

SCHOOL AND DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS'
PERSPECTIVES ON NATIONAL BOARD
CERTIFICATION AND LEADERSHIP OF
TEACHERS

A STUDY FOR THE WASHINGTON INITIATIVE

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PART ONE:

School Administrators' Perspectives:
Findings and Implications

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Washington Initiative for National Board Certification of Teachers (WI) aims to increase the number of Board certified teachers (NBCTs) in the state and to promote the leadership of NBCTs as change agents in schools and districts. Teacher leadership for school reform is a complicated phenomenon because the teaching role is not structured to include direct authority for school leadership; rather, teachers work within a system in which principals and superintendents are authorized to manage school organizations. Inevitably, administrators play a powerful role in establishing a context for the leadership of teachers.

In this study, we document the perspectives of administrators in Washington about National Board certification and the leadership of NBCTs in their schools and districts. We selected administrators who have NBCTs in their schools and districts so that we could learn from their firsthand experiences. Our purpose is to gain insights that can enhance the capacity of both NBCTs and administrators to infuse the wisdom of accomplished teachers into efforts to strengthen teaching and learning.

Major findings*Administrators value NBCTs as effective teachers*

Most administrators' priorities are focused on strengthening instruction in core academic subjects and increasing student achievement. They see National Board certified teachers as model teachers who can help them address these priorities. They have observed that the NBPTS certification process strengthens already strong teachers by involving them in rigorous reflection and analysis; and that this professional development experience increases teachers' ability to teach the full range of students and demonstrate evidence of student learning. These administrators have become proponents of Board certification because they have seen firsthand these direct benefits to student learning. Nearly all of them invest discretionary funds to support NB candidates because of the tremendous return on that investment. They also believe that ongoing external support, such as that offered by the WI, is critical to increasing the numbers of NBCTs and thus to improving teacher quality in Washington.

NBCTs are often valued leaders

Teachers who become Board certified are often established leaders in their schools. Moreover, the process of becoming Board certified can enhance teachers' stature as effective teachers and thus as potential leaders. Most of these administrators rely upon and seek out excellent teachers (often NBCTs) as leaders, and recognize that NBCTs play critical roles in advancing instructional improvement efforts. Administrators say, however, that Board certification does not automatically confer leadership status on teachers. Even NBCTs are influential as change agents only when their contributions support school priorities and when their style of leadership is congruent with the social practices and norms of their professional communities.

NBPTS process as model professional development

In the eyes of these administrators, NBCTs are model professionals and the NB candidacy process is a model professional development experience. A few highly sophisticated administrators have been able to infuse key elements of the candidacy experience—for example, reflection on teaching practice and analysis of student learning—into their district systems of professional development in order to benefit teachers more broadly. In some cases, NBCTs initiated these improvements in concert with administrators. In these districts, NBCTs are contributors to an infrastructure of improvement. In most schools and districts, however, NBCTs are considered as individual assets to a school staff rather than an enhancement of system capacity.

Implications

The educational system is structured such that administrators play a powerful role in establishing a context for teacher leadership. Thus, to strengthen NBCTs' role as change agents will require investment in a deliberate strategy for enhancing administrators' capacity and will to support NBCTs as leaders. Lessons from administrators have implications for such a strategy.

First, NBCTs in Washington—as individuals and as a supported leadership network—can develop greater articulateness about how their leadership supports the priorities and values of the administrators who are vested with authority for managing school organizations. With ongoing training, NBCTs can become more effective in exercising their leadership in a way that increases administrators' appreciation and appetite for it. Furthermore, those administrators who—by virtue of working alongside NBCTs—have gained deep understanding of the value of NBCT leadership can become stronger spokespeople for it. Finally, NBCTs and administrators, working together, can help increase understanding of the ways in which NB professional development practices can be infused into professional development systems and thus serve more teachers.

The Washington Initiative, in its three-year history, has gone a long way to increase the visibility and influence of teacher leadership for school improvement but the effort is far from finished. NBCTs and administrators, together, have a role to play in increasing the ability of schools and districts to create system infrastructures that draw upon the leadership of accomplished teachers as a source of improvement.

SCHOOL AND DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS' PERSPECTIVES ON NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION AND LEADERSHIP OF TEACHERS

A STUDY FOR THE WASHINGTON INITIATIVE

I. BACKGROUND

The goals of the Washington Initiative

The Washington Initiative for National Board Certification of Teachers (WI) was launched in 2001-02 as a three-year effort¹ to achieve two aims. One aim was to increase the number of National Board certified teachers in Washington by offering teacher candidates scholarships and systematic support as they prepared their application portfolios.² The second aim was to develop a network of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) as leaders and to support their role as change agents in local schools and districts. Ultimately, these two goals are intended to help strengthen the teaching profession and contribute to educational improvement by positioning highly effective teachers as leaders within Washington's education system.

The rationale for studying administrators' perspectives

The paradoxical nature of teacher leadership in schools

There is a paradox embedded in the idea and the reality of teacher leadership. On the one hand, highly knowledgeable, skilled, and articulate teachers such as NBCTs are well equipped – some would say best-equipped – to play a strong leading role in the improvement of teaching and learning. Because of their accumulated knowledge from informed practice, the system's leading teachers are potentially the system's greatest resource and asset. On the other hand, teachers have little positional authority in the education system. Rather, district and school administrators are designated as educational leaders responsible for implementing education policy. Further, the teaching occupation itself has a history and set of norms that limit teachers' achievement of differential status or role as leaders within their profession. Teacher leadership is thus a resource that may be integral to a stronger profession and to educational improvement, but is only partially embraced by the system as such a resource. This paradox raises a number of questions about the roles that leading teachers can actually play in educational improvement. One question that rises quickly to the surface is about the ways in which those who have greater legitimacy as leaders – such as school and district administrators – interact with leading teachers in the service of improvement.

¹ Funded by the Gates Foundation, Washington Mutual, and the Stuart Foundation and administered within the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. For more information, visit www.k12.wa.us/certification/nbpts

² Institutions of higher education were granted responsibility for providing support. See our report "Bringing National Board Standards to the Preparation and Certification of Teachers: Portraits of Four Universities Participating in the Washington Initiative for National Board Certification of Teachers," available from Inverness Research Associates and the Washington Initiative.

Studies of NBCT leadership in the WI

We at Inverness Research Associates were contracted by the WI to carry out a series of documentation and evaluation studies over the three years of the Initiative. In year 2 (2002-03) our research focused on the leadership of NBCTs. We conducted an in-depth survey all NBCTs in Washington, focusing on the nature and purpose of their leadership activity, their perspectives about the role of the WI network in developing their leadership skill and opportunity, and their perspectives on how their role as leaders and change agents is viewed by others in the education system, including school and district administrators. Additionally, we conducted case studies of change agent work that NBCTs were carrying out with support from WI leadership grants.³ As part of these cases, we interviewed the NBCTs involved, as well as their teaching colleagues and their administrators.

These studies revealed provocative findings about some of the relationships between administrator roles and the leadership of NBCTs, from the teachers' perspectives. For example, our survey showed that 87% of NBCTs believe that their leadership work is consistent with the major reforms in which their schools and districts are involved. Also, 70% of NBCTs believe their administrators hold National Board certification in generally high regard. However, fully 63% of NBCTs believe administrators do not know how to tap what leading teachers know and make best use of their leadership within their schools and districts. Also, only 35% of NBCTs believe that their school colleagues hold in high regard the fact that they are National Board (NB) certified. From the case studies of NBCT-initiated change, we learned that administrators inevitably play an important role in creating a supportive, challenging, or neutral context for NBCTs' leadership. These studies have implications for the Washington Initiative's goal of promoting and supporting NBCTs as leaders in their profession and as agents of change within their schools. In particular, these studies beg for further understanding of the perspectives of school administrators, i.e., of those who play such an important role in establishing organizational norms associated with teacher leadership.

This study

Focus and purpose

The current study focuses on principals' and superintendents' perspectives on the following:

- ◆ the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and the certification of teachers
- ◆ the Washington Initiative as a promoter of NB certification and teacher leadership
- ◆ the contributions of NBCTs to their schools and districts

We have not set out to test a hypothesis or develop a state-wide measure of administrator perspective. Instead, our purpose is to portray the perspectives of administrators *who have at least one (and sometimes several) NBCTs in their schools and districts* so that others may gain insight from their experiences. Our sample of administrators included those from all corners of the state; from rural, urban, and suburban settings; and from elementary, middle, and high school grade levels. We gathered background data about their schools and districts from documents and public web-sites, and interviewed each one individually for about an hour.

³ Reports of these studies can be found at inverness-research.org and cstp-wa.org.

This report

We have divided the report into two parts. Part One includes the findings that emerged from the full set of interviews, as well as our reflections on the implications that these findings hold for the Washington Initiative, for administrators, and for the state's broader effort to strengthen the profession and improve teaching. Part Two includes brief profiles of 18 superintendents and principals for the purpose of conveying a sampling of individual voices and experiences.

II. ADMINISTRATORS' PERSPECTIVES ON NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION OF TEACHERS

When we began our interviews we did not know the extent to which superintendents' and principals' perspectives might differ from one another. We learned that there were very few points of difference. The general views of the principals and superintendents we spoke with are quite similar, and similarly positive. With varying degrees of enthusiasm, they embrace the principles and professional development processes associated with National Board certification; and they believe NBCTs are highly effective in teaching students, and thus are great assets to their schools and districts. Below we highlight findings and themes that emerged in the study.

What matters most to principals and superintendents

- ◆ With few exceptions, the administrators we spoke with are giving highest priority to reforms closely aligned with state standards and accountability policies. They believe the quality of teacher instruction in the classroom is the factor most important to reaching all students and improving student learning. These administrators see NBCTs as real assets to their improvement efforts.

For the majority of these administrators, school improvement priorities focus on state standards—especially improvement in reading, mathematics, and writing—and on improving student learning and achievement on Washington's standardized tests. For a small few, other priorities such as massive school reorganization or construction projects are displacing those other priorities temporarily. One superintendent emphasized a more cultural goal of changing the model of the "lone cowboy" teacher to a collaborative model of professional community; another emphasized investment in high-quality professional development as the strategy for improving instruction.

Administrators' awareness of National Board certification

- ◆ These administrators learned about the NBPTS and teacher certification either from NBCTs in their districts/schools or through conferences and communications of OSPI or administrator associations. Firsthand advocacy from NBCTs was far more powerful in strengthening administrator understanding and support.

