

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 17, 2019

8:04 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Harriet Drummond, Co-Chair
Representative Andi Story, Co-Chair
Representative Grier Hopkins
Representative Chris Tuck
Representative Tiffany Zulkosky
Representative Josh Revak
Representative DeLena Johnson

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 128

"An Act relating to national board certification for public school teachers."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 128

SHORT TITLE: TEACHERS: NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) KREISS-TOMKINS

04/09/19	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/09/19	(H)	EDC, CRA
04/17/19	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

WITNESS REGISTER

JOHN SCANLON, Staff
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: On behalf of Representative Kreiss-Tomkins, prime sponsor, presented HB 128.

SONDRA MEREDITH, Administrator

Teacher Education and Certification
Department of Education and Early Development
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing of HB 128.

TIM PARKER, President
National Education Association-Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided invited testimony during the hearing of HB 128.

TAMARA VAN WYHE, Director
Division of Educator and School Excellence
Department of Education and Early Development
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided invited testimony during the hearing of HB 128.

NORM WOOTEN, Executive Director
Association of Alaska School Boards
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided invited testimony during the hearing of HB 128.

BEN MURRAY, Substitute Teacher
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided comments not on topic with the published agenda.

LISA SKILES PARADY, PhD, Executive Director
Alaska Council of School Administrators
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support during the hearing of HB 128.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:04:07 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ANDI STORY called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:04 a.m. Representatives Hopkins, Drummond, Revak, Tuck, and Story were present at the call to order. Representatives Zulkosky and Johnson arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 128-TEACHERS: NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION

8:04:50 AM

CO-CHAIR STORY announced the only order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 128, "An Act relating to national board certification for public school teachers."

8:05:30 AM

JOHN SCANLON, Staff, Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, Alaska State Legislature, informed the committee HB 128 is the product of many conversations between Representative Kreiss-Tomkins and educators, superintendents, and the Department of Education and Early Development (EED), about how to effectively elevate the prestige of the teaching profession in Alaska in a cost-neutral manner. As a result of these discussions, Representative Kreiss-Tomkins focused on the value of a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification. He paraphrased from the following sponsor statement [original punctuation provided]:

HB 128 represents a commitment from the legislature to elevate the prestige of the teaching profession in Alaska. National Board certification is reserved for educators who voluntarily undertake, and successfully complete, a rigorous certification process administered by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. The certification process is recognized as an invaluable learning experience for educators that also results in improved student outcomes. In Alaska and across the country, National Board certification is considered the gold standard of professional development for teachers. Certification by the National Board is an indicator of teacher quality. Many studies have concluded that National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) are more effective in the classroom and that students of NBCTs have better academic achievement. By displaying in public schools the name of each NBCT who teaches at that school, HB 128 creates a halo around this superlative certification, imparts upon the community and school the value of NBCTs, and celebrates the hard-earned accomplishments of NBCTs. HB 128 also sets the goal that four percent of public school teachers in Alaska will be National Board certified by 2025 – which would nearly double the current number of NBCTs.

MR. SCANLON explained HB 128 has two components that seek to elevate the prestige of, and respect for, the teaching profession in Alaska. The first component is that each public school shall display in a prominent location the name of each NBCT teaching in that school, which will celebrate the accomplishments of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) board certified teachers before the school and its surrounding community at no cost to the state. The second component within the bill is the goal of the legislature that by 2025 at least 4 percent of all public school teachers in Alaska will have achieved national board certification, which would nearly double the number of NBCTs in Alaska from the present number of 193. He concluded passage of HB 128 would represent a commitment from the legislature to elevate the prestige of the teaching profession in Alaska.

[8:09:17 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND expressed her support for the bill and asked how much it costs an individual teacher to become NBPTS board certified.

MR. SCANLON said the total cost of certification is \$1,900, which includes four components at a cost of \$475 each. In further response to Co-Chair Drummond, he said the certifications are in effect for five years; he was unsure of the cost of renewal, but advised recertification is a rigorous process.

CO-CHAIR STORY asked Mr. Scanlon to review the certification process.

