

ONE MILLION MORE

BUILDING A WORKFORCE OF
NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHERS
FOR CALIFORNIA STUDENTS

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NATIONAL
BOARD

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*for Professional
Teaching Standards®*

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About the National Board Advocacy Fellows

In August 2019, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards selected two California National Board Certified Teachers as inaugural California Advocacy Fellows. The Fellows represent a diversity of perspectives: they hail from different parts of California, teach in different settings and have had different types of teacher leader experiences. They were charged with seeking input of California National Board Certified Teachers, engaging stakeholders, and conducting research to develop state policy recommendations to support efforts to grow accomplished teaching and National Board Certification in California.

INTRODUCTION

School districts across California are grappling with the challenge of providing their students with access to a high-quality, stable teaching workforce.ⁱ The problem is even worse in high-needs schools where students are impacted by even more severe teacher shortages and, in particular, a shortage of high-quality teachers.ⁱⁱ As California works to address the shortage, the state should strive to do more than ensure that students have a fully credentialed teacher; the state should strive to ensure that there is an accomplished teacher in every classroom by growing and retaining the number of National Board Certified Teachers across the state.

The lack of access to high-quality teachers for all California students is a significant impediment to closing the achievement gap. Recent research conducted in California found that a key differentiator of the top-performing school districts was “hiring, supporting, and retaining a strong, stable educator workforce”.ⁱⁱⁱ Investing in National Board Certification is one strategy that can elevate the teaching workforce. Research shows students of National Board Certified Teachers learn more than their peers and the impact is even greater for high-needs students.

National Board Certification is a nationally-available voluntary advanced credential offered by a non-profit organization – the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards – that signifies the teacher is an instructional expert in their grade and subject. To become Board certified, educators must videotape their instruction, submit student work samples, and provide written analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of their own teaching. Throughout the process, teachers demonstrate instruction focused on student learning needs and continuous reflection on what they can do better next time.

Considered the gold standard in teaching, National Board Certification is a valid and reliable standards- and performance-based assessment.



Given California's goal to increase the excellence and equity in the education system, now is the time to expand the number of National Board Certified Teachers in the state, particularly for students who are in high-needs or underachieving schools. Only about 2.5% of California's teachers have achieved National Board Certification.

Increasing the number of National Board Certified Teachers in California will help retain effective teachers, build up these expert teachers to support their novice or under-prepared colleagues, and be an anchor for schoolwide improvement. If more California classrooms are led by National Board Certified Teachers, all students will be better equipped to thrive in new ways in an evolving world.

If 15% of California teachers achieve certification, **one million more** California students will have access to highly accomplished teachers.

The California National Board Advocacy Fellows analyzed surveys of California National Board Certified Teachers, reviewed research, and conducted interviews with stakeholders. From this work, the following state policy recommendations were developed. If implemented, these policies will help grow the number of National Board Certified Teachers and drastically increase the number of students who will benefit from access to accomplished teaching.



THE PROVEN IMPACT OF NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHERS ON STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS

Rigorous studies over the last decade have shown that National Board Certified Teachers have a positive, significant effect on student learning.^{iv} Studies conducted in California are consistent with the nationwide results. A 2012 Harvard study in Los Angeles found that “National Board Certified Teachers outperform other teachers with the same levels of experience by 0.07 and 0.03 standard deviations in math and English/language arts (ELA) respectively...roughly equivalent to two months of additional math instruction and one month of additional ELA instruction”.^v A 2008 study similarly found that Board-certified teachers in Los Angeles have a positive impact on student achievement.^{vi}

Board certification is also an educative experience, strengthening teacher professional learning and career growth.^{vii} Achieving certification is not only a valued professional benchmark, but also a journey of learning through which educators become more deliberate and reflective about their choices in the classroom.^{viii} Studies show that teachers make about 250 decisions per hour, which is – by all measures – a challenge. National Board Certified Teachers learn to be intentionally specific in those choices based on their knowledge of students and contexts, which leads to improved practice, increased satisfaction with teaching, and better student outcomes.



From increased performance by students to elevated practice by teachers, National Board Certification can be an effective school improvement strategy impacting entire school communities.

