

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, January 27th, 2020; 12:01 AM EST

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MORE TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS IN PENNSYLVANIA ADOPT SCIENTIFICALLY-BASED METHODS FOR TEACHING KIDS TO READ

Latest Review of Pennsylvania's Teacher Preparation Programs by the National Council on Teacher Quality Demonstrates Moderate Progress in Reading Instruction, Though Much Work Remains

Washington, D.C. — New [data and analysis](#) from the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) finds teacher preparation programs across the nation making significant progress in preparing teachers to use the most effective methods when teaching kids how to read, with program grades in Pennsylvania falling in line with the national average, a standing that reflects modest progress since NCTQ's last evaluation in 2016.

At the national level, the number of programs to embrace reading science has crossed the halfway mark for the first time in the history of the *Teacher Prep Review*, with 51 percent of 1,000 evaluated traditional elementary teacher preparation programs across the country now earning an A or B grade for their coverage of the key components of the science of reading—up from 35 percent in 2013. Pennsylvania keeps pace with those increases, with 59 percent (39) of 66 traditional programs preparing their aspiring elementary teachers in the science of reading. Pennsylvania ranks 15th nationally in terms of the average rating of its programs.

The following 16 traditional undergraduate (UG) and graduate (G) programs in Pennsylvania earn an A in the 2020 *Teacher Prep Review*.

Bucknell University (UG)	Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania (UG)
Cairn University (UG)	Misericordia University (UG)
Cedar Crest College (G)	Neumann University (UG)
Edinboro University of Pennsylvania (UG)	Robert Morris University (UG)
Gannon University (UG)	Saint Francis University (UG)
Geneva College (UG)	Saint Joseph's University (UG)
Kutztown University of Pennsylvania (UG)	Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania (UG)
La Salle University (UG)	Wilson College (UG)

[\(See how all Pennsylvania programs performed here.\)](#)

The latest national findings are a positive sign for newly energized movement across the nation to bring down notoriously high rates of illiteracy in the United States. Each year, well over a million public school students arriving in the fourth grade are added to the nation's ranks of nonreaders. Two-thirds are black and Hispanic children struggling in the face of an inequitable education system. Reading ability is a key predictor of future educational gains and life success, making successful reading instruction essential to achieving educational equity.

Now in its fourth edition, the *Teacher Prep Review* assigns a team of literacy experts to examine every course a program requires in early reading, looking at the planned topics to be covered in each class, readings, assignments, practice opportunities, and tests, as well as rating the quality of the textbooks used in each course. These experts look for clear evidence of dedicated course time as well as measures where aspiring teachers must demonstrate their knowledge of the five key components of the science of reading: **phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension**. All programs receive their

preliminary grades well in advance of publication with an opportunity to appeal their rating and are invited to submit additional evidence for consideration. (See a short animated video explaining the methodology [here](#).)

Dr. Maria Murray, a former teacher educator in reading who left her university position to start a national nonprofit dedicated to advancing evidence-aligned reading instruction, spoke to her own experience: “I was deeply frustrated that the science of reading—researched approaches that develop all aspects of what makes a successful reader—were not the norm in education. I am heartened that the tide may be turning. The Reading League’s fast-growing numbers—11,000 strong in three years—speak to how common my experience was and the eagerness of classroom teachers to learn more.”

Classroom teacher and coach Maci Fisher echoed Murray’s sentiments: “As a teacher in training, I had a few hours of instruction on phonics, but nothing on how to actually teach it. We mostly focused on getting students to use context or clues to figure out unknown words. When I first started teaching, I was teaching my struggling readers to guess words instead of actually teaching them to read the words. Frustrated and discouraged, I spent many hours after school researching ways to help them and had to learn the right methods on the job. It’s unfair that so many teachers start out without the knowledge and training they need to successfully teach their students to read.”

For programs that want to improve their reading instruction, a growing number of models of excellence exist. The 2020 *Teacher Prep Review* highlights 15 teacher preparation programs that do an exemplary job teaching reading instruction to aspiring teachers.

“There has been a great deal of cynicism—and I include myself—regarding the capacity of teacher prep to make changes,” commented Arne Duncan, former U.S. Secretary of Education in the Obama Administration. “I thank the National Council on Teacher Quality for refusing to turn their attention away from this issue. This progress gives me real hope.”

See how Pennsylvania and all of their teacher preparation programs performed in the interactive *Teacher Prep Review* database: www.nctq.org/review/standardDetails/Early-Reading

Watch a short explanation of the NCTQ methodology here:

www.nctq.org/pages/TPREarlyReadingMethodology. For a more detailed explanation see: www.nctq.org/review/standardDetails/Early-Reading#howWeGraded

Read the full NCTQ summary of findings and see top-performing programs:

www.nctq.org/publications/2020-Teacher-Prep-Review:-Program-Performance-in-Early-Reading-Instruction

Note: In Pennsylvania, there were 15 programs NCTQ was unable to rate, in spite of repeated requests to the institution to look at their reading syllabi. Those programs are listed here.

www.nctq.org/review/search/standard/Early-Reading_CBD--

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To schedule an interview with NCTQ President Kate Walsh or the individuals quoted in this press release, please contact Nicole Gerber at ngerber@nctq.org or (202) 393-0020 ext. 712.

About the National Council on Teacher Quality: *The National Council on Teacher Quality is a nonpartisan research and policy group, committed to modernizing the teaching profession and based on the belief that all children deserve effective teachers. We recognize that it is not teachers who bear responsibility for their profession’s many challenges, but the institutions with the greatest authority and influence over teachers. More information about NCTQ can be found on our website, www.nctq.org.*