

Blueprint for Change in Louisiana

2010
State Teacher
Policy Yearbook



National Council on Teacher Quality

Acknowledgments

STATES

State education agencies remain our most important partners in this effort, and their extensive experience has helped to ensure the factual accuracy of the final product. Although this year's *Blueprint for Change* did not require the extensive review typically required of states, we still wanted to make sure that states' perspectives were represented. As such, each state received a draft of the policy updates we identified this year. We would like to thank all of the states for graciously reviewing and responding to our drafts.

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About the Yearbook

The 2010 *Blueprint for Change* is the National Council on Teacher Quality's fourth annual review of state laws, rules and regulations that govern the teaching profession. This year's *Yearbook* takes a different approach than our past editions, as it is designed as a companion to the 2009 *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*, NCTQ's most recent comprehensive report on state teacher policies.

The comprehensive *Yearbook*, a 52-volume state-by-state analysis produced biennially, examines the alignment of states' teacher policies with goals to improve teacher quality. The 2009 report, which addressed key policy areas such as teacher preparation, evaluation, alternative certification and compensation, found that states had much work to do to ensure that every child has an effective teacher. Next year we will once again conduct a comprehensive goal-by-goal analysis of all aspects of states' teacher policies.

In 2010, an interim year, we set out to help states prioritize among the many areas of teacher policy in need of reform. With so much to be done, state policymakers may be nonplussed about where to begin. The 2010 *Yearbook* offers each state an individualized blueprint, identifying state policies most in need of attention. Although based on our 2009 analyses, this edition also updates states' progress in the last year, a year that saw many states make significant policy changes, largely spurred by the Race to the Top competition. Rather than grade states, the 2010 *Blueprint for Change* stands as a supplement to the 2009 comprehensive report, updating states' positive and negative progress on *Yearbook* goals and specifying actions that could lead to stronger policies for particular topics such as teacher evaluation, tenure rules and dismissal policies.

As is our practice, in addition to a national summary report, we have customized this year's *Blueprint for Change* so that each state has its own edition highlighting its progress toward specific *Yearbook* goals. Each report also contains

charts and graphs showing how the state performed compared to other states. In addition, we point to states that are leading the way in areas requiring the most critical attention across the country.

We hope that this year's *Blueprint for Change* serves as an important guide for governors, state school chiefs, school boards, legislatures and the many advocates seeking reform. Individual state and national versions of the 2010 *Blueprint for Change*, as well as the 2009 *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*—including rationales and supporting research for our policy goals—are available at www.nctq.org/stpy.



Blueprint for Change in Louisiana


The 2009 *State Teacher Policy Yearbook* provided a comprehensive review of states' policies that impact the teaching profession. As a companion to last year's comprehensive state-by-state analysis, the 2010 edition provides each state with an individualized "Blueprint for Change," building off last year's *Yearbook* goals and recommendations.

State teacher policy addresses a great many areas, including teacher preparation, certification, evaluation and compensation. With so many moving parts, it may be difficult for states to find a starting point on the road to reform. To this end, the following brief provides a state-specific roadmap, organized in three main sections.

- Section 1 identifies policy concerns that need **critical attention**, the areas of highest priority for state policymakers.
- Section 2 outlines "**low-hanging fruit**," policy changes that can be implemented in relatively short order.
- Section 3 offers a short discussion of some **longer-term systemic issues** that states need to make sure stay on the radar.

