

# EXAMINING EDUCATORS OF THE DEAF AS “HIGHLY QUALIFIED” TEACHERS: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER IDEA AND NCLB

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DUCATORS OF THE DEAF were long considered “highly qualified” if they obtained state licensure from approved deaf education programs. But the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) redefined qualifications based on core academic content areas, without recognizing disability-specific expertise. NCLB’s reauthorization will provide opportunities for examining definitions of “highly qualified” and ensuring that both general and special educators are appropriately prepared. Under the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, educators of the deaf are primarily responsible for supporting implementation of each assigned student’s individualized education program. When done skillfully and knowledgeably, IEP execution maximizes learning outcomes, and therefore would support NCLB mandates for improved student achievement. Instead of academic attainment alone, the primary “qualification” of educators of the deaf should be training and expertise in providing communication, learning, and assistive technology supports that allow access to academic content and, ultimately, address deaf students’ historical underachievement.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) has significantly challenged schools and teachers across the country to meet prescribed measures of educational progress (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a). All students must be assessed and demonstrate a 5% improvement per year in educational achievement (Council for Exceptional Children [CEC], 2002). In order to assure instructional quality, all teachers of core academic subjects must meet requirements to be “highly qualified.”

The challenge for educators of the deaf and other special educators is that

they must meet both NCLB and Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requirements (CEC, 2004). IDEA and the subsequent Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act Amendments of 2004 (IDEIA) require all special educators to have disability-specific training and degrees. Under NCLB, a teacher is adjudged “highly qualified” based on training, testing, and licensure within core academic subjects (CEC, 2003, 2004; No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Title IX, § 9101 (23)(A&B); Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2004). The

disability-specific training and licensure requirements under IDEA are not acknowledged under NCLB.

One reason for the discrepancy between NCLB and IDEA relates to the populations each act addresses. NCLB focuses on raising the achievement levels of *all* students, including students with disabilities; results may be disaggregated from the whole but must be considered against the same achievement standards. In contrast, IDEA prescribes processes and supports to maximize individual and unique student strengths and needs. NCLB assessments are based on standardized and normative outcomes; in contrast, IDEA's outcomes are individualized and prescriptive. Under NCLB, special education students, teachers, and programs are one part of a much larger whole; under IDEA, each student is distinct and entitled to unique educational processes, programming, and supports. Significantly, it is the special educators who implement and oversee IDEA's specialized processes and supports.

The upcoming reauthorization of NCLB provides an opportunity for educators of the deaf to reexamine the utility and efficacy of this federal act in producing highly qualified teachers for deaf and hard of hearing students. In support of NCLB, no parent, legislator, or educator can deny the importance of having well-trained, efficient, and effective instructors for America's children. The question is whether or not NCLB's mandates for general educators also support the development of well-trained, efficient, and effective educators of the deaf, given these educators' roles within the general teaching population. In answering this question, it is important to examine the roles and responsibilities of educators of the deaf in the provision of a range of linguistic, learning, and behavioral supports, as well as other

accommodations, for deaf and hard of hearing students across the continuum of classroom placements. In the present article, each role and classroom placement option will be examined in terms of the requisite professional responsibilities and expertise.

### **Summary of NCLB Standards for Teachers: Definitions of “Highly Qualified”**

NCLB establishes standards to ensure that every child receives a quality education, whether from general or special educators. Title IX, § 9101 (23)(A&B), describes as “highly qualified” a public elementary or secondary school teacher who meets four criteria:

- (i) Has obtained full State certification as a teacher (including certification obtained through alternative routes to certification) or passed the State teacher licensing examination and holds a license to teach in such State, except that when used with respect to any teacher teaching in a public charter school, the term means that the teacher meets the requirements set forth in the State's public charter school law; and
- (ii) Is an elementary school teacher who holds at least a bachelor's degree, and has demonstrated, by passing a rigorous State test, subject knowledge and teaching skills in reading, writing, mathematics, and other areas of the basic elementary school curriculum (which may consist of passing a State-required certification or licensing test or tests in reading, writing, mathematics, and other areas of basic elementary school curriculum);
- (iii) If new to the profession as a middle or secondary school teacher, she or he holds at least a bachelor's degree and has demonstrated a high level of competency in each of the academic subjects in which the teacher teaches, by passing a rigorous State academic subject test in each of the academic subjects in which the teacher teaches (which may consist of a passing level of performance on a State-required certification or licensing test or tests in each of the academic subjects in which the teacher teaches); or successful completion, in each of the academic subjects in which the teacher teaches, of an academic major, a graduate degree, course work equivalent to an undergraduate academic major, or advanced certification or credentialing; or
- (iv) If not new to the profession, she or he holds at least a bachelor's degree and has met standards for being highly qualified through an option for a test; or demonstrates competence in all the academic subjects in which the teacher teaches based on a high objective uniform State standard of evaluation that:
  - a. Is set by the State for both grade-appropriate academic subject-matter knowledge and teaching skills;
  - b. Is aligned with challenging State academic content and student academic achievement standards and developed in consultation with core content specialists, teachers, principals, and school administrators;