Even those who are now proponents did not have prior knowledge of the NBPTS. The strongest advocates are those who learned about it from the first one or two "super" teachers who became certified, often several years ago. Several administrators said that NBCTs had

“worked hard” to bring it to their attention. In a few districts, the administrators feel this effort to raise their awareness paid off because when they themselves became advocates, more teachers were encouraged to come forward and apply. They believe this is of benefit both to the individuals and their schools.

Those who heard about National Board certification through an event or publication developed greater knowledge and appreciation by interacting with NBCTs in their own schools and districts.

Administrators' support of teachers' candidacy for certification

- ◆ To varying degrees, these administrators add some district or school resources to the supports that candidates receive through the Washington Initiative or Washington Education Association. They make the decision to offer support by weighing the return on the teacher's investment: Teachers pay a high financial and personal cost in completing the application process, and these administrators believe their schools reap substantial benefits in the form of improved teaching and learning.

There are some differences in the types of supports principals and superintendents can offer, given the discretionary resources they have available. Most (not all) principals offer candidates two to four days of released time plus technical assistance with video-taping. They sometimes also offer other help, for example, reviewing draft portfolio entries. In some districts, administrators use discretionary professional development funds for released time, and they lend teachers video cameras (or operators) and laptop computers. A very few administrators do not offer any financial or technical support. These tend to be those who equated National Board certification with other achievements, such as the master's degree,⁴ and who feel they cannot offer similar support to all teachers.

Quite a number of principals offer emotional support to candidates because they see firsthand the toll that the process can take on teachers' personal lives. Because of this, principals are often more cautious than superintendents in encouraging more teachers to apply.

Contribution of National Board certification to effective teaching

- ◆ “Strong teachers become stronger.” These administrators believe that the greatest benefit of National Board certification is its contribution to NBCTs' effectiveness in their classrooms. This benefit far surpasses any other contribution because the administrators see improvement in student learning in the classrooms of NBCTs, and this is what matters to them the most.

⁴ Several administrators noted that they believe National Board certification is more difficult and rigorous than a master's degree, and that teachers who achieve certification should receive a master's if they do not already have one. We discuss higher education perspectives on the link between the master's and National Board certification in our report, “Bringing National Board Standards to the Preparation and Certification of Teachers: Portraits of Four Universities Participating in the Washington Initiative,” June 2004. Available from inverness-research.org and cstp-wa.org.

Improving “teacher quality and student achievement” has become mantra-like in this era of No Child Left Behind. Additionally, “delivering powerful instruction to all students” and “closing the achievement gap” are important educational ideas in Washington State. These administrators see the National Board certification process as producing these outcomes – improving teachers’ real ability to support the learning of all students. For example, they observe that NBCTs “make a shift” in which they take on the responsibility for truly reaching all students and for changing their practice. Some administrators said that these teachers become especially skilled in differentiated instruction. They also see teachers taking students more seriously and producing evidence that their students are learning more. One superintendent said, “NBCTs have the ability to measure the effectiveness of their teaching by analyzing the performance of their students, and this is a huge factor in influencing their impact on learning.” Building up a “critical mass” of NBCTs in their districts has become a major component of some superintendents’ reform strategy.

Some administrators make an explicit cost-benefit assessment of the value of National Board certification compared to other professional development investments, and they believe there is no other opportunity that offers greater value – immediate and long-term – for their quite modest investment. “Do the math,” one administrator said, “The teachers invest 200 hours and we offer \$1000 in support. Compare that to \$500 for a six-hour workshop. Which would you rather have?”

National Board process as model professional development

- ◆ Some superintendents embrace the NBPTS process as a model form of effective teacher development. Not only do these administrators encourage other teachers to become Board certified, but they have also drawn from NB principles to improve professional development for teachers in their districts more broadly. Most administrators, though, have not yet infused National Board-like experiences into their professional development systems.

A few of the superintendents we spoke with describe themselves as “disciples” of the NBPTS principles and practices of professional development. They are quite articulate in their view that an experience that compels teachers to reflect rigorously on their own practice and its effects on their students – and to do so over time – is the most effective form of teacher learning. They believe this type of opportunity is more transformative than workshops, which teachers can find difficult to apply to their teaching. The National Board process is thus congruent with these administrators’ values and theories of teacher development. These administrators have been able to reform professional development practices in their districts so that they include elements similar to those of the NBPTS, such as teachers’ critical reflection on practice and analysis of student work. They see NBCTs as among the teachers they can turn to for help in guiding this work. Additionally, some administrators welcome NBCTs’ initiatives to launch lesson study groups, critical friends groups, or other forms of reflective dialogue among teachers.

Other administrators, while they espouse similar ideas about the quality of National Board-like experiences, appear to have less capacity to translate those ideas into new professional development practices within their districts or schools. That is, while they would like to have

more NBCTs in their schools and districts, they are not taking a systemic approach to extending new forms of professional development to more teachers.

National Board certification and teacher leadership

- ◆ With few exceptions, the NBCTs that these administrators know were strong and well-recognized teachers before they were National Board certified. Some were also recognized in their schools as leaders. Thus, there is often a natural link between Board certification and teacher leadership. However, these administrators do not believe that becoming Board-certified automatically affords leadership status. Rather, teachers earn leadership status (among their administrators and their peers) by demonstrating both effective teaching and leadership qualities that are valued in schools.

Teachers earn leadership status in two ways, and this can occur before, during or after Board certification. First, they demonstrate their effectiveness in teaching students; this is requisite to any teacher gaining acceptance or recognition as a leader. For some teachers who are not already recognized as effective teachers, the process of candidacy can raise their stature because peers observe the rigor of the National Board application process and thus more fully appreciate their strengths as a teacher. Secondly, teachers earn leadership status by demonstrating qualities of leadership that are important in schools, for example, by fostering collaboration, engaging others in dialogue, making resources available to those who are interested, opening up their practice for others to observe, and avoiding criticism of their colleagues.

The administrators we spoke with – particularly the principals, who work within a teacher community – carefully avoid communicating to their staffs that NBCTs are the sole teacher leaders and they tend not to let NBCT leadership disrupt existing patterns of distributed leadership. Administrators vary in the extent to which they support NBCTs as innovators or instigators of change. Generally speaking, NBCTs are highly valued as leaders within their schools and districts when their leadership style is consistent with the professional culture and reasonably sensitive to school politics, and when their leadership work helps to advance school priorities.

Contributions of NBCTs as leaders within schools and districts

- ◆ Several of these administrators say that NBCTs play a range of formal and informal leadership roles in their schools and districts. They also say that many NBCTs bring a renewed drive and enthusiasm to their work as teachers, and that this more subtle contribution also has a positive ripple effect on their school staffs. At the same time, those we spoke with vary in the degree to which they have both desire and strategy for drawing upon teachers as leaders or inviting NBCTs to take initiative for change.

One administrator said, “Wherever I go, if there is a committee, Board certified teachers are there.” NBCTs are active as leaders within their content areas at both the school and district levels; they are leaders with unions and professional associations; they mentor other National Board candidates; they lead lesson study groups with colleagues, and lead other kinds of professional development in their districts; they are mentors and coaches for their colleagues;

and they help their colleagues develop ways to document student learning and communicate about it to parents and others. These administrators say these roles help schools and districts achieve their improvement goals. Administrators also value the kind of “energy” that NBCTs bring to their own teaching, and believe this helps create a positive model for new teachers.

Amid this general enthusiasm for what NBCTs offer, there is an undercurrent in some administrators’ accounts – especially principals, who work with teachers all day – which suggests that administrators’ general appetite for strong teacher leadership is modulated by a number of dynamics, including conceptions of appropriate roles for administrators and teachers, relations among teachers, and perceptions about individual NBCTs.

NBCTs as leaders beyond their schools

- ◆ These administrators would like to see NBCTs have a strong voice in education policy, including at the state level.

The school superintendents we spoke with believe that NBCTs are playing important roles at the state level, for example, on committees, and they believe this is appropriate. By comparison, the principals felt there was currently too little role for NBCTs at the state level, and that they should have a larger voice and role. They believe NBCTs can become more visible and assume a stronger voice as their numbers grow, and they believe this would be good for the health of the education system.

Administrators’ concerns about National Board certification

- ◆ Some of these administrators are concerned that the NBPTS certification process, as currently configured, excludes some teachers who are as deserving of the experience and recognition as those who are currently certified. They believe the process could be re-designed to benefit more teachers and thus more students and schools. Without exception, those we spoke to want the certification requirements to retain their current level of rigor.

The most common concern with the NBPTS process is that the months-long timeframe for application is too short for many teachers. The addition of 200-300 hours of work onto a full work and family life, plus the financial cost, makes National Board certification out of reach for too many people who otherwise are as effective as their colleagues. They believe that applicants should be able to choose a one- or two-year time frame. Moreover, one person stated that the goal of certifying 2% of teachers is “crazy” because it would put an arbitrary limit on the professional growth benefit that certification affords.

Other concerns are the lack of feedback to candidates who do not pass the first time, and the relationship of National Board certification to a master’s degree. To expect teachers to pursue a master’s and Board certification separately does not make sense to these administrators. Finally, some administrators worry that young teachers are encouraged more often than they should be to pursue National Board certification, and that more effort and support should go to supporting the candidacy of more seasoned teachers. They emphasize that this will require supports and incentives – but they feel the return on that investment is educationally significant.

The importance of the Washington Initiative

- ◆ These administrators see the Washington Initiative as playing a critical – and they hope ongoing – role in supporting more teachers in becoming National Board certified. They believe that the combination of financial support, released time, technical assistance, and group support are necessary to making National Board certification an option for all qualified teachers who wish to pursue it.

These administrators have a universal concern about the need for financial support and compensation/incentive for National Board certification. They believe the WI played a critical instrumental role in the certification of more Washington teachers, and that these teachers bring benefits to their schools in the form of effective teaching for improved student learning and modeling for their peers. They are concerned that too few teachers who are effective in the classroom would become National Board certified if they had to fund it themselves and add portfolio preparation to their own workloads without relief.

Additionally, they have a concern about the symbolic effect of discontinuing state-level support for the Washington Initiative: “If it drops off the face of the earth, people will assume it is not a good program, rather than the opposite.” They thus believe that the Washington Initiative as an entity plays a vital role in increasing the visibility and legitimacy of National Board certification as an important contributor to teacher quality and student learning.

III. REFLECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Lessons from administrators

Washington school administrators are designated as the leaders of school organizations that are held accountable for enhancing teacher quality and producing student achievement. The pressures that go along with this role inevitably give administrators strong interests in finding ways to serve these mandates. This study suggests that one of their strongest interests is in having on their staffs teachers who are demonstrably effective in their teaching *and* are able to improve their teaching. These administrators associate Board certification with these characteristics. In fact, for the administrators in this sample, being Board certified means being a *model professional*, i.e., a classroom teacher who is highly motivated, is able to teach well and provide evidence of student learning, is able to continue improving, and is likely to play a role in supporting improvement beyond their own classroom.

Moreover, the majority of these administrators deem Board certification only partly as recognition of existing teaching skill; importantly, they see the NB process as enhancing the professional growth of even highly effective teachers. In that sense, not only are NBCTs model professionals, but the NB process is a *model professional development experience*.

These administrators are interested in increasing the benefits that accompany Board certification. One way they do this is by investing school or district resources to supplement what the WI and other sources offer to enable more teachers to become certified. This kind of

investment pays off in the form of having more model professionals on staff. At the same time, they know there are some limits on the extent to which they can increase the number of NBCTs because of the heavy personal costs involved for the teacher, the limits on supports that can be provided, and what may be a natural cap on the proportion of teachers who want to or can become certified.

A few of the administrators also try to increase the benefits of Board certification in more systemic ways, for example, by infusing some features of the NBPTS model professional development experience into their school or district's professional development system. These administrators tend to have a more sophisticated understanding of the value of NBCTs as facilitators and leaders who can support the development of their colleagues. That is, they see NBCTs not only as highly skilled individuals in the classrooms, but as *members of a school or district infrastructure that supports the improvement of teaching*. In these schools and districts, NBCTs are more likely to be tapped or supported as leaders.

Variation in administrator sophistication aside, there remains a general system reality that circumscribes the leadership of teachers, i.e., that limits the extent to which teachers, even model professionals, can instigate change. The paradox still exists, even in schools where teachers are unusually empowered and influential. The lesson from this study – drawn from administrators who are biased in favor of NBCTs – is that teacher leadership is most welcome and most potent when it demonstrably contributes to the aims of the organization, as those aims are understood by the people who are formally charged with authority. Secondly, NBCTs are more likely to be tapped as leaders when they interact with their peers in ways that honor existing social norms and practices in their schools. In sum, administrators are more able and willing to react well to, and even to seek out, the leadership of NBCTs when NBCTs' contributions advance school objectives while being sensitive to school culture and politics.

Implications for NBCTS and the leadership network

Individual NBCTs and Washington's network of leading teachers as an entity can capitalize on these lessons in a number of ways.

Enhancing NBCTs' visibility and value as leaders

NBCTs can work to develop greater articulateness about how their leadership serves important educational goals, and greater ability to demonstrate the nature of their contributions. They can also work to develop greater sophistication in interacting constructively within the micro-political dynamics of their schools. Finally, NBCTS can hone the specific skills necessary to enabling more of their colleagues to have high-quality reflective professional development experiences. Ongoing efforts to expand NBCTs' ability to facilitate lesson study groups, critical friends groups and the like are consistent with this idea.

Carefully designed training – including sharing of experiences and lessons learned, as well as communication strategies – are all integral to these developments. We know from earlier studies as well as this one that NB certification does not by itself enhance teachers' leadership skills.

Increasing administrators' support and sophistication

When administrators make a cost-benefit analysis, they conclude that NBCTs provide much greater value to their schools than what the schools invest in them. Administrators may well be the best spokespeople to advocate among their peers for greater local investment in teacher certification.

It is important for the Washington Initiative to formulate a deliberate strategy for increasing school administrators' appetite for teacher leadership as well as their capacity to infuse what NBCTs have to offer more systemically into schools and districts. Lessons from this study can contribute to such a strategy.

Implications for administrators

These are mirror images of the above statements, but take the administrators' perspective.

Invest in strong teachers

The more that administrators understand — *by seeing for themselves* — the value of NBCTs for their schools, the stronger advocates they become. The most obvious implication can almost go without saying: Administrators should provide any support they can to the strong teachers on their staffs who wish to seek NB certification.

Enhance school systems with NBPTS assets

The somewhat more complex implication is that administrators may be able to accrue greater benefits by working to infuse the assets of National Board certification into their *systems* for supporting improved teaching. This could include, for example, changing existing professional development models so that they include reflective practices of documenting teaching and learning; or involving more NBCTs as professional development designers, mentors, and facilitators. Some districts are adopting exactly this approach as they establish Professional Certification programs in partnership with local universities.⁵ A systemic approach could support more teachers in having these kinds of experiences than could be supported solely through the NB candidacy process.

Two final thoughts

First, a cautionary note. Teachers require (at least) two modes of learning, only one of which is reflection for purposes of self-correction and improvement. Teachers also need inputs, that is, new knowledge and ideas associated with subject matter and pedagogy. A professional development system in which teachers can gain new ideas *and also* reflect on their own uses of those ideas, as well as on other practices, offer teachers a fuller learning opportunity. The only

⁵ For examples see two other reports we have produced for the Washington Initiative: *Cases of Washington Initiative-Supported leadership by NBCTs*, September 2003; and *Bringing National Board Standards to the Preparation and Certification of Teachers: Portraits of Four Universities Participating in the Washington Initiative*, June 2004. Both are available from Inverness Research Associates and the Washington Initiative.

limitation of envisioning the NBPTS process as *the* model for professional development is that it is not complete. To relieve this caution, we can note that NBCTs – as experienced teachers and also consumers of professional development resources, often over a long career – are likely to have considerable wisdom not only about how to support their colleagues' reflection on teaching and learning, but also how to blend reflection into other modes of learning.

The Washington Initiative, in its three-year history, has gone a long way to break down some of the dynamics embedded in the paradox associated with teacher leadership. As a statewide network it has created new opportunities for NBCTs to serve more visibly in change agent roles. The WI has also helped administrators begin to develop awareness of Board certification. And where NBCTs as individuals have worked to demonstrate the meaning of Board certification for them as professionals and for their students, they have often been able to inspire administrators to offer them support and draw upon what they have to offer. In a few instances, NBCTs and administrators have found ways to truly work side-by-side to enhance both teacher learning and student learning. This study suggests, though, that the work of embedding teacher leadership into the effort of school improvement is far from finished. NBCTs and administrators, together, have an important role to play in increasing the appetite for teacher leadership in Washington. And they have a role to play in increasing the ability of schools and districts to create system infrastructures that draw upon the leadership of accomplished teachers as a source of improvement.

PART TWO:

Profiles of Individual Principals and Superintendents

ADMINISTRATORS AND THEIR CONTEXT

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WASHINGTON INITIATIVE: SUPERINTENDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

"The National Board certification process changes people rather than recognizing or finding people who already had leadership skills."

Background

Superintendent A has been superintendent in this district for eight years. The district has about 15,000 students in 26 schools; 20% are FTE and 20% ELL. The district serves a diverse socio-economic group, including some of the wealthiest citizens in the country. Although there are neighborhoods where more than 60% of the students receive a free or reduced lunch, Superintendent A doesn't feel the population is overwhelmingly poor or that the difficulties of educating these students outweigh the possibilities. He believes what makes the district distinct is a philosophy that all students deserve an outstanding education. Ninety percent of the district's high school graduates attend college. In the past eight years, the high school drop out rate was dramatically reduced from 18% to 9%. Superintendent A cites the "ratcheting up of content standards" as the most significant factor impacting student retention.

The school district is currently focusing on developing a comprehensive, coordinated curriculum for grades K-12. Superintendent A speaks passionately about the need to change the old model of good teaching – where "the best teachers are super stars, the lone cowboy sort of teacher who doesn't work with anybody else, fights the institution and produces amazing results." Rather, he feels strongly that the students should be in an environment where the teachers are talking to one another and cognizant of what is being taught at every level of education. The district's primary focus is "developing this kind of comprehensive and cohesive curriculum that will prepare all students for college."

Support for National Board Certified Teachers

The first certified teacher in the district was instrumental in bringing the National Board certification process to Superintendent A's attention. He was impressed by the teacher's enthusiasm and ability to explain the certification standards and process. As he deepened his understanding of the NBC standards, Superintendent A became convinced that National Board certification was an exceptional tool for professional development. He has become actively involved in promoting the program district-wide. A year after the first teacher was certified, ten teachers applied and passed. The following year, an additional ten were certified. Currently there are 36 NBC applicants and 70 teachers considering application for the 2004-2005 school year.

Although the district is nearing the goal of 10% certified teachers of the district's 1000, Superintendent A's intention is to provide the same opportunity to all teachers. He applied the analogy of advanced placement classes for high school students to make his point. "All students deserve an opportunity to take AP classes (77% of the district's graduates take AP classes); likewise all teachers should be able to become National Board certified." He believes in catching teachers at the right place in their career and supporting them in attaining certification. He envisions that the district will soon reach a critical mass of NBC teachers (i.e., enough

teachers to transform the very structure of professional development). "When a teacher enters the district, he/she should begin a process of becoming familiar with the standards and themes from the National Board process. Over time, the teacher will naturally evolve and develop the ability to become an applicant for NBC."

Currently, Superintendent A supports candidates by providing:

- eight days of release time
- full amount of the application fee
- mentoring support throughout the year. Candidates meet with NBCT coaches during the weekly two hours the district allots for professional development
- technical support: professional videography
- special recognition in the local media at district events
- training for principals in understanding the NBC standards

National Board Certified Teachers as Leaders

Superintendent A says that when candidates go through the process, "it's like they got religion. They are inspired and want to go out and change the world." He describes leadership as that *thing* that drives a teacher to spread the word." Unlike many of the other administrators we interviewed, Superintendent A doesn't believe that teachers have special qualities from birth that predispose them toward leadership. He states "the National Board certification process changes people rather than recognizing or finding people who already had leadership skills."

Superintendent A believes that certified teachers have an ability to measure the effectiveness of their teaching by analyzing the performance of their students. "There is a tendency in education to judge the teachers effectiveness by judging the teacher's performance rather than assessing the learning of the students." He also believes that NBCTs generally become more reflective practitioners.

Several NBCTs in the district have applied for grants and have taken on special leadership roles. One of the district's certified teachers is involved in state and federal education reform.

