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ABSTRACT

This proposal calls for the establishment of an independent, freestanding, voluntary system of advanced certification for principals and superintendents that would recognize highly accomplished practices in these two educational fields. The proposal spells out why such an initiative is needed and how an American Board for Leadership in Education (ABLE) would be founded and governed. It describes how the establishment of standards for advanced practice could have a profound effect on the profession and how the idea draws on the lessons already learned, including the recent experience of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, an idea that was initially dismissed by many as laudable yet politically impractical but was eventually accepted. The case for a system of advanced certification is presented with, first, a look at school and district leadership and the effectiveness of current incentives and systems designed to encourage excellence and ensure quality. The proposal then goes on to discuss standards; professional education; mobility and the administrator labor market; the special case of urban education; licensure versus certification; designing a system of advanced certification for administrators; governance; and the establishment and staffing of an ABLE. (WFA)

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National Policy Board for Educational Administration

July 2001

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Recognizing and Encouraging Exemplary Leadership in America's Schools: A Proposal to Establish a System of Advanced Certification for Administrators

Prepared by the

National Policy Board for Educational Administration

July 2001

However one judges the current performance of our schools, or considers the degree to which there have been noticeable improvements at the margins as the result of 15 years of reform initiatives, the uncomfortable fact remains that too many children endure an inadequate education when judged against the demands of today's society. In part, this is because our expectations are higher than they have ever been. Students need to know more and be able to do more with what they know than previously. In part, it is because our societal goals for excellence and equity demand that the education previously reserved for an elite few now needs to be provided to the many. When such expectations meet a system where the incentives for change are few and far between, the prospects for marked shifts in teaching and learning that the times demand rest on bold solutions infused with large doses of imagination, creativity and inventiveness.

We cannot just order schools to improve and expect them to jump to attention. Nor is wishing them to get better likely to make them so. A series of extended efforts that address the fundamentals of teaching and learning must be put in place and joined by complementary efforts to address the institutional weaknesses common to American education that often block progress. These efforts will have to be sustained over many years if they are to succeed. Fortunately, over the past several years many key building blocks have received some degree of attention, in good measure a response to pressure from both political and business leaders. New curriculum standards and accountability mechanisms have been established, some more admirable than others. Attention to teacher development and teacher quality has been on the rise. And, here and there we have seen modest progress on other key issues such as improving the culture of schools, parental involvement and the fundamentals of school organization and management. However, given the multifaceted changes in current practice that are needed and all the inertia built into the system, it is quite striking that in the arena of institutional leadership so little has transpired.

Both the research literature and common sense tells us that leadership is an indispensable ingredient in transforming a school and a district and that there are a host of good reasons to change the current conditions. On this score two developments are especially promising. One is that several leading foundations have begun to express serious interest in this arena. The

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second is that former Secretary of Education Richard Riley has spoken out on the importance of strengthening educational leadership in the nation's schools and encouraged the funding community and the states to make this issue a priority. Bold actions to address a core weakness in American education may now have an audience.

This proposal puts forward one such bold idea. It calls for the establishment of an independent, free standing, voluntary system of advanced certification for principals and superintendents that would recognize highly accomplished practice in these two critical fields. A seemingly simple proposition, it sends a host of important signals about the critical importance of education leadership and is likely to provoke complementary policy initiatives that could serve to both increase the attractiveness of these ever more demanding positions and the ability to hold especially able people in them.

The proposal spells out why such an initiative is needed and how an American Board for Leadership in Education (ABLE) would be founded and governed. It describes how the establishment of standards for advanced practice could have a profound effect on the profession and how this idea draws on the lessons already learned, including the recent experience of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards – another bold idea that was initially dismissed by many as a laudable but politically impractical idea, but that over the past 15 years has taken root and proven the skeptics wrong.

The case for moving forward with this initiative begins with a look at the reality of school and district leadership as it exists today, its challenges, its rewards, and the effectiveness of the current incentives and systems designed to encourage excellence and assure quality.

The School Leadership Conundrum

The institutional leadership functions in schools and school districts are one step removed from the core teaching and learning functions of the institution. Consequently, the policy community has correctly placed substantial emphasis on what is to be taught, how it is taught, and who teaches. This is all to the good, but by itself insufficient. It is insufficient, because the way in which schools are organized, structured, financed and governed requires that a major dose of leadership be applied if we are to achieve real improvement in who teaches, how they teach and what they teach. The main workforce of the schools, teachers, have for the most part entered their profession with the notion that once granted a license to teach by the state they will be accorded certain prerogatives and function as independent experts able to decide what is best for their students. They are assigned courses and classes to teach on their own, further reinforcing their roles as independent practitioners. And, their compensation is generally not linked to either their individual or the institution's performance. This is a first challenge for leadership. Another is parents, the schools' customers, who are traditionally quite conservative regarding the education of their own children and naturally suspicious of initiatives to move schooling in directions that are at variance from what they experienced in their own youth. A third challenge is that school leaders have responsibility without a commensurate degree of authority for budgets, personnel or curricular objectives. A fourth challenge is the fishbowl like existence that distinguishes life as a school leader from the life of leaders in most American workplaces. This list could be extended, but just as it stands it

suggests why a premium needs to be placed on attracting and holding in positions of leadership knowledgeable, skilled and committed individuals.

