May 27, 2014

Gov. Bob Wise, Chair
National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
1525 Wilson Blvd. Ste. 500
Arlington, VA 22209

Dear Governor Wise:

Over the past several years, our associations have partnered with and placed faith in the National Board to establish the first advanced credential for the nation’s principals based on the Accomplished Principals Standards. The National Board’s recent decision to discontinue the Advanced Principal Certification—before any participant entries were evaluated—breaks that faith. The reversal does a disservice to the 95,000 principals for whom our organizations advocate and disregards the 230 principals who participated in the pilot.

Our organizations, therefore, request three specific actions toward an effort to restore that faith with school leaders in general and with the pilot principals specifically.

1. **Share with our two organizations a comprehensive explanation of the Technical Advisory Group’s conclusion that the pilot was invalid.** In correspondence of April 12, 2014, National Board CEO Ron Thorpe indicated that a primary reason for discontinuing the program, in addition to the expense, was that it failed to meet a “certain psychometric threshold.” More detail was revealed in conversation: The National Board’s Technical Advisory Group concluded that a change between the field test and pilot invalidated the process. Given the National Board’s credentialing expertise, we find it curious that such an error would have slipped through. And we are optimistic that a review of the group’s conclusion might reveal the change as a necessary part of a pilot process. Given our organizations’ significant investment of intellectual capital to develop the certification, in addition to the $1 million federal investment, we know you appreciate the need for transparency with regard to all information that informed the decision to discontinue the program.

2. **Review the portfolios of the pilot participants for advanced certification.** Participation in the pilot process was, quite appropriately, rigorous and time consuming. Yet 230 principals readily stepped up to the challenge. They put doctoral work on hold. They rallied their faculties and their communities to support the process. They let pass countless professional opportunities in favor of pursuing Advanced Principal Certification. Their efforts were rewarded with 24 months of silence from the National Board capped with a decision that their work was all for nothing. These principals, motivated by their own desire to grow professionally and contribute to the field, deserve more. They rightly expect that the National Board will fulfill their promise to review their
portfolios with a level of rigor appropriate to the National Board certification and inform them of how their professional performance measures against the Accomplished Principal Standards.

3. **Reconsider the decision to discontinue Advanced Principal Certification.** Principals are catalysts for school improvement and increased student achievement. The evidence is clear: a great teacher makes a great classroom, but only a principal can lead a school’s success and sustain long-term improvement. That conclusion motivated the National Board to actively pursue federal and private dollars and the institutional support of our two organizations to create the Advanced Principal Certification. That reality has not changed. Advanced certification is as important now as it was then to establish a principal’s career pathway, highlight models of principal practice, and give exceptional principals the recognition they deserve.

Our organizations were the earliest and most outspoken proponents of Advanced Principal Certification. We advocated for the federal earmark when funding was a challenge. We actively recruited pilot participants from the ranks of our members to help ensure validity. And when the National Board could not identify scorers, our organizations helped identify and conducted training for them.

While we remain disappointed by the National Board’s decision, we are confident that it is just another challenge in a process that will ultimately result in our common goal of ensuring the best education possible for each child. We look forward to your reply and to working with you to overcome these current obstacles.

Sincerely,

Gail Connelly  
NAESP Executive Director

JoAnn Bartoletti  
NASSP Executive Director

cc: NBPTS Board Members  
Ron Thorpe