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July 25, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Legislative Education Study Committee

FR: Pamela Herman, J.D.

RE: **NATIONAL COUNCIL ON TEACHER QUALITY: *STUDENT TEACHING IN THE UNITED STATES***

On July 21, 2011, the National Council on Teacher Quality[1] (NCTQ) released a report entitled *Student Teaching in the United States* (see Attachment 1, "Student Teaching in the United States, Executive Summary"). NCTQ states that it undertook a review of student teaching in an effort to understand what makes a student teaching experience strong. The review covered 134 state-approved undergraduate student teaching programs for elementary education candidates, selecting at least one institution from each state. From New Mexico, the only institution included in the review was New Mexico State University (NMSU).

Findings of the Study

Overall findings of the study were as follows:

- there are neither enough qualified cooperating teachers nor is there the need for new elementary teachers to justify the high numbers of student teachers that institutions insist on placing each year;
- institutions lack clear, rigorous criteria for the selection of cooperating teachers—either on paper or in practice;

[1] According to its website, NCTQ is a nonprofit, foundation-funded organization created in 2000 to "provide an alternative national voice to existing teacher organizations and build a case for a comprehensive reform agenda that would challenge the current structure and regulation of the teaching profession."

- institutions convey a strong sense of powerlessness in their relationships with school districts; and
- institutions do not take advantage of important opportunities to provide guidance and feedback to student teachers.

As to the programs themselves, the study includes one summary rating for each institution:

- 10 programs (7.5 percent) were rated as having "model" design;
- 24 programs (17.9 percent) were rated "good";
- 66 programs (49.2 percent), including NMSU, were rated "weak"; and
- 34 programs (25.4 percent) were rated "poor."

How the Review Was Conducted

According to NCTQ:

- the two-year review process began with the collection of a range of documents from each of the programs;
- information from the documents was augmented by several stages of feedback from officials at the programs; a survey of school principals who receive their student teachers, and five case studies based on campus visits;
- the standards against which the programs were measured were formulated by NCTQ with help from an advisory group of teachers and administrators, teacher trainers, researchers and academics described by NCTQ as "exemplary"; and
- all 134 programs were screened based on five standards deemed by NCTQ to be the most critical, and a subsample of 32 institutions were then selected for evaluation on 14 additional standards (see Attachment 1, page 7).

The five standards against which all programs were reviewed were:

1. The student teaching experience, which should last no less than 10 weeks, should require no less than five weeks at a single local school site and represent a full-time commitment.
2. The teacher preparation program must select the cooperating teacher for each student teacher placement.
3. The cooperating teacher candidate must have at least three years of teaching experience.
4. The cooperating teacher candidate must have the capacity to have a positive impact on student learning.
5. The cooperating teacher candidate must have the capacity to mentor an adult, with skills in observation, providing feedback, holding professional conversations, and working collaboratively.

NCTQ also conducted a literature review of educational research to identify the features of the student teaching experience that makes a teacher more effective in the classroom, as well as a review of regulatory requirements for student teaching programs in 50 states and the District of Columbia (see Attachment 2, "What states require on student teaching").

A copy of the full report is available at http://www.nctq.org/edschoolreports/studentteaching/.

National Council on Teacher Quality

Student Teaching in the United States

Executive Summary

Student teaching serves as the real-world classroom trial for nearly 200,000 teacher candidates each year. During a typical semester-long clinical experience, student teachers must synthesize everything they have learned about collecting or developing instructional materials, teaching a lesson, guiding small-group activities, establishing and maintaining classroom order, interacting with faculty and parents and even taking on lunchroom and playground duties. Passing (or failing) student teaching determines whether an individual will be recommended for certification as a licensed teacher.

Few dispute the potential value of student teaching. Even alternate pathways to the profession, often criticized for taking too many shortcuts, generally try to provide their teaching candidates with some kind of student teaching experience, however abbreviated. Surveys of new teachers suggest that student teaching is the most important part of their teacher training experience.

The stakes in student teaching are high. Student teaching will color teachers' perceptions of students' capacity to learn, shape their expectations for their own performance and help determine the type of school in which they will choose to teach. A mediocre student teaching experience, let alone a disastrous one, can never be undone. Conversely, strong student teaching experiences have the power to dramatically improve the overall quality of the profession, allowing student teachers to thrive under the wings of exceptional classroom teachers and flattening the sharp learning curve of the first year teacher.