- c. Provides objective, coherent information about the teacher's attainment of core content knowledge in the academic subjects in which a teacher teaches.

To summarize, there are three essential components: All teachers must be licensed or certified by their state, must have passed a state licensing examination, and must have at least a bachelor's degree. The law differentiates between qualifications for elementary school teachers and those for middle school or high school (secondary) teachers. Elementary school teachers are considered content-area "generalists," and must pass a rigorous state test in reading, writing, mathematics, and other basic elementary curriculum areas. Middle school and high school teachers are considered content-area "specialists," and must pass a rigorous state examination in each of the core academic subjects they teach. Core academic content is defined as language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2004; CEC, 2002, 2003, 2004; NCLB, 2001). Anyone providing direct instruction at the secondary level in any of the four core areas must meet these requirements as of June 30, 2006 (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2002a, 2004a, 2005). Requirements for educators teaching in other, noncore instructional content areas are not specified. These include special education and vocational teachers, teachers of English as a nonprimary language, and a variety of other educators. However, all of these educators must meet NCLB requirements if they provide direct instruction to students within a core content area at the secondary level.

A U.S. Government Accountability

Office (2004) report on states' compliance with NCLB found that by the 2002–2003 school year all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico required that special education teachers have a bachelor's degree and be certified to teach. Of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 3 U.S. territories (Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands), all but 7 jurisdictions (Idaho, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming) required statewide testing for their general or special education teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2004a). Twenty-four states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico required special educators to demonstrate additional subject-matter competency by having a degree or passing state tests in the core academic content they intended to teach. Additional subject-area competency is the area of least compliance among states. Later clarifications allowed special educators who provide consultation or indirect supports to general educators to be exempt from secondary-level subject-matter competency requirements (U.S. Department of Education, 2004a, 2005).

### **IDEA's Requirements for Special Educators**

IDEA and its amendments (Pub. L. 101–476; Pub. L. 105–17; Pub. L. 108–446) designate special educators as the personnel primarily responsible for implementing and overseeing the individualized and prescriptive educational services identified in each student's individualized education program (IEP). Instruction must occur in the least restrictive environment, with access to the general education classroom and curriculum. This law and its amendments have led to an evolution in special educators' instructional roles in order to support increasing numbers of students who

are taught outside segregated, disability-specific classrooms (Idol, Nevin, & Paolucci-Whitcomb, 2000; Kampwirth, 2003; Keefe, Moore, & Duff, 2004; Olson, & Platt, 2004; Ripley, 1997; Wigle & Wilcox, 2003). Among students in the federal category "students with hearing impairments," 29.49% were taught in regular classrooms and 19.73% in resource rooms during 1992–1993 (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). Ten years later, the categories were redefined. However, by that time 42.99% of these students were spending a large majority of their school day in the regular classroom (specifically, less than 21% of their time was spent in segregated classrooms), while 19.29% were spending 21%–60% of their time outside the regular classroom (U.S. Department of Education, 2004b). In terms of self-contained placements, almost half of students (49.22%) were outside the self-contained classroom during 1992–1993, but by 2002 nearly two thirds of students (64.28%) spent more than 20% of their day outside the self-contained classroom.

Increased placements with typical peers have not eliminated the need for instructional supports. Instead, educators of the deaf and other special educators increasingly work with general educators, and with students placed within general education classrooms. These educators of the deaf and other special educators work either directly with assigned students or indirectly with the students' general education teachers and related service personnel. They do so in three different roles:

1. as consultant teachers who meet periodically with general education teachers to provide expertise in addressing specific learning needs of special education students

2. as resource room or itinerant teachers who provide skill-specific or content-specific instruction to special education students who are in full-time inclusion placements
3. as coteachers or collaborative/cooperative teachers who work with a general educator on a full-time or part-time basis (Friend & Bursuck, 2006; Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003; Idol et al., 2000; Kampwirth, 2003; Moores, 2001; Olson & Platt, 2004; Stinson & Kluwin, 2003; Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003).

