



Transcript

National Press Club Discussion Forum on the Release of  
*Tear Down This Wall: The Case for a Radical Overhaul of  
Teacher Certification,*

A PPI Policy Report by Dr. Rick Hess

November 27, 2001

Good morning, I'm Andrew Rotherham, director of education policy at the Progressive Policy Institute, and it is a pleasure to welcome you to this event. I want to thank you all very much for coming this morning; this is an important issue and I know that in these days it's difficult to pull yourself away from CNN or the internet that long to focus on some other issues besides what is going on else where in the world, and I really appreciate it. We have a distinguished panel with us this morning, and I just want to say a few words before we jump into the discussion and then I'll turn it all over to them. You should all have copies of the paper and the materials, and if for any reason you don't, on your way out, there is plenty more on the table outside, and if you'd like additional copies of anything, feel free to contact us at PPI afterwards and we would be happy to get them to you.

The paper that we are going to discuss today is a fresh look at an old issue: how to train and certify teachers. But rather than rehash the tired debate that's been going on for quite a while, the paper takes a look at some of the assumptions that underlie our current approach to certification and it asks some very tough questions. It does not propose one best way to reform teacher certification, and if you came looking for that you are going to be disappointed. But it does hold the potential to foster many good ways that will work in various locales while maintaining fidelity to the principle of teacher confidence and teacher quality.

So what we are going to do this morning is have Rick discuss the paper for about ten minutes and then Dr. Imig and Wendy will give their reviews and their comments for a few minutes and then Rick will respond before we open it up for questions from all of you. All three of our panelists are very well known to all of you, but let me give each of them a few words of introduction before we get underway.

Dr. Hess is widely considered one of the most innovative thinkers in education today. His first book, *Spinning Wheels*, is widely read in the policy and education community, as are his articles and research. Rick is a professor in both the government and education schools at the University of Virginia, and he's also Director of the UVA Center for Education Policy Studies. Rick earned his BA from Brandeis and his PhD from Harvard, where in addition to his studies there, he worked and supervised student teachers and was a history teacher himself. He holds several credentials and has taught in public schools. In addition he is now serving as Executive Director of the new education policy magazine, *Education Next*.

Dr. David Imig is President and CEO of the American Association of Colleges For Teacher Education. Dr. Imig has worked with AACTE for more than thirty years in various capacities, including work in international relations education. He serves and has served on numerous committees and task forces, and writes a bi-monthly column for AACTE and is now working with Calvin Fraser on a book project. I want to thank David for joining us today to share the perspective of his organization on Rick's paper. It's a perspective that is very important to this debate.

Wendy Kopp is Founder and President of Teach For America, a corps of outstanding college graduates who work in public urban and rural schools. Since 1989 more than 8,000 corps members have taught around the country. Wendy is also chair of the New Teacher Project, which is a non-profit consulting firm spun off from Teach For America to help school districts and states with recruitment and professional development for teachers. Wendy was recognized as one of *Time Magazine's* 40 most promising leaders under forty and she was also the first woman and the youngest person ever to receive Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson Award, the highest honor that Princeton bestows on its undergraduate alums. She has authored her first book. *One Day All Children* was published this spring, and I commend that book to you as well. We're extremely pleased to have such a distinguished panel, and we're looking forward to a very interesting and lively discussion.

### **Statement of Dr. Frederick Hess**

I'd like to thank all of you for joining us this morning. I'm just going to speak for about ten minutes, and try to hit a couple of high points of the paper and lay out a bit of the discussion. It's relatively nuance, or at least I hope it is, and it's a discussion, which we are all very familiar with and in which the ideological sides have become pretty familiar. And I think therefore there is often a danger that we too quickly read any new argument or any new effort and say, "where does it fit? which side have they taken?" I'm really not interested in taking one side or the other in this debate, and so I'd encourage you to at least look though the piece and try to get a flavor of what I'm talking about. What I'm really most interested in doing in this piece is unpacking some of the assumptions. I think one of the reasons in so many debates in education today, whether it's high stakes accountability, whether it's school choice, whether its teacher certification, I think one of the reasons we tend to find ourselves in familiar ruts is that from one generation to the next we take for granted a number of the assumptions and a number of the arguments rather than filling our obligation to rethink them; we simply kind of pick up the torch from our mentors and carry that torch as far as we can before we

hand it over. And I'm simply not interested in doing that in this piece. So what I'd like you to do is look though it and see if you can at least think through with me the assumptions we are making and if you agree or disagree, that's entirely reasonable, but at least try to understand where I'm coming from and please don't too quickly try to pigeonhole this into what we presume to be the two sides of the existing debate.

The central place to start in this discussion is that schools, especially in troubled areas, are suffering from a shortage of teachers and a need for better, more qualified teachers. Two typical responses have emerged in response. One is that schools of education are a danger and a public menace and ought to be razed to the ground, that we ought to put salt in the ground for good measure. And the second approach is what we need are high, more demanding barriers for entry into the profession. We need to ensure that teachers have done more and better stuff than they currently have. And I argue that both approaches are misleading and fundamentally flawed. The first is an ideological charge rather than a useful policy description, and it confuses the symptom with the problem. And the second approach, actually looking at elementary laws of supply and demand, first is going to actually create a greater teacher shortage, particularly in areas where we are already having trouble-finding teachers. And second, I would argue, as I'll mention shortly that it really does not actually address our root concern. It does not ensure that we will actually have more competent teachers.

