

# Blueprint for Change in the District of Columbia

2010  
State Teacher  
Policy Yearbook



National Council on Teacher Quality

## Acknowledgments

### STATES

State education agencies remain our most important partners in this effort, and their extensive experience has helped to ensure the factual accuracy of the final product. Although this year's *Blueprint for Change* did not require the extensive review typically required of states, we still wanted to make sure that states' perspectives were represented. As such, each state received a draft of the policy updates we identified this year. We would like to thank all of the states for graciously reviewing and responding to our drafts.

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## About the Yearbook

The 2010 *Blueprint for Change* is the National Council on Teacher Quality's fourth annual review of state laws, rules and regulations that govern the teaching profession. This year's *Yearbook* takes a different approach than our past editions, as it is designed as a companion to the 2009 *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*, NCTQ's most recent comprehensive report on state teacher policies.

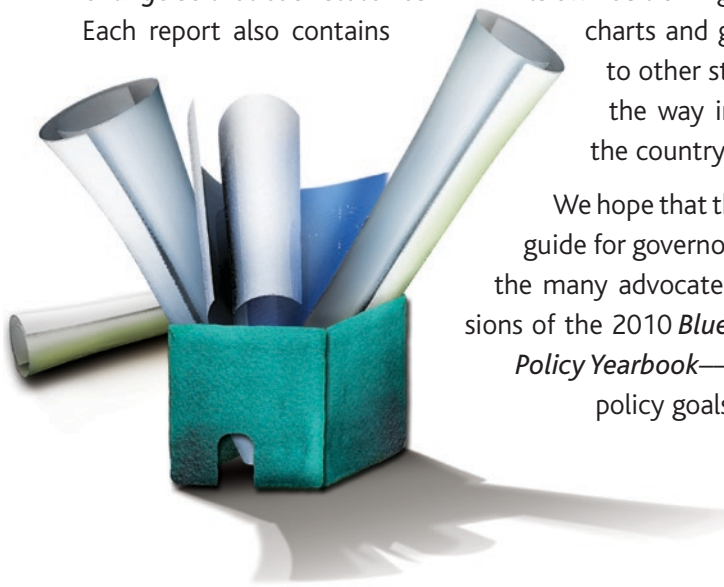
The comprehensive *Yearbook*, a 52-volume state-by-state analysis produced biennially, examines the alignment of states' teacher policies with goals to improve teacher quality. The 2009 report, which addressed key policy areas such as teacher preparation, evaluation, alternative certification and compensation, found that states had much work to do to ensure that every child has an effective teacher. Next year we will once again conduct a comprehensive goal-by-goal analysis of all aspects of states' teacher policies.

In 2010, an interim year, we set out to help states prioritize among the many areas of teacher policy in need of reform. With so much to be done, state policymakers may be nonplussed about where to begin. The 2010 *Yearbook* offers each state an individualized blueprint, identifying state policies most in need of attention. Although based on our 2009 analyses, this edition also updates states' progress in the last year, a year that saw many states make significant policy changes, largely spurred by the Race to the Top competition. Rather than grade states, the 2010 *Blueprint for Change* stands as a supplement to the 2009 comprehensive report, updating states' positive and negative progress on *Yearbook* goals and specifying actions that could lead to stronger policies for particular topics such as teacher evaluation, tenure rules and dismissal policies.

As is our practice, in addition to a national summary report, we have customized this year's *Blueprint for Change* so that each state has its own edition highlighting its progress toward specific *Yearbook* goals. Each report also contains

charts and graphs showing how the state performed compared to other states. In addition, we point to states that are leading the way in areas requiring the most critical attention across the country.

We hope that this year's *Blueprint for Change* serves as an important guide for governors, state school chiefs, school boards, legislatures and the many advocates seeking reform. Individual state and national versions of the 2010 *Blueprint for Change*, as well as the 2009 *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*—including rationales and supporting research for our policy goals—are available at [www.nctq.org/stpy](http://www.nctq.org/stpy).