The IEP team determines the placement regarding students who are deaf or hard of hearing, with the choice being made from a range of classroom options that include the following:

1. general education classroom placement with little or no support services needed from the educator of the deaf
2. general education placement with deaf education consultation and assistance with materials
3. general education placement with itinerant services from an educator of the deaf
4. general education classroom placement with resource room assistance
5. part-time in a special class and part-time in a general education class
6. full-time in a special class
7. special day school
8. residential school (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003; Moores, 2001; Olson & Platt, 2004; Stinson & Kluwin, 2003).

The roles of educators of the deaf may cross several student placement options. For example, consultant teachers may provide primarily over-

sight (placement option 1), or may consult regularly with general educators (option 2); resource room or itinerant teachers may be assigned both direct and indirect teaching roles across placement options 2 through 5 (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003; Luckner, 2006; Luckner & Howell, 2002; Luckner & Muir, 2001; Stinson & Kluwin, 2003). Under IDEA, the IEP team's primary goal is to facilitate student success by determining the "least restrictive" classroom placement and then identifying personnel and individualized support structures, accordingly.

Residential schools historically have provided an important option in deaf education services (Moores, 2001; Schirmer, 2001). However, preferences set out in IDEA for general education classrooms have substantially reduced residential school placement. Deaf and hard of hearing students' enrollment in residential programs decreased from 13.17% during 1992–93 to 6.79% during 2002–2003 (U.S. Department of Education, 1995, 2002b, 2004b). The result is that the majority of educators of the deaf currently work in public school settings, and many are assigned to roles outside special or segregated classrooms. This greatly affects the type of expertise these educators need to be successful, or "highly qualified," teachers.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Special Educators Under IDEA**

The nature of content responsibilities and the roles assigned to educators of the deaf are central to defining the qualifications these teachers need. The diversity of roles for educators of the deaf and other special educators under IDEA presents another fundamental disparity with NCLB. Under NCLB, curriculum content is delivered by a single "content expert"

working in isolation; under IDEA, and in light of increasing inclusion placements, this solitary teaching role is limited to segregated classrooms or schools.

### **The Consultant Teacher Teaching Responsibilities**

In the consultation model, the educator of the deaf provides indirect services to students by consulting with the general educator. Assigned students are identified as having few or no support needs (Vaughn et al., 2003). The educator of the deaf may do periodic monitoring or suggest adaptations of materials or instructional strategies; demonstrate teaching methods, communication, or learning strategies; engage in collaborative problem solving; and provide general case management (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003; Kampwirth, 2003; Olson & Platt, 2004; Weiss & Lloyd, 2003; Wigle & Wilcox, 2003).

### **Content-Area Responsibilities**

The general educator is the content-area specialist, with curricular and instructional decisions under his or her direction (Heward, 2000). The educator of the deaf or other special educator provides expertise in accommodations and communication strategies, knowledge and skills for adapting the curriculum and applying differentiated learning and literacy strategies, adaptations of the classroom environment to support student success, and consultation processes (Luckner, 2006; Luckner & Muir, 2001; Olson & Platt, 2004).

### **The Resource Room Teacher and the Itinerant Teacher Teaching Responsibilities**

Resource room teachers and itinerant teachers differ primarily by location(s) and duration or frequency of time with students. Resource room teachers typ-

ically remain in one school, working in a specially staffed and equipped classroom to which students with disabilities come for one or more periods each school day to receive individualized or small-group instruction (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003; Heward, 2000; Kluwin, Morris, & Clifford, 2004; Stinson & Kluwin, 2003). Itinerant teachers typically travel among several schools, reducing their availability to any one student and teacher but allowing for broader services across the school district. Itinerant teachers often are called upon when there is insufficient enrollment in a local school to hire a full-time special educator (Fisher, Frey, & Thousand, 2003; Olson & Platt, 2004).

