

TENNESSEE TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS POLICIES AMONG NATION'S STRONGEST; STATE EARNS B

New Report from NCTQ Finds Tennessee Is a Leader on Policies that Support 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 Tennessee.

Tennessee 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-".

Yearbook Goal Areas	Tennessee's 2015 Grades
Area 1: Delivering Well-Prepared Teachers	C+
Area 2: Expanding the Teacher Pool	C
Area 3: Identifying Effective Teachers	B
Area 4: Retaining Effective Teachers	B-
Area 5: Dismissing Ineffective Teachers	B+
Average Overall Grade	B

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

Key Yearbook Findings

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

- *Admission standards.* Tennessee is one of 24 states that set a high academic bar for admissions to teacher preparation programs.
- *Science of reading.* Tennessee is one of 18 states that require all elementary teachers to demonstrate their knowledge of the science of reading, although new legislation in the state allows teachers to delay passing content assessments if they have a bachelor's degree in a core content area.
- *Secondary teacher preparation.* Tennessee is one of only five states in the nation requiring secondary teachers to pass a content test in each and every subject they are licensed to teach.
- *Special education.* Tennessee is one of only 14 states in the nation that, appropriately, do not offer a K-12 general license for special education teachers.
- *Student teaching.* Tennessee is one of just 13 states that require that cooperating teachers that mentors to future teachers have demonstrated that they are effective in the classroom.
- *Teacher prep accountability.* Tennessee collects objective program data and connects student achievement data to teacher preparation programs.
- *Licensure test requirements.* However, Tennessee has taken a step backward in ensuring teachers are ready for the classroom with new licensure requirements that allow several years to pass required tests.

Tennessee has evaluations of teacher effectiveness and ties them to other teacher policies:

- *Teacher evaluation.* Tennessee is one of 27 states that require annual evaluations for all teachers and is one of 16 states that require student achievement/growth to be the most important criterion in evaluating teacher effectiveness.
- *Tying performance to tenure.* Evidence of student learning is the preponderant criterion used to grant teachers tenure in Tennessee. Tennessee is one of just nine states that have such a requirement.
- *Dismissing ineffective teachers.* Twenty-eight states, including Tennessee, articulate that classroom ineffectiveness is grounds for a teacher's dismissal.
- *Prohibiting "last in, first out" policies.* Tennessee is one of 19 states that consider teacher performance (rather than only seniority) in making layoff decisions.

There has been much less progress nationwide on policies aimed at recruiting and retaining the best teachers in the profession across the states, but Tennessee has taken some steps:

- *Professional support.* Tennessee requires that all teachers receive feedback on their evaluations and directs districts to connect professional development to teachers' identified needs. However, the state does not require improvement plans for teachers who receive poor evaluations.
- *Support for performance pay.* Tennessee support performance bonuses as well as differential pay for teachers in high-needs schools and subject area shortages. Unfortunately, however, Tennessee is one of 15 that continue to require increased pay for teachers earning advanced degrees, even though there is no evidence that such degrees have an impact on teacher effectiveness.
- *Alternate routes.* Tennessee could do more to ensure the quality of all alternate routes in the state.

The *2015 Tennessee 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.

	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