Stanford researchers found that school climate and culture improved when a collaborative of teachers simultaneously pursued Board certification.^{ix} When serving in mentor roles, National Board Certified Teachers have a positive effect on new teachers. One study in San Francisco found new teachers mentored by National Board Certified Teachers produce 6.5 months of additional student learning compared to new teachers mentored by other teachers.^x Investing in National Board Certified Teachers could result in financial benefits for the education system and for students. Preliminary research has shown that National Board Certified Teachers remain in the profession at significantly higher rates than their peers^{xi}, reducing costs associated with teacher turnover and filling teacher vacancies. Researchers in North Carolina found a National Board Certified math teacher increases the present value of students' lifetime income by \$48,000.^{xii}

A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY IN CALIFORNIA

California is leading the country with its focus on equity and excellence for all students, yet there is still work left to do as evidenced by the disparities among racial and demographic student groups. A diverse, high-quality educator workforce is central to the success of this vision for all students.^{xiii} Policies and programs already in place in California are strengthening the teaching workforce. For early career teachers, teacher residencies and performance assessments ensure teachers are profession-ready on their first day in the classroom. For teacher leaders, the Instructional Leadership Corps recognizes the power of teacher-led professional learning and provides the opportunity for practitioners to spread their expertise.

These policies and programs show that California stakeholders and policymakers recognize the importance of putting

excellent teachers in front of all students and lay a strong foundation for policies that support teachers becoming National Board Certified.

A number of California districts recognize the benefits of increasing the number of National Board Certified Teachers in their schools. For example, education leaders in Los Angeles recognize that growing the number of National Board Certified Teachers is a retention strategy that keeps highly accomplished teachers in the profession. In Los Angeles, a district salary stipend for National Board Certified Teachers incentivizes teachers to stay in the classroom and continue teaching students. This has resulted in approximately 2,500 National Board Certified Teachers, nearly half of whom are teachers of color.



SPOTLIGHT: LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) is leading the nation in producing National Board Certified Teachers. In 2018, nearly 150 teachers were added to the ranks of LAUSD's National Board Certified Teachers. In total, nearly 2,500 LAUSD teachers have earned this achievement – nearly 9% of all LAUSD teachers – including more than 1,100 teachers of color.

One of the reasons LAUSD has been so successful growing its teachers toward accomplished practice is because of the longstanding partnership between LAUSD and United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) on National Board Certification through The Support Network. Using a network model, the Support Network ensures LA teachers have access to candidate support as they pursue Board certification.

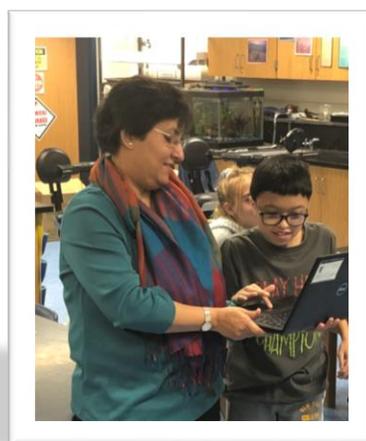
LAUSD and UTLA have also come together to establish a policy that encourages teachers to reach this high level of practice. Per the collective bargaining agreement, LAUSD National Board Certified Teachers who remain in classroom teaching assignments earn a monthly stipend equal to 7.5% of their regular salary and if National Board Certified Teachers complete 92 additional leadership duties annually, they earn an additional 7.5% salary stipend at the end of the school year. This policy ensures that accomplished teachers are raising their hands and stepping up for opportunities to improve the system in which they work, including mentoring other teachers, managing systems and reports at their school sites, partnering with families and communities, and leading professional development across the district.

California teachers are clamoring for the opportunity to advance their practice through Board certification. In response to rising demand, the number of programs supporting California teachers through National Board Certification has increased in recent years; for example, in 2019 the California Teachers Association (CTA) offered four Jump Start sessions (a pre-candidacy program created by the National Education Association (NEA)) for teachers who are members of NEA and CTA interested in becoming National Board Certified Teachers. The result is that more California teachers have had the opportunity to develop their practice through the certification process.

Work stoppages across California have drawn public attention to teaching and teaching conditions. The public believes teachers should be better supported and better compensated, and the teaching profession deserves more prestige.^{xiv}

National Board Certification is a pathway to recognize strong teachers and to lift more educators to the highest levels of practice.