Research to date has done little to clarify the central issue. While there is a great deal of interesting and useful research on this question, a lot of the best known research, such as the recent back and forth between Dan Goldhaber, Dominic Brewer and Linda Darling Hammond, actually focuses on a very narrow piece of the discussion: Does teacher certification cause student test scores to go higher or not? This is absolutely useful, relevant, and important, but I don't think anybody involved in this discussion thinks that one finding or the other is going to resolve the discussion.

What I want to talk about today, rather than get involved in the kind of methodological wrangling that tends to mark these debates, is focus on the more fundamental issues at stake. And the fundamental problem I argue is that with the standard approach to teacher licensure is that it is the wrong model for teaching, given the premises of the proponents of teacher certification. If you accepted the traditional defense of teacher certification, that teaching is a nuance, thoughtful, demanding, context driven profession, certification then is a bad model discuss this more in a moment.

Certification obviously varies from state to state, involves a number of provisions that mean different things in different contexts, and so on. So what I'm really talking about is the central premise of the certification analysis, which is that we ought to try to the extent possible to keep the uncertified from entering classrooms. The certification assumption is that students must be protected from the possibility that administrators may mistakenly, in a moment of weakness, hire the uncertified regardless of the applicant's abilities or the needs of the district. For instance, while the nation's capitol is starved for math and science teachers, certification requirements currently prohibit any member of the math or physics faculty at Georgetown, American, or George Washington universities from teaching even basic algebra or earth science in DC public schools, except by way of loophole or exception. Proponents of licensure respond that there is no guarantee that faculty at these universities would be effective K-12 teachers. And they are absolutely right; I would not quibble with that for a moment. However, there is no guarantee that

they would not be effective teachers. Allowing someone to apply for a job is not the same as guaranteeing them employment. We take this, obviously, in every walk of life, except perhaps in the public schools. All that permitting a physics professor at GW to apply for a job would do is it would permit the people in the DC public schools to make a reasoned choice. Is this person likely to better serve the children better than the alternatives? The issue is not whether teacher education improves the performance of graduates. It is irrelevant. I'm in a school of education; I think I would have real issues if I didn't think we were adding value. I am quite sure that teacher education adds some degree of value to most graduates going through the program. But that is not the issue. The issue is whether we ought to bar from teaching those who have not completed such a preparation program. After all, while graduates of journalism schools may make better journalists than their peers who failed to receive such training, we don't require them to attend in order to seek employment, even though they are educating the public day in and day out about issues of importance. Rather, training is factored into the hiring process along with other qualities like natural ability, diligence, aptitude, energy and other relevant experience.

Certification is most effective when licensing ensures mastery of essential skills or knowledge. Licensing does not ensue that licensees are talented practitioners, but that they have demonstrated a minimal level of attainment. In education, however, we thus far have been unable, unwilling, or uncomfortable to set a concrete body of skills or knowledge. Education experts, in fact, argue that teaching is so complex that it could be difficult to judge a good teacher outside of the classroom context. If clear standards do not exist, we are normally hesitant to prohibit some individuals from practicing a profession. This is not because we think incompetence is acceptable in music, in small business, or in farming; but because licensing is an ineffective and possibly pretentious way to control quality. Instead we deem employers in these fields the best judges of who is effective and realize that they are ultimately accountable to their public. The free-flowing process fosters diversity of ideas and approaches and creates room for innovation and for the non-traditional to succeed. Even with professions with clear knowledge based benchmarks, like law or medicine, we don't imagine that certification means expertise in ambiguous, subtle skills like comforting a patient or swaying a jury. The skills that teacher educators deem most important, like listening, caring, motivating, are not susceptible to standardized quality control. Certification works poorly in professions where practice depends on amorphous, interpersonal relationships.

To make teaching certification more a kin to certification in law or medicine, it would be necessary to determine a core of essential mastery. An obvious candidate is context knowledge. While few believe that encyclopedic knowledge alone makes for a good teacher, just as we don't believe knowing case law alone makes a good lawyer, I think most of us presume that it is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition. And often now we do offer content tests of teachers, but I think most of us agree that the current content tests are pitched at quite a low level, and the passing cutoffs are set at a remarkable low level. An alternative core of mastery, of course, is the broadly accepted pedagogical cannon. For instance, in the area of early childhood reading, I think there is a significant agreement that it's important teachers be familiar with issues, theory, and approaches to reading acquisition. However, outside of that K-3 acquisition, I'm personally hard put to put my finger upon a number of similar areas of agreement.