Itinerant and resource room teachers provide direct instruction to students, typically for limited periods, to address IEP literacy or learning needs, to provide content instruction and remediation, to develop strategies to promote overall classroom success, and to meet specific teacher requests (Cohen, 1982; Luckner, 2006; Olson & Platt, 2004; Stinson & Kluwin, 2003). Resource room teachers and itinerant teachers also may find or develop specialized materials, resources, and supports for students. They work in consultation roles to provide indirect service to students by overseeing assistive technologies, recommending teaching and learning strategies, sharing progress notes and assessment information, and providing support to administrators and parents (Cohen, 1982; Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003; Luckner & Howell, 2002; Olson & Platt, 2000; Voltz, Elliott, & Cobb, 1994).

### ***Content-Area Responsibilities***

The general education teachers determine the curriculum goals, sequence, learning materials, and methods for the class, including students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Resource and itinerant teachers work within the con-

tent and instructional sequence identified by the teacher, and according to the student's IEP. They use and apply expertise in deafness within this identified instructional sequence to address the student's identified needs in communication, literacy, content remediation, and other areas, using both direct and indirect instruction.

### ***The Coteacher, or Collaborative Teacher Teaching Responsibilities***

The coteaching model enables deaf and hard of hearing students with greater support needs to remain in the general classroom and curriculum by placing an educator of the deaf in the classroom with the student. This teacher may work with one or more general educators, and across several content areas, to meet student needs (Antia & Kreimeyer, 2003; Olson & Platt, 2004; Vaughn et al., 2003; Vaughn, Schumm, & Arguelles, 1997; Walsh & Jones, 2004). The educator of the deaf and the general educators collaborate on lesson planning and use a mixture of roles and responsibilities in the course of full-class, small-group, and individual student instruction or minilessons. They may provide instruction that covers the same or differentiated content (Antia, Stinson, & Gaustad, 2002; Compton et al., 1998; Luckner, 1999; Vaughn et al., 1997; Walsh & Jones, 2004).

### ***Content-Area Responsibilities***

Coteaching blends the expertise of educators of the deaf and general educators to provide access to the general curriculum and support within the general education classroom (Compton et al., 1998; Luckner, 1999; Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2004). The general educator provides content-knowledge expertise and is responsible for selecting curriculum standards and objectives, organizing and sequencing

the learning, and identifying the necessary texts, materials, resources, and learning activities to accomplish this learning. The educator of the deaf provides the specific instructional strategies, adaptations, and accommodations appropriate for the deaf and hard of hearing students in the classroom, and ensures that the instructional activities, strategies, and groupings support the students' success and that appropriate assistive technologies and accommodations are used to support full classroom participation (Antia et al., 2002; Friend & Bursuck, 2006; Luckner, 1999; Mrawski & Dieker, 2004; Vaughn et al., 2003).

### ***The Teacher in a Self-Contained Classroom Teaching Responsibilities***

Students are educated in self-contained classrooms full-time, or on a part-time basis with options that resemble those of resource room instruction (Olson & Platt, 2004). Deaf and hard of hearing students are assigned to these classes full-time when their IEP team has determined that they are not successful in general education classrooms, despite available technology and other supports, interpreters, classroom aides, or pullout services (Heward, 2000). Under IDEA, these students should demonstrate academic or other deficiencies of such severity that they need full-time placement in a segregated setting with an educator of the deaf. Residential schools are the most restrictive; however, they provide deafness-specific training across all teachers and staff, ensuring a range of specialized diagnostic and support services (Stinson & Kluwin, 2003). Deaf and hard of hearing students and their parents may prefer residential school placement as the best way to meet these students' educational, social,

emotional, and cultural needs (Schirmer, 2001).

### ***Content-Area Responsibilities***

Educators of the deaf in segregated classrooms and schools make all of the curriculum and content decisions, and implement these decisions using their knowledge and skills related to deafness and accommodation strategies. These teachers identify curriculum learning goals and sequences, materials, methods, and resources, in addition to the accommodations, adaptations, and learning strategies that are most appropriate for the individual students in each of their classes. They may work alone, or may team with one or more other educators of the deaf, other special educators, or general educators. Some schools and classrooms offer "reverse-inclusion" programs in which other special or general education students join a segregated classroom for specific content or time periods. When working in teams or reverse-inclusion environments, teachers may differentiate the teaching assignments by content or by grade level.

### ***Summary of Responsibilities***

The descriptions in the preceding sections of the present article identify the primary expertise expected of educators of the deaf as being the knowledge and skills related to the adaptations, strategies, and accommodations needed to meet the communication, literacy, learning, and academic needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Under NCLB, those educators providing only indirect services (consultant teachers) are not required to have content-area specialization if working at the secondary level (U.S. Department of Education, 2004a, 2005). All of the other teaching roles provide some direct instruction to students, and at the sec-

ondary level require teachers to be content specialists in every subject area to which they are assigned.