While some of the conditions that challenge school leaders can be improved, it would be extraordinarily shortsighted to wait for such changes to transpire before attacking the leadership challenge, especially because strong leadership can accelerate this process. In sum, transforming schools into the productive educational institutions they need to be is a daunting task, and unlikely to occur without inspired and intelligent leadership.

At this time when able leadership is needed, the demographics of school leaders pose yet another obstacle. Not only are many principals and superintendents nearing retirement, but turnover rates among superintendents remain high in many jurisdictions and school districts are reporting increasing difficulty in attracting strong candidates to both the principalship and the superintendency. These positions are as challenging as they have ever been due to accountability requirements, more difficult safety and security issues, and unending demands for time. Potential candidates for these posts also believe that there is a significant disjuncture between the rewards such positions offer and the wear and tear they impose on the lives of those who occupy them, thus rendering them less attractive than they might otherwise be.

This dilemma is especially problematic as schools search for new principals at a time when staying in the classroom has become a much more attractive option for teachers. States and school districts have for the best of reasons sought to change the incentive structure for teachers, which traditionally has encouraged the most able teachers to seek administrative positions (if they were interested in better pay and increased status). This has been accomplished by rewarding those who achieve National Board Certification and by creating lead teacher positions that offer increased compensation, responsibility, authority and standing. In so doing, the authorities may well be shrinking the pool of promising candidates for the principalship and other administrative positions.

Further constraining the solution set to address the demographic trend lines schools are now confronting is the fact that most prospective candidates come from within the education sector. Unlike other sectors of the economy, where it is not unusual for managers to move from industry to industry, in education a much more insular tradition prevails. This may or may not be all to the good, but it is a limiting factor. In short, the problem is not only one of quality, but also of quantity.

Thinking Afresh about the Development of Education Leaders

In thinking through how to address these matters, the career paths school leaders take and the manner in which they are educated and developed deserve serious attention. Most school leaders come from the teaching ranks and gain masters degrees on their way to acquiring an administrative license from the state. Recent efforts to redefine what first time administrators should know and be able to do were completed in 1996 by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) housed at the Council of Chief State School Officers. Influenced by the growing pressure on school systems to improve student learning, ISLLC places greater emphasis on the instructional leadership responsibilities of school administrators. Pushed by

ISLLC's actions and the broad influence of the accountability movement, instructional leadership is now a front burner issue as administrator preparation programs are restructured, and it can be seen as well in the development of a more performance-based licensing examination for administrators that ISLLC has sponsored at ETS. In this way and others the states are revamping their licensing requirements to focus greater attention on administrators' responsibilities to strengthen teaching and advance the learning of all students.

This is all well and good, but once in possession of a license administrators typically find themselves at the end of any organized effort to build their capacity to serve as education leaders. Unlike the common practice of the corporate world and the military where there are systematic and continuous initiatives to grow and develop a management cadre that can take on greater and greater responsibilities and succeed at each step along the way, education makes no such careful investment of resources in its future leaders. Rather, it typically sends a signal to its freshly minted novice managers that once assigned their first administrative position serious attention to their professional development has concluded. Yes, state licensing requirements encourage them to either take an occasional graduate course (which too often is weakly connected to their professional development needs), or accumulate some fixed number of continuing education units, or both, but the notion that there are higher standards to which they might aspire, that there are greater levels of competence and professionalism that they might work toward, or that they are just at the beginning, not the end, of their development as leaders are foreign concepts to school administration.

Today, there are several corporate initiatives and growing investments by the foundation community in the ongoing development of school and district leaders. These are typically modestly scaled ad hoc initiatives that are usually conducted outside the system and benefit only the lucky few to come within their orbit. Several states have also created leadership academies to foster the continuing education of their administrators. However, more comprehensive and far reaching efforts by states and localities to unlock the potential for growth that exists in most administrators have yet to emerge.

This same dilemma has until recently been characteristic of teaching as well. The system had placed nearly all its resources on assuring the quality of beginning teachers and hardly any on growing novice teachers into highly accomplished practitioners. The advent of National Board Certification (NBC) for teachers has begun to change this equation fundamentally. The profession has established high and rigorous standards for exemplary practice and built a valid, reliable and fair system for recognizing accomplished teachers. States and localities have responded by recognizing the value represented by a certificate issued by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). More than 30 states now offer financial incentives to seek and achieve NBC and often the promise of new roles and responsibilities as well. These incentives include full payment of the cost of the certification process, significant one-time and permanent salary increases, and access to lead teacher positions that offer greater responsibility, autonomy, status and compensation.

