

What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do

TEACHERS ARE COMMITTED TO STUDENTS AND THEIR LEARNING | TEACHERS KNOW THE SUBJECTS
THEY TEACH AND HOW TO TEACH THOSE SUBJECTS TO STUDENTS | TEACHERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR
MANAGING AND MONITORING STUDENT LEARNING | TEACHERS THINK SYSTEMATICALLY ABOUT THEIR
PRACTICE AND LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE | TEACHERS ARE MEMBERS OF LEARNING COMMUNITIES

THE FIVE CORE PROPOSITIONS

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PREFACE

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

LEE S. SHULMAN

PREFACE

Pundits are fond of saying that “necessity is the mother of invention.” With the National Board as its primary exemplar, I prefer to think that dreams are the mothers of invention. Audacity and courage are its siblings.

Early one morning in the late summer of 1985, I received a phone call from Marc Tucker, then staff director of the Carnegie Corporation’s Task Force on Teaching as a Profession. He asked if I could prepare a report describing what a National Board for America’s teachers might look like in the unlikely event that it could be created and sustained. It became clear that such a feat would call for new conceptions of teaching, utterly new technologies of teacher testing and assessment and the creation of a new kind of non-governmental organization

that would be neither a union nor a government agency. Suspending our sense of disbelief, I asked Gary Sykes—then a doctoral candidate at Stanford—to join in this act of creative thinking and writing. We set out to imagine a new institution, owned and operated by America’s most accomplished teachers, designing standards and inventing forms of assessment that had never existed before.

When we began to dream that dream and discussed it with colleagues, our visions were initially dismissed as hallucinations, as fantasies without a needed grounding in reality. The very idea of treating teachers as true professionals with clear standards and the capacity to take responsibility for the quality of their own work seemed absurd to many of our critics. While fields like medicine,

law and architecture had developed such boards, teaching was a very different kind of work, perhaps not even a real profession.

And if that idea were not sufficiently absurd, the insane notion of disdaining the “tried-and-true” methods of testing and replacing them with alternatives that were closer to practice was deemed foolhardy. Indeed, when the vision of a portfolio-based assessment that could be both pedagogically authentic and psychometrically sound was put forward, even some of our earlier supporters grew pale.

As we worked collaboratively with the first generation of teacher leaders who would ultimately become the majority of the National Board’s board of directors, we also insisted that whatever assessment method was used, it needed to show promise as a positive influence on the continuing professional development of the teachers who elected to become candidates. Measurement precision was not enough. If we were going to ask the nation’s finest teachers to dedicate their limited time to the development of a portfolio of their practice, that process had to be educative for the teachers or it would be a disservice to the profession. And if support systems or coaching services were created to help candidates perform at a higher level for their portfolios, that would be fine because the only way to do better on the assessment would be to become

even more accomplished as a teacher. Indeed, we urged that the ideal preparation for the assessment be mentorship support from Board-certified teachers because of the promise this kind of coaching process held for improving the quality of practice.

As the National Board took shape, educators in other countries took interest. The one assumption that many of us found most difficult to disabuse was that this activity had to be a government process, controlled and overseen by officials of departments or ministries of education. Our colleagues in other countries could not imagine that something this ambitious, this pioneering, this expensive, and having such a direct impact on national educational policy, could be led by a professional organization of teachers that was not controlled by national or state governments.

The original research and development effort I described took place between 1985 and 1990. During that period, the board as we know it was established. A great deal has happened since the work began. When the number of NBCTs crossed the 100,000 mark, it became clear our dream was no longer a fantasy, our ambitions no longer a hallucination.

This seminal text is organized around a mantra that is by now well known in the teaching world. “What

should teachers know and be able to do?” Hence, the standards for accomplished teaching encompass both the habits of mind needed by outstanding teachers—their knowledge, strategies, grasp of subject matter and understanding of developing kids—and also their skills, the technical “habits of practice” that accomplished professionals in every field of practice have honed and developed. Knowing and Doing are the hallmarks of deep professional achievement.

Nevertheless, in addition to knowing and doing, to habits of mind and habits of practice, Board-certified teachers are also identified by habits of the heart, as the kinds of human beings whom we trust and to whom we entrust the children of our communities. We trust them to use their knowledge and skills for the benefit of their students, their communities, and their society. In its fullest form, as you read the pages that follow, you will see that our characterization of the accomplished teacher is defined by what teachers should know and be able to do, as well what kind of human being they should strive to be.

During a study of how America’s engineers should be prepared, I asked a group of engineering students who were completing their undergraduate preparation how they would respond to someone’s question, “What is an engineer?” The response they gave provides a useful reminder of how we,

as teachers, might view our roles as professionals. Engineering students said, “As engineers we use math and the sciences to mess with the world by designing and making things that people will buy and use...and once you mess with the world, you’re responsible for the mess you’ve made.”

What then is a teacher? As teachers we use the many sources of professional knowledge, skill and experience at our disposal to engage the minds and hearts of children and youth by teaching and inspiring them. And once we mess with minds and hearts, we are prepared to take responsibility for the messes we have made, the dreams we inspired, the minds we have brought to life, the prejudices we have forestalled, and the society to which we have given hope.

And yet, there’s a deeper sense of what it means to take responsibility for the messes that we are destined, nay obligated, to make. We are obligated as teachers to do everything we can to become smarter about our subjects, our students, and our work, more skilled in the pursuit of our practice, and more ethical, self-aware and empathic as human beings that our society trusts to mess with minds and hearts. The National Board exemplifies how we as members of the professional teaching community take that responsibility.

Thirty years passed. And thus, one morning in 2016, I received an email from the new president and CEO of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards suggesting we meet over breakfast in Palo Alto. Peggy Brookins, a National Board-certified teacher of high school mathematics, was now president and CEO of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, an organization that has certified more than 112,000 teachers across all 50 states and DC. Peggy asked if I would revisit that newborn infant that began its life three decades ago and prepare a personal preface to this volume. I revisited the dream. Teaching portfolios, for example, were no longer a weird anomaly destined to be buried by traditional forms of assessment. The idea that teachers could be evaluated using professional standards created by teachers, for teachers

as adapted to the situations in which they taught was no longer a fantasy. The letters “NBCT” after a teacher’s name is the highest honor a member of the profession can attain.

“What” is the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards? That is the question this brief volume promises to answer. It’s a deceptively simple question with exciting and inspiring answers that, at least for me, extend back in time for 30 years. I am now confident that its life expectancy is unlimited, as is its potential for bringing about a significant improvement in the countenance of American education.

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BY TEACHERS, FOR TEACHERS

INTRODUCTION

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The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards was founded in 1987 to advance the quality of teaching and learning by:

- maintaining high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do;
- providing a national voluntary system certifying teachers who meet these standards; and
- advocating related education reforms to integrate National Board Certification in American education and to capitalize on the expertise of National Board Certified Teachers.

