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# National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification

## What Legislators Need to Know



## Acknowledgments

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## Introduction

States today are facing deep cuts to education while struggling to close the achievement gap and turn around low-performing schools. State legislators well know that education must be a priority for workforce development and economic competitiveness. The challenges lie in determining which programs are most effective and where money can be best invested.

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification for teachers is one program that many state legislators continue to embrace. Although this program to provide voluntary rigorous national teacher certification has been in existence since 1987, state and local education policymakers, teachers and school leaders now are recognizing its promise and potential for addressing challenges in 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms.

State legislators want to be armed with reliable information to make the best decisions about state resources. This guide provides a thorough overview of National Board certification so legislators can determine if this is a tool they wish to use to improve student achievement. Legislators will learn about the certification process, research on the program's effectiveness, state policies to support and best use the program, and examples of successful implementation.



# What Is the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards?

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards's mission is to advance the quality of teaching and learning by:

- Maintaining high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do;
- Providing a national voluntary system to certify teachers who meet these standards; and
- Advocating related education reforms to integrate National Board certification in American education and to capitalize on the expertise of National Board certified teachers.

In 1985, Albert Shanker, then-president of the American Federation of Teachers, first articulated a need for an organization that would study exactly what a teacher should know before becoming certified and determine the best way to measure that knowledge. In 1987, the Carnegie Corporation of New York funded this vision by creating the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards following recommendations of the Carnegie Forum on Education and Economy's Task Force on Teaching as a Profession. This report, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, called for creation of a board to "define what teachers should know and be able to do" and to "support the creation of rigorous, valid assessments to see that certified teachers do meet these standards."<sup>1</sup> Former North Carolina Governor James B. Hunt Jr. chaired the planning group and eventually the board of directors; most board members were classroom teachers.

Just after its creation, the National Board issued its first policy statement, "What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do," which provided a vision for accomplished teaching. This vision of knowledge, skills, dispositions and beliefs is summarized in five core propositions:

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

The National Board has worked with master teachers and education experts to develop standards for accomplished teaching in prekindergarten through grade 12 subject areas and offers 25 different certificates. Teachers must pass 10 rigorous assessments, including four portfolio entries featuring teacher practice and six exercises that assess content knowledge. Trained teachers in the candidate's certificate area review the assessments.

The certification process can take from one to three years. The fee is \$2,500, plus a \$65 processing charge. Once a candidate passes his or her assessments, the teacher becomes a National Board Certified Teacher. The certificate, valid for 10 years, can be renewed.

This voluntary program does not replace state prekindergarten through grade 12 teacher licensure or certification. Instead, it offers a much more rigorous national teacher credential that is recognized and rewarded nationwide. More than 91,000 teachers are National Board certified nationwide—just under 3 percent of the nation’s teachers. California, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina and Washington have the most.

Take One! is another program offered by the National Board. This job-imbedded, school reform program is available to all teachers and to induction or pre-service teachers, principals, administrators and professors in colleges of education. It can be used as professional development for an individual or a school-wide effort, which has been shown to transform a school into a professional learning community. Educators do not receive full National Board certification through this program—it is only an initial step—but can transfer the score within two years to pursue National Board candidacy. Because this program is less intensive, requires less time outside of work and costs less, it can be a more viable option for some educators.

“Take One! is important for pre-service and beginning teachers. It is cost-effective, yet will give a foundation for National Board certification and an understanding of how that can be used in the classroom.”

—Oregon Representative  
Betty Komp



## National Board Meeting Challenges in Today's Classroom

“Reforming education requires a multi-faceted approach that includes school leadership, community involvement, safe campuses, rigorous curricula and common core standards. It also requires highly effective classroom teachers, and National Board certification is one way of achieving this goal. It’s not surprising that most states, including Hawaii, stressed the importance of National Board certification in their Race to the Top applications. Despite our budget deficit, we continue to fund this program because we believe it makes a difference in student achievement.”

