

Executive Summary

Since the beginning of this century, states have been tackling their teacher policies with a tremendous resolve to increase teacher quality. For much of this time, NCTQ, in its biannual *State Teacher Policy Yearbook (Yearbook)*, has been tracking the states' progress and providing guidance and recommendations to states to support improved teacher quality.

In our 2015 *Yearbook*, we reported that states' teacher policies seemed to be approaching a tipping point. Over the time period spanning 2009–2015, nearly all states made significant progress on multiple fronts (Figure A). Their progress was particularly impressive given that, with each *Yearbook* edition, the bar was raised on specific goals in response to new research and to lessons learned from implementation, making it harder for some states to earn top marks. Still, states moved forward.

Unfortunately, the 2017 *Yearbook* demonstrates that state progress has slowed considerably, with more states decreasing in overall grade than ever before. We recognize that policy improvements are frequently nonlinear and rarely conducted at lightning speed; however, this *Yearbook* illustrates that states have, in many cases, not only stopped advancing but also appear to have lost their sense of urgency. Given the status of the teaching profession, urgency is as important now as it was in the early days of the *Yearbook*.

This edition, then, is designed to serve as a clarion call to states regarding the importance of continuing to address teacher policy deficiencies. Regardless of the direction in which the political winds may blow, there are still many policy improvements that can and should be made.

Figure A

Overall State Grades 2009 – 2017

	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017
ALABAMA	C-	C-	C-	D+	C
ALASKA	D	D	D	D-	D-
ARIZONA	D+	D+	C-	C-	D
ARKANSAS	C-	C	B-	B-	C+
CALIFORNIA	D+	D+	D+	D	D+
COLORADO	D+	C	C+	C	D+
CONNECTICUT	D+	C-	B-	B-	C+
DELAWARE	D	C	C+	B-	B-
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	D-	D	D+	D+	D+
FLORIDA	C	B	B+	B+	B+
GEORGIA	C-	C	B-	B-	B-
HAWAII	D-	D-	D+	D+	D+
IDAHO	D-	D+	D+	C-	C
ILLINOIS	D+	C	C+	C+	C+
INDIANA	D	C+	B-	B	B-
IOWA	D	D	D	D	D+
KANSAS	D-	D	D	D+	D+
KENTUCKY	D+	D+	C	C	C-
LOUISIANA	C-	C-	B	B	B+
MAINE	F	D-	C-	C-	D+
MARYLAND	D	D+	D+	D+	D+
MASSACHUSETTS	D+	C	B-	B-	B-
MICHIGAN	D-	C+	B-	C+	C
MINNESOTA	D-	C-	C-	C-	C-
MISSISSIPPI	D+	D+	C	C	C
MISSOURI	D	D	C-	C-	C
MONTANA	F	F	F	F	F
NEBRASKA	D-	D-	D-	D	D
NEVADA	D-	C-	C-	C-	C-
NEW HAMPSHIRE	D-	D-	D	D	D+
NEW JERSEY	D+	D+	B-	C+	B
NEW MEXICO	D+	D+	D+	C	C
NEW YORK	D+	C	B-	B	B
NORTH CAROLINA	D+	D+	C	C-	C+
NORTH DAKOTA	D-	D	D	D	D
OHIO	D+	C+	B-	B-	B-
OKLAHOMA	D+	B-	B-	B-	D+
OREGON	D-	D-	D	D	D-
PENNSYLVANIA	D	D+	C-	C-	C
RHODE ISLAND	D	B-	B	B-	B
SOUTH CAROLINA	C-	C-	C-	C	C+
SOUTH DAKOTA	D	D	D-	D-	F
TENNESSEE	C-	B-	B	B	B
TEXAS	C-	C-	C-	C-	B-
UTAH	D	C-	C	C+	C
VERMONT	F	D-	D-	D-	D
VIRGINIA	D+	D+	C+	C+	C+
WASHINGTON	D+	C-	C-	C-	C-
WEST VIRGINIA	D+	D+	C-	C-	C+
WISCONSIN	D	D	D+	D	D+
WYOMING	D-	D	D	D	D