This second edition of *What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do* articulates the National Board's Five Core Propositions for teaching. Similar to medicine's Hippocratic Oath, the Five Core Propositions

are held in common by teachers of all grade levels and disciplines and underscore the accomplished teacher's commitment to advancing student learning and achievement. Together, the propositions form the basis of all National Board Standards, which describe how teachers enact the Propositions in particular content areas and with students of particular developmental levels, and serve as the foundation for Board certification. National Board Certification—created by teachers, for teachers—is the profession's mark of accomplished teaching.

The explication of the Five Core Propositions in this edition of *What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do* was updated in 2015 to reflect advances in the field in research, professional language, and practice. Remarkably, the Propositions themselves

have stood the test of time. The stability of the Five Core Propositions is an indication of the teaching profession's ability to create and maintain a body of knowledge that guides practice. Stylistic revisions were made to the explication of each proposition to ensure the text resonates with modern ears, and updates to the content include a stronger emphasis on the roles that technology and language play in students' lives.

When *What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do* was first written in 1989, there were no National Board Certified Teachers. The Five Core Propositions established in that document anchored the development of peer-reviewed standards and assessments for Board certification in 25 certificate areas. As a testament to the strength of that visionary document, we can now say that over 700 Board-certified teachers contributed to the updated explication of the Five Core Propositions. They participated in the comment period, providing practice-based evaluations of the extent to which the descriptions of the Propositions have stood the test of time; they served on National Board's staff, Certification Council, and Board of Directors, shepherding the revision process; and they made up the entirety of the committee that oversaw the revisions, basing their decisions on the comment period findings, research, and their considerable experience with students.

A distinguishing hallmark of a profession is that those who are in it determine what its members must know and do. For this reason, how these revisions took place is as important as the revisions themselves. As is the case with all National Board Standards, the updated Five Core Propositions were written by teachers, for teachers. The Five Core Propositions—in content and in authorship—are a statement of what our profession stands for.

THE FIVE CORE PROPOSITIONS

Through National Board Certification, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards seeks to identify and recognize teachers who effectively enhance student learning and demonstrate the high level of knowledge, skills, abilities and commitments reflected in the following Five Core Propositions.

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PROPOSITION #1

Accomplished teachers base their practice on the fundamental belief that all students can learn and meet high expectations. Acknowledging the distinctive traits and talents of each learner, teachers are dedicated to and skilled at making knowledge accessible to all students. Educators are thus passionate about building meaningful relationships with young people so students can advance their understanding and experience success. Teachers know that ongoing achievement depends on their conviction in the value and dignity of all human beings as well as the potential that exists within each child. They therefore remain attentive to human variability, its influence on learning, and the interconnectedness of people in different contexts. Accomplished teachers become acquainted with students across

social and educational settings, not simply within their own learning environments.

Teachers Recognize Individual Differences in Their Students and Adjust Their Practice Accordingly

Teachers must know many things about the students they instruct so they can respond effectively to individual differences. For instance, one teacher may find that in her class, Alex works with a speech pathologist, Maria loves science fiction, Toby is anxious about mathematics, and Mikayla is captivated by music. Yet, accomplished teachers know much more about their students, such as where they call home, what their families¹ are like, how they

¹ The terms “family” and “parent” are used throughout this document to refer to people who are the primary caregivers, guardians, or significant adults in the lives of children.

performed academically in the past, and who they want to become in the future. Children and young adults live in a wide variety of physical locations and household groups; to understand their hopes and aspirations, educators must remain attuned to students' unique living situations and family dynamics.

Accomplished teachers further understand that student learning is influenced by personality—whether a student is shy or outgoing, impulsive or reflective, stubborn or eager to please. For example, a shy student might not perform well on an oral presentation. Similarly, an impulsive student who fills in answers hastily may receive standardized test results that do not truly reflect his or her knowledge. Accomplished educators take personality traits such as those into consideration when interacting with students, planning for instruction, and interpreting assessments. That kind of specific understanding is critical, for teachers use it constantly to tailor instruction for the individuals within their classrooms.²

Teachers who are accomplished respond to student needs based on their pupils' interests, abilities, and

prior knowledge. When planning a unit on genetics, for instance, a biology instructor will anticipate which concepts and activities certain students may find problematic; while listening to a small group, the teacher will then look for signs of individual student engagement and address any misunderstandings as they arise. By keeping a finger on the pulse of the class, educators decide when to alter plans, work with individual students, or enrich instruction with additional examples, explanations, or activities.

Recognizing that students bring different language practices and proficiencies to the classroom, accomplished teachers also understand the complex role that language plays in learning. For example, they respect the knowledge, perspectives, and experiences that English language learners possess and value the ways in which those factors can enhance and strengthen the learning environment. Similarly, educators know that students use language differently based on social or academic context, and accomplished teachers empower their students by providing them with access points for participating in various situations and occasions. Educators

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Teachers must become attuned to their students' individual situations and changing circumstances.

² All references to classrooms in this document, whether stated explicitly or not, refer to all educational settings (e.g., laboratories, gymnasiums, libraries, offices, outdoor locations).

explore opportunities to integrate diverse language practices meaningfully within the learning process.

Accomplished teachers gain knowledge about their students by studying them carefully and seeking additional information from various sources. They learn from experience by listening to students, watching them interact with peers, observing them work in different contexts, reading their thoughts and reflections, and otherwise examining their actions and behavior in the learning environment. Teachers also look closely at how students play so they can encourage those students to explore their imagination during instruction. By engaging students on a social, emotional, intellectual, and physical basis, accomplished teachers enhance learning at every age and developmental level. To inform their pedagogical decisions further, educators analyze assessment data as well, considering it alongside input they receive from family members and other adults involved in their students' lives.

Such an extensive evaluation represents no easy feat. What teachers are able to see, hear, and learn about students is influenced by their prior knowledge and experience as professionals. When working with children and young adults who have different backgrounds and experiences from their own, accomplished teachers therefore monitor their impressions and thoughts carefully to acquire a

deep understanding of their students and the communities that shape their students' values, outlooks, and attitudes toward learning. All the information that teachers acquire about students through the course of instruction subsequently informs their understanding of teaching and learning, which transforms their practice.

Teachers Understand How Students Develop and Learn

In addition to attaining knowledge specific to their students, accomplished educators consult a variety of learning and development theories to make informed decisions about instructional content and teaching methods. They are familiar with concepts about teaching and learning generated by social and cognitive scientists. Moreover, educators integrate that knowledge with personal theories about learning and development generated from their own practice. Based on their theoretical knowledge and practical experience in the classroom, accomplished teachers understand that each student has different cognitive strengths. Educators determine how to capitalize on those assets as they consider how best to nurture their students' abilities and aptitudes.