Current Status of Louisiana's Teacher Policy

In the 2009 *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*, Louisiana had the following grades:

| | | |
|---|--|----|
|  Overall Grade | Area 1: <i>Delivering Well Prepared Teachers</i> | C+ |
| | Area 2: <i>Expanding the Teaching Pool</i> | C |
| | Area 3: <i>Identifying Effective Teachers</i> | D+ |
| | Area 4: <i>Retaining Effective Teachers</i> | C |
| | Area 5: <i>Exiting Ineffective Teachers</i> | C- |

2010 Policy Update:


In the last year, many states made significant changes to their teacher policies, spurred in many cases by the Race to the Top competition. Based on a review of state legislation, rules and regulations, NCTQ has identified the following recent policy changes in Louisiana:

Teacher Evaluation:

All teachers must now be evaluated annually. In addition, student academic growth must count for 50 percent of a teacher's evaluation. The state's value-added formula relies entirely on whether students meet predicted outcomes on state assessments. Teachers who receive an "ineffective" rating three or more times during a certification cycle will not be recertified. *Act 54*

Louisiana Response to Policy Update:

States were asked to review NCTQ's identified updates and also to comment on policy changes that have occurred in the last year, other pending changes or teacher quality in the state more generally.

-  Louisiana confirmed that the identified update represents a complete and accurate list of recent policy changes. The state added that in addition to the statutory changes outlined above, Louisiana is working to revise state policy with respect to teacher performance standards and to develop state-endorsed teacher competency models based on the best practices of highly effective teachers.

Section 1: Critical Attention Areas

This section identifies the highest priority areas as states work to advance teacher quality. These are the policy issues that should be at the top of the list for state policymakers. While other states need also to address connecting teacher evaluation to effectiveness; middle school teacher preparation; holding teacher preparation programs accountable; and expanding the teacher pipeline through alternative certification, Louisiana should turn its immediate attention to the following six issues.



Critical Attention: Louisiana policies that need to better connect to teacher effectiveness

1. CONNECT TENURE DECISIONS TO TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS:

The point at which a teacher's probationary period ends, commonly referred to as tenure, should be a significant milestone. Although the awarding of tenure is a local decision, state policy should reflect the

fact that tenure should only be awarded to teachers who have consistently demonstrated their effectiveness. Louisiana should mandate a clear process, such as a hearing, for districts to use when considering whether a teacher advances from probationary to permanent status. Such a process would ensure that the local district reviews the teacher's performance before making a determination.

Although Louisiana's new evaluation policy requires student academic growth to count for 50 percent of the teacher's score, the state should also ensure that evidence of effectiveness is the preponderant criterion for making tenure decisions. New state law also denies licensure renewal to teachers rated ineffective three or more times during a certification cycle, but it is unclear that this will necessarily coincide with the end

of the probationary period. Further, the current policy of granting tenure after just three years does not allow for the accumulation of sufficient data on teacher performance to support meaningful decisions. Extending the probationary period—ideally to five years—would prevent effective teachers from being unfairly denied tenure based on too little data and ineffective teachers from being granted tenure prematurely.

2. PREVENT INEFFECTIVE TEACHERS FROM REMAINING IN THE CLASSROOM INDEFINITELY:

Although Louisiana has taken notable steps to improve its evaluation system, the state's current process for terminating ineffective teachers may undermine those efforts. Louisiana should explicitly make teacher ineffectiveness grounds for dismissal so that districts do not feel they lack the legal basis for terminating consistently poor performers, and it should steer clear of euphemistic terms that are ambiguous at best and may be interpreted as concerning dereliction of duty rather than ineffectiveness. In Louisiana, the process is the same regardless of the grounds

Tenure is a critical attention area in

46 states.

States on the right track include Colorado, Delaware and Rhode Island.

Dismissal is a critical attention area in

46 states.

States on the right track include Oklahoma and Rhode Island.

for dismissal, which include “willful neglect of duty, or incompetency, dishonesty, or immorality, or of being a member of or contributing to any group, organization, movement, or corporation that is by law or injunction prohibited from operating in the state of Louisiana.”

In addition, nonprobationary teachers who are dismissed for any grounds, including ineffectiveness, are entitled to due process. However, cases that drag on for years drain resources from school districts and create a disincentive for districts to attempt to terminate poor performers. Therefore, in the best interest of both the teacher and the district, Louisiana should ensure that a conclusion is reached in a reasonable time frame. The state should also ensure that appeals are made before a panel of educators and not in a court of law.

