

The Quality of Teacher Education in NC Matters

This article by Mary Lynne Calhoun appeared in the *For Your Consideration* section in our [February 27th e-Newsletter](#). *For Your Consideration** provides an open forum for individuals to voice their opinions on various public education issues.

The quality of teacher education in North Carolina matters. As citizens and members of the education community think through high-quality teacher education, some important questions come to mind:



Are teacher education candidates hired by local school systems, and are they successful in their work? Can they demonstrate a positive impact on student learning? Do they persist in the profession rather than leaving after a year or two? Are they satisfied with their professional education program? Do they contribute to the success of their schools?

A slick report by an organization called the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) claims to evaluate teacher education policy by state and assigns letter grades to those states. This report, which was referenced in MeckEd's February 13th e-Newsletter, is an attention-getter, with alarming grades assigned to the states: a national average of "D+" and North Carolina's grade of "D-".

The report addresses none of the questions above which are classified outcome measures. Instead, the recommendations focus almost exclusively on more restrictions and more testing for teacher candidates: more tests for elementary education majors, more tests for special education majors, more tests for middle and secondary education candidates, and more tests for practicing teachers who host student teachers in their classrooms.

Ironically, the NCTQ report also recommends holding alternative preparation routes to a different and lower set of standards than university programs in such areas as clinical experiences and demonstration of content mastery.

There is vibrant work going on in the teacher education programs in North Carolina. The University of North Carolina system, for example, is conducting a series of Teacher Quality Studies that looks at the success of our graduates in impacting student learning. The UNC system also tracks persistence in the profession, with the good news that more than 70 percent of our graduates are still teaching after five years, in contrast to the 50 percent national average. Several North Carolina universities are in the top 20 producers nationally of new teachers who achieve National Board Certification.

There's more to be done as we move together toward the goal of having a caring, competent, and highly effective teacher in every classroom every day. We should not let the NCTQ report distract us from this mission.

**Please note the views expressed in For Your Consideration are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of MeckEd. Dr. Mary Lynne Calhoun is the dean of the College of Education at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.*