Accomplished teachers provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge

and showcase their abilities, both in and out of traditional school settings. For example, students who find the calculation of percentages challenging in school may be able to determine value discounts readily while shopping—a mathematics instructor may thus incorporate that activity within an exercise to provide students with an alternate way to demonstrate their knowledge and improve their abilities. Accomplished teachers strive to appreciate and understand their students' aptitudes and intelligences.

By encouraging students to relate their personal experience to the classroom environment, teachers help students make learning relevant and advance their skills across academic settings.

Importantly, accomplished teachers recognize that, in a multicultural world, students possess a wide range of abilities and aptitudes that might be valued differently by families, local communities, and schools. For instance, the knowledge, skills, and dispositions nurtured in a Native American community may differ from those promoted in a Latino community. Similarly, those cultivated by a suburban community may differ from those developed in an

urban community. That said, people share important similarities as well, regardless of their social affiliation or cultural background. Those similarities and differences are always shifting.



Accomplished teachers therefore use everything they know about effective—and ineffective—practices to develop strategies that capitalize on their students' varied backgrounds, using diversity to enrich the learning environment for every student.

Thus, teachers must become attuned to their students' individual situations and changing circumstances. By doing so, accomplished teachers can develop an array of strategies for sharing differences, identifying similarities, and embracing diversity within the learning environment. Those strategies provide educational experiences that capitalize on classroom diversity by connecting students with various cultural experiences while broadening their perspectives on learning and thinking.

Teachers Treat Students Equitably

As advocates for the interests of students, accomplished teachers are vigilant in ensuring that all pupils receive their fair share of attention. Educators recognize their own biases and make certain that any preconceptions based on real or perceived ability differences, exceptionalities, socioeconomic or cultural background, family configuration, sexual

orientation, physical characteristics, race, ethnicity, language, religion, age, or gender do not distort their relationships with students. Accomplished teachers maintain an open mind and a balanced perspective on their students.

That approach does not suggest that teachers treat all students alike, because using the same tactics to address similar behavior by different students does not necessarily result in an equitable education. Rather, teachers respond to differences among students, being careful to counter potential inequities and avoid favoritism. Accomplished educators monitor their students' access to resources and advocate to ensure that students have the tools they need to learn. That level of attention requires a well-tuned alertness, which can be difficult. Accomplished teachers therefore use everything they know about effective—and ineffective—practices to develop strategies that capitalize on their students' varied backgrounds, using diversity to enrich the learning environment for every student.

Teachers Know Their Mission Transcends the Cognitive Development of Their Students

Accomplished teachers are devoted to supporting the development of character and preparing students for a successful future. To facilitate such growth, educators recognize that failure is a natural

part of the learning process; they show students how to cope with it and create environments in which learners are comfortable taking risks. Through failure, children and young adults can attain perseverance and resilience, which will help them achieve their potential. At the same time, accomplished teachers increase their students' engagement and motivation by providing them with options from which to choose, fostering their ownership in learning, and setting high expectations. Students come to understand that questioning and goal setting are integral aspects of the learning process.

Teachers model all those behaviors, using them to help students advocate for themselves in the classroom and in the community. As participants of a larger world, the students of accomplished teachers recognize the effect that their actions have outside the classroom. They therefore develop civic responsibility and digital citizenship, becoming aware of how their actions affect others. All those lessons—important in their own right—are essential to intellectual development as well. Accomplished teachers consider their students' potential in that broader sense when making decisions about what and how to teach.

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PROPOSITION #2

If one cardinal principle of teaching is a commitment to the welfare and education of young people, another is a commitment to subject matter. Accomplished teachers are dedicated to acquainting students with the social, cultural, ethical, and physical worlds in which we live, and they use the subjects they teach as an introduction to those realms. A comprehensive understanding of subject matter entails more than the recitation of dates, multiplication tables, or grammatical rules within a single content domain. Rather, it requires the pursuit of substantive knowledge by exploring domains and making connections to become fully engaged in the learning process.

Teachers Appreciate How Knowledge in Their Subjects is Created, Organized, and Linked to Other Disciplines

Teachers who possess a firm command of their subject areas understand factual information as well as major themes and concepts. They also comprehend the process of creative investigation and inquiry, whereby discoveries are made and new knowledge is formed, as demonstrated in the work of scholars and artists. For instance, physics teachers know the role of hypothesis generation and experimentation in scientific inquiry; geometry teachers know the modes of justification for substantiating mathematical claims; fine arts teachers understand how creative ideas are developed and meaning is conveyed through performance; social studies teachers know how historians use evidence

to interpret past events; and English language arts teachers understand the relationship between reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Literacy, a foundational component of learning across content domains, is instrumental to comprehending subject matter and connecting one discipline to another.

Accomplished teachers value the relationships among subject areas, using those relationships to forge multiple paths to knowledge. Thus, early and middle childhood generalists know about geography and its relationship to economics and history, and world language teachers know how political history and human migration inform an appreciation of language and culture. As those examples illustrate, accomplished teachers understand not only how content areas relate but also how they influence student learning.

Recognizing how knowledge is established within and across subject areas is crucial to the instruction of logical reasoning. Critical thinking does not occur in the abstract, for thinkers always evaluate something. Accomplished teachers realize the fundamental role that disciplinary study plays in the development of critical analysis and conceptual

understanding. Knowing that multiple perspectives and interpretations of each content area exist, educators expose students to different modes of critical thinking and show them how to reason ana-

lytically about subject matter. While maintaining the integrity of disciplinary methods, content, and structures of organization, accomplished teachers encourage students to question prevailing norms and assumptions so they can think for themselves.



Whether they are specialists or generalists, accomplished teachers use rich, complex subject matter to promote student learning across developmental levels.

Whether they are specialists or generalists, accomplished teachers use rich, complex subject matter to promote student learning across developmental levels. By engaging children and young adults in a broad array of disciplines, educators provide students with appropriate points of entry to appreciate the content. For example, early childhood generalists may not delve as deeply into cellular structure as high school biology teachers do, but they present foundational knowledge that introduces students to the joys of discovery, while inspiring a desire to explore the natural world in which they live. Similarly, physical education teachers may focus on locomotor movement—such as walking, hopping, or skipping—to help students with moderate and profound physical limitations develop gross motor

skills and achieve maximum independence. Teachers must possess a thorough understanding of subject matter to help their students develop critical skills and pursue lifelong learning—the hallmark of accomplished teaching at every developmental level.

