



Office of Diane M. Douglas  
Superintendent of Public Instruction

May 26, 2016

Dear Education Leader:

We are pleased to announce that the Arizona Department of Education, in consultation with the U.S. Department of Education, has developed a transition plan for the certification of teachers in Title I schools as we prepare for the approaching implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). As you are aware, ESSA will take effect in the 2017-2018 school year, which leaves the upcoming 2016-2017 school year as a transition year for our state.

We believe the proposed changes will have a positive impact on the number of applicants eligible to teach in our schools and in turn may ultimately help address the critical shortage of teachers Arizona is currently facing.

The most substantial change is that **federal Highly Qualified attestations will no longer be required of teachers in Title I schools for the 2016-2017 school year**. Instead, teachers in Title I district schools will be responsible for meeting only Arizona's certification requirements. Teachers teaching in Title I charter schools will be responsible for meeting either Arizona certification requirements or the requirements for Highly Qualified.

Here are two additional points to consider:

- Any certified teacher, including those holding intern certificates through an alternative pathway, will be eligible to teach the content areas associated with their Arizona certificate(s)/endorsement(s), regardless of whether they would be considered Highly Qualified in those areas.
- Special education teachers are still required to obtain an Arizona special education teaching certificate under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), regardless of their school's Title I status.

We welcome your thoughts and feedback as we move forward in this process and work to complete our preparations for ESSA. Please feel free to contact us at [HQTSupport@azed.gov](mailto:HQTSupport@azed.gov) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Cecilia E. Johnson, Ph.D.  
Associate Superintendent of Highly Effective Teachers and Leaders  
Arizona Department of Education