NCTQ standards for student teaching

In an effort to understand what makes a student teaching experience strong, the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) has undertaken this comprehensive review. Over a period of two years, we examined the student teaching programs of a stratified random sample of 134 higher education institutions across the United States, with at least one institution in each state. We began by collecting an extensive range of documents that would inform the structure of these programs, amplified by several stages of feedback from officials in the institutions themselves, a survey of local school principals who receive student teachers from the selected programs and five case studies based on campus visits. Together, these research strategies provide a comprehensive policy and on-the-ground picture of the student teaching landscape.

An advisory group comprising exemplary teachers and administrators, teacher trainers, researchers and academics helped us to synthesize characteristics that are common to strong student teaching programs. Having reviewed the existing standards for evaluating the quality of a teacher preparation program and how they fell short, we made it a priority to develop 19 new standards that were more specific and objectively measurable. [See the full complement of standards on page 7.]

Model Designs

Ten of the institutions* in our sample of 134 institutions have "model" designs because they require that cooperating teachers are fully qualified and also actively participate in the selection of cooperating teachers.

* The University of Minnesota at Morris declined NCTQ's invitation to display its logo.

The application of our standards to the 134 institutions provides an in-depth preview of NCTQ's national review, which is currently being conducted in partnership with *U.S. News & World Report* and which devotes substantial attention to the quality of student teaching programs. The goal of that larger review is to provide future teachers, district superintendents and policy makers with information about how well institutions are preparing teachers for success in the classroom, and, accordingly, evaluation of practice teaching will be a critical piece of that review.

Key Findings

In our review of student teaching we found evidence of some strong programs, including: **Bridgewater College**, **Cardinal Stritch University**, **Colorado Christian University**, **Florida Gulf Coast University**, **Furman University**, **Lake Superior State University**, **Oklahoma State University**, the **University of Hawaii at Manoa**, the **University of Minnesota at Morris** and **Wheelock College**. However most of the institutions we reviewed were generally weak, with fully 25 percent falling into the most deficient category.

Overall, our analysis raises some serious concerns about whether student teaching, examined in the aggregate, is adding nearly the value that it can and should. Looking at student teaching practices across institutions, four findings stand out:

1. There are neither enough qualified cooperating teachers nor is there the need for new elementary teachers to justify the high numbers of student teachers that institutions insist on placing each year.

Institutions are placing too many student teachers each year and consequently recommending far too many new candidates for certification, *more than twice as many as will be hired upon graduation*. Many students who go through teacher preparation programs have no intention of ever becoming a teacher, change their minds about teaching at some point or cannot get hired. This attrition rate might not be considered of public consequence except for the deleterious impact overproduction likely has on the quality of the all-important student teaching experience.

2. Institutions lack clear, rigorous criteria for the selection of cooperating teachers—either on paper or in practice.

While nearly all of the institutions we reviewed set various criteria for the selection of cooperating teachers, most often these criteria do not adequately address either the need for the teachers to be effective instructors or to be good at mentoring. *Three out of four institutions we reviewed fail to require cooperating teachers to be effective instructors. Nearly two out of three fail to assess the mentoring capacity of a teacher (or at least to require any mentoring training).*

By our conservative estimates, there just aren't enough elementary classroom teachers who possess the necessary qualifications to serve as cooperating teachers, that is: 1) they are themselves not brand new; 2) they are effective instructors; and 3) they have the capacity to mentor other adults. Therefore, instead of insisting that only the very best teachers train the next generation of teachers, institutions are routinely lowering their standards for placements within school districts. The problem is aggravated by institutions making it all too easy first to be admitted into a teacher preparation program and then to progress successfully through coursework, leading scarce qualified teachers, and their principals, to be reluctant to take on unacceptably weak student teachers who might imperil their students' progress.

3. Institutions convey a strong sense of powerlessness in their relationships with school districts.

The dependence of institutions on school districts to provide student teaching placements creates an imbalance of power between school districts and institutions. Nowhere is the sense of institutions' powerlessness more apparent than in the fact that *less than half of the institutions in the review assert their proper role in the selection of cooperating teachers*, being unwilling to put demands on local school districts. Only 7 percent of institutions in our sample insist that the bar be set high for determining who is qualified to serve as a cooperating teacher and then play a role sufficient to ensure that the bar is met.