Teachers Command Specialized Knowledge of How to Convey a Subject to Students

Teachers require pedagogical insight to communicate their subject knowledge effectively and impact students significantly. Accomplished educators use a specialized set of technical skills and abilities to convey instructional content and facilitate learning so students can develop bodies of knowledge and advance their systems of thinking. Pedagogical expertise incorporates wisdom related to the teaching and learning processes, as well as the dynamic between student needs and content demands. Accomplished teachers use their knowledge of the most appropriate ways to present subject matter through strategies and techniques such as demonstrations, experiments, analogies and metaphors, interactive learning, and appropriate uses of technology.

Pedagogical experience yields a repertoire of instructional techniques that allow teachers to share their subject matter knowledge with students.

Teachers draw on pedagogical and subject matter understandings to respond to common misconceptions within content areas; address challenging aspects of learning acquisition; and accommodate prior knowledge, experience, and skills that students at different developmental levels typically bring to the classroom. For example, science teachers anticipate that some students may have misunderstandings about gravity that can influence their learning, whereas fine arts and physical education teachers are prepared for young children to enter school at various stages of maturity with respect to hand–eye coordination. Balancing the insights of pedagogical and subject matter expertise helps teachers evaluate and resolve daily issues—decisions that include which aspects of subject matter to emphasize and how to pace instruction. Accomplished educators use a comprehensive awareness of their students, their subjects, and their practice to structure teaching that promotes learning in their schools.

To remain as effective as possible in the classroom, accomplished educators also demonstrate a strong commitment to learning about new curricular resources, such as textbook series, primary texts, classroom manipulatives, or research materials available through professional organizations. Educators keep abreast of technological developments that have implications for their subject areas

and their teaching, utilizing digital tools employed within their disciplines. Teachers understand that maintaining familiarity with the technology used by practitioners helps them remain current in their fields. In addition, they explore the influence that technology has on their subject areas because they know that it frequently affects the structure and process of thinking within disciplines. Importantly, accomplished teachers position themselves as critical users of technology, ensuring that it is employed to enhance student understanding. By modeling that stance, teachers help their students navigate the relationship between technology and learning, empowering them to use digital tools in authentic ways that advance their knowledge. Educators continually evaluate the usefulness of all curricular materials and pedagogical methods they adopt in the classroom, basing that evaluation on their professional judgment.

Teachers Generate Multiple Paths to Knowledge

Accomplished teachers wisely use the educational resources, pedagogical skills, and content knowledge they possess, varying their approach in the

classroom to meet learning goals and accommodate student dispositions as needed. Educators are thus aware of the value that lies in both structured and inductive learning. They understand that teaching students the concepts and principles that scholars within each discipline have generated is useful, but accomplished teachers also know that helping students develop a critical mindset is important. Through inquiry, students search for problems, patterns, and solutions, making discoveries and advancing their own learning. Accomplished educators model those processes for students, showing them how to pose problems and work through alternative solutions, as well as how to examine the answers that others have found to similar problems.

Posing and solving problems is central to the development of true understanding. That process moves students far beyond a rote memorization of facts, an easy manipulation of formulas, or the facile repetition of a musical scale. Teaching for understanding requires students to integrate discrete components of knowledge within their habits of thinking, instead of storing fragmented pieces of information without further consideration. It challenges students to think

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in nonlinear ways, to approach issues from multiple vantage points, to weigh competing sets of criteria, and to evaluate the merits of multiple solutions. Thus, in the eyes of accomplished teachers, the acquisition of knowledge does not signify a lower form of understanding. Rather, it represents a distinctly intellectual undertaking—a rich, demanding, creative process calling on the strategic coordination of skills, abilities, and dispositions to develop a deeper, more discerning matrix of understanding. That mode of thinking encourages students to apply their knowledge to new and unfamiliar problems so they can continue exploring and advancing their understanding. As they share their knowledge in all its forms with students in the classroom, accomplished teachers appreciate that this way of thinking and understanding will develop over time to support meaningful, substantial learning for a lifetime.

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PROPOSITION #3

Accomplished teachers maintain high expectations for all students. They view themselves as facilitators of student learning, helping children and young adults reach their fullest potential. To achieve that goal, educators create vibrant, productive workspaces for their students, adjusting and improving organizational structures as needed while establishing effective ways to monitor and manage traditional and nontraditional learning environments.

First and foremost, teachers facilitate the educational process by designing opportunities for learning—planning for and presenting students with inspiring material, promoting their participation, supporting substantive discourse, and sustaining long-term engagement by collaboratively working with students. To track their success, teachers carefully monitor activity within the learning

environment—observing student interactions, evaluating classroom performance, assessing all aspects of student development, and measuring learning outcomes relative to objectives. To increase students' success, teachers diligently manage the systems, programs, and resources that support every educational endeavor—fostering positive relationships in and out of the classroom, making sure classroom materials are used appropriately, maintaining schedules, ensuring student safety, and otherwise maintaining all aspects of a well-functioning learning environment. As masters of pedagogical practice, accomplished educators teach efficiently, making the most of every instructional moment to maximize learning. They are dedicated to helping young people thrive by respecting, encouraging, and advancing student interests and student learning at all times.

Teachers Call on Multiple Methods to Meet Their Instructional Goals

Accomplished teachers possess a range of pedagogical skills—for instance, they facilitate student inquiry, advise cooperative learning groups, and mediate classroom discourse. Their instructional strategies are largely informed by their students and their subject matter, although professional knowledge also guides their practice significantly. Thus, accomplished teachers understand what they and their students can reasonably achieve in a roundtable discussion, when they should hold back and allow students to determine their own solutions, and which questions they can pose to provoke the most thoughtful classroom conversation. Importantly, effective educators possess a comprehensive knowledge of instructional methods, broad and deep in scope. They have a strong theoretical understanding of various instructional modes and sound practical experience implementing these strategies. Accomplished teachers examine pedagogical issues regularly and reflect on their practice so that they use classroom time constructively.

Because students have diverse learning styles

and educational settings offer distinct learning opportunities, accomplished teachers know how and when to alter the organizational structure of their classroom environments to support instructional objectives. They transition among teaching methods, social groupings, and physical layouts to customize their approach, and they develop strategies based on learning goals and student needs. For example, depending on instructional objectives, outdoor experiments or classroom simulations may

be more productive for students than would a lecture or a discussion. Alternately, in some instances, journaling or note taking might be a more effective way to engage students in thinking and learning than would discovery-based

activities or dramatic performances. Accomplished educators understand the full breadth of pedagogical options available to them. They use traditional methods, and they employ innovative strategies to advance student learning in pace with the dynamic conditions of the classroom.

