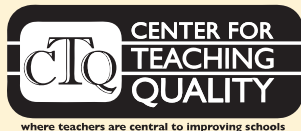


Every Child Deserves Our Best:

Recommendations from North Carolina's
National Board Certified Teachers on How to
Support and Staff High-Needs Schools

Barnett Berry and Bill Ferriter
with
Carolyn McClennahan Banks and Kathy Drew

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The National Education Association is the nation's largest professional employee organization, representing 2.7 million elementary and secondary teachers, education support professionals, college faculty, school administrators, retired educators, and students preparing to become teachers.

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On August 17, 2005, over 550 National Board Certified Teachers, (NBCTs) administrators, and policy makers convened at the North Carolina Policy Summit on Supporting and Staffing High-Needs Schools in Greensboro, North Carolina to discuss proactive ways to recruit and retain accomplished teachers for the state's neediest schools. Policy makers, including former Governor James B. Hunt, Jr., current Lieutenant Governor Beverly Perdue, and other local and state administrators and legislators, listened intently as National Board Certified Teachers spoke about the challenges facing high-needs schools and the barriers to attracting accomplished teachers there. Participants focused their discussions in breakout sessions, facilitated by NBCTs, on topics such as cultural competence, mentoring and induction, and "growing your own" National Board teacher support programs. Recommendations developed during these interactive morning sessions were then presented to policy makers for their reactions in the afternoon.

Following the NBCT Policy Summit, the Center for Teaching Quality developed two listservs to continue the conversations started in Greensboro. A monthly news e-bulletin is disseminated to all attendees to keep them informed about the local efforts of NBCTs in their home districts, events in other states, useful resources, and other important information about the work of NBCTs in North Carolina. In addition, an online discussion group, facilitated by Bill Ferriter (NBCT and Wake County Teacher of the Year), has been established for all NBCTs from the Summit to discuss critical issues during a series of three-day email conversations over the next year. Ideas generated from this online community, along with recommendations gathered at the Summit, were utilized in the organization and preparation of this post-Summit policy paper for local and state leaders.

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*"A thousand mile journey has begun toward placing
our best teachers in the schools that need them the most."*

—Carolyn Banks, NBCT from Hoke County,
during the opening session of the North
Carolina NBCT Summit

Getting good teachers to high-needs schools*—and keeping them there—may be the toughest public education issue facing North Carolina policy makers. Research continues to surface a disheartening fact: Poor and minority students, and those in low performing schools, are far less likely to have access to the most experienced and highly qualified teachers.¹ While many states have put into place a wide range of incentives to attract teachers to high-needs schools, there is little evidence about the effectiveness of these strategies. We do know that few state and federal policies have been created to recruit and retain highly accomplished teachers for the schools and students that need them the most.²

In North Carolina, the maldistribution of expert teachers quickly becomes apparent when we consider the state's large number of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs). Approximately 10 percent of the state's teachers have earned this hallmark of professional accomplishment, yet a recent analysis shows that half of North Carolina's NBCTs serve in the 20 percent of schools with the smallest percentage of disadvantaged students, and more than one-quarter of schools serving poor and minority students have no NBCTs at all.

The problem is not confined to North Carolina.

* High-needs schools are characterized by a mixture of interrelated student, teacher, and community factors, such as disproportionate numbers of students performing below grade level and those who move frequently from school to school. Other factors include large percentages of students who are second language learners or who come from single-parent or low-income families. Low-wealth communities that cannot afford to provide up-to-date school facilities and equipment, such as new technologies for students and teachers to have equitable access to teaching and learning resources, are also characteristic of high-needs schools. Still more factors include staffing patterns associated with disproportionate numbers of new, inexperienced, or lateral entry teachers, high teacher turnover rates, and low percentages of well-prepared, experienced (e.g., National Board Certified) teachers. The state of North Carolina formally has identified a group of high-needs schools, vis-à-vis the Leandro school adequacy finance law suit, but they are not the only ones that face significant challenges in serving students and attracting and retaining qualified and well-prepared teachers.



A national study, recently released, found that NBCTs are more likely not to be teaching in low-performing schools or in schools serving poor and minority students. Only 19 percent of NBCTs teach in a school in the bottom third of performance for its state.³ Andrew Rotherham, drawing on these data, has argued that the vast majority of NBCT incentives, while important in encouraging and recognizing accomplished teachers, “are generally divorced from efforts to make the distribution of top-flight teachers more equitable.”⁴ We—as teachers, researchers, and advocates for the teaching profession—agree that policy makers have every right to be concerned about where NBCTs are teaching and should be considering new policies to ensure that our nation’s most challenging schools are staffed with caring, qualified, well-supported, and effective teachers.

A number of states and districts have developed or considered policies that will reward NBCTs only if they teach in high-needs schools. One state is Georgia, where the governor and the legislature recently approved a law that will gradually eliminate current across-the-board salary incentives for NBCTs. The law requires that in the future, teachers who earn or renew National Board Certification status will receive a 10 percent salary increase *only* if they work in a school that has been on the state’s roster of low-performing schools for two or more consecutive years. A similar proposal from the governor’s office has been on the table in South Carolina. In Charlotte, the previous superintendent considered, as a last resort, the option of transferring “high-performing teachers”—including NBCTs—into schools declared to be in a state of emergency. According to a recent report by the Education Commission of the States, over the last year, nine governors in their state-of-the-state addresses spoke about the need to pay teachers differently and proposed some form of merit pay to attract and reward teachers for teaching and succeeding with lower performing students.

