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FLORIDA GETS MEDIOCRE MARKS FOR TEACHER POLICIES IN NEW REPORT-- LABELED 'WEAK BUT PROGRESSING'

—Today the National Council on Teacher Quality released a 50-state encyclopedia on states' teacher policies, concluding that while Florida takes a leadership role in some areas, many policies are counterproductive to the nation's teacher quality goals—

Washington, DC -- The *State Teacher Policy Yearbook* is the first project of its kind to provide a 360-degree detailed analysis of how states are hurting or helping teacher quality--and what they can do to fix broken and anachronistic policies.

While Florida did better than most states, its overall performance shows how much work it still has ahead. In the six areas reviewed, Florida earned one "B" grade, four "C" grades, and one "F" grade.

"As is true for all states, Florida's approach to the teaching profession needs an overhaul," said Kate Walsh, president of NCTQ. "Unlike many states, Florida does appear to recognize this need and is showing signs of changing."

Among the findings:

- The state pays little attention to the content preparation of elementary teachers, failing to lay out the specific knowledge needed to teach in the elementary classroom. The state has no specific requirements in any of the core subjects such as American history that elementary teachers need to know.
- Florida neglects the preparation of special education teachers, failing to ensure that these teachers are prepared to teach students with disabilities.
- For one reason and another, the state allows teachers three years to pass its licensing tests, creating all sorts of loopholes that let unqualified individuals into the classroom.

Despite these findings, Florida performs quite strongly in some areas. Providing a model for the rest of the nation, the state requires that teacher evaluations be based primarily on measures of teacher effectiveness and improved student learning. The state has also encouraged efforts at compensation reform, including performance pay initiatives. Florida has also eliminated obstacles that make it hard for career changers to enter the profession.

To download copies of the Florida report, which includes national comparisons, or to purchase printed copies of the report, visit the NCTQ website, www.nctq.org. For questions about the report, please contact Lisa Cohen at (310) 395-2544 or lisa@lisacohen.org or Molly Jackman at (202) 393-0020 (ext. 15) or mjackman@nctq.org.

NCTQ -- comprised of reform-minded Democrats, Republicans, and Independents -- advocates for 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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