In contrast to the requirements under NCLB, the descriptions in the preceding section of the present article show that in all but the self-contained classrooms the educator of the deaf works with a general educator, and it is the general educator who assumes primary responsibility for the curriculum content and sequencing decisions. This remains true across the range of collaborative placements: The general educators provide the content-area knowledge and skill specialization, and determine the content and sequence of instruction (Keefe et al., 2004; Murawski & Dieker, 2004; Schumaker et al., 2002). Overall, and across both the elementary and secondary levels, the general educators provide the required academic content "expertise" required under NCLB.

For the majority of placements for educators of the deaf, the critical professional content consists of disability-specific knowledge and skills, and their application to individual deaf or hard of hearing students and their classrooms. Whereas the general educator provides the academic content expertise, it is only through the deafness-specific expertise that the general curriculum is made accessible to the student who is deaf or hard of hearing. It is through this collaborative differentiation of content responsibilities (academic and deafness-related) that student success is optimized. The differentiated roles and content responsibilities of educators of the deaf and general educators are summarized in Table 1.

If no classroom supports are needed, that model also is available. However, without an "adverse educational impact," the deaf or hard of hearing student is unlikely to be eligible for special education services

(IDEIA, 2004). Any of these students' needs for accommodation and assistive technology would thereby be documented and monitored under Section 504 plans (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005).

The collaborative differentiation of roles to support inclusion placements has been described by several studies. Schumaker and colleagues (2002) found that high school special education teachers described their most important roles to be teaching learning strategies and working with general education teachers. They reported spending between 15% and 90% of their academic time providing learning strategy instruction, depending on the needs and constraints of the individual situation. Educators of the deaf also have reported spending substantial amounts of time addressing the significant needs of general educators and administrators in order to successfully support deaf and hard of hearing students (Luckner, 2006; Luckner & Howell, 2002; Luckner & Muir, 2001; Yarger & Luckner, 1999). The knowledge and skills content that is critical for educators of the deaf, and which is required for successful collaborative placements, is not academic content. Rather, it consists of the knowledge and skills to address the unique communication, literacy, learning, academic, and assistive technology needs of deaf and hard of hearing students, and the collaborative skills to communicate these needs effectively to a variety of educators, administrators, and family members.

### ***Academic Content Expertise***

IDEA's preference for inclusive placements of special education students has led a majority of educators of the deaf to work in collaborative and consultative roles. In these cases, the general educator makes academic content decisions for the full class, of which the

**Table 1**

Differentiating the Responsibilities of Educators of the Deaf and General Educators

<i>Title</i>	<i>Role of the educator of the deaf</i>	<i>Expertise of the educator of the deaf</i>	<i>Content expertise of the general educator</i>
Consultant teacher	Meets with general educators to eliminate barriers and maximize academic achievement of students in the general education classroom and curriculum.	Provides information about disability-specific communication accommodations and supports, adaptive teaching methods, and literacy and learning modifications.	Determines curriculum content, topics, texts, instructional sequencing, and instructional activities.
Resource room or itinerant teacher	<i>Indirect services:</i> Meets with general educators, administrators, and parents to identify specific content and remediation needs, to suggest strategies, and report progress. <i>Direct services:</i> Tutors and instructs students based on IEP- and teacher-identified academic, literacy, and learning needs.	Provides information about disability-specific communication accommodations and supports, adaptive teaching methods, and literacy and learning modifications. Provides tutoring and instruction to remediate and address identified academic and classroom needs.	Determines curriculum content, topics, texts, instructional sequencing, and instructional activities.
Coteacher or collaborative teacher	Teaches with one or more general educators full-time or part-time to facilitate students' success.	Provides information and collaborates in implementing communication, literacy, and linguistic accommodations, specialized teaching methods and materials, learning strategies, and curriculum modifications and adaptations.	Determines the curriculum content, topics, texts, instructional sequencing, and instructional activities in collaboration with the educator of the deaf to incorporate disability-specific adaptations and accommodations.
Self-contained classroom or segregated school teacher	Instructs students who cannot be accommodated or prefer not to be in general education classes. Students attend on a full- or part-time basis.	Uses disability-specific expertise to ensure basic skill acquisition in conjunction with intensive and ongoing accommodations for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, specialized teaching methods, learning and behavior management strategies, and curriculum modifications and adaptations. Provides primary content-area instruction, often determines content organization and sequence, and uses the general curriculum to facilitate movement into general education classrooms.	