New research on National Board Certified Teachers indicates that these policy solutions are too simplistic and could be counterproductive. A six-state survey of NBCTs found—overwhelmingly—that financial incentives alone will not lure these accomplished teachers to low-performing schools. Other factors such as strong principal leadership, a collegial staff with a shared teaching philosophy, adequate resources necessary to teach, and a supportive and active parent community were far more powerful determinants.⁵ As H.L. Mencken once wrote, “For every complex social problem there is a simple solution ... that is wrong.” Too often, teaching policies in North Carolina and across the nation are developed without a sufficient understanding of the realities of classrooms, teachers, and students. We believe policy makers can deepen their understandings and fine tune their policy decisions by tapping into the expertise of accomplished teachers who share their interest in high-performing schools.

In the 2001 report *Redefining the Teacher as Leader*, a task force organized by the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) found that the unique voice of teacher leaders is “too seldom heard or their views even solicited” and urged education decision makers to “exploit a potentially splendid resource for reform ... the experience, ideas, and capacity to lead of the nation’s schoolteachers.” With this in mind, the National Education Association has come up with a common-sense idea: *Ask highly accomplished teachers themselves what it will take to recruit and retain them in high-needs schools.*

On August 17, 2005, over 550 North Carolina NBCTs, administrators, and policy makers assembled in Greensboro to address the vexing problem of recruiting and retaining accomplished teachers for

high-needs schools. Before the meeting, the NBCTs read a number of background papers and research summaries. At the meeting, they listened to the state's leading policy makers and educators articulate their views on the issues at hand and then participated in 20 highly-structured, small group work sessions. Facilitated by specially prepared teacher leaders, the NBCTs analyzed the facts, grounded them in their own classroom experiences, and then quickly developed preliminary ideas about what needed to be done. After the meeting, they were invited to remain connected and continue the conversation via a powerful listserv dialogue where they refined their thinking and provided more details as to how and why certain recruitment and retention strategies would or would not work. What the NBCTs had to say about present barriers and possible solutions was focused, insightful, and provocative. Their knowledge of classrooms, the students they teach, and the communities in which they work clearly provided a powerful context for the recommendations that are assembled in this paper.

NBCTs who already teach in high-needs schools recognize the many obstacles they face in helping students achieve and how difficult it is to recruit quality teachers and keep them long enough to make a difference. Mary Ward, who teaches in a high-needs school, put it this way:

Let me tell you. We deal with overcrowded classes, too many supervision duties, lack of teacher empowerment, insufficient numbers of textbooks, lack of seating room for students (I have two students who have to sit at the table at my desk), lack of needed teaching supplies, etc. These are the "real" issues for us. These are the reasons why teachers leave our school districts. We have Leandro money, but no teacher-say on how it is spent. I don't need more repetitive staff development (that most of our Leandro money is currently being spent on). I need the resources I know will help my students learn.

Georgia Abeyounis, a technology specialist in a rural high-needs school, lamented about the lack of up-to-date resources available to her students:

We still have 10-year old Windows 95 computers that barely function for e-mail, let alone allow for innovative Internet uses. We have no software to use with the Windows 95 computers so we must rely on a few Internet sites that will run on our computers. We have had *no* technology budget for seven years.

Glenda Blaisdell-Buck, NBCT and library media specialist, further commented on the realities of teaching in a high-needs school:

Teachers here work really hard every day to improve student achievement, but we just have a lot of things stacked against us. Many of our parents struggle with literacy issues of their own. We have children who are homeless, who may be abused, who don't always know when they will get something to eat. Often, our students' parents are working so many jobs that they can't come into the school, or they had bad experiences in school themselves and do not want to darken a school's doors ever again. We have gangs in some of our neighborhoods. We have transient populations, and students moving from foster home to foster home. These are our teaching realities.





NBCTs like Mary, Georgia, and Glenda do not point to these issues as excuses but to help policy makers understand the context in which they teach. NBCTs believe strongly that all students can achieve, but they recognize that, in situations like those described, teachers need much more support to help students break through to success. They also need policies that provide the right mix of resources and rewards for helping students who come to school with very diverse and complex needs. Students cannot be treated as if they are widgets to be assembled on the school factory conveyer belt; instead, their teachers need to be encouraged to use their

expertise and best professional judgment to ensure their students' success by meeting their individual needs. As Georgia Abeyounis noted:

As NBCTs we are often *yoked* by pacing guides and by curriculum decisions that don't seem to make sense for our students. School districts look for those "one-size-fits-all" reading programs that don't always fit our students. Our expertise is not fully appreciated when we are presented with rigid six-point lesson plans that fail to take into account our teaching expertise and our knowledge of our students' academic and social needs.

For Charlotte teacher Jennifer Morrison, the accountability system often emphasizes the wrong approach to teaching, does not adequately recognize growth in student achievement, and can be insulting to her as a professional.

This does not mean NBCTs want to avoid accountability. In fact, the majority believes that teachers ought to be paid for results, but many feel the current system of testing and getting paid for test score gains does little to encourage effective teaching. In fact, it can also discourage teachers from moving to high-needs schools, where challenges are greater and bonuses more difficult to earn.

Lack of monetary compensation is not the only deterrent, however. As Wake County teacher Carolyn Moser noted, when it comes to recruiting and retaining NBCTs for high-needs schools, "Money isn't everything. Schools and districts must have lots to offer even outside the financial realm—a collegial and supportive atmosphere, high expectations for teaching and learning, and opportunities for professional growth and leadership."

