

NBPTS 2020 JAMES A. KELLY AWARDS CEREMONY
November 6, 2020

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*“Changes do not occur randomly in any direction.
They always are consistent with what has gone on before,
with the history and identify of the system.”*
(Margaret Wheatley, Leadership and the New Sciences)

Good evening. Thank you for selecting me to be the recipient of the 2020 NBPTS James A Kelly Award. It is truly an honor to receive this award. I am deeply honored and humbled to receive the award. Thank you very, very much.

As I reflect back on the 1980’s when we met as a task force, I recall the diversity of the group that had been selected to deliberate the challenges facing education and the teaching profession. Despite the diversity of opinions, thanks to Gov. Hunt and Mr. Kelly, we were able to conclude our work with a report of recommendations to address these challenges, including creating the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, which as you know was founded in 1987.

Here we are 33 years later and the Board is stronger than ever, As we look to the future, the Board’s work to enhance educational excellence by strengthening the qualifications and effectiveness of America’s teachers could not be more critical to our nation. After all, education is a major foundation of our democracy.

In 1983, approximately four years prior to the National Board being created, a report was released entitled, “A NATION AT RISK, That report stated that the United States was at great risk because of the lack of quality education the country was providing for its citizens. It contained almost 40 recommendations to improve the quality of education. Those recommendations focused primarily on 5 key issues

- *the quality of the content of the curriculum in our schools**
- *standards and evaluation of said**
- *time: The report recommended that the average school day should be 7 hours and the average school year should be 220 days. By the way, the US has one of the shortest school years among countries around the world**
- *Teacher training and salaries**
- *Leadership and fiscal support for our school.**

Twenty-five years after its release, a study showed that very little had been done to implement the report’s recommendations. To a large degree the rationale for failing to do

so was political. We have to remember that the USA does not have a national system of education, rather we have 50 state systems which primarily define and control education.

So, reflecting back on the report, I would like to ask you a question: “Is the United States of America still “A Nation at Risk”, especially when it comes to education? My answer to that question is “YES”! Some changes have been made, but simple changes are not enough. I believe we need to transform our education system to ensure that every child, all citizens have the quality education they need, our country needs to successfully address the social, economic, political and other issues we, as a society, are facing today and will continue to face in the future.

We have moved slowly in response to the challenges facing us whether in our local communities, our states or nationwide. But, sometimes, it takes an unexpected crisis to get our full attention, to make us truly understand the need to reform. And, I believe that is what has happened to us today as a result of COVID 19.

One year ago, who would have believed that 80-90% of school districts across America would be educating children virtually? That teachers would have to adapt to teaching “on-line” rather than face to face in classrooms? And, once this crisis is over, I do not believe we will simply revert back 100% to teaching and learning in our old traditional manner. What we are experiencing will re-define schooling. It also means we will have to re-examine what we mean by teaching and how we prepare teachers to educate in the future.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards should have a major role in helping to define what we mean by educating, the “teaching profession”; how we define the theories and practices of teaching and learning at all levels of our increasingly diverse, technological society.

The opportunities and challenges facing the teaching profession are anxiously knocking on the “door” of the United States of America and all around the world. The question is will we open the door and welcome those opportunities? The future of America is contingent upon whether, once we open the door of opportunity, we have the courage and willingness to transform our educational system to assure that we as a nation have the foundation to address the challenges of the future—whatever they may be.

NBPTS has already opened the door of opportunity to help transform education, especially as it relates to ensuring that teachers are better prepared to educate all citizens for the future. Through partnerships you have formed with other professions as well as with colleges and universities, the NEA and AFT as well as other professional educational groups, you have built and continue to build a strong base for change. When I became Dean of the Graduate School of Education and Human Development at The George Washington University, one of the first things I did was persuade the Department of Teacher Preparation to form a partnership with NBPTS to make sure our faculty and students understood the value and importance of national certification. The fact that 122,000 teachers have achieved national certification and studies show that the students

they teach are learning at a higher educational level is pivotal evidence of your capacity a a leader ... I strongly encourage you to continue the outstanding work you are doing to professionalize teaching and equally important to improve the quality of teaching and learning in our schools. It won't happen in my lifetime, but one day, I hope every student in America will be taught by teachers who are nationally certified.

Again, thank you for the honor of selecting me to be the recipient of the 2020 NBPTS James A Kelly Award. More importantly, thank you for the excellent work you are doing to strengthen our teaching profession. May God continue blessing each and all of you. Have a great weekend.