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Prior editions of the *Yearbook* sought to highlight bright spots in state teacher policy. In this edition, taking that approach is more difficult. Accordingly, we invite states to join us in a more retrospective analysis, by reviewing the headway that many states made regarding teacher policy over the past decade. Specifically, we have highlighted below policy improvements that may not carry a heavy political cost, with hopes that these research-backed, common sense policies will be considered and adopted by all states. If policymakers' commitment to teacher quality is genuine, surely it should be possible to agree on supporting some fundamental improvements.

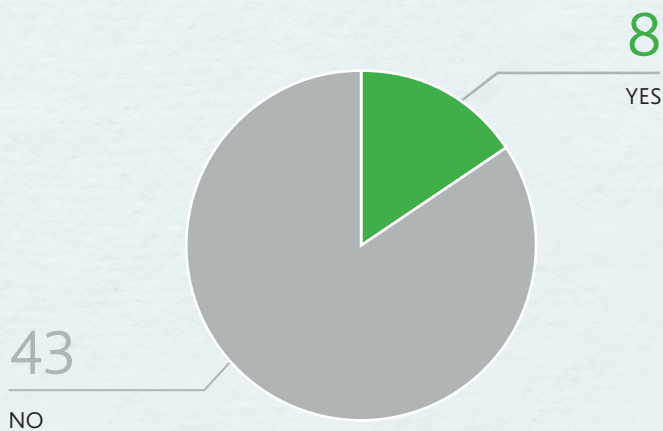
Following are areas of improvement that are feasible for all states to consider:

■ INVEST IN DATA SYSTEMS TO IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS TEACHER SHORTAGES

Despite the fact that declaring a teacher shortage every five to ten years has become something of a national pastime, most teacher shortages are local, not national, in nature. As such, these shortages require targeted, local solutions rather than blanket remedies. To diagnose and solve shortage problems, states, districts, schools, and communities need access to high-quality data.

Figure B

Do states collect and report all data necessary to eliminate existing teacher shortages?

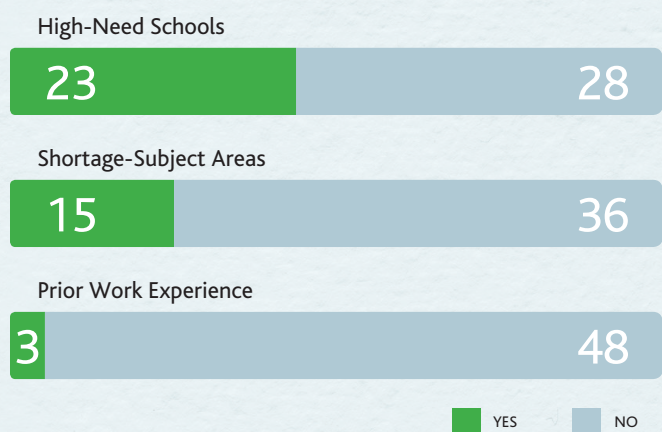


Unfortunately, only eight states currently collect and publicly report the necessary data to identify – and ultimately eliminate – existing teacher shortages.

Further, few states have taken the necessary steps to alleviate these shortages. For example, 48 states do not require districts to compensate all teachers for relevant prior work experience, which may discourage career switchers from other industries from entering the teaching profession. In addition, 36 states fail to support differential pay to encourage teachers to work in shortage-subject areas. The nation's shortage of STEM teachers will never be alleviated until districts recognize that significantly higher pay for these teachers is appropriate and necessary. States fare a bit better on providing teachers with differential pay to work in high-need schools, but 28 states still do not provide such incentives.

Figure C

Do states support differential pay for teachers with prior work experience or who teach in hard-to-staff subjects or schools?



