

NCTQ Teacher Prep Review 2014

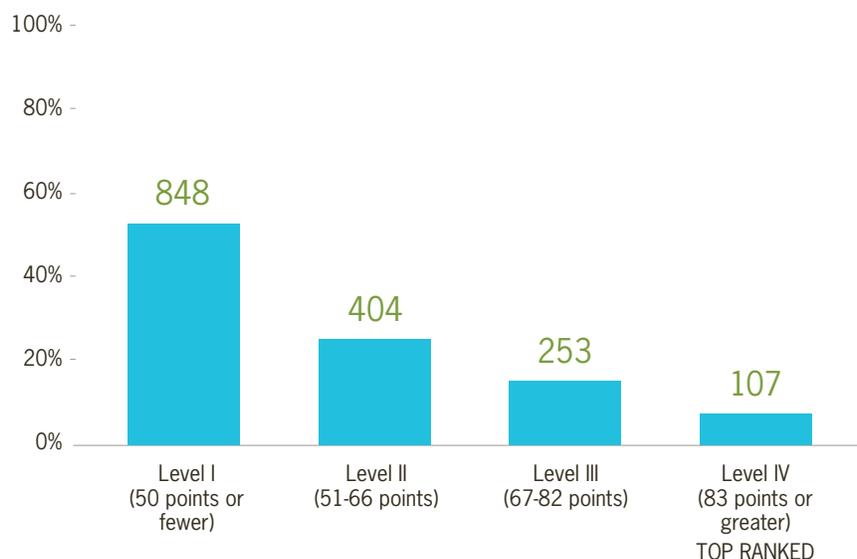
Executive Summary

Ever so slowly, the United States is taking a harder look at how its teacher preparation schools are improving the quality of the teachers they produce.

The signs are everywhere — from proposed federal action to state legislatures and school boards passing new oversight laws and regulations, to a newly marshaled push for stronger accreditation by the institutions themselves. The country is finally waking up to the critical importance of improving teacher preparation quality to produce more classroom-ready teachers.

But as *NCTQ Teacher Prep Review 2014* shows, far more needs to be done to expand the pool of teachers properly prepared to meet the challenges of the contemporary American classroom. In the graphic below, the mountain of low achievers on the left overshadows the sliver of high achievers on the right, making the distribution resemble a steep dive more than a bell curve. Still, an upsurge in quality has begun. It is good news indeed to be able to report some movement, however spotty, given the many attempts to improve teacher preparation that never even got off the ground.

Fig. 1 Distribution of raw scores of elementary and secondary teacher preparation programs (N=1612)



This graph displays the raw scores of the 1,612 ranked elementary and secondary teacher preparation programs in the Review. The highest score is 121 on a 125-point scale. Fifty-three percent of programs fall within Level I in terms of performance (≤ 50 on a 125-point scale).

The *Review 2014* builds on last year's report in several significant ways. First, it is bigger. The number of institutions whose programs we can evaluate on the core components of teacher preparation — selection, content preparation and practice teaching — has increased by almost 40 percent, to **836 institutions** housing at least one ranked program, compared with 608 institutions last year. The increase is due less to greater institutional cooperation than to our own efforts to secure course materials.

Next, we have discarded our system of *ratings* for a system of *rankings* to make it easier for users of our results to assess relative performance of programs in a crowded market. There are now both national rankings and regional rankings, out of consideration for aspiring teachers' tendency to attend teacher preparation programs relatively close to home.

Also this year, we include an analysis of alternative certification programs, a popular but poorly understood pathway into the classroom that supplies one of every five teachers in the United States. We begin this pilot effort with 85 programs not managed by any higher education institution also offering traditional programs, as these programs differ greatly from the traditional programs on which we focus much of our attention. Because alternative certification is particularly popular in Texas, the only state which permits for-profit companies to run programs, almost half of the sample providers are located in Texas. And in this first foray, we chose to evaluate secondary programs, as the original vision of alternative certification was to give high school students the benefits of teachers with talent and in-depth subject matter knowledge who chose not to go through an education school. The results of this analysis should put to rest concerns that NCTQ is attempting to dismantle traditional teacher preparation in favor of alternative approaches. If anything, our analysis of secondary programs shows that alternative certification is generally more broken than its traditional counterpart. These independent programs typically have very low admission standards, do not ensure that candidates are prepared to teach every subject to which they could be assigned, and provide insufficient support to candidates as they take on full-time teaching responsibilities. Only one was eligible for our highest mark: **Teach For America, Massachusetts**.

Finally, in response to suggestions from teacher educators and K-12 educators, we have made adjustments to several of our standards: selection criteria, classroom management and student teaching.

These changes have enabled NCTQ to take a closer, more definitive look at how teacher preparation programs are refining their efforts to raise the quality of their work and of the teachers they are sending into American classrooms.

