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NCTQ RELEASES NEW RATINGS OF ELEMENTARY TEACHER PREP PROGRAMS

PROGRAMS MADE GENUINE PROGRESS SINCE 2014, ESPECIALLY IN TRAINING FOR TEACHING READING

Preparation for Teaching Mathematics in Dire Need of Attention

Washington DC – Today, the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) released new ratings for 875 undergraduate elementary teacher preparation programs. The latest *Teacher Prep Review* found evidence that the nation's top programs--those that graduate teachers well versed in both evidence-based content and methods of teaching--are not all the nation's best known elite universities, but include Purdue University, Louisiana Tech University, Texas A&M University, Taylor University (IN), and the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Having last released ratings in 2014, NCTQ is able to report strong progress in some areas:

- **Programs are doing a better job teaching reading instruction.** Since 2006, NCTQ has focused on early reading instruction more than any other issue. Now we found the number of programs teaching research-based reading instruction is up to 39 percent, a sharp rise from 29 percent in 2014.
- **Half of all selective programs also report diverse enrollments,** showing that diversity and selectivity can go hand in hand. These [113 programs](#) are recruiting new cohorts of teacher candidates who are more racially diverse than the institution at large or the state's teacher workforce.

NCTQ President Kate Walsh stated that, "When programs improve, the big winners are of course future teachers and the children they will one day teach, but also the programs themselves. They are showing a willingness to change to better meet the needs of public schools. Programs who adopt an evidence-based model of teacher preparation are leading the way for others to follow."

Despite these gains, undergraduate elementary teacher prep programs still have far to go, particularly in preparing elementary teachers in mathematics. The weak preparation of teachers may help to explain the low performance of the US in the latest round of PISA testing announced this Tuesday, with 36 nations ranking higher in math. Only 13 percent of the teacher

prep programs have coursework covering the essential math topics every elementary teacher is expected to teach.

The new findings do little to quell the notion that teaching is an “easy major,” open to anyone who applies in many institutions. Only one quarter of the programs (26 percent) are sufficiently selective, generally admitting only the top half of college goers. However, a number of programs are taking it upon themselves to adopt tougher standards. At institutions lacking strong admissions requirements, the number of undergraduate elementary teacher prep programs which independently require at least a 3.0 GPA for admission has increased from 44 in 2014 to 71 today.

“So much of what teachers do in their first years relies on what they learned in their preparation programs,” said Arne Duncan, former Secretary of Education. “I am quite happy to see signs of movement being made by programs and hope they use the results of this *Review* to guide their further improvement.”

Other areas where programs can improve include:

- **Elementary Content** - Only a tiny percent of programs (5 percent) require aspiring teachers to be exposed to the full breadth of content needed to teach the elementary curriculum, including literature, history, geography, and science. For the most part, programs either fail to require any courses in the content or allow candidates to select courses from a long list of electives, many bearing no connection to the content taught in elementary grades.
- **Student Teaching** - Student teaching serves as a capstone experience, offering teacher candidates a chance to learn and practice under the guidance of a veteran teacher. However, only 5 percent of programs incorporate the elements of a quality student teaching experience. The vast majority of programs (around 93 percent) accept cooperating teachers suggested by a school district, without knowing much about that teacher’s effectiveness or mentoring ability.
- **Classroom Management** - New teachers, in particular, find classroom management consistently challenging. But still less than half of all programs (42 percent) give candidates sufficient feedback on their classroom performance.

Another former Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, now President of the University of North Carolina system, also commented, “These findings serve as reminder to me and my colleagues in higher education that we have a tremendous obligation to our public schools and future teachers. We must and can do better.”

This *Review* only analyzed undergraduate programs preparing elementary school teachers. Over the next two years, NCTQ will release updated ratings for undergraduate secondary, graduate and nontraditional elementary, graduate and nontraditional secondary, and undergraduate and graduate special education programs.

To read the *Landscape* report, click [here](#). To schedule an interview with Ms. Walsh, please contact Stephen Buckley at (202) 393-0020 ext. 129.

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About the National Council on Teacher Quality:

The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) is a nonpartisan research and policy group, committed to modernizing the teaching profession and based on the belief that all children deserve effective teachers. NCTQ is the nation's expert on the quality of teacher preparation programs and evaluates national teacher education against evidence-based criteria. More information about NCTQ can be found on our website, www.nctq.org

"As an educator, I know that one of the strongest in-school influences on students is the teacher in front of the classroom. As a nation, there is so much more we can do to help prepare our teachers and create a diverse educator workforce. Prospective teachers need good information to select the right program; school districts need access to the best trained professionals for every opening in every school; and preparation programs need feedback about their graduates' experiences in schools to refine their programs. These regulations will help strengthen teacher preparation so that prospective teachers get off to the best start they can, and preparation programs can meet the needs of students and schools for great educators."