This does not imply that NBCTs and other accomplished teachers would not expect to be paid more for working and being successful in high-needs schools. Rather, they would like to create a more comprehensive and responsive system of teacher development that includes new student assessments, professional development, supports, and rewards. They have very specific ideas about how to get NBCTs and other accomplished teachers into the state's high-needs schools. These ideas include the following recommendations:

1. Ensure that all administrators will use the skills and knowledge of NBCTs and other accomplished teachers;
2. Create opportunities for all teachers to teach effectively in high-needs schools;
3. Develop NBCTs as leaders for high-needs schools;
4. Create an array of incentives to attract NBCTs and other accomplished teachers to high-needs schools;
5. Create the conditions to develop new NBCTs inside high-needs schools;
6. Build awareness among policy makers, practitioners, and the public about the importance of National Board Certification.

Evaluating and Rewarding Good Teaching

"I believe in curriculum standards. I believe that students must grow academically and that we as educators are accountable for that growth. But making students' performance on standardized tests our top priority has its costs. When we do that, we are not giving all the attention we need to give to children's affective development—to family support, child-centered teaching, and the building of relationships in school and community.

I have been teaching for nine years in a high-needs school and it has taken me most of that time to figure out how to teach high-needs children and to develop the skill set necessary to help them succeed. Great teaching must be given time and support to develop and does not always or immediately show up on end-of-grade and end-of-course tests. In addition to the all-important test scores, other data need to be seen as valid measures of a teacher's accomplishments, including student and parent surveys, classroom measurements (particularly over the course of the school year), self-reflection on the development of classroom and instructional processes, and observations by colleagues. An accomplished teacher pays attention to data—all kinds of data.

I get a little tired of the state and my district dangling bits of ABC money in front of me to get me to buy into test scores as the primary measure of a teacher's skills. In fact, I find it rather insulting. It is a fact that teachers do not get paid enough. We simply need to be paid more, and if I could expect another 12 to 20 percent salary raise to work at a school with more problems than mine, I would consider it. I need the money like everyone else, but quit pretending that \$350 to \$750 bonuses (which are what I get after taxes) are gold. Let's remember that professionals in the business world regularly receive thousands of dollars in performance bonuses for doing their jobs well.

I want to get paid for my skill set, my experience, my accomplishments, and the 10–12 hours I put in per day—as well as the results I bring in. If that kind of professional and financial respect were offered at a difficult school, I would think seriously about moving."

—Jennifer Morrison, NBCT, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

The Recommendations

What follows is a fairly exhaustive list of NBCT ideas and recommendations that, if heeded, could solve North Carolina’s staffing problems in high-needs schools. We realize that it is unlikely that all of these ideas and actions will be implemented—and certainly not at once. We urge policy makers, however, to give close attention to the proposed strategies under each of these six critical issue areas and how they link together. Only a comprehensive set of solutions will solve the complex problem of recruiting and retaining accomplished teachers for high-needs schools.

1. Ensure that all administrators will use the skills and knowledge of NBCTs and other accomplished teachers

Accomplished teachers cannot have a positive impact on any school—much less a high-needs school—unless they are given the latitude to use their expertise. As NBCT Mary Ward stated in a list-serv discussion, “Presence without empowerment equals no change.” From the perspective of NBCTs like Mary, many school and district administrators either know too little about the National Board process and the level of expertise National Board Certification represents or they have not yet grasped the potential of teacher leaders to improve schools.

In a recent national survey, NBCTs, including those working in high-needs schools, reported that they were largely underutilized by their principals in school reform efforts. Once they were certified, their leadership roles and activities did not change much, if at all. One might hope that in North Carolina, after a decade of strong state support for National Board Certification, the situation might be different, but NBCTs in North Carolina say it is not.

An NBCT who attended the North Carolina Summit spoke of her principal’s lack of interest in and support of National Board Certification and his refusal to recognize or draw upon “what we know about teaching and learning.” Her comments were echoed by many other attendees during the Summit discussions. “We are constantly overlooked,” said one NBCT. “We are not even considered as assets.” Another NBCT asserted that, rather than having educators who work together as colleagues, “at my school, we have administrators and then we have subordinates.”

The Summit participants made it clear that they are eager to work in partnership with administrators to solve teaching and learning problems. Without that support from administrators, they believe even the best teachers have little hope of making a major impact on school improvement. During a Summit panel discussion, policy makers and teachers concurred that most state programs that prepare administrators have not paid enough attention to ensuring that school leaders understand and know how to use the high level of skills and knowledge that NBCTs and other accomplished teachers possess.

NBCTs of North Carolina recommend that new policies and programs:

- 1A. Require that North Carolina’s university-based education administration programs and the North Carolina Principals’ Executive Program (PEP) use NBCTs or other accomplished teachers in training future administrators.
- 1B. Provide incentives to higher education for the express purpose of hiring NBCTs or other accomplished teachers to provide training not only to new teachers, but to prospective and practicing administrators.

Why I Teach in a High-Needs School

“Becoming an NBCT was one of the best decisions I have made since becoming a part of the education profession. I readily admit that the first draw was the money. The second was the challenge. I’ll also admit that the potential impact of the National Board experience on student learning was not on my original top 10 list. After completing the process, it moved to my top three.

It was during the reflections portion of the National Board process that I realized I did not know how to teach writing. As a fourth grade teacher, this was a devastating blow but also one of the best things I could have learned about myself. With some hesitation, I discussed this revelation with my principal. He commended me on my openness and my commitment to staff development to strengthen this shortcoming. Each year since, my students’ writing scores improve over what I was able to help the previous class to accomplish.