This statute remaining on the books could be at odds with Louisiana’s new evaluation legislation, which clearly intends to deny licensure to teachers consistently rated ineffective. The state should similarly empower districts to remove underperforming teachers.

1 The District of Columbia has no state-level policy, but District of Columbia Public Schools requires that student academic achievement count for 50% of evaluation score.

2 Legislation articulates that student growth must account for a significant portion of evaluations, with no single criterion counting for more than 35% of the total performance evaluation. However, the State Board is on track to finalize regulations that limit any single component of student growth, such as standardized test scores, to 35%, but add other measures of student progress for a total of 50%.

Figure 1

Is classroom effectiveness considered in teacher evaluations and tenure decisions?

| | Evaluations include student achievement data | Evidence of student learning is the preponderant criterion in teacher evaluations | Evidence of student learning is the preponderant criterion in tenure decisions |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Alabama | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Alaska | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Arizona | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Arkansas | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| California | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Colorado | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Connecticut | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Delaware | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| District of Columbia ¹ | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Florida | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Georgia | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Hawaii | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Idaho | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Illinois | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Indiana | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Iowa | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Kansas | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Kentucky | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| LOUISIANA | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Maine | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Maryland ² | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Massachusetts | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Michigan | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Minnesota | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mississippi | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Missouri | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Montana | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Nebraska | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Nevada | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| New Hampshire | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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| New Mexico | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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| North Carolina | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| North Dakota | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ohio | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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| Texas | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Utah | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Vermont | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Virginia | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Washington | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| West Virginia | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Wisconsin | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Wyoming | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | 16 | 10 | 4 |



Critical Attention: Louisiana policies that fail to ensure that teachers are well prepared

3. ENSURE THAT ELEMENTARY TEACHERS KNOW THE SCIENCE OF READING:

Preparation to teach reading is a critical attention area in

43 states.

States on the right track include Connecticut, Massachusetts and Virginia.

Although Louisiana requires that its teacher preparation programs provide teacher candidates with training in the science of reading, the state should also require an assessment prior to certification that tests whether teachers indeed possess the requisite knowledge in scientifically based reading instruction. Ideally this would be a stand-alone test (such as the excellent assessments required by Massachusetts, Connecticut and Virginia), but if it were combined with general pedagogy or elementary content, the state should require a separate subscore for the science of reading.

4. ENSURE THAT ELEMENTARY TEACHERS KNOW ELEMENTARY CONTENT MATH:

Preparation to teach mathematics is a critical attention area in

49 states.

A state on the right track is Massachusetts.

Aspiring elementary teachers must begin to acquire a deep conceptual knowledge of the mathematics they will teach, moving well beyond mere procedural understanding. Leading mathematicians and math educators have found that elementary teachers are not well served by mathematics courses designed for a general audience and that methods courses do not provide sufficient content preparation. Louisiana should specifically articulate that preparation programs deliver mathematics content geared to the explicit needs of elementary teachers, including coursework in foundations, algebra and geometry, with some statistics. The state should also adopt a rigorous mathematics assessment, such as the one required by Massachusetts. At the very least, Louisiana should consider requiring a mathematics subscore on its general content knowledge test, not only to ensure that teacher candidates have minimum mathematics knowledge but also to allow them to test out of coursework requirements.

Figure 2

Do states ensure that teachers are well prepared?

| | Ensures elementary teachers know the science of reading | Ensures elementary teachers know elementary content math | Differentiates preparation between elementary and middle school teachers |
|----------------------|---|--|--|
| Alabama | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Alaska | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Arizona | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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| California | <input type="checkbox"/> ¹ | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Colorado | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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| District of Columbia | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Florida | <input type="checkbox"/> ² | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Georgia | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Hawaii | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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| Iowa | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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| New Hampshire | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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| Washington | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| West Virginia | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Wisconsin | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Wyoming | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | 6 | 2 | 29 |

1 Although California has a standalone test of reading pedagogy, the ability of this test to screen out candidates who do not know the science of reading has been questioned.

