



For Immediate Release

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**PENNSYLVANIA KEEPS PACE WITH OTHER STATES ON TEACHER  
EFFECTIVENESS POLICY OVERALL; BUT STATE EFFORTS ARE UNEVEN**

***New Report from NCTQ Finds Pennsylvania Could Do More to Consistently Enact  
Policies that Support Effective Teaching; State Earns C-***

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 Pennsylvania.

***Yearbook Goal Areas***

**Pennsylvania's 2015  
Grades**

Area 1: Delivering Well-Prepared Teachers	C-
Area 2: Expanding the Teacher Pool	C+
Area 3: Identifying Effective Teachers	C+
Area 4: Retaining Effective Teachers	D
Area 5: Dismissing Ineffective Teachers	D-
Average Overall Grade	C-

Pennsylvania received an overall grade of C-, which is the same as the average grade for 2015 across all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

NCTQ Senior Vice President for State and District Policy Sandi Jacobs said, "Nationwide the glass is really starting to look half full on states efforts to drive teacher effectiveness through smarter policy. Like most states, however, Pennsylvania has plenty of room for improvement."

**On teacher preparation and licensing, Pennsylvania could do more to help ensure teachers are prepared for the demands of college- and career-readiness standards:**

- *Admission requirements.* Pennsylvania requires that teacher preparation programs admit candidates with strong academic records.
- *Middle school licensing.* Pennsylvania does not offer a generalist K-8 license and requires middle school teachers to pass content tests in every subject they are licensed to teach.
- *Special education.* Pennsylvania is one of 14 states that, appropriately, do not offer a K-12 general license for special education teachers, a license that wrongly presumes special education teachers do not need to master grade and subject specific content knowledge.
- *Elementary teacher preparation.* However, Pennsylvania's content tests for elementary school licensure do not provide separate passing scores for each subject which makes it difficult to ensure teachers know all of the core content they will teach.
- *Science of reading.* Pennsylvania does not require elementary teachers to demonstrate knowledge of effective reading instruction.
- *Secondary teacher preparation.* Pennsylvania has significant loopholes in secondary teacher licensing.

**Pennsylvania requires evaluations of teacher effectiveness, and performance informs some policy and practice:**

- *Teacher evaluation.* Pennsylvania requires annual evaluations and is one of 16 states requiring student achievement/growth to be included as the most important criterion in teacher evaluations.
- *Dismissing ineffective teachers.* Pennsylvania articulates that classroom ineffectiveness is grounds for a teacher's dismissal.
- *Tying performance to tenure.* However, tenure decisions in Pennsylvania are made virtually automatically after three years, with no consideration of teacher performance.

- *Prohibiting “last in, first out” policies.* Pennsylvania does not require districts to consider teacher performance (rather than only seniority) in making layoff decisions.

**Pennsylvania has plenty of room to improve on several other critical teacher policy fronts:**

- *Professional support.* While Pennsylvania requires that teachers with poor ratings have improvement plans, the state does not require that all teachers receive feedback on their evaluations or require evaluations to inform professional development for all teachers.
- *Teacher prep accountability.* Pennsylvania collects some performance data on teacher preparation programs but does not set minimum program performance standards and does not connect student achievement to teacher preparation programs.
- *Support for performance pay.* Pennsylvania does not support performance pay or differential pay for teachers in high-need schools or shortage subject areas.
- *Alternate routes.* Pennsylvania’s alternate routes to certification are in need of significant improvement.

The *2015 Pennsylvania 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 *State Teacher Policy Yearbook* is funded by private foundations across the United States, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, The Joyce Foundation and The Walton Family Foundation. NCTQ accepts no funding from the federal government.

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).