I should not have been surprised by my principal’s response to my discovery. While he had his reservations about the National Board process and its impact on student learning, he willingly supported all who attempted the process. As a result, there are 13 NBCTs at my rural K–5 school, the most at any school in my county.

We are a Title I school with 43 percent of our population on free or reduced lunch. We have a large Hispanic population (34 percent), but our school also serves one of the most affluent neighborhoods in our county. Meeting the needs of all these students is a big challenge. The National Board process and the standards upon which certification is based helped me to have a better understanding of how students learn. The process also helped me to better organize what I was doing to provide the best opportunities for my students’ success.

My school might not be considered a high-needs school because of our high academic performance; however, I think it is ‘high-needs’ because of the large Limited English Proficient (LEP) population. These students require a lot of our energy, time, and flexibility to ensure their success in learning. Not everyone who teaches has the desire to teach these students. I usually have ‘the low and the poor’ in my classes. They are one of the main reasons I stay here. I see the growth in each student every year. The growth is not always in academics, but the social skills of the child are just as important. Convincing parents that I care about the whole child and the family allow me the opportunity to remove barriers that could hinder learning. I firmly believe that ‘students do not care about learning until they learn you care.’

Another reason I stay at my school is because of the freedom my principal gives me to teach. He views me as a professional and trusts me to do my job to the best of my ability. There is another high-needs school where I would love to have the opportunity to teach, but I know my philosophy and teaching style would be less welcomed by that school’s leadership. So I am content to help those who need me where I am.”

—Kathy Drew, NBCT, Wayne County Schools

- 1C. Incorporate coursework on using teacher leadership for school improvement in certification programs for new administrators and ensure that they understand and can apply the NBPTS five core propositions in supporting teacher leadership.
- 1D. Create a statewide program that enables NBCTs to become administrators in high-needs schools without the loss of any National Board incentives and support the program with free or reduced tuition at state universities.
- 1E. Require that K–12 administrators and university faculty shadow NBCTs or other accomplished teachers so they can appreciate the complexities of teaching and learning in today’s schools and how teachers need to be supported.

2. Create opportunities for all teachers to teach effectively in high-needs schools

Many NBCTs want to teach our most challenged students and they know what it really takes to be effective in schools that serve high-needs populations—smaller class sizes and student loads, money to purchase equipment (e.g., science lab supplies) and books (e.g., classroom libraries), and curriculum and instructional supports. For them, going to high-needs schools without the right resources would be akin to having a surgeon go into the operating room without a scalpel.

More than anything else, NBCTs and other accomplished teachers who moved to a high-needs school would want to be able to use their own professional expertise as well as have access to new technologies and more time to work with their colleagues in analyzing student work, planning lessons, and building better relationships with students and families. As one NBCT in a high-needs school noted, “Right now we don’t have time to do anything except just survive the day.” Another observed, “If we did not have to deal with so much paperwork and clerical tasks, we could spend more time helping children learn.” With more time and resources available, NBCTs and other accomplished teachers would be able to mentor new teachers and coach colleagues who need to learn new teaching strategies.

Governor Easley’s *2004 Teacher Working Conditions Survey* revealed that only 53 percent of the state’s teachers agree that they “assist” in determining the content of in-service professional development. While teachers expressed general satisfaction with the professional development they receive, many want more training in how to reach diverse learners, particularly those on Individualized Education Plans and those who are Limited English Proficient. At high-needs schools, teachers often spend their own money to get the training they need. As one NBCT disclosed, “I have to pay for my own substitutes to go to the kind of professional development they believe I need and fight for the right to go to conferences and present workshops myself.”

Many NBCTs also reported that faculty in high-needs schools often have to attend mandated, top-down staff development workshops. These “one-size” in-service offerings do not sit well with most NBCTs who have a clear understanding of what they know and do not know and what kinds of professional development will have the greatest impact on their teaching and on student achievement. Rarely, they say, do school districts listen to them.

Pilot Schools Staffed by NBCTs

“I would like to see a high-needs school in each school district in North Carolina become a pilot school staffed with NBCTs and lead by administrators who recognize the wealth of talent that NBCTs represent. In these high-needs schools, NBCTs and administrators would not only be paid extra to be there but could earn additional bonuses for taking the students to ‘School of Distinction’ and eventually ‘School of Excellence’ status.

NBCTs would be given the materials, resources, money, and professional flexibility they need to help children succeed—including excellent literature, an abundance of math manipulatives, science equipment, current maps and globes, up-to-date computers and software, and classroom technology resources such as SmartBoards, mobile wireless tablet PC labs, large screen TVs, digital cameras, projectors, online educational software subscriptions, Internet conferencing capabilities, and the latest reference sources.

Some of the money for these resources could easily come from what we spend on textbooks that fail to engage our students. NBCTs don’t need math books to teach our math curriculum. We don’t need science books that are already out-of-date before we unbox them. We don’t need social studies books, most of which are too difficult for our high-needs students to read. We do need maps, globes, and e-books into which we can download age-appropriate cultural and geographical information for our students. We need multimedia science rooms with shelves that are stocked with science supplies.

If Bill Gates and North Carolina high school educators can dream about and implement small, innovative technology-rich high schools, why can’t we also dream, plan, fund, and create small, innovative, technology-rich elementary and middle schools where a staff of NBCTs serve high-needs kids? If we were able to give our students the tools to learn, the gift of a dream, and a plan for their futures, they would be an awesome group of lifelong learners. Yet here we are with our pacing guides, our textbooks, our six-point lesson plans, our test stress, and our archaic discipline plans and we wonder why our high-needs students aren’t performing better.”