2 Florida's licensure test for elementary teachers includes a strong focus on the science of reading but does not report a separate subscore for this content.



Critical Attention: Louisiana policies that license teachers who may lack subject-matter knowledge

5. CLOSE LICENSURE LOOPHOLES TO ENSURE THAT TEACHERS KNOW THE CONTENT THEY TEACH:

All students are entitled to teachers who know the subject matter they are teaching. Permitting individuals who have not yet passed state licensing tests to teach neglects the needs of students, instead extending personal consideration to adults who may not be able to meet minimal state standards. Licensing tests are an important minimum benchmark in the profession, and states that allow teachers to postpone passing these tests are abandoning one of the basic responsibilities of licensure.

Licensure loopholes are a critical attention area in

34 states.

States on the right track include Mississippi, Nevada and New Jersey.

Louisiana should ensure that all teachers pass all required subject-matter licensure tests before they enter the classroom so that students will not be at risk of having teachers who lack sufficient or appropriate content-area knowledge. The state allows teachers who have not met licensure requirements to teach for up to three years on a Temporary Authority to Teach (TAT) certificate. Louisiana also offers a one-year Temporary Employment Permit (TEP), which allows individuals who have not passed required state tests to teach if their aggregate score on all of their exams is equal to or higher than the total required on all the tests; this permit may be renewed for up to three years if the candidate demonstrates that the test was retaken during the past year. If conditional or provisional licenses are deemed necessary, then Louisiana should only issue them under limited and exceptional circumstances and for no longer than a period of one year.

6. ENSURE THAT ELEMENTARY CONTENT TESTS ADEQUATELY ASSESS CONTENT KNOWLEDGE IN EACH SUBJECT AREA:

Although Louisiana requires that all new elementary teachers must pass a Praxis II general subject-matter test, this assessment does not report teacher performance in each subject area, meaning that it is possible to pass the test and still fail some subject areas. The state should require separate passing scores for each area because without them it is impossible to measure knowledge of individual subjects, especially given the state's current low passing score for the elementary content test. According to published test data, Louisiana has set its passing score for this test considerably below the mean, the average score of all test takers, so it is questionable whether this assessment is indeed providing any assurance of content knowledge.

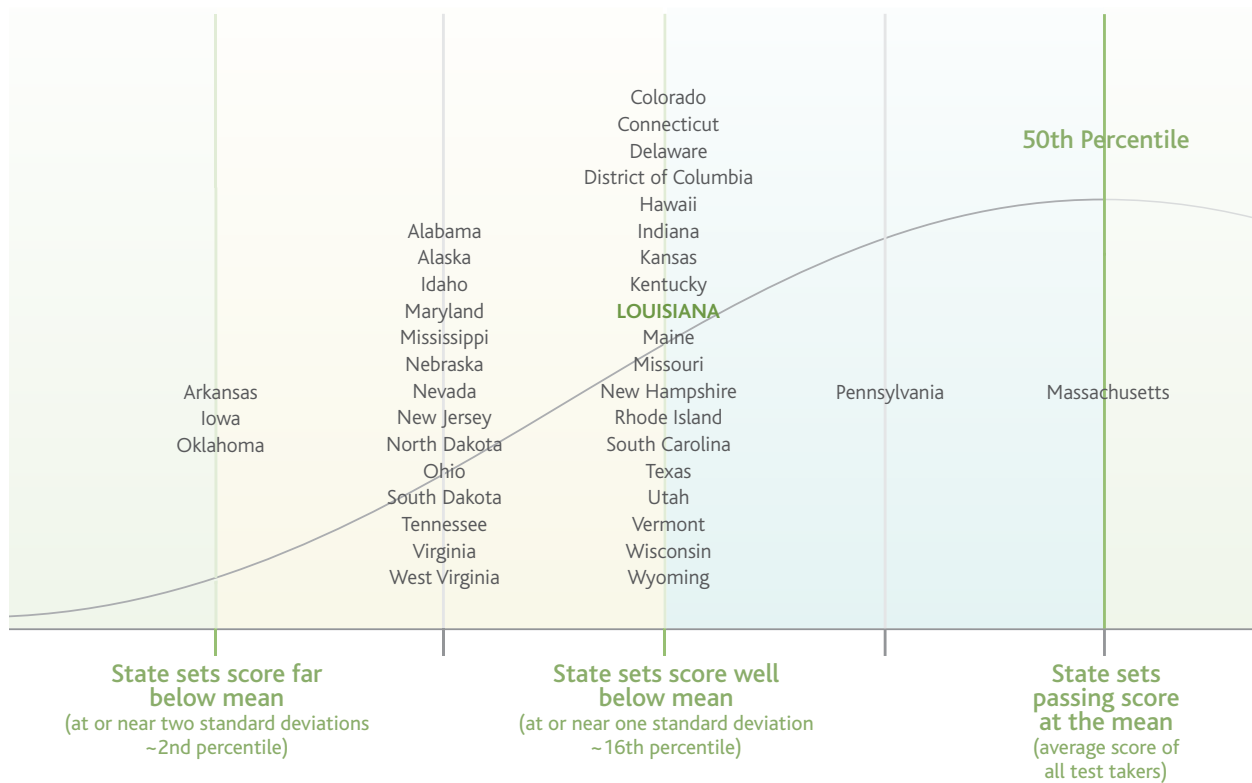
Elementary licensure tests are a critical attention area in

