. Meyer
   Mrs. Sarah P. Justiss

FY10-4044