Given the current state of school administration, a similar initiative to develop a system of advanced professional certification for principals and superintendents could pay dividends many times over. The benefits of developing such a system would fall along the following

lines:

- **Standards** – For the first time the profession would come together to formulate a set of professional norms for exemplary practitioners. Until now the standards conversation in this field has been confined to the requirements for beginning practitioners, an important and valuable benchmark. But building on this work and codifying the professional consensus around best practice is the mark of a genuine profession, for only when a profession can articulate what expertise characterizes a full-fledged member of its field can it claim, in fact, to be a profession.
- **Professional Education** – The existence of advanced standards means that for the first time there will be a set of high standards to guide all phases of the education and training of administrators, from initial preparation, through licensure and initial practice, and then on to advanced practice. This will ensure that a clear set of signals about the hallmarks of educational leadership is available to future and current administrators, to those who periodically evaluate their practice, and to those who hold the responsibility for educating administrators to the highest level be they in colleges, universities or elsewhere.
- **Recognition of Excellence in Education Leadership** – At present exemplary administrators have Principal of the Year and Superintendent of the Year programs to look to for professional recognition, but these programs are limited in their effect, designed as they are to recognize only one person per state per year. Administrators who have developed over time into first rate practitioners deserve, like teachers, to be recognized by their peers for their accomplishments without any artificial quotas standing in their way. This affirmation of the quality of their work would create an incentive for excellence and professional growth where few such incentives currently exist. It would also establish a vehicle for school systems to encourage such growth by tying both improved compensation and greater responsibilities to board certification.

At present, higher status and oft times greater compensation are associated with directing larger institutions and higher level schools, thus pushing able people to leave positions they might otherwise be quite content to remain in. Hence, many an elementary and middle school has lost an effective principal to a high school opening. Recognizing and rewarding exemplary practitioners without regard to their current role might encourage strong administrators to stay longer at places where they are making a difference and lead less nomadic lives, a change that might also make school administration itself a more attractive career choice over the long haul for talented educators.

- **Quality Assurance** – As school systems seek to develop and put in place highly effective administrators who can lead the transformation of schools and school districts, the existence of a valid, reliable and fair system to identify such administrators would be of substantial assistance in selecting new leaders and placing highly competent administrators in those settings most in need of renewal and improvement. It would also

serve as a legitimate basis to offer better compensation to those with demonstrated expertise and thereby broaden the pool of candidates for the most critical positions.

- **Mobility and the Administrator Labor Market** – While advanced certification of administrators by itself will not solve the problem of state retirement systems that tend to pin down able administrators, it could contribute to a general opening of the labor market for such professionals by introducing an objective, qualitative dimension to personnel evaluations and hiring decisions that is largely absent today. This would be a healthy development for both employers and employees and might also serve to jump-start a serious and needed conversation about pension portability.

Advanced certification for administrators will not by itself transform our schools. Joined with other well conceived innovations, however, it could have a catalytic effect on spurring positive change in the schools. For example, all the efforts that are now focused on providing schools with greater autonomy in exchange for increased responsibility, whether they are charter plans or something less contentious, rest importantly on the quality of school leadership. Hence, building leadership capacity and identifying highly accomplished leaders is crucial to such initiatives. Furthermore, if a new generation of leaders is to be found to fill the many openings created by an accelerating rate of retirements, someone is going to be asked to educate and mentor them. Who better to seek out for such assignments than our most accomplished principals and superintendents? But today it is not clear just who these individuals are as there is no reliable system in place to identify them. So this is another way in which advanced certification can have an immediate benefit.

As the states have introduced district and school report card systems the past few years, the fact that some schools are in deep trouble has become glaringly obvious. Part of the answer to turning around the performance of the nation's most troubled schools is strengthening their leadership and the level of support available from their district offices for teacher education. These schools need to be staffed and led by each system's strongest educators, not by novices as is too often the case. With an advanced certification system in place school districts will be better positioned to identify the educators best equipped to take on these critical assignments and those with system-wide responsibilities will have a clearer sense about how well their processes for allocating the systems' human resources are functioning. Leadership here is crucial when one considers that improving the nation's low performing schools is not just about upgrading their curriculum and revamping instructional practices, it is also about changing the culture of the school. On this front, strong, creative, open and imaginative leadership is absolutely essential.

The Special Case of Urban Education

No where are these matters more urgent than in our large urban school systems. These systems not only have a disproportionate share of underperforming schools; they often also have staff resources allocated in highly inequitable and inefficient ways. While this resource allocation problem can be tied in part to inflexible teacher and administrator work rules, not having in place mechanisms to systematically and reliably identify exemplary teachers and administrators can mask this problem and rob the district of a vehicle to set this right. Having

no trustworthy means in place to recognize administrator quality also works to the detriment of urban districts when it comes time to hire new people and promote promising staff into positions of greater responsibility, a function they have to perform on a regular basis due to the high turnover rates most such systems experience. So not only is their ability to make sound decisions about hiring, placement and staff development compromised, it is difficult for those with larger oversight responsibilities, such as school boards, state legislatures, state departments of education and governors' offices, to assess how well these key functions are being executed. On these grounds alone, the establishment of a national system for the advanced certification of education leaders has much to offer.

Licensure vs. Certification

It should be understood that this system of advanced certification is designed to be voluntary, not mandatory, and to complement state licensing systems, not substitute for them. While the language we use in education to discuss such matters often clouds this important distinction, it is a distinction with a real difference. In teaching and school administration, as in other professions, the state has an obligation to protect the public interest (in this case the special interests of young children) by ensuring that those with responsibility to perform critical functions have command of the basic knowledge and skills that guarantee that they will do no harm at a minimum, and hopefully will do some good. The state exercises this responsibility through its licensing systems and by virtue of their purpose, they are mandatory in nature.