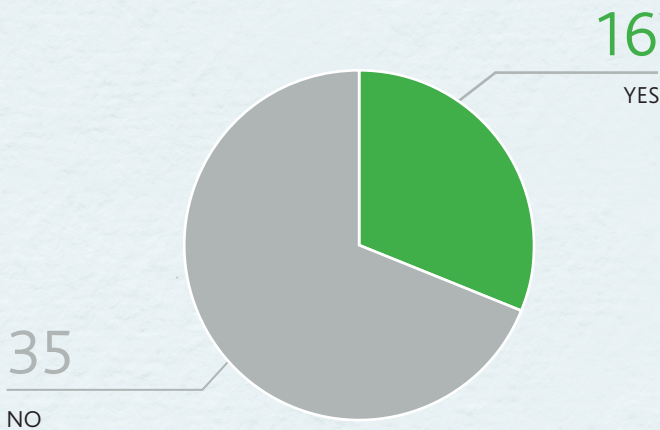
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■ INCREASE TRANSPARENCY REGARDING EDUCATOR EQUITY

Our national conscience—and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act—requires that we do not systemically discriminate against students based on their familial income or racial status. We do so by failing to ensure that these students are taught by their fair share of effective, in-field, and experienced teachers. Only states can provide the necessary leadership to accomplish this goal because they must collect and publicly report all necessary data to identify where inequities exist within school districts and at the building level.

Figure D

Do states publicly report all data necessary to identify whether there is an inequitable distribution of teachers at the school level?



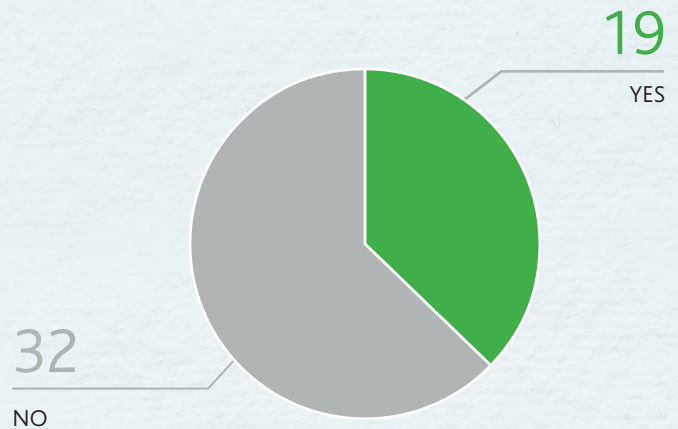
Currently, 35 states fail to publicly report these data. Such reporting can and should be done with careful consideration of applicable privacy constraints, but ultimately these data are essential to ensure that states and districts can target their resources to eliminate existing educator equity gaps.

■ EXPAND DIVERSITY IN THE NATION'S TEACHING FORCE

Increasingly, research demonstrates the value of a diverse teaching force, affirming many policy-makers' and educators' call to bring more qualified teachers of color into our nation's classrooms. Yet 32 states have yet to take concrete action to increase teacher diversity under a specific initiative, incentive program, or system of supports. Such action is particularly necessary given the changing demographics of our nation's students.

Figure E

Have states taken concrete action to encourage qualified individuals of color to enter the teacher pipeline?