# Blueprint for Change in the District of Columbia

The 2009 *State Teacher Policy Yearbook* provided a comprehensive review of states' policies that impact the teaching profession. As a companion to last year's comprehensive state-by-state analysis, the 2010 edition provides each state with an individualized "Blueprint for Change," building off last year's *Yearbook* goals and recommendations.

State teacher policy addresses a great many areas, including teacher preparation, certification, evaluation and compensation. With so many moving parts, it may be difficult for states to find a starting point on the road to reform. To this end, the following brief provides a state-specific roadmap, organized in three main sections.

- Section 1 identifies policy concerns that need **critical attention**, the areas of highest priority for state policymakers.
- Section 2 outlines "**low-hanging fruit**," policy changes that can be implemented in relatively short order.
- Section 3 offers a short discussion of some **longer-term systemic issues** that states need to make sure stay on the radar.

## Current Status of the District of Columbia's Teacher Policy

In the 2009 *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*, the District of Columbia had the following grades:



Overall Grade

Area 1: <i>Delivering Well Prepared Teachers</i>	D
Area 2: <i>Expanding the Teaching Pool</i>	D+
Area 3: <i>Identifying Effective Teachers</i>	F
Area 4: <i>Retaining Effective Teachers</i>	D-
Area 5: <i>Exiting Ineffective Teachers</i>	D+

### 2010 Policy Update:

In the last year, many states made significant changes to their teacher policies, spurred in many cases by the Race to the Top competition. Based on a review of state legislation, rules and regulations, NCTQ has identified the following recent policy changes in the District of Columbia:

### Teacher Evaluation:

Although not state-level policy, the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) has implemented a new teacher evaluation system called IMPACT, in which 50 percent of the evaluation score is based on the teacher's impact on students' achievement.

## ■ District of Columbia Response to Policy Update:

States were asked to review NCTQ's identified updates and also to comment on policy changes that have occurred in the last year, other pending changes or teacher quality in the state more generally.

- The District of Columbia pointed out that it won a Race to the Top grant, and as part of its proposal, it will require that all participating local education agencies (LEAs) implement a teacher evaluation system. Fifty percent of this evaluation must be based on student achievement growth in those grades for which there is statewide assessment data. The District added that this grant will also fund efforts to increase the number of subjects and grades for which there are statewide assessments. Thirty-five of the District's 53 LEAs (each charter school is a separate LEA) have signed on to the Race to the Top application and will be implementing evaluation systems next year. The District of Columbia also noted that, even though there is no state requirement, some of its LEAs, aside from DCPS, have already implemented evaluation systems.

## Section 1: Critical Attention Areas

This section identifies the highest priority areas as states work to advance teacher quality. These are the policy issues that should be at the top of the list for state policymakers. While other states need also to address middle school teacher preparation and licensure loopholes that allow teachers in the classroom with inadequate subject-matter knowledge, the District of Columbia should turn its immediate attention to the following six issues.



### Critical Attention: District of Columbia policies that need to better connect to teacher effectiveness

#### 1. ENSURE THAT TEACHER EVALUATIONS ASSESS EFFECTIVENESS IN THE CLASSROOM:

While the new IMPACT system implemented by the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and the new contract between DCPS and the Washington Teachers Union represent significant policy advancements in the areas of teacher evaluation, tenure, placement and dismissal, these are in fact district-level, and not state-level, policies. IMPACT requires that a teacher's impact on students' achievement account for 50 percent of the evaluation score. DCPS teachers are observed five times annually, with

the first observation occurring during the first part of the school year. In addition, mutual consent applies to teacher hiring, meaning that the teacher and the school must agree for a teacher to get the job. It applies regardless of tenure, so principals may now staff their schools based on the most qualified candidates. Both to support these important policies and to ensure their continuity, NCTQ encourages the District of Columbia to codify the requirements for these areas—as well as requirements for related areas such as tenure and teacher dismissal—in state statute and/or regulation.

Evaluation is a critical attention area in

**42 states.**

States on the right track include Colorado, Louisiana and Rhode Island.

