

***Ed School ESSENTIALS:  
A REVIEW OF ILLINOIS TEACHER PREPARATION***

**Evaluating 111 teacher preparation programs in the state,  
the National Council on Teacher Quality  
finds BIG GAPS in the preparation education schools provide  
and the preparation school districts wish their new teachers had**

Only 10 programs rated as strong.  
59 rated as weak.  
16 fail entirely.

*Illinois State University, the state's largest producer of teachers, ranks among the weakest in the review, with exceptionally low grades in its undergraduate elementary and special education programs.*

Washington, D.C. – Today, the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), released a statewide report commissioned by Advance Illinois finding that 53 of Illinois' schools of education -- by means of their 111 programs -- are not teaching aspiring teachers the fundamental knowledge and skills needed to be effective. NCTQ provides education-school "consumers"—prospective teachers and school districts—with specific data on the quality of the design of programs across the state with recommendations for policy changes.

The review assigns a letter grade to each program, with findings for each program available at [www.nctq.org](http://www.nctq.org). Overall findings include:

- **The preparation of the state's elementary teachers is being shortchanged on every front.** Of the programs evaluated, only 7 percent are ensuring that teachers get the broad content knowledge needed to teach elementary subjects; only 20 percent are giving teachers the tools they will need to teach *all* children, not just some, how to read; and only 3 percent are doing enough to counter the math phobia of so many elementary teachers by providing sufficient and relevant math content.
- **Far too many institutions discount the importance of selecting the most academically capable teacher candidates.** For example, three out of four of the graduate programs evaluated rely *only* on a test of largely middle-school level skills for admission.
- **Few institutions in Illinois ensure that the student teaching experience is of high quality,** ensuring that schools seek classroom teachers who are judged to be effective to mentor student teachers...not just volunteers.

- **Inconsistencies in quality among programs housed at the same campus are common.** For example, special education teachers in a graduate program might not get any preparation in teaching reading, unlike their undergraduate counterparts at the same education school. A program that has great strengths in teaching reading often had serious weakness in teaching mathematics or vice versa.

For this review, NCTQ applied 39 standards coalesced from research findings, best practices and common-sense principles for what new teachers need to know and be able to do. Most address the *design* of teacher preparation programs by assessing whether the fundamentals are in place to produce the best possible teachers. Among the areas the standards cover are admissions, preparation to teach reading and mathematics, content preparation and special education.

“The reason we put together these standards is to capture everything that superintendents and school principals talk about needing from new teachers and too seldom get” explains Kate Walsh, NCTQ’s president. “Our review is meant to help school districts know where to find the best trained teachers, as well as to help aspiring teachers identify which programs are providing the best preparation.”

The review also focuses on the contribution of state laws and regulations to the quality of these programs. It finds that while state regulators in Illinois are beginning to make up for years of regulatory neglect, the state as a whole is not acting with sufficient urgency.

“The timetable set by the state to address low program quality is much too slow and their goals hardly ambitious enough,” commented Walsh.

In the report, NCTQ also makes a number of policy recommendations, including:

- Put in place far better **licensing tests**, especially elementary reading and mathematics and secondary teachers in science and social studies.
- Accelerate plans to develop **data systems** to provide evidence of the value added by education schools.
- Eliminate the state’s one-size-fits-all **K-9 certification**.

*The review, which took 14 months to complete, involved extensive communications between NCTQ and the 53 schools of education in Illinois. Approximately 3,200 files were sent by the schools of education and analyzed by NCTQ. Another 4,400 emails were traded back and forth.*

To view the full report, including all of the findings and recommendations, go to <http://www.nctq.org/edschoolreports/illinois> or contact Lisa Cohen at: (310) 395-2544 or [lisa@lisacohen.org](mailto:lisa@lisacohen.org).

*The National Council on Teacher Quality is a non-profit organization comprised of reform-minded Democrats, Republicans and Independents. The organization supports 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.*  
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