

Address by Albert Shanker to the National Association of Directors of
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The creation and enforcement of real professional standards in teaching, through the vehicle of a new national board and exam, promise finally to allow the states to do the job they are supposed to do: to protect and promote the public health, safety, and welfare in the matter of public education. We educators are not doing that now, and we are unlikely to succeed even if all the reforms of the past three years were fully implemented. Unless we radically restructure the manner in which teachers are trained and certified, the system that we are charged to protect will ~~fail~~ go under [⊙]

There are three principal reasons for my call for a radical restructuring of education. First and most immediate is the teacher shortage crisis. Second are the endemic problems in competency tests as they are now constituted. Third, licensing and certification do not effectually exist in this country today.

Within the next six years, over one-half of the current teacher force will either leave or retire. That means 23% of each college graduating class from now into the 1990's must enter teaching if the demand is to be met. Although there has been a slight upturn in the number of teacher education students these past three years, this increase of approximately 1.5% per year falls far short of what the schools will require. If we want to recruit only from the top half of the college graduating class, the prognosis for meeting the shortage without making ~~the~~ fundamental changes becomes even worse.

Even if we raised salaries, which is a necessary move, the supply of quality teachers is still likely to fall short of demand. Business and industry will outbid the education sector, especially in mathematics and the sciences. Money is, therefore, not enough.

Bright young people, with the exception of dedicated individuals who continue to go into teaching no matter what the hardships, want more out of work now than just salary and security. And what they want, teaching does not currently offer: a stimulating and challenging education and training program; standards that carry a mark of distinction; a professional environment that allows them to exercise judgment, to work with colleagues, to enjoy relative autonomy while adhering to professional norms and standards — a real career, and, of course, a real professional salary.

This is not a description of the prevailing conditions of teaching. *And*
So reformers may ~~Raising~~ admissions standards to teacher education programs or devising alternative certification programs ~~only alters programs that are presently in place~~ *and the like, but the teacher shortage problem will not be solved by* such tinkering and tightening ~~will not solve the teacher shortage problem.~~

(through the even less defensible)
 Historically the shortage problem has been solved, ~~but the~~ approach of issuing emergency credentials ~~is neither dependable nor defensible~~. In the past, we were lucky. Because of the Depression, World War II, and other devastating events, emergency credentials brought in some highly educated, talented people whose initial career plans were thwarted. But the world has changed. If the statistics indicate that we are bringing in the bottom of the college class under so-called full certification, you know very well how poor the quality will be of those receiving emergency certificates. The number of those receiving emergency certificates is significant and

ominous. In many of our major cities today, the number of emergency certificates is beginning to equal the number of regular certificates. As more and more experienced teachers leave, the emergency credential may soon become the standard certificate.

At the same time as certification standards are being relaxed, the states have been spending millions upon millions of dollars to design or purchase entry-level tests for teachers in the name of tightening standards. Some states have even gone ahead and tested their entire experienced teacher force. The American Federation of Teachers has long been on record in support of rigorous entry-level teacher tests. We have supported the states' initiatives to test beginning teachers. But there are serious problems and shortcomings in the tests that the states have been adopting or designing.

Current teacher tests are not true professional exams. For the most part, teacher tests are tests of basic literacy and numerical skills. Other professional exams, even exams to enter the trades or driving tests, focus on the knowledge and skills underlying the tasks of that specific occupational group. Yet even the so-called specialized portion of some teacher tests--the pedagogy portion--can readily be passed by someone with common sense and test-taking skills. Journalists take them and pass them all the time. This could not happen with real professional exams ^(such as those) in law, accounting, or medicine. 5/1

Teacher tests are deeply flawed. Most tests of pedagogy, for example, do not examine knowledge of teaching practice but, instead, examine adherence to bureaucratic norms and the ability to perform administrative functions. However, research tells us that these abilities are negatively

associated with effective practice. Few, if any, of these tests provide a context for their questions. None require exercise of judgment and reasoning. Most assume that teaching is a purely technical endeavor, requiring only a few universally applicable skills.

