




TEACHER LEADERSHIP IN UNCERTAIN TIMES:

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM
BOARD-CERTIFIED TEACHERS
FOR SCHOOL, DISTRICT AND
STATE LEADERS

NATIONAL BOARD

for Professional Teaching Standards[®]

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CONTENTS

1

INTRODUCTION

2

LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF CRISIS

3

WHO ARE NATIONAL BOARD-CERTIFIED
TEACHERS?

5

THE LEADERSHIP OF BOARD-CERTIFIED
TEACHERS IN ACTION

16

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL, DISTRICT,
AND STATE POLICY LEADERS

19

LOOKING AHEAD

20

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



INTRODUCTION

It is often said that during crises leaders emerge. The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has brought out the leadership, indeed heroism, of citizens across society—from essential workers keeping store shelves stocked, to celebrities keeping up spirits through at-home performances, to political leaders bringing their constituencies along in the difficult commitments to stay home to save lives. Of course, front-line medical professionals have led and sacrificed beyond measure.

Amidst the emerging leaders and heroes in the pandemic, the vital role of our nation's teachers—particularly those serving our highest-need students—has stood out as extraordinary. Educating-at-home has made clear how hard engaging and directing sometimes distracted learners is, while providing the opportunity for parents to witness firsthand how expert educators conduct a class (online) that restores a degree of calm, normalcy, and educational progress in their children's frazzled lives. The viral tweet by TV writer and producer Shonda Rhimes captured how many parents feel: "Teachers deserve to make a billion dollars a year. Or a week."

In early May (at the time of publication), the future remains uncertain. Education stakeholders are unclear on how circumstances will evolve and how the pandemic will impact the 2020-21 school year: When will schools reopen, and for how long? Will student attendance be staggered? Will student sports, performances, and even socializing resume and with what changes? What special measures will be put in place for students, and staff, with vulnerable members of their household? How will the most disadvantaged students receive the additional supports they need? Teachers are poised to be rocks for communities rattled by questions and in many cases by trauma. And local and state leaders are poised to help teachers be the beacon of light their communities desperately need.

This brief provides recommendations for policy and system leaders to recognize, engage, and support teachers who are seizing the opportunity to step up to lead at this time of national crisis. To be sure, many teachers, including those predisposed to lead, are not currently in a position to take on any responsibility beyond the challenges of caring for their families and selves while managing a remote classroom. But, in light of numerous inspirational stories of extraordinary leadership by National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) that have already emerged from this pandemic, this brief provides snapshots of the type of courageous actions that are possible, giving new life to the old notion that "teachers change lives," while equipping other leaders with examples of the possibilities that can be celebrated, supported, and scaled.

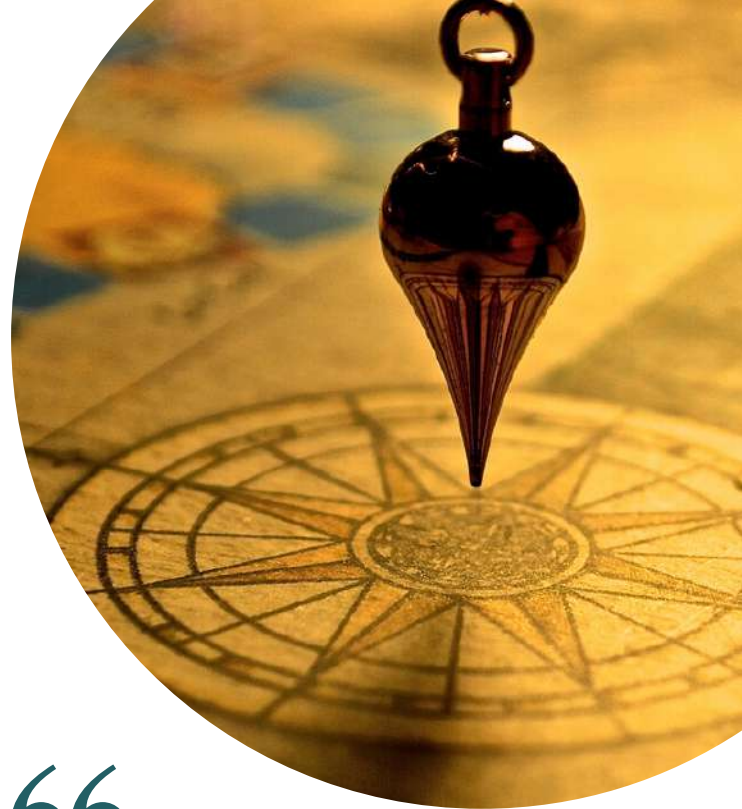
LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Stepping up to lead during this unprecedented crisis can fulfill a fundamental craving for meaning and purpose. According to leadership experts Heifitz & Linsky (2002, p. 209): “The answer to the question ‘Why lead?’ is both simple and profound. The sources of meaning most essential in the human experience draw from our yearning for connection with other people. The exercise of leadership can give life meaning beyond the usual day-to-day stakes -- approval of friends and peers, material gain, or the immediate gratification of success -- because as a practical art, leadership allows us to connect with others in a significant way. The word we use for that kind of connection is love.”

