

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Teacher

A REVIEW OF THE NATION'S

# Prep

TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

# Review

2013

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Additional materials for *NCTQ's Teacher Prep Review* can be retrieved at [www.nctq.org/teacherPrep](http://www.nctq.org/teacherPrep).

This webpage provides access to a variety of materials, including more detailed findings by state, by standard and by individual program; resources for program improvement; rationales and scoring methodologies for each standard; and more information about outside advisory groups and expert evaluators.



# NCTQ Teacher Prep Review

## Executive Summary

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Once the world leader in educational attainment, the United States has slipped well into the middle of the pack. Countries that were considered little more than educational backwaters just a few years ago have leapt to the forefront of student achievement.

There's no shortage of factors for America's educational decline: budget cutbacks, entrenched poverty, crowded classrooms, shorter school years, greater diversity of students than in other countries. The list seems endless.

NCTQ's *Teacher Prep Review* has uncovered another cause, one that few would suspect: the colleges and universities producing America's traditionally prepared teachers.

Through an exhaustive and unprecedented examination of how these schools operate, the *Review* finds they have become an industry of mediocrity, churning out first-year teachers with classroom management skills and content knowledge inadequate to thrive in classrooms with ever-increasing ethnic and socioeconomic student diversity.

We were able to determine overall ratings based on a set of key standards for 608 institutions. Those ratings can be found on the *U.S. News & World Report* website, [www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com), as well as our own, [www.nctq.org](http://www.nctq.org), where there is additional data on another 522 institutions. Altogether, the *Review* provides data on the 1,130 institutions that prepare 99 percent of the nation's traditionally trained new teachers. No small feat.

As the product of eight years of development and 10 pilot studies, the standards applied here are derived from strong research, the practices of high-performing nations and states, consensus views of experts, the demands of the Common Core State Standards (and other standards for college and career readiness) and occasionally just common sense.

We strived to apply the standards uniformly to all the nation's teacher preparation programs as part of our effort to bring as much transparency as possible to the way America's teachers are prepared. In collecting information for this initial report, however, we encountered enormous resistance from leaders of many of the programs we sought to assess. In some cases, we sued for the public information they refused to provide. We anticipate greater cooperation for future editions of the *Review*, which will be published annually, resulting in more ratings for more programs.

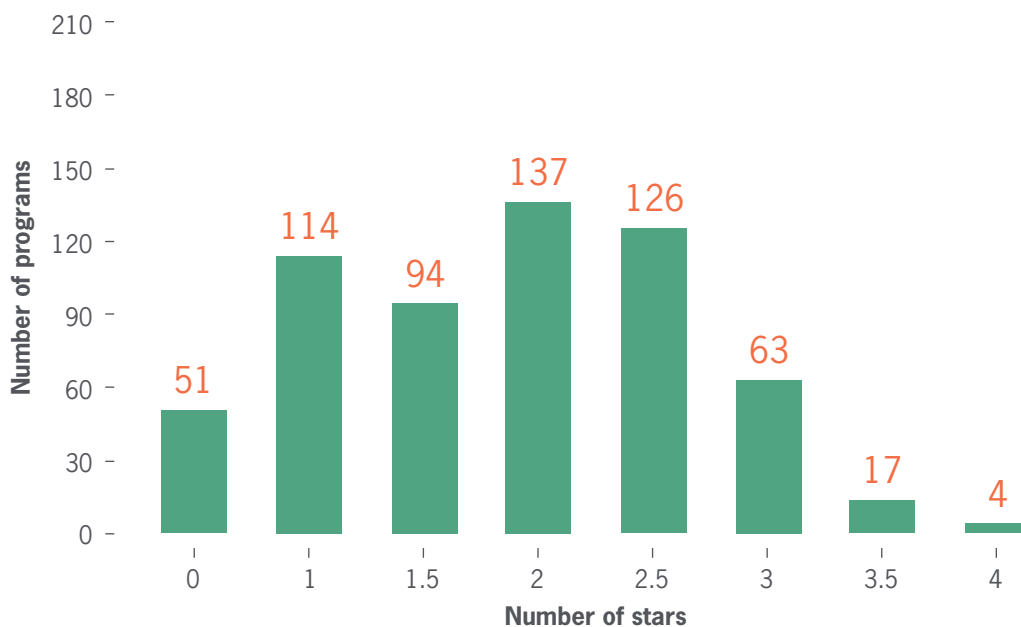
Breathing new life into teaching requires that we begin at the beginning: who gets in and what kind of training is provided.

For now, the evaluations provide clear and convincing evidence, based on a four-star rating system, that a vast majority of teacher preparation programs do not give aspiring teachers adequate return on their investment of time and tuition dollars. These are among the most alarming findings:

- Less than 10 percent of rated programs earn three stars or more. Only four programs, all secondary, earn four stars: Lipscomb and Vanderbilt, both in Tennessee; Ohio State University; and Furman University in South Carolina. Only one institution, Ohio State, earns more than three stars for both an elementary (3½ stars) and a secondary (4 stars) program.
- It is far too easy to get into a teacher preparation program. Just over a quarter of programs restrict admissions to students in the top *half* of their class, compared with the highest-performing countries, which limit entry to the top third.
- Fewer than one in nine elementary programs and just over one-third of high school programs are preparing candidates in content at the level necessary to teach the new Common Core State Standards now being implemented in classrooms in 45 states and the District of Columbia.
- The “reading wars” are far from over. Three out of four elementary teacher preparation programs still are not teaching the methods of reading instruction that could substantially lower the number of children who never become proficient readers, from 30 percent to under 10 percent. Instead, the teacher candidate is all too often told to develop his or her “own unique approach” to teaching reading.
- Just 7 percent of programs ensure that their student teachers will have uniformly strong experiences, such as only allowing them to be placed in classrooms taught by teachers who are themselves effective, not just willing volunteers.