Figure 1

*Is classroom effectiveness considered in teacher evaluations and tenure decisions?*

	Evaluations include student achievement data	Evidence of student learning is the preponderant criterion in teacher evaluations	Evidence of student learning is the preponderant criterion in tenure decisions
Alabama	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alaska	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arizona	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arkansas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
California	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Colorado	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Connecticut	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delaware	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Florida	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Georgia	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hawaii	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Idaho	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Illinois	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indiana	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Iowa	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kansas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kentucky	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Louisiana	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maine	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maryland <sup>2</sup>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Massachusetts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Michigan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Minnesota	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mississippi	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Missouri	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Montana	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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New Mexico	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
New York	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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North Dakota	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ohio	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Oklahoma	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Oregon	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pennsylvania	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rhode Island	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
South Carolina	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
South Dakota	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tennessee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Texas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Utah	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vermont	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Virginia	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Washington	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
West Virginia	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wisconsin	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wyoming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16

10

4

1 The District of Columbia has no state-level policy, but District of Columbia Public Schools requires that student academic achievement count for 50% of evaluation score.

2 Legislation articulates that student growth must account for a significant portion of evaluations, with no single criterion counting for more than 35% of the total performance evaluation. However, the State Board is on track to finalize regulations that limit any single component of student growth, such as standardized test scores, to 35%, but add other measures of student progress for a total of 50%.





## Critical Attention: District of Columbia policies that fail to ensure that teachers are well prepared

### 2. ENSURE THAT ELEMENTARY TEACHERS KNOW THE SCIENCE OF READING:

Scientific research has shown that there are five essential components of effective reading instruction: explicit and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. This science of reading has led to breakthroughs that can dramatically reduce the number of children destined to become functionally illiterate or barely literate adults. Whether through standards or coursework requirements, states must ensure that their preparation programs graduate only teacher candidates who know how to teach children to read. Not only should the District of Columbia require that its teacher preparation programs prepare their teacher candidates in the science of reading, but the District should also require an assessment prior to certification that tests whether teachers indeed possess the requisite knowledge in scientifically based reading instruction. Ideally this would be a stand-alone test (such as the excellent assessments required by Massachusetts, Connecticut and Virginia), but if it were combined with general pedagogy or elementary content, the District should require a separate subscore for the science of reading.

Preparation to teach reading is a critical attention area in

**43 states.**

States on the right track include Connecticut, Massachusetts and Virginia.

### 3. ENSURE THAT ELEMENTARY TEACHERS KNOW ELEMENTARY CONTENT MATH:

Aspiring elementary teachers must begin to acquire a deep conceptual knowledge of the mathematics they will teach, moving well beyond mere procedural understanding. Leading mathematicians and math educators have found that elementary teachers are not well served by mathematics courses designed for a general audience and that methods courses do not provide sufficient content preparation. Although the standards the District of Columbia relies on for teacher preparation address areas of mathematics such as algebra, geometry and data analysis, the District should specifically articulate that preparation programs deliver mathematics content geared to the explicit needs of elementary teachers. The District of Columbia should also adopt a rigorous mathematics assessment, such as the one required by Massachusetts. At the very least, the District should consider requiring a mathematics subscore on its general content knowledge test, not only to ensure that teacher candidates have minimum mathematics knowledge but also to allow them to test out of coursework requirements.

Preparation to teach mathematics is a critical attention area in

**49 states.**

A state on the right track is Massachusetts.

Figure 2

Do states ensure that teachers are well prepared?

	Ensures elementary teachers know the science of reading	Ensures elementary teachers know elementary content math	Differentiates preparation between elementary and middle school teachers
Alabama	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Alaska	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arizona	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arkansas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
California	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Colorado	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Connecticut	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Delaware	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Florida	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>2</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Georgia	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Hawaii	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Idaho	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Kansas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Kentucky	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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North Dakota	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ohio	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Washington	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
West Virginia	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Wisconsin	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wyoming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	6	2	29

## 4. ENSURE THAT TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS ARE ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE QUALITY OF THE TEACHERS THEY PRODUCE:

States should consider factors related to program performance in the approval of teacher preparation programs. Although the quality of both the subject-matter preparation and professional sequence is crucial, there are also additional measures that can provide the state and the public with meaningful, readily understandable indicators of how well programs are doing when it comes to preparing teachers to be successful in the classroom. The District of Columbia should make objective outcomes that go beyond licensure pass rates, such as graduates' evaluation results, retention rates and students' academic achievement gains, a central component of its teacher preparation program approval process, and it should establish precise standards for program performance that are more useful for accountability purposes. The District of Columbia should also post an annual report card on its website that not only details the data it collects but also identifies programs that fail to meet these criteria.