Encouraging and enabling teachers’ expression of love—for students and for society—is one way that leaders from schoolhouses to state capitols can build our collective resilience so that society comes out of the pandemic stronger.

As events continue to unfold, we are reminded that the Chinese symbol for “crisis” is composed of two characters: one meaning danger and the other meaning opportunity. At this time, the opportunity for leadership could not be greater. According to Thomas Friedman, “With people feeling frightened and uncertain [by the pandemic], leadership doesn’t just matter more. It matters exponentially more...We have never had a simultaneous global leadership stress test like this — one that is testing leaders from the schoolhouse to the White House and from city halls to corporate suites” (Friedman, 2020).

At this unprecedented time, teachers have quickly, and willingly, demonstrated just the type of courageous leadership that is needed. Teachers are leading with confidence through reflective practice — constantly reassessing and responding to the ever-changing landscape of the new “normal” classroom environment, while managing personal and professional priorities, and serving families and communities across the country. Below, we describe how individuals and teams of Board-certified teachers are serving as pioneers in a time of uncertainty, paving a path for a teaching profession that leads through this pandemic.



**AT THIS TIME, THE
OPPORTUNITY FOR
LEADERSHIP COULD
NOT BE GREATER.**

WHO ARE NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHERS?

NBCTs are teachers who have demonstrated they meet the profession's standards for accomplished teaching practice by successfully completing National Board Certification, an advanced, voluntary, professional certification designed to identify and recognize accomplished teachers. National Board certification is used by districts and states nationwide to develop and retain teachers and to generate ongoing improvement in schools. To achieve Board certification, teachers must submit evidence of the advanced knowledge, skills, and practices required by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (National Board) in the content area and student developmental level in which they specialize. Written by committees of practicing teachers and other experts, these standards represent a consensus among educators about what accomplished, effective teachers should know and be able to do to improve student learning and achievement. Board certification is available in 25 certificate areas, from Pre-K through 12th grade. Certification consists of four components: content knowledge, differentiation in instruction, teacher practice, and effective and reflective practitioner (National Board, 2017).

The leadership skill set that NBCTs bring to their classrooms daily and to the current pandemic stem from the [Five Core Propositions](#) that undergird the standards for accomplished teaching stewarded by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, including:

The National Board's 5 Core Propositions

- 1** Teachers are committed to students and their learning
- 2** Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students
- 3** Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning
- 4** Teachers think systematically about their practices and learn from experience
- 5** Teachers are members of learning communities

**Over 125,000 teachers
have achieved Board-
certification.**

**Over half of NBCTs
teach in high needs
schools.**

The Board certification process emphasizes teacher reflection, continuous improvement, use of educational technology, and engagement with learning communities. All NBCTs demonstrate these skills, but they can be taught, learned, and practiced by every teacher across America.

Beyond the skills, knowledge, and dispositions embodied by Board-certified teachers, these teachers represent a movement-in-action to elevate the teaching profession to that of the highly esteemed professions of law, medicine, and engineering.

The demonstrated expertise and professionalism of NBCTs helps the public see teaching as the complex craft it is, worthy of the respect, compensation, and working conditions seen in these other professions. As such, an army of champions across the nation and on both sides of the aisle stand ready to support NBCTs in their leadership pursuits.



THESE PRACTICES MAKE BOARD-CERTIFIED TEACHERS (AND ALL TEACHERS THAT EMBODY THESE SKILLS) UNIQUELY POSITIONED TO LEAD IN THE SWIFT AND EVER-CHANGING REMOTE LEARNING TRANSITION.

*The National Board's Teachers-
Helping Teachers:
Core Connections Webinar Series*

The [National Board Teachers Helping Teachers: Core Connections Webinar Series](#) highlights the powerful impacts of teachers being part of a learning community that is led by accomplished teachers. As school systems responded to COVID-19 by closing schoolhouses, teachers began to gather in virtual spaces to share expertise, elevate online pedagogy, and address equity by sharing inspiring ways to support students who do not have access to devices or the Internet. NBCTs have volunteered their time and talents to provide ideas, inspiration, and solutions to teachers from around the nation, responding to teacher needs as indicated by surveys and direct requests for support. Board-certified teachers have presented from their new virtual work spaces in their homes from Maine to Washington and from the Navajo Nation in New Mexico to the upper peninsula of Michigan. In addition, partner organizations like Understood.org, the Friday Institute, and many more have co-presented to provide content for every educator. With more than 115,000 participants having attended the first 25 webinars to-date, the Core Connections webinar series demonstrates that "For Teachers By Teachers" isn't just a saying—it's part of the NBCT lifestyle.



LEADERSHIP OF BOARD-CERTIFIED TEACHERS IN ACTION

From innovative ways of helping educators relieve stress to advocating for policy change, Board-certified teachers are rising to the occasion. Here, we share stories of Board-certified teachers who are showing extraordinary leadership during these uncertain times. Each offers inspiration and a message for how policy leaders can help.