--U.S. Secretary of Education, John B. King Jr.

"There is nothing more important to the success of a student than a great teacher, so it is critical all educators are prepared to teach at a high level. By grading teacher prep programs based on evidence-based criteria, NCTQ's *Teacher Prep Review* shines a spotlight on a frequently overlooked but vital component of America's education system. I hope programs carefully consider these findings and take steps to improve."

--Governor Jeb Bush

"Raising the quality of educator preparation is a vital part of giving the teaching profession the respect it deserves and NCTQ does an important service by tracking programs across the country. While there is more work to be done in our state, I am proud that our higher ed community, legislature, and education department have come together to improve prep programs and give our talented prospective teachers access to the best possible training. That means higher criteria for student admissions, higher-quality student teaching experiences, and a requirement that graduates pass both a performance assessment and a traditional written exam. The progress noted in NCTQ's *Teacher Prep Review* of the University of Delaware and Wilmington University provides further encouragement that we are moving in the right direction."

--Governor of Delaware, Jack Markell

“Great teachers are the single most important influence on learning inside schools. NCTQ’s *Teacher Prep Review* provides invaluable information about how colleges and universities in Iowa and across the nation can strengthen their elementary teacher preparation programs, which is one key to giving all students a globally competitive education. I am pleased the University of Iowa, St. Ambrose University, Iowa State University, Grand View University, and Faith Baptist Bible College scored so well. I am confident that all Iowa teacher preparation programs are committed to continuous improvement.”

--Governor of Iowa, Terry Branstad

“To enable all students to succeed, we must prepare all teachers to succeed. NCTQ’s *Review* shows that too many of our nation’s teacher prep programs are not yet where they need to be. Especially, there is a need for more courses that give aspiring teachers the background necessary to teach elementary content in greater depth, and more high-quality practice teaching experiences before teachers start in their own classrooms. I hope that teacher prep programs, in Ohio and around the world, take advantage of this constructive criticism and follow these suggestions aimed at helping them become even better.”

--Former Ohio Governor, Robert Taft

“Our nation's schools need well-prepared new teachers. The NCTQ *Teacher Prep Review* is the only tool currently available that makes it possible to assess program quality.”

**--Bernadeia Johnson, Former Superintendent of
Minneapolis, Assistant Professor at Minnesota State
University, Mankato State**

“As a former superintendent of a large school district, I struggled with the difference between what we needed new teachers to know and be able to do with how many higher ed institutions defined a well prepared teacher. To my mind, the NCTQ *Teacher Prep Review* helps create the basis of some honest conversations between school districts and their higher ed partners. It is in our students' best interest that we address those key issues on which we differ.”

**--Peter Gorman, Former Superintendent of
Charlotte-Mecklenburg**

“There's no more important work for a university to undertake than to prepare the next generation of teachers. That's why I'm determined to make The Educators College at Marian University a national exemplar for teacher preparation, and I'm grateful to NCTQ for lighting the path to help get us there.”

--Daniel J. Elsener, President, Marian University

“Many college teacher education programs fail to produce graduates who are more effective in the classroom than teachers with just a few weeks of pre-service training. These deficiencies are unfair to the teachers themselves, but also devastating to students--especially the low-income students and students of color who are most likely to be taught by novice teachers. To end this dangerous practice, teacher prep programs need to know where they are falling

short. NCTQ's *Teacher Prep Review* provides colleges with clear criteria for improving their programs."

--Kati Haycock, CEO, The Education Trust

"Nothing is more important to our nation's wellbeing than the quality of our nation's teachers. To that end, nothing is more important than that they are first prepared well. Unfortunately, our higher education institutions have too often failed to meet this grave obligation. That's why I stand fully behind NCTQ's willingness not only to shine a harsh light on these institutions but to light a path forward."

--Arthur Rock

"I look forward to getting your new report on teacher preparation programs. I think it is extremely important to our children's futures that we have phenomenal teacher training programs."

--Marshall Tuck, Educator in Residence, New Teacher Center.

"I enthusiastically endorse the *2016 Teacher Prep Review* of colleges of education. Slow progress is being made towards teaching all the five essential components of reading instruction to undergraduate teachers entering our elementary schools. 65% of 4th grade students still cannot read proficiently, even though we spend more money on education than any other nation on earth. Multiple scientific studies have proven that these five components are critical if K-3 students are to learn to read proficiently. Let's shine a light on this issue until ALL 1400 schools of education follow suit!"

--Robert W. Sweet, Jr., President, The National Right to Read Foundation