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NEW REPORT MAPS OUT NEXT STEPS FOR OKLAHOMA ON TEACHER POLICIES IN NEED OF REFORM

Oklahoma received a D+ in 2009 from the National Council on Teacher Quality but made significant progress in the past year; 2010 *Blueprint for Change* outlines remaining priorities to ensure that students have effective teachers

January 27, 2011 (Washington, DC) — The National Council on Teacher Quality today released its fourth annual *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*, reviewing state laws, rules and regulations that govern the teaching profession. The 2010 edition differs from earlier versions, providing a *Blueprint for Change* to help state policymakers prioritize among the many areas of teacher policy in need of reform.

Each state report identifies the policy areas most in need of critical attention, as well as "low-hanging fruit," policies that can be addressed in relatively short order. The *Blueprint for Change* is based on an updated-for-2010 review and analysis of Oklahoma's teacher policies. The state received an overall grade of D+ in 2009, but this year's *Yearbook* finds that Oklahoma has made significant progress on teacher quality goals over the past year, including new teacher evaluation requirements that make evidence of student learning the preponderant criterion in teacher evaluations and tenure decisions.

The *Blueprint for Change* is designed as a companion to the 2009 *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*, NCTQ's most recent comprehensive report on teacher policies. NCTQ President Kate Walsh said, "Our goal with this year's *Yearbook* is not just to provide analyses of where states are, but to give state policymakers a tool for getting started on the road to reform. To do this, we made this year's *Yearbook* a compilation of where states were last year, the progress they've made, and the areas in which they need to continue to work toward reform."

Among the findings for Oklahoma:

- One of only three states that does not need to address connecting teacher evaluation, tenure and dismissal to classroom effectiveness;

Critical Attention Areas -- Some of Oklahoma's highest priorities include:

- Ensuring that elementary teacher candidates are well prepared to teach mathematics and that middle school teachers have adequate subject-matter preparation;
- Ensuring that teachers have adequate content knowledge by closing licensure loopholes and improving testing requirements; and
- Expanding the teacher pipeline by allowing alternate route teachers to teach across all subjects and grades.

Low-Hanging Fruit – Examples of policy areas for Oklahoma where a small adjustment would result in significantly stronger policy:

- Ensuring that out-of-state teachers meet Oklahoma's testing requirements
- Strengthening the selectivity of its alternate route programs

The *Blueprint for Change* also identifies performance management, pension reform, and certification of special education teachers as **longer term systemic** issues that Oklahoma needs to keep in mind as it works on improving its teacher policies.

Walsh continued: "We are encouraged by the significant changes we saw in a number of states during the past year, largely spurred by the Race to the Top competition, but states still have much work to do to ensure that every student is taught by an effective teacher."

The *Blueprint for Change in Oklahoma*, which includes national comparisons, is immediately available for free download at: www.nctq.org/stpy. For questions about the report, please contact Sarah Brody at (202) 393-0020 or sbrody@nctq.org.

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About NCTQ

The National Council of Teacher Quality —comprised of reform-minded Democrats, Republicans, and Independents— is a non-partisan research and policy group committed to restructuring the teaching profession, led by the belief that all children deserve effective teachers. More information about NCTQ, including a list of the Board of Directors and Advisory Board, can be found on the NCTQ website, www.nctq.org.