



: Making a Difference

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education

From the president...



Teaching a child to read, to solve math problems, and to understand scientific concepts should not be a trial and error proposition. And it does not have to be.

In the teaching profession, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) is the professional accrediting organization for schools, colleges, and departments of education in the United States. NCATE relies on outstanding educators and public members to develop rigorous standards for teacher preparation and determine which schools of education measure up to them.

NCATE is a partnership of over 30 national professional organizations, representing over 3 million Americans, that have united to ensure high quality teacher preparation. Local and state policymakers, including school board members and chief state school officers, classroom teachers, teacher educators, school administrators, and specialists are the foundation of NCATE.

This brochure provides a glimpse of NCATE's standards, focus, and effect on teacher quality and student learning. I hope that we can continue to work together to improve the quality of teachers for our nation's children.

The Effect of NCATE

from *Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: A Review of State Policy Evidence*, released by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, written by Linda Darling-Hammond

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future has conducted a number of analyses of the influence of teacher quality on student achievement. A number of teacher quality variables are strongly related to student achievement in reading and mathematics on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. According to the Commission's research, the most significant predictors of teacher quality are (1) the proportion of institutions that are NCATE-accredited (the strongest predictor of the proportion of well-qualified teachers in a state), and (2) hiring standards of school districts (the proportion that requires full certification, a college major or minor in the appropriate content area, and graduation from an approved teacher education program as the basis for hiring).

The three states that required NCATE accreditation for all schools of education during the 1980s—Arkansas, North Carolina, and West Virginia—all experienced greater than average increases in student achievement during the 1990s. The Commission's research documents how states that invested most in improving the quality of teaching over the past decade experienced the greatest gains in student performance in that period of time.

A study by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) shows that graduates of NCATE-accredited colleges of education pass ETS content examinations for teacher licensing at a higher rate than do graduates of unaccredited colleges. In fact, teacher candidates who attend NCATE colleges boost their chances of passing the examination by nearly 10 percent.

ETS profiled the academic ability of those seeking a teaching license by determining the number of candidates who passed the licensing exam, PRAXIS. ETS examined 270,000 candidates between 1995 and 1997 who took PRAXIS II in the content area they planned to teach, and who had also taken the SAT or ACT. Graduates of NCATE-accredited institutions pass ETS content examinations for teacher licensing at a higher rate (91 percent) than do graduates of unaccredited colleges or teachers who never entered a teacher prep program at all.

NCATE graduates significantly outperform both graduates who prepared at unaccredited colleges and those who never prepared but took the exam. In a time of high demand for qualified candidates, encouraging schools of education to attain professional accreditation will increase the supply of well-qualified teachers.

NCATE Accreditation: Benefits for Teacher Candidates

The new professional teacher graduating from an NCATE-accredited institution:

is trained to assume responsibility for a classroom on day one—not through on-the-job training



knows the subject matter and a variety of ways to teach it to ensure student learning



will be able to manage classrooms with students from widely divergent backgrounds



has a broad liberal arts education



is able to explain why he or she uses a particular strategy based on research and best practice



reflects on practice and changes what does not work



is able to apply effective methods of teaching to students of different backgrounds



has had a number of diverse clinical experiences in P-12 schools and studied under a variety of master teachers during a coherent program of clinical education



nurtures the growth and development of each student in his or her classes

What NCATE accreditation means for teacher candidates

Teacher candidates from NCATE-accredited institutions will be better prepared for new, more demanding initial licensing expectations in many states, and for board certification through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. NCATE is working with the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards to ensure that accreditation, licensing, and certification standards are compatible. Many states have reciprocity agreements based on graduation from NCATE-accredited schools, so graduates of NCATE-accredited institutions will generally find it easier to apply for licensure when they move out of state.

New teachers say they are well prepared: Study in Kentucky reveals that NCATE is a factor

The vast majority of Kentucky's new teachers find that their college and university education prepared them well for their jobs in Kentucky's schools, according to a study released by the Kentucky Institute for Education Research, an independent research group that evaluates the progress of the state's education reforms. The study also indicates that their principals agree.

Over 90 percent of new teachers said they were extremely well prepared, very well prepared, or moderately well prepared to: establish a positive learning environment, communicate high expectations, design instruction that is developmentally appropriate, use different teaching strategies for different instructional purposes, and communicate the core concepts of their disciplines. Over six in ten, or two-thirds, said they were extremely well prepared or very well prepared for these tasks.

In addition to the survey of over one thousand new teachers, a sample of 125 principals of these new teachers was surveyed. Seven of ten of these principals said new teachers received better preparation than when they were trained.

These findings contrast dramatically with older surveys of teachers who criticized the preparation they received as being removed from the real world.

The NCATE standards can be seen as a major factor contributing to the positive results of the study, since 83 percent of new teacher graduates completing bachelor's level programs, and 94 percent of teachers completing post-bachelor or master's programs graduated from NCATE-accredited institutions in 1996. Thus, the vast majority of new teachers in Kentucky have completed programs of study at schools of education which use national professional standards developed by the field and coordinated and implemented by NCATE. Teachers reported that they felt prepared in areas covered by the NCATE standards in effect at the time they were in college.

These findings from Kentucky help to shatter the myth that teacher preparation is not effective.

NCATE is committed to emphasizing the performance of teacher candidates in its accreditation system, since it is what a teacher knows and can do that ultimately makes the difference in student achievement and learning.

Focus on subject matter

NCATE ensures that subject matter content, and how to teach it, is a priority. NCATE standards expect the school of education to base its programs on content and teaching standards set by professional associations in each content area (for example, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics). NCATE also expects candidates to gain a firm foundation in the liberal arts. NCATE expects the school of education and the college of arts and sciences to work together to develop future teachers.