When shifting their approach, accomplished teachers modify their learning environments and their instructional materials as needed. To inspire students further, teachers invite stakeholders and colleagues to the classroom so they can share their

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experience and communicate their expertise on specific topics. Accomplished educators appreciate how the knowledge and skills of other individuals can complement their own talents and enhance their students' understanding. They know the value of mobilizing students as peer tutors for the same reason. Accomplished educators thus enlist a wide range of support—from students, teachers, and paraprofessionals to family and community members—to provide their students with instructional opportunities that will augment their learning.

Accomplished teachers understand the strengths and weaknesses of the pedagogical approaches they take, as well as their suitability for different students and student groups. The settings that teachers design, the situations they create, and the strategies they select are all grounded in educational research and professional experience. For accomplished educators, the classroom represents a world of opportunities. One activity can lead to the possibility of many others that will engage students and entice them to explore subjects further, sometimes with their teacher, sometimes with each other, and sometimes alone.

Teachers Support Student Learning in Varied Settings and Groups

Accomplished teachers know how to work with

different groups of students. They manage those interactions carefully, establishing social norms for constructive communication, helping students adopt productive roles vis-à-vis their teachers and their peers, and showing students how to assume responsibility for their learning and for that of their classmates. The environments that teachers create guide student behavior and support learning as it takes place in large or small groups, in pairs, independently, or one-on-one with the teacher or another adult.

Because different pedagogical techniques may also require different types of social interaction, each carrying its own set of expectations, accomplished teachers remain sensitive to shifting norms that cast students and teachers in new roles. To ensure that the learning dynamic remains positive and responsive, educators assess the relative value of classroom structures and organizational requirements when determining which instructional strategies will best enhance student learning in their classrooms. They continually search for new configurations that will prove effective, expand their repertoire, and keep students excited to learn. The management techniques that accomplished teachers use are proactive rather than reactive, helping classroom participants focus on learning instead of controlling disruptive behavior. Educators thus develop classroom customs and practices based

on their knowledge of students, social contexts, and learning objectives, as well as their prior experience.

Teachers Value Student Engagement

Accomplished teachers know how to keep students motivated by capturing their attention and immersing them in the learning process. Teachers understand that they can build bridges between what students know and what they are capable of learning by expanding old interests and sparking new passions. Accomplished educators therefore focus significant attention on developing strategies to promote student interests and to monitor student engagement.

Motivating students does not always mean that accomplished teachers make learning fun; learning can be difficult work. For instance, developing an acute sense of one's body during dance requires intense intellectual and physical concentration. Similarly, writing a short story requires drafting and re-drafting, editing and re-editing, as well as responding to critiques from teachers and peers. Teachers must know how to encourage their students in the face of serious challenges and provide them with support as they push themselves to new physical, affective, and intellectual planes. Accomplished teachers model strategies for dealing with the doubts that students may experience,

helping them realize that frustrating moments often are when learning occurs. Those moments produce the true joy of education, the satisfaction of accomplishment.

Teachers Regularly Assess Student Progress

Accomplished teachers monitor student performance as well as student engagement. Bearing considerable responsibility for the children and young adults they work with, educators examine the success of all activities they design. They assess learning experiences that they create or coordinate with the help of other educators, tracking what students do and do not learn while evaluating the effectiveness of their instructional strategies.

Assessment is not always done for the purpose of recording grades; rather, it allows students and teachers to examine their current status. Accomplished teachers evaluate students to determine what they have learned from instruction, whether that instruction is a week of lessons on life cycles, a unit of photography, or a semester of athletic training. Educators use those outcomes to decide if they should review skills within a topic, challenge students with a related concept, or advance to the next subject. They also help students engage in self-assessment, instilling them with a

sense of responsibility for their own learning. By adding to their repertoire of assessment methods and by monitoring student progress regularly, accomplished teachers provide students, families, caregivers—and themselves—with constructive feedback.

Importantly, accomplished teachers understand that the purpose of evaluation affects the form and structure of any assessment—the method of observation, the length of duration, and the type of information gathered. Those factors, along with student demeanor and motivation, all affect the conclusions that teachers may reach when using a specific assessment. Educators therefore monitor student progress using a variety of evaluation methods, each with its own set of strengths and weaknesses. Accomplished teachers analyze data from standardized examinations, and they design their own assessment tools. For instance, they define the content requirements for student portfolios, create the scoring rubrics for demonstrations, and establish protocols for anecdotal record keeping. Above all, accomplished teachers are astute observers of their students—watching their movements and gestures, studying their facial expressions, listening to their

words—so teachers can discover what students are thinking and determine how best to advance their learning.



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Accomplished teachers evaluate their students throughout the learning process, from start to finish. They monitor student behavior at various times, in various situations, and for various purposes. So, when asking questions during group discussions, teachers may determine how well students comprehend information; when speaking

with individuals working independently, they may consider ways to augment student learning; and when using an online assessment that provides immediate feedback from the class, they may gauge the relative value of an instructional technique. Thoughtful assessment requires diligence.

On a continual basis, accomplished teachers monitor the progress of individual students, evaluate classes as learning collectives, and examine their practice in relation to their students and their classes. Those judgments are interconnected, although each merits attention in its own right. The dynamic conveys some of teaching's essential

tensions—educators instruct individual students while guiding the development of groups—and they focus their efforts on students, while striving to improve their practice. Accomplished teachers find ways to accommodate what they know and learn about themselves and their students within plans for the whole group. They take individuals into consideration, thinking across the full spectrum of ability within their classrooms. Individuals may not learn the same things or proceed at the same pace, but accomplished teachers are dedicated to ensuring that they all increase their knowledge, strengthen their skills, and expand their abilities.

Teachers Engage Students in the Learning Process

Throughout the learning process, accomplished teachers work collaboratively with their students. They plan their instruction carefully—identifying educational objectives, developing them, and discussing them with students. Teachers provide children and young adults with a clear understanding of what the objectives are and why they are relevant, encouraging students to take ownership of them. They motivate students to learn by stimulating their interest and challenging them during instruction.

To engage students further, teachers manage classroom dynamics and monitor student progress toward the completion of their goals. Educators analyze learning outcomes in relation to educational objectives, showing students what they have achieved, reviewing what they need to do, and formulating strategies with them for the completion of that work. By contextualizing evaluation within the learning process, accomplished teachers use assessment to empower themselves and their students. They help students identify opportunities to reach their goals and show them the importance of becoming active learners.

THE 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 MONITORING STUDENT LEARNING.
-

4. TEACHERS THINK SYSTEMATICALLY ABOUT THEIR PRACTICE AND LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE.

5. TEACHERS ARE MEMBERS OF LEARNING COMMUNITIES.

PROPOSITION #4

As with most professions, teaching requires practitioners to remain open, eager for, and dedicated to the pursuit of continuous growth. Because they work in a field marked by evolving questions and an expanding body of research, teachers possess a professional obligation to become perpetual students of their craft. Accomplished educators seek to expand their repertoires, deepen their knowledge and skills, and become wiser in rendering judgments. They remain inventive in their teaching, recognizing the need to welcome new findings and extend their learning as professionals. Accomplished teachers are ready to incorporate ideas and methods developed by other educators to support their instructional goals—namely, the advancement of student learning and the improvement of their practice. What exemplifies excellence,

then, is a reverence for the craft, a recognition of its complexities, and a commitment to lifelong learning and reflection.