—Georgia Abeyounis, NBCT, Pitt County Schools

NBCTs of North Carolina recommend that new policies and programs:

- 2A. Give NBCTs and other accomplished teachers in high-needs schools the flexibility to use research-based practices that go beyond scripted curricula.
- 2B. Provide two additional licensed teachers per high-needs school for the purpose of allowing creative scheduling and providing time for collaboration and planning.
- 2C. Provide additional teacher-driven professional development in high-needs schools that addresses the needs of second language and other diverse learners.
- 2D. Guarantee that every teacher has the opportunity to identify and choose 30 percent of his or her own professional development offerings, with another 20 percent allocated on a departmental or grade level basis, and the remaining 50 percent of professional development on a whole-school basis.
- 2E. Provide protected, uninterrupted, common planning time of 7 hours per week per teacher so colleagues can share ideas, materials, activities, etc., by teams, subject areas, and grade levels.
- 2F. Provide all teachers with the necessary technology to maintain instructional standards, parent communication, and personal/professional development, e.g., laptop computers to be used at school or home and telephones with sufficient outside phone lines in each classroom.
- 2G. Target funds for reducing class size to high-needs schools so all teachers have more time to know students better and have more time to collaboratively plan and improve instruction.
- 2H. Use Governor Easley's *Teacher Working Conditions Survey* to analyze what is working and not working in each of the state's schools.

3. Develop NBCTs as leaders for high-needs schools



NBCTs are proven teaching experts. This does not mean that every NBCT has all the skills needed to lead school improvement efforts in every one of North Carolina's diverse communities. An NBCT may be highly accomplished in one context and still need support to become highly accomplished in other contexts. All one has to do is imagine the new skills that a cardiologist who has only worked at Duke University Medical Center will need before being sent to work as a general practitioner in an under-resourced public health clinic in Bertie County. Like the cardiologist, NBCTs have much of the "right stuff" for leadership in their field, but they may not have the knowledge of community and local culture that will enable them to teach effectively and work well with their colleagues.

Research tells us of one area in which all teachers—including NBCTs—need more support: working with diverse students.

The state's 2004 *Teacher Working Conditions Survey* found that 60 percent of North Carolina teachers are now teaching second language learners; yet, only nine percent have had more than 10 hours of professional development in working with these students during the past two years.

In addition, not all NBCTs have the skills to lead their colleagues. They may be experts in teaching their content to students, but they may need additional training to learn how to help other adults teach the way they do. The National Board assessment process does not “test” for teacher leadership, and policy makers should not assume that all NBCTs are ready and willing to take on leadership roles in areas like coaching their peers or mentoring novices and under-prepared teachers. Lisa Mitchell, NBCT in Greensboro, noted, “Going through the National Board process pushes teachers to think about their teaching and make better decisions for their students, but that does not automatically make them ready to be teacher leaders for a high-needs school.”



Finally, we have learned that even when NBCTs are ready to lead, there are often no pathways for them to do so. One key barrier: Once NBCTs step forward to lead—and no longer teach students the majority of the day—they lose their NBCT salary supplement. As Mitchell observed, “With North Carolina’s 70 percent classroom teaching requirement for NBCTs to receive their salary supplement, it is really hard to create leadership roles for us without making us administrators.” Even within the current limits on work outside the classroom, most school districts do not have the resources to release NBCTs for leadership roles. And when the resources are available, district leaders often lack the training and experience to maximize NBCTs’ leadership potential.

NBCTs of North Carolina recommend that new policies and programs:

- 3A. Allow NBCTs to serve as full-time mentors, coaches, or in other specified school leadership positions without losing their 12 percent salary incentive.
- 3B. Create collaborative leadership models to train administrators and teachers in site-based decision making strategies.
- 3C. Provide leadership training in cultural diversity and awareness as well as multiple teaching strategies in order to use NBCTs as full-time mentors and coaches of other teachers in high-needs schools.
- 3D. Ensure that all teachers have weekly collaboration time dedicated to addressing problems and issues unique to high-needs students. NBCTs can serve as team leaders for these collaborative sessions.
- 3E. Create and fund 11-month school leader positions for NBCTs to enable them to assist schools and local education agencies (LEAs) with curriculum development, professional development planning, and other specified tasks.

4. Create an array of incentives to attract NBCTs and other accomplished teachers to high-needs schools

Many NBCTs want to work in our most challenging schools. From a recent national survey, we know that NBCTs seek certification primarily because they are looking for new professional challenges and also wanting to demonstrate their impact on student learning. However, these survey data reveal that if policy makers want to attract accomplished teachers to high-needs schools, they need to do more than offer financial incentives, which are necessary but not sufficient.⁶ More professional development, smaller class sizes, additional teaching assistants, and an array of financial perquisites should be put on the table.

NBCTs are in general agreement that the *last thing* policy makers ought to do is develop a single incentive to attract accomplished teachers to high-needs schools. On the one hand, while many NBCTs are not adverse to pay for performance, they want a system that encourages teachers to move to high-needs schools. Some NBCTs believe that the state's current accountability rating system serves as a disincentive to moving to a high-needs school—a belief supported by researchers at Duke University who found that the state's system of negative accountability labels can have adverse effects on teacher retention rates and, to some extent, the capacity of negatively labeled schools to attract teachers with higher qualifications.⁷

On the other hand, NBCTs were quick to point out that different teachers are at different points in their careers and are in the midst of different life experiences. We know that the incentives needed to recruit and retain a well-prepared 22-year-old novice to a high-needs school is not the same as the incentives required to attract and retain a 45-year-old National Board Certified Teacher or a 58-year-old retired teacher who could be lured back into service. A younger teacher may want a salary bonus while an older one may want to beef up his or her retirement package.

