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UTAH RECEIVES “D” FOR WEAK STATE TEACHER PREPARATION POLICIES

New report from the National Council on Teacher Quality gives Utah low marks for its inadequate efforts to ensure that all new teachers are classroom-ready; report provides roadmap for helping the state improve teacher preparation policies.

January 23, 2013 (Washington, DC) — The National Council on Teacher Quality today released its sixth annual *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*, with a special focus on the state laws, rules and regulations that shape teacher preparation. This 2012 edition of the *Yearbook* provides Utah with a tailored analysis, *Improving Teacher Preparation in Utah*, which identifies the teacher preparation policy areas most in need of critical attention, as well as "low-hanging fruit," policies that can be addressed by Utah in relatively short order.

The state received a grade of “D” for its teacher preparation policies in 2012, with no improvement since 2011. The average grade across all 50 states and the District of Columbia is a “D+”.

NCTQ President Kate Walsh said, "With so much attention on the issue of teacher effectiveness, the relative lack of attention to how candidates for teaching are prepared for the job in the first place is puzzling. The *Yearbook* provides a roadmap for policymakers on how to get teacher effectiveness right from the start – by setting higher expectations for what teachers need to know and are able to do before they are licensed to become teachers. Our teachers deserve the very best preparation so that they can step into the classroom and help our students prepare to be the most successful in the world."

Some of Utah's teacher preparation policies most in need of critical attention include:

- Raising admission requirements to ensure that teacher preparation programs admit candidates with strong academic records.
- Ensuring that elementary teachers know their subject matter and are ready to teach to the Common Core State Standards.
- Disallowing K-8 teaching licenses that fail to distinguish between teaching elementary and middle school students.
- Closing loopholes that allow some secondary science and social studies teachers to teach subjects in which they may lack sufficient content knowledge. Eliminating generic K-12 special education licenses that lower the bar for special education teachers and make it virtually impossible for the state to ensure that these teachers know their subject matter and are prepared to teach grade-level content.
- Requiring that teacher candidates receive a high-quality summative student teaching experience and are assigned to cooperating teachers who have demonstrated evidence of effectiveness as measured by student learning.

- Setting minimum program standards and holding teacher preparation programs accountable for the performance of their graduates.

The report also identifies ways that Utah could improve its weak Alternative Route to Licensure program, which has low standards, minimal flexibility and limited access.

This year's *Yearbook* comes in advance of NCTQ's forthcoming (Spring 2013) *Teacher Prep Review* of the higher education-based teacher preparation programs in the nation. A key area of focus in both reports is admission standards, and the 2012 *Yearbook* includes a sneak peek of data from the *Review*, which finds that 50 percent of undergraduate teacher preparation programs in Utah are insufficiently selective, failing to ensure that candidates come from the top half of the college-going population.

Walsh continued: "The 2012 *Yearbook* will serve as an important companion to NCTQ's forthcoming *Teacher Prep Review*, which will identify programs that are doing the best job of preparing tomorrow's educators, those that need to improve and those that need restructuring. The *Yearbook's* recommendations can help state policymakers build a strong policy framework for effective teacher preparation so that our teachers get what they deserve: training that provides them with the tools they need to lead a classroom the day they graduate."

Improving Teacher Preparation in Utah, which includes national data and state-by-state comparisons of teacher preparation policies, is immediately available for free download at: www.nctq.org/stpy. For questions about the report, please contact Laura Johnson, Director of Communications, at (202) 393-0020 ext. 117 or ljohnson@nctq.org.

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About NCTQ

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.