Teacher preparation program accountability is a critical attention area in **30 states.** States on the right track include Colorado and Louisiana.

1 Although California has a standalone test of reading pedagogy, the ability of this test to screen out candidates who do not know the science of reading has been questioned.  
 2 Florida's licensure test for elementary teachers includes a strong focus on the science of reading but does not report a separate subscore for this content.



## Critical Attention: District of Columbia policies that license teachers who may lack subject-matter knowledge

### 5. ENSURE THAT ELEMENTARY CONTENT TESTS ADEQUATELY ASSESS CONTENT KNOWLEDGE IN EACH SUBJECT AREA:

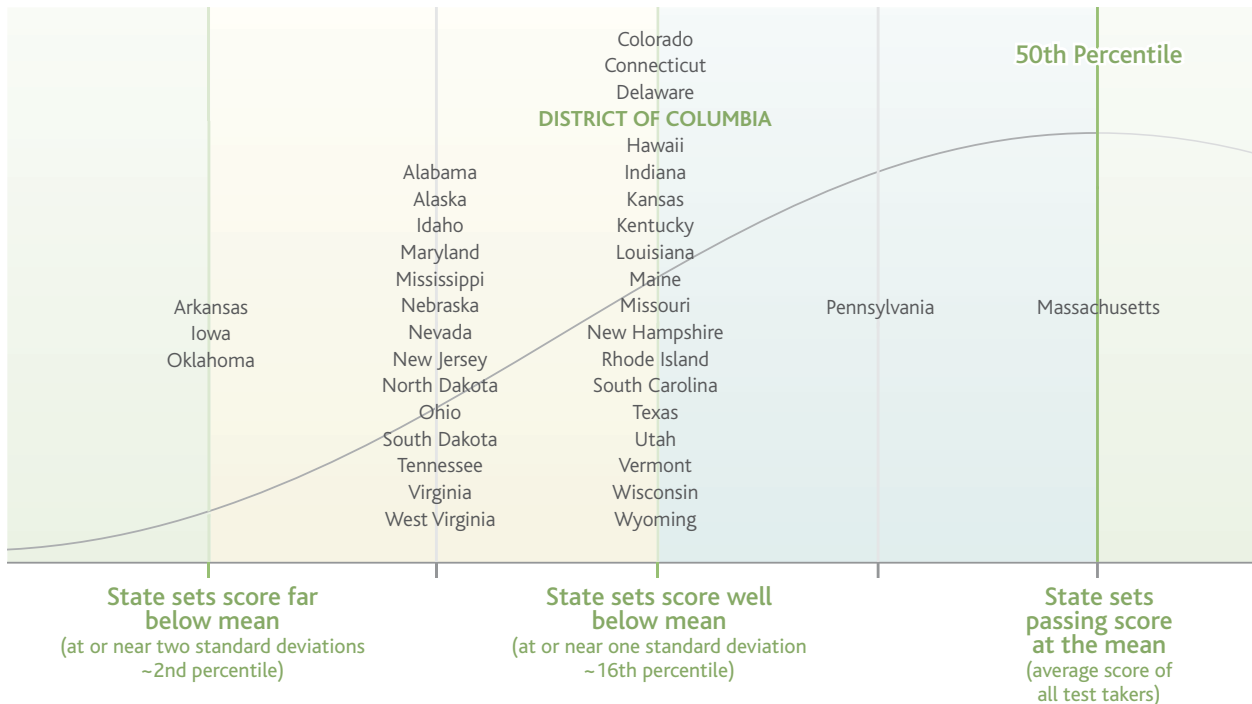
Although the District of Columbia requires that all new elementary teachers must pass a Praxis II general subject-matter test, this assessment does not report teacher performance in each subject area, meaning that it is possible to pass the test and still fail some subject areas. The District should require separate passing scores for each area because without them it is

impossible to measure knowledge of individual subjects, especially given the District's current low cut-score for the elementary content test. According to published test data, the District of Columbia has set its passing score for this test so far below the mean, the average score of all test takers, that it is questionable whether this assessment is indeed providing any assurance of content knowledge.