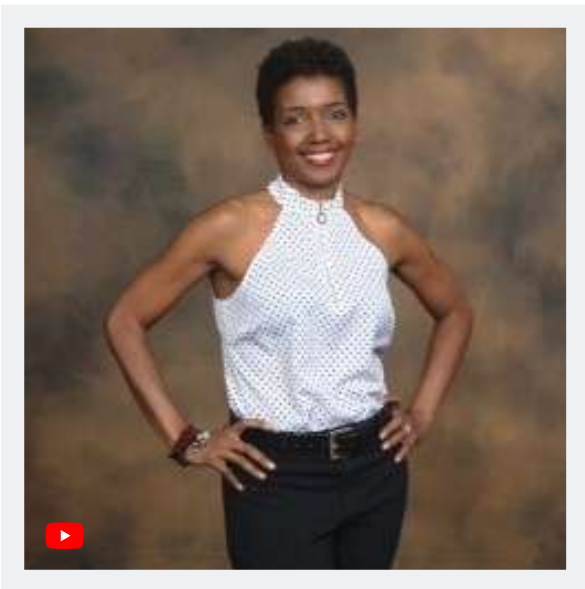
For more insights, please click on the images to hear directly from our Board-certified teachers!



BOARD-CERTIFIED TEACHERS - AS INDIVIDUALS, PAIRS, AND TEAMS - ARE EXEMPLIFYING WHAT IT MEANS TO LEAD IN A CRISIS IN A VARIETY OF WAYS.



Leading Teacher Communities in Self-Care



Elizabeth Brown-Davis, NBCT, an elementary school literacy teacher in Hillsborough County, Florida, saw an opportunity to apply her skills as a yoga instructor when the pandemic began. In response to the stress her peers were experiencing with the shift to distance learning, Ms. Brown-Davis created a professional development course on the parasympathetic nervous system, including research articles as well as some time to practice “virtual breathing.”

"LEAD WITH COMPASSION. JUST AS WE FOCUS ON THE WHOLE CHILD, RIGHT NOW WE MUST FOCUS ON THE WHOLE PERSON FOR EVERYONE IN OUR SCHOOLS."

Meanwhile, across the country Tonia Holmes-Sutton, Ed.D., an NBCT and the Nevada Teach Plus Director, had been leading and launching several national education endeavors: the Women of Color in Education TwitterChat (#wocedchat), the Equity in Education Virtual Mixer series, and the National Board Network for Accomplished Minoritized Educators (NBCTNAME). During a Twitter chat on educational issues that impact female educators of color, anxieties surrounding the pandemic surfaced, and Dr. Holmes-Sutton knew who she had to call. Ms. Brown-Davis agreed to lead “mindful meditation” for these virtual, national audiences.

What had started as local, formal professional development in response to teacher stress associated with e-learning transitioned to a weekly half-hour opportunity for camaraderie and



community for NBCTs and other educators and their friends and families to grapple not just with e-learning but with the wider set of concerns around sick relatives and dramatic changes to routine. Educators from across the U.S.—Florida, Louisiana, Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, Nevada, South Carolina, Kansas, Michigan, and New York—use the dedicated time to lean on, lift up, and connect with one another.

Their first trial also solidified their resilience: when a Mindful Meditation session was Zoombombed with vulgar racial slurs, the group managed to disconnect and reconnect the line and resume breathing within five minutes. The experience solidified their commitment to supporting each other’s emotional well-being, though now with participant registration required.

These teachers are on the front-line, experiencing extreme disparities that the pandemic has revealed between students who have and have-not: abused children for whom school had been the safe shelter, families whose income has disappeared or whose social supports are running dry, and a range of emotional needs far beyond students’ need for devices, connectivity, and meals.



THE TEACHERS’ OWN EMOTIONAL RESERVES ARE RESTORED BY THIS NBCT-LED COMMUNITY, ENHANCING THEIR ABILITY TO SERVE AS A SUPPORT STRUCTURE FOR THEIR STUDENTS.



Meeting the Needs of Students with Special Needs: From the Driveway

An elementary school special needs teacher in Las Vegas, Tamara Hudson, NBCT, knew that some of her students would struggle with the school closure. Even before the pandemic, some would have fits when they did not see her, and the sudden, unexpected loss of the safe haven school offered could be challenging. She gave each parent her personal phone number with an invitation to call at any time if their children were struggling. Through daily telephone and video calls, she worked one-on-one with her students, guiding them in a morning meditation, affirmation, and identification of a single goal for each day; she would then call in the evening to see if her students met their goal. It soon became evident that this approach worked for some students, but not for others; while still other students she had not heard from at all.



