

ADVANCE ILLINOIS-NCTQ EVALUATION OF ILLINOIS TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMS

FAQs

What is the overall scope of the Illinois study?

NCTQ will evaluate selected aspects of a combination of undergraduate and graduate early childhood, elementary, special education and secondary teacher preparation programs in 53 public and private college or university in Illinois as well as three independent recruitment and training programs. In an objective analysis, the study will lay out individual features and identify program strengths and weaknesses.

What are the ultimate goals of this study?

The findings from this study should aid the decision-making of five target audiences. First, it is designed to give prospective teachers better information about the quality of teacher preparation at individual institutions. Second, it will also provide such information to school districts in deciding from which institutions to hire. Third, it is intended to alter the dynamic between higher education administrations and their education schools, providing both parties better information for making necessary improvements. Fourth, it will encourage state education officials to use better information and data for approving education school programs as certification providers and for holding education schools accountable. Lastly and importantly, it should provide teacher educators a framework for improvement.

What features of preparation programs will be evaluated?

As the attached document describes, we will be looking at 30 standards of performance.

Has NCTQ done studies of this type?

In addition to several national studies, NCTQ has previously studied selected aspects of teacher preparation in Indiana, Utah, New Mexico, and Wyoming. A report on selected aspects of teacher preparation in Colorado and a more comprehensive report on teacher preparation in Texas are forthcoming.

Will there be an overall score and, if so, will all 30 standards be given equal weight in its calculation?

There will be both individual scores and an overall score that weights individual scores. The weighting formula will either be one used in our Texas study or one that emerges from a study now planned in another state that will give us better validating information necessary to apply different weights to the standards.

What materials about teacher preparation programs will colleges and universities be asked to provide?

NCTQ will be requesting syllabi for selected required coursework as well as information on student teacher placements. No syllabi will be collected from websites.

The request for specific material will be sent after November 1, 2009. In addition, later in the study via a letter to each college dean, we will ask the institution to verify information that we will have independently collected.

How will a national organization be able to make good judgments about what is good for Illinois and understand the context of Illinois regulations?

An advisory board has been established by Advance Illinois to help ensure an adequate sensitivity to Illinois and its regulatory climate. Members include representatives from higher education,

philanthropy, management organizations, district leadership and teachers unions to help oversee and learn from this project.

What if we disagree with one, some or all of your 30 standards?

NCTQ does not pretend to be the definitive or lone voice on the essential elements of strong teacher preparation. Indeed over the years many other groups and individuals have articulated what they consider those elements to be; they did not, however, apply those elements to rate individual institutions.

We have worked hard to base our 30 standards on the best research available and best thinking from previous efforts. We also believe that our 30 standards are remarkably uncontroversial and just make plain good sense. Nevertheless, we do not dispute that some groups would take a different approach and in fact we encourage any group willing to take on such an evaluation to do so. The more information from any and all perspectives, the better.

What if we disagree with your assessment of our program?

You will have several opportunities to provide us with materials to correct inaccuracies or misinterpretations. At the conclusion of the study you will be asked to submit a comment on the design and substance of the evaluation and that comment will be published in the final report.

Are you relying on our website to collect information such as syllabi?

No syllabi will be collected from websites. We will access your catalog and schedule of courses from your website, as well as collecting information on faculty and other miscellaneous program features. We will verify with you any information obtained from web documents to ensure that it is up-to-date and accurate.

Can we opt out of the study or refuse to provide some or all materials?

The integrity of the study depends on the fact that the institutions evaluated are not volunteers. Foremost in our minds as we begin this work is a dual responsibility: our responsibility to serve the public interest, but also the responsibility inherent in publicly regulated programs (whether in public or private institutions) producing teachers for public schools to be transparent to the public.

How will institutions in the study be kept apprised of its progress?

As the study progresses, NCTQ will be communicating regularly to provide you with draft ratings and seek material that might enhance our evaluation. Over the course of this communication, your understanding of NCTQ's methodology will grow and provide you with considerable perspective on our analysis. At the conclusion of the study you will be asked to submit a comment on the design and substance of the evaluation and that comment will be published in the final report.

When will the report be released?

Release of the report is scheduled for fall 2010.