Because of existing policies and programs across the state, more than 7,000 teachers in California have achieved National Board Certification, including nearly half who work in Title 1 schools. Yet this represents less than 3% of California's teaching workforce. Many California teachers still face barriers to pursuing National Board Certification including lack of access to support programs, assessment fees, and job-embedded time to work toward advancing their practice. If more California students are to benefit from accomplished teachers, policy leaders will need to act intentionally. A good place to start is examining models that have been used toward similar aims in other places.



MODELS TO GROW ACCOMPLISHED TEACHING

To grow the number of accomplished teachers, it is critical that policies and programs are in place to increase incentives and strengthen supports for – and lower the barriers to – teachers pursuing Board certification. The following models represent policies that have been used successfully in other states to increase the number of National Board Certified Teachers.

HIGH-NEEDS INCENTIVE

Eleven states have policies designed to increase the number of accomplished teachers in the schools where they are needed most. In these states, in addition to the base incentive that all National Board Certified Teachers earn, Board-certified teachers in designated high-needs schools (defined differently in each state) earn an additional stipend. For example, in Alabama, National Board Certified Teachers teaching certain subjects in high-needs schools earn an additional \$5,000 on top of their base supplement of \$5,000, which all National Board Certified Teachers receive.

These policies positively impact equity by increasing the number of Board-certified teachers in high-needs schools.^{xv} The increase is achieved through a combination of: 1) encouraging teachers already in the schools to advance their practice and remain in those schools, and; 2) Board-certified teachers coming to teach at those designated schools. For example, three years after Washington introduced a \$5,000 high-needs incentive, the total number of Board-certified teachers in those schools increased from 79 to 746 and the percentage of high-needs schools with at least one Board-certified teacher increased from 20% to almost 60%.^{xvi} High-needs incentives may have an additional benefit of increasing the number of National Board Certified Teachers of color since research shows teachers of color disproportionately teach in high-needs schools.

In the past, California had a high-needs stipend in place. From 2000-2009, the National Board Certification Incentive Program offered \$5,000 per year for National Board Certified teachers who taught in high-priority schools for four consecutive years, with a maximum pay of \$20,000.^{xvii} During this time, the number of Board-certified teachers increased from 325 before the policy was introduced to 4,533 in 2009, when the state eliminated funding for the stipend due to budget constraints brought on by the economic recession.



Photo by Kara Mauro

STATEWIDE INCENTIVE

Currently, twenty-five states provide financial incentives for National Board Certified Teachers. Some states incorporate incentives for National Board Certification directly into their state salary schedule, while other states, particularly those where salaries are decided locally, provide an annual stipend.^{xviii} Washington National Board Certified Teachers earn an annual bonus of \$5,000 with an additional \$5,000 for teaching in a high-needs school.^{xix} Teachers in Mississippi earn a \$6,000 annual stipend^{xx} with an additional \$4,000 for teaching in high-needs schools while North Carolina and Delaware offer teachers an additional 12% above their salary.^{xxi}

After a financial incentive is introduced, substantially more teachers pursue National Board Certification. Districts in California that have financial incentives – including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Long Beach, and Fresno – realize greater growth in the number of National Board Certified Teachers compared to districts without any financial incentives for Board-certified teachers. And while district financial incentives are important, incentives provided by the state serve an important equity tool; a statewide stipend ensures that even in under-resourced schools or districts, more students will learn from accomplished teachers. Eighty percent of California's National Board Certified Teachers who participated in a recent survey strongly agree stipends or salary increases for National Board Certified Teachers would expand teachers' access to Board certification.



CERTIFICATION FEE SUPPORT

Fee support can be another effective incentive to assist teachers with their journey to Board certification. The cost of certification, while critical to the quality of the assessment, can present a barrier.

Twenty-one states have policies in place to defray the cost of pursuing National Board Certification for teachers. For example, New York offers the Albert Shanker Grant to teachers statewide. This grant program requires the teacher to pay for the first component, the state then pays for the subsequent three and once the teacher has completed all four components, the state reimburses the teacher for the first component. Teachers then must remain teaching in New York public schools for at least one year following the grant.

States have different approaches to providing fee support. States like Oregon and Mississippi reimburse teachers for the cost of pursuing National Board Certification once they have completed the certification process. Some states, such as North Carolina and Washington, offer no- or low-interest loans that can be paid back through the salary incentive once Board certification is achieved. At the district level, a number of school districts and unionized charter schools in California have successfully negotiated certification fee support through the collective bargaining process. While reimbursement can be a successful approach, financial barriers may still prevent access and equity to the Board certification process for all teachers.