MR. SCANLON explained the process can be completed largely online in one, or up to five, year(s), although some in-person components require attendance at a testing center. He listed and described the following four components of the certification process: content knowledge and pedagogical practices; differentiation in instruction, which focuses on teaching students of various abilities in one classroom; improving teaching practice and classroom environment, in which teachers are filmed and reviewed; effective and reflective practitioner instruction, which helps to cultivate certain desired aspects of teaching. Mr. Scanlon offered to provide additional written information in this regard. In further response to Co-Chair Story, he was unsure of the number of hours that are required to obtain a certification and said he would provide this information.

CO-CHAIR STORY pointed out [the bill has a zero fiscal note, Fiscal Note ID HB128-EED-TC-04-11-19] and expressed her concern [without financial support from EED] there may be a disincentive created for teachers who do not have the personal resources necessary to obtain a certification. She questioned whether some school districts contribute to teachers' costs to obtain a certification.

MR. SCANLON deferred to EED. He acknowledged the sponsor was made aware that cost was a significant barrier to national board certification. At one time in 2012-2013, EED administered a subsidy funded by a federal grant. The sponsor seeks to identify state or non-state funding to offset the cost of certification; however, HB 128 would be the "first step" and a commitment from the legislature.

CO-CHAIR STORY inquired as to why federal funds for certifications were available in 2012-2013.

MR. SCANLON did not know.

[8:16:10 AM](#)

SONDRA MEREDITH, Administrator, Teacher Education and Certification, Department of Education and Early Development, informed the committee subsequent to reauthorization of [Title I, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)] federal passthrough funds are no longer available. At the school district level, she suggested one or two larger districts may have stipends or bonuses available. In further response to Co-Chair Story, she confirmed EED only administered funding for certifications that was sourced from "passthrough funding that we received from the federal government through the national board organization itself"; the federal funds provided ten to fifteen stipends that were awarded at Title I schools to teachers that applied for the stipends.

CO-CHAIR STORY asked for the cost for renewing a certification.

MS. MEREDITH was unaware of the cost for renewal.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK asked for the amount of each stipend.

MS. MEREDITH said approximately one-half of the cost.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked whether the cost of the certification was deductible from federal taxes.

MS. MEREDITH was unaware of a tax deduction.

[8:19:05 AM](#)

TIM PARKER, President, National Education Association-Alaska (NEA-Alaska), informed the committee he is a high school English teacher in Fairbanks. Mr. Parker said NEA-Alaska supports HB 128; teachers in Alaska seek increases in student learning and NBPTS board certified teachers see increased learning because they have worked for at least one year focused on better ways to improve learning. He recalled a similar bill [SB 188 introduced in the Thirtieth Alaska State Legislature] also included funding for the [certifications]. Mr. Parker advised teachers are challenged by the approximate \$2,000 cost of a national board certification, even though the process can be spread out over five years and each of four components cost about \$500. He stressed the certification process is professional development that is intensive, unique, and focused on many aspects of student learning in language arts, music, math, and all other subjects. Further, the certification allows teachers to focus on the content of each lesson and on student learning. The job of a teacher in the process of obtaining a certification is to prove that student learning is taking place in his/her classroom through testing, video demonstration, analysis of a lesson, and reflection.

[8:23:00 AM](#)

MR. PARKER characterized the certification as difficult to attain, but an achievement in which teachers are very interested. In fact, once per year NEA-Alaska offers preparation training for the certification process, known as "Jump Start," in Anchorage and other locations. He pointed out the actual number of board certificated teachers actively teaching in Alaska classrooms is less than 193, which is the total number who are registered. He opined the goal for the number of NBPTS board certified teachers in Alaska should not be the bill's goal of 4 percent, but should be 10-20 percent. For example, the State of Washington provides financial incentives for NBPTS board certified teachers of \$5,000 per year, increased to \$10,000 for NBPTS board certified teachers who have positions serving Title I schools, thus about 20 percent of Washington's teachers are NBPTS board certified. Mr. Parker said to attain a higher percentage in Alaska there must be help with the cost of

the initial certification and the renewal fee of \$1,250 after five years. Unfortunately, there is not much of an incentive for teachers in Alaska, so teachers feel this is not a high priority in the state.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked for clarification on the incentives offered in Washington [\$5,397 to NBPTS board certified teachers and \$5,000 to teach in Title I schools].