Elementary licensure tests are a critical attention area in **50 states.** A state on the right track is Massachusetts.

Figure 3

Where do states set the passing score on elementary content licensure tests?<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Data not available for Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, and Washington. Montana does not require a content test. Colorado cut score is for Praxis II, not PLACE.



## Critical Attention: District of Columbia policies that limit the teacher pipeline

### 6. ENSURE THAT ALTERNATE ROUTE CANDIDATES HAVE SUFFICIENT CONTENT KNOWLEDGE:

The District should require all alternate route candidates to pass a subject-matter test. The concept behind the alternate route into teaching is that the nontraditional candidate is able to concentrate on acquiring professional knowledge and skills because he or she has strong subject-area knowledge. This must be demonstrated in advance of entering the classroom. Currently, no content-area test is required for admission to the District's alternate route programs.

Alternate route admissions is a critical attention area in

**38 states.**

States on the right track include Michigan and Oklahoma.

Figure 4

Do states permit alternate route providers other than colleges and universities?

	Allows district run programs	Allows non-profit providers	Allows colleges and universities only
Alabama	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Alaska <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arizona	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arkansas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
California	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Colorado	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Connecticut	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delaware	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Florida	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Georgia	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hawaii	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Idaho	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Illinois	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indiana	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Iowa	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Maine	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Minnesota	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Missouri	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <sup>2</sup>
Montana	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Nebraska	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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New York	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
North Carolina	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
North Dakota <sup>3</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ohio	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Oklahoma	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Pennsylvania	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <sup>2</sup>
Rhode Island	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Washington	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
West Virginia	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wisconsin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wyoming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	19	23	21

1 Alaska's alternate route is operated by the state department of education.

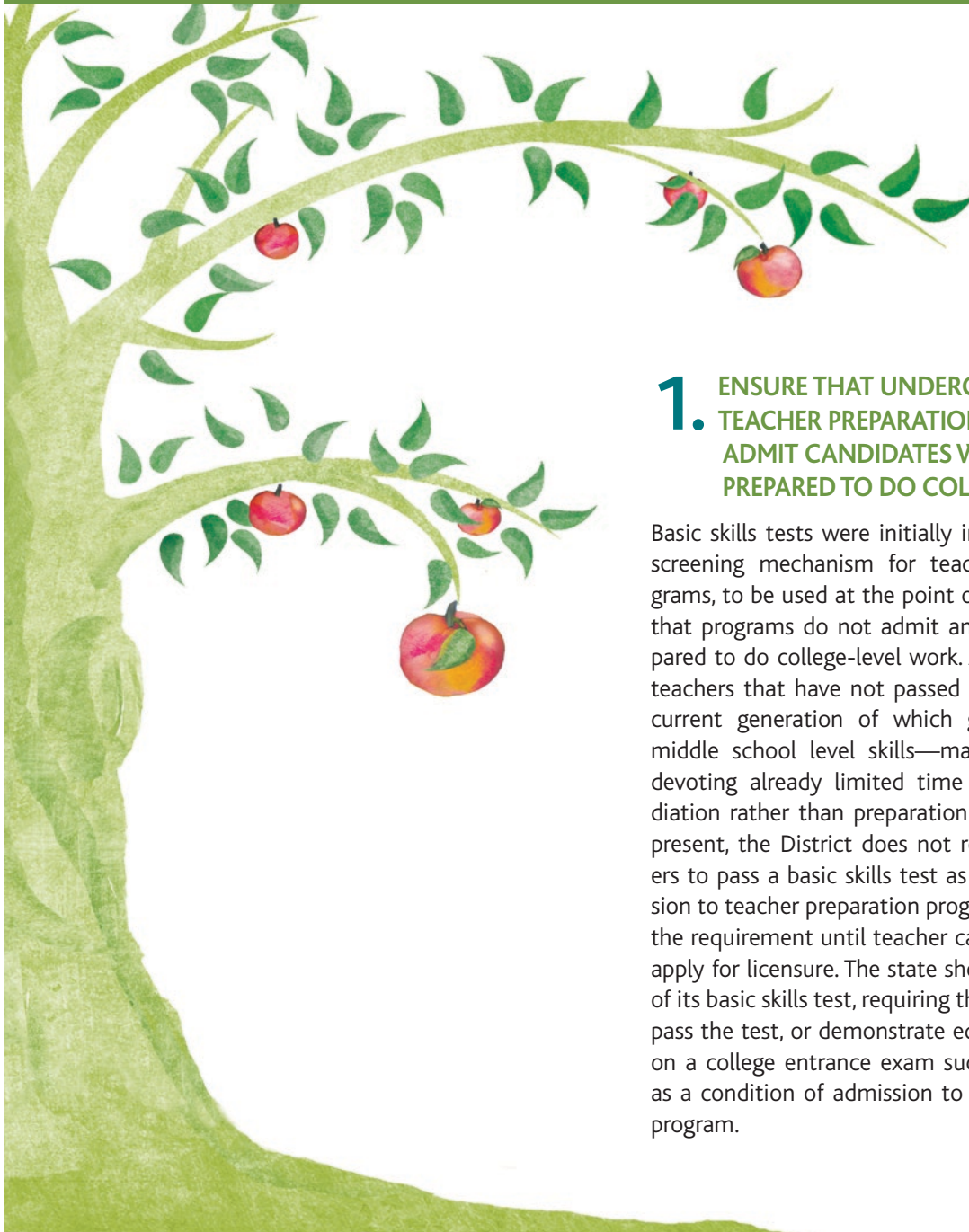
2 ABCTE is also an approved provider.

