



National Council on Teacher Quality

For Immediate Release

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NCTQ Releases New Report: What Teacher Preparation Programs Teach About K-12 Assessment

The National Council on Teacher Quality's evaluation of 48 teacher preparation programs indicates that only three prepare their candidates to meet routine job expectations regarding use of student performance data to improve instruction.

Only 3 programs rated as adequate.

10 rated as partially adequate.

35 rated as inadequate

Washington, D.C. – Today, the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), a nonpartisan research and advocacy group, released a report that provides the most comprehensive review to date of teacher preparation in the use of data generated by assessments of student learning. Thanks to the large-scale investments federal and state governments have made over the past several decades in developing assessments and data systems, the key questions in schools and classrooms across the country have shifted from “Was the content taught?” to “How much have our students learned?” and then “How can we help our students understand what they haven’t learned?” Yet little attention has been paid to the importance of building the capacity of teachers to answer these two last questions.

The report's findings give cause for concern: At best, teacher preparation programs are providing limited training to candidates in the field of assessment and data use. As a result, schools end up employing teachers who lack the training necessary to make use of information increasingly at hand.

The report evaluated a representative sample of 48 undergraduate elementary and secondary teacher preparation programs in nine states. It found that too few provide the foundation that they should in three critical domains of assessment: *assessment literacy* (with "assessment" broadly construed to include a range from informal checks of understanding using classroom exercises to formal, standardized tests), *analytic skills* (how to interpret and explain patterns in assessment data) and *instructional decision-making* (how to improve instruction based on assessment results).

"What we found is that when it comes to assessment, the teacher preparation programs focus on preparing teacher candidates for an insular environment -- the classroom," said Kate Walsh, NCTQ President. "Today's schools demand teachers who can comfortably understand and utilize -- both individually and collaboratively -- a much broader range of classroom and standardized data, whether it relates to their own students or all students in their school. Preparing them for anything less is unfair to teacher candidates as well as to the many students they plan to teach -- and that needs to change."

Key findings include:

- Because instruction is focused too exclusively on classroom assessment and neglects to address standardized tests, only 21 percent of the programs in the sample cover assessment literacy topics adequately.
- Because candidates practice analyzing assessment results largely through independent projects using classroom data and there is little emphasis on the type of collaborative analysis now common in schools, only 2 percent of the programs in the sample cover analytical skills adequately.
- While virtually all programs provide a foundation in instructional decision-making by addressing "formative assessment" (sometimes called "assessment for

learning”), no program thoroughly explores this domain with deeper, subject-specific analysis of assessment results for their instructional implications.

In the report, NCTQ also makes a number of policy recommendations, encouraging:

- The federal government to invest in research both about how use of data can improve instruction and how to better prepare teachers to use data.
- The states and the federal government to build teacher capacity by channeling an increased share of resources for education data systems to teacher candidate training.
- Districts to take steps to ensure that programs from which they hire produce more assessment-savvy teachers.
- Foundations to develop model exercises and curricula similar to the type now used to train practicing teachers and administrators who – unlike teacher educators – have ready access to extensive data inventories.

A second and larger report on assessment preparation, including evaluations of a total of approximately 200 programs housed in 100 institutions in 25 states, will be released in May 2012.

To view this report, go to

http://www.nctq.org/p/edschools/docs/assessment_publication.pdf or contact Lisa Cohen at: (310) 395-2544 or lisa@lisacohen.org.

The National Council on Teacher Quality is a non-profit organization comprised of reform-minded Democrats, Republicans and Independents. The organization supports reforms in a broad range of teacher policies and seeks to lend transparency and accountability to the three institutions that have the greatest impact on teacher quality: state governments, colleges of education and teachers unions.