■ INCREASE OVERSIGHT OF TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

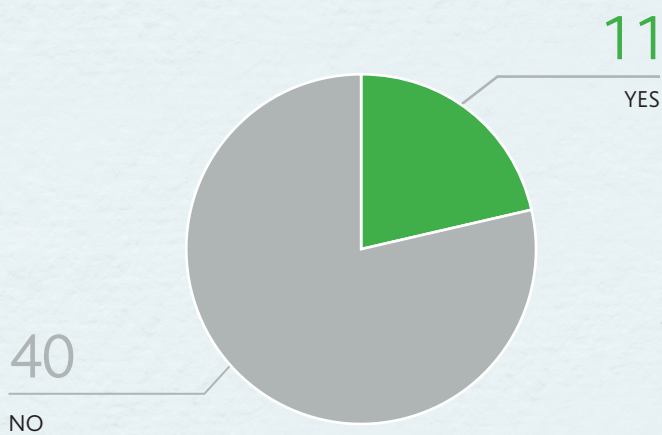
In all but a few states, the state educational agency, rather than university systems, decides whether teacher preparation programs are authorized to operate, functionally determining whether a specific teacher preparation program is deemed adequate to confer a teaching license. Yet only 11 states articulate standards that establish meaningful minimum thresholds for program performance and maintain clear protocols with

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significant consequences for programs that fail to meet those standards. The absence of standards, and of clearly defined next steps for programs that fail to meet them, results in an opaque environment lacking in transparency and, ultimately, adequate accountability.

Figure F

Do states establish meaningful performance standards and accountability protocols?



■ IMPROVE THE PREPARATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

Special education students are among our most vulnerable students. And yet, 42 states still allow elementary teacher candidates in special education to earn a license without verifying that they possess adequate content knowledge. Even more troubling, 29 states do not measure elementary special education candidates' knowledge of how to teach reading under any assessment, and 10 additional states require an assessment that is insufficiently rigorous to measure candidates' knowledge of the science of reading instruction. This is particularly problematic because reading difficulties are the most common reason for special education referrals.

Figure G

Ensuring Prepared Special Education Teachers

Elementary special education candidates are required to demonstrate adequate content knowledge as a condition for licensure.



Special education candidates are required to demonstrate knowledge of how to teach reading as a condition for licensure.



■ YES ■ PARTIALLY ■ NO

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■ SHIFT THE CULTURE OF TEACHING TO EMBRACE THE BENEFITS OF TEACHER EVALUATION

The national push to improve teacher effectiveness was predicated on learning how to measure what matters, especially teachers' contribution to student learning. Effective teachers should be recognized and rewarded, both monetarily and through increased opportunities for teacher leadership. Yet 41 states do not explicitly require that evaluation results inform teacher compensation in some manner. Although many states declare a commitment to teacher leadership opportunities, the clear majority (40 states) remain silent on the basic principle that such opportunities should be reserved for highly rated teachers.

Figure H

Do states use evaluation results to inform teacher compensation and leadership opportunities?



Despite these findings, this edition of the *Yearbook* includes some bright spots worth celebrating. For example, most states are focusing on student teaching, with 33 requiring that teacher candidates have at least 10 weeks of practice in real classrooms before earning a license and the clear majority of states (39) requiring that teacher candidates' practice experience is relevant to their likely teaching assignment. In addition, almost all states (43) now recognize that teacher effectiveness is not a binary judgment and require that teacher evaluation instruments have at least three rating

categories. This represents a significant improvement over 2011 when only 17 states required more than two evaluation rating categories. Finally, to help address one of the great stumbling blocks on the move to make teacher evaluation more meaningful, nearly two-thirds of all states (31) now require principal evaluations to be explicitly linked to the effectiveness of their teachers or to a principal's instructional leadership of the school.

For more information regarding how each state fared in each of these policy areas, see NCTQ's *Yearbook* Dashboard at www.nctq.org.

For our part, we continue to be grateful to all states for their cooperation and support in providing us with the data necessary to make each *Yearbook* a valuable resource and template for improving the quality of our teachers and education system. It is increasingly clear that we are partners with the same goal: to ensure that our children receive the highest-quality education that will give them the tools to eventually become confident and productive adults.

