

For Immediate Release
June 17, 2014

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As National Movement to Tackle Quality of Teacher Preparation Ignites, Programs Still Failing to Prepare Nation's Teachers

Just 7 Percent of All Programs Earn Top Ranked Status; Strongest Performers Generally Not Located in High-Prestige, High-Profile Institutions

33 States Make Significant Policy Changes to Their Teacher Prep Regulations; More Districts Considering Quality of Applicants' Training before Hiring Decisions Are Made

Washington, DC -- The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) released its 2014 *Teacher Prep Review* – an annual assessment of the nation's teacher preparation programs – with a much expanded and more comprehensive evaluation.

The *Review* uncovers early evidence that teacher preparation programs are beginning to make changes. It arrives at a time of heightened, unprecedented activity across the nation to improve teacher preparation:

- 33 states have recently made significant changes in their accountability policies over teacher preparation programs and another 7 have taken positive steps forward;
- a new consortium of seven states organized by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is working together to beef up their approval of programs;
- the Obama Administration has signaled it intends to strengthen accountability measures for teacher preparation and that it will restrict millions of dollars in federal grants to only high-performing programs;
- a new professional organization, Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), is beginning to accredit programs under considerably tougher standards; and
- a growing number of districts are pledging to make use of program data, including the NCTQ findings, to improve their hiring of new teachers and pressure programs to provide the training needed to successfully begin teaching in public schools.

For the first time, NCTQ provides a numeric ranking of the programs that prepare the nation's teachers. Most states (33) have at least one 'Top Ranked' program, leaving 17 states and the District of Columbia without a Top Ranked program in either elementary or secondary education. This finding suggests state and school district leaders in these states need to demand programs change to better meet their needs and, if necessary, look across their state borders for the best sources of well-trained teachers. Of the 1,612 programs ranked in the *Review*—an increase of over a third from last year's *Review*—NCTQ conferred Top Ranked status to 26 elementary and 81 secondary programs, accounting for only 7 percent of all programs. Fortunately, nearly two-thirds of the Top Ranked programs (68) are public, ensuring that aspiring teachers have high-quality, low cost pathways into teaching.

“With only 1 in 15 programs providing first-year teachers with solid preparation, it is clear we, as a nation, have a long way to go if we are going to do right by teachers as well as their students,” noted Kate Walsh, President of the National Council on Teacher Quality, a policy and research organization dedicated to ensuring every classroom is led by a quality teacher.

The top 10 national programs for elementary and secondary teaching are as follows:

Elementary

1. Dallas Baptist University (TX) (undergraduate)
2. Texas A&M University (undergraduate)
3. Ohio State University (graduate)
4. Northwestern State University of Louisiana (undergraduate)
4. University of Dayton (OH) (undergraduate)
6. Louisiana State University (undergraduate)
7. University of Houston (TX) (undergraduate)
8. Miami University of Ohio (tie; undergraduate)
8. Eastern Connecticut State University (tie; undergraduate)
10. University of Texas at Austin (undergraduate)

Secondary

1. Western Governors University (UT) (undergraduate)
2. Lipscomb University (TN) (undergraduate)
3. Fort Hays State University (KS) (undergraduate)
4. College of William and Mary (VA) (graduate)
5. Furman University (SC) (tie; undergraduate)
5. Henderson State University (AR) (tie; undergraduate)
5. Miami University of Ohio (tie; undergraduate)
8. University of California San Diego (tie; graduate)
8. University of California Irvine (tie; undergraduate)
8. CUNY - Hunter College (NY) (tie; graduate)
8. Miami University of Ohio (tie; graduate)

Walsh added, “These Top Ranked programs deserve tremendous credit. It is our hope that by honoring them in this way, more institutions will take the steps needed to improve teacher preparation.”