50 states.

A state on the right track is Massachusetts.

Figure 3

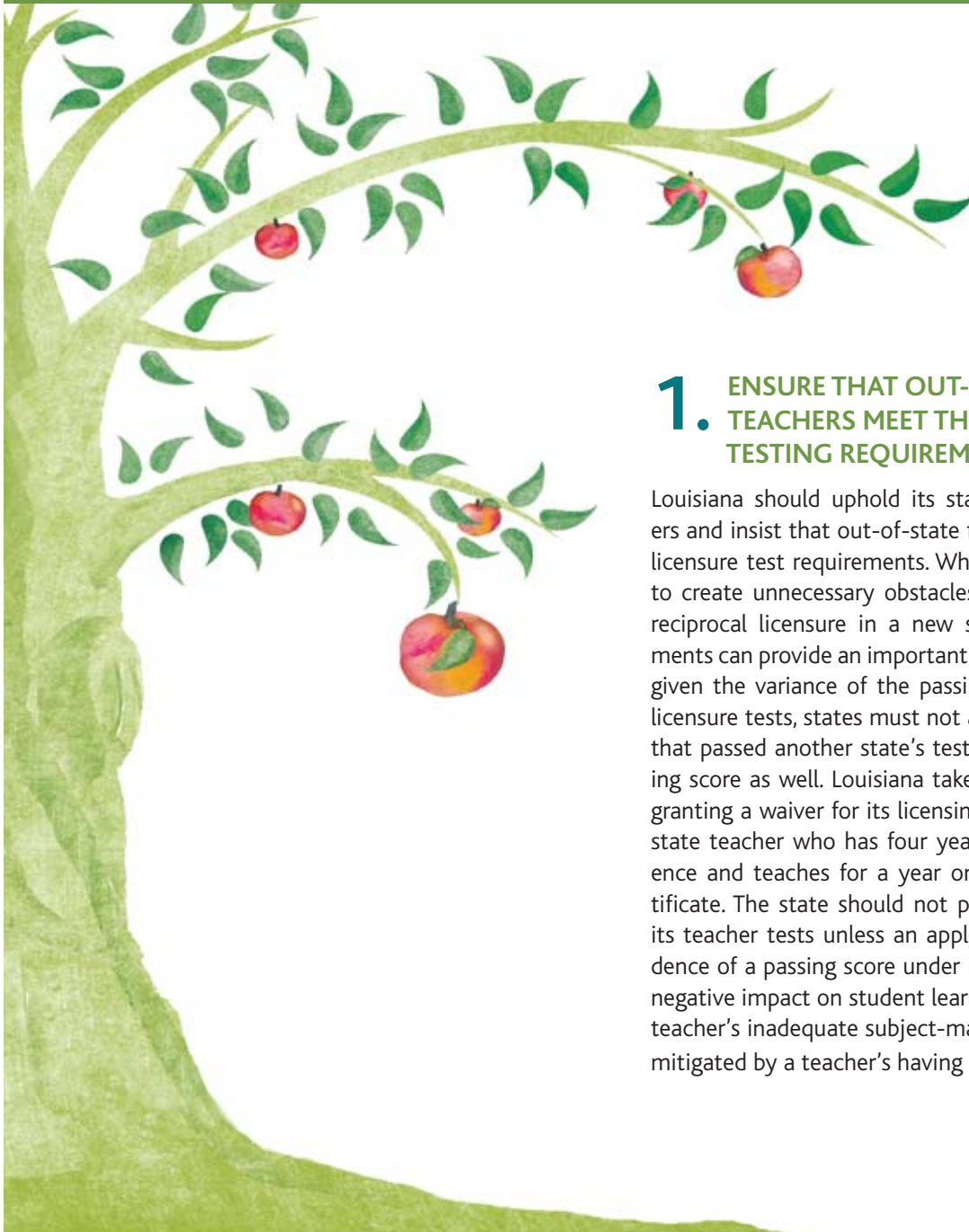
Where do states set the passing score on elementary content licensure tests?¹



