



NBPTS[®]

National Board for
Professional Teaching Standards

PROFILES IN EXCELLENCE: Washington State

Using a Statewide Coalition
to Transform Teaching through
National Board Certification



A SNAPSHOT OF WASHINGTON STATE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ENROLLMENT:

Serving 1,040,750 students, Washington's education system is slightly larger than the U.S. average.

(Source: www.nces.ed.gov)

SCHOOLS:

2,084 in 295 districts
(51% elementary schools; 16% middle schools;
17% high schools; 16% another configuration)

TEACHERS:

59,562

NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHERS (NBCTs):

3,975

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS:

40.4% low-income;
9.8% limited English proficiency;
5.5% African American;
15.3% Hispanic;
64.8% White;
8.6% Asian/Pacific Islander;
2.6% Native American

Source: OSPI, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Washington State Report Card



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**Using a Statewide Coalition to Transform Teaching
through National Board Certification**

***A coalition in Washington State
ensures that teachers who achieve
National Board Certification become
working assets for the improvement
of the profession as well
as student learning.***

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1998, Washington State had 51,512 classroom teachers, but only 29 of them were National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs). By 2009, the number of NBCTs in Washington had grown to 3,975—5th in the nation in total numbers, and 2nd in the nation in new teachers certifying that year. The state's successful strategy for increasing the number of NBCTs year by year is a good story, but what happens after teachers achieve certification is an even better one.

Making a Positive Impact on Teaching and Learning

National Board Certification, for veteran teachers, is a rigorous 10-part performance assessment that includes video portfolios of their classroom work, analysis of classroom practice, and evaluation of content knowledge. In one of the most comprehensive studies ever conducted of an education program (*Assessing Accomplished Teaching*, June 11, 2008), the National Research Council (NRC) found that National Board Certification has a positive impact on student achievement, teacher retention, and professional development. The NRC report states, “The evidence is clear that National Board Certification distinguishes more effective teachers...with respect to student achievement.”

NBCTs in Washington are achieving that same most sought-after result—positive impact on students. In a recent survey, 70 percent of school principals said National Board Certification had a very positive impact in the ability of teachers to make a difference in student learning. While continuing to teach, NBCTs are also:

- Leading school improvement committees and serving as department chairs.

- Supporting National Board Certification candidates by facilitating university support groups.
- Demonstrating the value of lesson study in improving math achievement.
- Advocating for system improvements by publishing their work in education journals and participating in online dialogues on teacher practice and policy.
- Serving on state commissions and professional educator advisory boards with colleges of education.
- Meeting with legislators individually and collectively to champion their education funding priorities.

A coalition that includes the governor, state department of education, the state teachers association, and an independent nonprofit organization ensures that teachers who achieve National Board Certification become “working assets for the improvement of the *profession* as well as student learning.”¹

Michaela Miller, NBCT, coordinator of candidate support for the state education agency, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

(OSPI), elaborates on the importance of this statewide coalition—which consists of the Office of the Governor, Washington Education Association (WEA), OSPI, and the nonprofit, Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (CSTP). “We’ve learned that NBCTs do not automatically assume the mantle of leadership—but with the encouragement and support from multiple directions—they will,” said Miller.

The Washington story is being played out every day through the work of the state’s National Board Certified Teachers and the coalition that supports them. Throughout the state, National Board Certified Teachers are:

- **Leading from the classroom, improving student learning.** National Board Certified Teachers are improving student learning in their own classrooms while leading school improvement efforts—building collaborative professional communities, facilitating lesson study, and designing professional development.
- **Stepping up to leadership on the state and national stage.** The voices of NBCTs are heard from Washington State to Washington, D.C., through service on state boards and commissions, presentations at association conferences, and essays, articles, and blog posts in national newspapers and education journals.
- **Serving in high-need schools.** Smart policy has led to increases in National Board Certified Teachers in high-need schools. Some have made the move to teach in a different environment, while more teachers in challenging schools are electing to become National Board certified.
- **Working with policymakers to inform sound policy.** Whether presenting testimony in legislative committee hearings or attending policy forums, NBCTs are influencing policy on classroom practice and student learning. Washington’s commitment to National Board

Certification is thus a math story and a science story, one that involves multiplying the numbers, leveraging the state’s investment, and creating an ecosystem that provides opportunities for NBCTs to accelerate student learning in the classroom and improve the education system at large.

