

## **National Board for Professional Teaching Standards**

### **Panel Discussion, National Board Certification as School Reform**

**October 21, 2009**

*Edited transcript*

### **Introductions**

**Governor Bob Wise**

**President, Alliance for Excellent Education**

**Chairman, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards**

This panel comes at a very important time. I believe that some of the discussions today will help influence what is going to happen in the next year and a half. It is a privilege to be the new chairman of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). I want to welcome everyone and thank you for coming today to hear how the National Board can help transform high-need, low-performing schools into professional learning communities with enhanced learning and improved student achievement. Secretary Duncan has set a goal to turnaround the 5,000 lowest performing high schools. The National Board, I believe, offers one very important tool in that toolkit to do that.

National Board Certified Teachers represent two percent of K-12 teachers. Two of the last four National Teachers of the Year have been NBCTs—including Kim Oliver Burnham, who is with us today. And over a quarter of the 2009 State Teachers of the Year and one-third of the recipients of the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching are NBCTs. Research has been very solid on the efficacy of NBCTs—most recently, the congressionally-mandated National Research Council report. Secretary Arne Duncan—a big believer in National Board Certification when he was superintendent in Chicago—greatly increased the numbers there.

Most importantly, the National Board believes it needs to keep moving forward to meet the emerging challenges—the challenge of transforming the nation’s lowest performing schools by expanding the concept from classroom-based teachers into whole school reform through large school buildings and districts. The focus of the National Board is expanding from individuals achieving National Board Certification into a systemic or systematic movement that changes the culture of classrooms, schools and districts by leveraging National Board Certified Teachers to build human capital—especially in high-need schools.

I was sitting on a plane to Atlanta and happened to strike up a conversation with a lady who was a middle school teacher in a rural school district. I asked, by chance, if there were any National

Board Certified Teachers in her very small district. She said, “I’ve got three in my school, and they make all the difference in the world. And that’s why, in a very high-need school, we are one of the most high achieving schools in the state.”

What NBCTs can do—the potential has only been tapped—and there’s far more. That’s what we are going to hear about today. Today’s program will highlight two schools in which groups of National Board Certified Teachers successfully raised student achievement and enhanced student learning in very high-need schools. Other panelists will discuss how National Board Certification serves as the largest pay-for-performance model in existence. And, some of the top educational researchers will share how National Board Certification can be part of the solution in serving the nation’s education crisis. We are delighted to have with us as moderator, Virginia Richardson, professor emeritus at the University of Michigan and long active in research and practice.

**Virginia Richardson**  
**University of Michigan**  
**Moderator**

We will explore how the National Board and National Board Teachers can help in terms of reform efforts in schools. We have two groups. In the first group, we have two practitioners who will be talking about their experience in their schools with National Board Certified Teachers and how they worked to actually raise achievement scores in those schools; and, as part of that same group, we have a panelist who is an expert in school finance. We then will hear the responses and the thinking of the second group—three researchers. All three are very much on the ground in terms of being in many schools and working with teaching and schooling over the years.

## **Opening Statements by the Panelists**

**Kiela Bonelli, NBCT**  
**Principal, Julius Corsini Elementary School**  
**Desert Hot Springs, Calif.**

Many of you think Palm Springs, California, as the place to golf or have a great time on vacation. Unfortunately, this is what the area our school is like (slides of police, crime, and poverty). My school is located in Desert Hot Springs on the north side of the I-10 Freeway. It has the highest crime rate per capita in the area. We’re talking about the highest-need students in my district and in the state. My school has 98 percent free and reduced lunch; 88 percent of my students are Hispanic; about 78 percent are English-language learners.

When I started at the school five years ago (this is the beginning of my sixth), we were the lowest-performing school in the district. We were in the bottom 10 percent in California in academics. We only had about 17 percent of our students scoring proficient in English Language Arts and 20 percent scoring proficient or above in math.

The average of our school experiences in our district is 12.3 years; at my school site, the average experience is 5.7 years with 4 years in the district. So, I had, not the youngest staff but the least experienced staff. I had 17 first- and second-year teachers. As you can see, this is a high turnover, high-need school.

Since 1976, this school has had anywhere from 50 to 75 percent turnover, where the teachers would leave each spring. In 2004, I had only 10 (out of 30) remaining teachers when I walked on campus that year. At that time, we had approximately 670 students.

The following year, I had six new teachers and one for growth. In 2006, we went from 670 students to more than 1,000 over the summer due to the increase in housing. That year, we had 19 new teachers at the school. The next year, 2007, 16 teachers left, and I found myself spending a lot of time training teachers to serve these students and having them leave the following year.

What I really needed to do was close that quality-teaching gap. Because we were such a low-performing school, we were “program improvement year 5,” which meant we had a lot of professional development that was one-size-fits-all professional development, and we weren’t able to reflect on our practices.

We were what California calls, a “school assistance improvement team,” which means the state took over the school. In addition, we were a district intervention team, too. We were “program improvement year 5,” which means we made our benchmark data for five years and many of students were looking at schools of choice across the freeway.

The things we saw at our school site, was, for example, lack of planning time. There was no collaboration. There wasn’t a buy-in as a professional learning community. No collegiately. Teachers left, and it was difficult.