In contrast, professions have the responsibility to establish high standards of excellence that are inappropriate for beginning practitioners, but set a goal to which members of the profession can aspire over time as they gain experience, build their knowledge, hone their skills, and develop the ability to make tough professional judgments. One can fail to reach these standards and still practice in a satisfactory manner, at a level that does not place the public at undue risk. Since each profession typically is populated by individuals of varying talent, competence and commitment, ratcheting up the mandatory licensing standard would only serve to drive out capable people who could contribute to the profession. Consequently, it doesn't make sense to make the attainment of such a high level of practice mandatory, but there are very good reasons to provide a voluntary process for professionals to be recognized by their peers for such accomplishment. The best example of this tradition can be seen in medicine, where physicians are licensed following their graduation from medical school and satisfactory performance on a series of national examinations, and then, on an optional basis, can apply for specialty board certification after completion of a multiyear internship and residency, a satisfactory review by senior, board-certified physicians, and passage of another more demanding set of national examinations. Architecture, engineering and accounting have similar but less demanding regimens for achieving advanced status.

Designing a System of Advanced Certification for Administrators

This proposal submitted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration requests support for putting in place the initial building blocks for a system of advanced certification for administrators. It would provide 30 months of funding for the initial planning and policy development activities leading up to the founding of an independent American Board for

Leadership in Education, and the initial standards development work needed to drive a program of assessment design, construction and testing.

If one is to consider creating a new system of this sort, a set of basic design decisions have to be reached that to some lesser or greater degree will interact one with the other. They include the following:

- **Standards Development** – While some systems of licensing and certification have been built without any attention to first establishing standards, this is a huge mistake. To establish the basic trustworthiness of any such system the first step must be to create an open and public process for the profession to reach consensus positions on the essential ingredients of exemplary practice. This activity would include a close examination of important and related work that had preceded this effort, including that of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC), ISLLC, and others, as well as a careful review of the research literature in education leadership, in particular, and of the broader management and organizational development literature as well. This would entail the creation of one or more standards committees composed of practitioners in the field, scholars, educators and others to draft an initial set of standards, to subject such work both to professional and to public review and critique, and then to reconsider their recommendations before forwarding them on to the governing body of the system (discussed below) for final adoption. Some of the participants in these activities might well be drawn from those who had prior experience in these related standard setting initiatives. On this and other scores as well, the well-regarded processes established by NBPTS deserve close attention.
- **Architecture of the Certificates** – Historically, professional boards are almost continually being lobbied to add new certificates to the set they currently offer, no matter how many they have brought on-line. This has been the experience of NBPTS, as it is the ongoing experience of the medical specialty boards. While there are good and proper reasons for expanding the number of fields where an important body of expertise has emerged and is valued, there is also the risk of professional boards inadvertently fostering overspecialization that is at odds with the public interest. There is also a set of economic imperatives to consider here as well. Each certificate carries with it not only the cost of standards and assessment development, but also a set of maintenance costs that have to be amortized over the pool of candidates that will apply each year. For fields with small populations this can be a substantial hurdle.

With these considerations as the backdrop, it appears that an American Board for Leadership in Education could begin with two certificates (principal and superintendent), four (elementary principal, middle school principal, high school principal and superintendent) or even one (for both principals and superintendents), although this latter option will probably find few advocates. While these could be rolled out one or two at a time, early in the life of ABLE a decision regarding this architecture question should be made as it will have implications not only for financing, but for both professional and public acceptance and standards development as well. One way to

consider this matter that might be worth pursuing would be for the Board to first craft an overarching statement of *What Education Leaders Should Know and Be Able To Do* that would specify the commonalities that tie these various fields of administration together. Then follow this effort by attempting to specify the distinctive attributes of the two or four specialty designations. The resulting standards could then be examined by the Board to determine if there are sharp enough distinctions along enough critical dimensions to warrant the development of more than one certificate and, if so, how many. Alternatively, this exercise could proceed concurrently with the drafting of *What Education Leaders Should Know....*, and by sharing the output of the various working parties have both the general discussion and the specialty discussions feed off each other and benefit each other. This would also serve to truncate the timeframe for making this critical decision.

An alternative model also deserving consideration is that of differentiation through endorsements (e.g., offering a single principal certificate along with the option of allowing candidates to earn an endorsement as an elementary, middle or high school specialist). However this decision comes out, it is one that should be reserved for the Board to make for itself. But, whatever the decision, the good news is that only a handful of assessments need be built and, consequently, the overall cost of building this system will be far less than the investment that was required to build NBPTS' system of 30+ certificates.

