

Staffing Standards for the Recruitment, Hiring, Training and Retention of Highly Qualified Personnel

Hiring and Recruitment

Professional Staff

It is the position of the Special Education District to hire personnel who are licensed/certified in the State of Minnesota in the category of special education for which the staff member was hired, whether a teacher or related services staff. Personnel are required to have specific content, knowledge and skills to serve students with disabilities.

Positions for special education staff are posted on district, college and universities and other websites specific to the recruitment of staff working in the area of special education, including national searches in the area of need.

Recruitment and selection of highly qualified candidates is the responsibility of the principal/administrator and superintendent or his/her designee. Criteria for selection of candidates include, but are not limited to, licensing or certification, essential requirements (HQ), previous experience, attitude, availability, and motivation to meet the requirements of the position.

A qualified staff member is one who holds a valid license/certification to perform the particular service for which the teacher/related service provider was employed. Each district will ascertain the license and Highly Qualified (HQ) status of its teachers and related services staff.

The principals and/or special education director work to ensure that special education teachers demonstrate subject knowledge and teaching skills in the core academic subjects they are assigned to teach. The special education teacher's "highly qualified" status to teach core academic subjects will be documented and held by the building principals and/or the School District Office to ensure that school district files are up to date. Each district has established procedures for annually reviewing licensure/certification to verify current and appropriate licensure/certification for the service for which the staff member is employed.

Paraprofessional Staff

Paraprofessional staff will be hired by the individual school districts according to each district's Board Policy. Paraprofessionals hired by districts may meet the requirements of a 2 year post-secondary degree or pass the Para Pro Exam. Paraprofessionals are trained and supervised by special and general education teachers, related service providers, and district administrators.

Staff Training

Special Education member districts have developed staff development programs to establish and maintain staff skills and ensure preparedness and training to serve children with disabilities.

The MNCIMP committee develops a yearly plan for training in the area of special education for all special education staff who provide services in member districts. Each year, the Plan includes:

- Summer Institute for teachers - 1 to 3 days of training in August in topical areas (e.g., Changes in Federal IDEA and/or State Legislative or Rule Changes, Transition, Data Collection etc.).
- Summer Institute for Paraprofessionals – 1 day of training in August on topical areas (e.g., Autism, Generalization, Decreasing Student Dependence, etc.).
- Summer Training in Specific Topics for teachers (e.g., TEACH, CPI, etc.).
- HVED provides numerous training opportunities throughout the school year both in large groups, small groups and within individual districts.
- Coordinators hold monthly District Meetings in each district with all special education professional staff. Topics include: rules and regulations, reporting changes, due process tips, child count information, and other topics relevant to skill development and special education knowledge.
- Director holds monthly meetings with Superintendents to discuss and approve special education functions.
- Director holds monthly meetings with the elementary and secondary principals to provide training in areas appropriate to the principal’s role in special education.
- Director holds meetings with business personnel to provide training in the area of special education finance accounting and reporting.
- Response to Intervention (RtI)/Problem-Solving Training is ongoing in member districts.

Retention

Because poor working conditions contribute to the large number of special educators leaving the field of special education, teacher burnout and substandard quality of education for students with disabilities, member districts are committed to decreasing the exodus of special education teachers from their districts and the field of special education in general. The strategies employed by the districts include:

- Insuring a successful first year by providing substantial training and mentoring of new teaching staff.
- Controlled caseloads; districts use the State’s Workload Analysis Model on a yearly basis to make decisions regarding district staffing needs.
- Federal funds are used to provide additional resources.
- Administrators are encouraged to provide a supportive environment for special education teachers.
- The use of technology is encouraged to reduce paper work and create efficiency.
- Significant staff development opportunities are provided both within and outside of the Special Education districts. Numerous experts are provided by the district in the areas of behavior management and academic instruction to consult with general and special education professionals and paraprofessionals.

Caseload/workload standards

The member districts follow Minnesota Statutes regarding caseloads for school-age educational service alternatives.

The maximum number of school-age students that may be assigned to a teacher:

- for students who receive direct special instruction from a teacher 50 percent or more of the instructional day, but less than a full school day:
 - deaf-blind, autism spectrum disorders, developmental cognitive disability: severe-profound range, or severely multiply impaired, three students;
 - deaf-blind, autism spectrum disorders, developmental cognitive disability: severe-profound range, or severely multiply impaired with one program support assistant, six students;

- developmental cognitive disability: mild-moderate range or specific learning disabled, 12 students;
- developmental cognitive disability: mild-moderate range or specific learning disabled with one program support assistant, 15 students;
- all other disabilities with one program support assistant, ten students; and
- all other disabilities with two program support assistants, 12 students; and
- for students who receive direct special education for a full day:
 - deaf-blind, autism spectrum disorders, developmental cognitive disability: severe-profound range, or severely multiply impaired with one program support assistant, four students;
 - deaf-blind, autism spectrum disorders, developmental cognitive disability: severe-profound range, or severely multiply impaired with two program support assistants; six students; and
 - all other disabilities with one program support assistant, eight students.