Even those tests that purport to rest on research are deeply flawed. For example, some tests are biased towards whole-class instruction, while others are oriented toward individualized instruction. The underlying assumptions or context are never made explicit. Doing well on one test means a person may do poorly on the other. Passing or failing ^{now} depends on ~~two things~~ which state you are in and your test-taking skills. 2/2/9

Even the length of teachers' tests is telling. The typical teacher's test takes less than one-half day. Tests in other professions such as nursing, law, architecture, accounting, and medicine take from a low of two full days to five days. The implications are that the knowledge base in teaching is proportionately weaker and that we expect less of a teacher than of someone who will audit our financial books.

Even at this low standard, teacher testing has resulted in challenges and serious questions. Virtually every testing initiative has resulted in political challenges from teachers' groups and civil rights organizations. Second, political challenges have frequently been followed by legal challenges. The technical grounds of such court cases are very strong, because despite the millions of dollars being spent on these exams, the majority of them are poor. Third, ^{some} research has shown that these tests are poorly related to later performance--a finding that further demeans teachers who pass the test. ^

Ultimately, the states themselves ignore the test results and standards. For example, prospective Baltimore teachers were recently tested, but because of a teacher shortage, candidates who did not do well on the exam were hired anyway and required to take compensatory classes at night.

of the effect on children! Think of the insult to able teachers! Think
 If states and districts do not respect their own standards, then how is the public to respect them? ~~Such inconsistencies further discourage the entry of new talent.~~

Another way of summarizing the situation with teacher testing and with emergency certificates is to say that even though the National Association ^{OF STATE DIRECTORS} of Teacher Education and Certification deals with the business of teacher licensing and certification, there really are no such things as teacher licensing and certification in this country today. Teaching is the only occupation I know of where the terms licensing and certification are used interchangeably and neither exists.

Licensing means that states guarantee a minimum standard to protect public health, safety, and welfare. Standards may be minimal, but licensing means that no one who has not met that standard may practice. Licensing carries an exclusive right. By that definition, there is no teacher licensing system so long as emergency credentials are issued and the holders of these credentials can call themselves teachers and do everything a fully licensed teacher can do.

Certification means that the state, but mostly a professional body, guarantees that the person has met a standard of proficiency higher than minimal competency. Other people might practice that profession -- non-CPA's can do accounting, non-registered architects can work in architectural firms, and general practitioners can practice some cardiology

-- but only the certified practitioner has met the special education and proficiency qualifications that entitle him or her to be known as an expert.

By that definition, we have no teacher certification system in the United States, either. We have no way of determining proficiency. Minimal qualifications and no qualifications all lead to the same thing: a job as a full-time classroom teacher who frequently teaches a subject for which he or she has no preparation.

None of this is illegal; all of this goes on with the blessing of the state. We may have been able to get away with this in the past, but we no longer can. The demographic and social conditions that brought large numbers of talented women and minorities into the nation's classrooms have changed. The needs of the increasing numbers of disadvantaged children we must educate are vast, and we cannot, as has been the case in the past and even with the current reform movement, turn our backs on them.

If there were no knowledge base in education, then we could legitimately continue on our present course, just as doctors did before the advances in medical knowledge and clinical practice. But there is a substantial knowledge and clinical base in education, and therefore no excuse not to institute it in training and require its demonstration as a condition for ~~those to meet before~~ entering teaching.

The economic and educational stakes have become too high to persist in a system that has been little changed since the nineteenth century. For the most part, our current educational system grew from the demands placed by a mass production economy, one which emphasized routine and repetitive

skills. This system of American education is not and will not be effective given the new global economy. We need only look to the relationship between the Japanese economy and Japanese schooling to see the point simply. If we are to be successful, our schools will need to emphasize a higher order of learning, which will require a highly skilled teaching force. If our schools do not rise to this challenge, the results could be disastrous.

We have a choice, then. We can turn public education into a total warehousing operation and pay attention only to its custodial function. Or we can take advantage of this crisis and do something we have never done before: create a public education system with the ^{whose} primary function ^{is} education ~~for the many~~, not just for a few, ^{but for the many}.

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We now have a good opportunity to bring about such a transformation. The form that opportunity comes in is the recent report of the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession. The basic line of the report is simple: If we are to have the kind of education system that we need to keep this nation competitive and to preserve our democratic institutions, we have to do the following:

1. The standards for entering teachers must be raised, not lowered or undercut. Simultaneously, there must be major improvements in teacher education and in higher education more generally. Teacher education should shift to the three-part model prevalent in other professions: liberal arts education, specialized professional training (which entails the incorporation and continual updating of the knowledge base in education), and structured, clinical induction experiences.