Lessons Learned from the Washington Experience

The activities of the Washington coalition over the last decade have propelled an increase in the number of NBCTs and a surge of participation by teaching professionals in improving education on many fronts. Many of the lessons learned in Washington State are applicable to other states, as well.

- **Leveraging the investment in NBCTs.** Washington has learned that growing and supporting teacher leadership advances a reform agenda farther and faster. “National Board Certification is an authentic assessment based on the everyday world of teaching and learning. Knowing Washington teachers respect this assessment, we should encourage more teachers to participate in this process,” said Governor Chris Gregoire in a 2009 interview with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). “National Board Certification builds confidence in our teaching corps as well as the students and families our teachers serve. Parents in our state will tell you that National Board Certified Teachers make a difference in their students’ lives.”
- **Involving teacher leaders in setting policies that affect them.** According to Inverness Research, “Policies channel funds toward or away from access to professional development, structure teachers’ workdays and career paths, and define available resources. It is vital that teachers, at a large scale, are aware of, involved with, and contributing to policies that influence

NBCTs are improving student learning

in their own classrooms while leading school improvement efforts—building collaborative professional communities, facilitating lesson study, and designing professional development.

their ability to do their best teaching and continue to develop their knowledge and skills.”²

- **Uniting on goals and outcomes for maximum impact.** Partnering organizations frequently have other agendas that are not always aligned but can make a commitment to a unified front to support NBCTs and the professionalism of teaching. “We have intentionally guarded this ground,” said Terese Emry, NBCT, associate director, Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession. “The organizations do not always agree on other issues, but when it comes to building and maintaining National Board Certification in our state system, we will always come together.”
- **Dividing the work to make things happen.** “It takes a partnership to make candidate support and NBCT leadership opportunities available across the state,” observed Miller at OSPI. “There is too much for any one organization to do.”
- **Sharing responsibility for monitoring challenges and opportunities.** “All three organizations keep an ear to the ground, support innovations, and add value to the system,” said Jeanne Harmon, executive

director of the Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession. “We know all the pieces of a complex puzzle, and we help those who have suggestions for augmenting the system understand how that idea might fit into and affect the entire system.”

- **Being vigilant with a policy agenda that supports National Board Certification.** “Legislative successes like these do not happen without politically savvy leadership and the temperament to keep plugging away each time the legislature meets to gain, maintain, and grow support,” said Steve Mullin, president of the Washington Business Roundtable.
- **Providing a variety of opportunities for teachers so they can find their own paths to grow from NBCT to accomplished teacher leader.** Some teachers are fearless in speaking up and out, while others are powerful with the written word. Some want to use their classrooms as research labs; others will bring teachers together to become a collaborative learning community. Jim Meadows, the Washington Education Association’s staff lead with National Board Certification, said, “Each of our organizations brings to bear unique resources, expertise, abilities, and connections to support our state National Board system. We leverage those at different times and in different ways to maintain and grow our system.”
- **Keeping NBCTs connected.** In 2004, Inverness Research surveyed NBCTs who had received support and encouragement for leadership work as part of the Washington Initiative for National Board Teacher Certification. Three-fourths of respondents said they “need to belong to an active leadership-focused professional network in order to sustain motivation, build knowledge, seek opportunity, and develop effectiveness in leadership.”³

A Collaborative Effort To Improve Teaching and Strengthen The Profession

It took several decades for Washington to develop statewide collaborations that helped springboard National Board Certification into the forefront of education reform in the state.

With the funding of a pilot group of candidates in southwest Washington in 1994, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards sparked the state's future growth. The Washington Education Association, an affiliate of the National Education Association (NEA), was next to champion the cause with the first candidate support program in the state.

In 1999, Governor Gary Locke's support for a financial reward resulted in a 15 percent salary bonus, and his advocacy for recognition of accomplished teaching was a major factor in the decision by the Stuart Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Washington Mutual to fund the creation of a statewide support infrastructure. In 2000, the Washington Initiative for National Board Teacher Certification (WINBTC) was created by a coalition that included the governor, WEA, the three foundations, and the state education agency—the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

As the three-year grant to WINBTC neared an end, the state agency and the teachers association assumed many of the responsibilities the foundations had underwritten, including recruitment, coordination with the universities that provided facilitation for candidates, and training for support group facilitators.

In 2003, the Stuart Foundation approved funding for the Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession, an independent, nonprofit organization whose mission is to develop the leadership of accomplished teachers, amplify their voice, and inform the policy debate with commissioned research on the state's teacher workforce. Today, these statewide collaborations continue to thrive.

