

Remarks of Segun Eubanks
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Before The Connecticut State Department of Education and State Board of
Education concerning proposed certification changes

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Good afternoon. My name is Segun Eubanks and I serve as Director of Teacher Quality for the National Education Association, a 3.4 million member association of teachers, education support professionals, college professors, and students. I've been invited here today to share information about the work of the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, of which I am an active participant. The complex and challenging job of the professional teacher, and in particular, the value of talented teachers sharing leadership and responsibility in schools, has too long gone unrecognized. Connecticut joins at least a dozen other states in various stages of seeking viable ways to recognize, support and utilize teacher leaders.

About two years ago, the Educational Testing Service sponsored the convening of educators to discuss and contemplate the critically important issue of teacher leadership. The group, now known as the Teacher Leadership

Exploratory Consortium, consists of representatives from higher education, state departments of education, non-profit organizations, teacher unions, and of course practicing teachers and administrators. The group acknowledged early on that teachers serving as leaders is not a new phenomenon – in fact, teachers have assumed a wide array of formal and informal leadership-like roles for many years. However, the term “leader” has been historically reserved for the building principal or administrator. The group tackled a wide range of issues which I would summarize in three primary questions:

1. What is a teacher leader and what differentiates a teacher leader from a formal administrator?
2. How can we promote avenues of teacher leadership that help schools, give teachers a meaningful role in decision-making, *and* keep them in the classroom?
3. How can we develop and support processes and systems to grow and effectively us teacher leaders?

The first key step in this process was the development of a draft set of *model* teacher standards which are currently available for public comment (available at <http://tlstandards.weebly.com>). The purpose of these standards are to guide states, institutions of higher education, schools districts, and teachers

themselves in growing the skills of teacher leaders and capacity of schools to share leadership in ways that improve the delivery of education services. They are not meant to be national standards or expected to be “adopted” whole cloth as the “singular” or “best” definition of teacher leadership. Our best hope is that they serve to guide discussions and policy decisions like those you are contemplating here in Connecticut.

The standards are organized around a framework of seven broad *domains* of teacher leadership followed by a set a sample *functions* of a teacher leader under each domain. The domains are as follows:

- I. Understanding adults as learners to support professional learning communities.
- II. Accessing and using research to improve practice and student achievement.
- III. Promoting professional learning for continuous improvement.
- IV. Facilitating improvements in instruction and student learning.
- V. Using assessments and data for school and district improvement.
- VI. Improving outreach and collaboration with families and community.
- VII. Advocating for student learning and the profession.

When the public comment period is complete (April 30, 2010) the Consortium will reconvene to revise and publish these Model Teacher Leader Standards. Along with the publication of the standards, the Consortium will publish a preamble, a vision of teacher leadership, and a set of policy implications and recommendations. While, the group has not yet reached consensus on the details of these key issues, I would characterize our direction as based on the following set of principles and ideas:

- Policies, programs and interventions to develop and support teacher leadership must include the teachers themselves at every phase of development.
- Systems should be designed to open new opportunities for learning and career advancement not to narrow opportunities via complex rules and needless bureaucracy.
- Systems should think carefully about the interaction and collaboration between traditional leadership and teacher leadership and should include meaning learning opportunities for traditional leaders.
- Instructional leadership is the primary but not exclusive area of teacher leadership. Advocacy, policy development, and other key

places where educational decisions are made should have teacher leaders engaged.

- Teacher leadership should be compensated but programs should not displace or substitute adequate teacher compensation.
- Programs and systems must allow for meaningful leadership opportunities that keep teachers in the classroom as practicing professionals.

Two states that have been grappling with these issues for quite some time are Kansas and West Virginia. Each of these states has pursued a multi-year effort that started with bringing together a broad range of stakeholders from across the state, including representation from higher education and the state teachers' association. These groups reviewed research, policies, and practice from around the country and developed a comprehensive set of teacher standards based on the unique interests and circumstances of each state. Kansas and West Virginia are currently engaged in a deliberative process of creating support systems for schools and universities – and endorsement processes at the state level with the specific goal of recognizing and rewarding current teacher leaders and growing the next generation of teacher leaders.

Several other states are engaged in the comprehensive process of developing an educator continuum to help states support the teaching profession through comprehensive reform at all stages – from preparation and licensure, new teacher induction, and teacher leadership. These innovative approaches to building, respecting and rewarding the profession of teaching will contribute significantly to improving outcomes for our students and ensuring great public schools. NEA will continue to support collaborative processes that build and support the growth and engagement of teachers and focus on improving the academic outcomes of students. Thank you.