To see a full review of each state's teacher policies, visit:
www.nctq.org

Figure 1

*Summary Grade Chart
2017 State Teacher
Policy Yearbook*

	Overall State Grade 2017	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4	Area 5	Area 6	Area 7	Area 8	Area 9
Alabama	C	C+	B-	C	C+	C	C	D-	D-	F
Alaska	D-	D-	D-	D	F	F	C	D	D-	F
Arizona	D	C-	F	F	F	D-	D-	C+	D	D+
Arkansas	C+	C	B+	A-	C-	C	F	D+	C	F
California	D+	D	C+	D-	D+	C-	F	F	B	F
Colorado	D+	D+	C-	D-	F	D	F	C+	D+	C-
Connecticut	C+	C+	B-	C+	D	C-	C	B-	D	C-
Delaware	B-	B	C	C	D-	C	B+	B-	D+	D
District of Columbia	D+	D-	C-	D+	F	C	B	D-	D-	F
Florida	B+	B	B+	A-	D-	C-	B	B	C+	C
Georgia	B-	C+	D	C+	F	B	C	B	C	C
Hawaii	D+	D-	F	D-	F	F	D-	B-	C	C
Idaho	C	F	C+	C-	C-	D-	B	C+	D-	C-
Illinois	C+	C+	C	C+	D-	B	C	C	F	C+
Indiana	B-	B-	C+	B+	D+	C-	F	B-	D+	B-
Iowa	D+	C	F	D-	D+	D	C-	D+	F	D-
Kansas	D+	D+	F	C+	D-	D-	C-	D	D-	D
Kentucky	C-	B	C	C+	F	D	C-	D-	C-	F
Louisiana	B+	B-	B-	C+	B	C	F	B	A	B-
Maine	D+	D-	C-	D+	C-	C-	D-	D	D-	D
Maryland	D+	D+	F	C-	C-	C	F	C-	C-	F
Massachusetts	B-	B+	C	C	B	C	C	B	F	D+
Michigan	C	C+	F	D	D	C	C-	C+	D	B-
Minnesota	C-	C-	C+	C+	F	C	D	C	D	D
Mississippi	C	D+	C-	C	F	C-	B	C+	C-	F
Missouri	C	B-	C	C+	C+	C-	D-	D	D-	D+
Montana	F	D	F	F	F	F	F	F	D+	F
Nebraska	D	D+	F	D+	F	D-	C	F	D+	F
Nevada	C-	C-	F	D+	F	D	C	C-	C+	C+
New Hampshire	D+	D	C+	C-	F	F	C	F	D-	D-
New Jersey	B	B	D+	C	C-	B+	B	B	F	C-
New Mexico	C	D	C-	D+	F	D-	B	B	C	C-
New York	B	C	C+	C+	A	C	B	B+	C	D+
North Carolina	C+	B+	C	C-	D+	C	D	C+	B-	F
North Dakota	D	D	F	D+	F	D	C-	C-	D	F
Ohio	B-	C+	D+	C+	D	C	B	B-	C-	C-
Oklahoma	D+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	C	D-	C-	D+
Oregon	D-	C-	D-	D-	F	F	F	D	D-	D
Pennsylvania	C	C-	D	B-	C+	C-	D	C+	D	C
Rhode Island	B	B+	C	C+	C+	C	B	B	F	D
South Carolina	C+	C+	C+	C+	F	C-	B	B	D+	D-
South Dakota	F	F	F	F	F	D	F	D	D	F
Tennessee	B	A-	D	B+	C	D-	C	B	C+	C+
Texas	B-	B-	B-	B	D-	C	C-	C+	C-	D+
Utah	C	C	C+	D+	F	D-	C	C+	C+	C
Vermont	D	D	C	C	F	D	D-	F	D	F
Virginia	C+	C	A-	B	D	C-	D-	D+	C	C
Washington	C-	B-	D-	D	F	C	F	C	C+	C
West Virginia	C+	B-	C	C+	C-	D	C	C+	C-	F
Wisconsin	D+	C	D+	D-	B	D-	D-	D+	D+	D-
Wyoming	D	F	C-	D-	F	F	D	D-	D+	D+