GRANT PROGRAM FOR COHORT BASED CERTIFICATION SUPPORT

A grant program could be designed to help teachers advance their practice and remain in the profession through the pursuit and achievement of National Board Certification. Such grants could prioritize districts with a commitment to supporting cohorts of teachers at schools to maximize school climate and culture benefits. Awarded districts could then serve as local exemplars across the state, share best practices, and spur additional local support of Board certification. This grant program could also leverage the in-state expertise of the Stanford University-based National Board Resource Center.

Nevada recently implemented a state-funded program focused on professional development and teacher recruitment and retention: The Great Teaching and Leading Fund. One of the grant-funded projects implemented school-based programs where cohorts of teachers in struggling schools came together for a yearlong program of collaborative learning organized around completing two of the components of National Board Certification to strengthen teaching and learning. After the first year of implementation, all the teachers who participated in the program remained in their Title 1 schools or transferred to another high-needs school.^{xxii}

California policy leaders have already implemented similar programs focused on teacher recruitment and professional learning. In 2018-2019, the California legislature allocated \$75 million for a grant program to address teacher shortages by developing or expanding residency programs for special education, bilingual, or STEM teachers. The legislature also allocated \$37 million for high-quality professional learning opportunities for teachers across the state through the Educator Workforce Investment Grant Program. Either of these programs could be expanded to focus on growing and retaining accomplished teachers and ensuring they are in the schools where they are needed most.

States and districts across the country continue to invest in National Board Certification because they know a high-quality teaching workforce results in increased student learning.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CALIFORNIA

Eventually all California students should have access to National Board Certified Teachers. A significant and measurable goal on that trajectory is that ONE MILLION MORE California students are being taught by National Board Certified Teachers by 2030. This is an ambitious goal, but it is also highly feasible. To reach this goal, 15% of the California teaching workforce would need to achieve National Board Certification – something that has been done successfully in other states. The following are our recommendations for a comprehensive state policy framework that could help move California toward this goal. While a comprehensive system is ideal, implementing even one of these state policies would be an important first step in ensuring more California children have access to National Board Certified Teachers.

Now is the time to invest in growing
the number of
National Board Certified Teachers
serving California students



Recommendation #1: To ensure accomplished teachers reach the students who need them the most, the state should provide a **high-needs incentive** for National Board Certified Teachers in high-needs schools.

Recommendation #2: The state should provide a **statewide incentive** to National Board Certified Teachers. This ensures access to accomplished teaching for all students across the state. Because many districts, particularly in high-needs and/or rural areas, cannot afford to offer stipends due to other pressing needs, this recommendation would allow teachers equitable opportunity for certification and increase access for students to Board-certified teachers.

Recommendation #3: The state should invest in a **grant program** to increase the number of accomplished teachers in districts. This program could be structured similarly to the California Teacher Residency Grant Program or the Educator Workforce Investment Grant Program. Such a program could support cohorts of teachers pursuing National Board Certification by providing mentoring and defraying the cost of the assessment. Districts would be required to provide a match of grant funding and develop structures to ensure sustainability of the program.

Recommendation #4: The state should provide guidance to districts on how they can use **professional development funds** to support National Board Certification. Supporting teachers in pursuit of Board certification is a path to ensure that the funds are being used for professional growth with proven results.

CONCLUSION

In a state as diverse as California, it is critical for our workforce of educators to be able to effectively meet the needs of all students. National Board Certified Teachers do this. They raise student achievement and narrow the achievement gap. They meet students where they are at and help them to develop skills and habits to be successful in college, career, and citizenship.

California will benefit as it grows and recognizes these expert teachers. Investing in National Board Certification will retain effective teachers by providing them with advancement, growth, leadership, and additional compensation opportunities; leverage expert teachers to support novice, under-prepared, and struggling teachers; and can be a strategy for school improvement.

The need to increase the number of Board-certified teachers in California must be a high priority for state education policy.

Increasing the number of National Board Certified Teachers in California will make a substantial difference in retaining highly qualified educators and it will make a profound difference in student learning. California should strive to ensure there is an accomplished teacher in every classroom and provide pathways for more teachers to meet that standard.



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- Ellen Sherratt, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
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Cover image by Chris Chadd from Pexels

ENDNOTES

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