

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, July 21, 12:01 AM

Contact
Nicole Gerber
ngerber@nctq.org
202-393-0020, ext. 712

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON TEACHER QUALITY PUBLISHES LONG-HIDDEN DATA ON TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

*Disclosure of Institutional “Pass Rate” Data on Elementary Teacher Licensure Tests Offers
Insights for Strengthening, Diversifying Teacher Workforce in The Face of COVID
Instructional Loss*

Washington, D.C.—The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) succeeded in [publishing new data today](#) that the U.S. Congress had also long worked to obtain but with only limited success. The data reveals the pass rates on teacher licensure tests for institutions preparing elementary teachers in 38 states and the District of Columbia. The publication of this data moves the field of teacher preparation more in line with a practice commonly observed in other professional preparation, such as nursing, law, and accounting, where “first-time pass rates” are routinely reported as key evidence of the quality of programs’ preparation.

Poor results may help to explain why state education agencies, teacher preparation programs, and test publishers previously resisted efforts to make the data public, revealing that a notably high percentage of institutions (29%) had first time pass rates of less than 50% across three years of requested data (2015-2018). Further, the data shows that many aspiring teachers who fail the first time do not persist. Nearly a quarter of all test takers (22%) who failed on their first attempt do not retake the test, and the percentage rises to 30% for test takers of color, a challenge to the many efforts underway to achieve greater diversity in the teaching profession.

“As we emerge from the pandemic and make critical infrastructure investments to improve and rebuild America, we cannot continue to ignore the importance of teacher preparation,” said **Rep. George Miller, former U.S. Congressman who chaired the House Education and Labor Committee**. “The relevance of the data obtained by NCTQ towards this goal is self-evident, at last providing an objective source of evidence speaking to the quality of programs.”

The data shows a strikingly large variation within each state in how many test takers are able to pass depending upon the institution they attend, with an average 56 percentage point gap between the institutions with the highest first-time pass rate and those with the lowest pass rate. Six states reported having at least one institution in which not a single test taker passed on the first attempt. When considering the “best attempt” pass rate, the variation is only somewhat reduced to an average gap of 44 percentage points.

Most notably, many institutions defy the narrative that only wealthier, more selective institutions can achieve high pass rates. For example, NCTQ found 161 institutions with more Pell grant recipients than average whose performance on licensure tests exceeded the state’s average.

“We find clear evidence that institutions with similar profiles and challenges produce remarkably different outcomes. That’s a story that hasn’t been told, to the detriment of the quality of teacher preparation in the United States,” commented **NCTQ President Kate Walsh**. “Instead of hiding this data, it should serve as a compass, with high achieving institutions pointing the way forward for the rest of the field.”

This new data set focuses on licensure tests in elementary content, defined by states as the minimal knowledge needed by a prospective elementary teacher in English language arts, science, mathematics, and social studies. While a total of 38 states and D.C. have been able to supply NCTQ with the requested data, there are still [12 that have only supplied incomplete data or have opted not to share their data](#). These twelve states are California, Georgia, Indiana, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin.

Like many tests used in education, the value of teacher licensure tests is being hotly debated in many states, propelled by unsubstantiated claims that licensure tests are not predictive of future teaching success and concerns that these tests are biased against candidates of color. In addition to the new data, NCTQ has also published [a literature review of the research on licensure tests](#), finding that nearly all relevant studies report a positive relationship between performance on licensure tests and classroom effectiveness. Most recently, a study in Massachusetts also found that the state's tests were just as predictive for teachers of color as for White teachers.

NCTQ identifies three primary ways for institutions to improve pass rates: earlier and better diagnostics of knowledge gaps; using pass rate data to monitor and improve program effectiveness; and more targeted coursework in content that is relevant to elementary teaching. Of particular importance is the selection of courses taken by aspiring teachers before they begin their professional coursework, ensuring these courses address relevant content that may have been missed in the course of a candidate's K-12 education.

To accommodate the fact that states often use different tests, making comparisons between states difficult, the NCTQ website (passrates.nctq.org) displays each state's data in its own customized dashboard. Data includes:

- **First-attempt pass rates for all test takers at an institution**
- **Best-attempt pass rates for all test takers at an institution**
- **Pass rates disaggregated by the admissions selectivity of the institution and teacher prep programs**
- **Pass rates disaggregated by the proportion of undergraduate students on a campus who receive Pell grants**
- **Proportion of test takers at each institution who take the test three or more times**
- **Pass rates for test takers of color at each institution**

Users are also able to download the data for a state to identify the performance of specific institutions. NCTQ will continue to add data as states make it available and will also publish new data in 2022 for those states testing elementary candidates on their knowledge of the science of reading.

Read the full NCTQ report here: www.nctq.org/publications/Driven-by-Data:-Using-Licensure-Tests-to-Build-a-Strong,-Diverse-Teacher-Workforce.

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To schedule an interview with NCTQ, please contact Nicole Gerber via email at ngerber@nctq.org or by phone at (202) 393- 0020 ext. 712.

About the National Council on Teacher Quality:

The National Council on Teacher Quality is a nonpartisan research and policy group, committed to modernizing the teaching profession and 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. More information about NCTQ can be found on our website, www.nctq.org.