

Supporting and Staffing High-Needs Schools

Executive Summary

On October 21, 2006, more than 200 Washington National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) assembled in Seattle to address the vexing problem of recruiting and retaining accomplished teachers for high-needs schools. Before the Summit, the NBCTs read a number of background papers and research summaries. At the Summit, they listened to the state's leading policymakers and fellow educators articulate their views on the issues at hand and then participated in ten highly structured, small group work sessions. Facilitated by specially prepared teacher leaders, the NBCTs analyzed the facts, grounded themselves in their own classroom experiences, and then developed preliminary ideas about what needed to be done. After the Summit, they remained connected and continued the conversation via a powerful web-based study group where they refined their thinking and provided more details regarding how and why certain recruitment and retention strategies would or would not work.

Within the full report, there is a fairly exhaustive list of NBCT ideas that, if implemented, could solve Washington'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 all at once; therefore, we asked the NBCTs in the state to rank the top 12 recommendations which would have the greatest impact on supporting and staffing high-needs schools. If Washington wants to continue to build upon its momentum for educational improvement, we urge policymakers to pay close attention to their proposed solutions and make supporting and staffing high-needs schools a priority. The following actions, taken together, have potential to positively impact education in Washington State:

1. Making the annual NBCT stipend permanent for the life of the certificate and applicable toward retirement.
2. Changing the formula for calculating class size to reflect real numbers of students in classrooms (rather than averages), with a maximum of 20 students at the elementary level and 22 students per period at the middle and high school levels.
3. Enacting an additional stipend for NBCTs who teach in high-needs schools, either 20 percent of the base salary or \$10,000 per year.
4. Providing all day kindergarten, starting with high-needs schools and phasing in all other schools.
5. Providing incentives to ensure experienced principals lead high-needs schools.

Convening Organizations: WEA, OSPI, PESB and CSTP. The recommendations contained in this report do not necessarily reflect the organizational positions of the convening organizations. Recommendations were generated by attendees at the NBCT Summit and reviewed and prioritized by NBCTs from around the state.

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6. Providing a menu of incentives for teaching in high-needs schools, such as:
 - housing allowances;
 - added contractual days;
 - additional classroom resources (i.e. materials, supplies, equipment);
 - additional classroom support from paraprofessionals;
 - paid leadership roles for NBCTs;
 - loan forgiveness; and
 - higher education allowances.
7. Creating a more equalized funding formula for schools that incorporates the number of ELL students, number of low-income students, percent mobility or other special needs.
8. Allocating additional resources to high-needs schools, such as:
 - instructional aides;
 - before- and after-school teachers; and
 - a full-time NBCT or other accomplished teacher serving as a trained instructional coach.
9. Creating a new salary schedule that establishes different levels of teacher mastery with accompanying compensation, professional growth opportunities, roles and responsibilities.
10. Paying NBCTs and other accomplished teachers to serve as leaders and facilitators to implement professional learning communities that foster collaboration and shared leadership.
11. Creating an induction program for new teachers that includes:
 - building-level mentors released for one-on-one support (1:15 ratio);
 - release time for observations-collaboration-planning; orientation and training before beginning of the year and throughout.
12. Embedding key information about National Board Certification into all administrator credentialing programs in the state.



Washington is on the threshold of institutionalizing National Board Certification as a powerful, ongoing reform movement. Strategic investments—particularly in ensuring accomplished teachers are teaching in high-needs schools—will yield dividends for the state for years to come. Indeed, silver bullets are not the answer. Washingtonians from all walks of life—from Seattle to Leavenworth to Spokane—must commit themselves to ensuring a quality teacher for every child. Taking the ideas of some of the state’s best teachers and transforming them from recommendation to reality will move the state one step closer to the public education system that policymakers, practitioners, and the public seek.