



Senate Education Committee Support for SB215 – Board Certification Incentive

**Lon Garrison, Executive Director
Association of Alaska School Boards.**

February 14, 2024

My name is Lon Garrison, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Association of Alaska School Boards. We are a nonprofit association serving 52 of Alaska's 54 school districts. I am writing to you in support of SB 215 Board Certification Incentives.

AASB is able to support SB215 through our **Resolution 4.1 Supports for Staff Development**. A copy of this resolution is appended to this letter.

The Association of Alaska School Boards knows that one of the single most important factors in the success of a child's education is to have a highly qualified and highly skilled teacher working with them. Like many other professions that demand a well-developed set of skills, attaining a nationally certified accomplishment through one's professional peers is a highly effective way to support effective professional development, leading to better outcomes for students.

AASB supports the goal of this bill to incentivize national board certification of teachers as a way to reward them for their commitment and conviction to the teaching profession. We agree that an incentive program like the one proposed in SB215 allows those without national certification to consider national certification and thereby improve their skills while improving the chances that the teacher will remain in the district. Unlike the retention bonus proposed by the governor, this incentive is linked directly to professional development and factors known to significantly impact student outcomes.

AASB is always concerned that something such as this could become an unfunded mandate. However, this bill approaches the implementation of the incentive as a state-funded grant program, which we support.

AASB urges you to consider supporting the passage of SB215.

Respectfully submitted,

Lon Garrison
Executive Director
Association of Alaska School Boards

Michael Mason

From: Ben Walker <benwalkeralaska@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 9, 2024 8:15 PM
To: Senate Education
Cc: Raymond Matiashowski; Sen. Jesse Bjorkman
Subject: Testimony for SB215, February 14th, 2024

Please consider the letter below my written testimony for the hearing on SB 215, scheduled for February 14th, 2024:

Dear Senate Education Committee,

I am writing today in support of Senate Bill 215 which provides an incentive for Alaska teachers to pursue National Board Certification. I first pursued my National Board Certification in 2010 and it changed my life as an educator, both in my classroom and in my professional relationships, which in turn, improved my classroom even more.

National Board Certification is the most rigorous process you can go through in education that focuses solely on the classroom and direct student impact. Dr. Deena Bishop, our current Commissioner of Education for the state, said in 2012 when recognizing us at an Anchorage School Board meeting that pursuing National Board Certification is like pursuing a Ph.D. in classroom practice. It is not hyperbole for me to say that I would not be even remotely the teacher I am today without the National Board Certification process. It allowed me a deep reflection on the WHY of my practice as it pertains to the only thing that matters in education, direct student impact. As I reflected on and analyzed my practice, I grew in ways as an educator that even now, nearly 15 years later, I am still realizing and working on. It is that impactful. Two years ago, I renewed my National Board Certification and was able to reflect on my practices as a mid-career educator and focus not only on where I have come but more importantly, on how I can still grow to continue to increase student outcomes.

[Multiple independent studies](#) have concluded that, on average, students taught by National Board Certified teachers achieved higher. This data stayed true from elementary through high school. Additionally, so many other professions have a national process to ensure a high-quality workforce, such as engineers, doctors, and nurses. National Board Certification should become the norm in education to give our students the best education possible. Providing this incentive would go a long way to increase the number of National Board Certified teachers here in Alaska and would also attract them to our state. So many other states have incentives for National Board Teachers including one of our closest neighbors, Washington, which has a \$10,000 bonus for NBCTs. In reality, this means, currently, an NBCT here in Alaska could move to Washington and immediately be making \$10,000 more simply by geography. This is a real recruitment and retention issue. I know this firsthand from teachers I know moving to Washington. While the bonus may not have been the sole reason for them moving, it was certainly part of it, and had there been something here in Alaska, they might have had second thoughts.

Additionally, rewarding teachers who continue to grow and develop signals it is a state priority to have the best educators and elevates the profession. This has a trickle-down effect as graduating students see teaching as a more revered and respected profession worth going into, one where their hard work and growth will be rewarded.