—*Hawaii Representative  
Roy Takumi*

Today, National Board teacher certification is being used as a turn-around strategy to improve teaching and learning in low-performing schools. Struggling districts and schools from California to Maryland and Arizona to Illinois are supporting their top teachers through the certification process and, when possible, hiring National Board certified teachers to fill vacant positions. Because these teachers have met high standards through study, expert evaluation, self-assessment and peer review, schools and districts believe they will improve student learning; contribute to a new, positive school culture; and become powerful teacher leaders. Schools and districts are reporting that this strategy is, indeed, making a difference. Teachers with board certification remain longer in these tough schools, and students are making gains.

National Board certification now has become central to state policymakers’ discussions about how best to define and evaluate effective teaching. As many states grapple with implementing of legislation passed during the 2010-2011 session and the federal Race to the Top grant awards, some top researchers assert that the key elements used for National Board certification can and should be used as criteria in a new teacher evaluation system.<sup>2</sup> The National Board’s standards have defined the highest level of teacher certification for years, and now can provide guidance for state policy. In fact, many states included National Board certification is a key component of their Race to the Top application.



Now, the National Board is launching the first voluntary national advanced certification for school principals to once again help meet the needs of today’s schools. At a time when effective leadership has become critical to improving teaching and learning, few reliable methods exist to

measure the performance of school leaders and reward their accomplishments. Responding to this need and to calls from school leaders across the country for a national certification, the National Board will launch its new principal certification in early 2012.



Times are very different and more challenging than when we attended school, and we want and need the brightest and the best teachers possible to meet these challenges. The rigorous National Board certification addresses these needs and challenges. Teachers—and now principals—who elect to participate in this program are to be commended for doing so. The requirements to receive this certification are in addition to their other responsibilities, and it takes a dedicated, well-organized and highly motivated person to complete and receive this certification.

We—as legislators, parents and grandparents—want the most effective teachers for our students, and we want the most effective principals to be the educational leaders of our schools. Even during these difficult economic times, National Board certification is one of the best investments we can make. When our teachers and principals have earned and are awarded this certification, we know they are the best of the best. Our students are the future leaders of tomorrow, and they deserve the best education they can get.

—North Carolina Representative Maggie Jeffus

## Does it Work: What Does the Research Say?

“The evidence is clear that National Board Certification distinguishes more effective teachers from less effective teachers with respect to student achievement.”

—*Congressionally mandated report from the National Research Council of the Academies, 2008*

While many schools, districts and individual teachers have claimed success with board certification, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and education researchers have been eager to confirm and measure this success. Legislators, too, are curious about whether this is a wise investment, especially during these fiscally challenging times. Researchers have investigated the following questions and found mostly positive results.

Research Question	Findings	Research Reports
Does National Board certification develop effective teaching?	National Board certification helps change teachers' formative assessment practices and their instruction in general. Even teachers who start at a lower skill level end up with better teaching practices than those who did not go through the process.	Sato, Wei and Darling-Hammond, 2008 <sup>3</sup>
	The process improves teacher professional development by enhancing reflective practice, establishing a professional discourse among teachers, raising standards for performance, and facilitating collaboration.	Park, Oliver, Johnson, Graham and Oppong, 2007 <sup>4</sup>
	The process is a transforming experience for many teachers, and they often apply in the classroom what they have learned. The process improves teachers' ability to improve student learning.	Lustick and Sykes, 2006; <sup>5</sup> Rotberg, Futrell and Lieberman, 1998 <sup>6</sup>
Does certification improve student achievement? Does it narrow the achievement gap?	Students of board-certified teachers outperform students of non-certified teachers on achievement tests. The positive effect is even greater for minority students.	National Research Council, 2008; <sup>7</sup> Clotfelter, Ladd and Vigdor, 2007; <sup>8</sup> Goldhaber and Anthony, 2004; <sup>9</sup> Cavalluzzo, 2004 <sup>10</sup>
	Students of board-certified teachers have stronger writing abilities, are better able to comprehend and integrate complex classroom materials, better understand concepts, and are more capable of abstract thinking than students of non-certified teachers.	Smith, Gordon, Colby and Wang, 2005; <sup>11</sup> Bond, Smith, Baker and Hattie, 2000 <sup>12</sup>
	Students of board-certified teachers make learning gains equivalent to an extra month in school.	Vandeboort, Amrein-Beardsley and Berliner, 2004 <sup>13</sup>
	Mixed results were found in two prominent reports, although board certification showed positive effects in subject and grade-specific areas.	Sanders, Ashton and Wright, 2005; <sup>14</sup> Harris and Sass, 2007 <sup>15</sup>