- To ensure candidates get started on the right foot, the Washington Education Association offers a Jump Start Seminar, a four-day boot camp to give prospective candidates knowledge of the NBPTS Standards, an immersion in the requirements of the portfolio, and the confidence to begin the candidate journey. The association also provides a one-day Home Stretch event to give candidates feedback on one portfolio entry just prior to submission, as well as the chance to prepare for the Assessment Center.
- The state agency (OSPI) delivers facilitator training for NBCTs who then work with candidate support groups at nine universities and several school districts and coordinate *Take One!*®, an NBPTS program that provides educators the opportunity to complete one video portfolio exercise from the National Board Certification process.

OSPI manages candidate support through the Washington State Conditional Loan program established by the Washington State legislature in 2009.

- Once teachers have certified, CSTP encourages them to join a statewide leadership network, take advantage of leadership opportunities such as advocacy training and writers retreats, and apply for leadership grants to support school improvement.

THE WASHINGTON STORY

Leading from the classroom, improving student learning

What NBCTs are doing...

The teaching staff at her 3rd-6th grade elementary school was “not a cohesive group of people,” said Debra Howell, NBCT. So, in 2004, she was surprised at their reaction when she approached 5th grade and multi-age teachers about the prospect of a grant for lesson study, a collaborative process for improving instruction. “Every single one showed up—and at the end of the school year.” Now, the school is a K-6 elementary, and teachers from 2nd to 6th grade are invested in using lesson study to improve math achievement.

“We were seeing results immediately,” said Howell, noting that state test scores “jumped up” after the first year and captured the attention of other teachers. Working in mixed grade level groups that included specialists and paraprofessionals, the teachers discussed their lessons on geometry one year, number sense the next. A memorable lesson presented by music teacher Andrea Peterson (NBCT and 2007 National Teacher of the Year) used musical notes to teach fractions.

In addition to improvements in student achievement, Howell said, “People started getting along with each other better and having conversations about student work. We were more respectful, more cohesive as a staff.”

Howell and the eight other NBCTs in this small rural district have collaborated on a video project, Granite Falls Rock Solid Instruction, to demonstrate for faculty district-wide what good teaching looks like.

NBCTs like Howell are leading improvement efforts in their schools with financial support from small leadership grants—building collaborative professional communities, tailoring workshops to closely match teaching needs, facilitating lesson study, and using teacher cadres to test new methods for teaching science.

At Tapteal Elementary School in eastern Washington, Karen Lipp, NBCT, facilitated math lesson study with all K-5 teachers and a Title 1 teacher. The focus on student learning resulted not only in improved math scores but also strengthened the teachers’ ability to collaborate. “The biggest benefit,” concluded math specialist Norma Eve, “was that we learned how to have professional discussions, using protocols to help the discussions, and that laid the groundwork for further work.”

The typical model for professional development at Lake Tapps Elementary in western Washington had been a presentation from someone outside the district with the result that the goals of the training did not always match the needs of the teachers, and teachers rarely had time to discuss the effectiveness of the lessons that followed.

(L-to-R): Jeanne Harmon

Executive Director, Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession

Andrea Peterson, NBCT
2007 National Teacher of the Year
Music Teacher, Monte Cristo Elementary School
Granite Falls, Washington

Michaela Miller, NBCT
Coordinator, National Board Certified Teacher Program
Office of Superintendent
of Public Instruction



Teacher leaders at Lake Tapps designed training for the staff by drawing on a survey identifying teacher needs.

Teachers surveyed at the end of the grant reported increased knowledge of science standards, increased confidence in teaching the district's new curriculum, and better understanding of effective instructional strategies. "The grant," said Tammy Zulauf, NBCT, "really established collaboration in our building. We weren't used to working together in the past. Since the grant, we have teachers planning lessons and units together."

Washington learned that big change can start with small change. An investment of a \$3,000 leadership grant empowered Dione Garcia, NBCT, to take on a leadership role at Woodinville High School in western Washington. Nine English department members "formulated new prompts for preparing students for the (Washington Assessment of Student Learning), spearheaded the adoption of new texts at all three grade levels, and addressed how to teach students to write a better thesis statement."

