NATIONAL BOARD
for Professional Teaching Standards®

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A Solution for Education in Pennsylvania: National Board Certification for Teachers

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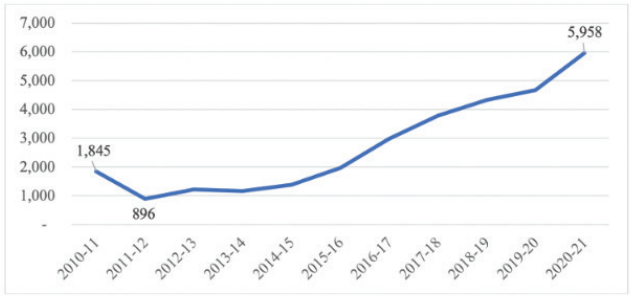
INTRODUCTION

Our country is facing some of the most severe educational challenges it has ever seen. Increasing teacher shortages, pandemic learning loss, lack of educator diversity, and plummeting teacher morale and retention top the list of pressing issues, threatening the quality of student learning and educational experiences.

Pennsylvania is suffering these challenges as much as, if not more than, the rest of the nation. Since 2010, the number of young people entering Pennsylvania teacher education programs has declined from 20,000 to under 7,000 per year.[1] This rate of decline is **double the national average.** This trend is particularly concerning when considering educator diversity: despite 36% of Pennsylvania's students being students of color, only 6% of teachers are teachers of color.[2]

The shortage is not only a result of fewer candidates in preservice programs; it is due to teacher flight. In 2023, Pennsylvania experienced its **largest attrition rate on record,** with almost 10,000 teachers leaving the classroom, and teachers of color leaving at higher rates than their white colleagues.[3]

Number of Teaching Positions Filled by Individuals on an Emergency Permit (2011-12 to 2020-21)



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And the concern is not just about quantity, but quality. In 2021, for the first time in the commonwealth's history, more teachers were issued emergency permits than traditional certifications.[1] In 2022, Pennsylvania had 13,337 teachers teaching a subject or grade level for which they were **not certified.**[3] Meanwhile, teachers lack the professional development opportunities needed to strengthen their skills and advance their careers.

Amidst these teacher workforce challenges, Pennsylvania also **exceeded the national average** in student pandemic learning loss. On average, Pennsylvania students are over **seven months behind** in math and almost **four months behind** in reading. Some districts are over a year behind in math. Higher-poverty districts, largely populated by students of color, suffered disproportionately greater loss.[4]

To guarantee that Pennsylvania's 1.7 million children have access to effective teachers, the state must act. **National Board Certification** can serve as a solution to Pennsylvania's challenges, including:

- Improving Teacher Retention
- Combatting Learning Loss
- Providing Quality Professional Development

WHAT IS NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION?

- National Board Certification is on-the-job professional learning developed by teachers, for teachers. It is a voluntary, rigorous certification that allows teachers to demonstrate mastery and excellence within their subject area and grade level.
- National Board Certification requires demonstrating evidence, reflection, and growth. Teachers must produce a comprehensive portfolio that includes videos of their classroom teaching, written analysis, and examples of student work.
- National Board Certification is ongoing. Initial certification typically takes one to three years. Certification is valid for five years; educators must then renew their certification through Maintenance of Certification (MOC) to demonstrate continued excellence.

The Five Core Propositions:

1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
5. Teachers are members of learning communities.

> Every time I went through the process, including both Maintenance of Certifications, I felt like I was a new teacher again on the front lines of learning.
>
> **Cindy Patterson, NBCT**
> Retired Teacher, Pittsburgh Public Schools

IMPROVING TEACHER RETENTION

National Board Certification builds teachers' self-efficacy both as educators and as leaders in their buildings, increasing their leadership and growth opportunities. This translates into teachers staying in their classrooms, and the education profession, longer.

Attrition across the country is exacerbating teacher shortages beyond normal rates. In contrast, National Board Certified Teachers leave the profession at one-third the rate of teachers overall.[5] At a time in which teachers of color are leaving the profession at particularly high rates, interest in National Board Certification among teachers of color has substantially increased.[6]

National Board Certified Teachers leave the profession at **one-third** the rate of teachers overall.

In 2022-2023, **29% of teachers** pursuing National Board Certification identified as teachers of color.

Despite comprising about 20% of the national teacher workforce, nearly 30% of teachers pursuing National Board Certification identified as teachers of color in 2022-2023.[7]

Many teachers go through the journey for National Board Certification with a group of peers or a mentor. These teachers connect to other educators in their schools, districts, states, and even across the nation, in their shared experience. This sense of community bonds them to their classrooms and the profession in a positive, dedicated way, and builds their professional learning communities. This, in turn, helps create a positive school culture focused on growth and self-improvement, which also positively impacts student success and achievement.[8]

National Board Certification reinvigorates mid-career teachers' passion for teaching and it shows early career educators that, similar to other professions, education has a next level of distinction and professionalism to aspire to. Amidst so much discouragement around the teaching profession, National Board Certification creates a space for accomplishment, celebration, and excellence.