These are among the key findings:

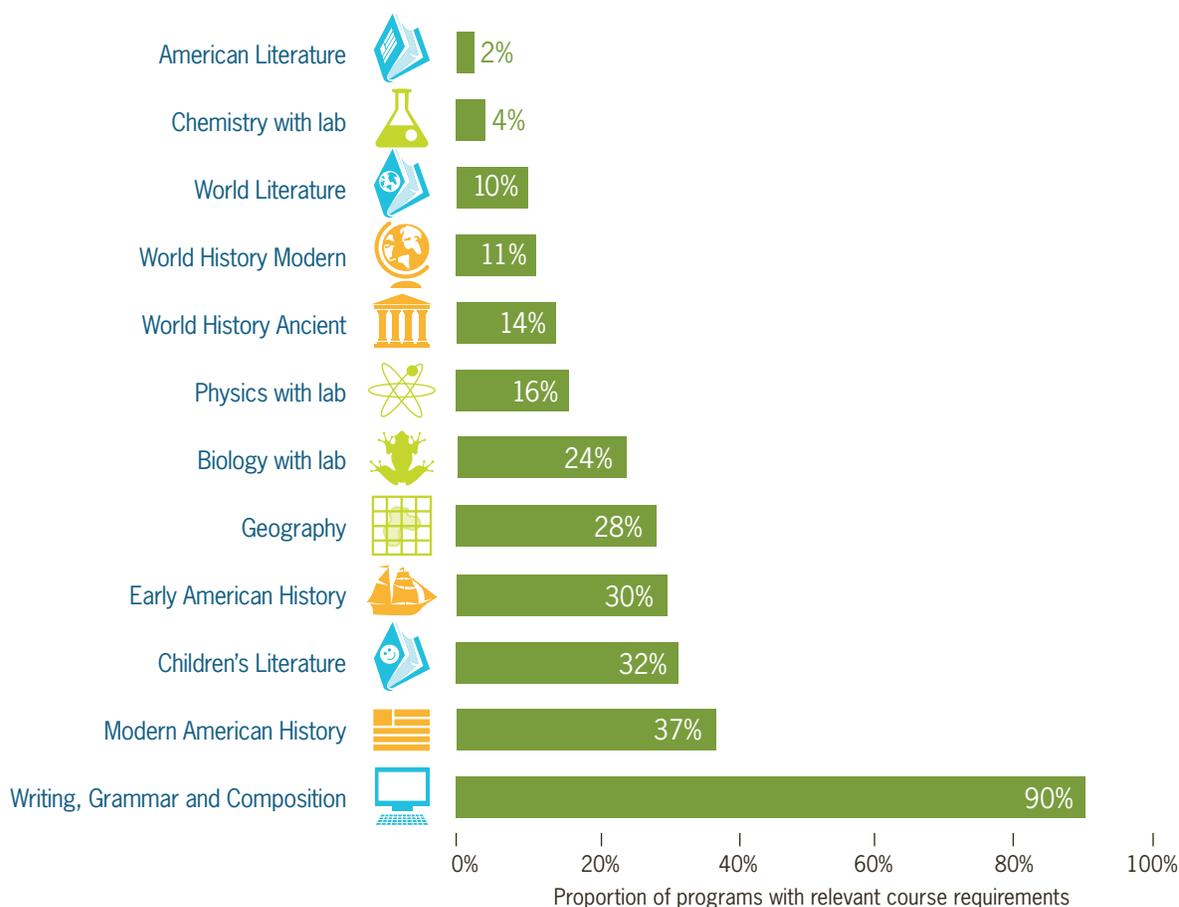
- Of the **1,668 programs** (housed in 836 institutions) ranked in the *Review*, only 26 elementary programs and 81 secondary programs make NCTQ's lists of Top Ranked programs. Seventeen states and the District of Columbia are without a Top Ranked program in either elementary or secondary education. There is much more work to do to ensure that future teachers are ready to lead the classroom when they graduate. Among the Top Ranked programs are 68 programs housed in public institutions that offer aspiring teachers an opportunity to enter the profession without overloading themselves with debt. Indeed, the fact that the Top Ranked list is dominated by institutions not traditionally considered elite or "high status" is telling. A number of programs worked hard and at lightning speed (within the context of the normal pace of higher education) to achieve Top Ranked status this year. **Ohio, Tennessee and Texas** — the last state the site of our first comprehensive statewide study on teacher prep in 2010 — are the three states with the most Top Ranked programs.
- Elementary programs continue to be far weaker than their secondary counterparts, with 1.7 times as many elementary programs as secondary programs found to be failing. Their poorer performance speaks to both the



specialized training elementary teachers need and its continuing neglect. We are disheartened that the teacher education field continues to disregard scientifically based methods of reading instruction: coursework in just 17 percent of programs equips their elementary and special education teachers to use all five fundamental components of reading instruction, helping to explain why such a large proportion of American school children (30 percent) never learn to read beyond a basic level. (However, we are gratified to report that of programs choosing to submit materials to NCTQ for the second edition, 38 percent improved their score on the Early Reading Standard.)

