



State is overhauling teacher certification

BY Jean Satterfield

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Misconceptions abound when it comes to Maryland's policies and plans for teacher certification ("Masters degrees don't produce better teachers," Dec. 19). Far from shying away from Education Secretary Arne Duncan's concerns regarding the efficacy of a master's degree in teaching, the Maryland State Board of Education has conducted an extensive review of the current teacher certification structure and is making changes.

The impact of a master's degree on teacher effectiveness was discussed months ago during three state board meetings. In addition, the state board convened a workgroup of Board of Education members, local school system and higher education representatives and teachers to begin the process of connecting certification to teacher effectiveness. Finally, Maryland's winning Race To the Top application includes a complete redesign of teacher certification. We are proposing a three-tiered system that provides an initial professional license in Tier 1; a certificate after three years of effective teacher performance in Tier 2; and an optional Tier 3 that could include an advanced degree, but also alternatives for professional growth, such as National Board Teacher Certification.

Building teacher capacity to focus on the continuous progress of students is the primary goal of professional development in Maryland. Increasing the achievement of students in our most challenging schools will require laser-like focus on teaching and learning. If we are to provide a quality education for all of our students, the delivery of professional development must be directly connected to the needs of teachers and students in specific schools and classrooms. An advanced degree is no magic bullet; the performance of educators must be based on outcomes for students.

The writer is assistant state superintendent for certification and accreditation at the Maryland State Department of Education.