Why we chose the National Board [approach]. One, we were really looking at ways to build relationships, keep teacher retention, build the communities, and improve quality instruction. When we decided, in 2006-2007, to do National Board, we implemented it in 2007-2008. I had 100 percent of my staff—43 teachers, two administrators and my reading coach. We pursued either full National Board Certification or *Take One!* [A component of the National Board process]. That year, we only lost three teachers, and we had an improvement of 56 points on our API (Academic Progress Inventory). We also made our targets for program improvement.

We went from having 17 percent of our students proficient in English language arts to 30 percent proficient. And in math, we had the same increase. The following year, after completing this, we decided to do it another year. I had another 12 teachers go forward with the National Board, and the rest decided to do another *Take One!* with a focus on early childhood/middle childhood generalist. We only lost one teacher last year. We also had another 46 point gain. We also had 60 percent of our students performing proficient or above in math and 46 percent in English Language Arts. We made our targets. We exited out of program improvement this year.

That, for us was a big achievement. We are no longer considered the lowest school in the district. We're at the midpoint. We have schools at the 800-900 level for us, which means they are high-performing schools. We are ranked about sixth in the district of the 13 elementary schools.

The biggest change for us was collaboration for the teachers and working with the students with the belief that all students can learn. I truly believe that National Board is what made the difference at our school site. The level of conversation at the school has changed from "what's going to happen at the next field trip" to "how can we help every child."

It is do-able, when you look at the demographics at our school, and, when you change the quality of instruction, student achievement goes up.

**Kimberly Oliver Burnim, NBCT**  
**2006 National Teacher of the Year**  
**First Grade Teacher, Broad Acres Elementary School**  
**Silver Spring, Maryland**

It's a pleasure for me to be here with you today. Broad Acres is located right across the line in Montgomery County. It's a school with about 450 students. Ninety percent of our students receive free and reduced meals. We are 100 percent minority. About two-thirds of our students are second-language learners. We also have about a 35 percent mobility rate.

In the year 2000, Broad Acres was one of the worst performing schools in the state of Maryland, and it was the worst performing school in Montgomery County. Among our third graders, 13 percent were proficient in mathematics and 5 percent were proficient on statewide testing. It was a school that was on the brink of academic despair. And so, during that time, Montgomery County decided to do internal structuring of the school to ensure that our students were getting the best possible education that they could get.

We started many efforts with that reform, and one of the things we did was hire a completely new staff. We found that we had a lot of younger teachers who came to our school. Although we wanted to have the best and most qualified teachers and our veteran teachers to come to Broad Acres, we found that when you put a school in the newspaper, you bash it, and you talk about how poor the students are doing and the teachers really don't come running to that school.

During my second year of teaching at Broad Acres, we had one National Board Certified Teacher on staff. She did an informal presentation at a staff meeting, talking about National Board Certification and how it had changed her teaching for the better. I thought about the process and thought about some negative feedback from some colleagues and co-workers who went through the experience. They said it is too stressful, and you couldn't possibly want to do that.

I thought it over for probably a year. After my third year of teaching, I decided that I wanted to become National Board Certified. It was due to that presentation that the NBCT had done because she was an excellent teacher. She was dynamic. She was a leader. More importantly, she was an advocate for students in a way that I had never seen in classroom teachers. She talked her stuff well. She knew what she was doing, and she backed it up. She stood her ground for her kids, no matter what. No matter who tried to say anything different.

So that was my introduction to National Board Certification. That was one of the reasons why I became National Board Certified. It was a trickle effect because that year it was just another colleague and I who attempted the process.

The district really values National Board Certification, so much to the point that our professional growth system and evaluation system for teachers is based solely on the Five Corps Propositions of the National Board. Every teacher may not be National Board certified, but every teacher within Montgomery County Public Schools knows those Five Corps Propositions because that's what they're evaluated on, and it is ingrained in the system. The district decided to come to Broad Acres and see who was interested in National Board Certification and recruited a cohort of 10 teachers to pursue National Board Certification. Those 10 teachers went through the process. Over the three years, all 10 of them achieved National Board Certification.

At a school that is not that big, 10 teachers is a large percentage. We found that we had a lot of great results from those 10 teachers going through certification. It was growing our own quality teachers. That's when we started attracting first- and second-year and novice teachers to our school. We realized that we had to create our own teachers. And so we made our teachers the very best teachers and created a level of excellence at the school through teaching that still stands today. Now we are one of the schools that are sought out by good teachers who want to come to and want to work with the staff.

I found the level of family and community involvement increased dramatically. I look today at programs that we're doing for literacy nights and math nights and parent nights for families and I chuckle because many of those programs started as a result of candidates who were going through National Board Certification. They realized our family involvement and community involvement could be increased. The school culture was affected tremendously. The level of conversations that were going on among staff became more data driven. It became focused on student learning. We had teachers who began to question things that had been done for years, asking, "Why?" "How is this going to improve student achievement?" "What does this mean for our students?" We had a deeper level of reflection going on about things that we were doing, as teachers, and the things that our students were doing. Their produced a level of advocacy among our teachers—where they became like that NBCT who I admired during that very first presentation. All of our teachers now know how to stand up for our students and know how to speak up for our students.

In 2009, eight years later, Broad Acres still has a lot of work to do, but we're no longer the lowest-performing school. In fact, right now, statewide, we're in the top 20 percent for student performance. I think a lot of it has to do with the level of teachers that we have and the influence that National Board Certification has had not only on the teachers who went through the process, but also those teachers who share what they have learned with the rest of the staff at that school.