3 North Dakota does not have an alternate route to certification.



## Section 2: Low-Hanging Fruit

This section highlights areas where a small adjustment would result in significantly stronger policy. Unlike the more complex topics identified in Section 1, the issues listed in this section represent low-hanging fruit, policies that can be addressed in relatively short order.



### 1. ENSURE THAT UNDERGRADUATE TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS ADMIT CANDIDATES WHO ARE PREPARED TO DO COLLEGE-LEVEL WORK:

Basic skills tests were initially intended as a minimal screening mechanism for teacher preparation programs, to be used at the point of admission to ensure that programs do not admit anyone who is not prepared to do college-level work. Admitting prospective teachers that have not passed basic skills tests—the current generation of which generally assess only middle school level skills—may result in programs devoting already limited time to basic skills remediation rather than preparation for the classroom. At present, the District does not require aspiring teachers to pass a basic skills test as a criterion for admission to teacher preparation programs, instead delaying the requirement until teacher candidates are ready to apply for licensure. The state should adjust the timing of its basic skills test, requiring that teacher candidates pass the test, or demonstrate equivalent performance on a college entrance exam such as the SAT or ACT, as a condition of admission to a teacher preparation program.

## **2. ENSURE THAT SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS ARE ADEQUATELY PREPARED TO TEACH SUBJECT MATTER:**

To allow special education students the opportunity to reach their academic potential, special education teachers should be well trained in subject matter. As a first step toward ensuring requisite content knowledge, the District of Columbia should require that elementary special education candidates pass the same Praxis II subject-area test as other elementary teachers.

## **3. INFORM THE PUBLIC ABOUT TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM QUALITY:**

Even though the District of Columbia does not collect more meaningful data to measure the performance of teacher preparation programs, it should at least publish on the District's website the licensure test pass rate data for each program that are reported to the federal government as required under Title II.