4. Institutions do not take advantage of important opportunities to provide guidance and feedback to student teachers.

First-year teachers are notoriously and almost uniformly ineffective. It therefore stands to reason that student teachers are even weaker. The process of helping these teacher candidates become stronger instructors can be hastened with ample and expert advice both from cooperating teachers and from supervisors who periodically visit, observe and conference with the student teacher. But our analysis found little evidence that student teachers get this level of support. In most institutions supervisors are not expected to observe and evaluate student teachers with sufficient frequency, and about a third do not require both conferencing and written feedback after each visit. Most instruments for evaluation lack clear organizing principles and consistency and cannot provide adequate feedback.

NCTQ recommendations

A combination of strong coursework and clinical practice should deliver competent and confident novice teachers. However, given the weaknesses documented in this study, simply doing more of the same, particularly in the area of clinical practice, is not a solution. For that reason, suggestions ranging from lengthening the student teaching experience to making clinical practice the centerpiece of the entire teacher preparation curriculum

Q: What criteria are used to select cooperating teachers?

Responses from four principals:

- *They let me chose who I want.*
- *Teacher candidates come to the building and request placements …Sometimes it is like they are begging for a placement.*
- *I don't select. Our central office personnel keep track of who has taken the required coursework for this and they assign on the basis of grade level requests by student teachers and availability of supervising teachers.*
- *We really run the show. The university doesn't give us any information beyond what placement they are looking for.*

are in themselves insufficient. Rather than leveraging real improvement in candidates' professional capacities, these ideas could simply mean that more preparation time is spent unproductively.

Instead, institutions need to substantially improve student teaching within its current structure, primarily by ensuring that smaller cohorts of more qualified teacher candidates are mentored by higher-quality cooperating teachers and aligning their programs with measurable standards such as those offered here.

The results of this study show that while many institutions aim for quality, something is often missing in the way in which student teaching programs are carried out. A university may make significant efforts to recruit a group of highly-qualified cooperating teachers, but also accept a number of unscreened volunteers. Placing large numbers of student teachers can be an obstacle to improvement, and we therefore offer the following strategies to reduce this problem.

1. Teacher preparation programs need to shrink the pipeline of elementary teachers into the profession.

We pay a heavy price for producing many more elementary teachers each year than the nation's public schools actually need. There are simply not enough high-quality classroom teachers willing to serve as appropriate mentors to the next generation of teachers. In addition to the need for institutions to raise their admission standards and more actively screen out inadequate candidates before they are permitted to student teach, the student teaching experience itself should be managed by a far more coherent evaluation process, certifying that a candidate is truly ready for the classroom.

2. Teacher preparation programs need to focus the student teaching placement process on the selection of exemplary cooperating teachers.

A teacher who is only average is simply not good enough to serve as a cooperating teacher. Only strong teachers should be allowed to mentor student teachers. We recommend that student teachers are placed with only those teachers in the top quartile of performance, as assessed by their school principals and objective measures of student learning, and all institutions should explicitly communicate that message. Currently, **Florida** is the only state that explicitly requires that student performance be considered when assessing whether a teacher is qualified to be a cooperating teacher.

3. Districts need to place limits on the number of student teachers districts can reasonably prepare each year.

School districts need to calculate their "clinical capacity," that is, the numbers of teacher candidates they can responsibly train each year. To do so, they need to quantify the number of teachers who have at least three years of experience, are high performers (roughly the top 25 percent of teachers as judged by principal evaluations and student learning measures) and either have strong mentoring skills or can be trained in how to be a good adult mentor.

4. Districts and teacher preparation programs need to make the role of cooperating teacher a more attractive proposition to classroom teachers.

While some cooperating teachers may abuse the student teaching arrangement to reduce their own work, the responsibilities of hosting a student teacher generally add to a teacher's workload. Yet if cooperating teachers are compensated at all for this additional work, it is with a tiny stipend, usually no more than $250 and generally much less. It would be difficult to pay cooperating teachers what they are really worth, but institutions must direct both more resources and recognition to boost the quantity of qualified cooperating teachers.

Along with compensation and prestige, it also matters whether the cooperating teacher is confident that the incoming student teacher will be a positive addition to the classroom and is given any real say in whether a student teacher passes or fails the student teaching experience. *For the process to be worthwhile, effective mentor teachers need to be empowered to have meaningful input.*

Conclusion

The teaching profession is in a period of change. With new Common Core state standards adopted by 40 states and a nationwide call for teachers' performance to be evaluated—at least in part—based on the performance of their students, teachers are being held to increasingly rigorous standards. Teacher candidates deserve student teaching programs that prepare them. While we certainly identified some exemplary institutions, this review suggests that all too often, too many elements of student teaching are left to chance.

