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ARKANSAS SHOULD DO MORE TO ALIGN TEACHER PREPARATION WITH COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READINESS STANDARDS

Some Arkansas teacher preparation policies are on the right track for ensuring that new teachers are ready to help students achieve to the high levels necessary for college and careers; others fall short.

December 10, 2014 (Washington, DC) — The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) today released its eighth annual *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*. This year's edition focuses on Arkansas's efforts to align its requirements for teacher preparation and licensure with the skills needed to prepare students for college and careers.

NCTQ Vice President and Managing Director for State Policy Sandi Jacobs said, "With such a profound change occurring in K-12 student standards across the country, it would stand to reason that parallel changes would occur on the teacher side. Arkansas needs to ensure that teachers are adequately supported in the transition and beyond. And there is no better place to start than where new teachers begin to learn their craft—in teacher preparation programs."

Key Yearbook Findings:

Unlike most states, Arkansas' teacher preparation requirements are explicit about preparing teachers for the instructional requirements of college- and career-readiness standards.

- Arkansas has done more than most states to revise teacher standards to explicitly articulate the instructional requirements of college- and career-readiness standards, including the use of informational texts, cross-disciplinary literacy, and intervention for struggling readers.

State content knowledge requirements for prospective teachers in Arkansas leave room for improvement.

- Arkansas is one of only 21 states that requires elementary teaching candidates to pass a content test in each of the four core subject areas.
- However, Arkansas does not have an adequate test for teachers to demonstrate their knowledge of the science of reading.
- Along with 37 other states, Arkansas has significant loopholes in its licensing requirements for high school teachers.

The preparation needs of special education teachers continues to be a largely neglected area, with the introduction of more challenging academic standards in Arkansas having little to no impact on requirements for teachers who educate special education students.

- Arkansas is one of 34 states that still offers or exclusively grants K-12 special education teacher licenses. Arkansas also does not require special education teachers to demonstrate subject matter knowledge as a condition of licensure.

Arkansas’ teacher preparation admissions requirements are not selective.

- With a required GPA of 2.5 and an academic proficiency test not normed to the college-bound population (such as the ACT or SAT) for admission to teacher prep programs, Arkansas sets a low bar for the academic performance of the state’s prospective teachers.

Arkansas neither collects meaningful data about the quality of teacher prep programs nor hold programs accountable for the quality of the teachers they produce.

- Arkansas is one of only 16 states that does not collect objective program performance data on teacher preparation.
- Arkansas is one of 41 states that does not connect student achievement data to teacher preparation programs.
- Arkansas does not set explicit minimum performance standards for teacher preparation programs in the state.

Looking at NCTQ’s traditional *Yearbook* metrics, Arkansas earns an overall grade of C+ for teacher preparation.

- The average grade for all states for teacher preparation in 2014 is a C, up from a D in 2011.

The [2014 Arkansas State Teacher Policy Yearbook](#) is immediately available for free download. The 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, Gleason Family Foundation, J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation, 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.