



Transforming the Teaching Profession via Teacher Leadership

A Conversation with Dr. Joshua Barnett and Dr. Carole Basile

Arizona State University's Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College is building the Next Education Workforce, which starts with the conviction that if we're not getting the workforce or the learning outcomes we want, we need to redesign the profession, the workplace, and how we prepare people for both. NIET is a partner in this work, focusing on how teacher leadership can drive this transformation. To discuss the impact of this partnership, NIET CEO Dr. Joshua Barnett interviewed Dr. Carole Basile, Dean of ASU's Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College.

Dr. Barnett: What are the most important challenges you see new teachers face when they enter the classroom?

Dr. Basile: All teachers start school facing 20, 30, or more students, who are all different, from different backgrounds and experiences. The challenge is how to teach all of them and each of them everything. Teachers

are expected to be all things to all people at all times. For too long, our education approach has left teachers with very little flexibility and very isolated. It is a difficult job made even more difficult by insecurities around pay, safety, status, and respect. However, we contend that the fundamental challenge is the default one-teacher, one-classroom model. That model prevents schools from serving all students equitably and effectively. And it prevents educators from enjoying the kinds of collaborative

work experiences that professionals in other fields enjoy and expect. Redesigning staffing models could help us make schools work better for both learners and educators.

Dr. Barnett: How can supporting teacher leadership help to address these challenges?

Dr. Basile: First, teachers need opportunities to advance. Day 2,000 should not look like Day 1, but it often does. Schools are flat organizations without much room for upward mobility. Second, moving from the one-teacher, one-classroom model of schooling provides opportunities for teacher leadership. If we build staffing models that are team-based and play to different strengths, then we can also create opportunities for teacher leadership in a variety of ways, such as team leads, cross-team leads, leaders with specializations. We build more robust organizational structures, providing more room for educators to grow and advance.

Dr. Barnett: Research has shown that deeper, personalized learning requires opportunities for collaboration, engaging in authentic tasks, and creative problem-solving. How do you see our partnership advancing this vision for more effective teaching and learning in classrooms?

Dr. Basile: Access to student-centered learning is critical for all students, but it takes a team of adults with different perspectives, backgrounds and expertise to lead this type of instruction well. By building new kinds

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DR. CAROLE BASILE | Dean of ASU's Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College

of staffing models and by understanding how teams can distribute expertise to personalize and deepen learning, we should be able to make more schools work better for both students and educators. Teaching is complex. We shouldn’t expect that every educator will master all the elements of that complexity on their own at exactly the same time. They will need to be part of self-improving teams that allow them to hone their craft, acquire new skills, and deepen other skills. Among the benefits of this approach — and one not to be underestimated — is that educators can model lifelong learning for their students.