Teachers Make Difficult Choices That Test Their Professional Judgment

Often, the demands of teaching present formidable challenges that defy simple solutions. To meet conflicting objectives, accomplished teachers regularly fashion compromises that will satisfy diverse parties. For example, a world history teacher attempting to reconcile the need for broad coverage and in-depth knowledge will do what is necessary to proceed from ancient civilizations to modern nations, while developing student understanding of history as a gradual evolution rather than a discrete series of

chronological events. Likewise, a middle childhood generalist will find a way to teach students the fundamental principles of spelling and grammar, while introducing them to an appreciation of writing as a mode of communication and a thinking process. Accomplished teachers may approach circumstances such as those in different ways, but they all demonstrate the strength and flexibility to negotiate competing goals.

Teachers also may face situations that cause them to reprioritize their goals based on reflection, resulting in the modification of their instructional plans. For example, a teacher may delay part of a daily lesson to foster classroom relationships. Another instructor may address student misunderstandings by reteaching a critical concept instead of moving forward. Circumstances such as those call on teachers to employ their professional knowledge of what constitutes sound practice, giving students' interest the paramount consideration. Accomplished teachers may forge a variety of successful plans to balance rival objectives, but their decisions invariably will be grounded in established theories and reasoned judgment born of experience.

Teachers Use Feedback and Research to Improve Their Practice and Positively Impact Student Learning

Accomplished teachers seek opportunities to cultivate their learning. As savvy students of their own teaching, they know the value of asking colleagues, administrators, and other educators to observe them and offer critiques of their instructional practices. They write about their work as well, and they solicit reactions to their teaching from students and families. Accomplished teachers develop strate-

gies for gaining feedback and insights from a range of stakeholders so they can reflect meaningfully on their pedagogical choices and improve their practice.

Accomplished teachers also stay abreast of current research and, when appro-

appropriate, incorporate new findings into their practice. They take advantage of professional development opportunities such as conferences, workshops, and digital learning experiences. Because testing new approaches and hypotheses is a commonplace habit among such teachers, they might conduct, publish, and present their own research, if so inclined. Accomplished educators understand the



An enthusiasm for, and dedication to, continued professional development distinguishes accomplished teachers and exemplifies the critical disposition they nurture in their students.

legitimacy and the limitations of the diverse sources they employ to inform their teaching, and they use those sources judiciously to enrich their practice.

An enthusiasm for, and dedication to, continued professional development distinguishes accomplished teachers and exemplifies the critical disposition they nurture in their students. The thinking, reasoning, and learning that characterize first-rate teaching are thus valuable twice over: not only are thoughtful teachers able to instruct their students more efficiently and effectively, they also serve as powerful models for the analytical mindset they strive to develop in children and young adults. Teachers who are exemplars of careful, logical deliberation—considering purposes, marshaling evidence, and balancing outcomes—are more likely to communicate the importance of critical thinking to their students and demonstrate how it is accomplished. Those teachers model other crucial traits, as well, such as a commitment to creativity in their work or the willingness to take risks when exploring new intellectual, emotional, physical, and artistic realms.

Accomplished teachers therefore serve as paradigms of lifelong learning and achievement. Character and competence contribute equally to their educative manner. Such teachers embody the virtues they impart to their students: curiosity and a

love of learning, tolerance and open-mindedness, fairness and justice, an appreciation for our cultural and intellectual heritages, and respect for human diversity and dignity. Moreover, they epitomize the intellectual capacities they foster: the ability to reason carefully, consider multiple perspectives, question received wisdom, adopt an inquiry-based approach, solve problems, and persevere. In all aspects of their action and demeanor, accomplished teachers convey the significance of reflection and learning, of pursuit and achievement.

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-

5. TEACHERS ARE MEMBERS OF LEARNING COMMUNITIES.

PROPOSITION #5

Accomplished teachers reach beyond the boundaries of their individual classrooms to engage wider communities of learning. They connect with local, state, national, and global groups in person or via technology to take advantage of a broad range of professional knowledge and expertise. Accomplished educators draw on those resources when instructing their students and participating in duties that contribute significantly to the quality of schools and student learning. Those duties address two areas of responsibility: collaboration with other professionals to improve the effectiveness of schools, and partnership with families and other stakeholders to promote the education of children and young adults.

Teachers Collaborate with Other Professionals to Improve School Effectiveness

The National Board advocates proactive and creative roles for teachers. Those functions involve analyzing and constructing curricula, coordinating instruction, contributing to the professional development of staff, and participating in other policy decisions fundamental to the development of highly productive learning communities.

Although state authorities and local leadership establish broad goals, objectives, and priorities for districts and schools, accomplished teachers share responsibility with their colleagues and administrators in determining what constitutes valuable learning for students. Educators understand their

legal obligation to carry out public policy as represented in state statutes and regulations, school board directives, court decisions, and other procedural documents—and they bear those mandates in mind while acting as professionals. Accomplished teachers thereby take the initiative to analyze curricula critically, identify new priorities, and communicate necessary changes to the school community. To perform that work effectively, teachers must have a thorough knowledge of their students and curricula as well as a willingness to question conventions and work collaboratively with educational stakeholders.

Developing curricula and coordinating instruction are key functions shared by teachers and administrators. Accomplished teachers work with other educators to plan instructional programs that promote continuity and support equitable learning experiences for all students. They help integrate plans for students with general and exceptional needs by thinking strategically across grade levels, academic tracks, and subject areas. Teachers work closely with administrators and staff to navigate systems, structures, and schedules so they can implement improvements that modify organizational

and curricular aspects of instruction cohesively. Accomplished teachers understand the technical requirements of a well-coordinated curriculum, possess the interpersonal skills needed to work in groups, and exhibit a readiness to join their efforts in the interest of school communities. Those qualities enable educators to participate effectively in plan-

ning and decision making in teams, departments, and other educational units outside the classroom, laboratory, or studio.

Accomplished teachers also are involved in the arrangement of student

services, uniting educators with a wide variety of specializations to ensure that instructional experiences remain productive and coherent. They help teachers partner to support inclusive education and create appropriate learning environments for students with a range of exceptional needs—those who face physical disabilities, sensory impairment, or behavioral challenges, as well as those who are gifted and talented. Accomplished educators foster cooperation among teachers and counselors of English learners, and others who offer high-quality programs featuring English as a new language, bilingual education, and English immersion. Importantly, they uphold the requirements of compensatory



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education with a similar sense of vigilance and dedication. Accomplished teachers are adept at working in tandem with other educators to provide students with the attention they need.

