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The Honorable George Miller
Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Kline
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Miller and Ranking Member Kline:

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is pleased to provide comments to inform the Committee's development of legislation to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Since the early 1960's, the federal role in education dramatically expanded from collecting information on schools and teaching, to helping states establish effective school systems, and finally, to supporting the equalization of educational opportunities for traditionally underserved populations. With the enactment of ESEA in 1965, Congress launched a comprehensive set of reforms, including the Title I program of Federal aid to disadvantaged children to address the problems of poor urban and rural areas. The policy underlying this expansion has been the basis for many federal initiatives designed to improve education for those long neglected by the educational system. Yet, 45 years later, the challenges facing our nation's schools remain as critical as ever. At no point in our nation's history has leadership in our schools been of greater importance. But we are falling further behind in reaching this goal and our global standing continue to slip.

The National Board embraces the challenge of transforming the nation's lowest performing schools, and is at a point in its development where it can contribute significantly to that goal. At its inception, the National Board was designed to certify teachers, one teacher at a time. While individual certification continues to be a core part of its mission, the focus of the National Board now is expanding from individuals achieving National Board Certification into a systemic movement that changes the culture of whole classrooms, schools and districts by leveraging National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) to build human capital—especially in high-need schools. The National Board programs are proven and time-tested ways to help meet the goals of ESEA and should be explicitly included in the reauthorization.

Below are the specific recommendations that NBPTS urges the Committee to include in the legislation to reauthorize ESEA. For consistency, the comments are organized to follow the general framework of the Administration's *A Blueprint for Educational Reform*.

I. Standards, Assessment, and Accountability

The National Board believes that the ESEA Reauthorization should use the same definitions of student learning and achievement as reflected in the National Board Certification standards and assessment process for teachers:

Student achievement is the status of subject-matter knowledge, understanding, and skills at one point in time.

Student learning is growth in subject-matter knowledge, understanding, and skills over time. In essence, a change in achievement constitutes learning. It is student learning—not student achievement—that is most relevant to defining and assessing accomplished teaching.

There is a fundamental distinction between student achievement, which presents a snapshot of subject matter knowledge, skills and understanding at one point in time, versus student learning, which measures growth in subject-matter knowledge, understanding and skills over time. It is important to explicitly link measures of student learning to teacher practice. Learning gains should always be interpreted in the context of the instruction that was provided. The process by which teachers correlate learning gains over time with their instructional plans and strategies also allows them to adapt their teaching practice to address specific student needs. When multiple measures of student learning accurately reflect growth in student progress over time, they can serve as part of a broader range of tools that capture information about both student learning and teacher practice. NBPTS recommends that the following approaches to measuring student achievement as identified by an NBPTS task force be incorporated into the definition of “student achievement”.

1. Alignment of standardized student assessments with the curricula and student learning goals.

If an assessment is to truly capture a teacher’s contributions to student learning, it must reflect the breadth of the curriculum and standards that teacher is expected to teach. State-level assessments and standards that target basic skills may also have limitations in evaluating the higher order skills associated with accomplished teaching.

2. Metrics incorporating measures of student learning in addition to a snapshot of achievement.

Such measures require data systems that track students over time and are capable of providing information about student learning at multiple points during a specific teacher’s interaction with an individual student. While “value-added” models incorporate information about prior student achievement, the extent to which they capture growth in learning over time varies from model to model, and thus require further refinement.

3. Inclusion and accommodation. Policies should address the assessment of students with special needs or limited English proficiency, which vary from state to state. The assessments themselves also must be validated for these student populations.

4. Scaling and equivalence among assessments and curricula. Differences in standards, curricula and assessment methods across states—and, at times, individual districts—make it challenging to

fairly assess teachers on an even playing field. NBPTS offers common, national standards for accomplished teachers which should be incorporated and aligned with common student standards under development.

5. **Breadth.** Breadth is particularly important given that standardized assessments are typically only given in certain grade levels and subjects. Assessment should be available in all subject areas. Estimates suggest that less than one-third of all K-12 teachers have the assessment data required to develop measures of student learning for use in teacher evaluation.

II. Great Teachers and Leaders

A key task of a highly effective teacher is to use the knowledge of the student to develop strategies that utilize the child's background as a starting point, and a possible strength upon which to build toward success. This information can be used to craft differentiated instructional techniques that meet the needs of each student. Effective teachers should expect all of their students to reach high goals, and should be equipped with various strategies for helping students to achieve, realizing that every student starts at a different place and may require a different path to accomplish the same goals.