...with support from Washington

"After expending all that energy and commitment on becoming certified, NBCTs often found themselves asking, 'Now what?'" said Jeanne Harmon. "A big part of our mission is to help them answer that question—and assume leadership roles in their schools, districts, and the state."

In the past three years alone, NBCTs have been invited to 120 events and activities designed to build their leadership skills. Since 2003, NBCTs have been involved in more than 30 collaborative projects associated with teacher preparation, certification, development, leadership, compensation, and career structure.

Research on the impact of certification

Since Washington does not have a data system that matches students with teachers, CSTP has commissioned researchers who use other measures to gauge the impact of National Board Certified Teachers on student achievement. Recent survey data from school principals and NBCTs document positive impact on students as the result of certification.

Seventy percent of principals believe certification had a very positive impact in the teacher's ability to make a difference in student learning outcomes, and 58 percent of NBCTs agree. Seventy-six percent of principals found a positive impact on the ability to use assessment to inform instruction, and 79 percent saw positive impact on the ability to use multiple instructional strategies with students. In every category, principals—who were able to observe teachers before, during, and after certification—had a higher opinion of the contribution of certification than the NBCTs.

Researchers also measured teachers' willingness to assume leadership roles in their schools and

districts. Compared to their positions prior to certification, more NBCTs are serving as school-based coaches and lead teachers (8 percent increase), district-level curriculum coaches and subject matter specialists (7 percent increase), and mentors (5 percent increase).

Leadership Grants

With small grants funded by the Stuart Foundation, NBCTs planned and implemented collegial learning opportunities to improve teachers' ability to address the needs of their students. OSPI originally managed these grants with foundation funding beginning in 2002 and passed the effort to CSTP in 2004. Since then, 61 grants have supported 330 teachers in professional development coordinated by their NBCT colleagues.

NBCT Leadership Conference

One of the peak-experiences for NBCTs in Washington is participation in the NBCT Leadership Conference, where newly certified

teachers gather for a mix of dialogue, workshops, and recognition ceremonies. NBCTs hear from their certified colleagues about leadership roles and opportunities and then create a plan to develop and utilize their own leadership skills in their schools, districts, and beyond. The value of the conference has been documented in pre- and post-survey data. "After two days of leadership training, the attitude toward leadership changed dramatically," said Emry. "Instead of waiting for others to create the conditions of leadership for them, NBCTs realized that reaching their leadership goals was in their control."

Coordination and facilitation of the conference was initially the responsibility of the state education agency and CSTP staff. Now in an intentional effort to showcase NBCTs in leadership roles, NBCTs are coordinating this major annual event and conducting the workshops.

Direct support to candidates

Similarly, the Washington Education Association recruits more than 100 NBCTs each year to

Impact on Students: Principal and NBCT Perspectives*						
	Principals with NBCTs on staff			NBCTs		
	Q: Think about the impact of National Board Certification on the teachers' work with students. What impact do you see in their ability to...			Q: Think about your work with students. In what ways has becoming an NBCT impacted how you...		
	No/Negative Impact	Somewhat Positive Impact	Very Positive Impact	No/Negative Impact	Somewhat Positive Impact	Very Positive Impact
...make a difference in student learning outcomes	0%	30%	70%	7%	35%	58%
...evaluate individual student needs	0%	28%	72%	4%	29%	66%
...teach discipline-specific content	3%	22%	75%	16%	43%	41%
...use multiple strategies with students	0%	21%	79%	6%	36%	58%
...use assessments to inform instruction	3%	22%	76%	7%	31%	62%

*Source: Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession, 2009

Kareen Borders, NBCT
Key Peninsula Middle School
Lakebay, Washington



provide direct support to candidates for four days of Jump Start, a workshop to introduce prospective candidates to the NBPTS Standards and the portfolio requirements.

Stepping up to leadership on the state and national stage

What NBCTs are doing...

NBCTs bring their expertise to bear as members of state policy boards and teacher preparation program advisory committees. Washington has a continuum of teaching standards informed by NBPTS and national content association standards: residency, professional, and National Board Certification. The New ProTeach® Portfolio, required for Washington's second tier (professional) certificate, uses assessment structures similar to NBPTS.

Jennifer Wallace, executive director of the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) that oversees teacher preparation and certification, notes that most of the board members are National Board certified and bring valued perspective to the current work of PESB. "In response to national initiatives, our state is being pushed to come up with more meaningful measures of teacher effectiveness and use evidence of student learning. All those things are a part of what NBCTs understand. They bring a different eye that is rooted in evidence and performance."

