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REPORT GIVES ARKANSAS A GRADE OF 'C-' FOR POLICIES RELATING TO NEW TEACHERS

—Today the National Council on Teacher Quality released its 2008 *State Teacher Policy Yearbook* focusing on Why States Fail to Retain Effective New Teachers, concluding that Arkansas's policies discourage promising new teachers from sticking with the profession, while doing little to identify and move out ineffective teachers.

January 29, 2009 (Washington, DC) -- A new report released today by the not-for-profit, non-partisan National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) finds that Arkansas's policies for new teachers are lacking.

NCTQ's 2008 *State Teacher Policy Yearbook* looked at three areas of state policy that impact new teachers. Arkansas earned the following grades, earning the state an overall grade of **C-**:

- Identifying Effective New Teachers – **D-**
- Retaining Effective New Teachers – **C**
- Exiting Ineffective New Teachers – **C+**

NCTQ President Kate Walsh said, “The third through fifth years of teaching represent an opportunity lost for teacher quality. That’s certainly when teachers begin to add real value, and it’s also when they tend to make decisions about staying or leaving. Arkansas can help districts do much more to ensure that the right teachers stay *and* the right teachers leave.”

Walsh continued: “Many states argue that their school accountability systems nullify the need to intervene, and that setting the sort of requirements that would lead to better decision making about teachers would be overstepping their role. Such arguments hold little sway, as states already intervene substantially on teacher issues, they just don't do so productively. Further, states should not overlook their responsibility to ensure that all students—especially children in poverty—have quality teachers. Every problem hasn't been solved simply because states see a few upticks in their test scores.

“Even if there were only one classroom of children in an entire state that was ill served by a teacher, states have an obligation to those children.”

While school districts are certainly key players in shaping the quality of their own teaching force, the public may not fully appreciate the considerable and increasingly critical role played by states. Without exception, state laws and regulations touch upon every aspect of the teaching profession, having a measurable impact on the quality of new teachers.

Among the findings about Arkansas:

- Although Arkansas controls how and when its local school districts may award teachers tenure, it does not require districts to collect any evidence of teacher effectiveness as part of that determination.
- Arkansas only requires its school districts to evaluate new teachers once a year, which provides insufficient information about new teachers' performance.
- Arkansas's pay and benefit policies for teachers—including the state-run retirement system—disadvantage newer teachers, offering inadequate incentives to stay in teaching.

Despite these findings, Arkansas has some bright spots, including its support of performance pay and differential pay in shortage subject areas and high-needs schools.

The 2008 *State Teacher Policy Yearbook* finds that Arkansas's regulations are in need of significant reform in order to improve teacher quality and offers specific guidelines for rectifying substandard policies. To download copies of the Arkansas report, which includes national comparisons, visit the NCTQ website, www.nctq.org/stpy. For questions about the report, please contact Lisa Cohen at (310) 395-2544 or lisa@lisacohen.org or Pat Giles at (202) 393-0020 or pgiles@nctq.org.

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About NCTQ

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. A list of the Board of Directors and Advisory Board can be found on the NCTQ website, www.nctq.org.