What did she do? Ms. Hudson went to their homes—with gifts of toilet paper, snacks, and hand sanitizer in tow. From outside their windows, she engaged students in their routine techniques to address their special needs. One morning she received a parent’s call: her child was having a fit and had broken his Chromebook. Wearing a homemade hazmat suit and mask, Ms. Hudson went straight over to de-escalate the child’s fit. “Take a deep breath, count to 10. I’ll stay here until you are calm enough to clean this mess,” she said. The young child was so touched by his teacher coming over, that he invited her for dinner. That evening, Ms. Hudson brought dinner to the student’s house and they dined “together” – she on the family’s outside patio, chatting through the window.

“CONSIDER IF THERE ARE EFFICIENCIES TO BE MADE IN REPURPOSING THE ROLES OF WORKERS WHOSE JOBS HAVE PAUSED. FOR EXAMPLE, COULD WI-FI ENABLED BUS-DRIVERS DRIVE BUSES TO AREAS WHERE STUDENTS LACK CONNECTIVITY, OR POLICE OFFICERS CHECK-IN AT THE HOMES OF AT-RISK STUDENTS WHO HAVE NOT BEEN HEARD FROM?”

Scaling Accomplished Teaching in Times of Uncertainty

Leslie Anaya, NBCT, is a high school English teacher at Eastland Independent School District in Texas, and the only NBCT in her or the neighboring 120 school districts. Reflecting on the process of achieving certification, she said that, "The rigor of National Board Certification has transformed my craft as a teacher." When sweeping 2019 legislation created the opportunity for Texas teachers that achieve National Board Certification to earn an additional \$3,000 - \$9,000, she felt determined to help the state dramatically scale its population of NBCTs. For Ms. Anaya, who was used to working from 6:30am to 8:30pm and coaching track, volleyball, and basketball, the pause and subsequent cancellation of school sports left her with significant "extra time" to pour into her passion of advancing teaching and learning by building awareness about the new policy, and connecting NBCTs across the Lone Star State.

Ms. Anaya put out a call for Texas NBCTs through her social media networks. A team of eight responded, and formed the [Texas National Board Coalition for Teaching](#). The team of NBCTs held virtual meetings with each other and with the Texas Education Agency. Ms. Anaya said, "On the one hand, the pandemic made it more difficult to meet; but on the other hand, it equipped us with the resources to make it easier to meet. For example, I personally had rarely used Zoom beforehand."



"LEADERS FROM EVERY SPHERE CAN BOLSTER THE CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION OF HIGH-QUALITY TEACHERS THROUGH INFORMATION DISSEMINATION, RESOURCE PROVISIONS, AND LEGISLATION FOR NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION."

Virus or no virus, the team is persevering in its mission to engage and support high-quality teaching and learning through professional growth and leadership, relentlessly preparing to educate the state's 1,227 school districts and 327,000 teachers about the National Board Certification process and its benefits for teachers and students alike.

Ms. Anaya explained how the National Board's Five Core Propositions are the foundation not only of her instruction but of her leadership. For example, she translated Core Proposition 1 (Teachers are committed to students and their learning) to "Leaders are committed to teachers and their learning." Her commitment is to advance teacher learning through expanded access to Board Certification. Core Propositions 4 (Teachers think systematically about their

practices and learn from experience) also informs her leadership—she is constantly assessing the effectiveness of her communication and actions, gathering feedback and data from peers to refine her leadership skills and style. Finally, Core Proposition 5 (Teachers are members of learning communities) has led her to engage with virtual communities of NBCTs, focused on professional learning facilitation, recruiting teachers from diverse backgrounds, and a variety of skills-building webinars.

“
**IN SHORT, I JUST REPLACE
'TEACHER' WITH 'LEADER'
AND APPLY THE SAME 5
CORE PROPOSITIONS THAT
GROUNDED MY BOARD
CERTIFICATION.**



Advocacy in the Pandemic



Although the global pandemic ground much legislative activity to a halt, some important policy work continues. A school staff developer and former middle school English Language Arts teacher from Jefferson County, Kentucky, Sarah Yost, NBCT, collaborated with the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) to pass legislation in the middle of the pandemic that allows teachers to pursue Board-certification earlier in their career and achieve an accompanying salary increase.

During the fall of 2019, KDE introduced the possibility, sharing draft statute language with Ms. Yost. Having that draft language in hand gave Ms. Yost the confidence to engage her state Senator, a vocal supporter of teachers, to sponsor the bill. She then testified to the Senate Education Committee, bringing authenticity and life to the discussion in sharing the impact the Board certification process had on her and her students. Fast forward to April 2020, the legislature convened to quickly close the session due to the COVID-19 pandemic, during which time this bill was passed. The reason? The bill was presented as bipartisan, and also championed by Board-certified teachers -- thus focused squarely on children, not politics.

“INVITE TEACHERS TO TESTIFY. BRINGING AUTHENTIC TEACHER VOICE TO THE POLICY TABLE MOVES US BEYOND PARTISAN POLITICS TO IMPROVE TEACHING AND LEARNING AT A TIME WHEN KIDS NEED ADULT ADVOCACY MORE THAN EVER.”