**John Myers**  
**Vice President, Augenblick, Palaich & Associates**  
**Denver, Colorado**

We're now going to shift from the school site to states and districts. At the state and district level, there are some important things, and school finance is one of the most important at the state level. How to fund school sites resides with state legislatures. When we think about it, in the 2008 legislative sessions, states appropriated about \$300 million to support fee supports and salary supplements for National Board Certification. So I'm going to talk today about two things: School finance from a state and district perspective and then alternative teacher compensation, because that's the intersection between the dollars and the changes that are taking place at school sites.

Augenblick, Palaich & Associates, a Denver-based consulting firm, works primarily on school finance. We have done a lot of work with states on their school finance formulas, recently in Pennsylvania in a major school finance reform initiative, as well as several states and a number of studies that have been done focused on the cost of No Child Left Behind. Often when I've testified in court cases or when we've worked in front of the legislature relating to these school finance studies, the question that comes up always is: "Does money matter?" Or maybe better,

“How does money matter?” And the answer always came back to teacher quality, teacher engagement and the professionalism of teaching. And so I got involved in some of those issues.

In 2008, the National Board asked Augenblick, Palaich & Associates to look at the cost and benefits of the National Board process. We were able to do that from a national perspective and found a positive cost-benefit relationship. Overall, the National Board has become one of the most accepted ways to differentially pay teachers. There are 32 states and more than 700 school districts in the country that provide stipends for National Board Certified Teachers. Although I’ve got to say 2009 has not been a very good year. Overall, we expect a continuing trend toward more states that are going to be involved in paying for fee supports and salary supplements for National Board Certified Teachers.

Augenblick, Palaich & Associates also did a peer review—a research journal article that looked at the issue of alternative teacher pay and what’s going on in the country. We identified some selected sites in the country that we looked at closely. When we looked at those, we found that programs vary in a lot of different ways. The successful ones were those that had strong teacher engagement and those that involved a broad base of assessments. It wasn’t simply a standardized test score that was being rewarded and other things. We found during the research that half of the sites we looked at had a strong National Board support program, and the buy-in of teachers often related to the fact that National Board Certified Teachers were a part of that.

I’ve been working with the Austin Independent School District in Texas. In 2007, the district kicked off a pilot program that has grown now this year to 15 school sites in Austin. They call that program AISD Reach. It was originally called, “strategic compensation.” I wanted to mention just a few things that as we design the programs, are being used in those pilot sites on alternative teacher pay. Among the first team of core staff that we’re working with on the project -- four of the five original professionals were National Board Certified Teachers. We included as part of one of the elements would be *Take One!*. The program is the beginning professional development that is available to all teachers and that was both rewarded in those pilot sites. High-needs pilot sites as well as supported. This year last, in 2008-2009, the teachers that went through it, and 100 percent said that they would recommend it to other teachers. This year we have a much larger group of people who will be going through *Take One!* in Austin.

By and large, National Board Certification is a piece of this new and emerging education reform which is supported by the Department of Education, supported by all of the federal grants that are coming as well as the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association as an alternative compensation method. In the area of finance and alternative compensation for teachers, National Board Certification is playing an important role.

**Gary Sykes**  
**Michigan State University**

We might say that what the National Board is doing at this moment is moving from a model that states, one teacher at a time, to a model that states, one school at a time.

The original vision of the National Board was to certify outstanding teachers. The initial waves of research were aimed at discovering whether, in fact, National Board Certified Teachers were effective with respect to hard and soft measures and student learning. But we're moving rapidly into an era when the great issue before the country concerns schools that need to be improved. So, school-wide strategies are on the table—and in play.

What the National Board is beginning to do today is to work out strategies through which it can participate in the nation's drive to improve schools that need the most improvement. What we heard on the left (practitioner) side of the podium were several inspirational stories. But the National Board's potential is largely aspirational. That is to say, it has great potential, but it is at the dawn of beginning to realize what that potential is with respect to its capability in driving school-wide change above the individual teacher and in the school as a whole.

I think that in some respects [school-wide change] is the great new mission of the National Board. Certainly, the Board's original mission was to achieve a number that might be around 10 percent of all American teachers who are National Board Certified. That was a number and a goal. It is still a goal, and I firmly believe that goal will be achieved in the coming years despite the setbacks brought on by the recession.

I think that the movement now, in addition to realizing the goal of one teacher at a time, is for the National Board to begin to work out strategies so it can contribute to this new mission of one school at a time: To recognize that National Board Certified Teachers are social resources for their schools in improving school-wide culture, performance, innovation and high expectations for all *students*—particularly those students who have historically not been well-served by American schools.

I think that the new mission of the National Board will not replace its original mission but will stand alongside it as the National Board continues as a new and innovative organization whose deepest purpose is to improve the learning of America's children.

**Laura Desimone**  
**University of Pennsylvania**

It was so wonderful to hear the inspirational stories from our two expert teachers. It made me think of the decades of research we have been able to identify regarding the characteristics of effective schools—shared mission, professional community, reflective practice, collaboration, strong instructional leaders, data-based decision-making. We've had study after study that has come to consensus about what those features are.

Where we have a real challenge is how to develop those characteristics in struggling schools that don't already have those characteristics. What I heard is that—what we know from some of them and the work that has been done: This certification offers an opportunity, a path to reach some of those effective school characteristics. So you can take a school that is struggling on many levels and use the National Board Certification process—the framework, the standards, and the reflective practice—to develop a professional community around high quality practice that sees its way into the classroom.