- **Prerequisites** – If one accepts the notion that there are several paths that one might take to become an exemplary education leader, then creating an open system, one that is easily accessible by administrators with varying backgrounds, is highly desirable. This doesn't mean a system sans prerequisites, as another operating idea ought to be that however knowledgeable one is on their first day as a principal or superintendent, individuals who are going to become exemplary educational leaders will grow on the job as they gain experience and additional knowledge and skill. It is this latter status as an effective and experienced leader that a system of advanced certification should seek to honor, not how proficient a novice administrator might be. Consequently, an experience requirement on the order of 3-5 years as a principal or superintendent might be appropriate. The number of years should be low enough to allow for the exceptional individual to apply, but not so low as to blur the distinction between licensing and certification. Conversely, it should be high enough to avoid the Board being pushed into a corner by a weak pool of candidates and having to compromise its principles and set a standard below par (to ensure a plausible pass-rate), but not so high that it discourages promising candidates by making them wait an inordinate number of years to apply.
- **Assessment Development** – There are many forms that an assessment for the advanced certification of educational leaders might take as the education measurement community has made important technological advances in the past ten years. Performance measurement still holds many challenges, but enough experience has been gained with National Board Certification and the use of performance measures in other venues to make such methodologies a viable option. Advances in the use of computer

administered examinations and the development of video portfolios should also put these options into the mix of possibilities the Board examines. And, while NBPTS decided that on-site observation of teachers was not a feasible option for a variety of reasons, the same may not hold true for administrators. In any event, how to proceed here is not a decision to be made without extensive exploration and examination of the range of options that would meet the APPLE criteria of being Administratively feasible, Professionally acceptable, Publicly credible, Legally defensible and Economically affordable. Here, as elsewhere, the Board will quickly discover that it is often the case that a choice that maximizes one of these criteria will only serve to compromise another. So striking the proper balance among legitimate competing priorities is the ongoing challenge.

As these options are explored, other corollary questions have to be answered:

- Should the process be subdivided into several parts and, if so, must the parts be taken in any particular order?
- Should there be, in effect, a content knowledge examination, and might there be a different prerequisite threshold for it than for other aspects of the assessment process? For example, there might be a reasonable argument advanced that providing prospective candidates an early indication of the viability of their candidacy through such an examination has merit.
- What kind of feedback can candidates be provided that might be professionally valuable, especially for those whose performance on the assessment is below par, without exposing the Board to burdensome legal challenges?
- Will there be an unlimited retake policy and will partial credit be awarded for satisfactory performance on any component part of the assessment? Different professions have taken markedly different philosophical stances on such matters. The question will be, what is best for this field?
- What price should be charged for the certification process?
- **Renewal** – If the certificates to be issued by this new Board are not to be certificates for life, as there is broad agreement that a mark of a professional is keeping abreast of developments in one's field and continually striving to strengthen one's practice, then decisions will have to be taken on the renewable life of each certificate (e.g., 5-10 years) and on the design of the renewal process itself. With respect to the requirements for renewal there will also be the question of whether a board-certified administrator should be expected to make some contribution to the profession and, if so, what form should it take? With respect to evidence for each of these attributes, the great temptation will be to make this just a low burden, paper-only process. Taking this path has some risk as it could dilute or diminish the value of a hard won ABLE certificate. Lessening this risk will require taking the decision to include a knowledge examination and/or a

performance assessment of some sort as part of the renewal process.

In many of these matters there is knowledge to be gained by taking advantage of the trials and tribulations that NBPTS has experienced in the 15 years since the Carnegie Forum Planning Group that preceded the founding of the teacher board began its deliberations in 1986. Several leaders of NPBEA initially discussed the possibility of ABLE capitalizing on the significant investment that has been made here in policy development and assessment technology with Jim Kelly, NBPTS' first president, and more recently with Betty Castor, NBPTS' new president. Both have endorsed the merits of this idea and Dr. Castor has indicated her strong interest in finding ways to collaborate with ABLE and share the wisdom NBPTS has accumulated in this arena.

Attending to each of these matters is clearly a multiyear process that can only be rushed so much without placing the entire enterprise at risk. Time is also crucial to build support for this effort in the profession, in the policy community and amongst the public. So, as much as the advocates of this idea would, for the very best of reasons, like to see it come alive immediately, some degree of patience is required to allow for careful planning, the airing of competing theories, the rectifying of problems that are bound to occur when one is operating at the edge of new assessment technologies, and for a decision making process to emerge that inspires trust among all the constituencies at interest here. What this will require is the following sequence of actions:

- Creation of a planning group to charter the new organization, oversee the raising of the initial seed money, and address the governance issues spelled out below (8-12 months).
- Development of initial policies and standards (1 year).
- Design and field test of initial assessments (2 years).

Once one also factors in the possibility that unexpected events will occur to delay one or more aspects of this rosy scenario, the anticipated time to launch should realistically be seen as four to five years from the point of initiation. Nevertheless, as the process moves forward one can expect the Board to look for every opportunity to truncate this timetable while at the same time being careful to guard against any precipitous action that might place the entire enterprise at risk.

Governance

This effort like others before it will be of most immediate interest to members of the profession it promises to address, but it will also be of interest to others that the profession comes into contact with in the course of its work. In this case this includes teachers, parents, those who employ administrators (school boards), those who educate them (at the college and university level and elsewhere), and those with overarching responsibilities for the schools (state officials). In one way or another, this effort should seek out various means to connect the work of this new enterprise on a regular basis to these various constituencies and the key organizations that typically represent their interests.