Research Question	Findings	Research Reports
Does certification improve teacher retention?	Board certification was found to keep the most highly accomplished teachers in the classroom. In Florida, nearly 90 percent of these teachers remain in teaching, far exceeding the average 60 percent retention for teachers statewide. In Ohio, 52 percent of board-certified teachers surveyed report they plan to stay in teaching as long as they can, compared to 38 percent of non-certified teachers. South Carolina reports similar results.	Florida Department of Education, 2008; Sykes, et al., 2006 <sup>16</sup>
Does certification equip teachers for traditionally low-performing students and schools?	In 2008, 42 percent of board-certified teachers were teaching in schools eligible for Title I funding. Nearly 46 percent taught in schools where more than 40 percent of students were eligible for free and reduced lunches.	National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2008
	The National Board's Targeted High-Need Initiative and Take One! programs are increasing board-certified teacher diversity and impact in high-need schools. A large majority of teachers in high-need schools report that Take One! improved the quality of their instructional planning and implementation by enhancing their approach to analyzing and reflecting on their teaching practices.	Learning Point Associations, 2008
Do board-certified teachers teach in low-performing schools?	This examines the distribution of board-certified teachers in the six states—California, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, Ohio and South Carolina. Except for California, board-certified teachers are not equitably distributed across schools that serve different populations of students. In five of the six states examined, poor, minority, and lower-performing students are far less likely to have the opportunity to benefit from the teaching of a National Board-certified teachers than are their more affluent, majority, and higher-performing peers.	Humphrey, Koppich and Hough, 2004 <sup>17</sup>
Does certification create teacher leaders?	Board-certified teachers give input on curricular decisions, organize professional development opportunities, chair departments, engage with the community, reach out to parents, and serve as a faculty voice to policymakers and other stakeholders.	Sykes, et al., 2006 <sup>18</sup>
	Board-certified teachers take on leadership roles that include mentoring and coaching others and developing programs aimed at improve student learning.	Freund, Russell and Kavulic, 2005; <sup>19</sup> Yankelovich Partners, 2001 <sup>20</sup>

## Policy Options for Legislators

“These are difficult times, and we are faced with difficult budget decisions. In the last budget year, the Legislature chose to withhold the stipend for National Board certification. In the school reform bills before us, however, we have included National Board certification as criteria for leadership awards as part of an individualized compensation package for educators in Idaho.”

—*Idaho Senator John Goedde*

“With our current financial crisis, every program is being looked at . . . even programs that have been ‘sacred cows’ in the past, such as National Board certification. We have to make difficult decisions today, so we can look to the future and re-embrace these successful programs tomorrow.”

—*Illinois Senator Pam Althoff*

For years, state policymakers have recognized the significance of National Board certification by enacting policies to support teachers as they complete the process. Legislators want the best teachers in the classroom, and many see this as an effective way to get them there. Teachers often need incentives to encourage them to sacrifice personal time to complete this rigorous program.

