



Ms. Leslie Birdon

National Board Certified Teacher

How she “**Took the LEAP**”



Ms. Leslie Birdon, NBCT, is a long-time champion for the nation’s most marginalized, at-risk groups in Louisiana and nation-wide. Leslie first realized her passion for policy and advocacy work through her involvement with school boards and networking with other teachers as they worked together to identify ways in which they could influence annually-updated legislation.

As she learned more about how this legislation directly impacted her own and fellow teachers’ students’ potential, she sought out more ways to be a “voice for the voiceless,” actively speaking up for the needs of children lacking proper support systems at home and in school, particularly those with disabilities and those from minority communities.

After seeing the profound impact she and other teachers could make on students’ lives by bringing attention to inadequacies and injustices in existing legislation, in 2008 Leslie took the LEAP to become an NBCT to elevate her vigilant fight to put an end to widening achievement gaps, teacher turnover and increasingly under-resourced classrooms across the country. In 2018, she was appointed to a governor’s council as a representative of students with disabilities, which resulted in adjustments to policy that enabled schools to provide these students credit for progress made rather than milestones reached - a huge stride toward achieving increased accessibility and opportunity for students of all learning abilities.

Instead of getting disheartened when she observes the ongoing obstacles confronting students, she remains committed to being a catalyst for change. Through the Louisiana NBCT Network she and other NBCTs work tirelessly to grow their NBCT community in order to strengthen teacher’s training and professional credibility thereby improving working conditions and compensation. In 2019, Leslie (with the support of her peers):

- Held weekly professional development meetings where teachers discussed the What Teachers Should Know and Be Able To Do book, setting relevant and rigorous standards for their curricula while offering one another support and accountability
- Worked on the Louisiana NBCT Network advocacy committee with Louisiana policy makers and the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to draft a proposal introducing National Board Certification as an option for advanced teacher licensure credentials
- Spoke with teachers both within her own school and across Louisiana, offering support and mentorship to those professionals interested in pursuing Board Certification Leslie is committed to ensuring that teachers everywhere can create classrooms where children’s needs can be fully realized and supported every single day.

Looking ahead, she plans to use her leadership and advocacy skills to put the National Board Certification back on the radar for legislators, ensuring that teachers are provided with the resources and compensation necessary to support each and every child to achieve their greatest potential.

—The Leading, Empowering, and Advocating for the Profession (LEAP) project is generously supported by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation

“National Board Certification has not only furthered my credibility as a reputable thought leader in education, but also has provided me with an incredible network of peers to collaborate with and with whom to continue to make improvements to the education system.”

– Leslie Birdon, NBCT



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