So taking Gary's [Sykes] articulated idea about school-to-school reform, National Board Certification holds promise in terms of being a mechanism to develop some of these school-wide characteristics that we know are effective but where some of the comprehensive school reform and other methods have sometimes fallen short. I would like to hear some of the details about how that transfer occurred between having some of the teachers go through the National Board Certification process and then coming back to the school. What I heard a lot it was through professional communities—where teachers collaborating, reflecting on their practice, changing the culture where all students can learn and practicing database decision-making--again, the factors that we know are important. National Board Certification seems like a very powerful way to actually achieve them.

Secondly, I'd like to see us think about moving even beyond school-by-school reform. If you look at the most effective schools and turnaround schools, many people know school-by-school reform can work, but it's a very slow process. The districts can play a very important role here. And one of our participants described how a district adopted National Board Standards for their teachers. I think that is one mechanism that the National Board may think about using as a strong leverage point. If districts could think about using the National Board Certification process—e.g., standards, portfolio development—for their framework, about how they induct new teachers, and for the professional development they provide. To develop a culture around this high quality teaching could not only address individual quality as individual teachers grow in a particular district but also create a culture of high quality teaching in every school—if a district takes on a leadership role.

This certification process and the standards and activities that go with it have great potential to contribute to district-and school-wide reform. I look forward to the National Board taking on a strong role in leveraging that with districts and schools.

**Jorgelina Abbate-Vaughn**  
**University of Massachusetts—Boston**

For 10 years, I have been doing clinical supervision for teachers before they are recommended for initial certification. Last spring, I had the opportunity and fortune to spend a semester observing accomplished teachers—veteran teachers recommended by the community—and many of them overlapped with National Board Certified Teachers. After the end of the semester, my chair asked me how was it to observe experienced National Board Certified Teachers compared to pre-service teachers. My response was: This is the caviar of clinical supervision. It was a luxury semester. I learned more than I would ever think I could learn from reading—because the practices of these teachers were so outstanding.

I live in a state where National Board Certified Teacher numbers are not large. I have had the opportunity to observe about 30 NBCTs in Boston, Springfield, Cambridge. What came about, so I said to myself, is that National Board Certification is really a process to identify outstanding teachers. That's what I came out with from my research. Dr. Bonelli's and Kimberly's statements have made me think that this is not only a process for identifying excellent teachers, it is also process where good teachers can be held to a common standard, and therefore all can improve.

Dr. Bonelli's remarks showed us in a school where the commitment is there, and the energy is present. Good organizational skills on the part of the principal or superintendent can really get a group of teachers who are committed to underserved populations to really get there. And I think Kimberly also showed an example of how that can happen. I have learned about the effect of National Board Certification on urban districts. I personally was, for seven years, an urban teacher. So I was very familiar with this situation and the situations that they faced. I think there is a power to be unleashed. In my papers, I cited three of those cases of National Board Certified Teachers who went above and beyond which I could have ever thought. They were teachers next to me 10 years ago. I think there is a force to be unleashed and used smartly by school districts, superintendents and policymakers a lot better than what we can do from the university. So there is some connection to be made between what can be done at the university and what school districts can do in partnering with NBCTs to further the purposes of school reform.

## **Questions and Comments from the Audience**

**Question: What is different between National Board Certification and other professional development?**

**Laura Desimone:** I do some research on teachers and professional development. The literature that looks at effective characteristics of professional development identifies two of the qualities that the NBCTs mentioned: the active learning (in and out of each other's classrooms—being

observed) and the reflecting on student work and personal challenges and lessons that teachers are using. These are findings that are consistent with the wider findings about effective professional development. So I wasn't surprised. It seems like a great match with the generic what we know about professional development practices and an actual model of what we can do.

**Virginia Richardson:** I think also that the standards are very clear. You have them listed; you can work to the standards and have feedback as well.

**Question: In terms of professional development, how is National Board Certification different from the rest?**

**Kiela Bonelli:** I am a National Board Certified Teacher, certified in 2000. And going through the process, I felt it was the best professional development I ever had. It made me a better teacher. I've been talking about it with my staff. Having a staff in an under-performing school in California means a lot of professional development that's in and out. You go for training for a week, you get a packet and that's the end of the professional development. There's no reflection, so we needed something that really had that third prong of professional development: We needed that reflection piece.

We decided to go forward with a three-year commitment to National Board Certification so that every single teacher at my school site could potentially be a National Board Certified Teacher at the end of the third year. The big key is the reflection, a three-pronged piece. We plan the lessons together; we teach the lessons; we use the videotapes as a reflection; and we discuss how the lesson went and go back and we teach it. That is the key piece that is missing from a lot of our professional development as teachers. We're given the information, but we're not given the opportunity to practice and reflect.

For my staff, that was a big step because now we are opening up the classroom doors. They are going into each other's classrooms. They are watching lessons and giving each other feedback, which, in turn, has improved the level and quality of instruction that is going on at the school site for these needy students that we have.

**Kimberly Oliver Burnim:** I think one of the most powerful things at Broad Acres was, number one, it was voluntary. It was something that teachers self selected. But I also think that it was based in the work that we were already doing in the classroom with our students. It was a very authentic professional development experience with teachers. We had teachers going through graduate programs and different trainings and things always wondering: "How do I tailor this to my students?" I think that authenticity is what is often missing from professional development. And that is what National Board Certification offers.

**Question:** When schools were designated failing, you were provided with support systems for professional development to make that school successful. Now that your schools are successful and the support systems are gone, how can you continue to provide professional development?