Advocating for Back-to-School Needs while Meeting Immediate Needs

With the now regular sound of ambulance sirens passing by his New York City apartment, José Vilson, NBCT, cannot escape the heavy reminder of the reality his middle school math students are facing. Mr. Vilson feels fortunate that the relationships he had with his students before COVID-19 were so strong that the swift shift to online schooling was manageable. His students trusted him, so when he established video lessons paired with “online office hours,” the transition was seamless. But going back to school in the pandemic’s epicenter is another story. Mr. Vilson says,



“We cannot do our jobs if we do not take full inventory: How many students’ parents are essential workers? How many have lost family members to the pandemic? How else has the community been impacted (noting that many teachers live in different NYC neighborhoods)?”

Mr. Vilson presented to the NYC Council advocating for this data to be gathered and shared within the first week back to school, and for that first week back to be devoted to healing and restoration for students.

Alongside planning for these back-to-school needs, Mr. Vilson stepped up immediately to respond to pressing educational needs as they emerged and to vocalize those that had not yet surfaced widely. Within the first week of school closures, Mr. Vilson produced live math lessons on Instagram for the general public— first from his empty classroom and then from his home. His lessons, such as “A math lesson on percents using COVID-19” have been used by students, teachers, and parents during the crisis. When the need for lessons lessened, he turned to voicing what leaders need to hear through a blog post “[On Disaster Distance Learning in New York City](#)”, and [presentation](#) to an 800-person webinar audience on equity in the time of the pandemic for the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics 100th anniversary conference.

“SIMILAR TO HOW WE’VE REVERED EPIDEMIOLOGISTS FOR BEING THE CALM IN THE STORM, WE NEED TO RELY ON OUR EXPERT K-12 EDUCATORS TO SPEAK ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH REMOTE LEARNING IN THIS CONTEXT. OUR PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE IS EQUALLY AS IMPORTANT AS OTHER EMPIRICAL DATA, AND OUR STORIES COULD HELP GUIDE EVERYONE ELSE.”

Making Masks from the Classroom Maker Space



One of the first teachers to become Board-certified at the Native American tribal JKL Bahweting Anishnabe School in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Susan Solomon, NBCT, a gifted and talented teacher, has repurposed her classroom maker space 3D printers to manufacture hundreds of masks and face shields for front-line medical workers. When it became clear that the COVID-19 pandemic was creating a shortage of personal protective equipment, a group of NBCTs and other teachers at her school began sewing masks.

"TRUST YOUR TEACHERS. KNOWING MY ADMINISTRATION STANDS BEHIND ME MOTIVATES ME TO KEEP GOING."

Not a sewer, Susan turned to her strength—building products—and with filament, furnace filters, window sealer, hot glue, and a copy of a prototype 3D printer file, got to work. "Creating much needed medical supplies gave us something positive to focus on at this difficult time," she says. After experimenting with several styles, Ms. Solomon found one that filters out an impressive 75% of 0.3 micro-particles. Now in her home, the school's three 3D printers run all through the day and all through the night (each mask takes 7 hours to print). Realizing how quickly mask manufacturing burned through the raw materials, Ms. Solomon created an Amazon wish-list to replenish supplies and posted it on Facebook. The list was cleared in less than one day.



Leading by Listening

When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in New York, Ms. Evelyn Figueroa-Funches, NBCT, had just lost her mother. She soon found herself surrounded by loss in her community in the Bronx where she is an English as a New Language coordinator—virtually everyone had experienced the loss of a loved one, the loss of a job, or both. When one student's entire family came down with Coronavirus, she coordinated food delivery from a local restaurant. But mostly, she led by listening, checking in regularly and providing a space for both families and teachers to air their feelings and frustrations.

Her school, which had the highest need for devices in the district, had a further need for help using them. The district had successfully made iPads available and sent comprehensive communications in English, Spanish, and other languages. But many Spanish-speaking parents, intimidated by distance learning, needed one-on-one help getting students online, using Google classroom, and supporting students' instruction.

A Spanish speaker herself, Ms. Figueroa-Funches dove into the role of digital learning interpreter. She joined online lessons to support Spanish-speaking families with technology and learning needs in real time so that teachers could focus on the larger lesson. And she has made herself available from 8:00pm to 10:30pm to help families over the telephone after the children have gone to bed.

Ms. Figueroa-Funches developed a full understanding of her community's needs, which she drew on to develop the school's remote learning plan with her principal. The relationships she built have strengthened the bridge between schools and students. According to Ms. Figueroa-Funches:

"Before, we struggled to get parents to attend PTA meetings. Now that the parents know how much we care, we anticipate stronger relationships and more family engagement when the pandemic is over."



"PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY AND FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS TO APPROACH DISTANCE LEARNING AND IN SCHOOL LEARNING IN WAYS THAT WORK BEST FOR THEM. EVERY SCHOOL COMMUNITY HAS SUCH DIFFERENT NEEDS."