IEP, individualized education program.

deaf or hard of hearing student is a member. The educator of the deaf works within these curricular parameters to accommodate the student's individual needs and abilities.

Only in segregated classrooms or schools does the educator of the deaf assume responsibility for both academic content and deafness accommodation decisions. States vary greatly in the percentage of deaf and hard of hearing students who attend separate schools (from 0.00% in Louisiana and New Hampshire to 35.38% in Rhode

Island). The same is true regarding residential schools: 0.00% in Alaska, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, Utah, and Vermont, to 25.09% in Rhode Island (U.S. Department of Education, 2004b). It can therefore be inferred that the number of educators of the deaf working in these roles also varies widely by state. Overall, the number of those working in segregated placements has continued to decline since IDEA was first implemented in 1975 as the Education

for All Handicapped Children Act. Deaf and hard of hearing students in segregated placements may be at an academic content disadvantage as defined by NCLB. This may be true particularly when a deaf or hard of hearing student's academic performance is at a level beyond the subject-area "generalist" training of an educator of the deaf and elementary-level academic content.

Unfortunately, however, the typical academic achievement levels of deaf and hard of hearing students are sub-

stantially lower than those of their peers, and the majority leave high school performing substantially below secondary grade levels. The Stanford Achievement Test (9th ed.) national median reading comprehension level for 18-year-olds is fourth grade (Traxler, 2000). Only those students scoring in the 80th percentile achieve at the sixth-grade reading level, reaching this at about age 14. According to NCLB, sixth grade would be the point at which secondary-level reading instruction would commence. However only about 20% of deaf and hard of hearing students would need this level of literacy instruction. Thus, few educators of the deaf who teach reading need secondary-level content-area specialization in order to teach their students. Those students performing at or near grade level may be placed in the general education classroom and receive instruction from a general educator with content-area expertise.

Stanford Achievement Test (9th ed.) median levels for language are approximately at grade level 4.5 for 18-year-olds, and slightly below the 8th-grade level at the 80th percentile. Median spelling scores are approximately at the 6th-grade level for 18-year-olds and at grade level 9.5 at the 80th percentile. Again, few educators of the deaf who are teaching English need secondary-level academic content expertise, and, according to IDEA, deaf and hard of hearing students performing near grade level are likely to be placed in general education classes.

Limited English proficiency concomitant with substantial hearing loss has a significant delaying effect on academic achievement as well (Karchmer & Mitchell, 2003). The median mathematics achievement for *problem solving* at age 18 years is slightly below the fifth-grade level, and the ninth-grade level for those at the 80th percentile (Traxler, 2000). Median

*mathematics procedures* scores are slightly higher, with the median score near sixth grade for 18-year-olds and approximately ninth grade at the 80th percentile. Scores of the 16-to-17-year-old group were approximately one grade level higher than those of 18-year-olds in most tests. Yet the majority of the achievement of deaf and hard of hearing students remains at elementary levels, and thus does not require secondary-level mathematical content expertise.

The reading, language, and mathematics data present a pattern of achievement that rarely exceeds elementary achievement levels and elementary content training. Regardless of the classroom placement, educators of the deaf need elementary academic content expertise for most of their students, even when they are the sole content instructors (for example, in segregated placements). These academic norms suggest that it is critical for educators of the deaf to be well trained in basic academic content, and in using their deafness-specific expertise to ensure that this content is acquired. That the majority of deaf and hard of hearing students still struggle to obtain this content well into their secondary school years suggests that a substantial barrier has yet to be overcome. Only by assuring that such students have these foundational academic skills, made accessible through deafness-specific accommodations, can the profession realistically move toward higher expectations and outcomes.

#### *Contradictory or Complementary NCLB and IDEA Requirements?*

As currently interpreted, NCLB's priority to ensure academic content preparation for teachers does not address the multiple roles assigned to educators of the deaf and other special educators, nor their critical functions in

providing disability-content expertise and supports. NCLB presumes a role in which teachers work alone to provide a single assigned academic content area of instruction. In contrast, placement data show that most educators of the deaf work in collaboration with general educators, who are primarily responsible for making curriculum content determinations. In addition, the academic achievement levels of the majority of deaf and hard of hearing students remain predominantly at elementary content levels, regardless of age and assigned grade level (cf. Traxler, 2000). Educators of the deaf need strong training in this basic academic content, and the deafness-specific accommodations that mediate communication and acquisition of this content, in order secure these foundational skills, particularly when assigned to students performing at elementary levels.