MR. PARKER further explained Washington sought to attain equity in education by encouraging teachers to move to "hard to reach" schools; he has heard this effort has been successful. In further response to Co-Chair Drummond, he said the incentives are paid each year.

[8:28:16 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS questioned why self-reflection is important to becoming a better educator.

MR. PARKER said self-reflection is key to success in many professions because one has to think about and improve his/her practice. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards developed five core propositions that focus on how to become an accomplished teacher: teachers are committed to students and their 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. He remarked:

Those five drive the entire process and you're constantly thinking about those five, applying them to every area of your practice, looking for the best ways that you can make that student learning thing happen in your classrooms.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK recalled at one time EED was videotaping teachers in Alaska classrooms.

MR. PARKER deferred to EED for specific information. He acknowledged at one time videos were reviewed as part of the certification process; he cautioned the program was complicated and he was unsure when or why it was withdrawn. He described the video procedure associated with NBPTS board certification.

8:31:56 AM

CO-CHAIR STORY inquired as to the NEA-Alaska Jump Start program and whether NEA-Alaska has considered providing match funding to encourage teachers to apply for board certification.

MR. PARKER said NEA-Alaska has considered a match or loan program, but funding is not currently available. Jump Start is held for one week at the end of the school year in Anchorage and is open to all members; transportation, housing, and highly qualified instruction is provided. The workshop is usually attended by 20-30 teachers.

CO-CHAIR STORY asked how much time is required for the renewal process.

MR. PARKER expressed his understanding the renewal process is not as intensive as the four components of certification but is rigorous. He deferred to a representative from EED.

8:35:47 AM

TAMARA VAN WYHE, Director, Division of Educator and School Excellence, Department of Education and Early Development, said she is a NBPTS board certified teacher, an achievement for which she is proud. She informed the committee educators not practicing in a classroom are eligible to renew their board certification through a modified process at about one-half of the cost. In further response to Co-Chair Story, she said according to EED, there are 58 NBPTS board certified educators teaching in Alaska classrooms.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked for information about NBPTS.

MS. VAN WYHE explained NBPTS is a national organization - comparable to the Council of Chief State School Officers - that comes together for one purpose: teacher excellence. The organization has an executive director and board members who represent entities from across the country.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked whether NBPTS board certification is transferable between states.

MS. VAN WYHE said yes, the certification is recognized nationally. In further response to Representative Hopkins, she suggested the certification helps teacher retention because educators who seek board certification are very invested in

their profession. Further, a recommendation out of [EED's strategic plan component Alaska's Education Challenge] is that attaining board certification is a way to retain teachers and encourage teachers to stay in the classroom; although the data in Alaska is unclear, those who pursue board certification are "on kind of a leadership track," and she spoke in support of incentives to keep educators in the classroom and in high-need schools.

[8:42:11 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND stressed the importance of supporting teachers financially, and observed Ms. Van Wyhe is an appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission, EED.

CO-CHAIR STORY asked whether the State Board of Education and Early Development has considered funding incentives for board certification.

MS. VAN WYHE declined to speak for the board; however, as part of the EED strategic planning process - the Alaska Education Challenge - there was lengthy discussion about board certification. She advised the board is aware of the importance of board certification, but she has no personal knowledge of discussions regarding financial incentives, or of supporting certification through legislation. Ms. Van Wyhe pointed out, in Alaska, school districts have federal [ESEA Title II Part A Section 2101, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act] funds that are available for professional development.

