**MEMORANDUM**



**TO:** Oklahoma School Districts

**FROM:** State Department of Education

**DATE:** August 9, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Qualifications of elementary and early childhood level Special Education teachers for School Year 2016-2017

As you know, the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) has superseded *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) as the education legislation in effect at the federal level. ESSA eliminates the Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) requirements that were in effect under NCLB, and with them the HOUSSE (High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation) system of demonstrating subject area teaching competency through accumulated points.

While NCLB was in effect, Oklahoma permitted special education teachers at the elementary and early childhood levels to meet HQT requirements by demonstrating competency through a HOUSSE points system. Post-NCLB, there is a question regarding the teaching eligibility of elementary special education teachers who have previously qualified as teachers of record through HOUSSE.

**For the 2016-2017 school year, identified by the U.S. Department of Education as a “transition year” for states as they move from NCLB to ESSA requirements, teachers who are certified in special education may be approved to serve as the teacher of record for grade purposes in early childhood or elementary education by either passing the appropriate OSAT or fulfilling HOUSSE requirements.**

**For secondary coursework (grades 7-12 math/grades 9-12 all other subjects), special education teachers must be certified in special education and hold appropriate subject certification to be the teacher of record. Special education teachers who are not approved to serve as a teacher of record may still serve as co-teachers.**

Guidance on special education certification issues for the 2017-2018 school year and beyond will be developed as Oklahoma establishes its state plan for ESSA implementation.