

TEAL's Teacher Prep Program Named One of the Nation's Best for Early Reading Instruction | CEHS

01/28/2020



Utah State University's [undergraduate elementary teacher preparation](#) program in the School of Teacher Education and Leadership (TEAL) has been named one of the top in the country by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) for its strong commitment to evidence-based reading instruction.

NCTQ, a nonpartisan, not-for-profit research and policy organization, released its *2020 Teacher Prep Review* earlier this month. The review revealed significant progress on the science of reading instruction in teacher preparation, with 51 percent of the over 1,000 evaluated traditional elementary teacher preparation programs earning an A or B grade for their coverage of the key components of the science of reading. This marks an increase from 35 percent of programs evaluated in 2013.

Utah State University is one of only 15 undergraduate elementary programs to earn an A+ for exemplary coursework and serves as a model of excellence for others. These top-performing programs provide the following for each of the five essential components of reading:

- Explicit and repeated instruction on each component
- Support for instruction with high-quality textbooks that accurately detail established principles of scientifically-based reading practices
- Opportunities for teacher candidates to demonstrate mastery through in-class assignments, tests, and instructional practice

"Reading is the breathing of education," said Dr. Cindy Jones, director of TEAL's [Literacy Clinic](#), housed in the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services. Every elementary education student at USU gains experience in this clinic, where children in grades K-9 receive one-on-one sessions with an undergrad tutor going through the teacher prep program. The collected data is used to teach students how to diagnose and help children with reading challenges who are below, at, or above grade level. This continual feedback allows tutors to make immediate changes to the next lesson, allowing for very rapid growth.

Beth Foley, dean of the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services, said that principals throughout Cache Valley have discussed their wish for every student to go through USU's Literacy Clinic. They appreciate that USU graduates enter teaching with more confidence and are better able to prepare lessons because of this experience.

"What makes USU different is that we want our tutors to know what a real classroom is like and create lesson plans," said Jones. "This clinic would not exist without Dean Foley. She advocates for us and makes sure we have the resources and equipment that we use and enjoy every day."

The NCTQ's latest findings on early reading instruction are a positive sign for bringing down notoriously high rates of illiteracy in the United States. Reading ability is a key predictor of future educational gains and life success, making successful reading instruction essential to achieving educational equity.

"The progress being made by programs comes as a real shot in the arm," observed Kate Walsh, president of NCTQ. "The resistance to teaching what is scientifically-based has been so formidable. The scale is now tipping in favor of science, and the real winners here are the students who will learn to read."

[View a brief video](#) about NCTQ's methodology, or [read the full NCTQ](#) summary of findings and see all top-performing programs.