Thirty states currently offer assistance with application fees or financial incentives for completion. Mississippi, for example, offers a \$6,000 annual salary increase for the life of certification, and North Carolina offers a salary 12 percent higher than base for the life of the certificate. Colorado, Hawaii, New York, Washington and Wisconsin offer additional salary to board-certified teachers working in low-performing schools. States such as Illinois, New Mexico, Ohio and Wisconsin require board certification to achieve the highest level of state licensure, sometimes known as the mastery level, which provides for additional salary.

These incentives have been effective. States with the most assistance, support and salary increases have the highest number of board-certified teachers—Mississippi at 9.4 percent, North Carolina at 15.8 percent, and South Carolina at 15 percent. However, many of these teachers are not teaching in high-need schools where they are needed most. Additional incentives may be needed to lure them into these positions.

The decision to provide state-funded support for National Board certification is not easily made. Although most states still provide some fee support and financial incentives, others are cutting back. Some states have reduced salary incentives and limited the number of eligible candidates. South Carolina, for example, once offered the highest bonuses for completion at \$7,500 for the life of the certificate. Since July 1, 2010, however, board-certified teachers receive \$5,000, capped at 900 candidates. Other states—such as California, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, Missouri and Oklahoma—have reduced or eliminated financial support, at least temporarily, because of tight budgets. Legislators in many of these states say they believe their state will reinvest in this program when budget conditions improve.

State legislators who want to support board certification at the state level may wish to consider the following policies to support and encourage teachers—and now principals—to become board-certified.

- Provide resources to help teachers and principals with the cost of certification, including allocating state funds for fee reimbursement, making federal funding available to support certification, and creating loan programs to cover the cost of fees.

- Offer salary increases for the life of the certificate.
- Offer additional salary for board-certified teachers and principals who serve in low-performing, hard-to-staff schools.
- Offer mastery or top-tier state licensure or certification to board-certified teachers and principals.
- Publicly recognize teachers and principals who achieve certification and provide leadership opportunities to leverage their knowledge and skills.

State legislators might also consider the following policies to make better use of National Board certification.

- Use National Board standards to define effective teaching.
- Include board certification as an indicator of effective teaching for purposes of teacher and principal evaluations.
- Create career ladders for board-certified teachers, removing barriers and encouraging them to serve in such leadership roles as mentors, team leaders, curriculum leaders and instructional coaches.
- Allow board certification to qualify as or replace traditional professional development requirements.
- Require teachers and principals in low-performing schools to complete Take One! as a whole school professional development program and provide incentives for choosing to seek full board certification.
- Require teachers who receive state support for National Board certification to serve in low-performing schools.



“We in Washington believe that the quality of teacher is the most important thing. Over the last five or six years, we have encouraged our teachers to become even better through National Board certification. In fact, we have thousands of teachers that are now going through that process, and we are paying them up to \$5,000 or \$10,000 more to teach because we know that is the quintessential place where our investments can make the difference.”

—*Washington Representative  
Kathy Haigh*

# State Incentives and Rewards Support

State	Fee Support	Financial Incentives	Release Time	License Portability	License Renewal or CEUs	Total Number of Teachers*	NBCTs Certified in 2009-2010	Total NBCTs	% of NBCTs to Teachers
AK					X	7,927	7	120	1.5%
AL	Full fee pay for candidates who pass the state selection process	\$4,450 annual increase		X	X	47,818	224	2,007	4.2%
AR	\$2,500 for eligible first-time candidates	\$5,000 bonus annually to any NBCT who continues to be employed in accordance with legislative provisions governing bonus eligibility	3 days	X	X	37,162	290	1,690	4.5%
AZ					X	54,696	88	769	1.4%
CA		Funding is provided for stipends to NBCTs who were approved for an annual \$5,000 (four-year maximum) for teaching in a low-performing school before April 2009		X		303,647	342	4,913	1.6%
CO	\$750 for candidates on a first-come, first-served basis (temporarily suspended due to economic downturn)	\$1,600 bonus for all NBCTs; an additional \$3,200 for NBCTs in low-performing schools (temporarily suspended due to economic downturn)		X	X	48,692	65	545	1.1%
CT				X	X	48,463	0	136	0.3%
DC		One-time \$4,000 bonus	3 days	X	X	5,321	3	66	1.2%
DE				X	X	8,322	5	440	5.3%
FL	Some federal money available to teachers in selected high-need schools to pay half of fee	Annual salary bonus of up to 10% for 10 years only		X	X	186,361	273	13,532	7.3%
GA	Some federal money available to teachers in selected high-need schools to pay half of fee		2 days	X	X	118,839	18	2,604	2.2%
HI	Fee reimbursement of \$1,500 paid upon completion of process; remainder of fee is reimbursable upon certification	Annual \$5,000 stipend for life of certificate				11,295	44	284	2.5%
IA		Local incentives provided by a number of local school districts.		X	X	35,961	19	664	1.8%
ID		\$2,000 annual increase for first five years (Not funded in 2010-2011)		X		15,148	6	368	2.4%