#### *Recognizing Disability Content*

A key contribution of NCLB is to ensure that educators have content-area training. Teachers assigned to work with deaf and hard of hearing students should have expertise in deafness, just as general educators should have training in their assigned content. NCLB requires state and district accountability to provide evidence of this training, and to remedy cases in which teachers work outside their content training area (*Science and Math Education*, 2004). The consultative and collaborative roles assigned to educators of the deaf under IDEA presume that general educators have content-area training, and appropriate specialization at secondary levels. Complementary implementation of NCLB and IDEA would ensure that all educators brought their respective critical content and training to their collaboration.

The alignment of NCLB with IDEA for educators of the deaf and other

special educators would ensure that they were trained, tested, and licensed in their primary *disability* content area. Students whose hearing loss provides a substantial barrier to communication and learning need teachers who are knowledgeable and skillful in accommodating the concomitant delays and deficits. Educators of the deaf must also be skillful in integrating appropriate accommodations and learning strategies with basic academic content, including modifications of materials and the environment. A special educator with other licensure in, for example, learning disabilities or moderate/severe disabilities does not have the expertise in deafness to thoroughly and skillfully address the learning and academic needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Under complementary NCLB/IDEA implementation, such a situation would represent a teacher working outside his or her licensure content, would be identified as such on a school or district "report card," and would constitute a circumstance that would require a "remedy."

The critical professional and collaborative knowledge and skill competencies needed by well-trained educators of the deaf are fairly well delineated in the 10 CEC/Council on Education of the Deaf (CEC/CED) standards (CEC, 2006–2007). These standards also are used by CED to accredit programs, and to issue CED certification to teachers (Council on Education of the Deaf, 2007), and are incorporated into accreditation procedures of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium. These standards provide a professionally recognized basis that could be used for determining the "highly qualified" status of educators of the deaf. The same licensure, degree, and testing requirements under NCLB

**Table 2**

Council for Exceptional Children/Council on Education of the Deaf Professional Standards

Standard 1:	Foundations
Standard 2:	Development and characteristics of learners
Standard 3:	Individual learning differences
Standard 4:	Instructional strategies
Standard 5:	Learning environments/social interactions
Standard 6:	Language
Standard 7:	Instructional planning
Standard 8:	Assessment
Standard 9:	Professional and ethical practice
Standard 10:	Collaboration

From *Professional Standards: Deaf and Hard of Hearing*, Council for Exceptional Children (2006–2007).

would help ensure that the skills of educators of the deaf, as recognized under IDEA, were clearly documented. The categories of the 10 CEC/CED standards are listed in Table 2.

All states require a bachelor's degree and licensure (U.S. Department of Education, 2004a; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2004). What is missing for educators of the deaf and other special educators is a clearly valid and reliable test that aligns with professional standards. Recently, the Educational Testing Service (2007) undertook such a project, surveying educators of the deaf and other special educators both personally and through the CEC Web site, to develop a licensure assessment for entry-level special educators (S. Robustelli, personal communication, May 7, 2007). This would suggest that complementary NCLB/IDEA implementation is indeed possible.

Large-scale and standardized testing is an imperfect process (cf. Popham, 2001, 2004). Providing adequate, thorough, reliable, and valid testing of educators of the deaf that does not discriminate or otherwise disadvantage those who themselves are deaf, have a disability, or are culturally diverse is a substantial professional challenge (cf. U.S. Department of Ed-

ucation, 2002a). However, providing such testing would be an important advance toward ensuring that educators of the deaf were "highly qualified" and that deaf and hard of hearing students were receiving optimal instruction. A valid and reliable test built on the CEC/CED standards would support complementary NCLB/IDEA implementation across degree programs and different states' licensure.

As currently interpreted, NCLB's precedence over IDEA guarantees only academic content training; for educators of the deaf, the critical training and expertise in disability-specific knowledge and content is ignored. Expanding the NCLB definition of "content" to include disability-specific expertise would give recognition to the critical content that educators of the deaf are expected to bring to collaborative and consultative roles, and would support efforts to ensure that this expertise is verified through testing, training, and licensure requirements.