Now, certification promises three main things and I argue that it actually fails at all three. The first is that certification presumes that those getting certified, that the certification is so useful, that unless you receive that training you will be an inadequate performer. The second presumption is that certification makes teaching more professional. First, I'd argue that we're actually unable to be sure that the uncertified are inadequate. One, the mere existence of alternative certification programs, the fact that there is significant belief that some of the alternative certification programs, such as Troops to Teachers or Teach for America, actually are generating results, which are at least largely indistinguishable, if not more effective than some of the local teachers, raises real doubt about whether or not you need to be certified. And quite frankly if you read either the national Board Standards or the AATCE document, I personally have a hard time finding precisely what it is that people who completed this training are expected to know or have mastered. There is a number of sentiments, which I think we all share, that there is a number of goals and objectives, which I think we all find compelling, but I'm really not sure what it means when you have mastered or what have completed to have received certification through these organizations. Second, although the certification processes can certainly screen out applicants, it does not do so in the case of education. We merely need to look at acceptance rates, even in the elite institutions, or at failing rates from schools; very different from the case with some of the schools we hold education schools analogous to such as law or medicine. And it is important to remember that there are actually 1300 teacher preparation institutions in the country and when we think about the schools to weed out we are only talking about schools that train 4-5% of the entering pool. Finally, there is nothing about certification that necessarily raises the profession's prestige. If certification were the key to professional respect we might expect that more respect would be accorded to cosmetologists, traffic school instructors, athletic trainers, and so on. In fact, there is nothing inherently prestige gathering about certification.

There are four major costs of certification I'll mention briefly. One, it imposes real costs on teachers; essentially it's a tax to enter the profession. You must take a year out of the labor forces and pay tuition and living expenses during that year, which means you are roughly \$35,000-\$40,000 in the hole before you are permitted to start your career. Second, it dissuades potential teachers from entering into the profession. Third, it stifles intellectual diversity by forcing all applicants to go through schools of education, which tend to share a certain pedagogical and curricular perspective. And finally, it undercuts professional development by creating an either/or proposition, which says that you are certified or you are not certified.

So what I suggest is an alternative system in which we all agree that teachers need to hold a college degree, there is a certain base of knowledge, that I think we agree, and actually this is a continua so you can argue in various directions. But this strikes me as a solid meeting ground. Second, I think its useful that the teachers pass an examination that is grade and/or subject appropriate which suggests that they actually know a certain degree of context. How they acquired it, whether in colleges or schools of education, or professional work, I don't think particularly relevant. And third, I think we all are deeply concerned about the safety of our children, so it is obviously appropriate that they pass a criminal background check. Beyond that I think I suggest that districts be free to make policy as they see fit. Montgomery and Fairfax counties will continue to only hire people

who have gone through teacher certification programs because they have a massive surfeit of applicants and they can therefore afford to be risk adverse. On the other hand, Washington DC, Birmingham, Alabama, and San Antonio, Texas, where currently half or more of teachers in some subject areas are uncertified, rather than doing the August 29<sup>th</sup> shuffle when they are desperately seeking any warm body in the area to fill in, can actually go out and systematically recruit individuals to bring into the profession. Now one of the advantages that I hope we will get a chance to talk about, of this kind of model, is that it creates fascinating new opportunities for induction and professional development. In no way am I suggesting that professional development is unimportant. In fact I think that is a common mistake made by both sides of the debate.

Many critics of teacher certification suggest that any college graduate can walk into a classroom and teach, which I think is naïve and silly. And many folks suggest that you need to get certified because then you are a teacher. Then you are sent in to teach five periods a day, thirty kids for five hours in elementary schools or 150 kids in a high school and you have very little time for mentoring or counseling. Most of your support mechanisms, which were offered at the school of education, are no longer with you and you are left to sink or swim on your own. It strikes me that if we truly believe in trajectory of professional growth that the appropriate model is to permit districts, using the resources that will need up by this process, to offer a variety of induction and professional development models in partnership with schools of education or by themselves, whatever is appropriate in order to offer ongoing professional development of these individuals. Now this does not suggest that schools of education are problematic or should go away. The fact that you don't need a journalism credential to be a journalist does not mean that we don't still have journalism schools of varying quality; but what keeps them in business is the belief that applicants or folks who hire them who offer ongoing professional development are adding value. Schools of education will continue to be necessary and valuable, so long as somebody out there wants us to do things for them, and I suspect that we are up for that challenge. And if we are not, then I think that is a real and significant problem.

Let me conclude by way of saying teacher advocates are justly envious of the pay perks and prestige accorded to doctors, lawyers, engineers, accountants, and so on. They see elevated licensure as a ticket to similar status. Unfortunately, desiring licensure without concrete standards, professional advocates actually aggravate their situation. Let me suggest two remedies. First, in those areas where we can agree upon clear and concrete, concrete being the key word, standards and certification, such as perhaps knowledge of reading acquisition training for K-3 teachers, certification is entirely appropriate. However, in those areas where we are unable to move beyond general goals, platitudes, and hopes, such as it's important that teachers undertake global perspectives taking, I suggest that a more appropriate model is to permit administrators and principals to make the decisions that are appropriate for their students. Now the concern of course is that administrators will make bad choices; however, if we don't think the principals are willing or able to make appropriate hiring decisions, it strikes me that is the real problem in our system. Teaching certification is a mighty thin barrier to hold up against that kind a fundamental dysfunction. Certification is a poor, costly, and ineffectual way to address that problem. If the problem is that we don't think that our school administrators are

willing or able to make good choices, then that is the problem and let's address it and let's not rely upon costly parchment barriers to minimize the damage.

### **Remarks of Dr. David G. Imig, President and CEO of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education**

Winston Churchill once said, "Democracy is the worst form of government except all others." The current system of teacher licensure, some might say, is the worst possible system except all others. What I am going to do is essentially parallel what I have offered in the four-page summary that I have submitted to you. And what I would like to do, is simply state that this is my statement and not an official statement of the association—although yesterday I had one of the most interesting experiences as an association executive that I have ever had—and that is that seemingly every one of my staff members wanted to have some input into this process. They have all read your paper. They would love to engage you in a commentary and they would all like to have an opportunity, and we will extend an invitation to you, to come and spend the day with us.