**Kimberly Oliver Burnim:** Once you increase the capacity of teachers, you can't take that away from them. Once you instill in teachers that we have high expectations for our students—that every child can learn, it's our job to ensure that they learn. We're not doing this for a paycheck. We're doing it because that's what we believe in our hearts and that's what we've signed up to do. So I think when you have good teachers at high-need schools, even if you take the supports away, it'll be more difficult. I think the level of progress can still continue to arise because of the teachers you have in those schools.

**Kiela Bonelli:** Financially, we didn't have much support. It came down to teacher commitment for making changes for the students and the only financial support I was able to give them was to help with cost of National Board Certification. The collaboration time was on their own, on scheduled weekly meetings. As Kim said, once you build capacity, the teachers want to do it and be the best that they can be. My teachers are very committed to the process and, with the third year, they want to complete it. They're doing it on their own; they're building from within, from the ground up. Last year we had five that certified of the 43. At this point, we're continuing to reflect on our practices, and we are moving forward to meet the needs of our students.

**John Myers:** What gets in the way of good professional development from a state perspective and district perspective is when money comes in categorical blocks that can be taken away. When we do adequacy studies with states, we look at what is the proper role of the state, the school district and the school site. Teaching and learning happens in a classroom, not at the state level. The proper role in standards-based reform is the state sets standards. Assessments are tied to those standards and school districts are held accountable for meeting those standards.

Nothing in there says how you go about teaching and learning—how you go about professional development. It should be made and mandated from a federal perspective. The problem with good professional development support from a state and federal perspective is when it is categorically mandated and required. It should be an option for the school site and school district.

**Question:** Can you tell us more about the upcoming plans for National Board Certification for principals, assistant principals and teacher leaders.

**Joseph Aguerrebere:** The National Board is going in a new direction in addressing many professionals in a school who have important roles to play. We are about improving the capacity of all professionals—whether at the school level or any other level to be effective in working with all students. We started with teachers—and that is our core business. We are expanding to other people who have a role.

We had heard from so many teachers around the country that, if my principal had to through something similar to what I went through to become National Board Certified, it would go a long way toward helping improve the school and also support the positive momentum that is going on. The principals are now asking for it. So we have many positive vibes from around the country of principals who want to be a part of the pilot—who want to test it out, want to see what the standards are. Evidence of that was during the public comment period when we developed the draft standards. We received 5,000 comments for our initial statements and an additional 2,800 comments for the standards. We'll talk about that a little bit more when it's underway.

**Question: Two recent studies find a stronger connection between curriculum/student achievement and school climate/student achievement than teaching quality/student achievement. Have you seen the studies and what is your response?**

**Gary Sykes:** Either/or thinking doesn't make sense. It's almost always "and." Both good teachers and good curriculum and school climate produce higher achievement in students. I don't think the implication that curriculum and school climate are important undercuts the importance of teacher quality. I'm not inclined to think that these citings or reports contradict other research that supports the importance of teachers. I wouldn't deny for a minute that curriculum and school climate are important. So are good teachers.

**John Myers:** To build on Gary's comments--giving you some recent examples: I mentioned the Austin program. We are not just working on professional development through *Take One!* with these teachers, we are also working on student learning objectives, curriculum improvement projects and a new look at assessments. In Denver, there is a new teacher-led school run by National Board Certified Teachers. In Austin, there is a pilot school led by an NBCT who has become the principal. So this combination of doing many things at the same time is working in a better way than what was seen by comprehensive school reforms in the past.

**Jorgelina Abbate-Vaughn:** I am in agreement with Gary. A good curriculum is as good as the teacher who delivers it. Without quality teaching, classroom management and rapport with the students—a curriculum doesn't do much. So it is always a combination of the three. Yes, a scripted curriculum can be delivered, but in a perfunctory way, which is rigid for the students. The teacher needs to be is high quality and one who knows how to deliver that perfect curriculum to the needs of the diverse learners in the classroom.

**Kimberly Oliver Burnim:** You find that your best teachers want a good leader; they want a good curriculum, they want a school that has a good school climate. Teaching is the hardest job out there. If you can have things to make your job easier, then your best teachers are probably seeking them out and are at those schools that have them. So I'm sure there is a correlation, but I still believe that the teacher is the number-one factor.

**Question: Describe the inclusion and collaboration of special education teachers at your school with respect to National Board Certification and *Take One!***

**Kiela Bonelli:** Because of the number of fields or certificate areas, every single one of my teachers could participate in National Board Certification or *Take One!* I even did *Take One!* myself. I have three special education teachers on campus and a severely handicapped teacher. I have a special-day-class teacher, and I have a resource teacher. All three were part of the process with us. All three have gone forward with full National Board Certification. I believe that all three will certify. What's been amazing for them is that they have become the leaders in the district for our special education department. Our district is under program improvement, so they are doing the collaboration days district-wide in special education. So they are playing the part of role models throughout the district.

**What effect did the *Take One!* process have on teachers with less than 3 years?**

**Kiela Bonelli:** A lot of our first- and second-year teachers did very well with *Take One!* And now, except for one teacher, all are going forward with full National Board Certification. The only reason why the one is not going forward is because she is only a second-year teacher.