NBCTs of North Carolina recommend that new policies and programs:

- 4A. Create an array of incentives for different NBCTs and other accomplished teachers to consider in order to move to high-needs schools—including retention bonuses, relocation reimbursement, tuition-free advanced degrees at state universities, housing subsidies (mortgage reduction, teacher housing villages, etc.), state income tax credits, state university scholarships for children of recruited and retained teachers, and early retirement incentives (if teachers go to and stay in high-needs schools for at least five years).
- 4B. Invest in strategies to eliminate the stigma of working in a low-performing school and continue to provide financial bonuses for growth as well as proficiency.



Challenging Assignments Deserve Extra Compensation

“When I say this, I feel guilty—almost greedy in a way. But simply expecting accomplished teachers to accept challenging assignments with no extra compensation of any kind is a shortsighted policy. We need to rely on more than just the altruism of teachers to recruit our best talent to our most challenging schools.

During my teaching career, I have always been the beneficiary of top-level bonuses under the ABCs program. I have also always worked in affluent, high-performing schools. I’ve even come to count on that money as a part of my salary. If that money were taken away to provide incentives for teachers in high-needs schools, I would have to give serious consideration to moving to such a school to continue to supplement my income.

At the same time, I do not believe it is appropriate to require NBCTs to work in high-needs schools in order to receive their 12 percent salary stipend. Working in high-needs schools takes a certain set of skills and experiences that many teachers, regardless of their certification status, may not have or have yet to develop. If we require that teachers work in high-needs schools in order to receive the NBCT yearly bonus, I think we will simply chase teachers away from National Board Certification and reduce the overall quality of teachers in all of North Carolina’s schools. I don’t think this is what most parents and local citizens want for their schools.”

—Bill Ferriter, NBCT, Wake County Schools

5. Create the conditions to develop NBCTs inside of high-needs schools

Many high-needs schools are located in isolated rural communities and, in many cases, it will be difficult to attract accomplished teachers from other areas into these schools. As one NBCT in such a school noted:

Most of our students face enormous academic challenges and need so much individual and small group instruction. We all stay late and go home exhausted. We just do not have all the pieces in place to grow our own NBCTs. We have a dedicated group of teachers, a number of whom are NBCTs, and there are several more who want to become certified, but quality time for pursuing the reflection, planning, and writing process would collapse their fragile “house of cards.”

The North Carolina Association of Educators has developed a set of high quality support programs to recruit and develop new NBCTs, as has the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching. Without these efforts, North Carolina would not have the most NBCTs in the nation and would not have as many teacher experts in the state’s classrooms. While these efforts focus primarily on grooming individual teachers for the rigors of the National Board assessment process, North Carolina needs a specific program to grow and utilize NBCTs from within high-needs school communities. One shining example that has emerged naturally can be found at D. F. Walker Elementary School in the Edenton-Chowan School District.

Walker has 85 percent of its students meeting grade level standards, has become a North Carolina School of Distinction, and has met 20 of 21 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets under No Child Left Behind. At Walker, the National Board standards underpin the school’s teacher evaluation and professional development processes. Now over 50 percent of the faculty are NBCTs and, most notably, so are the principal and assistant principal. Teaching is made public as teachers watch and review each other’s teaching, and NBCTs are specifically assigned to support the school’s novice and under-prepared teachers. School administrators need to know how to create more “D. F. Walkers” and they need novel incentives, rewards, and tools to do so.

NBCTs of North Carolina recommend that new policies and programs:

- 5A. Allocate to every high-needs school 1.3 full-time equivalent (FTE) for every new NBCT hired or “grown” in that school.
- 5B. Develop a school-wide model for teacher evaluation and professional development, based on National Board standards, in order to grow more NBCTs in high-needs schools and, in doing so, transform the way teachers are assessed and supported.
- 5C. Provide opportunities for new and/or underprepared (e.g., lateral entry) teachers to team-teach with NBCTs for their first year.

6. Build awareness among policy makers, practitioners, and the public about the importance of National Board Certification in the service of high-needs schools.

The staffing problems of high-needs schools are not intractable. In fact, the solutions are all around us. Almost everything that needs to be done to increase the presence of accomplished



Educating Our Administrators about National Board Certification

"I was the first teacher in my county to achieve National Board Certification. Today we only have seven teachers who hold this distinguished honor. I once approached a former superintendent in my county about starting a support group for National Board candidates and providing some incentives to teachers to seek National Board Certification. His reply: 'I first have to get them certified by the state.' Teacher certification was a major problem in our system, and I understood what he was facing at that time. Even so, I knew that we were passing up an opportunity to strengthen our teaching force and our schools.

Unfortunately, not too much has changed since then. We still have many teachers and administrators who do not understand the value of National Board Certification for students in our high-needs schools. In particular, I believe we need to focus on educating school administrators, especially principals, about the potential of the National Board process to help close the achievement gap. I have found that most NBCTs think strategically in almost everything they do. They give more than 100 percent, and they are dedicated to their students. They can make a difference in school success.

Many schools are still staffed with teachers who tend to follow the direction of the principal. If we hope to involve teachers more in improving schools, we must give more attention to the role of the principal in encouraging, motivating, and supporting teachers. When I pursued National Board Certification, I received very little support.