In addition to developing curricula and coordinating instruction schoolwide, accomplished educators work with one another to strengthen their teaching practices. They observe colleagues in the classroom, engage in pedagogical discussions, and collaborate to improve their teaching methods and explore new instructional strategies. Accomplished instructors may focus on different aspects of their practice, based on opportunity, need, and disposition; however, they share a common commitment to pursuing teaching excellence in concert with their peers.

Schools that thrive and flourish emphasize a similar process of continuous improvement. Accomplished teachers in those schools help their colleagues identify and resolve problems while encouraging them to experiment with different teaching methods and forms of instructional organization. They

work as teacher leaders, strengthening professional development and advocating improvements. Educators in less successful schools strive to promote the same traits of excellence—to build systems, develop networks, and foster a culture of innovation that will help their schools prosper.

Accomplished teachers undertake a variety of projects to pursue all those goals, participating actively in their learning communities to promote progress and achievement.

For example, they may mentor novices, form study groups, demonstrate new methodologies, serve on school and district policy councils, or engage in scholarly inquiry and artistic expression. Teachers work with their colleagues as members of a team, sharing their knowledge and skills while contributing to the ongoing development of strong schools. Alongside their administrators and other school leaders, they assume responsibility for the quality of their schools' instructional programs. This set of expectations is integral to the mission of accomplished teachers. It characterizes a professional approach to teaching and distinguishes the educational field as a whole.



Accomplished teachers communicate regularly with students' parents and guardians. Teachers inform them about their children's accomplishments and challenges, responding to their questions, listening to their concerns, and respecting their views.

Teachers Work Collaboratively with Families

Accomplished teachers communicate regularly with students' parents and guardians. Teachers inform them about their children's accomplishments and challenges, responding to their questions, listening to their concerns, and respecting their views. Teachers encourage families to become active participants in their children's education by acquainting them with school programs and enlisting their help to develop skill sets and foster lifelong learning. For instance, a kindergarten teacher may discuss the importance of reading stories at home and show a grandparent why engaging her child in conversation is critical to literacy development. Accomplished teachers share the education of children with families.

Ideally, teachers and parents become mutually reinforcing partners in the education of young people. However, various circumstances can complicate relationships, such as divergent interests or mistrust. Accomplished teachers are alert to those issues and tailor their practice to enhance student

achievement. Understanding that some families may take more time than others to gain confidence in school-home relationships, teachers proceed patiently, learning about cultures, beliefs, and priorities while expressing respect for families and demonstrating their attention to students. Throughout the process, educators develop skills and understandings that help them avoid pitfalls while working to foster positive, collaborative relationships between schools and families.

The changing structure of families in our society creates both challenges and oppor-

tunities. Accomplished teachers must possess a thorough knowledge of their students as individuals to work creatively and effectively with family members. Advancing the intellectual development of students is a teacher's foremost responsibility, but accomplished teachers understand that a broad range of student needs can influence that goal, such as the need for informed caregivers to provide guidance and support. By learning the dynamics within their students' homes, teachers appreciate how they can work with families to address student needs and advance educational gains. The distinctive mission of teaching is the promotion of



Any community—urban, suburban, or rural; wealthy or poor—can become a laboratory for learning under the guidance of an accomplished teacher. Accomplished teachers need not teach alone.

learning—a complex undertaking in and of itself; but accomplished teachers understand that the physical, emotional, and social well-being of students cannot be separated from their intellectual growth.

Teachers Work Collaboratively with the Community

Accomplished teachers cultivate their students' knowledge of the local community as a powerful resource for learning. Opportunities abound for enriching lessons, projects, and topics of study; for example, observing the city council in action, collecting oral histories from senior citizens, studying ecology at a public park, visiting a museum, drawing the local architecture, or exploring career options in small businesses. Any community—urban, suburban, or rural; wealthy or poor—can become a laboratory for learning under the guidance of an accomplished teacher. The Internet can extend those experiences, giving students the chance to investigate local towns further or to explore cities, states, and countries farther afield. Within all those communities, instructional partners such as government officials, organizational volunteers, and corporate leaders can serve as valuable assets, supplementing and enhancing the education of students. Accomplished teachers need not teach alone.

Teachers also explore the concept of culture within their communities and its influence on children and young adults. Accomplished educators encourage students to appreciate linguistic traditions and ethnic contributions, to study social influences on their expectations and aspirations, and to discuss the effects that economic conditions can have on political views and outlooks. Although careful attention to diversity may challenge teachers, learning about a wealth of cultures can help them work meaningfully with students. An understanding of multiculturalism promotes an acknowledgment of differences and similarities, which, in turn, inspires students to accept individuals and to adopt civic ideals. Accomplished teachers capitalize on those opportunities so they can respond productively to their students' diverse backgrounds.

Such work rests on a delicate balance. Teachers cannot alleviate all the social problems they encounter, but they can be sensitive to those issues and caring toward students as they fulfill their professional responsibilities as educators. Teachers confront the human condition daily in all its splendor and misery; what they choose to share, how they respond, and how they prepare students in the face of it all are the factors that distinguish teachers who are truly accomplished.

CONCLUSION

**IMPLICATIONS FOR
THE PROFESSION**

CONCLUSION

The National Board’s standards and assessment were created by educators and [have been] tested and revised, and the [Board certification] process is performance-based and peer-reviewed. ... If educators mapped backward from board certification, embedding the standards and the process, even as they are now, into the steps every teacher takes from preservice on, teaching in general would be stronger, and the profession would have a sturdy base on which its future could be built.

What matters is the continuum and the agreement within the profession that there can be only one. That has been the key to the success of every other profession. It is the underpinning of a profession’s authority, and there is no reason to think teaching will ever achieve the same status without it.³

Ronald Thorpe

President and CEO,
National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2011–2015

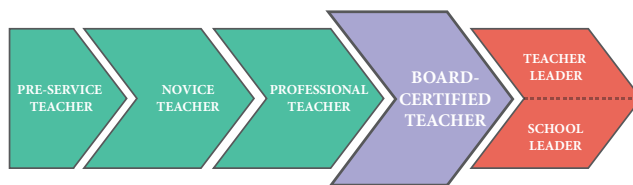
³ Thorpe, R. (2014). Sustaining the teaching profession. *New England Journal of Public Policy*, 26(1), 1–16.