Challenges

According to Superintendent A, the National Board's goal to certify only 2% of the teaching population is a sham. He posed this question: "Should (our district) stop at 20 teachers just because the National Board thinks 2% is the target? Why shouldn't there be NBCTs at every level of a child's education?" Superintendent A thinks there is great potential for Washington's NBCTs to forward educational reform, yet he's pessimistic that this can happen without attaining a critical mass of certified teachers.

Superintendent A is an advocate of maintaining rigorous standards for Board certification; however, he is critical of the National Board for not doing enough to help teachers through the process. He recommends that teachers be given two years to complete the process, thus allowing them the time they need to develop and collect documentation, and still maintain their personal commitments. He bemoans the fact that the National Board seems satisfied with the

fact that 50% of applicants fail in the first year. Superintendent A would like to see the Board provide additional time and support so that more applicants will succeed in becoming certified.

Summary

Although Superintendent A is clearly a champion for National Board certification, he is frustrated with the philosophical stance taken by the National Board to target only a small percentage of teachers in the country. Meanwhile, he intends to actively pursue his district's goal to increase the number of NBCTs far beyond the national average.

WASHINGTON INITIATIVE: SUPERINTENDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

"Nothing happens by accident. This can't be a one time contribution. It needs to be continuous and provide enough money (to make it possible). If we don't fund these programs, people will think that the idea disappeared because it wasn't a good idea. This **is** a good idea. We know it's a great program."

Background

As a veteran superintendent, Superintendent B knows his district well. Although a relatively small school district consisting of three schools, (Pre-K to grade 12), this district serves students from a wide, rural area in the northeastern part of the state. Superintendent B described the county's population as a mix of old time farming and ranching communities supported by the more transient, crop laborers and their families. Student population in the district is comprised of 70% Caucasian, 15% Hispanic and 15% Native American. More than 55% of the students receive free or a reduced-priced lunch.

When asked about challenges facing the district, Superintendent B replied "it is tough right now." Due to high student turnover and a serious decline in enrollment (the district lost 130 students this year), the school board recently proposed to close one of the district's schools. As expected, the board's decision created tension in the community, upsetting a generally positive climate between the schools and their constituents.

Support for Nationally Board Certified Teachers

Superintendent B first learned about National Board certification from two teachers in his district who were candidates. One of the candidates was certified and other was not.

Superintendent B believes that a teacher who applies for NBC is already a "quality teacher." He says it is important that as an administrator he support good teachers in becoming better teachers because it can have a positive influence on the school community as a whole. He cited the example of the teacher in the district who received certification. "The entire school community felt good about the NBCT's success. We all celebrated with him."

Regarding specific support to candidates, Superintendent B relied on the requests of candidates to fulfill their need for support. "The district provided him with release time; access to a car and copy machine; and ongoing moral support. The candidate's colleagues helped out by taking on some of his responsibilities so that he could use the time to prepare his documentation. The school community celebrated the teacher's certification by announcing it in the local news media and at a school board meeting." Superintendent B views public recognition of NBCTs as a tool for improving the image of the schools in the public eye.

When asked about the importance of a funded network to support NBC and leadership, Superintendent B said that financial support is critical to the success of promoting National Board Certification. "Nothing happens by accident. This can't be a one time contribution. It needs to be continuous and enough money (to make it possible). If we don't

fund these programs, people will think that the idea disappeared because it wasn't a good idea. This is a good idea. We know it's a great program."

National Board Teachers as Leaders

Although there is only one NBCT in his district, Superintendent B believes that this teacher has become a more visible leader in the school community. Since becoming Board Certified, the teacher was selected to be a department chair. However, Superintendent B questioned whether or not National Board Certification is the reason for his advancement. He reiterated his earlier statement that "a NBCT is already a great teacher. Those good teachers who have the drive to go further and achieve higher levels of excellence become Board certified."

Challenges

The NBC process is a "double edged sword" according to Superintendent B. The length of time required to prepare documents is too long and requires too many hours for a teacher; yet the Superintendent also believes that the intensity and depth of the study required for certification contributes to the overall value of the process. Perhaps an incentive (such as a permanent salary increase) should be offered.⁶

Summary

Superintendent B wholeheartedly supports teachers who want to become Board Certified. He believes that the process provides an opportunity for good teachers to improve their craft.

⁶ Since 2000, Washington State has been paying a salary incentive of \$3500 per year for NBCTs teaching in the public schools. There is concern among some in the state that the incentive will be discontinued.

WASHINGTON INITIATIVE: SUPERINTENDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

"There is a substantial difference in the level of teaching quality, and in what can be achieved with student learning, between those teachers who are and are not Board Certified."

Background

Superintendent C is currently working at a local university as a visiting lecturer. Prior to that, he served as Superintendent of a small urban district in the Seattle area. The district has five schools, some 2600 students and is very diverse, with a quarter of the students newly landed immigrants, and with three dozen different languages spoken in the schools. The district has a high concentration of poverty among local districts and also has a high mobility rate.

The district currently has several initiatives in place to improve instruction and student achievement. The first is that three elementary schools and one middle school are connected with the Accelerated Schools program. Secondly, at the high school level, schools are involved in the Coalition of Essential Schools, and the district is in the third year of Gates Foundation Small Schools Initiative. Two teachers obtained their board certification in 2001-2002, a third in 2002-2003; this year, the district has eleven candidates.

Perceptions of National Board Certification

Superintendent C learned about National Board certification through professional reading and a state workshop. He sees a close alignment with the National Board standards and certification process and his values. He said: "I am very much a fan of improving instruction and have a strong belief that effective teaching can improve student achievement. The degree to which the process informs teachers of their effectiveness, through self-reflection, and collecting data on their own students – that certainly fits my model." He sees the Washington Initiative as invaluable in providing both financial and mentoring support to teachers as they work towards their certification.

Support for National Board Certification

This year, the district received a two-year Stuart Foundation grant to put in place a process to support candidates for National Board certification, as well as to develop a research-based, best practices program for all teachers. The district has an explicit priority for increasing the number of certified teachers; the goal is to get close to 30% of the 180 teachers in the district Board certified within the next five years.

Because of the Stuart Foundation funds, each person pursuing their Board certification is fully subsidized for their Board fees by the district. Each person has full access to a lap top to keep data, as well as video equipment and someone to operate that equipment. In addition, teachers can apply for an additional \$750 from the district. Once teachers receive their Boards, they are recognized at a staff appreciation dinner, in school publications, and at school board meetings.

The level of support is important, as Superintendent C says, because it removes many of the barriers that might prevent teachers from going after their Board certification.

National Board Certified Teachers as Leaders

Superintendent C feels strongly that Nationally Board certified teachers are leaders in their classrooms, schools and district. First and foremost, he sees certified teachers as being more successful in helping their students gain high levels of achievement than non-certified teachers. "I am very convinced that teachers who are certified are of a higher quality in gaining student achievement than those who are not." He also pointed to specific examples from the three currently certified teachers in the district and the leadership roles they are pursuing. One is pursuing a principal's certificate. Another became a "highly sought after" primary grade-level expert in raising student achievement, based on the changes that she made in her own classroom practice. "She emerged as a professional expert in how to raise student achievement with highly struggling students; all of her first graders were reading and that wasn't true of other classrooms."

Concerns Associated with National Board Certification

One concern this superintendent noted is the difficulty teachers pursuing their Boards face in balancing the demands of their teaching load and family lives with the added work of the Boards. "Obviously, it is going to take an extraordinary commitment and level of hours of work, so one would hope that those hours don't come out of the normal tasks and activities teachers are expected to do." He also worries that once teachers move into leadership roles, the demands of their teaching jobs and leadership activities could cause burn out.

Summary

Superintendent C described himself as a "total disciple" of the Board certification process. "One of the biggest advances you can make for teachers and students is to have teachers embark on the process of National Board certification, because the results are going to make a positive difference for student achievement." He feels that the level of work required for Boards should be tied as well to a master's degree. "It seems to me that teachers go through such a genuine process of critical analysis and research (in getting their National Board certification) that it should be more regarded as a route toward a legitimate master's degree in education."

WASHINGTON INITIATIVE: SUPERINTENDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

"What I like about the certification process is that it is a very reflective process. It makes them analyze their teaching and the results of their teaching in terms of student learning."

Background

Assistant Superintendent D is the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources in a district in north central Washington. She has been in the position for the past six years and in the district since 1987. She described the area as more rural than suburban, with a valley-wide population of 60,000 residents. The district houses almost seven thousand students and over 400 certified staff. About 30% of the student population is Latino. In terms of instructional goals, the district has been focusing on aligning their curriculum K-12, literacy and mathematics improvements, classroom-based assessments, and meeting adequate yearly progress in state benchmarking areas. The district has four National Board certified teachers.

Awareness of National Board Certification

Assistant Superintendent D became aware of the National Board standards at a Washington State Personnel Association workshop, and aware of the Washington Initiative when teachers began to pursue National Board certification. She sees value in the reflective processes that the certification requires, and feels strongly that going through the process helps to improve teaching and student achievement.

Support for National Board Certified Teachers

Assistant Superintendent D is working closely with the Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning to help make information about scholarships and financial assistance readily available to teachers seeking Board certification. The district has provided some release time for teachers as well. She has asked the Board certified teachers to present to classes as part of the new teacher mentor program and to a professional certification class that she taught. Teachers who receive National Board certification are recognized at school board meetings and in the district newsletter and local newspaper.

National Board Certified Teachers as Leaders

She feels that National Board certified teachers are respected by their peers. She said that they had an influence on their grade level and department teams in their schools, sharing what they have learned about best practices from going through their board process. Some have also served on district and state committees pertaining to improvements in specific content areas, such as literacy, math and library content.

Concerns Associated with National Board Certification

Assistant Superintendent D had few concerns regarding the certification process. She thinks that the time-intensive nature of the process prohibits some very good teachers from going through the process. She also feels that the cost is prohibitive to some teachers. She did stress, however, that teachers need some level of teaching experience—at least six years—before embarking on this process. She also felt that the similarities between the new teacher certification process in Washington and the Board certification process were positive, that perhaps more teachers who had been through the new teacher certification would then pursue Boards because they would have a better sense of what the process entails.

WASHINGTON INITIATIVE: SUPERINTENDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

"As long as the scholarship is available, this (National Board certification) is the best money I could spend on professional development, the best money I could invest. The work teachers put in, the requirements, the effort—it is great."