2. School districts must offer more money, autonomy, and career opportunities to teachers. Teaching, in short, must be fully professionalized, and teachers must be allowed to assume the responsibilities and prerogatives of professionals. In return, teachers must become more accountable for school-wide performance in ways that still require research and development.

3. The structure of schooling must be radically altered. We can continue, through collective bargaining, to make some incremental changes in salaries, in the size of classes, and in some other areas. But we will not attract the best and the brightest who are graduating today if schools continue to look like old-fashioned factories. We will certainly not succeed in preparing the majority of our students for productive and decent lives in the 21st century.

The first step in the Carnegie plan calls for the creation of a National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. This will be a national, non-governmental board that will set standards for what teachers ought to know and be able to do. The board also will be responsible for developing and administering a national exam.

This exam would consist of three parts. First, there would be a stringent test of subject-matter knowledge. The second part of the exam, which probably would be given on a different day, would test knowledge of pedagogy, educational issues, and the ability to apply educational principles to many different student needs and learning styles. The written examinations, therefore, would require demonstrations of thought processes and decision making skills, and would be in sharp contrast to the

cheap, ~~context-free~~, multiple choice exams of today. Finally, the third part of the assessment would be a clinical induction program of from one to three years in which teachers would be evaluated on the basis of how well they work with students and their colleagues. Rather than a sink-or-swim approach, staged induction would give novice teachers the time and opportunity to learn from and reflect on their practice with experienced teachers.

Two consequences of this testing need careful examination. First, this type of certification is not licensing. States would be encouraged to adopt this procedure, but it would be on a voluntary basis. Moreover, as noted earlier, certification denotes a higher level of proficiency than does licensing. In other professions, the certification exam became the basis of licensing because the exam was proven to guarantee quality. The same potential exists for the board exam in teaching, but it will be up to the states to decide. The board and the exam in no way, then, diminish the role of state governments. In fact, they can enhance that role as they have in other professions.

The other major concern used as an argument against raising standards is that higher standards would exacerbate the teacher shortage crisis. It is a legitimate concern and may be true in the short-run. However, the history of other professions suggests a different pattern, in which higher standards change the pool of applicants: the result is an increase in the number and quality of candidates.

In the short-run, we would not rely only on board-certified teachers. It would take a number of years before the assessment is ready and a sufficient group of teachers are board-certified. There are all sorts of other incentives for attracting and retaining teachers in the meantime. All of them involve higher standards, higher salaries, and improved conditions for teaching. Indeed, to use the shortage to argue against high entry standards for teaching is to undermine our very enterprise.

The Carnegie report is different from previous education reform reports in its commitment to the professionalization of teaching and its acknowledgment that the time is past for marginal reforms that uphold the status quo. Moreover, Carnegie is putting money behind its commitment. Over \$800,000 has been granted to Stanford University for the research and development necessary to put together the board assessment. The planning board for the national board will soon be announced. The changes proposed by the Carnegie report are not theoretical. They are coming.

In the next few months, there will be many appeals made to reject the concept and legitimacy of a national professional board and exam and instead create new state standards boards or concentrate only on improving current procedures. Appeals will be made on the basis of licensing and certification bodies losing power and authority to a national board. My arguments suggest that this will not be the case, but for those who are not yet convinced, there is one final argument: it is the right thing to do. The current system, from the way we license teachers to the way we deliver instruction, simply is not working.

As the leader of a teachers union, I can say that this notion of the right thing to do, given the perilous state of public education in this nation and what's at stake, has informed our thinking and the new practices we are embracing. We have moved towards ideas and practices long thought anathema to a union, even this union. It has not been easy, either for me as a leader or certainly for our members. It would be much easier just to urge more of the same: more money, lower class size, more teachers on state boards, etc. But the AFT is taking a different route, and my members understand what is at stake, painful as some of it may be. They know that more of the same can only lead to the ~~failure~~ ^{demise} of a public education system ~~we have been charged to protect.~~

and, with that, an important part of America's ~~past~~ ^{past +} a critical institution for guaranteeing America's future as a democratic society.