Leading by Learning

When Lauren Jewett, NBCT, attended the statewide NBCT celebration at the Louisiana Governor's Mansion on March 11, she would not have thought that just two days later her New Orleans charter school would be shuttered due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A third and fourth grade special education teacher, her immediate concern was whether the needs of students on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) would be met by the last-minute take-home packets. Would the material be accessible for the range of special needs she supported? Were parents going to feel supported? What social emotional needs of students with disabilities would be exacerbated by this crisis?

“SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND TRAUMA-INFORMED EDUCATION NEED TO BE PRIORITIES WHEN SCHOOL RESUMES. WHILE MAKING UP LOST LEARNING GAINS IS IMPORTANT, STUDENTS ALSO LOST MEMORIES, EXPERIENCES AND, IN MANY CASES, FAMILY MEMBERS AND THE LIFE THEY KNEW; THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO LEARN IF THESE TRAUMAS ARE NOT ALSO ADDRESSED.”



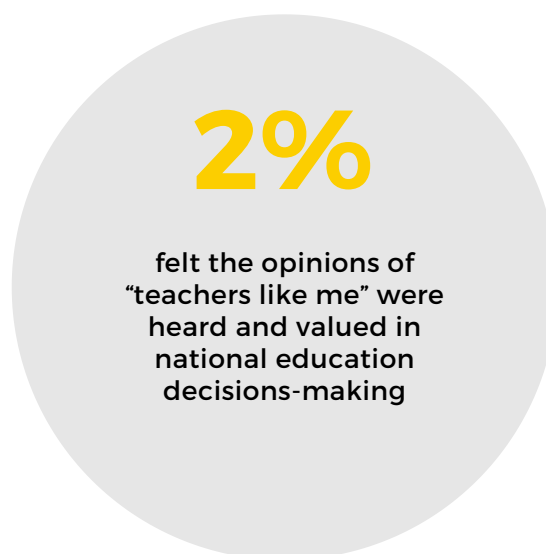
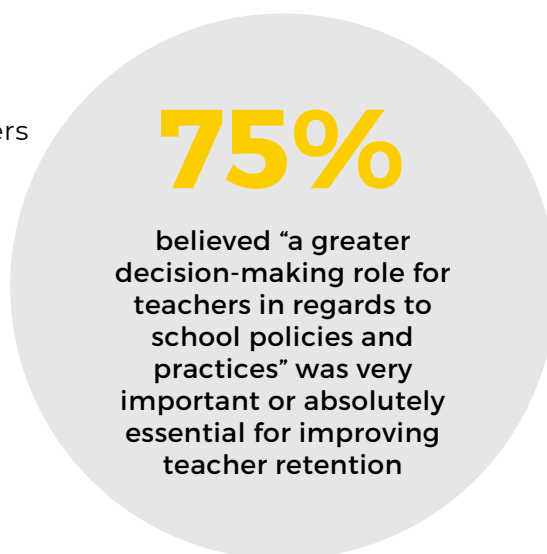
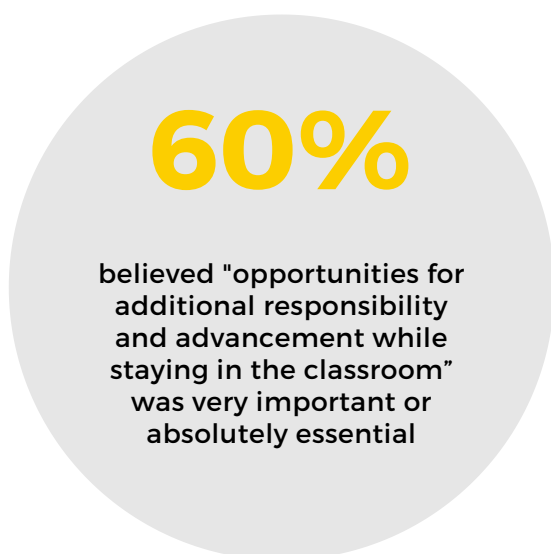
Ms. Jewett threw herself into research and information-gathering. She revisited materials from past professional learning on social-emotional learning and trauma-informed education. She tapped into all her networks – her own classroom's families, her local teachers' union council, the National Board cohort of districtwide professional learning facilitators, her Understood.org special education teacher fellowship partners, NBCT networks, special education teacher networks, and others. Intensively connecting in dialogue with teachers from a range of school, district, statewide, regional, and national networks reduced her feelings of isolation but more importantly let her problem-solve and learn with and from the many other solutions-oriented teachers in those spaces. In response to what she was hearing, Ms. Jewett made YouTube and ScreenCastify videos for families to teach math to students with special needs and wrote an article on [Leading Remote IEP Meetings](#).

“At the end of the day, a lot of children will be returning to school post-pandemic needing the same types of individualized and social-emotional supports as students with disabilities. Hopefully special education teachers will be a useful resource.”

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL, DISTRICT, AND STATE POLICY LEADERS

While few leaders are searching for additional responsibilities at this time of crisis, taking the time to support teachers as leaders can pay dividends in the short and long term. Unleashing the talent and passion of our educators can fulfill much-needed voids around system supports, morale-building, innovation, and community in the immediate term.

