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Contact: Lisa Cohen
310-395-2544

**NEW REPORT: EDUCATION SCHOOLS ARE FAILING TO PREPARE
ELEMENTARY TEACHERS IN MATH**

***87% OF EDUCATION SCHOOLS IN STUDY FAIL TO ADEQUATELY PREPARE
ELEMENTARY TEACHERS FOR THE MATHEMATICAL DEMANDS OF THE
CLASSROOM; REPORT SHEDS LIGHT ON WHY U.S. STUDENTS ARE
STRUGGLING TO KEEP UP INTERNATIONALLY***

Washington, DC – Today, the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) released a new report that finds that only 13% of undergraduate education schools require sufficient amounts of relevant math coursework for prospective elementary teachers. NCTQ rated 77 education schools in 49 states by studying entrance and exit requirements, course syllabi, textbooks, tests, and state licensing tests. The results of NCTQ’s study shed new light on why American kids fare so poorly on international comparisons. Math scores for American fourth graders haven’t improved since 1995 on the world’s “report card” (the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, or TIMSS), leaving U.S. students 12th out of the 25 countries whose students took the test (right above Cyprus).

Kate Walsh, president of NCTQ stated, “As a nation, our dislike and discomfort with math is so endemic that we do not even find it troubling when elementary teachers admit to their own weaknesses in basic mathematics. Not only are our education schools not tackling these weaknesses, they accommodate them with low expectations and insufficient content. We simply must begin to appreciate the critical importance of elementary teachers gaining the knowledge and skills they need to effectively teach mathematics. It is what our children need in order to keep up with their peers around the world – and what our country needs in order to produce a skilled workforce that can compete in today’s global economy.”

The new report, “*No Common Denominator: The Preparation of Elementary Teachers in Mathematics by America’s Education Schools*,” is the most comprehensive picture to date of how education schools are preparing – or failing to prepare – elementary teachers in math. NCTQ found that the combination of state and individual school requirements result in very few teacher candidates taking a sufficient number of courses that prepare them well for teaching in elementary classrooms. This study is the second in NCTQ’s series about the quality of elementary teacher preparation; an earlier study looked at how well elementary teachers were prepared to teach young children to read.

Some of the report’s findings include:

- **Low Expectations**: Compared to other countries, the expectations for mathematics knowledge that aspiring teachers must have before they are admitted into a teacher preparation program are exceedingly low. One out of six schools in the study admits teachers without ever asking if they can successfully do grade school arithmetic. Nearly all of the remaining skills verify only that the teacher knows the math learned in middle school.

- **Low Standards:** The exit tests administered by states to award a teaching license assess virtually the same math used on admission tests. In other words, the math knowledge needed to get out is little more than the math knowledge needed to get in.
- **Lack of National Consensus:** Across the United States there is no consensus on how institutions should prepare elementary teachers in mathematics. Given that the job description of the elementary teacher does not vary much from state to state, there is an inexplicable range of course requirements from one institution to the next, from those that require none to those that require up to six.
- **Irrelevant Coursework:** Few programs cover the mathematics content that elementary teachers need. Only one in eight schools actually requires a sufficient amount of the coursework that elementary teachers will need.
- **Haphazard State Guidance:** State regulation and guidance for the preparation of elementary teachers is haphazard, further compounding the variation in institutional requirements.
- **Algebra MIA:** The nation's goal of building the foundation for algebra in elementary grades is not evident in the preparation that elementary teachers receive. In no other area of mathematics are aspiring elementary teachers more shortchanged.

The report includes specific recommendations to help states and education programs develop more focused and rigorous coursework ensuring that teacher candidates become skilled, confident mathematics educators well prepared to teach our nation's children. These include:

- **World Class Math Standards:** Creating coursework standards for aspiring teachers that lay the foundation for teacher preparation that is truly world class.
- **Tougher Admission Standards:** Establishing higher admission standards for education schools that will ensure that only individuals who have a high-school level of math knowledge are admitted.
- **New State Licensing Tests:** Creating new state licensing tests for elementary school teachers in mathematics that would essentially force institutions to prepare teachers to get it right.

To view the full report, including all of the findings and recommendations, go to www.nctq.org or contact Lisa Cohen at (310) 395-2544 or lisa@lisacohen.org.

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About NCTQ

NCTQ is a non-profit organization comprised of reform-minded Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. The organization supports reforms in a broad range of teacher policies and seeks to lend transparency and accountability to the three institutions that have the greatest impact on teacher quality: state governments, colleges of education, and teachers unions.

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