I want to make the claim that what Mr. Hess does is present a commentary but never the case for a radical change of teacher certification. I would claim that what he does is place an emphasis on the supply side with a reserve pool of now almost 6.5 million teachers who are licensed and prepared to teach. And I would also argue that he has made a false claim when he asserts that education schools have been entrusted with control over entry to teaching, something which if it were ever true, disappeared in the 1980s when the Council of Chief State School Offices asserted great claims around teacher quality and teacher education. There are things that I would say about the length of the essay, Rick's strain into a number of areas; but let me simply say that I think we share a common goal of having highly effective teachers for all of America's schools.

I think that where I would like to make some distinctions is between the differences between teacher certification and teacher licensure. Teacher licensure is owned by the states. I should not be up here this morning; my colleagues, either Tom Houlihan or Brenda Willburn should be here because in some sense teacher licensure and program approval are state functions, owned and controlled by state agencies and/or by professional practice boards that are under the authority of state agencies. Those are the bodies that control, set standards for both the schools of education and the candidates that matriculate through them.

Rick makes a number of statements in the paper having to do with accreditation; having to do with accountability; having to do with the process by which teachers are educated and placed in schools. I would argue that he ignores a number of things that have happened in the last decade; namely the significant reorganization of the accreditation function, the advent of the title to reporting requirements which has dramatically changed the responsibility of "ed schools," and that he has also ignored the reality of what H.R.1 and S.1 currently present and, if enacted, would dramatically change the way we both would prepare teachers and the roles and the responsibilities of schools of education.

Perhaps Mr. Hess' most egregious omission is consideration of the Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium, which is the profession's effort to arrive

at a consensus position on entry-level standards. He attributes all sorts of modes to his claim that such efforts are lacking, but I would want him to spend a great deal of time looking at the work of the Council of Chief State School Officers and Jean Miller in the effort to build a common set of standards for admission. The task, in some sense, is something that the community's effort, with the support of the Department of Education, to build a common system of standards for the licensure of teachers throughout the country.

Rick pleads the case of Janet, our English major from the liberal arts college that does marketing without analyzing the merits that the District of Columbia has in place to ensure that 7<sup>th</sup> graders, in this case for Jamarcus and Rosalee, have a teacher who helps them gain ground the DC standards of student performance. This argument that people should have free and easy access to teaching in the poorest of our schools is one that I reject. And interestingly if you take the very evidence that he presents in former William Sanders work, he would have to reject it as well. That inconsistency in the terms of the importance of good teachers for all the Jamarcus' and Rosalees' is what I would assert is necessary.

Let me conclude by saying that what AACTE has advocated which he incidentally identifies as a National Organization and Voice of Teacher Education Programs, which of course I like, we have advocated and called for a rigorous and demanding system of licensure standards for all candidates to teaching. We have accepted the reality that there will be many roots to teaching, but we insist that there be a common licensure requirement for all teachers. No more backdoor approaches, no more emergency roots. All candidates should have an academic degree, all candidates should move through clinically based higher education programs, all candidates, all preparation programs, both higher education and non-higher education, alternative and traditional, should be free to prepare candidates in the most suitable way possible. And all programs should be judged on the success of their graduates in ensuring the learning of all students in K-12 schools.

In conclusion, let me urge Mr. Hess to take the latest NASDEC standards manual to bed with him tonight to learn about the state expectations for teacher education programs. Let me urge him to engage the leadership of Intask in a dialogue about teacher quality standards and the efforts of the chiefs to build a defensible entry the standards for teaching to be used everywhere. Let me urge him to engage his University of Virginia colleagues in the dialogues about the value added in teacher education. And also for his own best interest, I urge him to consult with his dean about his call to end the exorbitant monetary costs that prospective teachers spend to learn to teach in places like the Curry School of Education. Hopefully he will have alternatives to present to Dean Brenemen regarding other ways to pay the salaries of assistant professors, absent the student tuition dollars those prospective teacher candidates generate. Finally, I urge Mr. Hess to withdraw this paper and join the efforts to build a reliable and defensible system of teacher licensure that will be in the best interest of JaMarcus and Rosalee and all of the children of the country.

**Remarks of Wendy Kopp, Founder and President of Teach For America**

Well I'm glad David gave me the opening to clarify that this is not a statement of Teach For America and is really just my personal reflection as well. In fact, if I'd had the chance to distribute this paper to our local staff members who have, as heads of our teacher support offices, strong relationships and partnerships with many, many of the members of David's association, they would probably not want me to make this statement. But I couldn't resist because I guess I am just personally excited about this paper coming out at this particular time.

I've been feeling as if so much has changed in the kind of education environment over the last several years in terms of the fact that we are now operating in really a pretty different world. We're saying we're going to hold school districts accountable for results through implementing systems based on standards and accountability and such, and yet I've felt that our teacher policies haven't necessarily moved into this new world. So we have a situation where we're saying we're going to hold districts accountable for results but we're still tying their hands completely over what I think is probably their most significant input and level to achieve those results: who they can hire to teach in their schools. And so on one level I think this just presents an opportunity for us to start a really serious discussion about what our teacher certification and teacher education policies in general should be in this new world. I also think that so much of what Rick proposes here just holds great promise to propel our schools to where they need to be.