In conclusion, I ask that you please support SB 215 and advocate for its swift passage so students across our great state can benefit from having the highest quality educators possible.

Thank you.

Ben Walker

Science Teacher, Romig Middle School, Anchorage

2018 Alaska State Teacher of the Year

2019 National National Science Teachers Association/Shell Science Teaching Award

2013 Alaska Awardee Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching

2022 Lindblad/National Geographic Grosvenor Teacher Fellow - Antarctica

2023 NEA Foundation Global Learning Fellow - South Africa

Michael Mason

From: locke_jaime <locke_jaime@asdk12.org>
Sent: Tuesday, February 13, 2024 11:17 PM
To: Senate Education
Cc: Sen. Jesse Bjorkman; Raymond Matiasowski
Subject: Senate Bill No. 215: National Board Certification

To whom it may concern,

I awoke this past Monday morning to good news! Senator Jesse Bjorkman filed a bill to provide incentives for teachers in the state of Alaska who have earned their National Board Certification. I *am* such a teacher and proud of it!

I first heard about the National Boards when I started my teaching career 24 years ago, in Edina, Minnesota. To start the back-to-school teacher in-service, the entire district gathered inside the high school auditorium. The marching band played while newly crowned National Boards educators were invited to the stage and cheered! "Wow, what a prestigious thing," I thought, not knowing anything about how one achieves such an honor.

Fast forward eight years later and my best friend and colleague was working on *her* National Boards. I still had no clue about what it took to achieve this certification. When she submitted her portfolio she immediately came to talk to me about it and highly encouraged me to take on the challenge! I was intimidated by the time commitment, amount of work and just wondering if I could measure up to this.

A few months later I decided to bite the bullet and do it. I sat on my deck in the warm sunshine, reading through the National Boards Standards and wrapped my head around exactly what would go into this lofty endeavor.

Back in the day, when I first started my National Boards journey, one was allowed to work on all four entries and submit them in less than a year AND take the assessment center exercises too! That is hard core because you are not permitted to do such today. . . probably because it's such a HUGE undertaking!

Since that time, I have achieved my certification in **Literacy: Reading-Language Arts-Early and Middle Childhood** and am proud and confident in what I have achieved.

I've alluded to the fact that the National Boards certification process is a huge undertaking but what exactly does it involve? Here is a short list of what you do:

- Reflect on every aspect of your teaching and put it into writing.
- Plan and conduct specific lessons in your classroom that are recorded and analyzed in depth, in writing.
- Plan and conduct activities that allow you to analyze student work over a set period of time, tracking the progress towards the set goals.
- Prove who you are and what you do over and over and over by submitting evidence of your teaching, leadership and professional involvement.

The aforementioned items took hours upon hours upon hours to do, edit, revise, finalize and submit. I am so glad I did this **before** having my first child because I don't know how a working parent/teacher can do it.

I have also renewed my certification once and plan to do so at the end of my current certification. This process was different but still focused on deep reflection and how I've grown in the past ten years since obtaining my certification.

These words sum up my experience with the National Boards process as a continuous cycle: **plan, teach, analyze, reflect, improve.** I have this engrained in me because of doing my National Boards work and am so proud to have succeeded in this grand achievement!

I now try to give back by participating each year in the NEA Jump Start program that is offered in Anchorage each summer. I love meeting with candidates to help them wrap their head around what achieving your National Boards certification entails and brainstorm ideas for projects.

I am so glad and appreciative that Senator Bjorkman is proposing this bill and support it 1000% percent because it's validating, satisfying and deserved for people who work so hard and achieve the highest honor a teacher can receive!

Thank you so much for allowing me to share my National Boards journey in the hopes that this bill receives much support!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jaime Locke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jaime" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Locke".