Background

Superintendent E has been the superintendent of a school district located in central Washington, for the past six years. He oversees a district containing 820 students and 55 teachers. The district is rural and mostly Hispanic; 100% of its schools receive Title 1 funds. Importantly, most of the teachers have been in the district for 10 years or more, and 60 to 70 percent of the district's teachers have earned a master's degree. One teacher in the district is Board certified, another is redoing one section, and two additional teachers are candidates.

In terms of instructional priorities, Superintendent E mentioned reading and mathematics. "Our big theory of action at all grade levels is that improving instruction in the classroom will influence student achievement."

Awareness of National Board Certification

Superintendent E heard about Board certification and the Washington Initiative through publications from the state and through a colleague at Washington State University. He feels that the work teachers do on their certification—looking at instruction, student achievement and data, and parental involvement—all are things that teachers need to be "quality teachers in today's world." He also said the work of the network is essential to the process. "I think teachers need to work with other teachers and have direction from distinguished professionals to help guide them through it. It is not an easy process and there is little experience in the districts to help them."

Support for National Board Certified Teachers

The district matches half the scholarship funds, as well as release time to attend meetings. The district also provides cameras and microphones for videotaping. The Superintendent is also requiring that the teachers who are currently going through Board certification must remain in the district for the next two years and, as part of their work, mentor other teachers who go through the certification process.

National Board Certified Teachers as Leaders

Superintendent E definitely thinks his National Board certified teachers are viewed as leaders, primarily because they are "innately qualified teachers, the top ten percent of our instructional force." One teacher is the literacy coach for his grade school, conducting model lessons, videotaping teachers, and helping teachers in his building reflect on their literacy teaching.

Superintendent E thinks the self-reflection required by the certification process helps teachers get a bigger view of the scope of instructional practice. He also praised the cost-effectiveness of the process from the district's point of view. "This is the most cost-effective way to get teachers at a high level of skill. And it is a lot less labor for us—the teachers do it all. And you get a lot of bang for the dollar. Their instructional skill really grows."

Concerns Associated with National Board Certification

This Superintendent's main concern stems from the one teacher who has had to redo one section. He feels there was not enough specific feedback as to why that one section was not good enough. "The teachers need more specific feedback when parts don't qualify." Another concern was cost: he feels the scholarship is essential to getting teachers to participate, and wondered if some additional federal monies, such as Title 2 funds, could be used towards certification. A third concern has to do with the certification process for new teachers in the state. "This certification process is almost as rigorous as National Boards; it would be nice for there to be some rhythm with the states. So perhaps this becomes one of the regular steps of a teacher's progression—state board certification before national, or can it be one and the same?" He has not seen any resentment towards National Board certified teachers from other teachers, and he thinks that is because the teachers themselves are making the commitment and doing the work versus the district selecting them as stars and rewarding them. "It was not like they did the same thing every other teacher did. It wasn't me selecting them as super teachers. They did the work."

WASHINGTON INITIATIVE: SUPERINTENDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

"I see the National Board process, whether you actually make the National Board cert or not, as one of the best forms of self-reflective, introspective professional development a teacher can do."

Background

Superintendent F has been working in his school district for 25 years, the last 17 as superintendent. The district serves approximately 8,000 students in a mostly rural area that is becoming a commuter base for a large city some 20 minutes away. The district has a history of, and propensity toward, being "ahead of the curve" when it comes to educational innovation. For example, they took the initiative to help the state pilot a new Professional Certification program. Also, the superintendent has a history of strong positive relationships with Education leaders in two universities.

Awareness of National Board Certification

The Superintendent is very knowledgeable about National Board certification. He believes strongly that the professional development experience afforded teachers who participate in the process is of very high quality. He also sees having NBCTs in the district as a useful and effective marketing tool for attracting other high-quality teachers to the district and as a public relations asset within the local community.

The Superintendent is a passionate supporter of site-based, ongoing professional development for teachers: "I am convinced that the only effective professional development that has at least some semblance of data behind it is the way people are finally looking at it: site-based, job-embedded, focused on student work, ongoing, all of those things that we never did." During his tenure as superintendent, he has built a strong infrastructure to support this approach, including establishing a dedicated professional development specialist at every school site. He comments, "Professional development is really the only thing I am interested in anymore nowadays, period, because I don't think we are going to get anywhere unless we improve what happens in classrooms with teachers and kids." He sees National Board certification as a major component of the district's overall professional development infrastructure, and NBCTs as key contributors.

Support for National Board Certified Teachers

The Superintendent and the district leadership as a whole are very supportive of NBCTs. In addition to the WI-sponsored support groups offered in partnership with a local university, the superintendent supports candidates through book studies for teachers to learn more about the process, assistance filling out scholarship forms and other paperwork associated with the process, and a special gift basket with videotapes, other resources, and "sub day" certificates. In addition, the district sponsors a support group for teachers who did not receive WI scholarships.

National Board Certified Teachers as Leaders

The district is home to nine board certified teachers. Two of those teachers have received WI leadership grants to design and implement a professional certification program for the district modeled after the national board. While Superintendent F does not believe National Board certification automatically qualifies a teacher to be an effective leader, he does trust that a teacher who has successfully certified connotes a level of quality that sets that teacher apart from the norm. He regards National Board certification as a necessary but not sufficient indicator of a teacher's leadership potential.

Concerns Associated with National Board Certification

The Superintendent has no real concerns about National Board certification. He is sensitive, however, to the egalitarian nature of the teaching profession. While offering substantial supports to NB candidates and opportunities to NBCTs in his district, he also takes care to support the leadership, development, and positive recognition of teachers more broadly.

WASHINGTON INITIATIVE: SUPERINTENDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Background

Assistant Superintendent G is an administrator (primarily in human resources) for a large suburban district near a major city. The district serves some 27,000 students in 40 different school sites. The district has a large number of students "living in poverty" as well as a large population of students whose first language is not English. Superintendent G estimated that 85 different languages are spoken in the district.

The two main foci of the district's improvement efforts have been literacy and numeracy. The district is also focusing on narrowing the achievement gap for children of color and poverty in the district. There are 10 National Board certified teachers in the district, with another six to eight working towards their certification.

Awareness of National Board Certification

Assistant Superintendent G heard about National Board certification at a conference for human resources professionals in Oregon. Shortly thereafter, a teacher in the district earned her National Board certification. The certification process has been listed by the district as one example of a "professional growth option" that teachers might pursue under a new assessment and professional development model for teachers in the district. As Assistant Superintendent G said: "We see it integrally tied to ongoing professional growth that we expect teachers to involve themselves in."

Support for National Board Certified Teachers

The district currently offers no financial support to teachers pursuing their National Boards. She indicated that they had, in the past, loaned laptops to teachers working on their Boards, and that individual building principals have assisted teachers, but there has been no coordinated support offered from the district level. Teachers who earn their certification are recognized at school board meetings. She said that the lack of support was due primarily to ongoing budget cuts that have impacted the district for the past several years.

National Board Certified Teachers as Leaders

Assistant Superintendent G did feel that the teachers in the district who were National Board certified were leaders, but she felt they were leaders prior to their involvement with the National Boards. She could not provide any specific information about the ways in which these teachers were filling leadership roles in their schools and in the district.

Concerns Associated with National Board Certification

The one question this Assistant Superintendent had involved the relationship of the National Board certification process to that of the professional certification in Washington—would there

be overlap or connection between the two? Her main concern is the district's lack of ability to bring resources to bear to assist and support teachers as they work towards their certification.

WASHINGTON INITIATIVE: SUPERINTENDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

"National Board certification not only helps the individual teacher to gain expertise, but it helps the district. These teachers will be out there representing our district, helping to show our district in a positive light, helping us to recruit and retain top-notch teachers."

Background

Superintendent H has been a superintendent in a district in Western Washington for the past six years and an assistant superintendent in the district the six years prior to that. The district has about 4,300 students and 550 staff, and covers an area of 400 square miles; it is moving from a rural area to more of a suburban area. Instructional foci for the district include meeting the goals of No Child Left Behind and the state reform act, appropriate use of assessments, and creating smaller communities within the large high school.

Importantly, Superintendent H also described one of the priorities of the district this year as moving from "staff development" to professional development. "We have always done a good job of having staff attend workshops and gain knowledge through seminars – what I see as staff development, but we haven't emphasized professional development, where a person pursues a defined program that results in a certificate or a degree. That is the direction we are headed in now." National Board certification is the key mechanism for moving in this direction. Thus, this district is in the early stages of having teachers work towards their certification: the district currently has no certified teachers, but has ten this year working on Board certification.

Awareness of National Board Certification

Superintendent H heard about certification and the work of the Washington Initiative at a conference two years ago. He sees it fitting perfectly with his vision of professional development. He also sees the network as essential and is moving to create a network of certified teachers within his own district as well.

Support for National Board Certified Teachers

As of this year, there is an explicit goal in the district to increase the number of board certified teachers. Superintendent H has a staff person in the district who, in addition to other responsibilities, helps promote Board certification and assists the candidates as they work on the process. The district provides \$1,000 in funds for candidates to use as they see fit – for substitute time, tuition costs, equipment, etc. The district is also encouraging teachers to go through the process in groups. He views this first group of ten as a "cohort" and will have them mentor the next cohort that begins the process. The district plans on recognizing candidates upon completing their certification. He said: "I promote it as an opportunity rather than another hurdle to go through, and support it with whatever resources I can muster."

National Board Certified Teachers as Leaders

He sees the teachers currently pursuing their certification as leaders in their schools and districts. As an example, he described one of the teachers pursuing certification as a “successful motivator of students, a great teacher in the classroom, a Milken Education Award winner. He has been very proactive in obtaining grants.” He feels the reflective process required by the certification helps teachers look deeply at themselves and their teaching, which, in turn, helps them become advocates for better classroom practices in their schools and the larger district.

Concerns Associates with National Board Certification

This Superintendent mentioned two concerns: helping teachers maintain a balance between their personal and professional lives, and making sure that the Board certification process remains fluid over time and not tied to any specific educational agenda.

WASHINGTON INITIATIVE: SUPERINTENDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

"I value having the opportunity available to teachers enough to put resources, time and energy into it. For some teachers, it seems to be a professional growth experience that is a great match for where they are on their career path. It gives us another professional development avenue for our teachers."