# Supporting National Board Certification

State	Fee Support	Financial Incentives	Release Time	License Portability	License Renewal or CEUs	Total Number of Teachers*	NBCTs Certified in 2009-2010	Total NBCTs	% of NBCTs to Teachers
IL	State and federal funds combine to pay up to \$2,000 per candidate as funds are available	\$3,000 annual stipend and mentor compensation as funds are provided		X	X	135,704	771	4,692	3.5%
IN				X	X	62,668	5	149	0.2%
KS	State and federal funds combine to pay up to \$2,000 per candidate as funds are available	By statute, districts are responsible for paying \$1,000 to NBCTs for the life of the certificate		X	X	35,883	20	344	1.0%
KY	75% fee reimbursement upon certification	Annual \$2,000 salary supplement for the life of the certificate; \$400 for candidate preparation	5 days	X	X	43,451	316	2,156	5.0%
LA	\$750 from Louisiana Department of Education grant	\$5,000 annual increase for life of certificate, funded by districts				49,377	148	1,681	3.4%
MA				X	X	70,398	17	518	0.7%
MD	Two-thirds of fee for up to 1,000 candidates	State will match up to \$1,000 offered by local school districts and \$2,000 for NBCTs assigned to specific low-performing schools			X	58,940	302	1,976	3.4%
ME		No stipend for 2010, fixed funds for 2011-2012.		X	X	15,912	20	201	1.3%
MI	State and federal funds are combined to pay the application fee as funds are provided			X	X	94,754	29	348	0.4%
MN					X	53,083	14	352	0.7%
MO	State and federal funds are combined to pay the application fee as funds are provided	School district policy often uses the career ladder to award NBCTs up to \$5,000 annually for the life of the certificate	2 days	X		68,015	73	670	1.0%
MS	Reimbursement of unsubsidized portion of fee upon completion for public school teachers	\$6,000 annual increase for life of certificate		X	X	33,358	120	3,222	9.7%
MT		One-time \$3,000 stipends for up to 20 NBCTs as funding is approved each biennium		X	X	10,467	7	92	0.9%