I don't know how many of you have read a recent book put out by McKenzie and Company called, *The War For Talent*, but I found it to be an inspiring read. I'm not sure what that says, but these sorts of McKenzie consultants looked at what it is that differentiates the highest performing companies. They started off with various theories about what it would be, but actually came to the conclusion, over several years, that the actual thing that was differentiating the most successful companies was that they had, what this book calls, a talent mindset. From the very top levels of these companies, there is a commitment to going out and finding and then developing over time, talented leadership at every level of their companies. And if you read Jack Welch's recent book as well, the same thing just jumps off the page.

I guess just in my experience walking around schools and spending time in school districts it's hard to imagine that people are any less of a lever—I mean if anything, more of a lever, in education as they are in business. Yet I think we would be really, really hard pressed to find more than a handful, if that, of school districts in this country that truly have a talent mindset. I think we have to ask ourselves, "Why not?" and I would say that it is very possible that it is because state regulations that exist to control teacher policy and such have sent the message pretty directly to districts that teacher quality is not their issue, it is in the hands of a whole different set of institutions.

So I thought I would just respond to some of the arguments Rick makes in his paper by sharing some of our experience through Teach For America. Three major observations based on some of which he points out: I think to the point about the fact that if we free up districts to hire people who may not have come through a school of education and have a traditional teacher license initially that that will help our teacher supply issues. Clearly our experience through Teach For America, the New Teacher Project, experience in working with school districts across the country, is evidence of that. In the last year 5,000 people competed for the opportunity to teach through Teach For America. We ended up placing about 1,000 of them. But not only in that unique

program, on that level, but in school districts across the country we've seen the same phenomenon. Here in Washington, DC is an example: The DC teaching fellows inspired something like 1,200 people to compete for 75 spots in DC public schools. There are probably 425 new teachers hired this year in the DC public schools and for the other 350 positions I've heard estimates from 400 to 1,000 people applied for the remaining 350 positions; people who had theoretically the traditional certification requirements. So I do think that there is just an untapped pool of people out there.

Secondly, to the point that there is not a clear professional knowledge base that should be the basis for how we de-select people into teaching. I have to say that at Teach For America we are on a mission every year to think about; every year we refine our selection criteria. Every year we're constantly thinking, "What is it that differentiates our most successful core members who are teaching out there?" I have to say that I don't think I have once heard a staff member even suggest that what we should start doing is looking for people who come in with a knowledge base, say about how children develop. Always our conversations are around how can we make sure the people we are getting are achievement oriented. The kinds of people who, despite the circumstances they are put in, are going to set big goals and meet them; the kind of people who are driven to learn constantly, strong critical thinkers. It's those traits, and we actually have even done more scientific studies—McKenzie and Company actually did this for us where they looked at our highest performing core members against our lowest performing core members and looked at what are the differentiators. That also did not reveal that even experience working with kids previously was one of the differentiators.

And then finally, to Rick's point that none of this means that teacher education is not important and that in fact the quality of teacher education would go up if we moved to a new system of teacher certification. I have to say that we could not agree more. First of all teachers need intensive pre-service training so that before they enter a classroom they're getting a solid understanding of, "What is the approach that differentiates successful teachers?" They are getting a grounding in basic teaching skills like how to teach kids to read, how to plan lessons, how to plan a curriculum around clear student goals, how to assess students and such. And not only is pre-service training essential but we've seen the critical need for on-going professional development that is tailored to the particular context in which our core members are teaching. There's no doubt to the idea that we need to ensure that districts are feeling responsible for finding and then developing over time excellent teachers. I don't see a way around putting that responsibility on districts and I think moving to a different system might help facilitate that. So just in quick conclusion, I know that if I was a school district superintendent who was determined to get results, I would be fighting *passionately* for completely revamping teacher licensure laws that are tying my hands right now in recruiting and selecting and developing the talent that I would need at every level of my system.

### **Dr. Hess's Response**

I thought the comments were certainly interesting and useful. In particular, Dave's point is one to be taken seriously - this issue particularly of urban communities and the worst served communities. And it is really important to understand that there are