Those who were with me three years ago are all going forward with full board certification because they saw the benefit and the support it provided for them. Several of my first and second year teachers during their first two years said they don't think they could have made it at our school site without *Take One!*

I had a full grade level, fourth grade, consisting of five first-year teachers who did *Take One!* in English as a New Language. They had the highest test scores in Palm Springs Unified for the fourth grade. With the demographics we had, it was an amazing feat for first-year teachers. Collaboratively, they are still working together, and they are probably my strongest team at the school site. It was because they used *Take One!* as an induction program for the first two years.

**Question: Regarding the percentage of NBCT cohorts that are math and science teachers, is this an area where the National Board may choose to push in the future?**

**Joseph Aguerrebere:** Math and science certification is at the secondary school level, and we have more elementary teachers who are National Board Certified than secondary school teachers. So there aren't as many of them. However, as a percentage, I think they are probably proportional to the numbers of math and science teachers that exist in the system altogether.

Having said that, there are literally thousands of math and science teachers—elementary, middle and high school teachers around the country who are National Board Certified. And many of them are involved in lots of interesting activities, which probably explains why the Presidential Award for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching has a disproportionate number of National Board Certified Teachers. The area that we are working on more importantly is how we can strengthen those particular skills among elementary teachers. To that end, we are actually trying to look at what math and science teachers are going through—in particular, the math portion—and see what we can do to strengthen that. So, with the help of a gift from a corporation, we are going to launch an online professional development program to strengthen math teaching among all teachers who want to get stronger—particularly elementary and middle school teachers.

**Question: To what extent are the practices at large of the NBPTS informing what is happening in the pre-service.**

**Jorgelina Abbate-Vaughn:** After you have this experience, you look at your list of cooperating teachers and think what you need to change there. So we recruit more NBCTs to mentor our pre-service teachers. I think that the district, to a limited extent, uses NBCTs to mentor teachers in the induction process in the first year. One of my colleagues that I highlight in my summary has been doing that for the district. So, it's both processes: 1) informing the pre-service service teacher education and 2) informing the induction/mentoring period that most states have to do the induction of novice teachers into the profession.

Colleges don't show standard practices: There are certainly standards from the states. But people go into teaching with different skills. What National Board Certified Teachers do is help colleges with a standard of optional practices. That's certainly another way that districts need to start looking at NBCTs—as the people who can do induction and mentoring.

**Virginia Richardson:** There is an experiment at George Mason University where the student teachers—when they go to student teach—will go through one of the processes of National Board/*Take One!* And they will receive three credit hours as part of their program. So, I think it is slowly moving into teacher education at this point.

**Question:** What about a system where a school would like to get involved but doesn't have a core group of school leaders to work with that would get people involved?

**Tony Norman:** I'm associate dean at the Western Kentucky University, and one observation is that the core propositions are something that, through our accreditation process, we have to address the talk about the quality of our programs. In fact, one of the interesting things that happened in Kentucky -- the whole state has come under a mandate from our standards board that we have to revisit our Masters program and be able to articulate to the state that our advanced teacher preparation programs—Masters level—have to show how they are aligned to the core propositions of the National Board. Clearly what's happening here is the filtering down to teacher preparation—particularly advanced preparation. What's happening is that *Take One!*, in particular and the National Board process has moved from more of a recognition process to a program for professional growth. My observation is that it has been successful because there are natural leaders in the school—who were already certified or saw certification as a process to by which to move forward. And those leaders helped bring people along. What about a system where a school would like to get involved but doesn't have a core group of leaders to work with that would get people involved. What scaffolding tools and other support systems could the National Board use to support those schools?

**Gary Sykes:** This draws attention to a policy argument that rises out of the experiences that the practitioners have presented. There is an argument today about how the nation solves—not the production problem of teachers, but the distribution problem. We are all aware of the fact that teachers are unevenly distributed across schools. One response to that problem is to pay teachers more to go to teach in schools that are having trouble recruiting teachers. And we are going to see a lot of experiments of that kind unfold in the coming year. The research on prior efforts of that kind is not promising. The alternative is “grow your own”—both with respect to teacher prep programs in the locales that need those teachers and also with respect to what it is that teachers in the schools currently can do to enhance the value of the staffs that are there.

In both the stories we heard today, it wasn't to import teachers from somewhere else to raise the quality of the staff, it was an indigenous effort of the staff to build the quality of people who were there. That's what National Board Certification can do. It can be a very powerful resource in “growing your own” to improve staff quality and retention in schools that desperately need good teachers. So my money is strongly on that approach rather on an approach that we need to pay teachers more and bring them in from somewhere else to teach in high poverty, high-need schools. That approach is unlikely to have significant payoff. I do believe that “grow your own” strategies, for which the National Board can be instrumental, can get more leverage on that critical problem.

**Virginia Richardson:** Might there be a combination? In both schools, there happened to be National Board Certified Teachers at the schools. Might there be a combination—make sure there is a National Board Certified Teacher at the school and then work with what’s there?

**Keith Geiger (NBPTS Staff):** The THIN/*Take One!* (Targeted High Need Initiative) —where we used federal dollars to help teachers go through *Take One!*—started three years ago. Let me, just by numbers, tell you where we have gone in those three years. The first year, I had 54-55 sites (at the December 31/the end of the first year, which is the deadline for applications for *Take One!* we had about 1,300 candidates. Last year, we had about 54 or 55 sites—and by the end of the year, we had had about 2,100 candidates. This year, projecting, we are going to have 54-56 candidates—but we will have 2,500 candidates.