Shannon Lawson, NBCT, said her four years as a PESB board member allowed her "to dive into the policy side of education. I've engaged with other professionals in the vital work that takes place at the state level and that directly impacts the work we do with students on a daily basis." As is true of so many NBCTs, Lawson is "amazed at the wider impact I have been able to have on students across the state....I have had the unique ability to work on state task forces, give input on regional and state committees, become an adjunct faculty member at two universities, join in national discussion groups around educational policy, participate in leadership trainings, and mentor other NBPTS candidates."

Tom White, NBCT, teaches third grade in Edmonds School District on the western side of the state. About six hours east over mountain passes, Beth McGibbon, NBCT, teaches in a high school in Spokane, the state's second largest city and school district. When McGibbon describes her leadership work, she starts from the school and works out. She's been an instructional coach at her school, facilitating study groups that examine formative assessment; a member of the district's World History Committee, creating common assessments; and co-chair of the statewide leadership conference. She participated in one of CSTP's first advocacy workshops and now facilitates them along with Terese Emry.

White attended CSTP's initial writers retreat in 2004 and produced an article urging NBCTs to be involved in association leadership that was published in the WEA's statewide newspaper. With WEA's Jim Meadows, he made his case in several presentations at subsequent NBCT leadership conferences.

White is one of six teachers who write for CSTP's teacher leader blog, *Stories from School: Practice Meets Policy* (www.storiesfromschool.org). His blog post on bullying, written jointly with a state legislator, captured the interest of *Washington Post* blogger Valerie Strauss, and in January 2010, Strauss and fellow *Post* blogger Jay Mathews included *Stories from School* on their list of Best Education Blogs of 2010.

White and McGibbon are both facilitators for WEA's Jump Start workshop for candidates, and both participated in the work to define a framework for teacher leadership. The two teamed up with another colleague to present the Teacher Leadership Framework at the National Staff Development Council's (NSDC) annual convention. McGibbon and Emry joined forces to offer a pre-conference session at NSDC that mirrors the advocacy training they provide in Washington. White and Meadows collaborated to present WEA's Jump Start Seminar.

...with support from Washington

Writers Retreats, Case Study Training

Every summer since 2002, teachers have been participating in a four-day training to develop an idea into an article for publication, learn what to

expect when presenting at a legislative hearing, or examine which aspects of their leadership might become grist for a case study. As a result of their skill development in writers retreats and case study training, NBCTs are expressing their opinions and exerting influence not only in Washington but on a national stage as well.

The voices of NBCTs are heard from Washington State to Washington, D.C., through service on state boards and commissions, presentations at association conferences, and essays, articles, and blog posts in national newspapers and education journals.

Writers retreat alumni have published articles in national newspapers, print magazines, and electronic journals—including *Education Week*, *Reading Journal*, *The Reading Teacher*, *Science Scope*, *Curriculum in Context*, *Educational Leadership* and *Educational Leadership Online*, *Teacher Magazine*, *Community Works Journal*, and *Choice Literacy*.

Appointments, hiring in key roles

OSPI, the state education agency, has consistently hired NBCTs for critical positions and leadership roles. Since 2000, NBCTs have held key positions within the agency, ranging from assistant superintendent of teaching and learning to director and coordinator positions. In addition, NBCTs are chosen for committee positions in virtually every discipline and area of the agency.

WEA, the teachers association, encourages NBCTs to get involved in local and state association leadership roles and connects NBCTs with key leadership roles at the local, state, and national levels. In collaboration with NEA, WEA appoints NBCTs to the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) Board of Examiners.

Research on orientation to leadership

NBCTs are more interested in exerting leadership in a variety of roles than teachers who have not certified, according to the Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (2009). When surveyed about their interest in prospective leadership roles, such as presenting at statewide conferences, advocating for policies, or serving on policy teams with educators and legislators, the majority of NBCTs indicated interest in assuming nine of the 10 leadership roles. By contrast, the majority of non-NBCTs indicated interest in only three of the 10 leadership roles. NBCTs were much more interested in leadership roles outside of their schools:

- Sixty-five percent of NBCTs were somewhat or very interested in serving on state committees, compared to 39 percent of non-NBCTs.
- Fifty-nine percent of NBCTs were somewhat or very interested in serving on policy teams, compared to 41 percent of non-NBCTs.
- Fifty-nine percent of NBCTs were somewhat or very interested in speaking on accomplished teaching, compared to 44 percent non-NBCTs.