- The field also maintains a scattershot approach to mathematics preparation: 23 states cannot boast a single program that provides solid math preparation resembling the practices of high-performing nations. Looking across 907 undergraduate and graduate elementary programs, nearly half (47 percent) fail to ensure that teacher candidates are capable STEM instructors: these programs' requirements for candidates include little or no elementary math coursework and the programs also do not require that candidates take a single basic science course (with most giving candidates free rein to choose from a long list of narrowly focused or irrelevant electives).
- District superintendents tell us that elementary teachers simply don't know the core subjects of the elementary curriculum. We think it's no wonder that there's a "capacity gap" given the lack of guidance given to candidates about the content foundation they need before they even begin professional training.

Fig. 2 Is Teacher Preparation "College and Career Ready"?
(N=885 undergraduate elementary programs)



New college and career ready student learning standards require broad content knowledge of elementary teachers. Yet few programs require teacher candidates to demonstrate upon admission (through either testing or coursework) that they will be able to meet these higher demands, something we term a very real and disturbing "Capacity Gap."

- Three out of four programs fail even to insist that applicants be in the top half of the college-going population, a modest academic standard. One encouraging sign: nine institutions raised their admission standards after the release of the first edition of the *Review*. This issue is also being tackled at the state level, with two states — **Delaware** and **Rhode Island** — requiring their programs to raise the bar on admissions. The related situation of a low bar for performance will be addressed in more depth this fall, when NCTQ releases a new examination of how common it is for candidates to complete teacher preparation earning much higher grades than their peers on the same campus.
- Ten institutions had *both* an elementary and a secondary program on the lists of Top Ranked programs: **Arizona State University**, **Miami University of Ohio**, **CUNY-Hunter College** (NY), **Dallas Baptist University** (TX), **Eastern Connecticut State University**, **Fort Hays State University** (KS), **Lipscomb University** (TN), **Ohio State University**, the **University of Houston** (TX), and **Western Governors University** (UT).
- The proportion of programs that have all of the basic components in place for a strong student teaching experience fell to 5 percent from 7 percent last year, with performance suffering after an adjustment was made to correct a potential loophole in the methodology of evaluations in the *Review's* 2013 edition. Student teaching, which may be the most important element of teacher preparation, is the NCTQ standard that institutions struggle most to meet, particularly around ensuring that student teachers are placed with effective teachers.
- The most promising sign of progress is in the training teacher candidates receive in how to manage classrooms — an area that new teachers perennially describe as their most difficult challenge. Of the institutions that submitted new materials and asked to be rescored for this edition, 15 percent made important improvements to the guidance they give to their student teachers about how to set rules, how to minimize classroom disruption, and how to apply consequences to misbehavior fairly and effectively.

By applying the new ranking system for preparing teachers, NCTQ's *Review 2014* determined that **Dallas Baptist University** (TX) houses the top elementary program, while the top program in the nation for training secondary teachers is at **Western Governors University** (UT), which had nearly perfect scores across the board and whose online training is accessible to any aspiring teacher in the nation. Primarily an online program, Western Governors University places staff in every state who carefully oversee the delivery of a strong student teaching experience. The commitment and focus on the part of these institutions, and indeed all of the institutions with Top Ranked programs, serves as a tremendous source of optimism that it is possible for all new teachers to receive the preparation needed to be classroom ready on day one.

The National Council on Teacher Quality advocates for reforms in a broad range of teacher policies at the federal, state and local levels to increase the number of effective teachers. In particular, we recognize the absence of much of the evidence necessary to make a compelling case for change and seek to fill that void with a research agenda that has direct and practical implications for policy. We are committed to transparency and increasing public awareness about the four sets of institutions that have the greatest impact on teacher quality: states, teacher preparation programs, school districts and teachers unions.



The Top Ten programs in each category are as follows:

Elementary

1. **DALLAS BAPTIST UNIVERSITY** (undergraduate)
2. **TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY** (undergraduate)
3. **OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY** (graduate)
4. **NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA** (tie; undergraduate)
4. **UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON** (tie; undergraduate)
6. **LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY** (undergraduate)
7. **UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON** (undergraduate)
8. **MIAMI UNIVERSITY OF OHIO** (tie; undergraduate)
8. **EASTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY** (tie; undergraduate)
10. **UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN** (undergraduate)

Secondary

1. **WESTERN GOVERNORS UNIVERSITY** (undergraduate)
2. **LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY** (undergraduate)
3. **FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY** (undergraduate)
4. **COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY** (graduate)
5. **FURMAN UNIVERSITY** (tie; undergraduate)
5. **HENDERSON STATE UNIVERSITY** (tie; undergraduate)
5. **MIAMI UNIVERSITY OF OHIO** (tie; undergraduate)
8. **UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO** (tie; graduate)
8. **UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA IRVINE** (tie; undergraduate)
8. **CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK – HUNTER COLLEGE** (tie; graduate)
8. **MIAMI UNIVERSITY OF OHIO** (tie; graduate)



National Council on Teacher Quality

1120 G Street, NW, Suite 800
Washington, D.C. 20005
Tel: 202 393-0020 Fax: 202 393-0095
Web: www.nctq.org

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