What we are doing is moving from a few teachers in this building or a few teachers in that building—and moving to whole school reform. In fact, I almost had a whole school district, but the teachers couldn’t settle their contract, and they bailed out on me. Otherwise, we would have had a whole school district.

In THNI/*Take One* this year, I will have about 20 buildings, where I will have everybody doing *Take One!*—including the principal and assistant principals. When I say “everybody,” we don’t include teachers who may be retiring and say: “Don’t make me do it.” We excuse them. But that means, just about everybody on the staff.

**Celeste Bagley (NBPTS Staff):** I just want to add to Keith’s response to what happens if there are no natural leaders in a school regarding implementing *Take One!* We have two new tools: 1) the *Take One! Implementation Guide*. A facilitator in a school can use that from September to April and it has specific learning objectives; and 2) activities for workshops when you are taking a group of teachers through the process. And we also have a series of Webinars that we are offering on a repeating basis that will help facilitators—not only with workshop topics but also interpersonal skills so help teachers work as a team.

**Question: In the early years of National Board Certification, teachers became certified but no one—principals in particular—didn’t find their accomplishment significant enough to change the way they worked in the schools. This seems to be changing. Have the principals finally caught on—or is it something else?**

**David Mandel:** I’m with the National Center for Education and the Economy. The story that we are hearing today is nicely uplifting in many ways. But it’s a different story than what we heard in the early days of National Board Certification. Part of it is the same. The part that’s the same is this notion of teachers coming back and going back through the process—and teachers who weren’t successful the first try saying that it’s the best professional development experience that

ever happened to them. And, I was most impressed with those teachers. It's not just teachers who were successful who told me so.

The other part of the story wasn't so rosy. It's when teachers came back to school, and they were all dressed up with no place to go. No one—the principals especially—didn't find their accomplishment all that significant to change the way in which they worked with their colleagues to start with. And the whole notion that the promise of National Board Certification as a way to change the culture of the school and to increase the chances that the strongest of the faculty have a positive effect on the rest of the faculty wasn't seen much and reported in the literature. But that seems to be changing now. I'm curious from amongst the panelist as to why those changes have occurred. Whether it's just the passage of time and the growing acceptance of National Board Certified Teachers; whether it's principals who have finally caught on; or whether it's something else, because it certainly feels different, and it would be good to understand why.

**Gary Sykes:** The research we did found exactly what David is talking about. One kind of story would go like this: A principal in a school has a handful of National Board Certified Teachers who are among the staff. But the principal has to be very careful not to show any favoritism to any of the teachers on the staff and, as a consequence, was leery of making any moves that would benefit National Board Certified Teachers because that disrupts the traditional culture of schools that is highly egalitarian and highly individualistic. So, in the schools where we did field work, we found that's what the principals said to us. When we asked them, "How are you making use of these Board Certified Teachers?" they said, "We have to be very careful because this can backfire." David, I hope things are changing—simply because National Board Certification is becoming more widely accepted and recognized for what its benefits are. But I'm not even sure that it's a question of the culture of schools, but instead it's a question of the culture of teaching—the ethos of the occupation and the fact that the principal has to accept that ethos. We know this takes a long time. The time frame is closer to 25 years than 5 years—and we're 20 years into this. I think it's moving slowly but it's beginning to happen. You are absolutely right. The early research showed exactly what you are talking about—especially on the part of administrators.

**Virginia Richardson:** The focus on the school that is happening now at the National Board is going to make a difference. What happened before is that individuals decided to go through the process—almost by themselves—and now with the focus on the school level, and it probably will be different.

**Question: Describe how National Board Certification is changing the culture of a school**

**Kiela Bonelli:** I achieved National Board Certification 10 years ago and I do know what you're talking about when it comes to being underutilized. I believe there is a shift at the school site

especially at mine, because we see those going through the process as going above and beyond—and seeing what’s needed. They naturally become leaders and rise to the top at the school site. Even though I wasn’t given a leadership role, we had the qualities that were necessary to be leaders at the school site. I’m finding that in my teachers at my site – my site was a school that no one wanted to be at. If you ask, five years ago, “Where you are from?” And you said, “Julius Corsini,” you’d hear the groan across the district. Now, we have people who want to be at our school site, because they see the level of professionalism with our teachers; how they enjoy working together; they’ll do whatever it takes to be the best at instruction.

It has trickled out throughout the district. We have 30 more teachers moving forward with full National Board Certification at schools wanting to do the same thing and mainly at our under-performing middle school. They are being seen as leaders—very naturally as being great teachers.

**Kimberly Oliver Burnim:** I think we’re at a point where we’re really looking at teacher leadership. A lot of the teacher leadership roles that are available for teachers are informal roles, so there are things that teachers do above and beyond their normal day of planning, teaching, grading and everything else that a teacher has to do. It’s extra work, and usually you’re not paid for that work. So, there are very few formalized teacher leadership roles where you have teachers in schools working with teachers and released from the classroom for some part of the time.

I think we’re at a point in time in the profession where we need to reevaluate the way that we’re utilizing our teachers and create more opportunities for flexibility and job sharing so that we can utilize teachers and not burn them out by only asking them to do above and beyond what they’re already doing which is already a full-time job and hard work.

## **Concluding Remarks**

**Joseph A. Aguerrebere**  
**President and CEO**  
**National Board for Professional Teaching Standards**

On one side of the dais, we had, what I call, “healthy skeptics,” where we had people asking tough questions. Those kinds of comments we wouldn’t have heard 10 or 15 or over 20 years ago when the National Board first got off the ground. When you think about the history, and there are some people in the room who were here at the time of creation, no one really knew at that time if we built it would they in fact come.