Serving in high-need schools

What NBCTs are doing...

A growing number of NBCTs in Washington are choosing to teach in high-need schools, and more teachers in those schools are seeking certification.

In 2006, fewer than 10 percent of the state's NBCTs were teaching in challenging schools. The addition of bonuses for teaching in high-need schools resulted in some shifts in the system. Some NBCTs moved to schools where they qualified for the bonus, and many teachers already working in challenging schools began the certification process. According to OSPI, over a three-year period, the percentage of NBCTs teaching in challenging schools increased from 15 percent to 23 percent, and the percentage of teachers in those schools seeking certification increased from 16 percent to 27 percent.

...with support from Washington

As the number of NBCTs in Washington grew, coalition members turned their attention to addressing data that showed most NBCTs were teaching in schools with smaller proportions of students with high needs.

	% of NBCTs in Challenging Schools	% of NBCT Candidates in Challenging Schools
2007-08	14.8%	16.3%
2008-09	16.6%	29%
2009-10	22.5%	27.3%

Source: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2010



Jodi Kimizuka-Connolly, NBCT
Lacey Elementary School
Lacey, Washington

(photo taken at Jodi's previous school, Vaughn Elementary School, Vaughn, Washington)

In collaboration with NEA and NBPTS, WEA, OSPI and CSTP coordinated a policy summit in 2006 where 200-plus NBCTs identified the kinds of incentives needed to increase the number of accomplished teachers in high-need schools and made policy recommendations for districts and the state legislature. The resulting 35 recommendations provided much-needed momentum for state policy.

In 2007, the legislature and Governor Chris Gregoire increased the base bonus for NBCTs to \$5,000 and added a cost-of-living adjustment. That same year, legislation provided an additional \$5,000 bonus for NBCTs teaching fulltime in a challenging school and, for the first time, instituted a definition of a high-need school—one with 70 percent of students receiving free/reduced price lunch. The definition was changed a year later in recognition that secondary schools were disadvantaged, since their students often decline to identify their eligibility for free/reduced price lunch. Washington's definition of a high-need school is currently one with 70 percent of eligible elementary students, 60 percent

of middle school students, or 50 percent of high school students.

These gains in financial support were secured through a collaborative effort that began with legislation submitted by the governor's office, continued with testimony from individual NBCTs, WEA, and CSTP, and concluded with personal

calls, visits, letters, and e-mail messages by NBCTs to legislators.

In partnership with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, WEA organized a Targeted High Need Initiative (THNI) program in Seattle Public Schools to provide recruitment and support for candidates in high-poverty, low-performing schools. The THNI program, which has helped dramatically increase the number of NBCTs in Seattle, was also a pilot site for an NEA

initiative focused on ensuring greater candidate access through more culturally responsive candidate support techniques. Both efforts increased interest, access, and support for candidates.

Smart policy has led to increases in National Board Certified Teachers in high-need schools. Some have made the move to teach in a different environment, while more teachers in challenging schools are electing to become National Board certified.

Working with policymakers to inform sound policy

What NBCTs are doing....

NBCTs in Washington are influencing state and local policy through formal and informal conversations that occur in the state legislature and school district boardrooms—offering their perspectives on teacher induction programs, the role of school librarians in improving student learning, and education funding priorities for a biennium with scarce resources.

When the state legislature was considering changes in a teacher assistance program for beginning teachers, Jennifer Kovach, NBCT, chose to meet with legislators because of her belief in the value of mentoring as part of induction. “Meeting with legislators and having them ask me to think about other ways to further mentoring has given me a lot to think about,” she said. “I recognize that legislators cannot know enough about everything in order to do their jobs well, and that they appreciate learning from people who know a lot about a particular issue. It made me appreciate my expertise and have more confidence about sharing it.” Legislators approved changes to the existing program to include strategies based on research and best practice.

Sarah Applegate, NBCT, honed the skills she learned in advocacy training by working with the Washington Library Media Association (WLMA) and supportive parents to ensure that *school librarians* are considered essential teaching staff for the purposes of state funding. Thanks to a successful campaign that included testifying at legislative hearings and creating a blog in the voice of her two-year-old daughter, she is now a *teacher librarian*,

ian, “a function that includes information literacy, technology, and media to support school library media programs.”⁴ Applegate and Marianne Hunter, both NBCTs, developed a session on “The ABCs of Library Advocacy” for the WLMA state conference to help teacher librarians “create a vision, find a voice, and make an impact.” Last year, that voice resulted in significant additional state funding for school libraries.

