

## **ARKANSAS TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS POLICIES STRONGER THAN MOST OTHER STATES; STATE EARNS SOLID B- GRADE**

### ***New Report From NCTQ Finds Arkansas Supports Effective Teaching***

December 8, 2015 (Washington, DC) — The National Council on Teacher Quality today released its ninth 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 earned a B- this year, holding steady from 2013, despite the fact that NCTQ raised expectations in several key policy areas, including aligning teacher licensing with the requirements of states' college- and career-readiness standards. The average grade across all 50 states and the District of Columbia for 2015 is a "C-".

<b>Yearbook Goal Areas</b>	<b>Arkansas' 2015 Grades</b>
Area 1: Delivering Well-Prepared Teachers	B-
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-

NCTQ Senior Vice President for State and District Policy Sandi Jacobs said, "Most states, including Arkansas, still have plenty of room for improvement, but on the whole the glass is really starting to look half full on states' efforts to drive teacher effectiveness through smarter policy. Arkansas is among the national leaders."

### **Key Yearbook Findings**

#### **Teacher licensing requirements are becoming more in step with teacher effectiveness:**

- *Admission standards.* Arkansas is one of 24 states that set a high academic bar for admission to teacher preparation programs.
- *Elementary teacher preparation.* Arkansas's content tests for elementary school licensure provide separate passing scores for each subject which helps to ensure teachers know all of the core content they will teach.
- *College- and career-readiness.* Arkansas's teacher competencies include expectations that teachers will be able to build literacy across subject areas, challenge students with literacy and intervene with struggling readers. Few states have done as much as Arkansas to ensure that standards for teachers are well aligned with standards for K-12 students.
- *Student teaching.* Arkansas's has relatively strong policies for ensuring that teaching candidates have a high-quality student teaching experience. It is one of only 13 states that require student teachers to be assigned to effective teachers.

#### **Arkansas is implementing evaluations of teacher effectiveness but could do more to use results to inform policy and practice:**

- *Teacher evaluation.* Arkansas is one of 27 states that require annual evaluations for all teachers and is one of 35 states that require student achievement/growth to be a significant criterion in evaluating teacher effectiveness.

- *Tying performance to tenure and licensure.* Tenure decisions in Arkansas are made virtually automatically after three years. Arkansas requires teacher performance to be considered for licensure advancement but it is not tied to effectiveness.
- *Dismissing ineffective teachers.* Arkansas is one of 28 states that articulate that classroom ineffectiveness is grounds for a teacher’s dismissal.
- *Prohibiting “last in, first out” policies.* Arkansas makes no effort to require districts to consider teacher performance (rather than only seniority) in making layoff decisions. Such decisions should be informed by teacher effectiveness.

**Arkansas has some promising policies aimed at recruiting and retaining effective teachers:**

- *Professional support.* Arkansas requires that all teachers receive feedback on their evaluations and directs districts to connect professional development to teachers’ identified needs. The state also requires structured improvement plans for teachers who receive poor evaluations.
- *Support for performance pay.* Arkansas is one of 16 states that support performance pay. The state also allows differential pay for high-need schools or shortage subject areas. Unfortunately, however, it is also one of 15 states that require teachers to be compensated for earning advanced degrees, even though research shows no evidence they promote classroom effectiveness.
- *Alternate routes.* Arkansas is one of just six states that have high-quality alternative certification pathways into the teaching profession.

**Arkansas still has room to improve on several critical teacher policy fronts:**

- *Science of reading.* Arkansas should ensure elementary teacher know the science of reading by requiring all elementary teachers to pass a rigorous test measuring that knowledge.
- *Strengthening secondary teacher preparation.* Arkansas should require that all secondary teachers pass a content test in every subject they are licensed or have an endorsement to teach.
- *Teacher prep accountability.* Arkansas should hold teacher preparation programs accountable by collecting performance data and setting minimum program performance standards.
- *Special education teachers.* Arkansas is one of 21 states that offer only 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.

The *2015 Arkansas State Teacher Policy Yearbook* is immediately available for free download [here](#). The 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.

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The National Council on Teacher Quality is a nonpartisan research and policy group committed to modernizing the teaching profession based on the belief that all children deserve effective teachers. We recognize that it is not teachers who bear responsibility for their profession's many challenges, but the institutions with the greatest authority and influence over teachers. To that end we work to achieve fundamental changes in the policy and practices of teacher preparation programs, school districts, state governments, and teachers unions. Our Board of Directors and Advisory Board come from a broad range of backgrounds and perspectives, and they all believe that policy changes are overdue in the recruitment and retention of teachers. More information about NCTQ can be found on our website, [www.nctq.org](http://www.nctq.org).

	Overall State Grade 2015	Overall State Grade 2013	Overall State Grade 2011	Overall State Grade 2009
Florida	B+	B+	B	C
Indiana	B	B-	C+	D
Louisiana	B	B	C-	C-
New York	B	B-	C	D+
Tennessee	B	B	B-	C-
Arkansas	B-	B-	C	C-
Connecticut	B-	B-	C-	D+
Delaware	B-	C+	C	D
Georgia	B-	B-	C	C-
Massachusetts	B-	B-	C	D+
Ohio	B-	B-	C+	D+
Oklahoma	B-	B-	B-	D+
Rhode Island	B-	B	B-	D
Illinois	C+	C+	C	D+
Michigan	C+	B-	C+	D-
New Jersey	C+	B-	D+	D+
Utah	C+	C	C-	D
Virginia	C+	C+	D+	D+
Colorado	C	C+	C	D+
Kentucky	C	C	D+	D+
Mississippi	C	C	D+	D+
New Mexico	C	D+	D+	D+
South Carolina	C	C-	C-	C-
Arizona	C-	C-	D+	D+
Idaho	C-	D+	D+	D-
Maine	C-	C-	D-	F
Minnesota	C-	C-	C-	D-
Missouri	C-	C-	D	D
Nevada	C-	C-	C-	D-
North Carolina	C-	C	D+	D+
Pennsylvania	C-	C-	D+	D
Texas	C-	C-	C-	C-
Washington	C-	C-	C-	D+
West Virginia	C-	C-	D+	D+
Alabama	D+	C-	C-	C-
District of Columbia	D+	D+	D	D-
Hawaii	D+	D+	D-	D-
Kansas	D+	D	D	D-
Maryland	D+	D+	D+	D
California	D	D+	D+	D+
Iowa	D	D	D	D
Nebraska	D	D-	D-	D-
New Hampshire	D	D	D-	D-
North Dakota	D	D	D	D-
Oregon	D	D	D-	D-
Wisconsin	D	D+	D	D
Wyoming	D	D	D	D-
Alaska	D-	D	D	D
South Dakota	D-	D-	D	D
Vermont	D-	D-	D-	F
Montana	F	F	F	F