National Board Certified Teachers embody the very essence of what it means to be a highly effective teacher. Unfortunately, under NCLB, the term "highly qualified" became virtually meaningless, as states reported as many as 100 percent of their teachers as highly qualified. The term cannot be sufficiently rehabilitated and should be changed to "highly effective." In addition, while we do not suggest that a teacher must be an NBCT to be considered highly effective, the ESEA reauthorization should clearly reflect that *all* NBCTs meet that standard, by whatever definition is used.

NBPTS has created a national standards and assessment process that reaches across all teaching content areas and developmental levels. The ESEA Reauthorization process should reflect the National Board Certification process, which is a widely-accepted, multi-dimensional measurement of teacher effectiveness that has stood the test of time. The standards and assessment process for National Board Certification of teachers is based on the NBPTS Five Core Propositions which frame the knowledge, skills, dispositions and beliefs that characterize National Board Certified Teachers.

The National Board recommends that the NBPTS Five Core Propositions form the basis for the definition of highly effective teachers included in the final guidelines.

1. **Teachers are committed to students and their learning.** Teachers are dedicated to making knowledge accessible to all students and believe all students can learn. They treat students equitably—recognizing the individual differences that distinguish their students from one another and taking these differences into account in their practice. They understand how students develop and learn.
2. **Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.** Teachers have mastery over the subject(s) they teach and have a deep understanding of the history, structure

and real-world applications of the subject. They have skill and experience in teaching it, are very familiar with the skills gaps and preconceptions students may bring to the subject and are able to use diverse instructional strategies to teach for understanding.

3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning. They deliver effective instruction; move fluently through a range of instructional techniques—keeping students motivated, engaged and focused; and know how to organize instruction to meet instructional goals. They know how to assess the progress of individual students as well as the class as a whole.

4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learning from experience. They model what it means to be an educated person. They read, question, create and are willing to try new things. They critically examine their practice on a regular basis to deepen knowledge, expand their repertoire of skills and incorporate new findings into their practice.

5. Teachers are members of learning communities. They collaborate with others to improve student learning—including partnerships with community groups and businesses; working with other professionals on instructional policy, curriculum development and staff development; and working with parents to engage them productively in the work of the school. They can evaluate school progress and the allocation of resources in order to meet state and local education objectives.

In sum, the core propositions paint images of highly effective teachers that are multifaceted and complex. They describe a teacher's skills that go beyond credentials and subject matter knowledge. The current definition of quality teaching as stated in ESEA underestimates the complexities and overlooks its non-routine nature and the importance of independent professional judgment. A more complete description of quality teaching describes the inner workings of teaching that require a well-trained professional who can bring to bear professional judgments that are appropriate for each student.

Effective Principals

Effective principals reflect collaborative actions that advance learning to the highest levels for every child. They recruit, engage, promote and retain accomplished teachers; improve school culture and student performance; advocate for the profession and the needs of their school; and purposefully engage families and the broader community in the school's vision and mission.

Two years ago, NBPTS began work to develop the National Board Certification for Educational Leaders (NBCEL). To date, the Core Propositions are completed, the standards are under final consideration, and the assessment design is underway. The results of this work should be reflected in the framework for educational leaders in the ESEA reauthorization

The following standards will be the basis for the National Board's Advanced Certification for Principals, currently under development. Although they are designed at the accomplished level, they should serve as aspirational standards for all school leaders:

1. **Leadership for Results.** Accomplished principals lead with a sense of urgency to achieve the highest results for all students and adults. They build organizational capacity by developing leadership in others. These dynamic, forward-thinking principals lead collaborative organizations that realize and sustain positive change to enhance teacher practice and improve student learning.
2. **Vision and Mission.** Accomplished principals lead and inspire the learning community to develop, articulate, and commit to a shared and compelling vision of the highest levels of student learning and adult practice. These principals advance the mission through collaborative processes that focus and drive the organization toward the vision.
3. **Teaching and Learning.** Accomplished principals ensure that teaching and learning are the primary focus of the school. As stewards of learning, these principals lead the implementation of a rigorous, relevant, diverse curriculum and appropriate assessments of student learning. They know a full range of pedagogy and make certain that all adults have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to support student success.
4. **Knowledge of Students and Adults.** Accomplished principals ensure that each student and adult in the learning community is known and valued. These principals develop systems so that individuals are supported socially, emotionally, and intellectually, in their development, learning, and achievement.
5. **Culture.** Accomplished principals inspire and nurture a culture of high expectations, where actions support the common values and beliefs of the school. These principals build authentic, productive relationships that foster a collaborative spirit. They honor the culture of the students, adults, and larger community, demonstrating respect for diversity and ensuring equity. They create and maintain a trusting and safe environment that enhances student learning and adult practice.
6. **Strategic Management.** Accomplished principals skillfully lead the design, development, and implementation of strategic management systems and processes that actualize the vision and mission. These principals lead the monitoring and adaptation of systems and processes to ensure they are effective and efficient in support of a high-performing organization focused on teaching and learning.
7. **Advocacy.** Accomplished principals effectively advocate internally and externally to advance the organization's vision and mission. These principals strategically seek, inform, and mobilize influential educational, political, and community leaders to advocate for all students and adults in the learning community.
8. **Ethics.** Accomplished principals are ethical. They consistently demonstrate a high degree of personal and professional ethics exemplified by integrity, justice, and equity. These principals work to establish a culture in which exemplary ethical behavior is practiced by all stakeholders.
9. **Reflection and Growth.** Accomplished principals are reflective practitioners who build on their strengths and identify areas for personal and professional growth. They adapt their paradigm and

practice to improve student performance and enhance teacher instruction through reflective practices.

III. 21st Century Teaching and Learning

Learning must occur at all stages of professional growth. Educators require professional growth tools that span their entire careers with the goal of creating high performing schools to support student success. The National Board programs are uniquely designed to meet the challenge of supporting teachers and educational leaders at every stage of their careers.

1. **Pre-service.** During their pre-service and initial licensure periods, teachers should be introduced to the NBPTS standards—advanced professional teaching standards that span 16 subject areas (e.g., art, English, literacy, mathematics, music, school counseling, science, social studies/history).

Developed and updated over the past two decades, the NBPTS Standards reflect what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do in preK-12 education. The standards also provide a reference point for teacher preparation, graduate programs in education and ongoing professional development, as well as providing the foundation for the National Board Certification process, encompassing 25 certificate areas.

2. **Initial Licensure, Induction and Beyond.** New teachers—not only during initial licensure but also during induction and throughout their careers—have the opportunity to participate in professional growth programs (e.g., the NBPTS program, *Take One!*)—optimally in a collaborative environment that creates professional learning communities that include not only teachers but also principals, other administrators and the entire faculty—all focused on student learning and achievement.

These offers should be based on the NBPTS standards for improving teaching practice and linking student learning to effective instruction. School-wide participation stimulates development of learning communities organized around professional teaching standards.

3. **Veteran Teachers.** Licensed teachers with three or more years experience should have the opportunity to become candidates for National Board Certification, a voluntary program a voluntary assessment program designed to identify develop, recognize and reward accomplished teachers. National Board Certification is more than a summative assessment; teachers who go through the process consistently report it to be the best professional development they have experienced.

During the National Board Certification process, teachers spend one to three years demonstrating what they know and can do in one of the 25 certificate areas through rigorous assessment that includes video recordings of classroom instruction and examples of student work. Like board-certified doctors and accountants, teachers who achieve National Board Certification have met advanced standards through intensive study, expert evaluation, self-assessment and peer review.

4. **Ongoing Professional Growth.** Professional growth opportunities should be based on NBPTS standards and provide linkages between the NBPTS assessment process—whether as stand-alone professional development or as part of the National Board candidacy process. Such professional development offerings encompass conferences, courses, and other opportunities for NBCTs and other educators to learn and share best practices and build face-to-face or online professional learning communities. In addition to utilizing the NBPTS professional development resources, many districts align their professional development programs to the NBPTS Standards. As recognized by the National Research Council of the National Academies, NBPTS provides high quality professional development serving teachers along their entire continuum of professional growth.

5. **Educational Leadership.** A school’s success ultimately depends upon the leadership of its principal and teacher leaders in the school. Effective principals are critical to the success of students, teachers and entire schools. A successful principal creates a culture of learning that advances student learning and engagement, recruits and retains the best teachers, and improves teacher and school performance.

