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MAJORITY OF STATES FAIL TO ALIGN THEIR TEACHER PREPARATION POLICIES WITH COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READINESS STANDARDS

One million new teachers have graduated since states adopted college- and career-readiness standards; new report from the National Council on Teacher Quality finds states have yet to make critical changes so that requirements for teacher preparation are aligned and new teachers are ready to teach these standards.

December 10, 2014 (Washington, DC) — The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) today released its eighth annual *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*. This year's edition focuses on state efforts to align their requirements for teacher preparation and licensure with the skills needed to prepare students for college and careers. Five years after the vast majority of states adopted Common Core State Standards or other state-specific standards, NCTQ finds that most states have not done nearly enough to make sure new teachers will be ready for the higher standards their students are expected to achieve.

NCTQ Vice President and Managing Director for State Policy Sandi Jacobs said, “With such a profound change occurring in K-12 student standards across the country, it would stand to reason that parallel changes would occur on the teacher side. States need to ensure that new teachers are adequately supported in the transition to higher standards and beyond. And there is no better place to start than where new teachers begin to learn their craft—in teacher preparation programs.”

Key Yearbook Findings

States are not ensuring that new teachers are ready for college- and career-readiness standards.

- NCTQ identified only five states – Indiana, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island and Texas –that are on the right track in terms of aligning state requirements for teacher preparation with college- and career-readiness standards while also setting higher expectations for obtaining a teacher license.

Most states’ policies aren’t explicit about preparing teachers for college- and career-readiness standards.

- Arkansas has done more than other states to revise teaching standards to ensure that teachers are prepared to meet the instructional requirements of college- and career-readiness standards.
- California’s reading licensure test for elementary teachers is a standout for assessing new teachers’ knowledge and skill related to key instructional shifts associated with the new standards.
- Illinois’s new standards for preparation of middle school teachers are exemplary, establishing clear expectations that teachers of all subjects must incorporate close reading of complex, challenging text, with clear articulation of the purposes of and strategies for supporting students.
- Indiana, Minnesota, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Texas are the only states besides Illinois and Arkansas to detail the ways literacy skills must be incorporated across all subject areas.

State content knowledge requirements for prospective teachers just aren't ambitious enough to meet the demands of college- and career-readiness standards.

- Only 20 states and the District of Columbia require elementary teaching candidates to pass a content test in each of the four core subject areas.
- Just 18 states require elementary teachers to demonstrate their knowledge of the science of reading. In 2007, NCTQ identified only four states with such a requirement. Despite this notable progress, the majority of states still do not ensure that new elementary teachers know how to teach young children to read.
- Fourteen states continue to issue a K-8 teaching license, which fails to differentiate between the preparation of elementary teachers and middle school teachers. Another five states allow K-8 licenses under some circumstances.
- At the secondary school level only five states – Indiana, Minnesota, Missouri, South Dakota and Tennessee – require secondary level teachers to pass a test in each subject they will be licensed to teach in high school. Most other states generally require content area tests for secondary teachers, but their policies have significant loopholes.

The preparation needs of special education teachers continues to be a largely neglected area, with the introduction of more challenging academic standards having little to no impact on requirements for teachers who educate special education students.

- Thirty-four states still offer or exclusively grant K-12 special education teacher licenses. In addition, most states do not require special education teachers to pass subject-matter tests.
- In 2014, for the first time, NCTQ examined whether states that require a rigorous reading exam for elementary teacher certification also require that test for elementary special education teachers. Of the 18 states that require elementary teacher candidates to pass an adequate test of the science of reading, only 11 also require special education teachers at the elementary level to pass the same test.

On the plus side, more states than ever are poised to become more selective about admission to teacher preparation programs because of new accreditation standards.

- Up from just seven states in 2013, 16 states now require a minimum GPA of 3.0 or higher and 13 states require a score above the 50th percentile on an academic proficiency test such as the ACT or SAT for admission to teacher preparation programs. This increase is largely attributed to states requiring national accreditation which includes more rigorous admission requirements.
- There does remain some uncertainty about whether accreditors and states will hold programs to these standards in the absence of clear state policy establishing rigorous admission criteria.

More states are collecting better data and information about the quality of teacher prep programs but this transparency is of limited value without a link to accountability.

- To date, no state explicitly holds teacher preparation programs accountable for ensuring that teachers are prepared to teach college- and career-readiness standards.
- In 2014, 35 states collect objective program performance data on teacher preparation, and 18 states publish teacher prep performance data.
- However, just 10 states – Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, Tennessee and Texas – connect student achievement data to teacher preparation programs.

- A mere four states set explicit minimum performance standards for teacher preparation programs in their states.

Looking at NCTQ's traditional Yearbook metrics, the average state grade for teacher prep in 2014 is a C.

- Florida, Indiana and Rhode Island earn the nation's highest grades (B+) for delivering well-prepared teachers.
- New York and Texas earn strong B grades.
- All of these states are raising admission standards for teacher preparation institutions, requiring teachers to adequately demonstrate knowledge of the content they will be licensed to teach and collecting the kinds of data that will help hold teacher preparation programs accountable for giving new teachers the tools they need to succeed.

This year's 2014 *State Teacher Policy Yearbook* provides each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia with a tailored analysis of state teacher preparation policies most in need of critical attention so that all new teachers are well-prepared to help students meet college- and career-readiness standards.

State Yearbook Dashboard

The NCTQ *Yearbook* website (www.nctq.org/statepolicy) provides free download of the national and state-specific *Yearbook* reports for 2014, as well as searchable access to the entire *Yearbook* dataset, including topical pages with up-to-date data on state teacher policy, a customized search tool and user-friendly options for generating graphic results that can be exported and shared.

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About NCTQ

The National Council of Teacher Quality —comprised of reform-minded Democrats, Republicans, and Independents— is a non-partisan research and policy group committed to restructuring the teaching profession based on the belief that all children deserve effective teachers. More information about NCTQ, including a list of the Board of Directors and Advisory Board, can be found on the NCTQ website, www.nctq.org.