Background

Assistant Superintendent I is the staff development director for a school district located in a largely farming community in western Washington. The district serves some 5600 students in nine schools, with close to 50% Hispanic population. Students move in and out of the district fairly frequently. The two main instructional foci for the district in recent years have been language arts and mathematics. The district also continues to work to improve learning for ESL students. There are four National Board certified teachers in the district, with another five currently pursuing certification.

Awareness of National Board Certification

Assistant Superintendent I had heard of National Board certification when he was a teacher, and learned a great deal more about the process when a librarian in the district earned her certification about three years ago. About the same time, a National Board certified teacher from Ohio moved into the district and approached him about supporting teachers interested in pursuing their certification.

He said he sees some parallels between his own philosophies on teaching and learning and the certification process: "I value the notion of a reflective practitioner. I also value looking at student work and student products as a measure of my success as a teacher. And third, it seems that while there is a structure and framework to the National Board certification process, it is a self-directed, self-driven one—people are interested in it for their own professional growth." He felt the work of the Washington Initiative was essential, primarily in its financial support to candidates.

Support for National Board Certified Teachers

Assistant Superintendent I said that while the district does not have an explicit goal for increasing the number of certified teachers in the district, the district is doing outreach to interest teachers in pursuing their certification. NBCTs in the district have received Washington Initiative mini-grants that have supported teachers' exploration of National Board certification. (The mini-grants help fund teachers to learn about the process and submit their application.) In addition, the district has made available \$3,000 for all the candidates working toward certification. Teachers have used this money to pay for substitutes, videotaping assistance, and to offset incidental costs such as postage. The district recognizes teachers who have earned their certification in the district newsletter. Assistant Superintendent I said he would like to see the district do more with the local media in recognizing these teachers.

National Board Certified Teachers as Leaders

Assistant Superintendent I indicated that the district is in the early stages of working with National Board certified teachers; he sees them as leaders but has not yet found the best way to utilize them at the district level. He does see them serving in leadership roles in their buildings, primarily in their content areas; however, he also noted that there were many talented teachers serving as leaders in the district that did not have National Board certification. He does see these National Board certified teachers as playing a key role in working with young teachers as they go through their professional certification processes. "I think that may be one of the more powerful places that National Board certified teachers can influence their peers."

Concerns Associated with National Board Certification

Assistant Superintendent I's only concerns have to do with the subjectivity of the process, and the degree to which it addresses not only the "science of teaching, but the art of teaching." He said: "I think that the process attempts very intentionally to hold up the traits that are characteristics of effective teachers. But the question I have is 'you are relying on artifacts and reflective writing about instructional events,' so there is a kind of subjectivity to it. I also have seen really powerful teachers who are not very skilled at reflecting on their own work - it is internal to them and they are not able to articulate it, so they would struggle with this process."

WASHINGTON INITIATIVE: SUPERINTENDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

"One-agenda superintendents are not very effective. If you hard-sell a program and then move from one program to another, you won't last very long. It is better to create an environment that helps people be self-motivated for self-improvement, and have National Board certification as one option in a basket of options."

Background

Superintendent J has been Superintendent of a school district in Eastern Washington for the past seven years. The district houses some 10,000 students and 700 teachers. He described the community as very solid: many parents work in the nuclear industry, and at one point in time, the area had the highest ratios of PhD's in the country. He described his staff as a strong, senior staff, with many of the teachers having attended high school here. He also noted that the district's test scores are often in the top 10% in the state. The major instructional areas the district is focusing on is trying to raise the achievement level of the lower students. To do that, he employs a "building-by-building" strategy whereby the district hires good principals, who in turn create a good environment and hire good staff, and who all use "proper assessment data" to drive the school's improvement. In addition to the Washington state assessment, the district has spent the last seven years developing its own assessments to provide data to teachers and principals. The district has twelve to fourteen National Board certified teachers, and another six candidates working toward their Board certification.

Awareness of National Board Certification

The district hired a National Board certified teacher from California many years ago who has promoted the Board certification process to district staff and fellow teachers. In addition, Superintendent J heard about the state's program to support certification from a state-level workshop.

Support for Nationally Board Certified Teachers

The district supports National Board certified teachers by paying a fee to Washington State University, which supports instructors for the program. The district also provides two days of release time and a communications specialist to videotape classes. Teachers who receive Board certification are presented at school board meetings. He is proud of the number of certified teachers in the district and helps encourage them by talking with them regularly as they work through the certification process.

Superintendent J did note that he is careful not to put too many resources towards this program. As he said, "we have many people here working on masters and doctorate degrees and they aren't getting extra days or financial assistance. We have to be careful with our district resources and not put one program above all others. So we try to do small things that will be helpful, but not set it up that these (National Board certified) teachers are special." In general, the philosophy here is one of National Board certification being one option a teacher might

choose to grow professionally, and it is neither promoted nor supported more than other options.

National Board Certified Teachers as Leaders

Superintendent J said the National Board certified teachers are active in their schools, district and at the state level, particularly in their curriculum areas. He feels certified teachers are complex thinkers who are able to think more deeply about teaching and learning; however, he feels these teachers were so before their certification process. He also thinks these teachers were leaders prior to their pursuit of certification; the self-reflection process enabled them to gain confidence and take more risks in their professional lives.

Concerns Associated with National Board Certification

He mentioned only one concern: that of a high school librarian in his district who pursued National Board certification and ultimately quit because the certification process is not designed for educators who do not teach children in classrooms. He said: "I thought it was sad for such a sophisticated program like the National Boards ... this person should never have been accepted in the first place, or they need to create different criteria for people like her."

In terms of advice about National Boards he might give a new superintendent, Superintendent J said: "One-agenda superintendents are not very effective. If you hard-sell a program and then move from one program to another, you won't last very long. It is better to create an environment that helps people be self-motivated for self-improvement, and have this as one option in a basket of options."

WASHINGTON INITIATIVE: SUPERINTENDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

"We would like to have more National Board certified teachers here, and we value that as another step in the professional development of teachers."

Background

Superintendent K has been the superintendent of a school district in central Washington for the past eight years, and has been an administrator for nearly 30 years. She sees her role as one of overseeing the reform program—primarily in reading, writing, mathematics and science—in the district. The school district includes some 3,000 students and about 187 teachers. She noted two strong community influences on the schools: a university located nearby, and a strong agricultural community. These attributes contribute to a district that values education, and one in which the community's education goals and the schools' education goals are closely aligned. She noted, "What our community wants from public schools and what we are attempting to deliver is a close match." She has one National Board certified teacher in the district and three candidates.

Perception of National Board Certification

She heard about the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and the Washington Initiative through the Washington Association of School Administrators. She is aware that the certification process is rigorous and extensive, and valuable in pushing teachers to examine carefully their teaching practice.

Support for NCBTs

The district offers up to \$2,500 per teacher to help support teachers in their candidacy. In addition, one NBCT in her district received special recognition at a televised school board meeting. This superintendent does not provide release time; she thinks the work towards certification should happen outside of school, just as it would if one were working towards a Masters in administration or some other degree.

NBCTs as Leaders

The one NBCT is considered a leader in the district. This teacher is an active member of several state committees that look at school reform in the areas of writing and mathematics. In addition, she has spearheaded a writing group for 3rd, 4th and 5th grades in her building and the work of this group is being disseminated to other elementary schools in the district. Superintendent K values the process of certification, and in particular, the rigor. She believes that the process "validates teachers' leadership qualities." In addition, she believes it helps people in all parts of the education system value what happens in the classroom. "The way we have tended to value our teachers in the past is to make those people administrators; this helps us value our teachers in such a way that they stay in the profession as lifetime contributors."

She also sees tremendous potential and value in having National Board certified teachers mentor new teachers who come into the district.

Concerns and Challenges

The expense is a concern—this superintendent would like to see the process opened up to more people by being more affordable, but still rigorous enough that it is clearly not for everyone. “It shouldn’t be something that anyone could receive national certification. I don’t want to dilute the importance of being nationally certified.” She did not see any instances where other teachers resented the National Board certified teacher in her district.

WASHINGTON INITIATIVE: PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE

"National Board certification is the single, most significant cause of change in teacher performance that I have ever witnessed."

Background

As a veteran principal of 22 years, Principal L is a seasoned administrator and a veteran principal at a high school located in a rural area in the northwestern region of the state. The school serves 700 students, 33% of whom receive free and reduced lunch. The student population is mostly middle class and white. There is a minority group of immigrant Russians who were brought to Canada by local church groups. The school has more than doubled in size since Principal L became principal 14 years ago. He described the current school climate as being in flux, "We are constantly building and expanding facilities to meet the needs of the increasing student population." Principal L proudly states that he has "the best group of teachers in the state and the best facilities for the size of school." There are 30 teachers on staff, many of whom relocated from the city to enjoy the lifestyle afforded by a small, rural school district. Principal L reports that in a recent school survey, 94% of the staff agreed that, above all, professional development has the strongest impact on student achievement. As is the case with most schools in Washington, this school is in the throes of state and federal initiated education reform.

Support for National Board Certified Teachers

Surprisingly, there are three National Board certified teachers at the high school. Principal L first learned about National Board certification from several veteran teachers who have their finger on the pulse in education. Three teachers applied and two were certified in the first year. The third teacher reapplied and passed last fall.

In a tone of amazement and appreciation, Principal L exalted the National Board certification process as the single, most significant cause of change in teacher performance that he has ever witnessed. He believes that the standards set by the National Board changed the lives of these teachers – "They have risen to another level, quite different than they were. And these were master teachers, my best staff members." When asked how he would describe the changes, Principal L explained "(these teachers) have transformed more in the area of bringing **all** students from where they are to the next level. They have differentiated their instruction in the classrooms. They have decided that students will not fail; they take responsibility for each student's success."

Principal L says that he is "100% behind the Washington Initiative's financial support of NBC candidates." He believes that it is cost-prohibitive for teachers in his district to pay the application fee. He knows of five teachers on his staff who would become candidates tomorrow if it were not for financial reasons. There are no current candidates at the school.

According to Principal L, the school's NB certified candidates have been supported "in whatever ways they needed support." The candidates asked for three to four days of release

time – what the principal believes are “a small investment for a huge payoff.” Special recognition was given in the school and community newspapers. “We wanted to see what the reaction would be like. We are a district who likes to celebrate.” The principal’s only frustration is that there isn’t more funding for candidates who want to apply. “My people are geared up to put the time in, but they’re not geared up to afford it.”