To ensure all students receive an education that prepares them for postsecondary success and life, the teaching profession must be strengthened such that it systematically guarantees high-quality teaching practices. In other professions, such as medicine, engineering, and architecture, board certification has helped to create a culture and expectation of accomplished practice, both within the profession and amongst the public. Professions build this expectation into their preparation and practice development pipelines by design, beginning with a clear vision of what its accomplished practitioners should know and be able to do and then mapping backwards to ensure each new practitioner begins their career knowing what achieving board certification would mean for the level of their practice. Those professions have done what teaching must

now do: define and strengthen a coherent continuum to ensure that every teacher in America is on a path to accomplished teaching.

With this continuum in place, Board certification would be the norm, not the exception, and be fully integrated into the fabric of the teaching profession. The Five Core Propositions, as explicated above, would serve as the guiding framework for every teacher's ongoing development of their practice. This continuum, explicitly and visibly aligned to the Five Core Propositions and National Board Standards, begins in preservice preparation, proceeds developmentally to and through Board certification and into educational leadership, each step engineered to support teachers working toward more accomplished practice.

Professional Career Continuum for Teaching



Pre-service Teacher

A strong pre-service experience builds the content knowledge and teaching skill of entering teachers to a level of beginning proficiency with an eye towards

the eventual development of accomplished practice. Preparation of new teachers should require a residency year with a reduced teaching load and intense supervision, enabling the practice-based

development of teaching skill. High-quality initial licensure requirements, including teacher performance assessments, would allow aspiring teachers to demonstrate they possess the knowledge and skills required to be effective in a classroom. Throughout the preparation experience, Board certification can serve as a qualification or preference for clinical faculty at teacher preparation programs and cooperating teachers who work with student teachers during their clinical experiences and residency, as it signals a teacher who understands and has incorporated the Five Core Propositions into their practice. If teacher candidates, as they complete their preparation program, study the Five Core Propositions, encounter National Board Standards, and analyze the practices of the Board-certified teachers in schools or through case analysis in ATLAS⁴, they will begin their careers on a path to develop into accomplished practitioners themselves.

Novice Teacher

The early years of a teacher's career should build from their preparation experience, with a robust mentoring and induction program for novice teachers seeking to further new teachers' efforts to improve their practice, understand the priorities of

their school and school system, and build relationships with their colleagues. Through infusing the content of the Five Core Propositions, the National Board Standards, and case analysis of accomplished teaching into induction programs, and by ensuring novice teachers receive mentorship from Board-certified practitioners, teachers' early-career development will be strengthened. This coherence will improve retention of novice teachers, instill in them the practice of continuous reflection, shape the culture and language of professional practice in their schools, and lead them towards accomplished practice and Board certification.

Professional Teacher

Professional teachers, having demonstrated the knowledge and skills needed to positively impact student learning, benefit from ongoing professional learning and growth. Various systems shape and support them in this endeavor, including state licensure (or certification) systems, local educator evaluation systems, and professional learning opportunities offered through local education agencies and professional associations. Importantly, educators' needs evolve. Engaging in the same life-long learning they want their students to embrace, teachers are constantly striving to meet students'

⁴ ATLAS, which stands for Accomplished Teaching, Learning, and Schools, is an online library of cases showing Board-certified teachers at work with students. Each case contains video of instruction, the teacher's analytic and reflective analysis of the instruction, and instructional materials used with the students.

ever-changing needs and to stay current in their field. These experienced teachers can engage more deeply with the Five Core Propositions and National Board Standards to guide their growth as they delve into problems of practice and seek both individual and communal professional learning opportunities. Coaching and support from Board-certified teachers can further help them expand their knowledge and skills. When ready, professional teachers can begin their candidacy for Board certification.

Board-certified Teacher

At the heart of the continuum is National Board Certification, a process designed for teachers to demonstrate, through standards-based evidence, the positive impact they have on student learning as a result of their deep and abiding understanding of students, content knowledge, pedagogical practice, ongoing reflection, and participation in learning communities. Under the guidance and mentorship of Board-certified colleagues and with the support of fellow candidates, candidates for Board certification submit evidence that their practice meets the Five Core Propositions and National Board Standards, a body of knowledge that is maintained by teachers. Practicing teachers, through a peer-review process, then assess their submissions. Board certification, as in all other professions, is a hard-earned distinction practitioners bestow on each other.

Today when Board-certified teachers attest to the positive impact the certification process had on their practice, they often remark that the pursuit of Board certification was the most transformative professional learning experience they have ever had. In a profession where Board certification is the norm, however, it would be the natural next step in a career that has been coherently building towards the development and demonstration of accomplished practice since day one. Increasingly, school-based learning communities will support teachers to work together towards accomplished practice and becoming Board-certified. Ultimately, this phase of a teacher's career is marked by fulfilling a professional responsibility to their students, to themselves, to their colleagues, and to the profession.

Educational Leader

Board certification is a foundation through which teacher leadership, in all its many forms, can take hold. At its core, National Board Certification is about demonstrating a teacher's impact on student learning around a specialized body of content. Once achieved, Board certification serves as a platform for teachers to grow professionally and to become leaders in their schools, districts, states, and the profession. At the school level, teachers can model what the Five Core Propositions look

like in action, spreading their knowledge and skills to help develop the next generation of accomplished practitioners. At the district and state level, Board-certified teachers can transform isolated pockets of excellence into system-wide improvement. Board-certified teachers can work to support fellow educators along the continuum, for example by teaching or mentoring in preparation programs, leading induction programs, engaging colleagues in inquiry and study of National Board Standards, or by taking on formalized roles in schools, local or state agencies, or professional associations. They can contribute to the body of knowledge that underlies teaching through research, standards development, and other endeavors that impact the professional practice of all teachers. In the future, Board-certified teachers will fill other roles yet to be created, roles that will emerge as the body of

knowledge of accomplished practice upon which the continuum is based becomes more and more visible and Board certification becomes a collectively held expectation.

The work to codify the Five Core Propositions and the National Board Standards and to develop the Board certification process was led by teachers, for teachers. The work to build a continuum in the teaching profession grounded in this body of knowledge will be no different. It will not be easy work and the path to success will not be straightforward. Yet, when it is successful, it will have an immeasurable impact on the learning experiences and outcomes for millions of students. All students—each and every student—will learn from accomplished teachers every day.

“Teachers, administrators, and others whose work is designed to support best practice in our schools must seize this moment to rethink every aspect of the trajectory people follow to become accomplished teachers. Getting that path right and making sure all teachers follow it asserts the body of knowledge and skills teachers need and leads to a level of consistent quality that is the hallmark of all true professions.

The government cannot do it. Business cannot do it. Only educators can make it happen, and we need to seize the opportunity we have now to do just that.”⁵

Ronald Thorpe

⁵ Thorpe, R. (2014). Sustaining the teaching profession. *New England Journal of Public Policy*, 26(1), 1–16.

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