¹ Data not available for Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, and Washington. Montana does not require a content test. Colorado cut score is for Praxis II, not PLACE.


Section 2: Low-Hanging Fruit

This section highlights areas where a small adjustment would result in significantly stronger policy. Unlike the more complex topics identified in Section 1, the issues listed in this section represent low-hanging fruit, policies that can be addressed in relatively short order.



1. ENSURE THAT OUT-OF-STATE TEACHERS MEET THE STATE'S TESTING REQUIREMENTS:

Louisiana should uphold its standards for all teachers and insist that out-of-state teachers meet its own licensure test requirements. While it is important not to create unnecessary obstacles for teachers seeking reciprocal licensure in a new state, testing requirements can provide an important safeguard. Particularly given the variance of the passing scores required on licensure tests, states must not assume that a teacher that passed another state's test would meet its passing score as well. Louisiana takes considerable risk by granting a waiver for its licensing tests to any out-of-state teacher who has four years of teaching experience and teaches for a year on its out-of-state certificate. The state should not provide any waivers of its teacher tests unless an applicant can provide evidence of a passing score under its own standards. The negative impact on student learning stemming from a teacher's inadequate subject-matter knowledge is not mitigated by a teacher's having recent experience.



2. ENSURE THAT SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS ARE ADEQUATELY PREPARED TO TEACH SUBJECT MATTER:

To ensure that secondary special education teachers are adequately prepared to teach multiple subjects, Louisiana should require that teacher preparation programs graduate secondary special education teacher candidates who are “highly qualified” in at least two subjects. The most efficient way to accomplish this objective is to require that teacher candidates earn the equivalent of two subject-area minors and pass tests in those areas. Louisiana’s current policy of requiring candidates to pass a content exam appropriate to their certification level only guarantees that they are “highly qualified” in one area.

3. STRENGTHEN SELECTIVITY OF ALTERNATE ROUTE PROGRAMS:

Because nontraditional candidates enter the classroom with little or no preparation, states should require alternative certification programs to be selective in whom they admit. Alternate route programs should require some measure of past academic performance, such as a GPA, that is higher than what is generally expected of teacher candidates in traditional preparation programs. All of Louisiana’s alternate routes to certification fall short of requiring a minimum GPA that is a sufficient indicator of selectivity. The state should consistently require that candidates in all programs demonstrate evidence of strong academic performance through a minimum GPA of at least 2.75, making accommodations as appropriate for career changers.