The National Board Certification for Principals is the first phase of an expanded umbrella program, National Board Certification for Education Leaders (NBCEL). The NBCEL program will not only create standards and an assessment process for principals, it will also lay the groundwork for a new educator leadership endorsement for teachers and other school-based educators who positively impact the culture of learning in the classroom.

IV. Successful, Safe, and Healthy Kids

There must be a sense of shared responsibility for student success, including providing safe schools and positive climates, ensuring comprehensive student supports and improving students’ health and well-being. Parents, teachers, and communities believe schools should focus on developing students who are academically proficient, as well as physically and emotionally healthy and respectful, responsible, and caring. The goal is to produce graduates who contribute to the community and the world and are productive at work, at home, and at leisure. Schools should develop the entire child, not just the academic child. This commitment must be to every child, not just the economically advantaged.

The NBPTS Health Standards provide a framework that represents a professional consensus on how educators can advance student success, safety and health. These concepts are reflected in each of the standards for National Board Certification in Health Education. While these standards specifically drive the assessment process for accomplished teaching of health education, they should be integrated into the entire fabric of schools at all teaching and leadership levels. Any standards incorporated in the Reauthorization of ESEA should require that educators:

1. **Be knowledgeable about health-related subject areas.** This includes comprehensive instruction in personal health, nutrition, prevention and control of disease, injury prevention and safety, mental and emotional health, substance use and abuse, family life, community health, consumer health, and environmental health.

2. **Promote skills-based learning.** Teachers need to help students comprehend that the foundation of good health rests on healthy choices and behaviors and that they have the power and responsibility of choice; demonstrate good interpersonal-communication, goal-setting, decision-making, and problem-solving skills; augment health literacy and fostering health; communicate to students the benefits of activities that further a healthy lifestyle and enhance health, and teach strategies to resolve conflicts and manage stress; implement strategies to teach students how to analyze the ways various factors, such as peers, cultural beliefs, the media, and technology, influence health.

3. **Demand high expectations for students.** Teachers should design activities and pose questions that encourage critical thinking and problem solving and foster student engagement to promote self-confidence that students might not already possess; pose real-world situations that allow students to synthesize knowledge and analyze possible solutions; and encourage students to reflect on prior knowledge and experience and articulate their reactions to health-related concerns.

4. **Demonstrate increased parent collaboration.** Teachers should initiate positive, interactive relationships with families in their children’s education. They gain additional knowledge of students through teacher-parent interactions that contribute to improved classroom outcomes—e.g., home and classroom visits, meetings, phone and e-mail exchanges.

V. Innovate and Evaluate

To build on the promising elements developed through the work of the National Board for effective and meaningful teacher evaluation, we have drawn out a set of practices that we believe can collectively articulate a way forward that we recommend be incorporated into the framework on ESEA reauthorization.

1. **Teacher evaluations should be grounded in measures of student learning and student achievement.** The only defensible way to determine teacher effectiveness is to focus on the *gains* that students have realized over the period the teacher provided instruction. The analysis of student work before and after a teacher’s instructional intervention provides the conceptual basis for inferring that the teacher had a positive influence on individual student learning. A single achievement measure, by contrast, reveals nothing about the influence of the teacher.

2. **Teacher evaluations should explicitly link measures of student learning to teacher practice.** Teachers need to analyze learning gains over time in relation to their instructional plans, focusing on learning at the individual, group, or class level—or some combination of levels. The measure of student learning does not stand on its own in assessing a teacher’s performance—it is interpreted in the context of the instruction that was provided.

3. **Teacher evaluations should rely on multiple measures, including measures that assess both teaching practice and student learning.** We defined accomplished teaching as being a function of both teaching practice and student learning, and the National Board Certification process reflects this understanding. Evaluation of teacher effectiveness, then, needs to include measures of both.

4. Teacher evaluations should use measures and instruments that, to the greatest extent possible, reflect the full curriculum, the full scope of a teacher’s responsibilities, and the full domain of skills and competencies students are expected to develop. Instruments should be continuously evaluated to determine the extent to which they address the issues of alignment, metrics, inclusion and accommodation, breadth across content areas, and scaling and equivalence outlined in this comment.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is pleased to offer these recommendations to the U.S. Department of Education on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. We look forward to working with the Department to help secure passage of this critical legislation.

Sincerely,



Joseph A. Aguerrebere, Ed.D
President and CEO

cc: The Honorable Dale Kildee
Chairman
Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education

The Honorable Michael N. Castle
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education