National Board Certified Teachers as Leaders

The three NBCTs at the school are revered by the staff. They are selected to be representatives on the school site council; they lead faculty meetings when normally no one but the principal would do so; and they are the go-between for staff and union. The principal says these three teachers have the drive to be leaders and motivate others.

When asked about the NBCTs influence in the community, Principal L reflected on the question and candidly replied that there wasn’t much carry over to the community. “High schools don’t tend to involve the community as much as they do at other levels. We are right in the middle of figuring out how to involve parents in the school. We need to do this and be better at it. Our NBCTs will lead the way.”

Principal L cited a second example of NBCT leadership. The school participates in the Running Start program, a state sponsored pre-entry to college program for high school students. The principal claims that all of the high schools in the neighboring area have between 60 to 100 students enrolled in college courses at 11th grade. His staff has chosen to keep students on campus, offering high quality, advance placement classes within the school program. He believes it is the dedication and commitment from his teachers, especially his NBCTs who make a program like this successful.

Several weeks ago the NBCTs requested time at a faculty meeting to make a presentation about the NB certification process. The principal says it was very well received. The NBCTs also gave presentations to the primary and middle school staffs.

Summary

Principal L offered these words of advice to other administrators: “*Get the word out (about NB certification) swiftly and strongly. It will change the way we do the most important thing in our job and that is instruction. It will rejuvenate and increase the effectiveness of the teacher beyond your wildest dreams.*”

WASHINGTON INITIATIVE: PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE

"National Board certification is the best process I have ever seen for professional development of teachers who have already established themselves as competent and confident in the profession."

Background

Having been principal of a middle school for the past eight years, Principal M exudes pride as he described his staff, the student body and local school community. The district has a population of 24,000 people; however, only 9,000 people are permanent residents. Most of the population is comprised of students attending graduate and post-doctorate programs at a local, well known research university. As Principal M explained, "this is an unusual school community...with 83% percent of the students coming from parents who are professors or post-graduate students, this is a highly educated group - they expect the best."

Principal M described his staff as the "best he's ever worked with." As he told us, each faculty member is a "true middle school person" - a dedicated educator, one who is willing to go the extra mile for his or her students. During the past eight years, the faculty has focused on two areas of education reform: improving student behavior/school climate and revamping the curriculum, specifically math, reading, writing and science. The presence of high stakes testing has significantly impacted the schools' goals for the past three years.

Support for National Board Certified Teachers

Principal M first learned about the National Board certification process through a program at the local university designed to support local candidates applying for Board certification. Coincidentally, Principal M also learned about the program from a parent at the school who was an instructor in the university program. Several teachers at his school became interested in applying for Board certification. One of the teachers actively recruited her colleagues to join her in becoming candidates. To Principal M's amazement, six teachers followed that teacher's lead and asked permission from the Washington Initiative to apply for candidate scholarships as a team.

Principal M believes that NB certification is an "outstanding tool" for professional development, so when it came time to provide support for the candidates, he jumped on the bandwagon. In fact, the WI gave him an award for his extraordinary support of his staff. Each teacher was given five days of release time which amounted to half of the total grant money the school received from a professional development grant. In addition to giving release time and public acknowledgement of the seven candidates, Principal M provided ongoing emotional support and guidance.

Principal M's overwhelming confidence in National Board certification stems from a belief that even the best of the seven candidates was challenged by the process. As he put it, NB certification "rocked their foundation...teachers had to examine their practice and honestly address the issue of whether or not their instruction was effective." Although only five of the

seven achieved certification, Principal M feels that all of the candidates significantly increased their instructional capacity to meet the needs of their students.

National Board Teachers as Leaders

All but one of the candidates was considered as having qualities of leadership before applying for National Board certification. Principal M thinks that each teacher would have eventually moved into a leadership role without having been Board certified. There's no doubt in his mind that a NB certified teacher is more likely to have the knowledge and ability to be a leader.

Concerns and Challenges

Principal M emphatically stated "NO" when asked if he had concerns about the NB certification process. He does believe that the process is "more of an ordeal than a obtaining a masters degree" but that it is more valuable because it is grounded in classroom practice. He would like to see the National Board maintain the rigor of the program. The only concern he expressed had to do with funding. He is wondering what will happen when the private foundation funding for Washington teachers disappears.

Summary

Principal M states "National Board certification is the best process I have ever seen for professional development of teachers who have already established themselves as competent and confident in the profession." He has great admiration for his teachers who persevered despite the hurdles they encountered. He genuinely believes that the process is good for all teachers; however, he believes that only the top 10% of teachers in the profession are likely to succeed at becoming a National Board certified teacher.

WASHINGTON INITIATIVE: PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE

"I tried to do anything I could to support the teachers working on National Board certification. If I needed to cover a class or rearrange a schedule, I did it."

Background

Principal N is in her first year as principal at a small elementary school in a rural area in Eastern Washington. About 275 students attend the K-5 school which is 33% bilingual. The community is largely agricultural-based with most students coming from two-parent households. Principal N described her students and teachers as having a "great work ethic" and the community as supportive of the schools; in fact, many parents and grandparents of the current student population attended the school. Teacher turnover is not a big issue, and the teaching experience of her staff varies from a few first-year teachers to veterans who have been teaching for nearly 20 years.

Most importantly, previous to her position at this school, she served as principal of a middle school which supported five teachers in receiving their National Board certification last year. She first learned of National Board certification from OSPI and sees the standards and certification process as "exactly matching" her values and philosophies.

Support for National Board Certified Teachers

Principal N was highly supportive of the teachers who pursued their National Board certification at the school where she previously worked. The support included three days of release time for teachers to work on their projects, purchase of a video camera for teachers to use in their classroom, and making some building-wide staff development money available for teachers. The broader district was supportive in paying for the release time which this principal had originally planned to fund from her building budget, and by allowing the media director to film the teachers' classes. Even after she had switched schools, when the teachers told her they had all passed their Boards, she called the middle school and the central office to ensure that the teachers would be recognized.

Her strong support for NBCTs in part derives from one National Board certified teacher in her building whom she viewed as exceptional prior to going through the certification process. He commented to her on how he felt like a much better teacher because of the amount of reflection he did on his teaching while going through the process. She said: "He is an unbelievably good teacher, and for him to make that comment, I knew this was something great."

National Board Certified Teachers as Leaders

Principal N views these teachers as leaders and feels that others in the school and district see them as leaders as well. She thinks the process of getting certified pushes teachers to gain the knowledge they need to be change agents. She said: "All of their work had to be aligned with

our reform efforts, especially with the classroom-based assessments." Principal N pointed to one teacher in particular who had been sought out by WSU Tri-cities to facilitate groups of teachers going through the Board certification process and who is a leader in mathematics in the state.

Concerns and Challenges

Principal N noted that at her current school, she has no National Board certified teachers and no candidates, in part, because of the age of her teaching staff. She said: "Our new teachers are working on their professional certification, and my experienced staff is looking toward retirement. I don't have anyone at the 'right moment' in their teaching careers. I am looking to my 'newbies' to take this on in a few years."

Summary

In the end, what drives this principal's support of National Board certification is the value not only to teachers, but to their students as well. "I think we need to do everything we can to support this opportunity for staff and to encourage participation in the process. I think it is very, very valuable and the pay-off for our students, as well as our teachers, is tremendous."

WASHINGTON INITIATIVE: PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE

"When I saw one teacher go through the process, I saw how it deepened his own thinking about his craft; he became a much more reflective teacher just around instruction as a result of this. It got me really excited about it. And a spin-off has been his leadership, which has grown in leaps and bounds. I have been ever pleased to support him as he grows."

Background

Principal O has been the principal of an intermediate school, serving grades 3 to 6, in suburban western Washington for the past six years. His school currently serves over 500 students, and has a teaching staff of nearly 20. The school is a school-wide Title 1 school, meaning in the principal's words, "high poverty and low performance." The student population is very diverse and includes students who speak 23 different languages. The population of students who speak English as their second language has tripled in the past six years. The principal described the school population as "highly mobile," and high on the number of single parent households. The school faces significant challenges in the coming years as it moves to a K-6 school in 2005-2006. Creating a caring environment through character education and aligning with the state standards have been major foci in the past few years.

Principal O described his philosophy as being driven by "transformational leadership;" that is, he believes that leaders build other leaders and this philosophy drives all of the improvement efforts at his school. The school has three National Board certified teachers, a fourth teacher who is working toward certification, and 10 Gates teacher leadership⁷ recipients.

Perceptions of National Board Certification

Principal O became aware of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and its certification process through multiple channels: a friend who worked in the state office of public instruction, a PBS station in San Francisco that included one of his teachers in a documentary about National Board certified teachers, and the Washington Initiative's work. However, it was when the first teacher under his principalship worked toward and received his Board certification that this principal became interested and excited in the program. He views the personal journey the process requires teachers to make as matching philosophically with his approach to teaching and learning, and sees the contributions the process made to this teacher and his reflection on his teaching as essential.

Support for NCBTs

The district does little to support teachers as they work toward their certification. As Principal O said, "I don't think the district has shown a lot of support. We have 30 or more buildings in the district, and I have a third of the Board certified teachers in my one building." However, the

⁷ In a survey of all NCBTs in Washington in 2003, we learned that 48% are involved with Gates Teacher Leadership Projects in their schools.

district has begun to recognize teachers who receive their certification through ceremonies in teacher's classes and recognition at school board meetings and special breakfasts. This principal did not identify specific things he was doing to support teachers as they worked toward certification; however, it was obvious he was very supportive of the process. In addition, the fact that several teachers have gone through the process has created a mini-network of support in the building for helping teachers work through the rigors of the process. Principal O said, "We have encouraged staff to help each other if someone new wants to take this on."

NBCTs Contributions

The three teachers that have their certification are considered to be building leaders, and two are considered district leaders. One of the teachers is the elementary science lead teacher, another is on the professional education development committee, and a third is the building representative for the state education association. Principal O thinks the process of certification helps prepare these teachers for leadership roles in several ways: "The reflection process causes them to increase their own level of skills and there is a component in National Boards about being willing to share with others; I think that piece helps them see themselves in a different light and pushes them farther out."

In addition to the leadership roles these individuals are now playing, the Washington Initiative and Board certified teachers have had a major impact on the professional development program at Principal O's school. The major staff development initiative at all grade levels is 'lesson study' and is funded through the Washington Initiative. One Board certified teacher started lesson study with his own grade level group and year by year, all the grade levels have implemented it as well.

