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NEW NATIONAL REPORT: STATES' SENSE OF URGENCY TO IMPROVE OUTDATED TEACHER POLICIES GRINDS TO A HALT

Washington, DC--Today, the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) released its biannual *2017 State Teacher Policy Yearbook (Yearbook)*, which finds that the rapid progress made by states over the last decade to modernize their teacher policies has largely slowed. Since the last edition of the *Yearbook* in 2015, few states have initiated any new actions to improve their teacher policies guiding how teachers are selected, prepared, evaluated, and retained.

Louisiana and **Florida** are this year's top performing states, each earning a B+. Overall, however, the 2017 *Yearbook* finds that state grades have mostly stagnated, with more state grades decreasing than at any other time in the *Yearbook's* 10-year history. No state has ever earned an A.

From 2007, when NCTQ began tracking state progress, until 2015, many states took aggressive action to improve their teacher policies, including raising the bar for entry into the teaching profession, overhauling teacher evaluation policies, implementing tenure reform, and requiring that districts consider teacher effectiveness when making personnel decisions.

"Our review indicates that a pressing need still exists to tackle anachronistic and counterproductive teacher policies, perhaps because policymakers are paying attention to where the political winds are blowing at the expense of improving teacher quality," commented Elizabeth Ross, Managing Director of State Policy at NCTQ. "Notably, many of these policies are noncontroversial – for example, whether teachers can transfer a teaching license across state lines without unnecessary barriers and whether states are ensuring that special education teachers know how to teach struggling readers. Adopting and implementing new, more effective policies would benefit school districts, teachers and, most importantly, students."

Some specific areas merit full attention by states:

- **Invest in data systems to address issues relating to teacher shortages and surpluses.** Despite the alarming talk of teacher shortages, few states are collecting and connecting the full set of high-quality data necessary to support their districts in making fact-based decisions regarding targeted, local solutions to address teacher supply and demand issues, and no state has established clear parameters that govern the number of teachers trained in each major certification area.
- **Increase transparency regarding educator equity to ensure that vulnerable student groups are not systemically underserved by ineffective teachers.** Fewer than one third of all states collect and publicly report all necessary data to identify where traditionally underserved students do not have equitable access to effective teachers.
- **Expand diversity in the teaching workforce.** Fewer than half of all states are taking any concrete action to increase teacher diversity under a specific initiative, incentive program, or system of supports.

- **Increase oversight of teacher preparation programs.** Fewer than half of all states articulate minimum standards of performance for teacher preparation programs, and among states that do maintain minimum performance standards, even fewer have articulated consequences for programs that do not meet such standards.
- **Improve the preparation of special education teachers.** Only nine states require teacher candidates in elementary special education to possess basic content knowledge before they can earn a license, and only 12 states measure special education candidates' knowledge of how to teach reading, even though reading difficulties are the most common reason for special education referrals.
- **Fully utilize teacher evaluation systems.** Only 10 states explicitly require that evaluation results inform teacher compensation in some manner, and only 11 states explicitly require teacher leadership opportunities to be reserved only for highly rated teachers.

Information regarding whether each state meets the above policies is available [here](#).

Despite significant room for improvement, some bright spots exist within the 2017 data. For example, many states have in place commendable policies to help ensure that 1) student teaching requirements are appropriately targeted to the grades and subjects the teachers will be teaching; 2) teachers are evaluated across more than two rating categories; and 3) principals are rated, in part, on the effectiveness of their teachers and on their instructional leadership of the school.

“States’ teacher policies have an enormous impact on the quality of education in the state,” said Ross. “By highlighting opportunities for improvement, as well as strong policies, this *Yearbook* is designed to catalyze state action. We have seen the progress states are capable of making and urge them to attend to suboptimal policies that decrease the health of the teaching profession. Teachers and students deserve nothing less.”

The 2017 *Yearbook* evaluates states against nine policy goals, including, for the first time, information to reflect teacher diversity initiatives, principal evaluation and support systems, and state support for teacher leadership opportunities. For all 50 states and the District of Columbia, NCTQ produces a customized summary that provides state policy strengths and opportunities for improvement.

The 2017 *State Teacher Policy Yearbook* is available [here](#), with comprehensive information regarding each state’s teacher policies available in NCTQ’s [State Teacher Policy Database](#).

For more information, or to arrange an interview with Elizabeth Ross, please contact Eric Duncan at eduncan@nctq.org.

The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) is a nonpartisan research and policy group committed to modernizing the teaching profession and based on the belief that all children deserve effective teachers. NCTQ is the nation’s expert on the quality of teacher preparation programs and evaluates national teacher education against evidence-based criteria. More information about NCTQ can be found on our website, www.nctq.org.

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