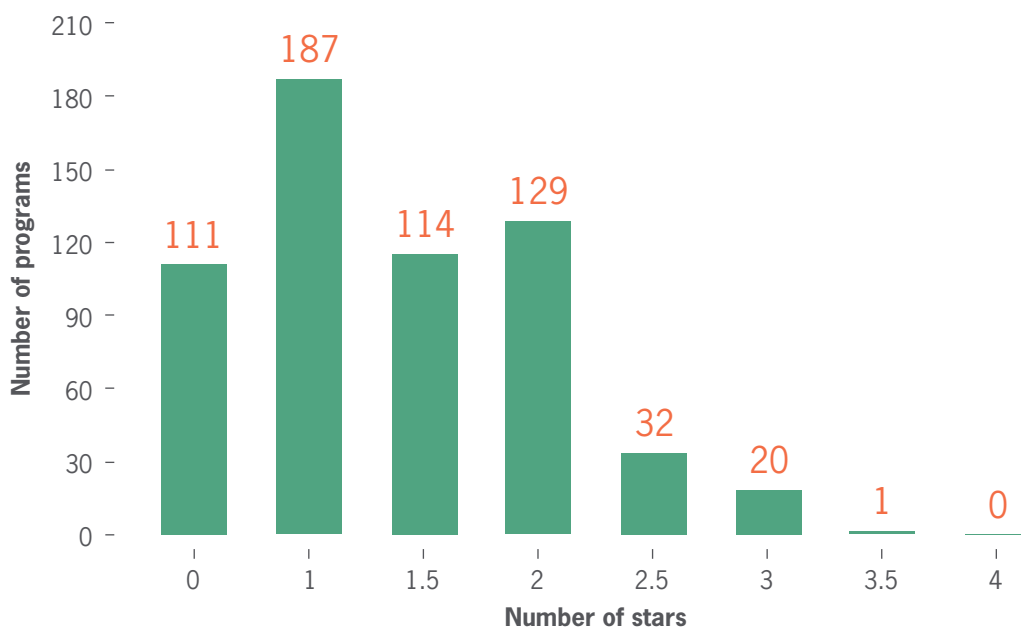
### Program ratings: Secondary programs


N=606 undergraduate and graduate programs



### Program ratings: Elementary programs

N=594 undergraduate and graduate programs



More than three-quarters of the programs, 78 percent, earn two or fewer stars, ratings that connote, at best, mediocrity. The weakest programs, those with a rating of no stars (14 percent), earn a “Consumer Alert” designation . While these low-rated institutions certainly can produce good teachers, it is less by design than happenstance: a chance placement with a great mentor or assignment to a strong section of an otherwise weak course.

The *Review* was inspired by a landmark study conducted more than a century ago, the Flexner Report of 1910, which evaluated the nation’s medical schools and led to consolidations and upgrades that transformed the system of training doctors into the world’s best.

Our goal is the same. We have created the largest database on teacher preparation ever assembled, with information from thousands of syllabi, textbooks, student teaching handbooks, student teacher observation instruments and other material. With this data, we are setting in place market forces that will spur underachieving programs to recognize their shortcomings and adopt methods used by the high scorers. At the same time, the *Review* serves as a consumer guide for aspiring teachers in selecting a superior preparation program and for principals and superintendents in their recruitment efforts. It also includes recommendations for current teacher candidates in these programs, school districts, institutions and policy makers to hasten the market forces that will overhaul the system.

As much attention as teacher quality has received in recent years, teacher preparation has stayed remarkably off the radar. States have made unprecedented changes in their teacher policies but almost none in teacher preparation. However, as illustrated by trail-blazing nations such as Finland, South Korea and Singapore, breathing new life into teaching requires that we begin at the beginning: who gets in and what kind of training is provided.

The importance of addressing these issues has never been more urgent. With the wave of baby-boomer teacher retirements, novices make up a greater share of the teacher workforce than ever. Twenty-five years ago, if you asked a teacher how much experience he or she had, the most common response would have been 15 years; if you ask the same question of teachers today, the answer is one year. The real challenge is that first-year teachers now teach around 1.5 million students every year, many of whom, because of district placement practices, are already behind in their learning.

The heart of the matter for the field of teacher education is that students taught by first-year teachers lose far too much ground. And it’s not just the students who suffer. First-year teachers deal with so much anxiety and exhaustion that many just crash and burn.

Should first-year teaching be the equivalent of fraternity hazing, an inevitable rite of passage? Is there no substitute for “on-the-job” training of novice teachers? The answers are obvious. We need more effective teacher preparation. Our profound belief that new teachers and our children deserve better from America’s preparation programs is the touchstone of this project.

## National Council on Teacher Quality

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*The National Council on Teacher Quality advocates for reforms in a broad range of teacher policies at the federal, state and local levels in order to increase the number of effective teachers.*

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