## State Incentives and Rewards Support

State	Fee Support	Financial Incentives	Release Time	License Portability	License Renewal or CEUs	Total Number of Teachers*	NBCTs Certified in 2009-2010	Total NBCTs	% of NBCTs to Teachers
NC	\$2,500 for eligible teachers as funds are available through a loan from the state at 3% interest rate to be repaid over three years, with no payment required in the first 12 months	NBCT placed on salary schedule that is 12% higher than base pay for life of certificate	3 days	X	X	109,634	2,277	17,957	16.4%
ND	50% of fee for up to 17 candidates	Annual \$1,000 bonus for life of certificate		X		8,181	1	32	0.4%
NE				X	X	22,057	7	85	0.4%
NH				X		15,661	0	19	0.1%
NJ				X	X	114,713	13	211	0.2%
NM		Annual 1.5 program unit stipend at a variable rate, currently estimated at \$5,800 for FY 2009-2010		X	X	22,825	92	578	2.5%
NV	Up to \$1,250 fee reimbursement upon certification	5% annual salary increase for life of certificate		X	X	21,993	41	487	2.2%
NY	Up to \$2,500 for eligible public school teachers	If school district applies and is approved by the state, an annual \$10,000 stipend may be granted for three years to teach in low-performing schools and mentor new teachers		X	X	217,944	131	1,131	0.5%
OH		NBCTs meet requirements for lead professional licensure and are eligible for teacher leadership opportunities				112,845	81	3,268	2.9%
OK	Fee support suspended for two years because of moratorium on National Board program	\$3,900 annual stipend for current NBCTs for the life of the certificate		X		46,571	225	2,820	6.1%
OR				X	X	30,152	6	243	0.8%
PA	Up to \$1,250 for approximately 200 candidates			X	X	129,708	124	769	0.6%
RI	\$750 available for approximately 50 candidates			X	X	11,316	33	417	3.7%
SC	\$1,250 in federal funds available to pay half of fee	\$7,500 annual salary increase for life of certificate for candidates before July 1, 2010; \$5,000 stipend after July 2010, capped at 900 candidates		X	X	49,941	498	7,784	15.6%

# Supporting National Board Certification

State	Fee Support	Financial Incentives	Release Time	License Portability	License Renewal or CEUs	Total Number of Teachers*	NBCTs Certified in 2009-2010	Total NBCTs	% of NBCTs to Teachers
SD				X		9,244	3	74	0.8%
TN		Stipends by school districts only			X	64,926	71	484	0.7%
TX				X	X	327,905	83	627	0.2%
UT				X		23,657	21	204	0.9%
VA		Initial \$5,000 award, with a subsequent annual award of \$2,500 for the life of the certificate, contingent upon continued funding		X	X	71,415	184	2,180	3.1%
VT				X	X	8,766	3	124	1.4%
WA	State offers interest free conditional loan for \$2,000 of the \$2,500 fee	\$5,000 annual bonus upon certification; NBCTs in challenging schools, as defined by the state, will receive an additional \$5,000 annual bonus. Proposed two-year suspension in funding program		X	X	54,428	1,272	5,232	9.6%
WI	Reimbursement of fee-related expenses up to \$2,000 in first year of certification	\$2,500 annual grant upon application for subsequent nine years; additional \$2,500 grant for NBCTs in high-need schools (60% free or reduced lunch) as funds are provided. Additional incentives also provided by local school districts			X	59,401	101	783	1.3%
WV	Reimbursement of 50% upon application, and remainder upon certification, for up to 200 candidates; \$600 toward retakes	Reimbursement of \$600 for certification expenses; annual \$3,500 supplement for life of certificate		X		20,209	86	580	2.9%
WY		\$4,000 salary increase for each year as funding is approved each biennium		X	X	7,000	60	314	4.5%

**Key:** NBCT = National Board-Certified Teacher

**Source:** National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. This information is accurate as of March 24, 2011.

## Examples of Success

“We used to be very individualized in our approach to teaching. Now we are working together to meet the needs of these struggling students. We are going from closed to open doors, and this collaborative spirit is making a big difference. That’s what we need for effective teaching and learning.”

—*Kiela Bonelli, National Board Certified Teacher, Principal, Julius Corsini Elementary School*

### Chicago Public Schools, Illinois

Chicago Public Schools, located in the heart of the city, is the third largest urban school district. It serves primarily black and Hispanic students; 82 percent are considered low income. Traditionally, Chicago Public Schools has struggled with student achievement, and a significant achievement gap stubbornly persists. Beginning in 2000, a powerful partnership between Chicago Public Schools (then under the leadership of current U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan), the Chicago Teachers Union, the Mayor’s office and the Chicago Public Education Fund set its sights upon improving teaching quality and retaining effective educators with the ultimate goal of improving student achievement. The strategy included raising the number of National Board-certified teachers from 11 to 1,200 by 2008, in less than a decade. The goal was reached with the help of generous funding from the Chicago Education Fund and the hard work and dedication of many teachers. As a result, the district has made significant gains. It has raised student achievement every year; nearly nine of 10 board-certified teachers remain in the district; more than half the district schools have at least one board-certified teacher; 60 percent of schools with board-certified teachers have at least 85 percent of students receiving free and reduced lunches; 85 percent of the district’s board-certified teachers work in schools where at least 85 percent of the students are of color; and 50 percent hold leadership positions within their schools.