two philosophies at work here. I think we started from an absolute point of agreement: that it is unconscionable that these children be worse served than children in more fortunate communities and, in fact, I think almost all argue in this discourse that if there is one place we want to see our best teachers going it is to the districts where the children are starting so far behind in terms of resources, situation, and knowledge base. It is a question of technique. If we had a surfeit of qualified teachers, who are effective teachers, and one of the things to keep in mind is that the reserve army of certified teachers varies across categories. And as a former social studies teacher, for instance, who once applied for 130 jobs to find work, we are a dime a dozen. It is particularly hard, of course, in some of the more difficult areas, such as math and science, and foreign languages where we are really hard put to find certified teachers and of course if we could find certified teachers who were effective, knowledgeable, and driven, and trained in pedagogy in math and science, and if we had a surplus of these individuals applying to teach in DC, Chicago, and Birmingham – I say “fabulous”. We could still pursue the reform I suggest. People who run public institutions tend to be risk adverse. This is why NASA doubled up with every system going to the moon. You don’t want to be in charge of a public agency and have embarrassing stuff happen; it is really unpleasant. So if there were a surfeit of qualified and talented individuals for these jobs, I think we could still shift to the alternative model I’m talking about and not much would change, because if you can hire somebody who has been stamped with that stamp of approval, you will. But the reason this model is particularly relevant to these undeserved and hard hit areas is because quite simply they are not getting enough individuals who meet the stamp of approval. Quite frankly there is data, which at least suggests that the individuals who are applying in these underserved areas, who have the stamp of approval, may not be the kinds of effective teachers that we necessarily want these children to have. In such a circumstance, particularly if there are individuals who might want to work with these children, I think we’re doing ourselves, and the children a real disservice by creating bureaucratic, fiat barriers to create barriers, which deny these people the ability to work with these children. Now I am in no means suggesting that they will be effective or the fact that they want to work in schools means that they should be there—absolutely not—nothing could be further from the truth. I would love Lou Gershner’s job. It doesn’t mean for a second that if I were to apply to be a chairman of IBM that I would necessarily be given a moment’s thought—I’m an education professor. They would say, “What the heck are you talking about?” And I think, again, we come back to this issue: if we believe that our accountability system, that are lines of direction, that are notion of accounts and schooling is so skewed that we don’t trust principals and administrators to make reasonable decisions—that’s a real problem. Or if we think that the people who are running our schools systems and running our schools are so incompetent that they won’t make good decisions—that’s a real problem.

Now the fact that these individuals will, from time to time, make mistakes is not the key issue. I think all of us in the course of our life understand that sometimes bosses make an occasional bad decision. It doesn’t mean that we do away with promotions or hiring processes. We simply try to build in safety mechanisms, but the concern in the case of schooling is that for some reason principals and human resources people will systematically make fundamentally incorrect decisions; that they will systematically not

hire effective people. If we really believe that then we really need to refocus this discourse on that issue and not play with this red herring of teacher certification.

### **Question and Answer**

**Q:** Rick, since you raised the question that maybe the issue is selection criteria or help in kind of the point of intrigue into teaching, I wonder whether you might comment on what you would help the principal with if you think that is an issue, both in terms of the kinds of qualities and the kinds of support to both select and the support afterward. But I want to frame with a background, the brief comment on something you said and something Wendy said, which is that Wendy, you seem to dispose a kind of “trait” theory of teacher quality, which had to do with characteristics of the individual, which seems to imply that those are the kind of the things you don’t train for, that you actually select for. So that marginalizes teacher education, it would only help if it were a screening mechanism. And I’m wondering how you reconcile that with what I’ve heard from Rick, which seems to be a content based the notion that what you want is somebody that is strong content based coming in and then you help them become a better teacher once they have a content base. And that then goes directly to the question—“How do you help them select?”

**Wendy Kopp:** I could talk about, in fact the New Teacher Project, the reason why we launched the New Teacher Project, is to try to help districts apply what we’ve learned through Teach For America more broadly so we’ve definitely, as I’ve said, refined the selection model and it is as you say “trait based.” And that being said, we’re placing our corps members in ways that they are meeting the context requirements that currently exist according to state requirements. It’s not that we don’t think that math teachers should have strong math backgrounds, and in fact we’re placing math and science majors in math and science classrooms and such but definitely what has most resoundingly come up is 4 major traits differentiating are most successful corps members. As I’ve said before they are 1) achievement orientation 2) critical thinking skills 3) motivational ability in terms of the ability to influence others, not just in terms of charisma but the ability to influence other through a variety of strategies and 4) the drive to learn constantly. Those are what have come up for us, and there are a few others that we think are very essential as well. But that’s what our model is based around.

**Dr. Hess:** I think that a discussion about traits versus training is really an important one that we too often gloss over. In any interpersonal profession, traits are essential to the discussion. When we talk about engineering in the abstract applied context, traits are less important. The question becomes are you able to master the stuff, and have you mastered it? And it really does not matter that much if someone is licensed to approve a bridge design. But I think most people involved in the education debate, including folks who endorse certification, believe that a big piece of teaching is actually the subtle interpersonal dynamic. Is this somebody who is able to communicate the stuff effectively with children? Is this somebody who is able to somehow get through to children in any fashion? And that’s the kind of thing that is really difficult to access in standardized fashion. It’s hard to know, short of the field of fire, whether anybody is good with these

kids or not. It's not clear that the same people will connect with these children in all environments, so it's not clear that you want to have a state wide regimen deciding if this person is or is not suited to teach. They might be suited to teach in some environments and not others. So I think one of the real difficulties for any kind of soft profession like consulting or education or journalism is that we have a real trouble of establishing how—which traits matter or not so much; which traits matter but how much they matter and then of course there is this question that training matters also. Training is a piece we can handle. In the case of medicine or law, of course, it is training that you're certified on. Do you know this context whether it is medical knowledge or in the case of a broker, series 7--the first test you pass--Do you know this stuff? It doesn't necessarily mean that you're good with a client; it means you know some stuff. So if you're hiring as a principal you've got to weigh these issues obviously and the historic concern has been that principals were primarily concerned with keeping parents off their backs, they're primarily concerned with keeping tranquility and peace within the school environment and therefore that really good or effective teachers were going to get the shaft because principals were not going to put up with their nonsense. Now this is not anyone's fault, per say, I argue that it is a case of misaligned incentives. So the first issue is to make sure that it is in the principal's interest to find and keep talented teachers and to require that we think about what schools are doing and how they are doing it. Now in terms of help and support for principals, I think there is a reasonably obvious array of support mechanisms, everything from training to creating more effective infrastructures for disseminating and sharing applicants throughout a school system to creating some kind of centralized capacity for working with principals to identify the key traits. So I think that there is a lot of stuff that comes pretty much straight forward out of public sector management literature that principals could train to.