*Over one hundred
unsolicited
testimonials from
schools of education
that have completed
the accreditation
process report that
working to meet
NCATE's state-of-the-
art standards helped
institutions improve
their programs.*

Focus on candidate performance

NCATE's accreditation standards focus on candidate performance. In fact, NCATE is one of the first accrediting organizations to use candidate performance as an integral part of its accreditation system. Other accreditation agencies have consulted with NCATE on incorporating performance outcomes into their own systems. NCATE institutions are expected to use multiple sources of performance-oriented data, including actual candidate performance in the classroom, before the completion of the program and/or recommendation for licensure. NCATE wants to know—What does the teacher candidate know, and how well can he or she apply that knowledge to teach all of the students in the classroom?

Focus on research base and best practice

NCATE expects teacher candidates to work from a solid base of research and best practice. Schools of education are expected to infuse the growing knowledge base about how to teach into the curricula. Should teacher preparation programs operate as they did 40 years ago—and as some still do today—or should they incorporate new knowledge and expect graduates to base classroom decisions on it? NCATE institutions are expected to establish a conceptual framework that connects their philosophy, research, programs, and clinical practice.

Focus on diversity

Rapidly growing diversity in America's classrooms will mean that almost 50 percent of schoolchildren will be from widely divergent backgrounds by the early 21st century. Preparing teachers who are ready to teach all students is a part of NCATE's expectations.

Focus on technology

NCATE's standards expect accredited schools of education to provide adequate access to computers and other technologies, and expect faculty and candidates to be able to use technology effectively as a teaching tool.

Focus on improved clinical experiences and education

One of the enduring criticisms of schools of education has been the lack of coordination with P-12 schools to ensure that candidates gain "real world" experience. NCATE colleges and universities are expected to reach out to P-12 schools and enter meaningful partnerships with them. NCATE standards link preparation and practice more closely than ever before. The old student teaching "apprenticeship" model of clinical education is giving way to improved clinical practice in which the candidate experiences a variety of master teacher styles.

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Visit NCATE's Web site for more
information about professional
accreditation and a list of accredited
schools of education at
<http://www.ncate.org>.

NCATE is a leader in standards development

NCATE is a leader in standards development and serves as a resource to states, colleges and universities, and policymakers.

Performance-Based Accreditation

NCATE is leading specialized accrediting bodies in its development of a performance-based accreditation system.

Clinical Preparation

NCATE has produced new standards for professional development schools (PDSs). PDSs are cutting-edge partnerships of colleges and universities and P-12 schools dedicated to the clinical preparation of new teachers, P-12 student learning, and the professional development of all teachers. These standards are moving the field forward in the area of clinical preparation.

Resource to States

Many states now use NCATE standards developed through nationwide professional consensus. Increasingly, states are delegating the job of reviewing individual teacher education programs, such as math education, to NCATE, while they focus on developing performance-oriented state licensing standards and assessments. These developments parallel the relationship of other national professional accrediting bodies to the states.

The state, not NCATE, determines whether a school of education operates. States may choose to use the results of NCATE reviews to take action with regard to their institutions. Forty-five states and the District of Columbia now have partnerships with NCATE.

NCATE Performance-Based Accreditation

Teacher candidate performance—not just curriculum and other input measures—is evaluated by on-site examining teams as part of a performance-based system of accreditation in teacher education. The system is the natural evolution of several strands of development begun by NCATE in the early 1990s. It includes the following components, and places NCATE at the leading edge of practice in specialized accreditation:

- ◆ The central feature of the system is performance-based standards for accreditation. Accreditation decisions now focus on the performance of the institution and its candidates, and less on input and process measures. More emphasis is placed on the quality of candidate work, candidate subject matter knowledge, and demonstrated teaching skill. NCATE wants to know—What do candidates know and what can they do when they graduate from initial and advanced teacher preparation programs? Do they know their subject matter and can they teach it effectively? The answers play a significant role in accreditation decisions.
- ◆ Standards for accreditation are compatible with standards for P-12 education, model state licensing standards, the standards for advanced certification of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), and the standards of specialized professional associations that are recognized by NCATE. Teachers will be well prepared for licensing, National Board Certification, and most importantly, will be prepared to help schoolchildren meet rigorous new achievement standards.
- ◆ Review of the school, college, or department of education is linked closely with review of individual programs, so that subject matter/content standards play a prominent role in accreditation decisions.
- ◆ Institutions were involved at each step of the way in the development of the standards, since in a performance-based accreditation system, institutions are expected to have evidence of the assessments of candidate performance easily accessible. This expectation has driven changes in the structure of teaching and learning within teacher preparation programs. Longitudinal performance assessments will most likely become the norm, as institutions examine the progress of candidate performance more closely during their clinical preparation. This means that clinical preparation is given greater attention, as the clinical portion of candidate education is the definitive demonstration of competence in the classroom.

Close coordination with the states is needed since NCATE has partnerships with 46 states at this time. Many states are moving toward performance-based licensing systems. Standards for accreditation and licensing should be closely aligned, to assure that new teacher candidates are prepared for successful teaching of increasingly rigorous standards for P-12 student learning. Since states are requiring evidence of candidate performance on licensing examinations, those results will be one form of evidence NCATE now uses in its accreditation system.

In addition, NCATE and its specialized professional associations are collaborating to strengthen the completeness and value of assessments used in teacher preparation. Likewise, NCATE's standards that apply to advanced programs should be closely aligned with NBPTS standards for advanced certification. Linking preparation with National Board Certification requires program change at many institutions.
