

Perspectives on Opportunities and Challenges for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and Certification

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As guest editors of this theme issue concerning the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and Certification, we invite the readers of *Issues in Teacher Education* to examine multiple perspectives of the National Board process represented in the following five articles. With the recent focus on teacher performance and teacher preparation, and policymaker demands for increased accountability,

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such an examination can provide a catalyst for discussions about this professional development opportunity and how we can proceed together as teacher educators with even deeper understanding.

Since the fall of 2000, the four of us have been involved in a series of discussions concerning: (1) how NBPTS can become a viable part of the culture of partnerships between school districts and institutions of higher education, (2) how we can recruit and support NBPTS candidates, and (3) how we can use the NBPTS in the overall professional development and performance of teachers by integrating the vision of teaching articulated in the Five Principles of the National Board in our work.

These discussions were first supported by the inception of the California State University System National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Network in 2000, and the subsequent development of our own particular forum of discussion concerning our work in the California State University, Long Beach/Long Beach Unified School District K-16 Partnership. As one of the major outcomes of these discussions, we submitted a theme issue proposal to *Issues in Teacher Education* that would focus on: (1) articulated research and multiple perceptions grounded in practice concerning the nature of NBPTS, (2) how the work of NBPTS is articulated in practice, and (3) how teacher educators such as ourselves can move forward with an increased knowledge base in both research and research-based activities.

In the articles selected for the issue, we find the authors' varied perspectives powerful as a combined body of work. Together, the articles help define how NBPTS is working in California and where we, as teacher educators, could go with the compelling evidence presented. We hope that these articles will contribute to further professional dialogue and enhanced understanding of the role of NBPTS in shaping the professional development of teachers, and thereby enhance the educational experiences of the children of California.

A Brief History of the NBPTS

Since the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk*, concern over the state of American public education has steadily increased. That report launched a variety of educational reforms focusing on school governance, academic standards, and high stakes assessments. However, few programs focused on the role of teacher development as the key to educational reform. In 1986 the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching issued a report in which the classroom teacher was placed at the center of educational reform. The major recommendation from *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* called for the formation of a National Board for

Professional Teaching Standards that would develop a vision and a system by which teaching excellence would be valued and rewarded.

Subsequently, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards was initiated in 1987, stating that its mission was: “to establish high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do, develop and operate a national voluntary system to assess and certify teachers who meet these standards, and to advance related education reforms for the purpose of improving student learning in American schools” (NBPTS, 1999). In order to do this, the NBPTS continues to espouse the belief that exemplary and distinguished teachers are able to effectively enhance student learning through the demonstration of knowledge, skills, dispositions and commitments that are reflected in the following five 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 mentoring student learning.
4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
5. Teachers are members of learning communities.

Already the NBPTS vision of accomplished teaching is having a significant influence on the preparation and licensure of teachers. The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), for example, has revised its accreditation standards to reflect the NBPTS statement of accomplished practice, and the Council of Chief State School Officers has developed a project — the Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) — to produce model standards for initial teacher licensure that are designed to be consistent with NBPTS standards.

Overview

Articles in this issue examine both general themes relating to NBPTS (Digby & Avani, Ross & Alfaro) and specific reflective inquiry into particular programs (Glaeser & Aloia; Unrau; Eckmier, Ericson, Huetinck, & Sato). We have chosen to open the themed discussion of this issue with the review of literature by Annette D. Digby and Nathan Avani that investigates the benefits of the National Board for candidates

and their students. The review reveals three recurring areas of the impact of NBPTS on preschool through 12th grade [P-12] education: (1) professional development of candidates, including reflection and collaboration; (2) leadership development of candidates; and (3) student achievement. Both qualitative and quantitative articles are represented in their review. The authors also inquire into the connections between NBPTS and teacher education within (1) program design, (2) professional development, (3) personnel, and (4) student (P-16) learning and achievement. Suggestions for further action are offered for research that could be imbedded in the development, delivery, and evaluation of programs based upon NBPTS standards.

Next, Donna L. Ross and Christna Alfaró analyze the current lack of representation of exemplary teachers of color in the successful completion of National Board certification. Their article serves as an important forum for the topic. The authors suggest that a major social challenge for the National Board process is the exploration of factors that have kept teachers of color from becoming certified. After their discussion of the current status, they offer powerful suggestions for changing the current lack of ethnic diversity in the demographics of successful NBPTS candidates.

In their article, "A Miss or A Match for Special Education?," Barbara J. C. Glaeser and Stephen Aloia evaluate the place of special education in the National Board certification process. Their concern is twofold: (1) given the nature of the field, they question if special education can be codified within a set of advanced competencies; and (2) how educators in the field would benefit from the certification process. However, they suggest that, politically, the prestige of having National Board Certification could enhance the image of the profession.

We conclude the issue with two articles concerning building frameworks for advanced teacher development programs by incorporating the tenets of NBPTS, specifically in the redesign of master's degree programs. First, Norman J. Unrau examines lessons learned by both candidates and university faculty in supporting NBPTS candidates in a graduate program setting. With support of the Curriculum and Instruction faculty and the California State University, Los Angeles Task Force for NBPTS, an agreement was negotiated to offer the National Board certification process as a Capstone Project for MA candidates in the Middle and Secondary program. Unrau explores the entire process and includes suggestions for how the National Board model could support not only the instructional programs but also the assessment of university faculty, especially those who educate teachers in service.

Finally, Janice Eckmier, Bonnie Ericson, Linda Huetinck, and Kyoko

Sato make a case for using the tenets of NBPTS in redesigning the Mathematics and English Subject Specialist Master's Programs at California State University, Northridge. They take us through the constructed cohort program semester by semester, discussing both the coursework and portfolio activities. The authors pay particular attention to the culminating master's experience of a portfolio presentation that serves as a form of the comprehensive examination for their program. Eckmier and colleagues then analyze the outcomes of the program and conclude that such programs could serve as revitalizing agents for change in the education of career teachers.

Conclusion

We have had two goals in presenting this issue: (1) to contribute to the process of knowledge development about the work of the National Board, and (2) to build a well-grounded baseline for future planning and partnerships in the work of the National Board Standards and Certification in California. We offer these articles as examples of what can be learned from reflective inquiry and as a foundation for how such inquiries can inform our work.

Serafini (2002) states that "although challenges have been raised about the NBPTS and its certification system, especially the assessment process, there also exists the possibility for improving the status and quality of the teaching profession that has not existed in previous reform initiatives" (p. 325). He further states that there are: (1) few studies reporting on the actual certification process, and (2) few reports written by other than certified teachers and NBPTS staff. As guest editors of this special issue, we believe that we have contributed to the field of inquiry by presenting five well-documented and compelling articles written by teacher educators engaged in the NBPTS certification process. We hope that this issue will not only help fill the gap in research but inform professional dialogue as P-16 partnerships work together to design and implement programs for National Board certification.

References

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