Key findings from the 2014 *Review* include:

- 94 institutions have a Top Ranked elementary or secondary program. Three institutions can boast three Top Ranked programs: CUNY – Hunter College, Miami University of Ohio and the University of Houston. Seven others have two Top Ranked programs: Arizona State University, Dallas Baptist University, Eastern Connecticut University, Fort Hays State University, Lipscomb University, Ohio State University and Western Governors University. States with the largest number of Top Ranked institutions include Ohio, Tennessee and Texas.
- In their admissions processes, three out of four programs fail to insist that applicants meet even modest academic standards (a 3.0 GPA or scoring above the 50th percentile on the ACT or SAT). There are encouraging signs since last year’s *Review*: nine institutions moved swiftly to raise their admissions standards to meet the NCTQ recommendations. In the absence of institutions voluntarily raising standards, a number of states such as Rhode Island and Delaware are moving to impose higher admissions standards on their institutions. Importantly, nearly 100 institutions were commended by NCTQ for not only being appropriately selective, but also for achieving strong diversity among admitted

students.

- While the second-year results still paint a grim picture of programs providing poor guidance to teacher candidates on reading instruction, there is some positive movement. Of programs choosing to submit materials to NCTQ for the second edition, 38 percent improved their score on this standard. Still, overall, almost all programs (83 percent) do not provide even a basic orientation in effective reading methods to elementary and special education teacher candidates, helping to explain why such a large percentage of American school children (30 percent) never learn how to read beyond a basic level.
- The nation's push to improve American performance in STEM areas remains at risk by the ongoing failure of 93 percent of all programs to ensure that elementary teacher candidates receive the math preparation they need, as well as by programs' scattershot approach in science, with over 70 percent of undergraduate programs failing to ensure that elementary teachers take a single basic science course.
- The 2014 findings also suggest that the push for stronger student learning standards by states, notably the Common Core State Standards and various state facsimiles, is imperiled by what NCTQ terms a "capacity gap," that is, the low expectations institutions have about what teachers must learn, and the broad subject matter knowledge public schools need teachers to have in order to teach to these new, higher levels. For example, only 20 percent of undergraduate elementary programs require a world history course; only 14 percent require candidates to develop deep knowledge of a subject by means of a concentration.
- More institutions fare much better in the preparation of secondary teachers, particularly in the preparation of English and mathematics teachers, but they—and many of the states which regulate them—struggle to make sure candidates have sufficient preparation in "multi-subject" majors such as social studies and science, with only 35 percent of programs ensuring that teachers aren't sent into classrooms with significant weaknesses in specific disciplines.

In addition to analyzing colleges and universities providing traditional teacher preparation, NCTQ rated, for the first time, secondary alternative certification providers. The results in this pilot study of some of the largest providers—almost half of which are located in Texas where alternative certification is particularly popular—were even weaker than for traditional programs. NCTQ found their admissions standards to be too low; that efforts to assess subject matter knowledge are inadequate; and that there is too little training or support provided to candidates who are asked to hit the ground running in the classroom. Only one provider out of 85 earned high marks (Teach For America, Massachusetts). Nine programs earned a B.

Since 2005, NCTQ has been working with states to help improve accountability systems for their teacher preparation programs, an effort that has gained traction in the last few years. Most of the new regulations raise admissions standards and require better, more rigorous licensing tests of teacher candidates. In addition, numerous districts are using NCTQ's data to make hiring decisions.

“While we are encouraged by the action that has been taken by the federal government, states, and the field itself through the new accrediting body (CAEP), we believe the greatest lever for change will be school districts,” added Walsh. “They have the power to turn this system around. For too long, they have allowed higher education to unilaterally decide how to prepare a new teacher. At the very least, school districts need to have a seat at that table.”

The full report is available [here](#). NCTQ has identified steps states could take to make meaningful improvements to teacher prep ([available here](#)) and has provided guidance to districts on how to identify the best trained teachers ([available here](#)).

About NCTQ

The National Council on Teacher Quality is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research and policy organization located in Washington, DC. Founded in 2000, the National Council on Teacher Quality is committed to restructuring the teaching profession, led by our vision that every child deserves effective teachers. NCTQ is committed to lending transparency and increasing public awareness of the four institutions having the greatest impact on teacher quality: states, teacher preparation programs, school districts and teachers unions.

Funding for the second edition of the *Review* is provided by 54 foundations, located in 22 states.

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