Moreover, supporting teacher leaders in the pandemic can catalyze longer-term norms for this burgeoning policy priority area. Abundant evidence shows that, prior to COVID-19, teachers craved greater leadership opportunities and voice. For example, national survey data by Scholastic found that:



Figures from Scholastic and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012; Mayer & Phillips, 2014

More recently, the 2020 Educators for Excellence “Voices from the Classroom” survey found an overwhelming 95 percent of teachers wish there were more opportunities to influence education policy, while less than 30 percent say their perspective is sought out at least monthly by district or state leaders (Educators for Excellence, 2020, p. 31). Beyond teachers’ preference for greater voice and leadership, research finds that students in schools with greater levels of teacher leadership perform more than 10 percentage points higher both in mathematics and English language arts proficiency exams (Ingersoll, Sirinides & Dougherty, 2017).

A National survey of over 5,000 NBCTs found that having supportive school leaders was more important for enabling teacher leadership than title, training, or mentorship. Eighty-four percent of respondents cited school leaders as among the most effective supports, compared to 32, 69, and 63 percent, respectively, citing these other support areas (Jacques, Behrstock-Sherratt, Parker & Bassett, 2017, p. 24).



CREATING NEW APPROACHES TO RESPECT, RECOGNIZE, INCLUDE, ENCOURAGE, SUPPORT, AND OTHERWISE CELEBRATE OUR DEDICATED TEACHING FORCE AT THIS TIME CAN LEAD TO LASTING CHANGES THAT ELEVATE THE PROFESSION FOR YEARS TO COME.

Below are several strategies for policy and system leaders:

1) SEEK OUT AND LISTEN TO TEACHERS AT SCALE

Turn to teachers as leaders and partners in navigating the COVID-19 crisis and educational response over time. Create avenues to solicit teacher expertise and create open communication to understand what they are experiencing, and what they and their students need to continue learning in these unprecedented times. In particular, engage teachers with an intimate understanding of the struggles of our most vulnerable students during the pandemic. Students who were “at risk” before now face risks far greater yet far less visible, and their teachers, particularly those from similar backgrounds, can help elevate their circumstances and needs at the policy table.

Minnesota’s state Chief, Mary Cathryn Ricker, NBCT, set a strong example for how policy leaders can seek out teacher expertise during the pandemic. Within a week of the state’s schools closing, Commissioner Ricker held a virtual statewide convening of Board-certified teachers to discuss the expectations behind equitable distance learning with high-poverty students’ needs at the center and requested NBCTs to provide sample lesson plans that address the state’s academic standards and do not require access to technology.



2) TRUST, SUPPORT, AND ENCOURAGE TEACHER LEADERS' AMBITIONS

Show appreciation, publicly and wherever possible, for the leadership roles teachers are taking. Several NBCTs who engaged in extraordinary teacher leadership have shared how reassuring and motivating it was to know their administration stood behind their efforts and in some cases actively encouraged teachers to move their leadership and expertise from the margins to the center. Whether entrusting a teacher to bring three costly 3D printers home to manufacture masks or doing legwork to advance legislation, support teacher leadership in action as well as words. This trust may extend to finding ways to relieve teachers of unnecessary time burdens so they may attend to higher-impact pursuits—personal or professional—at this time of crisis.

3) INVEST IN TEACHERS, PARTICULARLY IN SOLUTIONS THAT STRENGTHEN PRACTICE AND BUILD LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

To start, commit your appreciation for teachers notwithstanding the uncertain times. While the economic impact of the pandemic will likely touch all aspects of society, reassurance that teachers are valued by our highest level leaders can be a source of comfort in uncertain times. The Teachers 2020 Bill of Rights (see www.NBPTS.org/Teachers2020)—a bipartisan call for high-quality professional learning, professional compensation and working conditions, adequate resources and access to teacher diversity—can spark productive dialogue on what teachers need in this moment and beyond. Policy leaders can sign and circulate the Teachers 2020 Bill of Rights on social media or hold a virtual town hall to discuss how the principles of the campaign apply in the local context. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the [Maryland](#) legislature passed a sweeping bill to elevate the teaching profession in line with research and best practice from the world's top-performing school systems. Lawmakers in [Kentucky](#) and [New Mexico](#) similarly have committed to investing in an elevated teaching profession despite economic uncertainty.

LOOKING AHEAD

On March, 23, 2020, just as COVID-19 was emerging as a global pandemic, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published their international teacher survey, calling on policy leaders worldwide to value teachers as professionals. According to the report, only 21% of U.S. teachers believe policy leaders value their view (OECD, 2020, p. 208). The report states:



“THE NOTION OF PROFESSIONAL TEACHERS...IS NOT A STATIC ONE AND IS CONTINUOUSLY EVOLVING TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES THAT EMERGE...WHAT [THE SURVEY] RESULTS SHOW US IS THAT, IF WE EXPECT TEACHERS...TO BEHAVE AS PROFESSIONALS, WE SHOULD TREAT THEM AS SUCH. THIS MEANS HAVING AN OPEN AND DIRECT DIALOGUE WITH THE TEACHING PROFESSION...MAKING TEACHING CAREERS ATTRACTIVE AND PRESTIGIOUS ALSO ENTAILS EMPOWERING TEACHERS AND OFFERING THEM THE POSSIBILITY TO BE ACTORS OF CHANGE THROUGH ADVOCACY AND ADVISING ON EDUCATIONAL REFORM.”

