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## **IS A RIGOROUS BOARD EXAM FOR TEACHERS IN OUR FUTURE?**

Arlington, Va.—It's time to test teachers' mettle – before they begin teaching – say two Harvard School of Education researchers, Jal Mehta and Joe Doctor. They recently co-authored an article in the April issue of *Phi Delta Kappan* magazine encouraging policymakers to significantly raise the bar before allowing teachers to enter the teaching profession. They argue that one important step in the credentialing of teachers is to require them to pass a bar-like exam.

The exam “could change who is drawn into teaching, develop a more consistent, higher level of skill among all teachers, improve student outcomes, and greatly increase public regard for teachers and teaching,” the authors write.

They note that other nations draw teachers from the academic top-third of their class, have fewer institutions that prepare teachers, and give education students more extensive training than do American teacher preparation programs. According to the article, the word on the global street is that anyone can become a teacher in the American system.

Medical examination boards provide a doable model for education, suggest Mehta and Doctor. They propose a four-step set of exams taken over time and ending with a final exam before a teacher be allowed to take over a classroom.

- Step #1      Teacher candidates must pass an assessment demonstrating basic core knowledge of content and pedagogy.
- Step #2      Teacher candidates have one year of site-based clinical practice under supervision. At the end of the year, candidates must pass a performance-based exam to demonstrate competence.

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- Step #3      Teacher candidates have a two year apprenticeship under supervision of a master teacher and must pass a performance-based exam to demonstrate a professional level of practice.
- Step #4      Teacher candidates must pass a voluntary performance-based exam to obtain specialized certification.

“It can happen,” say Mehta and Doctor, “if the key stakeholders get on board including governors; chief state school officers and the state school boards; and lead associations representing the profession including the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the National Education Association, and the American Federation of Teachers. The obstacles to raising the bar on teaching standards can be overcome by building a wide coalition.”

The authors admit that making these changes will not be easy, but “they have the potential to significantly transform the American teaching profession.”

To read the entire article, go to <http://www.kappanmagazine.org/content/94/7/8.full>.

-30-

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