Section 3: Systemic Issues

This section discusses some of the longer-term systemic issues related to teacher quality that states also need to address. While these may not be “front-burner” issues in many states, they are important to an overall reform agenda.

1. Performance Management

The critical relationship between teacher quality and student achievement has been well established, and ensuring that all students have teachers with the knowledge and skills to support their academic success has become a national priority. Yet the policy framework that governs the teaching profession in most states is almost entirely disconnected from teacher effectiveness. Although states largely control how teachers are evaluated, licensed and compensated, teacher effectiveness in terms of student learning has not been a central component in these policies.

Fortunately, this is starting to change. Fifteen states, including Louisiana, have made progress in their requirements for teacher evaluation in the last year alone.¹ As evaluation ratings become more meaningful, states should plan to connect teacher evaluation to an overall system of performance management. The current siloed approach, with virtually no connection between meaningful evidence of teacher performance and the awarding of tenure and professional licensure, needs a fundamental overhaul. These elements must

not be thought of as isolated and discrete, but as part of a comprehensive performance system. This system should also include compensation strategies as well as new teacher support and ongoing professional development, creating a coordinated and aligned set of teacher policies.

Meaningful evaluation is at the center of a performance management system. Louisiana is already working to ensure that evaluations measure teacher effectiveness. As the state continues to move forward, it should keep in mind the larger goal of creating a performance management system.

A successful performance management system—one that gives educators the tools they need to be effective, supports their development, rewards their accomplishments and holds them accountable for results—is essential to the fundamental goal of all education reform: eliminating achievement gaps and ensuring that all students achieve to their highest potential.

¹ Includes changes to state policies regulating the frequency of evaluations for probationary and nonprobationary teachers as well as requirements that teacher evaluations consider classroom effectiveness.

2. Pension Reform

State pension systems are in need of a fundamental overhaul. In an era when retirement benefits have been shrinking across industries and professions, teachers' generous pensions remain fixed. In fact, nearly all states, including Louisiana, continue to provide teachers with a defined benefit pension system, an expensive and inflexible model that neither reflects the realities of the modern workforce nor provides equitable benefits to all teachers.

The current model greatly disadvantages teachers who move from one state to another, career switchers who enter teaching and those who teach for fewer than 20 years. For these reasons alone, reform is needed. But the dubious financial health of states' pension systems makes this an area in need of urgent attention.

\$780,982

Amount Louisiana pays for each teacher that retires at an early age with unreduced benefits until that teacher reaches age 65⁴

Some systems carry high levels of unfunded liabilities, with no strategy to pay these liabilities down in a reasonable period, as defined by standard accounting practices. According to Louisiana's 2009 actuarial report, its system

was only 59.1 percent funded, significantly below recommended benchmarks.¹ When funding cannot keep up with promised benefits, a new approach is clearly needed. And changes must be made immediately to alter the long-term outlook for the state, as it is exceedingly difficult to reduce promised benefits once a teacher is a member of the system—regardless of whether the state can afford them.

Systemic reform should lead to the development of a financially sustainable, equitable pension system that includes the following:

- The option of a fully portable pension system as teachers' primary pension plan, either through a defined contribution plan or a defined benefit plan that is formatted similar to a cash balance plan²

- Reasonable district and teacher contribution rates
- Vesting for teachers no later than the third year of employment
- Purchase of time in a defined benefit plan for unlimited previous teaching experience at the time of employment, as well as for all official leaves of absence, such as maternity and paternity leave
- The option in a defined benefit plan of a lump-sum rollover to a personal retirement account upon employment termination, which includes teacher contributions and all accrued interest at a fair interest rate
- Funds contributed by the employer included in withdrawals due to employment termination
- A neutral formula for determining pension benefits, regardless of years worked (eliminating any multiplier that increases with years of service or longevity bonuses)³
- Eligibility for retirement benefits based solely on age, not years of service, in order to avoid disincentives for effective teachers to continue working until conventional retirement age.