(OECD, 2020, pp. 3-4 and 207)

The current crisis creates an opportunity for policy and system leaders to create this reality by uplifting teacher leadership and voice in earnest at last. It provides the opportunity to celebrate and recognize the extraordinary leadership teachers are exhibiting, and to encourage and support more of it – now and for the long-term. In short, it provides the opportunity for leaders to inspire the best in teachers - in words and actions – helping them achieve their highest potential so that teachers, in turn, can inspire the same of their students.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following additional resources provide research-based strategies for state and district leaders working to promote teacher leadership.

- 1** **American Federation of Teachers – Teacher Leadership: From Practice to Policy**
https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/tlp3_practicetopolicy.pdf
This brief provides illustrations of three types of teacher leadership roles: peer-to-peer teacher leaders, school leadership, and system leadership.
- 2** **Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession - Teacher Leadership Skills Framework**
http://cstp-wa.org/cstp2013/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/CSTP_teacher_leadership_skills_framework.pdf
This framework details the five categories of knowledge, skill sets, and dispositions of effective teacher leaders: working with adult learners, communication, collaboration, knowledge of content and pedagogy, and systems thinking.
- 3** **Center on Great Teachers & Leaders and Leading Educators - Teacher Leader Toolkit 2.0**
https://gtlcenter.org/technical-assistance/toolkits/teacher-leadership-toolkit-2_0
This Toolkit consists of 10 resources for state and districts to use in planning, decision-making and stakeholder engagement, including a research synthesis, exemplar teacher leadership initiatives, and practical tools for designing teacher leadership policies and programs.
- 4** **Chiefs for Change - The Case for Teacher Leaders (and State Exemplars)**
https://chiefsforchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/The-Case-for-Teacher-Leaders_June-2017-8.24.44-AM.pdf
This series of briefs makes the case for Chiefs to elevate teachers in policy-making and build a leadership culture, including detailed case studies of exemplar approaches Chiefs have taken to develop teacher leadership in Louisiana, New Mexico, and Tennessee.
- 5** **Council of Chief State School Officers - Empowering Great Teachers Blog**
<https://ccsso.org/blog/empowering-great-teachers-states-leading-advance-teacher-leadership>
This blog post from the Council of Chief State School Officers describes their 13-state workgroup on teacher leadership, including highlights of state activity, common challenges, and the next directions for supporting state Chiefs in advancing teacher leadership

6 **Education Commission of the States - Teacher Leadership State Profiles**
<https://www.ecs.org/teacher-leadership-and-licensure-advancement-state-profiles/>

This 50 state summary of state statute on teacher leadership provides users with side-by-side comparisons and interactive maps depicting details of the 17 states that have adopted teacher leader standards and 13 states that prescribe the role of teacher leaders in state statute or regulation.

7 **National Council on Teaching Quality - Databurst on Teacher Leadership Opportunities:**
https://www.nctq.org/dmsView/NCTQ_Databurst_Teacher_Leadership_Opportunities

This resource provides a state-by-state summary of the formal policies states have adopted to identify, support, and incentivize teacher leaders. It details the policy, selection criteria, incentives and supports, and preparation for the 35 states with formal teacher leadership policies.

8 **National Education Association - Teacher Leader Competencies**
http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/NEA_TLCF_20180824.pdf

The Teacher Leader Competencies were developed by the National Education Association, the National Board, and the Center for Teacher Quality to support the Teacher Leadership Institute partnership to support teachers passionate about leading the profession. It builds on the Teacher Leader Model Standards developed by the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium.

9 **WestEd Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning - Centerview Series on Teacher Leadership**
<https://thecenter.wested.org/category/centerview/>

This series includes several briefs outlining the results of surveys of teacher leaders, strategies from school level administrators, and structured protocols to assist teachers in leading peers.

In addition to these resources, several innovative teacher leadership training programs and fellowships include:

The American Federation of Teachers Teacher Leaders Program

https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/br_teacherleaderprogram2015.pdf

Public Impact - Opportunity Culture

<https://publicimpact.com/category/teacher-leadership/>

Educators for Excellence - Teacher Leadership Trainings

<https://e4e.org/what-we-do/teacher-leadership>

National Institute for Excellence in Teaching - Teacher Leadership Series

<https://www.niet.org/assets/Resources/917c7fd50e/niet-teacher-leadership-series-brief.pdf>

Teach Plus Policy - Fellowships and Instructional Leadership Program

<https://teachplus.org/>

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