### Julius Corsini Elementary School, California

Julius Corsini is a Title I elementary school in Desert Hot Springs, California, serving primarily Hispanic and English language learner students. Before 2006, this was a failing school by all accounts: 50 percent to 75 percent of the staff resigned every spring; student absenteeism was second highest in the district; and student performance was in the lowest 10 percent of schools in the state. In an effort to turn around this failing school, the entire faculty, including the principal, enrolled in either Take One! or full candidacy for National Board certification during the 2007-08 school year. Since then, the school has seen unprecedented success. Teachers now closely analyze their instruction and seek feedback from others for continued improvement. The school now holds weekly professional Learning Community meetings for coaching and sharing best practices. In 2009, the school was one of only four in California to exit Program Improvement Year 5 status. It met federal Adequate Yearly Progress benchmarks for two consecutive years; significantly increased test scores; increased teacher retention to 100 percent; and increased parent participation from 25 percent to 90 percent.

## Montgomery County Public Schools, Maryland

Montgomery County Schools is Maryland's largest school district. Students are 40 percent white, 23 percent black and 23 percent Hispanic; about one-third are considered low income. Although the district is located in one of the nation's most affluent areas just outside Washington, D.C., pockets of low-performing, high-need schools and students exist. About a decade ago, district officials developed a strategy to provide an effective educator and promote college and career-ready standards for every student. The district provided incentives and support for teachers to become board-certified. District leadership also created a partnership with the Montgomery County Education Association, the local affiliate of the National Education Association, to embed the National Board's Five Core Propositions—what teachers should know and be able to do—into professional development, hiring and evaluation for all teachers. The effort is showing results. Student achievement has improved, and the achievement gap has narrowed in elementary school reading and math. The district now has the highest graduation rate among large school districts in the nation. Participation rates in Advanced Placement exams have increased. Nearly 95 percent of national-board certified teachers remained in the district during the past five years.

## Mitchell Elementary School, Arizona

Mitchell Elementary School is located in Isaac School District in Phoenix. This school serves a low-income neighborhood with high crime rates, fewer than 25 percent of adults have a high school education, and 96 percent of students qualify for free or reduced lunch. In 2000, less than 34 percent of those enrolled completed ninth grade, and less than 22 percent graduated from high school. As a result of these difficult working and learning conditions, teacher quality and retention has traditionally been very low. In 2008, more than 60 percent of the teachers in the school decided to do all they could to make a difference—they committed to completing National Board certification to improve their teaching and equip them with the tools needed to turn around this impoverished, low-performing school. They were determined to make a difference in their students' lives. Although some teachers have completed the program and others are still working on it, students already are making progress, and collaborative professional learning community within the school is strong. This unique story about the power of teachers is garnering attention nationwide. Policymakers and education experts—from U.S. Secretary Arne Duncan, NEA President Dennis Van Roekel, and former Governor Bob Wise to education expert Barnett Berry—are paying close attention to this effort.

“Test scores alone do not determine effective teaching. As an instructional coach, I have to look at the thinking that goes into teaching minute by minute. Teachers must be consciously competent—we have to know what we are doing, how we do it, and why. We must make existing teachers the best they can be through effective professional development, such as National Board certification.”

—Daniela Robles, *National Board Certified Teacher, Instructional Coach, former Mitchell Elementary teacher*

## Notes

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