1 Public Fund Survey, <http://www.publicfundsurvey.org/www/publicfundsurvey/actuarialfundinglevels.asp>.

2 A cash balance pension plan is a benefit plan in which participants, and their employers if they choose, periodically contribute a predetermined rate to employees' individual pension accounts. These contributions grow at a guaranteed rate. Upon retirement or withdrawal, the participant may receive the full account balance in one lump sum, so long as the benefits are fully vested. (Based on Economic Research Institute, <http://www.eridlc.com/resources/index.cfm?fuseaction=resource.glossary>)

3 The formula may include years of service (i.e., years of service x final average salary x benefit multiplier), but other aspects of the benefit calculation, such as the multiplier, should not be dependent on years of service.

4 Calculations are based on a teacher who starts teaching at age 22, earns a starting salary of \$35,000 that increases 3 percent per year, and retires at the age when he or she is first eligible for unreduced benefits. Calculations use the state's benefit formula for new hires, exclude cost of living increases, and base the final average salary on the highest three years. Age 65 is the youngest eligibility age for unreduced Social Security benefits.

3. Certification of Special Education Teachers

States' requirements for the preparation of special education teachers are one of the most neglected and dysfunctional areas of teacher policy. The low expectations for what special education teachers should know stand in stark contradiction to state and federal expectations that special education students should meet the same high standards as other students.

Louisiana, like most states, sets a low bar for the content knowledge that special education teachers must have. The state appropriately requires elementary special education teachers to pass the same content test as all other elementary teachers; however, as described in the Critical Attention section of this report, Louisiana's requirement of the Praxis II general elementary subject-matter test does not ensure that any elementary teacher has appropriate subject-matter knowledge relevant to the elementary classroom. Further, although secondary special education teachers must be highly qualified in every subject they will teach, the state's current policy of requiring a passing score on a content test only ensures that teacher preparation programs graduate teachers who are highly qualified in one core academic area.

But the problem requires a more systemic fix than just raising content requirements for elementary and

secondary special education teachers. The overarching issue is that too many states make no distinction between elementary and secondary special education teachers, certifying such teachers under a generic K-12 special education license. Even though Louisiana offers grade-specific endorsements for special education teachers, it also certifies special education teachers under a generic 1-12 license. While this broad umbrella may be appropriate for teachers of low-incidence special education students, such as those with severe cognitive disabilities, it is deeply problematic for high-incidence special education students, who are expected to learn grade-level content. And because the overwhelming majority of special education students are in the high-incidence category, the result is a fundamentally broken system.

It is virtually impossible and certainly impractical for states to ensure that a K-12 teacher knows all the subject matter he or she is expected to be able to teach. And the issue is just as valid in terms of pedagogical knowledge. Teacher preparation and licensure for special education teachers must distinguish between elementary and secondary levels, as they do for general education. The current model does little to protect some of our most vulnerable students.

Figure 4

Do states distinguish between elementary and secondary special education teachers?

| | Offers only a K-12 certification | Offers K-12 and grade-specific certification[s] | Does not offer a K-12 certification |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Alabama | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Alaska | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Arizona | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Arkansas | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| California | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Colorado | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Connecticut | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Delaware | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| District of Columbia | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Florida | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Georgia | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Hawaii | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Idaho | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Illinois | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Indiana | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Iowa | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Kansas | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Kentucky | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| LOUISIANA | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Maine | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Maryland | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Massachusetts | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Michigan | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Minnesota | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mississippi | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Missouri | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Montana | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Nebraska | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Nevada | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| New Hampshire | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| New Jersey | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| New Mexico | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| New York | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| North Carolina | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| North Dakota | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ohio | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Oklahoma | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Oregon | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Pennsylvania ¹ | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Rhode Island | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| South Carolina | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| South Dakota | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tennessee | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Texas | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Utah | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Vermont | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Virginia | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Washington | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| West Virginia | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Wisconsin | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Wyoming | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | 22 | 17 | 12 |

¹ New policy goes into effect January 1, 2013.



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NCTQ is available to work with individual states to improve teacher policies.

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