With organizational support from the coalition partners, NBCTs are participating in policy forums like the 2006 gathering where they made recommendations on how to encourage more NBCTs to teach in high-need schools. In 2009, 210 NBCTs applied for 100 seats at an NBCT policy symposium coordinated by OSPI to prioritize how Washington should invest in a variety of proposed education reform efforts.

A team of NBCTs presented conclusions from the symposium to the state’s Quality Education Committee (QEC). “We really made a team effort to try and help the members of the QEC understand the conclusions for the policy symposium,” said Paul Rae, NBCT. “Each of the members of the team brought their specific expertise to the presentation. I was primarily there to provide the statistical evidence that supports the conclusions made from the symposium data. The data made a very strong statement grounded in proper statistical methodology.”

...with support from Washington

WEA, OSPI, and CSTP coordinated the 2006 NBCT Policy Summit to identify incentives for NBCTs to teach in high-need schools, and the 2009 NBCT Policy Symposium to prioritize areas of education funding. The contributions of NBCTs



Governor Chris Gregoire signs legislation providing bonuses to Washington teachers who achieve National Board Certification.

She is joined by (L-to-R) State Rep. Ross Hunter; State Sen. Rodney Tom; Lucinda Young, WEA; Jim Meadows, WEA; Terese Emry, CSTP; Washington NBCT Laura Koch and family.

in the policy arena are valued by state leaders like Governor Chris Gregoire, who said, “We need this expert classroom voice,” and Superintendent of Public Instruction Randy Dorn, who said, “We will continue to seek input from this group of accomplished educators...as we move down the road to a more equitable funding system for Washington State students.”

Teachers are using what they learned in advocacy training and through support from CSTP and WEA to make presentations at legislative committee hearings and initiate contact with their local legislators.

In 2009, CSTP invited Washington State Senators Rosemary McAuliffe and Erik Oemig, chair and vice-chair of the Early Learning and K-12 Committee, to utilize the CSTP-sponsored teacher

leader blog to report on a summer and fall listening tour, which the senators described as an effort “to listen to what teachers on the ground have to say and make sure our objectives align with real needs.” Their blog post, which generated extensive

comments from appreciative teachers, concluded with a commitment to continue the engagement with teachers: “There are many steps involved with bringing policy to practice, and the above steps are just a start. As we move forward with the effort to redefine basic education, we want to continue engaging teachers and administrators around the state. We recognize the state needs to

provide the necessary resources and tools to ensure that policy can become practice. This is a shared responsibility of everyone involved.”

Whether presenting testimony in legislative committee hearings or attending policy forums, NBCTs are influencing policy on classroom practice and student learning.

CONCLUSION

In her 2010 State of the State address, Governor Chris Gregoire said, “In classrooms, our hard-working, committed teachers are focused on improving student and teacher performance. In 2009, almost 1,250 teachers received the prestigious National Board Certification, and we rank fifth in the nation in [National Board] certified educators, in part, because of the investments we put in place.”

Those investments are paying off in the state. Although Washington, like other states, is facing

serious education funding challenges during tough economic times, it is managing to break new ground in offering its most challenged schools and students access to the state’s most accomplished teachers. Washington is making this happen because of the state’s unique partnership among the state’s top education policymakers, union leaders, and private sector groups. It is an approach that other states can learn from.

ADVICE TO STATES

- Leverage the investment in candidates with investments in NBCTs.
- Involve teacher leaders in setting policies that affect them.
- Unite on goals and outcomes for maximum impact.
- Divide the work to make things happen.
- Share responsibility for monitoring challenges and opportunities.
- Be vigilant with a policy agenda. An independent, non-partisan organization is a boon in policymaking.
- Provide a variety of opportunities to grow from NBCT to teacher leader.
- Organize and support an NBCT network.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Stokes, Laura; St. John, Mark; and Helms, Jenifer. The Case for Long-Term Investment in Strengthening the Teaching Profession: An Assessment of the Contributions of CSTP at Age Five. Inverness Research. October 2009
- 2 Stokes, op cit.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 *Final Report of the Joint Task Force on Basic Education Finance*. January 14, 2009.



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1525 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 500
Arlington, VA 22209
www.nbpts.org | 1-800-22TEACH

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