

The Impact of Michigan's National Board Certification Grants

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INTRODUCTION

In 2023, the Michigan legislature provided \$5M in temporary funding to incentivize teachers-especially those serving high-need schools-to earn National Board Certification.¹ This funding removes financial barriers by reimbursing teachers in Title I schools for the fees associated with pursuing Board certification. Additionally, it rewards teachers who actively hold the certification, known as National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs), by providing those in Title I schools with a \$10K stipend and all others with \$4K.

To earn National Board Certification, teachers must demonstrate that their teaching meets the profession's highest standards through a rigorous, peer-reviewed, and performance-based process similar to professional certification in fields such as medicine. By achieving Board certification, NBCTs prove their ability to advance student learning and achievement. Decades of research have shown that NBCTs are more effective at advancing student learning and are more likely to remain in the profession.²

Michigan currently ranks **36th** nationally, with just **201** teachers actively Board certified.³

With this initial grant funding, Michigan has taken an important step towards becoming a top 10 state in education. To understand the impact of the funding, we connected with educators, district leaders, and key stakeholders from every corner of the state. This brief highlights how funding for National Board Certification is helping build a stronger, more resilient educator workforce for Michigan's students.

Grant Funding Progress Report

63 districts have received funding to pay stipends for NBCTs

32 districts have received funding to pay the fees for teachers pursuing National Board Certification

154 teachers have received stipends for earning National Board Certification

250 teachers in high-need schools are using funding to pursue National Board Certification

\$1.5M total amount of funding provided for stipends to NBCTs

\$518K total amount of funding provided to pay teachers' candidate fees

"Pursuing National Board Certification has given me the opportunity to lead in my district and connect with passionate educators from around the state. It has provided me with resources and support to inspect and strengthen my teaching practices."

Courtney Steketee, Aspiring NBCT | Kentwood Public Schools



DISTRICT IMPACT

74

school districts across Michigan used grant funding to expand access to NBC and recognize accomplished educators.

“Teachers sharing and discussing their practice holds the possibility of **improving instruction not just in a single classroom, but across entire departments, creating widespread improvement that ultimately impacts our students, schools, and communities.”**

Courtney Vermeersch, NBCT
Detroit Public Schools Community District



Example: Pickford Public Schools

Rural school districts across the state often face significant challenges due to limited resources and persistent staffing shortages. Pickford Public Schools, nestled in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, has leveraged the state's grant funding to invest in its teachers and support their pursuit of National Board Certification.



415

students in the district

33

total teaching staff members

6

teachers using funding to pursue National Board Certification

\$19K

total amount of funding provided to pay teachers' candidate fees

Angela Nettleton | *Superintendent, Pickford Public Schools*

“Pickford Public Schools appreciates the opportunity to offer support for National Board Certification to our staff through the Section 27m(7) Grant. We believe **programs that promote professional growth and reflection are crucial for teacher recruitment and retention.**

Often, rural districts are at a disadvantage in regard to offering staff professional learning due to lack of resources, cost, and other factors. For us, **supporting multiple National Board candidates would not be possible without this grant. We encourage our state to continue and expand upon these opportunities as ways to recruit and retain educators in our schools and help fight the teacher shortage.”**

MICHIGAN'S NBCTs

Michigan is home to hundreds of NBCTs who are driving student growth, strengthening school communities, and modeling excellence in practice. The following stories illustrate how investment in National Board Certification strengthens teaching and learning while empowering teacher leaders and promoting retention.

Improving Educational Outcomes

Despite the dedication of many educators, Michigan's academic performance reveals significant room for growth, with 30 states demonstrating higher reading scores in 2024.⁴ NBCTs are equipped to elevate both student performance and learner autonomy—supporting success in school and beyond.

Emily De La Cruz, NBCT, has successfully improved academic outcomes for students through National Board Certification. She transitioned into instructional coaching as an Instructional Support Coordinator for Howell Public Schools.

"My students showed some of the highest growth in the schools I taught in based on state standardized tests. Beyond that, they became aware of their own power to determine their trajectory as I became better at helping them understand where they were on the path to subject mastery and how to set goals and reflect on progress."

Emily De La Cruz, NBCT | *Howell Public Schools*



Boosting Teacher Salaries

Pay for Michigan teachers has been stagnant, making the profession less attractive and driving many out of the classroom. Concerningly, Michigan ranks 39th in the nation for starting teacher salaries.⁵ Michigan's one-time grant funding gives annual stipends as large as \$10K to NBCTs, providing opportunities for financial advancement and incentivizing highly effective teachers to teach in low-income schools.

Julie Reese has served as a Teacher Leader, mentor, and curriculum developer, leveraging her expertise in English Language Arts to enhance student learning as a High School English Language Arts Teacher.