My accomplishment was not recognized, and nothing changed at my school. There were no encouraging words for other teachers, no suggestion that they follow my example and seek certification for the benefit of the students. I took it upon myself to encourage other teachers to become aware of the difference it would make in their classrooms if they would go through the National Board process. I stood on my soapbox and I explained the benefits, the value of the professional development experience, and even the 12 percent increase in salary—but nothing worked. The overall attitude at the school was that it was too hard, too subjective, and too long of a process.

'Grow Your Own NBCTs' is an excellent concept, but it requires a trusting partnership between administrators and teachers. They must work cooperatively to strike a clear and concise agreement about how teachers will be supported as they seek certification and how they will be utilized once they succeed. If the principal supports the process, the teachers will buy into it. In my work at UNC-Pembroke as a National Board Facilitator, I have had many prospective National Board candidates tell me that the support of their principal is vital if they are going to pursue certification. Most of the time, they feel they don't have it.

I also agree with the recommendation that would allow NBCTs to move into administrative positions without losing their 12 percent salary differential. As more NBCTs begin to move into administration and become school leaders, we will really begin to reap the benefits of North Carolina's investment in the National Board process. Principals who are NBCTs will be willing and able to work side by side with other NBCTs to help solve some of the problems we are facing in our schools. When those principals are leaders of high-needs schools, they will attract more NBCTs and other accomplished teachers to the students who need them so much.

It would be wonderful to know that you have a principal with an open door policy who wants you to have a voice and play an active role in the decision making that takes place at your school."

—Carolyn McClennahan Banks, NBCT, Hoke County Schools

teachers in high-needs schools is being done somewhere. What is missing is a comprehensive plan for North Carolina school districts that invests federal, state, and local dollars in the most effective strategies to address the problems. In addition, too few policy makers and local education leaders understand what NBCTs know and can do—both in determining how students need to be taught and in shaping policies and programs that will successfully recruit and retain good teachers for our most challenging teaching and learning environments.

Strong outreach efforts need to be launched. The North Carolina Policy Summit on Supporting and Staffing High-Needs Schools is just the beginning. As Summit keynote speaker Carolyn Banks said, “A thousand mile journey has begun toward placing our best teachers in the schools that need them the most.”

NBCTs of North Carolina recommend new policies and programs:

- 6A. Hold a local or regional summit for the purpose of sharing the findings of the North Carolina Summit with the school administrators, teachers, and members of the community.
- 6B. Require university faculty—including the arts and sciences and teacher education professors who prepare future teachers—to spend time working with NBCTs and other accomplished teachers in K–12 classrooms.
- 6C. Expect each state-elected public official and/or lawmaker to spend time with NBCTs and other accomplished teachers, both in school settings and at the policy table.



If policy makers want to ensure that NBCTs and other accomplished teachers are recruited and grown in the state's high-needs schools, then they must go beyond the "simple solutions" reflected in the recent Georgia legislation and in the narrowly defined "pay-for-performance" ideas currently touted across the nation. Salary incentives alone will not get the job done. NBCTs have much to offer our struggling schools and they are clearly part of the answer to these schools' teaching quality problems. Even so, a number of intertwined policies and practices must be in place if we expect to realize the potential of NBCTs to improve high-needs schools.

What is needed is a comprehensive approach that takes into account the working conditions that North Carolina's NBCTs tell us are necessary to attract, promote, and sustain quality teaching in a school. These conditions include: (1) skillful administrators who know how to lead school improvement and support teacher leadership; (2) sufficient curriculum resources needed to engage and teach students; (3) a high quality results-driven professional development program; and (4) the time for teachers to reflect collaboratively on student data and their own teaching practice, searching for the most effective strategies to reach every child.

Our nation and our state have the capacity to solve this problem. Thirty-six years ago, America developed the expertise and wherewithal to send a man to the moon. Doing so required the use of reliable data and evidence, sustainable plans, actions driven by professionals in the field, and a great deal of political will. Recruiting, developing, and retaining accomplished teachers for our highest needs schools will require no less.

While the solutions will not require rocket science, there is a science to putting the pieces of the teaching quality puzzle together. NBCTs have demonstrated their teaching prowess through a grueling assessment process. They know their students and the communities in which they teach. They understand what makes schools work for kids. Policy makers and other educational decision makers would be wise to listen to and learn from NBCTs in North Carolina as they search for better ways to close the teaching quality and achievement gaps that exist in all of our school communities.



Footnotes

¹ Sanders, W. L. & Rivers, J. C. (1996). *Cumulative and residual effects of teachers on future student academic achievement*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center; Rivkin, S.G., Hanushek, E.A., & Kain, J.F. (2002). *Teachers, schools and academic achievement*. Dallas: University of Texas-Dallas Schools Project; Clotfelter, C.T., Ladd, H. F., Vigdor, J., & Diaz, R. (2003, February). "Do school accountability systems make it more difficult for low performing schools to attract and retain high quality teachers?" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Economic Association, Washington, DC.

² Berry, B. & Hirsch, E. (October 2005). "Recruiting and retaining teachers for hard-to-staff schools" (Issue Brief). Washington, DC: National Governors Association.

³ Humphrey, D. C., Koppich, J. E., & Hough, H. J. (2005, March 3). Sharing the wealth: National Board Certified Teachers and the students who need them most. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 13(18). Retrieved June 1, 2005 from <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v13n18/>.

⁴ Rotherham, A. (2005, March 30). "Give credit where it's due: Putting nationally certified teachers into the classrooms that need them most." *Education Week*, 24(29), 48.