Jaime Locke
1st grade teacher
Trailside Elementary
Anchorage, Alaska

Michael Mason

From: Collins_Jason <Collins_Jason@asdk12.org>
Sent: Sunday, February 11, 2024 9:33 AM
To: Senate Education
Cc: Raymond Matiashowski; Sen. Jesse Bjorkman
Subject: SB 215

To State of Alaska Senate Education Committee,

My name is Jason Collins, and I am a teacher in the Anchorage School District. I am writing to show support for Senate Bill 215. I was informed about this bill from a colleague of mine, Tara Bivins. I have known Tara for a long time, as someone that helped guide me through the process to earn my National Board Certification. I didn't know much about National Board certification at the time, but after going through the process, I realized how powerful it was and what kind of impacts it had on student learning outcomes and relationships.

I originally worked on earning my NB certification in 2006, when I was relatively new to the profession. My mother was a veteran teacher and had earned her certification a couple years earlier. I was debating getting my Master of Education degree or national board certification. I will be honest and say the original reason I chose NB certification was that it came with a \$2000 a year addendum from the Anchorage School District as long as you maintained certification. Teaching is not a profession you get rich at monetarily, and being young and with a young family, the financial incentive made more sense.

I was lucky enough to earn my certificate on my first attempt. Some unexpected results were the wealth of knowledge and experience that I gained toward teaching and understanding the teaching process. The process to earn certification requires in-depth, systematic reflection of your lessons. It really makes you look at your students, what you are teaching, and why you are doing what you are doing. You have to explain every thought you had about your lesson and make sure you know why you're doing it. This may sound obvious to outsiders, but these skills were not gone over in college, in education preparation programs. You are so focused on doing what is needed to secure a job, that you don't get to really practice good teaching techniques until you are in the classroom, but by then you are left on an island, often alone and unsupported (this was before new teaches were paired with veteran mentors).

The National Board program creates a community of educators that collaborate, listen, support, and encourage each other. I met many other educators that were having similar issues I was. We were able to answer questions together, read each other's work, and be there for each other. After earning my certification, I felt so passionate about this process that I helped other teachers at my school gain financial support from our school to also start their journey toward NB certification. We created a support group within our school and more teachers were able to benefit from the reflective practice that NB certification requires.

One of the biggest benefits of going through the NB process was reflecting on how I assessed math. I realized what I was doing prior to going through the NB process was not effective, and I did research on and joined another group of like-minded teachers. Together, we developed a mastery learning program in our school. That was in 2007, and I still use the same system today, although I have made changes over

the years to fit current students' needs. This is another characteristic of NB certification though, the need to reflect, adapt, and make changes as needed.

I was a state finalist for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching (PAEMST) for Alaska in 2021 (we are still waiting to hear who won for 2021). When I was going through the PAEMST process, I had to get testimony from people that could attest to the claims I was making about the learning growth my students had, and I reached out to many former students. They all mentioned similar stories about the impact that the mastery learning process had on them and how it helped their learning and understanding of the concepts we were working on.

The process to earn National Board certification was the most challenging and rigorous program I have ever worked on academically. I spent many hours writing, reflecting, and questioning my own practice. Having gone through a master's degree program later, I can accurately say that the NB process was more rigorous, and I am glad my mother steered me toward that all those years ago. The financial support that the state is offering in Senate Bill 215 is a good start. The bonus that the Anchorage School District provides is much appreciated, but it also hasn't changed in nearly 20 years. It has not kept up with inflation and its worth is not as great today, as it was in 2007.

I am including a link to a report from the National Conference of State Legislators. It details much of what I have explained in here, but it also shows what other states are doing to financially support National Board-certified teachers. Many states offer bonuses and incentives, as much as 12% of a teacher's base salary. These incentives can go a long way toward helping more teachers go through this process that truly is career and life changing for the teacher and their students. Please consider supporting SB215. Our state needs to place a higher value on education than it has been, and this is a good place to start.

Jason Collins

<https://www.ncsl.org/education/a-legislators-guide-to-board-certification-for-teachers>