## **4. ENSURE THAT OUT-OF-STATE TEACHERS MEET THE STATE'S TESTING REQUIREMENTS:**

The District of Columbia should uphold its standards for all teachers and insist that out-of-state teachers meet its own licensure test requirements. While it is important not to create unnecessary obstacles for teachers seeking reciprocal licensure in a new state, testing requirements can provide an important safeguard. Particularly given the variance of the passing scores required on licensure tests, states must not assume that a teacher that passed another state's test would meet its passing score as well. The District of Columbia takes considerable risk by granting a waiver for its licensing tests to any out-of-state teacher who has three years of teaching experience. The District should not provide any waivers of its teacher tests unless an applicant can provide evidence of a passing score under its own standards. The negative impact on student learning stemming from a teacher's inadequate subject-matter knowledge is not mitigated by a teacher's having recent experience.



## Section 3: Systemic Issues

This section discusses some of the longer-term systemic issues related to teacher quality that states also need to address. While these may not be “front-burner” issues in many states, they are important to an overall reform agenda.

### 1. Performance Management

The critical relationship between teacher quality and student achievement has been well established, and ensuring that all students have teachers with the knowledge and skills to support their academic success has become a national priority. Yet the policy framework that governs the teaching profession in most states is almost entirely disconnected from teacher effectiveness. Although states largely control how teachers are evaluated, licensed and compensated, teacher effectiveness in terms of student learning has not been a central component in these policies.

Fortunately, this is starting to change. Fifteen states have made progress in their requirements for teacher evaluation in the last year alone.<sup>1</sup> As evaluation ratings become more meaningful, states should plan to connect teacher evaluation to an overall system of performance management. The current siloed approach, with virtually no connection between meaningful evidence of teacher performance and the awarding of tenure and professional licensure, needs a fundamental overhaul. These elements must not be thought of as isolated and

discrete, but as part of a comprehensive performance system. This system should also include compensation strategies as well as new teacher support and ongoing professional development, creating a coordinated and aligned set of teacher policies.

Meaningful evaluation is at the center of a performance management system. The District of Columbia is already working to ensure that evaluations measure teacher effectiveness at the district level (DCPS). As it moves forward, the District should keep in mind the larger goal of creating a performance management system and codify changes at the state level to ensure the continuity of important new policies.

A successful performance management system—one that gives educators the tools they need to be effective, supports their development, rewards their accomplishments and holds them accountable for results—is essential to the fundamental goal of all education reform: eliminating achievement gaps and ensuring that all students achieve to their highest potential.

<sup>1</sup> Includes changes to state policies regulating the frequency of evaluations for probationary and nonprobationary teachers as well as requirements that teacher evaluations consider classroom effectiveness.

## 2. Pension Reform

State pension systems are in need of a fundamental overhaul. In an era when retirement benefits have been shrinking across industries and professions, teachers' generous pensions remain fixed. In fact, nearly all states, including the District of Columbia, continue to provide teachers with a defined benefit pension system, an expensive and inflexible model that neither reflects the realities of the modern workforce nor provides equitable benefits to all teachers.

The current model greatly disadvantages teachers who move from one state to another, career switchers who enter teaching and those who teach for fewer than 20 years. For these reasons alone, reform is needed. But a defined benefit model is also extremely costly, relying in large part on current workers to fund benefits promised to retirees. Although

the District of Columbia's 2009 actuarial report indicates its system was 92.2 percent funded,<sup>1</sup> the District should be concerned about the cost of sustaining promised benefits. Many states' systems are in dubious

**\$585,737**

Amount District of Columbia pays for each teacher that retires at an early age with unreduced benefits until that teacher reaches age 65<sup>4</sup>

financial health, including some that appeared even recently to be well funded. All states need to take a long-term view of their pension systems, since it is exceedingly difficult to reduce promised benefits once teachers are members of the system. In addition, the District of Columbia should consider whether the benefits provided by its current model attract the most effective teachers.

Systemic reform of should lead to the development of a financially sustainable, equitable pension system that includes the following:

- The option of a fully portable pension system as their primary pension plan, either through a defined contribution plan or a defined benefit plan that is formatted similar to a cash balance plan<sup>2</sup>

- Reasonable district and teacher contribution rates
- Vesting for teachers no later than the third year of employment
- Purchase of time in a defined benefit plan for unlimited previous teaching experience at the time of employment, as well as for all official leaves of absence, such as maternity and paternity leave
- The option in a defined benefit plan of a lump-sum rollover to a personal retirement account upon employment termination, which includes teacher contributions and all accrued interest at a fair interest rate
- Funds contributed by the employer included in withdrawals due to employment termination
- A neutral formula for determining pension benefits, regardless of years worked (eliminating any multiplier that increases with years of service or longevity bonuses)<sup>3</sup>
- Eligibility for retirement benefits based solely on age, not years of service, in order to avoid disincentives for effective teachers to continue working until conventional retirement age.