⁵ SRI International, WestEd, Julia Koppich and Associates, and the Center for Teaching Quality are completing a three-year study examining the "Impact of NBCTs in Low Performing Schools"—a study that has focused on the kinds of schools in which NBCTs are most likely to be found, explores why NBCTs choose to teach in these types of schools, and reveals the challenges facing districts that seek to increase the numbers of NBCTs in low-performing schools. To review initial findings see Humphrey, D. C., Koppich, J. E. & Hough, H. J. (2005, March 3). Sharing the wealth: National Board Certified Teachers and the students who need them most. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 13(18). Retrieved June 1, 2005 from <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v13n18/> and Berry, B., Johnson, D., & Montgomery, D. (2005, February). The power of teacher leadership. *Educational Leadership*, 56-60.

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⁷ Clotfelter, C.T. & Ladd, H. F. (2003). "Do school accountability systems make it more difficult for low performing schools to attract and retain high quality teachers?" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Economic Association, Washington, DC.



The Center for Teaching Quality thanks the following National Board Certified Teachers for their contributions to this report:

Georgia Abeyounis

For thirty-four years, Georgia Abeyounis has served as a teacher, administrator, and specialist in reading, curriculum, and technology. With degrees from East Carolina and the University of Georgia, she has taught every elementary grade (K-6) as well as undergraduate and graduate levels. A 2004 NBCT, Georgia also assisted with the creation of a quality teacher education program at Chowan College that has been accredited by DPI, NCATE, and SACS.

Carolyn McClennahan Banks

Carolyn McClennahan Banks is a career and technical education teacher at East Hoke Middle School in Hoke County, where she has taught for 12 years. She received her undergraduate degree in business from UNC-Pembroke and a master's degree in technology education from NC A&T State University, and was the recipient of the TE International Teaching Excellence Award in 2002. Carolyn completed the requirements for National Board Certification in 2000, becoming the first teacher in her county to do so. For the last four years, she has served as a National Board facilitator for UNC-Pembroke. Carolyn is married and has three sons, two of whom are Air Force Academy graduates.

Glenda Blaisdell-Buck

Glenda Blaisdell-Buck is a library media specialist for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. In 1999, she received her National Board Certification in Early Adolescence/Generalist. Recently, she was presented the "Hometown Heroes" award by WBT Radio for initiating and coordinating a drive to collect used band and orchestra instruments to send to students who lost their musical instruments in the recent hurricanes in Louisiana.

Kathy Drew

In 2001, Kathy Drew achieved National Board Certification as a Middle Childhood/Generalist. For twelve years, she has worked at Spring Creek Elementary School in Wayne County, the past nine as a fourth grade teacher. She has served as chair of her school's leadership team (2004-2005), member of the student assistance team (1999-2004), co-chair of the school improvement team's writing division, and school representative for news and publicity. She is also a trained mentor.

Bill Ferriter

Bill Ferriter is certified as a Middle Childhood/Generalist. He teaches sixth grade language arts and social studies in the Wake County Public School System, representing the district as the 2005 Teacher of the Year. He has served as a Senior Fellow in the Teacher Leaders Network and a Teacher-in-Residence at the Center for Teaching Quality. Bill has written extensively about teaching and learning, having articles published in Threshold magazine and the Journal for Staff Development. He currently moderates the post-summit electronic conversation focused on the challenges of staffing high-needs schools between the almost 400 National Board Certified Teachers in North Carolina who attended the policy summit in Greensboro.

Lisa Mitchell

With twelve years of classroom experience in North and South Carolina, Lisa Mitchell is presently on educational leave, completing her doctorate in curriculum and instruction at UNC-Greensboro. In 2001, she completed National Board Certification requirements for Early and Middle Childhood/Art. Her past awards include Bessemer City Central Teacher of the Year, Pinnacle Technology Leader for Gaston County Schools, and NC Museum of Natural Sciences Educator of Excellence.

Jennifer Morrison

Jennifer Morrison is an eighth grade language arts and reading teacher for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. She earned her National Board Certification as a fourth year teacher. She has been honored as a Charlotte-Mecklenburg Teacher of the Year finalist, a Charlotte Teaching Fellow in 2005, and was named ASCD's National Outstanding Young Educator of the Year in 2003. Currently, she works as a trainer for the North Carolina Teacher Academy and as a teacher consultant with the UNC-Charlotte Writing Project. In 2004, she received the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's National Outstanding Young Educator Award.

Carolyn Moser

With thirty years of experience in Granville and Wake Counties, Carolyn Moser is a National Board Certified Teacher in Early Adolescence/Science. This trained mentor is also certified as a North Carolina Environmental Educator, currently serves as a team leader and member of her school's leadership team, and actively writes grants for her school and district. She has been honored as a Kenan Fellow for Curriculum and Leadership Development, a Fulbright Memorial Fund Teacher, and a USA Today Teacher Team Member.

Mary Ward

Mary Ward is a business teacher at Southeast Halifax High School in Halifax County. She received her National Board Certification in Career Technical Education in 2002. The mother of an adult son with autism, Mary has written and published many pieces about her family's journey with autism and is in the process of completing a book that shares their journey in detail. Active in community affairs, Mary advised her school's National Honor Society to raise over \$1,100 for "Relay for Life" in April 2005. In addition, she has served as a mentor teacher and National Board trained facilitator, working with NBCT candidates in her county on a weekly basis. She is also actively involved in the NCAE-NBCT Caucus and has recently been appointed to the NCAE Government Relations Commission.



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Notes

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