One means to accomplish this is through active inclusion of such individuals in the governing board of this new institution. The emphasis here on new is deliberate and should be accompanied by the idea that the body that governs the certification process also be independent of other professional institutions that have ongoing and different responsibilities to discharge. Creating such independence is necessary to guard against the appearance, if not the reality, of potential conflicts of interest that inevitably can arise in such professional enterprises. However, such independence has political advantage as well, as there are multiple organizations representing administrators, each of which needs to have a voice in the conduct of this new Board, but none of which should be seen as controlling its operations. Ready parallels can be seen in medicine where the specialty boards that govern advanced certification operate independently from the colleges of cardiology, surgery, family practice and the like, as well as from the AMA and the American Association of Medical Colleges. This model does not preclude the active participation of an individual who is also an active member of one of several related organizations, but what it does do is preserve the freedom of movement that each entity needs and deserves.

While several steps can be taken to move this initiative forward in the next several months, soon enough incorporation papers will have to be filed to bring this new institution to life, and at this point an initial board of directors will have to be in place. In thinking about the composition of the board, two criteria seem paramount:

- A majority of the members should be practicing principals and superintendents.
- Some significant portion of the membership – perhaps as much as a two-fifths -- should be made up of other educators and others drawn from outside the profession.

After this there are a broad range of conditions that can be established, probably the fewer the better, but the first priority ought to be to send two clear and unmistakable messages: (1) that this board represents the profession taking responsibility for setting its own high standards for exemplary practice, standards it is prepared to defend and encourage its members to meet; and (2) that the profession values the perspectives of those it serves and works with.

While there is no one perfect recipe for designing the composition of such a governing body, here is a first cut that will hopefully provoke a constructive dialogue about what formulation makes the best sense for this board. Consider a board with two classes of seats: (1) administrators; (2) other educators and others. Roughly three-fifths of the seats would be allocated to the first class and roughly two fifths to the second. Aiming for a board that was no larger than some number in the 20s, a board with the following makeup might work:

- Administrators (15) – Five each drawn from the ranks of elementary school principals, secondary school principals, and superintendents.
- Other Educators and Others (10) – A mix of teachers, parents, local school board members, college and university faculty, state policy makers (e.g., governors, state legislators, chiefs, state board members and state licensing officials) and business and community leaders.

Members would serve overlapping 3-year terms and elect a chair, vice-chair and any other such officers as the Board's by-laws might specify. Nominations for open seats on the board would be sought from all the appropriate constituency organizations and from the profession at-large. Having held a leadership position in one of the administrator organizations would be desirable characteristic for some of the board members to have, but making this an absolute requirement would needlessly limit the pool of able professionals whose service would be of substantial benefit to this new entity. Similarly, while there may be some advantage in reserving a seat or two for each of the four administrator associations (AASA, ASCD, NAESP, NASSP), carrying this precedent any further could put the enterprise on a slippery slope from which it would be difficult to recover. The last thing this board needs is for the preponderant number of its seats to be "owned" by any set of organizations.

Moving Forward

This basic set of ideas has been developed over the past year during deliberations at three meetings of the NPBEA and tested at discussions that each of the NBPEA constituent organizations have had amongst their respective leaders and with their members. In each instance both leaders and rank and file members have voiced strong support for this initiative. That there has been as much unanimity as there has been among the NBPEA constituency organizations speaks to the power of this idea. Not only has it been embraced by the various administrator and administrator educator associations, who do not always see eye-to-eye, it has also been endorsed by the National School Boards Association, the employers of administrators, and the Council of Chief State School Officers, the overseers of the nation's school districts. No small accomplishment.

At the NBPEA meeting in May 2000, the participating organizations unanimously agreed to move forward with a three-step plan for the establishment and initial operation of ABLE that would have the following characteristics:

- This organization will be governed by a practitioner majority, but have other communities of interest represented on its governing board.
- The governing board will be chaired by a distinguished individual who would be seen as representing the public interest; mostly likely a current or former high government official or a leader from business or the non-profit sector who would command the respect of all the parties at interest. This person would be expected to commit a portion of his or her time to actively advancing this idea over the next several years.
- At each step of the way, the process of growing the core group of planners/founders to a full board of directors would be open to consideration of exemplary individuals from both the profession and elsewhere who can bring credibility, luster, intelligence, and different kinds of experiences and perspectives to the table, without regard to their past involvement in the organizational life of the NPBEA or its member associations. However, some members/directors should be drawn from among the current and past leaders of these organizations and some should have participated in past standard setting and/or assessment development initiatives in this field. In addition, the

composition of the planning/governing bodies to be established should reflect the diversity of the profession not only as it is but as it seeks to be along several critical dimensions such as gender, race/ethnicity, region, urbanicity, and school and district size. If the board is to be reflective of the profession, people on the outside looking in should see this in the members sitting around the board's table.