### ***Disability-Specific Implementation***

Under NCLB in its current form, teachers can be reported as "highly qualified" only on the basis of academic curriculum content. However,

the qualifications of educators of the deaf and other special educators could be reported separately, by means of disaggregation processes similar to those allowed for special education student reports under NCLB. Educators of the deaf working at secondary levels but teaching at elementary levels present a unique challenge. Schools would need to verify the required instructional content level; however, this information is provided on each student's IEP in the "Present Levels of Performance" section. Schools could positively report the elementary-level academic content area qualifications of educators of the deaf (e.g., for district "report cards") if all assigned students were performing no higher than elementary levels.

For deaf and hard of hearing students who do perform at secondary achievement levels and who are in segregated placements, complementary NCLB and IDEA procedures could be implemented to support secondary content-level instruction. IDEA's flexible instructional roles, now applied primarily to general education classrooms and educators, could be applied to segregated settings, specifically utilizing the resource, collaborative, or consultant teacher roles. For example, in public school settings, a general educator with a secondary-level content expertise could be assigned to consult or collaborate in content-area instruction provided by the educator of the deaf. In separate or residential schools, one educator of the deaf could be designated to obtain content-area expertise and similarly consult or collaborate with other teachers. This would ensure that students who were deaf or hard of hearing would receive secondary-level instruction with deafness-specific accommodations to support appropriate means of content delivery. The IDEA teaching roles typically have been applied in unidirectional ways to support

the general educator. However, these supports are assigned to meet student needs across a continuum of placements and need not be restricted in their application.

### **Conclusion**

Without question, all teachers should be qualified to teach. General educators and educators of the deaf should be trained and prepared to deliver specific content. Complementary implementation of NCLB and IDEA would redefine content to recognize both academic and disability-based knowledge and skills. IDEA has resulted in an increase in general education classroom placements, and most students who are deaf or hard of hearing now spend much of their school day in such placements. A majority of educators of the deaf now work in a range of direct and indirect instructional support roles to facilitate student success with the content and in the classroom (Keefe et al., 2004; Luckner, 2006; Murawski & Dieker, 2004; Schumaker et al., 2002). Both general educators and educators of the deaf bring unique content to support successful learning. But under NCLB in its current form, only the content expertise of the general educator is recognized. "Like never before, NCLB and IDEA require special and general educators to work collaboratively to assure high learning results for all students, including students with disabilities" (CEC, 2005, p. 1).

Recognition of this differentiated instructional expertise would sustain high-quality accommodations and supports provided by educators of the deaf through verified training, degrees, licensure, and testing—measures that are equivalent to other "content" area requirements under NCLB. Therefore, the critical *content* taught by educators of the deaf and the endorsement of these teachers as "highly qualified" should be based on (a) foundational

curriculum and disability-specific content, knowledge, and skills, and (b) the application of these to classrooms and to students with disabilities in (c) a form that schools, teachers, administrators, and families can effectively utilize (Compton et al., 1998; Idol et al., 2000; Luckner, 1999, 2006; Luckner & Howell, 2002; Weiss & Lloyd, 2002, 2003).

The CEC/CED standards provide a disability-specific set of criteria that could be used to meet NCLB requirements. Complementary implementation of NCLB and IDEA could disaggregate educators of the deaf and other special educators by disability content, but otherwise hold them accountable for meeting the same professional requirements. Similarly, all teachers would be assigned according to their specific content areas: General educators could not teach outside their subject area; nor could educators of the deaf be assigned to teach other disability areas. For the small percentage of deaf and hard of hearing students who are performing at secondary academic levels and are not in general education classrooms, provision of appropriate content could be supported through consultation or collaboration from an educator of the deaf with designated content expertise. This would merely extend the same roles applied to support the general education classroom to the deaf education classroom.

Clearly, there is a unique confluence of factors that create resilient barriers to higher academic achievement of deaf and hard of hearing students, despite the advent of better assistive technologies, acceptance of sign language in general and American Sign Language in particular, and the presence of trained interpreters in the schools. A critical component in the improvement of the academic outcomes of deaf and hard of hearing

students is that they first acquire elementary and foundational skills, provided by those with critical expertise in deafness. The reauthorization of NCLB provides an opportunity to create complementary implementation of IDEA and NCLB and to recognize the expertise of educators of the deaf and validate their disability-specific training, testing, and licensure. This would provide a significant step forward in ensuring that students who are deaf or hard of hearing receive high-quality teaching that meets both their disability-specific and content-specific instructional needs.

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