For students who receive direct special education less than 50 percent of the instructional day, caseloads are to be determined by the local district's procedures based on the amount of time and services required by student's IEP plans.

Caseloads for early childhood program alternatives. A teacher's caseload will be adjusted downward based on student's severity of disability or delay, travel time necessary to serve students in more than one program alternative, and if the students on the teacher's caseloads are receiving services in more than one program alternative or the pupils are involved with other agencies. The maximum number of students that can be assigned to a teacher in any early childhood program alternative is:

- birth through two years: 12 students per teacher;
- three through six years: 16 students per teacher; and
- birth through six years: 14 students per teacher.

District early childhood special education (ECSE) classes must have at least one paraprofessional employed while students are in attendance. The maximum number of students in an ECSE classroom at any one time with a teacher and a program support assistant is eight. The maximum number of students in an ECSE classroom at any one time with an early childhood team is 16. (See [Procedures for Determining Teacher Workload and Staffing Needs](#) for determining all other staffing needs).

Documentation

- Individual District's Policies on Hiring, Recruitment, Staff Training, and Retention of HQ Personnel (filed in individual districts)
- District Teacher Contracts (filed in individual districts)
- Advertisements (individual district postings)
- List of teaching and related services staff and their qualifications (HOUSSE files-maintained in individual districts)
- Paraprofessional Training Manual and training flyers (training manual and flyers filed in individual districts)
- Teacher Training Manuals (Electronic TSES Manual, Transition Guide – filed in individual districts)
- [Highly Qualified Requirements for Special Education Staff](#)
- [Minnesota HOUSSE Documentation Form](#)
- [Staff Responsible for Approving Core Academic Areas for HQ Status](#)

- [Procedures for Determining Teacher Workload and Staffing Needs](#)
- [Copy of Caseload Analysis Forms](#)
- [Copy of Paraprofessional Work Plan Request](#)
- [Related Services Role Description](#)

“Highly Qualified” Requirements for Special Education Teachers

At a minimum, in order to be “highly qualified”, special education teachers must:

1. Hold a bachelor’s degree; and
2. Be licensed by the state in special education
3. If special education teachers are providing direct instruction in a core academic subject to children with disabilities, they must also demonstrate subject matter competence for each subject taught in order to meet federal “highly qualified” requirements. Special education teachers who provide only consultative services to highly qualified teachers are considered “highly qualified” if they are fully licensed in special education and hold a bachelor’s degree.

For special education teachers who are required to demonstrate subject matter competence in order to meet the federal ‘highly qualified’ requirements, they must meet the following requirements:

Special Education Teachers “New” to the position

IDEA 2004 defines ‘new’ as hired on or after December 3, 2004. NCLB clarification states **that a teacher is considered ‘new to the profession’ until he/she has taught a minimum of one school year.** A “new” teacher demonstrates competence in the following ways:

Elementary

- Full licensure in Elementary Education, or
- Passing the appropriate Praxis II test(s)

Middle School and Secondary

- Full licensure in each core academic subject they teach, or
- Passing the appropriate Praxis II test.

A special education teacher who is “new” to the profession who teaches multiple subjects **and** who is “highly qualified” in math, language arts, or science must demonstrate competence in the other core academic subjects in which the teacher teaches in one of the following ways **within two years** after the date of employment:

- Verify 100 points using the HOUSSE process for Elementary Education or for each core academic subject they teach.
- Passing the appropriate Praxis II test(s).

Special Education Teachers “Not New” to the Profession

A special education teacher is “not new” to the profession after they have taught for one year or longer. A special education teacher who teaches core academic subjects to children with disabilities must demonstrate competence in all the core academic subjects in which the teacher teaches in one of the following ways:

Elementary

- Full licensure in Elementary Education, or
- Passing the appropriate Praxis II test(s), or

- Verify 100 points the HOUSSE process for Elementary Education or for each core academic subject they teach.

Middle School and Secondary

- Full licensure in each core academic subject they teach, or
- Passing the appropriate Praxis II test.
- Verify 100 points the HOUSSE process for Elementary Education or for each core academic subject they teach.

Teachers of students with moderate to severe-profound cognitive disabilities in a secondary setting:

- May demonstrate meeting “highly qualified” requirements at the elementary level.