1 Public Fund Survey, <http://www.publicfundsurvey.org/www/publicfundsurvey/actuarialfundinglevels.asp>.

2 A cash balance pension plan is a benefit plan in which participants, and their employers if they choose, periodically contribute a predetermined rate to employees' individual pension accounts. These contributions grow at a guaranteed rate. Upon retirement or withdrawal, the participant may receive the full account balance in one lump sum, so long as the benefits are fully vested. (Based on Economic Research Institute, <http://www.eridlc.com/resources/index.cfm?fuseaction=resource.glossary>)

3 The formula may include years of service (i.e., years of service x final average salary x benefit multiplier), but other aspects of the benefit calculation, such as the multiplier, should not be dependent on years of service.

4 Calculations are based on a teacher who starts teaching at age 22, earns a starting salary of \$35,000 that increases 3 percent per year, and retires at the age when he or she is first eligible for unreduced benefits. Calculations use the state's benefit formula for new hires, exclude cost of living increases, and base the final average salary on the highest three years. Age 65 is the youngest eligibility age for unreduced Social Security benefits.

### 3. Certification of Special Education Teachers

States' requirements for the preparation of special education teachers are one of the most neglected and dysfunctional areas of teacher policy. The low expectations for what special education teachers should know stand in stark contradiction to state and federal expectations that special education students should meet the same high standards as other students.

The District of Columbia, like most of the states, sets an exceedingly low bar for the content knowledge that special education teachers must have. The District does not require that elementary special education teachers take any subject-matter coursework or demonstrate content knowledge on a subject-matter test. Further, although secondary special education teachers must be highly qualified in every subject they will teach, the District does not require that teacher preparation programs graduate teachers who are highly qualified in any core academic areas.

But the problem requires a more systemic fix than just raising content requirements for elementary and secondary special education teachers. The overarching issue is that too many states, including the District of Columbia, make no distinction between elementary

and secondary special education teachers, certifying all such teachers under a generic K-12 special education license. While this broad umbrella may be appropriate for teachers of low-incidence special education students, such as those with severe cognitive disabilities, it is deeply problematic for high-incidence special education students, who are expected to learn grade-level content. And because the overwhelming majority of special education students are in the high-incidence category, the result is a fundamentally broken system.

It is virtually impossible and certainly impractical for the District of Columbia to ensure that a K-12 teacher knows all the subject matter he or she is expected to be able to teach. And the issue is just as valid in terms of pedagogical knowledge. Teacher preparation and licensure for special education teachers must distinguish between elementary and secondary levels, as they do for general education. The current model does little to protect some of our most vulnerable students.

Figure 5

*Do states distinguish between elementary and secondary special education teachers?*

	Offers only a K-12 certification	Offers K-12 and grade-specific certification(s)	Does not offer a K-12 certification
Alabama	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Alaska	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arizona	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arkansas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
California	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Colorado	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Connecticut	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delaware	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Florida	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Georgia	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hawaii	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Idaho	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Illinois	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indiana	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Iowa	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Kansas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kentucky	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Louisiana	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maine	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Maryland	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Massachusetts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Michigan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Minnesota	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mississippi	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Missouri	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Montana	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nebraska	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nevada	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
New Hampshire	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
New Jersey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
New Mexico	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
New York	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
North Carolina	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
North Dakota	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ohio	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Oklahoma	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Oregon	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pennsylvania <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rhode Island	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
South Carolina	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
South Dakota	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tennessee	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Texas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Utah	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vermont	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Virginia	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Washington	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
West Virginia	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Wisconsin	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Wyoming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>22</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>12</b>

1 New policy goes into effect January 1, 2013.









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