Investing in Michigan Teaching Excellence through National Board Certification

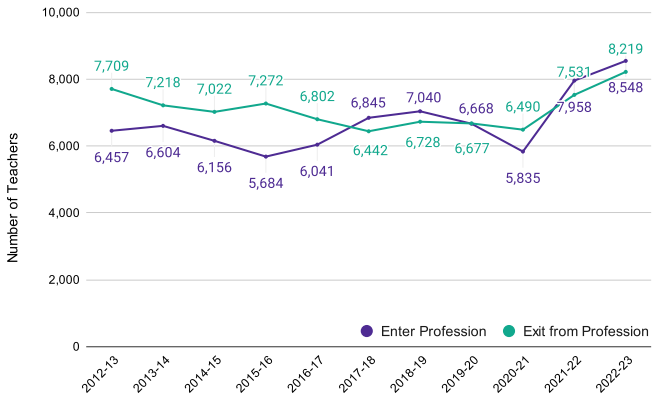
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INTRODUCTION

Michigan's workforce is dependent on a literate and productive population. A high quality and relevant education is essential to preparing young people to be thriving, contributing members of society and Michigan's future leaders. Michigan is at a critical point: without immediate improvements to education, a generation of students may be left behind. As innovations in technology, manufacturing, and service industries suffer, so will the state of Michigan. The road to a Top 10 education system, and bright futures for Michigan students, is through its teachers.

Across the state of Michigan, teachers have been leaving the field at alarming rates, citing burnout, inadequate compensation, and lack of professional support.[1] In the 2022-2023 school year, the number of Michigan teachers who left the profession was the highest in a decade.[2] This phenomenon is even more severe among teachers of color, who experienced a woeful 59% retention rate in the 2021-2022 school year, compared to a statewide average of 73%.[3] The districts facing the most severe teacher shortages overwhelmingly serve students from low-income households who benefit more from learning from a teacher of color.[4] New teachers, who disproportionately teach in these districts, are eager to impact student learning but need support and mentorship from experienced teachers.



Michigan needs a solution like National Board Certification, which keeps teachers in the profession and provides them with opportunities for continuous growth, to curb persistent teacher shortages and ensure teaching quality. Like medical boards, National Board Certification is an advanced certification that signifies that a teacher has met the profession's highest standards.

In 2023, with bipartisan support, Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed the largest education budget in Michigan's history. Within that budget, $5 million was allocated to incentivize and reward educators attaining National Board Certification.[5] By continuing to invest in National Board Certification for teachers, the Michigan legislature and the Michigan Department of Education can:

- ✔ **Narrow achievement gaps for students**
- ✔ **Improve teacher professional development**
- ✔ **Increase teacher retention**
- ✔ **Raise teacher compensation**

PURSUING EXCELLENCE

National Board Certification is a rigorous, voluntary system created by teachers, for teachers to demonstrate mastery of the profession's highest standards. Despite the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards being founded in Michigan in 1987, the state never systemically committed to the program until now, with its inclusion in the 2023 budget. As Michigan strives to become a top ten state in education, we must continue to strategically invest in this evidence-based, job-embedded professional learning that has a demonstrated impact on teachers and students.

In order to achieve National Board Certification, educators must submit a portfolio that demonstrates:

1. Deep understanding of the content they teach by subject and grade level
2. Ability to differentiate instruction to meet student needs
3. Strong relationships with students, families, and colleagues
4. Ongoing critical reflection of their practice

> "The process of going through National Board Certification has truly elevated the impact that I have with my students. I am certainly a better teacher by achieving this incredible certification."
>
> **Elizabeth "Becky" Park, NBCT**
> 2nd Grade Teacher
> Haslett Public Schools

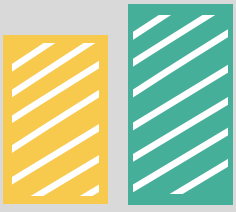
Teachers typically complete the initial certification within 1-3 years based on personal pacing, and they must maintain their certification every five years. The recertification process prioritizes teachers' continuous growth in the profession and enhances their impact on students.

Earning National Board Certification can lead to increased compensation, making teaching a more desirable career. More than half of all states and hundreds of school districts across the country provide financial incentives for National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs), many of which are designed to target teachers in high-need schools.[6] Today, Michigan is among these states with the creation of its National Board Certification Recognized Achievement Grant program. Extending this program beyond the current end date can boost Michigan's ranking of 39th in the nation for teacher salaries while improving outcomes for students. Failing to do so, however, would cause both students and teachers to lose the benefits this initiative affords.

IMPROVING OUTCOMES

The evidence in support of National Board Certification is clear: over a decade of research shows that **students taught by National Board Certified Teachers have significant academic advantages** over their peers who are taught by other teachers.[8] Studies across the country have shown that students taught by an NBCT achieve learning gains equivalent to 1-2 months of additional instruction, and these gains are even higher for low-income students.[9]

In Mississippi, a significant investment in National Board Certification operated as part of its strategy to increase early literacy outcomes. As a result, **3rd graders taught by National Board Certified Teachers are 11% more likely to be proficient in reading than their peers**.[10] Encouraging Michigan teachers to pursue National Board Certification through this grant offers opportunities for advancement in the profession and better learning for students.



Third grade students taught by an NBCT are **11% more likely** than other students to achieve a proficient score on literacy assessments.

"Achieving National Board Certification shows that I am making the right choices for my students, community and district."

Lisa Briegel, Kindergarten, NBCT
Kindergarten Teacher
Detroit Public Schools

National Board Certification also provides teachers with a highly meaningful and relevant professional learning experience: **98% of NBCTs assert that the National Board Certification process was the best professional development they ever experienced.**[11] This is in stark contrast to the typical divide between the professional development teachers say they need and what they receive; about half of all teachers believe professional development in its current model is irrelevant.[12]

National Board Certification encourages teacher leadership, empowering NBCTs to facilitate professional development and act as mentors to their colleagues. These opportunities energize teachers and help them remain dedicated to their practice while supporting others in the profession. As a result, **NBCTs stay in the profession longer with a turnover rate of one-third of their colleagues**.[13]

Finally, National Board Certification can help stem the high rates of attrition for teachers of color, leading to a more diverse teaching workforce that better reflects the student population. Data show that teachers of color are eager to pursue Board certification: **31% of current candidates for National Board Certification identify as teachers of color**, despite representing less than 20% of the teaching workforce.[14] By intentionally investing in policies that promote equitable access to Board certification, we can ensure that teachers of color have the opportunity to advance their careers, remain in the profession, and positively impact the lives of their students.

"National Board Certification pushes you to be better, not just a better educator, but a better person."

Serwaa Osei-Danquah, NBCT
Student Development Compliance Officer
University Prep Schools

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MICHIGAN

To ensure that every student in Michigan has access to accomplished teachers, **the legislature must make the National Board Certification grants a permanent program**. The program must also be expanded to provide all teachers with equitable access and opportunity.

Legislators should:

» **Codify the program** and fund it annually

» **Extend program eligibility** to National Board Certified teachers who serve as instructional coaches

The Michigan Department of Education should:

» **Streamline the application and funding disbursement process** by allowing teachers to manage their participation in the grant programs directly

» **Lengthen the application period** to increase teacher participation

» **Recognize initial National Board Certification and Maintenance of Certification** as part of the state licensure system

ENDNOTES

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