

## Case 59

# Certifying America's Teachers' Competence in the Subjects They Teach: National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

*Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1985*

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*Background.* In 1983, the President's Commission on Excellence in Education published a landmark report, "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform," criticizing the education system as inadequate to address the changing economic and social needs of the country. The report sparked widespread discussion, and in some cases alarm, about the need for educational reform.<sup>888</sup>

*Strategy.* Also in 1983, a group of individuals assembled at the Carnegie Corporation under joint chairmanship of former North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt and Corporation President David Hamburg to discuss the educational needs of the country. In January 1985, the Corporation created the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy and allocated \$100,000 to administer the Forum and continue the discussion.<sup>889</sup>

One year later, in 1986, the Corporation allocated \$600,000 to the Forum to convene annual conferences on educational policy and to coordinate task force studies as well as smaller meetings on education-related topics.<sup>890</sup> In May, the Forum's Task Force on Teaching as a Profession presented a report titled "A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the Twenty-First Century."<sup>891</sup> A primary recommendation of the Task Force report was that a profession of better-educated teachers be developed to satisfy the growing need for more, as well as better-qualified, classroom teachers. The Task Force also recommended the creation of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards which would establish teaching standards in course content areas and certify teachers who met its standards.<sup>892</sup>

The Corporation allocated \$910,000 for operation of the Carnegie Forum, and of that sum, \$140,000 was designated for implementation of the Task Force recommendations.<sup>893</sup> The Corporation made an additional allocation of \$250,000 in 1987 for the special purpose of furthering implementation of the report's recommendations.<sup>894</sup>

Governor Hunt led a group of educational leaders in asking the Carnegie Corporation specifically to fund the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards recommended in "A Nation Prepared." A thirty-three-member planning committee drafted the bylaws and articles of incorporation for the NBPTS, and its first meeting was held in October 1987.<sup>895</sup> The Corporation granted \$1,000,000 to NBPTS to aid its creation, and it continued to make annual \$1,000,000 grants to support the NBPTS through 1998.<sup>896</sup> Soon, the NBPTS attracted other donors, and the U.S. Congress began supporting NBPTS in 1990 with a \$5,000,000 appropriation.<sup>897</sup>

The NBPTS focuses education reform efforts on improving the quality of teaching in the classroom.<sup>898</sup> It issues National Board Certificates to outstanding teachers, as judged by peers, as a supplement to state certification and as a mark of excellence. Certification standards are the same nationwide. For the first time in U.S. history, a certification to teach in the public schools is fully portable throughout the country. Certification through the NBPTS has facilitated, therefore, also for the first time, a national market for public school teachers.

*Impact.* NBPTS Certification is voluntary, but all fifty states and hundreds of local school districts recognize National Board Certification, and many provide incentives for certified teachers.<sup>899</sup> Educators consider the NBPTS to be the "single most powerful merit pay system in public education," with some certified teachers receiving annual premiums of \$5,000.<sup>900</sup> The benefits of NBPTS Certification, though, are not confined only to those students or colleagues of a certified teacher. The tough and time-consuming standards adopted by the Board have influenced state

policies for initial licensing of all teachers.<sup>901</sup> Its work has served as the foundation not only for state policies but also for other education commissions making policy recommendations on improving the education system.<sup>902</sup> By 2005, more than 40,000 teachers had been certified by the NBPTS.<sup>903</sup>

## Notes

888. "About NBPTS: History & Facts," National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, <http://www.nbpts.org/about/hist.cfm>.
889. Carnegie Corporation of New York, *Annual Report*, 1984, 37.
890. Carnegie Corporation of New York, *Annual Report*, 1985, 30.
891. Carnegie Corporation of New York, *Annual Report*, 1986, 27.
892. "About NBPTS: History & Facts," National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, <http://www.nbpts.org/about/hist.cfm>.
893. Carnegie Corporation of New York, *Annual Report*, 1985, 27.
894. Carnegie Corporation of New York, *Annual Report*, 1987, 31.
895. "Looking Back at Our Roots: Early Days, Critical Players," National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, <http://www.nbpts.org/about/lookingback.cfm>.
896. Carnegie Corporation of New York, *Annual Report*, 1988, 27.
897. Carnegie Corporation of New York, *Annual Report*, 1989, 21; Carnegie Corporation of New York, *Annual Report*, 1990, 37; Carnegie Corporation of New York, *Annual Report*, 1988–98.
898. "About NBPTS: History & Facts," National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, <http://www.nbpts.org/about/hist.cfm>.
899. "About NBPTS: State & Local Support & Initiatives," National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, <http://www.nbpts.org/about/state.cfm>.
900. Jay Matthews, "For Elite U.S. Teachers, Cachet and More Cash," *Washington Post*, 2/8/2005, A10.
901. Christine L. Compston, "Teacher Preparation and Certification: Who, What, Why, and How?" *The History Teacher*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (August 1998), 521.
902. Compston, "Teacher Preparation," 527.
903. Jay Matthews, "For Elite U.S. Teachers, Cachet and More Cash," *Washington Post*, 2/8/2005, A10.