In 1983, there was the “Nation At Risk” report, the presidentially commissioned report that talked about the fact that, as a country, we were not competitive economically and globally—and

that we needed to improve the education of young people in order to be competitive. Sound familiar? What was under-addressed in that report besides talking about the fact that they needed to take more years of English, more years of math, etc., was the role that educators play in helping students to meet those higher standards. In 1986, there was a blue ribbon commission that the Carnegie Corporation put together to take a look at the role that educators can play. They issued a report—and among the recommendation in that report, was the call for the creation of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

The idea was not a new idea in the larger society. We've heard of board certified doctors, certified public accountants, board certified architects. The concept for teachers was something new. Between 1987 when the board got off the ground and 1995, it took a lot of work to come to some sort of professional consensus about what teachers should know and be able to do at an accomplished level. In that first group—in 1994-95—that certified, there only were about 100. These were early pioneers. At that time, it was about self-selection. What National Board Certified Teachers in the room know is you get this box in the mail, and you're supposed to go through and videotape with an analysis and you put it in a binder. It's a correspondence course in a way. We want to take that from being a correspondence course where you get stuff in the mail that you send back to being an experience that is profound and career-changing.

Today, you heard from experiences from Kim and Kiela—not just individually but moving to that next stage that Gary talked about which is taking that experience and looking at it as a collective experience. Gary once talked about the development of human capital to the development of social capital—in other words, individuals in their development to this kind of collective environment and how people can work together in order to accomplish goals.

The other thing that has changed, I'd have to say, is that the questions that are still out there. When you hear the discourse out there in this country about what it is we need to do in order to improve education, we still have a lot of people saying: “We don't know how to measure teacher quality,” “We can't define it,” “We don't know what it looks like,” “We don't have any models.”

I'd have to say, we do. And, we have been at this for a while now. We can define what accomplished teaching looks like; we actually have a language to talk about it. They now realize that they actually do have a practice just like other professions—and that there is a language to talk about what works, what doesn't work and what good and effective ways to do this are.

The other question we often hear is that we don't know enough about how to turn around low-performing schools and we need more information. I think what you heard today is at least an important ingredient in that mix that we do know the role of quality teaching and also other factors. I think the part that we need to work on—and we are working with folks in the field is

the “how”: How do we develop these kinds of characteristics that we know exist in effective schools?

I guess the analogy would be that you can look at a cookbook if you want to learn how to cook something and follow the recipe. It's another thing when it's done in the hands of a master chef who knows that even if you follow the recipe there may be some differences or some changes. I think that's the impact we're beginning to see.

That leads us to this other logistical step and that is impacting the other professionals who work in schools—mainly teacher leaders, assistant principals and principals. December 8<sup>th</sup> is that launching event where we will publicly announce the fact that we're moving into this arena. We have understood and learned a lot from the work in developing standards for teachers and now it's time to move on to other folks who work in schools.

On December 8<sup>th</sup>, here at the National Press Club, I invite all of you to join us as we talk about the process that we're going through. The process that we're going through is very similar to the process we went through the first time around—a very inclusive, broad-based approach, bringing in the best minds and more importantly, the best practitioners around the country to come to some professional consensus about what it is that principals should know and be able to do; what teacher leaders should know and be able to do and other people in different capacities.

The initial work has begun, starting in the early part of this year – something we call Core Propositions, which are our value statements that reflect the different domains that people in leadership positions be concerned with. The next part is the development of standards. We have draft standards that have been out in the field getting public comment and brought before our Board of Directors and hopefully, if they approve them, we move on to developing an assessment. That assessment design is important to the challenge that we have and that is, just like the teacher experience, we don't want it to be a multiple choice kind of test where you sit in front a computer and answer a bunch of questions and then you come out certified. This has to be an ongoing, professional growth experience.

There's a lot more that could be said but I want to leave you with the fact that we are in a very interesting time as it relates to education. If you listen to the discussions going on, you will hear the Administration talking about the unprecedented amounts of resources that will be available to help schools improve, to help teachers improve and actually do a better job at educating our children. It is unprecedented in terms of amounts of money.

The worry I have, with everybody rushing around, trying to come up with a proposal that they think makes sense that might garner some money, is that lots of ideas will be out there unproven and will be tried and a few years later, we will be saying: “Well we tried that and that didn't

work either and we threw a lot of money at the problem and therefore we need to do something else.”

Part of the message this morning is we actually know a lot more than we're doing, and we actually have certain parts of the solution here. That is investing in the capacity of the professionals in the system as a proven method—and we have lots of research to back it up and growing evidence that continued evidence that over time, will continue to make a difference that is lasting and that can actually be taken to scale. Those areas are actually things that we all need to be thinking about as we have discussions where ever we live related to the “Race to the Top” proposals that states are busy putting together, innovation fund proposals, the school improvement funds and, as our Board Chairman, Governor Wise continues to talk about, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization, which is in process. That is an opportunity for good ideas like what the National Board has to offer to be embedded into the education improvement cycle in this country as opposed to the stimulus funds which are one-time funds.

The ESEA reauthorization is ongoing. That, I think, is an important message. When you have these discussions in your localities and jurisdictions, share the good news that there are solutions, and we know a lot more. We don't have to reinvent the wheel, as I'm afraid some of these ideas are going to do. We can embed them in the ESEA act.