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Contact: Alexandra Wilding
Phone 202.393.0020 ext.131
awilding@nctq.org

ARKANSAS EARNS “B-” FOR TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS POLICIES

New report from the National Council on Teacher Quality gives Arkansas improved grades for policies that support effective teaching

January 30, 2014 (Washington, DC) — The National Council on Teacher Quality today released its seventh annual *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*, which includes a 360-degree analysis of every state law, rule and regulation that shapes the effectiveness of the teaching profession in Arkansas.

Arkansas received an overall grade of B-, up from a C in 2011, the last year the state’s full portfolio of teacher policies was graded. The average grade for 2013 across all 50 states and the District of Columbia is a “C-”.

NCTQ President Kate Walsh said, "This year’s *State Teacher Policy Yearbook* proves that it is both possible and practical for states to drive teacher effectiveness policy. Many states once argued that raising the bar for teacher preparation, licensing and evaluation and tying personnel decisions to results for kids couldn’t be done. Now these policies are on the books in increasing numbers of states across the nation."

Key Yearbook Findings

Teacher effectiveness is increasingly being factored into personnel decisions:

- *Teacher evaluation.* Although Arkansas does not require annual evaluations for all teachers, Arkansas is one of 35 states that requires student achievement/growth to be an important criterion in evaluating teacher effectiveness.
- *Dismissing ineffective teachers.* Twenty-nine states, including Arkansas, now articulate that classroom ineffectiveness is grounds for a teacher’s dismissal.
- *Tying performance to tenure.* Unfortunately, teachers are granted tenure virtually automatically after three years in Arkansas, without consideration of classroom effectiveness as measured by student learning.
- *Prohibiting “last in, first out” policies.* Arkansas also fails to require districts to consider teacher performance in making layoff decisions.

Progress is being made in setting higher standards for the preparation of teachers but there is much more to be done:

- *Elementary teacher preparation.* Arkansas’ content tests for elementary school licensure now provide separate passing scores for each subject which helps to ensure teachers know all of the core content they will teach.

Yearbook Goal Areas	Arkansas’s 2013 Grades
Area 1: Delivering Well-Prepared Teachers	C+
Area 2: Expanding the Teacher Pool	B
Area 3: Identifying Effective Teachers	C-
Area 4: Retaining Effective Teachers	B-
Area 5: Dismissing Ineffective Teachers	C-
Average Overall Grade	B-

- *Science of reading.* Arkansas's teacher preparation requirements articulate that teachers should know the science of reading; however, the state does not have a rigorous test of scientifically-based reading knowledge for all elementary teachers.
- *Raising admission requirements.* Arkansas could strengthen teacher preparation by raising admission requirements to ensure that teacher preparation programs admit candidates with strong academic records, such as requiring a minimum GPA of 3.0.
- *Strengthening secondary teacher preparation.* Arkansas has significant loopholes in its secondary teacher licensing requirements. Arkansas should require that all secondary teachers pass a content test in every subject they are licensed or have an endorsement to teach.
- *Special education teachers.* Arkansas is one of 28 states that only offers a K-12 special education license, a license that wrongly presumes special education teachers do not need to master grade and subject specific content knowledge.

There has been much less action on policies aimed at recruiting and retaining the best teachers in the profession:

- *Use of evaluations for improving practice.* Unlike most states, Arkansas requires all teachers to receive feedback on their evaluations, professional development to be informed by evaluation findings, and improvement plans for teachers with poor evaluation ratings.
- *Support for performance pay.* While Arkansas supports performance pay, the state is also one of 15 that requires districts to compensate teachers for advanced degrees that likely have no impact on student achievement.

Very few states are providing flexible pathways into teaching:

- *Alternate routes.* Although better than what is offered by many states, Arkansas's pathways to teacher certification are in need of improvement.

The 2013 Arkansas State Teacher Policy Yearbook is immediately available for free download at: www.nctq.org/statepolicy. The newly redesigned website also provides 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.

The *State Teacher Policy Yearbook* was funded by private foundations across the United States, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Joyce Foundation and The Walton Family Foundation. NCTQ accepts no funding from the federal government. 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

	Overall State Grade 2013	Overall State Grade 2011	Overall State Grade 2009
Florida	B+	B	C
Louisiana	B	C-	C-
Rhode Island	B	B-	D
Tennessee	B	B-	C-
Arkansas	B-	C	C-
Connecticut	B-	C-	D+
Georgia	B-	C	C-
Indiana	B-	C+	D
Massachusetts	B-	C	D+
Michigan	B-	C+	D-
New Jersey	B-	D+	D+
New York	B-	C	D+
Ohio	B-	C+	D+
Oklahoma	B-	B-	D+
Colorado	C+	C	D+
Delaware	C+	C	D
Illinois	C+	C	D+
Virginia	C+	D+	D+
Kentucky	C	D+	D+
Mississippi	C	D+	D+
North Carolina	C	D+	D+
Utah	C	C-	D
Alabama	C-	C-	C-
Arizona	C-	D+	D+
Maine	C-	D-	F
Minnesota	C-	C-	D-
Missouri	C-	D	D
Nevada	C-	C-	D-
Pennsylvania	C-	D+	D
South Carolina	C-	C-	C-
Texas	C-	C-	C-
Washington	C-	C-	D+
West Virginia	C-	D+	D+
California	D+	D+	D+
District of Columbia	D+	D	D-
Hawaii	D+	D-	D-
Idaho	D+	D+	D-
Maryland	D+	D+	D
New Mexico	D+	D+	D+
Wisconsin	D+	D	D
Alaska	D	D	D
Iowa	D	D	D
Kansas	D	D	D-
New Hampshire	D	D-	D-
North Dakota	D	D	D-
Oregon	D	D-	D-
Wyoming	D	D	D-
Nebraska	D-	D-	D-
South Dakota	D-	D	D
Vermont	D-	D-	F
Montana	F	F	F