

August 9, 2004

Dear Superintendent:

The No Child Left Behind Act sets out requirements for both teachers and paraprofessionals to demonstrate competence as a condition of assignment to an instructional role. In establishing the requirements Congress provided an opportunity for individual states to allow for additional options to be made available to educators to meet these requirements. The State Board of Education has approved additional options for teachers to demonstrate competence through high objective uniform state standards of evaluation (HOUSSE), as well as additional means for paraprofessionals to qualify. Options for both teachers and paraprofessionals include the use of a professional portfolio to meet this federal mandate. Portfolio guidelines have been approved by the State Board, and are available for all teachers and paraprofessionals. Districts should engage in a conversation with representatives of the teacher and paraprofessional staff to implement the portfolio process. Additionally, it should be noted that all State Board approved options should be made available for teachers and paraprofessionals to demonstrate competence in their assignment.

A teacher or paraprofessional who has demonstrated competence in any Michigan district is considered competent in any other Michigan district. Portability of documentation is inherent in the State Board approved processes and is consistent with the expectations of the federal legislation. However, a teacher or paraprofessional from another state who has demonstrated competence in that state may not be automatically considered to have demonstrated competence in Michigan. Check State Board of Education definitions and guidelines to determine if requirements have been met.

Finally, the Michigan Department of Education has acknowledged that the Saginaw/Midland ISD teacher portfolio process meets the State Board approved guidelines for Michigan teacher portfolios. The Saginaw/Midland approach may be considered one example of a local response to the option, but it should not be considered the only approach. It is recommended that a district wishing to develop a local portfolio option should first review the Michigan Guidelines for the Highly Qualified Teacher Content Area Portfolio and address the four categories in which competency must be demonstrated. To meet the Michigan Department of Education Guidelines, each local portfolio program must include the following:

1. A teacher must provide documentation/evidence for each of the four categories;
2. A reflection statement, tying professional development to classroom practice;
3. Five-year recency in the professional development and service to the content area cited;
4. Maximum of five years of teaching experience documented; and
5. The local assessment team must be balanced with teachers and administrators.

If these elements are addressed, a district need not send the portfolio to the Michigan Department of Education for approval, but rather notify the Department that a portfolio, meeting the Michigan Department of Education Guidelines, has been approved locally.

If you are in need of further assistance, please feel free to contact Frank Ciloski at 517-373-6791.

Sincerely,

Flora L. Jenkins, Director
Office of Professional Preparation Services