Those who teach special education on a variance, limited license, or non-licensed community expert status may not be considered “highly qualified”, unless already licensed in another special education area. These teachers must be “highly qualified” in the core academic subjects they teach.

Minnesota HOUSSE Documentation Form

Teacher's _____

D _____

Indicator A: Student Achievement

Blank area for Indicator A: Student Achievement documentation.

Indicator B: Awards and Recognition

Local:

Blank area for Local awards and recognition.

State:

Blank area for State awards and recognition.

National:

Blank area for National awards and recognition.

Indicator C: Teaching Experience

Location	Date(s)	Licensure Held	Subject Taught

Indicator D: Praxis Test

Tests Taken	Dates

Staff Responsible for Approving Core Academic Areas for High Quality Status

School Districts

- Superintendent – Final Approval
- Cluster Director of Special Education and Principals – HOUSSE Process Verification

HVED #6013

- Executive Director – Final Approval
- Cluster Special Education and Principal, if applicable – HOUSSE Process Verification

Procedures for Determining Teacher Workload and Staffing Needs

HVED uses the Workload Analysis Model to determine the staffing level needed to provide FAPE to students with disabilities and increase the retention of special education teachers by evaluating their work environment.

Since the number of students for whom a special education teacher manages IEPs does not provide a true picture of workload (intensity of the work), the Workload Analysis Model is used to determine the reasonableness of a teacher's workload. There are fundamental assumptions regarding reasonableness that include time for the following functions: duty free lunch, evaluations, due process paperwork, and meetings. The Workload Analysis Model incorporates these functions:

Components of the Workload Analysis Model

The basic model is:

$$\text{Contact minutes} + \text{Minutes} + \text{IEPs Managed} = \text{Workload}$$

Rather than recommend a maximum caseload based on the student's disability, number of IEPs managed, or levels of service, the *Workload Analysis Model* is based on the severity of student need or the time required to meet the identified needs of the students related to his or her disability. This kind of analysis will allow a district to plan properly. Because excessive workload is not a universal problem in Minnesota, it is essential that any method for determining workload be responsive to the circumstances of individual special education teachers and the students with IEPs for whom the teacher is responsible. In so doing, this model is responsive to the needs of school district and to individual special education teachers.

An effective *Workload Analysis Model* identifies excessive workload when it occurs. The approach provides a model for workload analysis that contributes to an increased ability to meet the needs of students by special education teachers and will result in increased job satisfaction. The six quantifiable elements found in Chapter 2 are incorporated into the Minnesota model for workload analysis.

The six elements are:

- Specially Designed Instruction
- Evaluations and Reevaluations
- Due Process Procedures and IEP Management Responsibilities
- Preparation Time
- Directing the Work of Paraprofessionals
- Other Assignments

A district's target range of 12-16 for elementary age students, for example, would remain the same in this model. However, target ranges need to be thought of as workload rather than caseload ranges. That is, the number of students served will not necessarily match the number in the range. The number resulting from use of the model represents the teacher's workload. That number should fall into the target range.

Paraprofessional Work Plan Request

Student's Name _____ Grade _____

School _____

Case Manager _____

_____ Date _____

Disability Area _____ IEP Date _____ Assessment

Date _____

Document the need for a paraprofessional by answering the following questions:

What can the student do independently?

What specific task(s) does the student need help with?

What accommodations can be made to assist the student in being independent?

What interventions or program changes have you tried (e.g., cooperative learning, behavior management plan, regrouping within the classroom, pairing with other students)?

Is there already someone in the building that can provide the services noted above (e.g., another paraprofessional, a student)? Please describe why or why not.

What time during the day will the student not require assistance?

What time of day will the student require assistance? (See attached schedule)

Identify which student goal(s) from IEP will require a paraprofessional in order to be attained.

Goal # _____ Describe:

Goal # _____ Describe:

Goal # _____ Describe:

Identify the goal(s) and describe the opportunities for the student to practice the goals independently without paraprofessional help.

Goal # _____ Describe:

Goal # _____ Describe:

Goal # _____ Describe:

Describe the plan(s) for decreasing and reviewing the use of a paraprofessional and include target dates.

Describe the plan for training the paraprofessional in helping the student to establish independence.

Two student observations are required. Persons responsible:

1. _____

(See attached observation forms)

2. _____

Team conclusion:

Team members: _____

Target date for reviewing need for paraprofessional support:

Who will be responsible to coordinate paraprofessional training?

Who will be responsible for directing the work of the paraprofessional?