Copies of the full report, including the full complement of NCTQ Student Teaching Standards, can be found at www.nctq.org. Exemplar materials from institutions included in the study and additional materials developed by NCTQ can be found in the "Key Ingredients for Strong Student Teaching," on our website.

Performance of institutions

State	Insitution	Rating
Alabama	Alabama A&M University	Weak
	Concordia College Selma	Weak
Alaska	Alaska Pacific University	Weak
	University of Alaska Anchorage	Weak
	University of Alaska-Southeast	Poor
Arizona	University of Arizona	Good
	Arizona State University West Campus	Weak
	University of Phoenix	Poor
Arkansas	Harding University	Good
	Southern Arkansas University	Weak
	Arkansas State University	Poor
California	California State University, Long Beach	Good
Colorado	**Colorado Christian University**	**Model**
	University of Northern Colorado	Poor
	Western State College of Colorado	Poor
Connecticut	Eastern Connecticut State University	Good
	Sacred Heart University	Weak
	Southern Connecticut State University	Weak
District of Columbia	University of the District of Columbia	Weak
Delaware	Delaware State University	Good
	University of Delaware	Weak
Florida	**Florida Gulf Coast University**	**Model**
	Florida Southern College	Good
	University of Central Florida	Good
Georgia	Brenau University	Good
	Georgia Southern University	Good
	Columbus State University	Poor
Hawaii	**University of Hawaii at Manoa**	**Model**
	Chaminade University	Weak
Idaho	Brigham Young University-Idaho	Weak
	Idaho State University	Weak
	Boise State University	Poor
Illinois	University of Illinois at Springfield	Good
	Northeastern Illinois University	Weak
	Chicago State University	Poor
	National-Louis University*	Poor
Indiana	Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis	Weak
	Purdue University Calumet	Weak
	Valparaiso University	Poor
Iowa	Luther College	Weak
	University of Northern Iowa	Weak
	Iowa State University	Poor
Kansas	Kansas State University	Weak
	Washburn University	Weak
	Tabor College	Poor
Kentucky	Midway College	Good
	Kentucky State University	Weak
	Murray State University	Weak
Louisiana	Louisiana State University	Weak
	Northwestern State University of Louisiana	Weak
Maine	Thomas College	Weak
	University of Maine at Machias	Weak
	University of Maine	Poor
Maryland	University of Maryland, Baltimore County*	Good
	Mount St. Mary's University	Weak
	Salisbury University	Weak
Massachusetts	**Wheelock College**	**Model**
	Bridgewater State University	Weak
Michigan	**Lake Superior State University**	**Model**
	Western Michigan University	Weak
	Hope College	Poor
Minnesota	**University of Minnesota at Morris**	**Model**
	St. Cloud State University	Weak
	Crown College*	Weak
Mississippi	Mississippi College	Good
	University of Southern Mississippi	Good
	Mississippi Valley State University	Poor
Missouri	College of the Ozarks	Good
	Missouri Western State University*	Weak
	Missouri State University	Poor
Montana	Rocky Mountain College	Weak
	Montana State University	Poor
	University of Montana Western	Poor
Nebraska	Creighton University	Poor
	University of Nebraska-Lincoln	Poor
	Wayne State College	Poor
Nevada	Great Basin College	Weak
	University of Nevada, Las Vegas	Poor
New Hampshire	Plymouth State University	Good
	Keene State College	Weak
New Jersey	Montclair State University*	Weak
	New Jersey City University	Weak
	Caldwell College	Poor
New Mexico	New Mexico State University	Weak
New York	CUNY Lehman	Weak
	New York University*	Weak
	SUNY Cortland	Weak
North Carolina	University of North Carolina-Charlotte	Good
	Wake Forest University	Good
North Dakota	Mayville State University	Good
	University of Mary	Weak
	University of North Dakota	Weak
Ohio	Youngstown State University	Weak
	Ohio University	Poor
Oklahoma	**Oklahoma State University**	**Model**
	Northwestern Oklahoma State University	Poor
	Oral Roberts University	Poor
Oregon	Linfield College	Weak
	Eastern Oregon University	Poor
Pennsylvania	Drexel University*	Weak
	Mansfield University of Pennsylvania	Poor
	West Chester University	Poor
Rhode Island	University of Rhode Island	Good
	Rhode Island College	Weak
	Roger Williams University	Weak
South Carolina	**Furman University**	**Model**
	South Carolina State University	Good
	Clemson University	Weak
South Dakota	Black Hills State University*	Weak
	Dakota State University	Weak
	Augustana College	Poor
Tennessee	Peabody College of Vanderbilt University	Weak
	Tennessee Technological University	Weak
Texas	University of Texas-Austin	Good
	LeTourneau University*	Weak
	Texas State University-San Marcos	Weak
Utah	Dixie State College of Utah	Weak
	Utah Valley University*	Weak
	Western Governors University	Poor
Vermont	Castleton State College	Weak
	Champlain College	Weak
	University of Vermont	Poor
Virginia	**Bridgewater College**	**Model**
	College of William and Mary	Weak
	Longwood University	Poor
Washington	Eastern Washington University	Good
	Western Washington University	Weak
West Virginia	West Virginia Wesleyan College	Good
	Marshall University	Weak
	Fairmont State University	Poor
Wisconsin	**Cardinal Stritch University**	**Model**
	University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire	Weak
	University of Wisconsin-Green Bay	Weak
Wyoming	University of Wyoming	Weak