"Receiving the state's NBCT stipend was incredibly helpful for my family. Knowing the current state of teacher salaries in Michigan, it has been many years since I have had a significant improvement on my salary. The influx of additional funds last year helped to offset the lack of pay increase and will significantly help toward the calculation of my pension."

Julie Reese, NBCT | *Rochester Community Schools*

Retaining High Quality Teachers

In the 2023-2024 school year, 156 school districts in Michigan reported permanent teaching vacancies, a striking 700% increase from pre-pandemic levels.⁶ Collaborative pathways like National Board Certification build professional communities—supporting career longevity and increasing overall job satisfaction. Research has shown that NBCTs are more likely to remain in the profession than their peers.

Maurice Telesford, teaches high school science and has served as the President of his local education association for 11 years. The dedication of educators like Maurice are at the heart of thriving schools and ensuring they remain in the classroom is essential to student academic success.



"Teaching can be a lonely profession, but having a chance to work with others to become National Board Certified helped me build connections and a sense of community that I believe will lengthen my teaching career."

Maurice Telesford, NBCT | *Ferndale Public School District*

Advancing Professional Growth

Professional development for teachers can often be one size fits all, lacking relevance and practicality. National Board Certification is a job-embedded process that offers educators a rigorous, content-specific framework for professional growth rooted in their own classroom.

Brian Peck, as a Spanish Teacher and Librarian, launched a project-based learning unit that led to the creation of the school's first library. Courtney Valentine, once a Mathematics Training and Support Coordinator in her district, transitioned back into the classroom and serves as a K-8 Mathematics Teacher Leader, fostering growth for both students and educators.

"Getting a new opportunity to take a step back and examine my practice and aim for higher achievement and broader impact on all my students was pivotal for me to persevere. It was really nice to have such a rich and rigorous framework for teaching."

Brian Peck, NBCT | *University Preparatory Academy District*



"Becoming an NBCT provided me an opportunity to become involved in mentoring and coaching my colleagues. These experiences strengthened my own practice further and allowed me to spread effective teaching strategies through the district, impacting student learning at a greater scale."

Courtney Valentine, NBCT | *Detroit Public School Community District*

SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Teachers pursuing National Board Certification benefit greatly by participating in support programs to navigate the rigorous and complex process. These programs can provide a variety of resources such as mentoring, coaching, and professional learning communities to empower teachers to improve their process and increase their odds of achieving the credential.



“As a former classroom teacher who achieved National Board Certification, I know first-hand its value and how it helped to improve my instructional skills. MEA hopes that more educators will pursue NBC, and we support state funding to help offset costs. We are ready and willing to create support opportunities for those pursuing.”

Annette Christiansen, NBCT | *Michigan Education Association*

Example: TeachMichigan

TeachMichigan, an initiative powered by Teach For America Detroit, is focused on supporting the retention and development of high-impact educators in under-resourced schools across the state. The National Board Certified Educator Fellowship provides mentorship and coaching support to teachers pursuing National Board Certification.

“As a National Board Coach, I mentor passionate and dedicated educators to reflect on and improve their teaching practice. Every student deserves to be taught by a high impact teacher and I am proud to be working with TeachMichigan to provide support to equip teachers to lead with confidence.”

Bonnie Jackson, NBCT | *Rochester Community School District*



- 17** districts currently involved in the National Board program
- 83** teachers currently pursuing certification in the National Board program
- 137** teachers ever supported by the National Board program

“Having mentors and coaches to guide me through the process has made everything feel more manageable - providing the support, feedback, and encouragement I need to navigate this rigorous journey. This entire experience has reminded me why I love teaching and motivated me to keep growing.”

Jasleen Singh | *University Preparatory Academy District*



Armen Hratchian | *Executive Director, Teach for America Detroit*

"In 2019, we launched our fellowship geared toward National Board Certification because excellence in teaching is the foundation of great schools. Investing into the teachers who serve their students at the highest levels, while modeling and mentoring other educators, is one of the best investment we, and our education system, can make."

CONCLUSION

The impact of the funding provided by Section 27m is already underway – recruiting, developing, and retaining effective teachers. By fostering deep professional growth and long-term career satisfaction, these grants support lasting improvements in Michigan classrooms.



"Through the National Board Certification process, teaching is no longer a job but a career. I am learning to embrace the power of questions and the power of community."

Cynthia Fordham Woods, Aspiring NBCT | *Lansing School District*

As states like North Carolina demonstrate—with over 13,000 actively certified NBCTs—National Board Certification can transform student outcomes at scale. With sustained state support, Michigan has the potential to rise into the top 10 nationally, unlocking the power of accomplished teaching for every student, in every community. **Now is the time to invest boldly in Michigan's educators by making this program permanent — because every Michigan student deserves an accomplished teacher and every teacher deserves a path to get there.**

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