Approved by: *(Signature)*

Special Education Director _____

Principal _____

Superintendent _____

Related Services Role Descriptions

A related service is provided for students after a team documents that without this service the student will not profit/is not profiting from the primary special education service. The primary special education service(s) will be insufficient for the students to meet his/her IEP goals and objectives. If the IEP team determines that a related or support services are necessary, the basis for this conclusion must be documented in the student's IEP and the related service must be directly linked to the student's IEP goals and objectives.

Registered Occupational Therapist (OTR)

Occupational therapists act as team members in the evaluation, plan development, and program implementation process. Occupational therapists provide consultative services and program recommendations to parents, teachers, and administrators regarding appropriate IEP/IFSP goals in the areas of fine and gross motor, perceptual motor, self-help skills, and the use of adaptive equipment. Technical assistance is also provided on building accessibility for handicapped students. Occupational therapists also provide in-service training in the following areas:

- Range of motion
- Positioning
- Motor development
- Self-care (e.g., feeding, dressing, grooming, mobility, and sensory processing/stimulation/development)

Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (COTA)

Under the direction and supervision of a registered occupational therapist, the COTA participates in team evaluations and program planning. Direct service is provided in the following goal areas:

- Range of motion
- Positioning
- Motor development (e.g., perceptual motor/eye hand coordination)
- Self-care (e.g., feeding, dressing, grooming, mobility)
- Sensory processing/stimulation/awareness/development

COTAs also provide technical assistance and demonstration teaching to parents and teachers and assist teachers in adapting equipment and materials to meet student needs.

Registered Physical Therapist (PTR)

Physical therapists perform standardized or observational assessments related to gross motor skills and assist teams in developing appropriate educational plans for students. The physical therapist also assists teams in monitoring student progress of goals and annual goal development. Most services provided by physical therapists are consultative to special education teachers, paraprofessionals, DAPE teachers, and parents and include the areas of: range of motion, strengthening, facilitation of developmental motor skills, gait training, transfer training, sensory motor processing, positioning, and wheelchair mobility skills. The physical therapist also monitors student equipment for fit and safety. The physical therapist also provides information to school staff regarding transportation safety and emergency evacuation.

Developmental Adaptive Physical Education

Developmental Adaptive Physical Education (D/APE) teachers provide direct and indirect services to students who require adaptations to the regular physical education curriculum. These services are often provided through consultation with physical education teachers, which include ideas for adaptations and goals for students. Students must meet eligibility criteria in a disability area to qualify for D/APE services. D/APE teachers provide students with lifetime skills, fundamental motor skills, sport skills and fitness. Services from D/APE teachers are often in conjunction with other related service partners, such as physical therapists (PT), occupational therapists (OT), physical and other health impaired (POHI) teachers, special education case managers, and school nurses.

Educational Audiologist

The educational audiologist provides services to students who are deaf and/or hard of hearing (D/HH). Priority services include assisting school personnel to insure that students who are D/HH have optimal amplification and a good acoustic environment in the classroom. The audiologist evaluates hearing status to determine eligibility for services, consults with school personnel regarding the effects of the hearing loss, recommends remediation strategies for students with fluctuating hearing loss, consults with medical personnel, inservices staff, completes classroom acoustic analysis, and monitors students hearing aids and auditory trainers. Audiologist also provides services to the “at risk” student population (e.g., early childhood special education, speech and language, and Down Syndrome).

Speech and Language Pathologists

Speech and language pathologists act both as direct, stand-alone service providers as well as related service providers. Speech and language services include evaluation, program development and planning for students with speech and language disabilities. Related services in the area of speech and language usually include consultative and direct services in speech and language development, as well as services in specific speech, language, and hearing problems.

School Social Workers

School social workers help students resolve problems that interfere with adjustment to school and ability to have a successful educational experience. As a team member, social workers provide the following kinds of services: investigate neglect and abuse of children and provide advocacy services for abuse victims; consult and collaborate with school personnel in gathering and providing information on a case; and assist in the establishment and planning of respective roles in the modification of a student’s behavior. School social workers often provide parents with the knowledge regarding access to appropriate resources and understanding children’s needs. Social skill training, group and individual counseling may also be part of the services available to students.

School Psychologists

The school psychologist’s role is to assist staff in establishing and conducting mainstream intervention activities. Activities may include the following: review of student records, consultation with students, teachers and parents, assisting in the development and implementation of positive behavioral intervention strategies including functional behavioral assessments. For students birth-21, the school psychologist participates in evaluation and reevaluation activities to determine a student’s special education needs. Another function of the school psychologist is the availability to assist education staff in systems change, program development, and the coordination/communication of HVED activities. The school psychologist is also available to provide

technical assistance to specialized teams (TAT, SAT and SST). This support may include developing individual student plans, goals, and evaluation reports.