* We were unable to determine ratings for some standards for this institution.

NCTQ Standards for Student Teaching

Length of placement; nature of commitment	1. The 10-week student teaching experience should last at least five weeks at a single local school site and represent a full-time commitment.
Role of teacher preparation program in selection of cooperating teacher	2. The teacher preparation program must select the cooperating teacher for each student teacher placement.
Qualifications of cooperating teacher	3. The cooperating teacher candidate must have at least three years of teaching experience. 4. The cooperating teacher candidate must have the capacity to have a positive impact on student learning. 5. The cooperating teacher candidate must have the capacity to mentor an adult, with skills in observation, providing feedback, holding professional conversations and working collaboratively.
Qualifications of teacher candidates for student teaching	6. Student teaching is part of a rational sequence of coursework that ensures that all methods coursework and practica precede student teaching.
Expectations for student teaching experience	7. Written expectations for competencies on which student teachers will be evaluated are clearly communicated to student teachers, cooperating teachers and supervisors. 8. Written expectations for competencies include the student teacher's analysis of student achievement using informal and formal assessments.
Schedule for observations by supervisor	9. The university supervisor should observe the student teacher's delivery of instruction at least five times at regular intervals throughout a semester-long experience. 10. Each observation should be followed by time for conferencing with written feedback aligned with identified competencies.
Culminating projects	11. The student teaching experience should include a graded, culminating project that explicitly documents the student teacher's gains on the performance expectations that were communicated at the onset of the experience.
Alignment of student teaching placement with elementary school calendar	12. Particularly for student teaching during the fall academic term, the schedule for student teaching should align with the elementary school calendar, not the calendar of the teacher preparation program.
Activities during student teaching placement	13. The student teaching experience should include a gradual increase of student teacher responsibilities, with the student teacher first closely shadowing the cooperating teacher in all professional activities and then transitioning to a more independent instructional role with daily monitoring and feedback. This expectation should be laid out explicitly in guidelines provided to the cooperating teacher, the student teacher and the supervisor. 14. The student teacher should be involved in a full range of instructional and professional activities.
Selection of supervisors	15. The process for selection of the university supervisor should consider the supervisor's instructional knowledge. 16. The university supervisor candidate must have the capacity to mentor an adult, with skills in observation, providing feedback, holding professional conversations and working collaboratively.
Evaluation for continuous improvement of cooperating teacher selection process	17. Cooperating teachers' adequacy should be evaluated by student teachers and university supervisors at the end of each semester. Data from these evaluations should be part of an established and regular review process to ensure that multiple perspectives on the student teaching experience are used to refine it and discontinue placements, if necessary.
Evaluation for continuous improvement of school selection process	18. Schools in which student teachers are placed should be evaluated by student teachers and university supervisors at the end of each semester to determine their functionality—that is, whether the school is high-performing, safe, stable, supportive and collegial. Data from this evaluation should be part of an established and regular review process to ensure that multiple perspectives on the student teaching experience are used to refine it and discontinue placements, if necessary.
Selection of placements	19. Recognizing possible geographical constraints, the teacher preparation program should have criteria favoring placement of student teachers in elementary schools in which 1) they have an opportunity to teach children from low-income families and 2) there is an orderly learning environment.

This report is available online at
www.nctq.org/edschoolreports/studentteaching/executiveSummary.jsp

National Council on Teacher Quality

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The National Council on Teacher Quality advocates for reforms in a broad range of teacher policies at the federal, state and local levels in order to increase the number of effective teachers.

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