> It was my 11th year of teaching, and during the pandemic, when I renewed my National Board Certification. Instead of feeling burnt out and thinking about leaving, I felt a renewed sense of purpose because of this goal and the opportunity to reflect on my career.
>
> **Kelly Essick, NBCT**
> 2nd Grade Teacher, State College Area School District

> It was important for me to do the MOC as an administrator because it is important to never be too far from the classroom, regardless of the role we play in the building.
>
> **Elizabeth Walls, NBCT**
> Assistant Principal, School District of Philadelphia

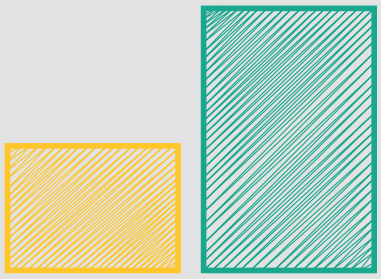
COMBATING LEARNING LOSS

The research is clear: being taught by a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) at any point in a student's education deepens their learning and vastly increases their potential for future academic success. Growing the number of NBCTs in Pennsylvania could help alleviate the learning loss students suffered during the pandemic and narrow achievement gaps, especially in the districts most in need.

Students benefit tremendously from having an accomplished teacher in the classroom, yet the students in Pennsylvania who suffered the largest pandemic-related learning loss and achievement gaps are the most likely to have inexperienced teachers. Students taught by NBCTs learn more than their peers, with high-need students demonstrating the largest gains.

Students taught by NBCTs are
1-2 months
ahead of their peers in instruction in one school year.[9]

Kindergarten students taught by an NBCT are **31% more likely** than other students to achieve a proficient score on the state Kindergarten Readiness Assessment.[10]



All Pennsylvania students deserve access to experienced, accomplished educators, no matter what zip code they reside in. By growing the number of NBCTs, we can support and retain educators in the profession in every district, and improve the outcomes for all students in Pennsylvania.

ENHANCING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

So often, teachers are made to participate in district-mandated professional development that is not relevant to their individual growth or classrooms. This consumes precious time, energy, and resources that could be spent on more evidence-based practices that drive student achievement. National Board Certification requires evidence, reflection, and growth that is individual to each teacher who chooses to participate.

Most teachers who embark on the National Board Certification journey describe it as the most powerful professional development they have had, including graduate courses.[11] Instead of front-loading information that may or may not be useful in the classroom, National Board Certification is an active demonstration of content knowledge, pedagogical excellence, community connection, and personal growth.

One of the most impactful professional development experiences throughout my career was my journey to obtain my National Board Certification. It left a permanent impression on my practice to be keenly aware of how to assess and reflect on student learning.

Dr. Lisa Pickett, NBCT
Grades 9-12 Literacy Coordinator,
Pittsburgh Public Schools

The fact that you have to prove that you are a different teacher than you were 5 years ago is something above and beyond a degree. An NBCT has to constantly grow and provide evidence of that growth.

Matthew Shrader, NBCT
High School Physics Teacher,
Berwick Area School District

WHAT HAVE OTHER STATES ACHIEVED?

Other states have recently instituted meaningful incentives around National Board Certification. By covering fees for certification and offering stipends for achieving certification, states can vastly increase the number of NBCTs teaching students across the state. About half of all states already fund these types of initiatives.[12]

	Maryland	Texas	California
	$10,000 salary increase for those who certify Additional **$7,000** to NBCTs who teach in a designated high-need school Covers certification fees statewide	Additional **$3,000-$9,000** to NBCTs in designated schools, depending on school socioeconomic and rural status Reimburses certification fees for NBCTs	**$25,000** stipend over 5 years for NBCTs in high-priority schools Covers certification fees for teachers in high-need schools
IMPACT	Number of teachers newly earning certification each year increased by **980%** since 2021	Number of teachers newly earning certification each year increased by **777%** since 2019	Number of teachers newly earning certification each year increased by **302%** since 2021

Currently, in Pennsylvania, fee coverage and/or post-certification stipends for National Board Certification varies widely from district to district, which has proven to be an inequitable system. Many districts outside Philadelphia and Pittsburgh do not offer any incentive at all. Pennsylvania must join neighboring states like Maryland, West Virginia, and Delaware in offering incentives for teachers who pursue and achieve National Board Certification.

CALL TO ACTION

Research shows that **the most impactful school-based factor in a student's education is their teacher.** National Board Certification elevates educators to the highest level of effectiveness, accomplishment, and commitment.

Previously, Pennsylvania provided support for teachers pursuing National Board Certification through the higher education system at four institutions: Duquesne University, Gannon University, East Stroudsburg University, and Temple University. This built-in system provided mentors and support to teachers pursuing National Board Certification. What's more, an annual ceremony used to be held at the Capitol Building Rotunda in Harrisburg to honor the newly National Board Certified Teachers. But in the last fifteen years, these supports and celebrations have dwindled.

Pennsylvania can do better.

Recommendations

Legislators can:

» Cover the fees for National Board Certification

» Establish a statewide stipend for NBCTs to incentivize attaining National Board Certification

» Offer an additional stipend for NBCTs to work in hard-to-staff and underserved schools/districts

The Pennsylvania Department of Education can:

» Provide a clearer path for Act 48 credits for National Board Certification

» Better incorporate National Board Certification into the state licensure framework and communicate its role in Level II certification

» Utilize the state's Intermediate Units to support teacher candidates and disseminate information consistently about the National Board process

» Fund mentorships for teachers pursuing National Board Certification

» Support superintendents throughout the state in encouraging teachers to apply for National Board Certification

» Celebrate teachers who have newly earned National Board Certification, publicly acknowledging their hard work and dedication to their craft

ENDNOTES

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