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Most teacher preparation programs failing to make grade: report

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Only seven percent of the more than 1,600 teacher preparation programs evaluated by a group pushing for improvement in the quality of such programs nationwide earned the group's "Top Ranked" status in its latest assessment.

The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), which describes itself as "a policy and research organization dedicated to ensuring every classroom is led by a quality teacher," released its *2014 Teacher Prep Review* Tuesday.

"With only 1 in 15 programs providing first-year teachers with solid preparation, it is clear we, as a nation, have a long way to go if we are going to do right by teachers as well as their students," NCTC President Kate Walsh observed.

Three out of four programs surveyed fail to insist in their admissions processes that applicants meet even modest academic standards (a 3.0 GPA or scoring above the 50th percentile on the ACT or SAT).

Still, the NCTQ noted, "There are encouraging signs since last year's *Review*: Nine institutions moved swiftly to raise their admissions standards to meet the NCTQ recommendations. In the absence of institutions voluntarily raising standards, a number of states, such as Rhode Island and Delaware, are moving to impose higher admissions standards on their institutions. Importantly, nearly 100 institutions were commended by NCTQ for not only being appropriately selective, but also for achieving strong diversity among admitted students."

Overall, said the NCTQ, "The *Review* uncovers early evidence that teacher preparation programs are beginning to make changes. It arrives at a time of heightened, unprecedented activity across the nation to improve teacher preparation."

Most states - 33 - had at least one Top Ranked program, with 26 elementary and 81 secondary programs earning the gold star. "Fortunately," the group said, "nearly two-thirds of the Top Ranked programs (68) are public, ensuring that aspiring teachers have high-quality, low cost pathways into teaching."

The NCTC highlighted what it sees as particularly encouraging developments:

- 33 states have recently made significant changes in their accountability policies for teacher preparation programs and seven more have taken steps forward
- A new consortium of seven states organized by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is working to beef up program approval standards
- The Obama Administration has signaled it intends to strengthen accountability steps for teacher preparation and that it will earmark millions of dollars in federal grants to only high-performing programs

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-- A new professional organization, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), is beginning to accredit programs using much stricter standards

-- And more districts are pledging to make use of program data, including the NCTQ findings, to improve their hiring of new teachers and pressure programs to provide the training needed to teach successfully in public schools.

Among the programs in the "Top Ranked" level:

For elementary school teachers:

1. Dallas Baptist University (TX) (undergraduate)
2. Texas A&M University (undergraduate)
3. Ohio State University (graduate)

For secondary school teachers:

1. Western Governors University (UT) (undergraduate)
2. Lipscomb University (TN) (undergraduate)
3. Fort Hays State University (KS) (undergraduate)

Three institutions had three Top Ranked programs: CUNY - Hunter College, Miami University of Ohio and the University of Houston. Seven others have two Top Ranked programs: Arizona State University, Dallas Baptist University, Eastern Connecticut University, Fort Hays State University, Lipscomb University, Ohio State University and Western Governors University. States with the largest number of Top Ranked institutions include Ohio, Tennessee and Texas.

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