- The establishment of ABLE needs to proceed in a manner that: (a) builds confidence within the profession that needs to respect the standards and have trust in the assessment process; (b) builds confidence in the policy community that needs to trust the certification process if it is to place value on the ABLE certificate(s) and establish incentives for administrators to apply; and (c) builds confidence in the foundation world that the ABLE process will be characterized by high levels of quality, integrity and professionalism and be seen, above all else, as a vehicle for improving student learning and the performance of American schools.
- The initial work of ABLE would proceed with all deliberate speed and center on the key design questions discussed above. The paramount issues here will be deciding on the architecture of the certificates, on a process for standards development, and on the shape and content of the standards for advanced certification. During its initial year, as the full Board takes its first major decisions, it will be important for it to widen the circle of conversation beyond the boundaries of the board table and draw in to its deliberations in one form or another outstanding people from all the constituencies at interest.

With these considerations in mind, the NBPEA decided that **Step 1** in the process would be the appointment of a Core Group of roughly 5-7 people. The composition of this group might include a governor, business leader, community leader, a superintendent, an elementary and a secondary school principal, and a university administrator educator. Their assignment would be to make initial staffing decisions, begin the process of formal fund raising for ABLE, and administer an open process for selecting a strong mix of individuals to join them on a roughly 15 member Planning Group. Both groups would be led by a chair who was committed to working on this project in a serious way for several years and met the criteria noted above. This step should take no more than six months from start to finish.

The creation of The Planning Group by the Core Group would launch **Step 2**. The Planning Group should be able to accomplish its assignments in eight to twelve months. Its main responsibilities would be to:

- Craft an initial set of by-laws and arrange for the filing of articles of incorporation and application for non-profit status for an independent, free standing ABLE.
- Support the efforts of the four administrator organizations to secure initial commitments of financial support from the foundation community.
- Develop a business plan that will allow the Board to become self-sufficient within 3-5 years of beginning to operate the system.

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- Conduct a search for a president who will be able to provide the new organization with the necessary leadership.
- Identify the members of the initial board of directors.
- Agree on a mission statement that might read as follows:

The mission of the American Board for Leadership in Education (ABLE) is to establish high and rigorous standards for what accomplished school leaders should know and be able to do, to certify principals and superintendents who meet those standards, and to advance related education reforms for the purpose of improving student learning in American schools.

- Begin assembling exemplars of standards and assessment processes from other professions and commission policy papers that might inform the early deliberations of the new Board.

Working with a small core staff and a few consultants, the Planning Group should be able to conduct its work with three to four well-planned meetings during this initial period and a good deal of sharing of papers, proposals and ideas between meetings. It would function in an open manner seeking advice and counsel from a wide variety of sources and conduct a thorough search process for distinguished individuals to fill out the initial ABLE board. The composition of the Planning Group might mirror or come close to mirroring the makeup of the ABLE board.

At the conclusion of Step 2 NPBEA's role in this process would come to a close and the responsibility for moving the initiative forward would be handed over to the new American Board for Leadership in Education.

ABLE would open its doors (**Step 3**) upon the successful completion of the Planning Group's work. It would be governed by a roughly 25 to 30-person board of directors and be led by a chair and vice-chair. Seats on the board would, with rare exception, not be owned by any organization, but be apportioned in a 60:40 ratio between current practitioners (i.e., principals and superintendents) and other educators and parties at interest (e.g., administrator educators, state and local officials, business and community leaders, teachers). This ratio is designed to serve two purposes: (1) assure a practitioner majority; and (2) provide sufficient seats for adequate representation of the variety of other constituencies that ought to have a voice in the ABLE governance structure.

While the development of standards, assessments and policies for the operation of an advanced certification system will probably take a minimum of three years, this proposal requests support only through the first year of ABLE's life. During this time the new board will lay the foundation stones for the system it will eventually oversee. Not only will the Board have on its plate the charge to set basic policies and develop standards as noted above, it will

also need to reach out to the practitioner and policy communities and begin to educate them about the merits of its mission and its plans for moving forward. As they do this it will be imperative to listen carefully to these communities' concerns and ascertain their views on the design choices before the Board.

Assuming that progress on all of the above is desired, the resources required for the functioning of the Core and Planning Groups and the first year of ABLE would be on the order of \$1,991,151.

In September 2000, at a national conference on school leadership Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley made the following plea:

The American Board for Leadership in Education, or ABLE, will establish advanced certification for experienced school leaders who meet high and rigorous standards. Advanced certification for school leaders will help us to identify and support our nation's best school leaders.

To kick this off, I urge the foundations here and others in the private sector to work with the nation's principals and administrators groups to work to put this plan into action as soon as possible. And I challenge states to support advanced certification by providing a salary supplement for school leaders with advanced certification.

Meeting the Secretary's challenge is at the heart of this proposal. While moving forward is no guarantee of success, not doing so is a much less attractive option if one accepts the basic proposition that America's schools are in need of a large injection of high quality educational leadership. If well conceived, the initial steps outlined here pose only modest hurdles, with the tougher work to come when the Board moves to translate its standards into valid, reliable and fair assessments. Although not without risk, this is a battle worth fighting.

Staffing

During the project's initial 18-month start-up period, the NPBEA Executive Secretary, E. Joseph Schneider, will serve as director. As such, he will oversee the grant, be the principle liaison with funders, and be responsible for overseeing the consultants and staff.