**Dr. Imig:** I don't want to belabor the point but what you have, in some sense, done is try to create an economy between traits and training, and I want to reject that because the biggest struggle that "ed schools" have is what are the traits that are acceptable in the legal world for admission purposes. Wendy cites work that she has done for Teach for America and the SRI has an inventory that lots and lots of ed schools use. I don't know what they use in Virginia. Marty Hayburnmen has made a career of the last 25 years working on the traits or characteristics of people who should enter. Now at what point do you use those comes as a very relevant question. The other thing, and if the author is in the room then I apologize, I think the NSF study right now of French teacher education, of the induction process in France, is something that I commend to everyone. Because, in some sense, what you've created is a system that simply blurs the distinction between traits, training, and induction, when those are all part of a common system and you move from reparation to practice in ways that principals have or that teachers have a considerable say in. And that I think is an ideal system that we all should inspire to.

**Question:** I want to make a comment on the dichotomy; I think David makes a good point that if you take the traits that Wendy listed, any boss of any profession would list those traits as important ones. It seems to me that one of the things that influences that whole discussion, which we are not taking into account, is that teachers are asked to do an incredible amount now without providing them the resources. So that individuals that

have these traits that Wendy listed are able to work in a system where they don't have resources that they need, that someone with lesser talents might be able to be effective as a teacher if they had good curricular materials, if they had a system that made good choices and provided professional development. So we are asking a lot, as the point Rick made, of asking the system to decide what makes good teachers outside of thinking how the system has to work to support those teachers to be able to do their jobs. So licensing is just not a big deal, you don't hear people or school districts complaining about licensing as a barrier.

**Dr. Hess:** That may or not be true, it depends on who you are talking to, but that is a fair point, that there might be other concerns. One of the interesting things though is, when we take the world as given, I mean take for instance a study out of Public Agenda that when you ask principals and teachers how concerned they are about certification, I think your point is a fair one. One of the things we often don't realize is when we take these things for granted, what are the unobserved costs? We simply don't know, we don't have any hard sense of how many potentially effective teachers might choose to apply if not for the institutional barriers in place. Now it is always true of course, which David points out and his organization has certainly endorsed some alternative certification routes, which make it easier and less costly to enter the profession. But there are informational barriers as well as real barriers. If folks don't know anybody who has entered the profession through these non-traditional routes, if they are not familiar with them, it is not necessarily likely that somebody who we would like to see in the schools, who might be interested, will find their way to these relatively unpublicized alternatives. Partly the issue is how do you create an institutional, cultural set of proxy that lead people into a profession. Now the other issue, of course, is this lack of support for these teachers. One of the arguments I think is key is that the certification presumption is you've been certified, we're hiring you, we're putting you in the classroom, let's see you go. That's why, when you speak to teachers, so much of professional development actually has this de-rigger character about it. It is really done for the purpose of accumulating your required hours or points. Now if you contrast that with professional development in other professions, where it is done because it is useful to the professional and because it is in accord with the goals of the organization, let's say what McKenzie does by way of professional development, you find a very different set of attitudes on the parts of the organization and employees regarding professional development. So I think your point about a lack of support mechanisms is key, and I think it is one of pathologies that grows out of certification presumptions. What I would much prefer to see is that rather than hit teachers with, essentially, a tax, this opportunity cost, their first year, of \$45,000 is something more akin to the induction model we see in psychiatry or in medicine where teachers say work half time for their first two years, are paid half time salary; so they're teaching three hours and now they're actually in the context where they're going to work. The system can now use these freed up resources to actually pay senior personnel to actually work with these teachers and create support mechanisms and provide materials on an on-going basis. Such opportunities become available if we reallocate the resources. Now if that means that UVA can no longer hire me because my salary has been redirected, so be it. I don't think necessarily that public education is there to create a subsidy for education professors if we're not adding value.

**Wendy Kopp:** I have to jump in and just throw out a couple of things in response. One, I couldn't agree more, and clearly these are traits that differentiate successful people in any kind of sector. The question is if districts are basically not finding enough of those people coming out of schools of education, should we hold them back from finding people who have those traits that we all now are a prerequisite to success in any sector including in education? So that's one of the fundamental issues. I also just think that we're operating in a different work and our bar needs to be very high. We're trying to create high performing school systems. I cannot imagine how we cannot get there if we basically build a system based on mistrust of our school principals and superintendents, which is what we have a system based on right now. It's what the teacher licensure system is based on and it's saying, "We don't trust you. We're going to control that from the state level and I would say let's re-direct all of our policy energy away from control to say, "How do we get our districts where they need to be? How do we build the capacity? How do we develop a talent mindset in these districts?" If we don't do that we will never get where we want to be for kids. It's just not feasible—it's never been done in any context I've ever seen.