Concerns and Challenges

Principal O's concerns had mainly to do with the initial expense teachers had to invest. Another concern had to do with a lack of specific feedback that two of his teachers reported after narrowly missing their certification in their first attempt. "It was such a cost in terms of time and money and effort, and they didn't really know what they needed to do to improve. The feedback they got was so vague. It eroded their confidence in the process and made them and me really wonder about the scoring." He did not see a problem with NBCTs being resented by their fellow teachers in his school.

He feels getting National Board certification can be a great team-building activity and that candidates need the support of other teachers as they go through the process of getting certified. He also feels that as more and more teachers become certified, efforts need to be made to integrate them fully into broader statewide conversations about reform efforts.

WASHINGTON INITIATIVE: PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE

"This happens within the four walls of their classroom—it begins and ends with their kids. I don't know of any other staff development that does that."

Background

Principal P is the principal of a suburban elementary school in the western part of the state that houses almost 700 students. He is in his fourth year as principal at the school and has been an administrator for eight years.

The school is the largest elementary school in the district, and in the principal's words, "the home of staff development in our district." Money that would ordinarily fund an assistant principal pays for a full-time staff development person, and the district funds a second full-time staff development person for the school. Two days of each month, staff development is offered as part of the school day. They also have nine teachers involved in implementing lesson studies in the school, funded through the Washington Initiative. The school houses almost half of the National Board certified teachers in the district; six teachers at the school are National Board certified, with another two in process, while an additional eight teachers are certified district-wide.

Principal P described the community as very supportive. He has 200 parent volunteers who work at the school who recently purchased a new computer lab for it.

One struggle he mentioned is the fact that, with all the emphasis on staff development, test scores in the school are not "head and shoulders above everyone else's." "The biggest issue for us has been how to translate professional development activities into classroom-based changes in instruction." A focus for professional development this year is making assessment a more integral part of instruction.

Perceptions of National Board Certification

Principal P became aware of National Board certification when he became principal of the elementary school and had a teacher on staff who had achieved certification. She took him to a workshop, and he was hooked. "I became a disciple when I saw the features of it. You are talking about 200 to 400 hours of reflection and work. When I compare that to what I pay teachers for an eight-hour workshop with no assurance of reflection, from a pragmatic standpoint, I was convinced of its value." He noted that the Boards are a minimum of 200 hours. "If you put \$1,000 into it, that is five dollars an hour. Compare that to one workshop—six hours for \$500. Which would you rather have?"

He sees the network supporting the teachers as "absolutely huge." "Typically, networks are based on union activities or more content-driven activities, not on reflection on instructional practice and work with kids. This provides a network of pretty intellectual stuff for teachers to wrestle with."

He also noted the fact that the National Board certification process is job-embedded. Teachers do not have to come out of their classroom for professional development, then figure out how to take that back and implement it.

Support for National Board Certified Teachers

Principal P provides money to teachers upon completion of their certification. He purchased a new video camera for teachers to use in their taping, and tracked down a professional cameraman to assist in the taping. He offers to help edit and consult with teachers on their written products. He provides \$500 for substitutes for release time. The district provides existing National Board certified teachers to support and assist candidates. In terms of recognition, teachers are recognized at staff meetings, the parent volunteers bought them gift certificates for dinner, and the school mounted plaques recognizing the teachers' achievements. Additionally, the principal said that this year, he has had representatives from other school districts visiting his school expressly to discuss National Board certification. While the district does not seek out National Board certified teachers in its hiring processes, as he said, "If I came across one, I would sit up and look."

National Board Certified Teachers as Leaders

Principal P mentioned that all of the certified teachers are active in building planning activities and district-level staff development activities. "Our National Board certified teachers are powerful leaders in our building, and have had such a strong influence on the staff. It is a neat cultural thing." The first teacher in the building to receive National Board certification is currently working at the state level as part of the Washington Initiative. More importantly, he noted that these teachers tend to "take all of their students more seriously. They see their whole class and they don't marginalize any kids. They work systematically to meet all their kids' needs. Not all of my teachers do that."

Concerns and Challenges Associated with National Board Certification

While Principal P is clearly a proponent of National Board certification, he did raise several issues. One is that other teachers in the building who are working towards master's degrees question the amount of support given to teachers pursuing their certification versus no support for those pursuing their master's. "My response has always been that my master's work wasn't terribly rigorous. I haven't seen as much impact from master's work as I have from the National Board certification work."

He worries that the criteria is weighted to benefit those that are good writers; that is, those who are good writers but who aren't necessarily as good a teacher are rewarded by this process. He also worries that teachers are not assessed adequately on their "quality as staff members."

He also expressed concern over the state level certification process. He noted: "I have some teachers now who should be headed towards their National Boards and instead they are working on their professional certification. It would be good to find a way to combine a master's program with the Boards somehow, to see those working hand in glove."

WASHINGTON INITIATIVE: PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE

"If you have the moxie to do this NBPTS program, you already bring a lot to it."

Background

Principal Q has been a principal for nine years at an elementary school in a rural area of northern central Washington. The school has 14 teachers serving 250 students. Some students travel as far as 1 ½ hours one-way to school each day. Although the minority population is relatively low (19% Hispanic and less than 10% African American), the poverty level is high (67%). The school's current focus for instructional improvement closely follows state and federal mandates to address literacy and mathematics. Principal Q says his staff is very receptive to professional development.

Support for Nationally Board Certified Teachers

Like many of the principals we interviewed, Principal Q first learned about the National Board certification through introductory sessions hosted by OSPI. Beyond the value of promoting student-centered learning, Principal Q has been impressed with the National Board's emphasis on teachers demonstrating an ability to meet the needs of individual students. He appreciates that the NBC standards are closely aligned with the goals and objectives he deems important in educational reform.

There are currently two Board certified teachers at his school. The accomplishments of these two teachers sparked the interest of other members of the staff; however there are no current applicants. Special recognition was given to the NBCTs through local media, district newsletters and internal memos in the school. NBCTs were also recognized at a district board meeting. Candidates were given release time and the use of any special equipment they needed including video recorders, copy machines, etc.

National Board Certified Teachers as Leaders

Four or five years ago, the school implemented a new professional development model designed to increase the capacity of its own staff to provide professional development. Rather than hiring outside consultants, the school identified three key teachers and supported them in developing the skills and knowledge required to lead staff development and training. One of the teacher leaders was a NBCT. This same individual also successfully participated in an administrative internship. When asked what contributed to her success at leadership, Principal Q replied "She is a veteran teacher at our school; she's organized and an opinion-maker. She is also positive, supportive, kid-oriented and well-respected by her peers. If you have the moxy to do this (NBCT) program, you already bring a lot to it."

According to the principal, another positive effect of having Board certified teachers is the attention they receive through the media. He believes that some families are beginning to move from neighboring areas to this school because of its reputation for good test scores and talented teachers.

Challenges

Principal Q does not have significant concerns about the NBC process. He values the philosophy of the program and believes that it would be more valuable if more teachers could participate. He agrees with many of the other administrators we interviewed that the only downside of the process is the time required to complete the documentation. Many teachers do not have the time to commit to the process due to personal responsibilities.

Summary

Principal Q believes that NBCTs should be given more leadership roles and encouraged to develop a facilitative style of leadership. He is a strong believer in "teachers teaching teachers." He wouldn't hesitate to hire a NBCT if he could attract teachers to this rural area.

WASHINGTON INITIATIVE: PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE

"If we are going to reform our schools, this is a good place to begin. National Board certification gives teachers a heightened awareness of the instructional process and student needs."

Background

This is Principal R's second year as a principal of a high achieving suburban elementary school. The school serves a population of 580 students with 550 FTE, 83% receiving free and reduced lunch. Hispanic students account for 53% of the total student population. Principal R described her school and staff as "outstanding... especially as shown by achievement scores at the fourth grade level." Currently the staff is focused on revising literacy and math curricula to meet state standards.

Support for National Board Certified Teachers

Principal R first learned about National Board certification process from the OSPI. She is a member of a state-wide reform project focusing on improving art and science classroom instruction. The project focuses on collaboration and implements the *Teaching for Understanding* methodology. Principal R believes the National Board certification process is aligned with both state and federal initiatives including No Child Left Behind. "NBCTs understand what a lesson plan needs to look like, what differentiated curriculum looks like."

Three candidates from the high school applied for NBC last year. Two out of the three were certified. According to Principal R, the applicant who did not qualify wasn't as thorough as she could have been and is "too young" in the profession to have taken on this process. That teacher is reapplying this year and seems more confident of her ability to become certified. There are no new teachers this year or applying for next year. Principal R does not consider NB certification as a priority in her school or district. She has some outstanding teachers and she feels that they would continue to grow professionally with or without certification.

Although Principal R feels that the district is generally supportive of candidates, she wonders if the teacher who did not qualify would agree. Principal R gave applicants release time and much-needed emotional support during their year of candidacy. She felt that the group support they received from WI was especially valuable to teachers. Principal R feels that the support given is adequate; however, she doesn't believe it is necessary to support a candidate's second attempt at certification. The teacher who did not pass last year has requested the same level of support but was denied her request. This has become a bone of contention for the teacher.

There was special recognition given to the teachers who certified primarily in the form of school and district attention. Press releases were sent to local papers, teachers were honored at a school board meeting and a celebratory cake was enjoyed by staff. The level of recognition was

comparable to that given to a teacher who had received the Milken Education Teacher of the Year Award.

National Board Certified Teachers as Leaders

Both of the certified teachers are team leaders in their respective vertical study teams. One teacher has a manner which provokes colleagues and inhibits her effectiveness; the other teacher is a better listener and is a very strong leader. One of the teachers serves on an OSPI board.

Principal R feels that a teacher's personality is the key to a teacher's success as a leader. In response to the question "What impact has National Board certification had on your school or district?" Principal R commented "the staff is proud of the NBCTs for their accomplishments. Our NBCTs have become more confident in their knowledge and practice."

Challenges

Principal R's primary concern about NBCTs as leaders is that sometimes "they can become arrogant and assume their way is the only way...their word is the last word." Principal R feels that this kind of attitude hinders dialogue rather than promotes it. She also mentioned that she is concerned about the amount of release time required and its impact on student learning.

Summary

Overall, Principal R believes in the National Board certification process. "If we are going to reform (our schools), this is a good place to begin. National Board certification gives teachers a heightened awareness of the instructional process; however, teachers can't forget that student needs comes first, not the teacher's (needs)."