The NPBEA is a nonprofit corporation based at the headquarters of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) in Arlington, VA. Schneider was selected by the NPBEA member delegates to serve as its chief executive officer in November 1999. At the same time, the delegates agreed to move NPBEA from its prior home at the University of Missouri, Columbia, to AASA.

Project Director

In addition to being the chief administrative officer of NPBEA, a non-paid, part-time position, Schneider serves as deputy executive director and chief operating officer of AASA.

Consequently, Schneider brings both programmatic and administrative leadership to the project.

Schneider has 30 years of administrative and policy experience in education, most of it served as either the CEO or COO of a Washington-based education association. In addition to his NPBEA responsibilities, he currently is the elected chair of the Educational Leadership Constitute Consortium (ELCC). It consists of AASA, Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the National Association of Secondary School Principals. The ELCC has the responsibility for reviewing departments of educational administration and recommending "national recognition" for those that meet certain standards adopted by the NPBEA.

Schneider served for 19 years as the Executive Director of the Council for Educational Development and Research (CEDaR), a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit association of regional educational laboratories and university-based research centers. In that role he helped his member institutions mature from a "Great Society" experiment into a network of mature research and development entities. Later he worked for nearly seven years as the deputy executive director of the Southwest Regional Laboratory (SWRL) in Los Alamitos, CA. While at SWRL he created its policy center, the Metropolitan Educational Trends and Research Outcomes (METRO) Center, and contributed to its scope of work. That effort led to the writing of a book with Paul Houston entitled *Exploding the Myths*, an examination of the "conspiracy against candor" in public education. He has been the number-two administrator at AASA since 1995.

In his various capacities Schneider is heavily involved in issues related to administrator preparation and certification. He has written extensively on the topic and presented his ideas at national gatherings of university professors of educational administration. At AASA he was the principal author of the planning-grant proposal funded by the Readers Digest-Wallace Fund to develop an approach to recruit and train school administrators. His earlier work with NPBEA member associations led to the adoption of a resolution to develop this proposal.

Schneider began his career in education as an editor at the Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration where he had the opportunity to work with some of the leading scholars in the field of educational leadership. Previously he had been a newspaper reporter and desk editor as well as a university news bureau director. He received his undergraduate degree in sociology from North Dakota State University and his master's degree in journalism from the University of Oregon.

Chief Consultant

David R. Mandel, director of MPR Associates' Center for Curriculum and Professional Development, will serve as the lead consultant for this work. The Center conducts research, develops materials, and provides services designed to advance student learning in powerful directions and promote the development of highly accomplished practice in teachers toward the same ends. Before joining MPR in 1996, Mr. Mandel played a central role in creating the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and designing its system for the advanced

professional certification of teachers. He did this, first, as associate director of the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, where he participated in the preparation of the widely acclaimed report *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*, and, second, as the National Board's vice president for policy development. In this latter role, he oversaw the development of the nation's first standards for highly accomplished teaching practice, working closely with the nation's leading practitioners, scholars, and educational organizations.

In 1997, Mr. Mandel oversaw the development of the item and test specifications for the Voluntary National Tests in 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade mathematics. Working collaboratively with the Council of Chief State School Officers, a national policy panel, committees of reading and mathematics experts, and a technical advisory group, he coordinated their various efforts to design the first-ever national achievement tests for individual students. During the past two years he has lead a team that is working with ten *High Schools That Work* sites to accelerate their progress toward becoming New American High Schools as part of a U.S. Department of Education (USDE) initiative to develop model high schools that join the strongest aspects of academic and vocational-technical education. Mr. Mandel has also been instrumental in overseeing the development of the Center's *WorkWise* multimedia cases that have enjoyed the sponsorship of the USDE and the National Science Foundation. These curricular materials are designed to place students in an adult environment that challenges them to apply what they are learning in both their academic and vocational classes to authentic real world problems.

Mr. Mandel began working on education policy issues in the early 1970s at the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity, where his efforts were directed at the intersection of public policy and the needs of poor and minority children. As one of the original members of OEO's Evaluation Research Office he designed and conducted evaluations of federal youth programs, legal services, and school choice initiatives, including the well-known Alum Rock Compensatory Voucher Demonstration Program.

From 1973 to 1982 at the National Institute of Education, he created and managed research programs on school finance equalization, family choice mechanisms, investment in human capital, and postsecondary education finance and governance. During his last four years at the Institute, he served as assistant director and was responsible for the Education Finance Program where a major priority was providing policy analyses to federal, state, and local decision-makers. Mr. Mandel then served a two-year term as a senior policy analyst in the Office of the Under Secretary of Education before joining Carnegie Corporation of New York in 1985. As a member of the Under Secretary's Issues Analysis Staff he advised the Secretary and Under Secretary on sensitive policy matters including legislative and regulatory initiatives, and interpreted research findings and economic, social, and demographic trends. Mr. Mandel carried forward a portfolio of analytic work there that concentrated on intergovernmental relations, education and economic development, the tension between excellence and equity, and the financing of higher education.

Mr. Mandel holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Economics from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and a Master of Business Administration degree from New York University's Stern School of Business in Operations Research.

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