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NEW REPORT FINDS THAT STATES SQUANDER OPPORTUNITIES WITH NEW TEACHERS

National Council on Teacher Quality Releases its 2008 *State Teacher Policy Yearbook* Focusing on Why States Fail to Retain Effective New Teachers;

NCTQ Rates and Reviews the Teacher Policies of Every State, Finding That States Fail to Ensure that School Districts Adhere to Minimum Human Capital Standards Common in Other Job Sectors

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 the laws and regulations of a majority of states discourage promising new teachers from sticking with the profession, while doing little to identify and move out ineffective teachers.

The report finds that states: 1) do not require sufficient support and evaluation of new teachers, a problem since most districts rarely opt to exceed state requirements; 2) do not require or even allow a teacher's effectiveness to be considered when granting tenure, although states control how and when tenure is awarded; 3) cling to anachronistic compensation schemes rather than advancing differentiated pay systems; 4) are lagging in the development of the systems necessary for identifying effective teachers; 5) place a disproportionate emphasis on providing pension benefits to retiring teachers at the expense of providing benefits that would appeal to younger teachers; and 6) allow far too many ineffective teachers to remain in the classroom and gain tenure, including teachers who repeatedly fail to meet the state's own licensing standards.

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. States 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, the state should not overlook its 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, the state has an obligation to those children.”

The 2008 *State Teacher Policy Yearbook* finds that state regulations are in need of significant reforms in order to improve teacher quality and offers states specific guidelines for rectifying substandard policies. **Each state’s *Yearbook*, as well as a national summary, is immediately available for free download at www.nctq.org/stpy.**

NCTQ, in consultation with over 150 leading thinkers, organizations, and teachers in the country, identified 15 policy goals that support the retention of effective new teachers. While no one state represents a national model for change, NCTQ found South Carolina to be leading other states, earning a rating of B-. South Carolina has particularly noteworthy policies for ensuring that ineffective teachers do not remain in the classroom.

Other states with some strong and effective policies in particular areas are Alabama, Ohio, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Tennessee, all of which received an overall grade of C. Eight states received a C-, 30 states received a grade in the D range, and six received an F.

Key findings include:

- **States' laws ensure that teachers can gain tenure without demonstrating they are effective:** States do virtually nothing to establish teachers' effectiveness in the classroom before awarding them permanent employment status—more commonly known as tenure.
 - *Only 2 states require their school districts to determine if a teacher is effective before they award tenure. 44 states allow teachers to earn tenure in three years or less, which is simply not enough time to accumulate sufficient data on a teacher’s performance.*
 - *3 states award teachers permanent status after a single year of teaching.*
- **States are not playing their part in the identification of effective teachers:** Determining which teachers will be effective before they begin to teach remains an elusive goal. The absence of predictive indicators creates a critical need to identify whether teachers are effective as soon as possible, before tenure is awarded.
 - *Only 23 states require that new teachers be evaluated more than once a year, a necessary component for determining effectiveness.*
 - *Only four states require evidence of student learning to be the preponderant criterion in teacher evaluations.*
 - *Just two states use value-added data to assess teacher effectiveness.*
- **States are complicit in keeping far too many ineffective teachers in the classroom:** Although it is local districts that hire and fire teachers, states could

do considerably more to ensure that ineffective teachers do not remain in the classroom indefinitely.

- *Only 13 states specify that teachers who have been rated unsatisfactory on multiple evaluations should be eligible for dismissal.*
 - *Only half the states require that teachers who receive even one unsatisfactory evaluation are placed on an improvement plan.*
 - *Twenty-two states permit teachers to remain in the classroom for three years or more without passing all required licensing tests.*
- **State policies raise unnecessary barriers for advancing in the profession, and could do much more to influence teachers' decisions to stay or go:** In the areas of compensation, certification and induction, there is much more states could do to support the retention of effective teachers early in their careers.
- *More than half of states do not require that local districts provide new teachers with adequate support.*
 - *Eighteen states require districts to pay more to teachers with advanced degrees, which have been shown repeatedly to bear no connection to teacher effectiveness.*
 - *In order to advance from a probationary to a professional license, 20 states require teachers to complete additional coursework that is not specifically targeted to improve their practice.*
- **State pension systems are generally inflexible and unfair to all teachers, but they particularly disadvantage teachers early in their careers:** States continue to provide teachers with expensive and inflexible pension plans that do not reflect the realities of the modern workforce.
- *Just four states offer teachers a defined contribution plan as their primary pension plan; the portability of these plans can be attractive to an increasingly mobile workforce.*
 - *Pension systems also overly commit districts' resources to retirement benefits, leaving little room to provide benefits that might be of more immediate relevance to new teachers.*

While school districts are certainly key players in shaping the quality of their own teaching force, the public may not fully appreciate the considerable 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. While the state has long been the traditional licensing body of teachers, nearly every state also has laws on the books which establish the tenure process, retirement benefits, dismissal procedures, evaluation requirements and even pay structures. This report analyzes what each state is doing to identify teachers' effectiveness; support the retention of valuable, early career teachers; and dismiss those found to be ineffective, with each of these factors measured against a realistic blueprint for reform.

Unlike the more comprehensive analysis of all aspects of states' teacher policies provided in the 2007 edition of the *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*, this year's report focuses on a

particular policy issue. The 2009 *Yearbook* will revisit and reevaluate the states' progress in meeting the full set of goals first analyzed in 2007, as well as the new goals examined this year.

For more information on *Yearbook* findings at the national and state level, methodology, and background on the report, go to www.nctq.org/stpy.

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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.