[8:44:58 AM](#)

NORM WOOTEN, Executive Director, Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB), informed the committee AASB submitted written testimony in support of HB 128. Mr. Wooten said research shows a highly qualified teacher is the most effective way to ensure high student achievement, and to be highly effective, a teacher must: use data to determine the needs of each student; engage every student; personalize instruction; alter instruction to respond to students' interests. Responding to the needs of many students takes a remarkable teacher and AASB believes the rigorous standards of NBPTS board certification enable teachers to be successful. The aforementioned five core propositions required of a NBPTS board certified teacher embody the definition of a teacher who is prepared. Mr. Wooten advised Alaska's recruitment and retention of teachers is a serious problem throughout the state. Further, teaching seems to have

lost the respect of the general public thus fewer applicants are entering the teaching profession; however, AASB believes NBPTS board certification is one way to restore prestige to the teaching profession because rigorous certifications create pride in any profession and recognition from those served. Mr. Wooten expressed AASB's support for public recognition of those who have mastered the teaching profession; NBPTS board certified teachers will serve as mentors to other teachers and will inspire future teachers. Mr. Wooten urged the committee to support HB 128.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked Mr. Wooten how teachers continue to teach to the needs of every student given the effect of budget cuts that result in increased class sizes.

MR. WOOTEN acknowledged an increase in pupil teacher ratio raises the difficulty in responding to the varied needs of every student. He cautioned kids fall through cracks, which is unacceptable.

CO-CHAIR STORY questioned whether AASB staff have urged industry partners to invest "with tax credits" so that teachers could apply [for money] to get NBPTS board certified.

MR. WOOTEN advised AASB is reviewing tax credit law to determine whether AASB can encourage entities to utilize tax credits; he offered to present Co-Chair Story's concept before the AASB board of directors.

[8:51:56 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY opened public testimony on HB 128.

[8:52:15 AM](#)

BEN MURRAY, substitute teacher, provided comments not on topic with the published agenda.

[8:55:34 AM](#)

LISA SKILES PARADY, Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA), informed the committee ACSA represents the Alaska Superintendents Association, the Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals, the Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals, the Alaska Association of School Business Officials, and other school administrators. She returned attention to the Alaska Education Challenge (AEC) and

said she chaired the Education Excellence committee - under the umbrella of AEC - that was charged with creating transformative ideas; the Education Excellence committee established subcommittees and the transformative idea from the Recruitment and Continuous Improvement subcommittee was to develop a comprehensive statewide salary incentive for earning a NBPTS board certification, because that would make the biggest difference in student achievement in Alaska. She returned to the question of how the acquisition of a NBPTS board certification affects preparing, attracting, and retaining highly qualified educators and pointed out ACSA's position that retaining effective educators is essential to closing achievement gaps and increasing student performance in all subjects. Therefore, ACSA strongly supports comprehensive statewide incentive programs and recommends strengthening statewide and national recruiting efforts. Dr. Parady advised the aforementioned positions are also one of the pillars of AEC and are fully supported by HB 128. She returned to a comparison of education policies in Washington and read [document not provided]:

Connecting state policy to retention of teachers is key. Teachers who earn national board certification are likely to be active participants in their school communities. Offering an incentive to keep these teachers in our state certainly encouraged them to stay and contributes to improvement of education for Alaska students. ... The number of national board certified teachers in Washington state increased at dramatic rates since the bonuses were put in place. Building capacity of nationally board certified teachers across the state created a stable and forward-moving environment for the continual improvement of teaching and learning. As the number of national board certified teachers increased, student improvement increased Concentrations of national board certified teachers in a school and district meant that the, the students would be O.K. even in environments of lots, lots of change and other maybe more negative considerations

[9:00:25 AM](#)

DR. PARADY continued, noting that prior to bonuses for teaching in a high needs school, about 9 percent of Washington teachers in high needs schools were NBPTS board certified; currently

about 35 percent of teachers in high needs schools are NBPTS are board certified. Providing an additional stipend to teachers in high needs schools was meant to attract new teachers; however, the result was teachers already working in those schools attained NBPTS board certifications and stayed in the high need schools. She offered to provide additional written information and described a program that worked successfully in Wyoming through a partnership with a private foundation. She restated ACSA's support for HB 128.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked for clarification of certain statistics.

DR. PARADY confirmed prior to the bonus schedule, about 9 percent of Washington's teachers in high needs schools were NBPTS board certified, and that percentage is now 35 percent.

[9:03:45 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY, after ascertaining no one further wished to testify, closed public testimony. She observed the bill has a zero fiscal note and surmised the bill would be more effective were funding added to support the intent of the bill.

CO-CHAIR STORY announced HB 128 was held over.

ADJOURNMENT

[9:05:25 AM](#)

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at [9:05] a.m.