**Dr. Imig:** Public schools belong to the state. It is a state function. The Pennsylvania story, the take over of Philadelphia, is a classic example of the state owning the public schools. Wendy, I agree that in an ideal world the teacher and the principal and the school superintendent ought to have that authority but the reality is that it is a state function and it is owned by and controlled by the state superintendent. So when we get into this discussion it has to be, "What is the state's prerogatives? What are the state's rights? And what is the state willing to give up?" And that's the reason I think that part of this discussion needs to take place.

**Question:** Dr. Hess made a reference earlier to Dr. William Sanders work. I was wondering if you could elaborate a little bit to the state of the debate about the correlation between teacher licensure and standardized test scores.

**Dr. Hess:** Well David, you had the reference to it.

**Dr. Imig:** I think that the interesting thing Sanders is doing right now is he is backward mapping in Tennessee, back into the preparation institutions so he is now able to identify high performing teachers in terms of the schools of education. And he's arriving at some startling facts. I accused Rick of a degree of elitism a few minutes ago, but one of the startling facts is that the variation, and the methodologist in the room can argue this one for the rest of the day: The variation between the best and the worst institutions in Tennessee is greater than the variation between the best and the worst institution preparation programs in Tennessee. So that we can identify highly effective teachers, we now can look at where they come from and we can identify within programs which enforces Rick's point that who comes out and where they teach and kinds of settings—and some of you have done studies which point to the fact that a teacher at nine o'clock can be more effective than the same teacher at three in the afternoon. And there is enormous variation in this and trying to regulate this, which I think is Wendy's point. As

states now try to do is probably wrong, inappropriate and principals have to be given greater authority in managing their schools and assigning people in appropriate ways.

**Dr. Hess:** I think one crucial point that comes out, of course, is that when Sanders is talking about effective teachers and obviously in this research he's talking about test score gains in math and reading and if we're comfortable with that, then that's fine. I think that's certainly legitimate criteria for school effectiveness, but it strikes me that sometimes we go back and forth on this. At times we're comfortable with it, at times we're not. If we're comfortable with this, that's a reasonable way, but we actually have a more direct way to assess teacher effectiveness then. If the point about licensure is that we know that licensed teachers produce better student test score gains and that's measures for criteria, then that's reasonable. But heck, well let's do away with the middle step and let's assess teachers based on student test score gains and then teachers who aren't generating effective test score gains, we ought to weed out or remediate. Now I don't think we're actually comfortable going quite that far so if licensure is simply kind of a middle ground I think we need to think through what its purposes are and what its effects are. But I think Dave's points about the potential of Sanders work are entirely fair and valid, and I certainly agree that this is the kind of work that we need to keep looking at and thinking through.

**Question:** I would commend you next to looking at the training of principals and administrators. I think there are a lot of problems here. The AFT produced a report not long ago about issues of the preparation of teachers and calling for coming to some consensus around what the knowledge base is. You've recognized that in your talk about a few things when you refer to reading and when you referred to the issues from the National Academy of how children learn. So we really do have a dilemma here and a need for a process for coming to a consensus or examining what appears to be a consensus right now. And I would applaud that, but I think there are a lot of things smooshed here and everybody weeps and moans about high standards and needing special kinds of things and now we have high standards where before we didn't and now we have to educate everybody and talking about effectiveness in teaching and certification licensure. Licensure is to do no harm. There is no quo and acclaim for identifying the most effective, so that's the first thing we have to understand. I think that the other thing that distresses me a lot in these conversations is about the Janet's and the Einstein's and what have you who we're keeping out of teaching. I am concerned about who, right now, with the licensure system we have and all its flaws, who we're letting in. I would like somebody to look at those data rather than pulling out the thousand when New York City will need 57,000 teachers in the next twenty years. We have to be serious about who gets in when you lift up the tab to let a few folks in. So I would like some response to some of these issues.

**Dr. Hess:** I think they're excellent points. I'll take the last one first. I think this is really a crucial issue. The problem with our current alternative education systems is that we only are able to let a few in. Teach For America is a wonderful thing primarily because it is a way to illustrate some of the potentialities and to foster discussion. But I think Wendy would be the first to tell you that they don't see themselves as able to generate or

train enough people to make a massive, nationwide difference. I mean that's not what they are set up to do. So the question becomes, given what we are, I think many of us are concerned about the folks getting into teaching and about the people who are being drafted in on August 30<sup>th</sup> and the day after Labor Day because we aren't able to fill classrooms and the question becomes, "What's an effective approach?" Now I would argue that the point regarding certification never being designed to identify stellar performance but only being a safety mechanism against the inadequate is exactly right because never forget all certification says is you're not allowed to apply for the job. The absence of certification doesn't mean that anybody can get the job; it just means they're allowed to apply. Certification only exists to say you're not allowed to apply for the job. So therefore it is intended to screen out the people who we are scared to have in front of children because they are unsafe or incompetent or ineffective or what not. Now, given that, if we are screening out the people we truly want to screen out because we are dissuading them from going through the certification process or because they are getting weeded out of the certification process, then I think one of us have any quibble, we say "great, it is working just like it is supposed to". Now it might be a slightly more costly approach that we need to weed out but it would at least be doing what it was intended to do. My concern is that I'm not comfortable with that it is actually working that way. I think we are screening out huge numbers of people who may actually be effective teachers.