Agenda Topic: National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and the Illinois Master Certificate

Materials:
“Leading from the Classroom” brochure
District NBPTS Incentives
NBPTS State Support
Illinois NBPTS Design Team Membership List
Map of College/University Support Programs
Graph of Illinois NBPTS Participation Levels
Map of the Distribution of National Board Certified Teachers Statewide

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Purposes of Agenda Item

- Provide the additional information about state and national NBPTS activities requested at the March State Board meeting;
- Propose long-term and short-term goals and evaluation criteria for gauging the success of the Illinois NBPTS initiative; and
- Describe alternative models of service delivery to Illinois teachers seeking NBPTS certification, including appropriate technology.

Expected Outcomes of Agenda Item

- Board comments on service delivery alternatives;
- Board endorsement of goals and evaluation measures for Illinois NBPTS initiative;
- Board authorization to explore the use of technology to improve mentoring and other support services; and
- Board authorization to pursue a study on potential incentives to attract teachers from low-performing schools to the National Board certification process.
Background Information

In March, a report on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards to the State Board described the development of the national organization, the nature of the certification process, and special features of the Illinois process. The report outlined policy issues related to the goals and future of the Illinois NBPTS initiative.

At that time, the State Board requested additional information on:

- recognition of teachers who earn certification;
- incentives for participation;
- additional leadership opportunities for certified teachers;
- clarification of the goals of the state initiative and measures for gauging its success; and
- options for alternative ways of providing candidate support.

This report addresses each of these requests.

Recognition

Recognition for earning national certification is important for the individual teacher and for expanding awareness of the National Board certification process. For the last two years, the Governor’s office and the Illinois Education Association have hosted a reception recognizing National Board teachers. At this event, business and education leaders join Governor Ryan and Deputy Governor for Education and Workforce Development Hazel Loucks in honoring Board certified teachers from across the state.

Illinois school districts are also finding resourceful ways to recognize teachers who achieve National Board certification. Special presentations at faculty or school board meetings, congratulatory messages on the school marquee, personal notes, plaques, and flowers were mentioned by teachers attending a June National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) conference on the Bradley University campus. One district has each teacher’s National Board certificate professionally framed.

More newspapers and magazines are featuring the accomplishments of individual or small groups of certified teachers. School, district, union, and local publications often profile National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) who are familiar to their readers. Several districts have posted these profiles on their websites.
Incentives

Commonly, there are two forms of incentives, state enacted and district based.

State Incentives

Information in the March presentation on incentives offered in seven states -- California, Florida, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Texas -- suggested a direct correlation between state fee support and other financial incentives and the number of teachers who earn National Board certification. Despite a few variants, the pattern is clear: states with the largest numbers of Board certified teachers pay all or most of the candidate fee and offer significant financial incentives for achieving certification. The attached chart on NBPTS State Support provides information on all states and additional evidence to support the pattern demonstrated in the smaller March sampling.

Other factors that influence the level of teacher participation are the availability of candidate support services and the political climate of the state or district. As the chart illustrates, states such as North Carolina (2406 Board certified teachers), Florida (1267), Ohio (924), and Mississippi (755), which lead the nation in the number of board certified teachers, offer significant financial incentives, provide comprehensive candidate support services, and evidence political leadership that enthusiastically backs board certification.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, states including Pennsylvania (29 nationally certified teachers) and Texas (37) offer no financial incentives for achieving certification, have no organized support system, and operate within a political environment that appears indifferent to national teacher certification. The number of board certified teachers in these states is predictably small.

Two variations shown on the enclosed NBPTS State Support chart warrant comment. Arizona and Michigan lack a state incentive but have a significant number of NBCTs (75 and 89 respectively). In these states, staff has learned that one or more urban or suburban districts have enacted generous incentives. The majority of the participants in these states are in the districts with financial incentives.

The second variation is explained by the time necessary for teachers to become aware of a state incentive and successfully complete the National Board process. Two years generally are needed for the impact of a financial incentive to translate into increased numbers of Board certified teachers. Therefore, a few states (e.g., South Dakota, Wisconsin, etc.) that offer attractive incentives presently have low numbers of certified teachers (1 and 33). Over the next few years, these states are expected to show significant increases in numbers of NBCTs as teachers respond to recently enacted state incentives.
Several years will probably also be needed to determine whether the incentives recently created in Colorado and New York in the hope of drawing talented teachers into low-performing schools will have their desired results. These states limit their financial incentives to teachers working in low-performing schools.

With its commitment to subsidizing the application fee for qualified candidates and its one-time $3000 incentive for holders of a Master Certificate who teach in a public school, Illinois is in the middle ranks of states offering incentives for earning National Board certification. It is possible that growth in participation and numbers of Board certified teachers will not keep pace with states offering larger incentives. Moreover, participation in Illinois will likely remain geographically uneven, with significant growth occurring primarily in districts that have created their own incentives.

The achievement gap between students from low-performing schools and their counterparts in less academically challenged districts is a continuing concern. Participation in the National Board certification process improves the level of instruction, even for those teachers who do not achieve certification. To increase the number of candidates from low-performing schools, the State Board should consider the development of incentives to attract these teachers to the National Board certification process.

While fee subsidies and access to training workshops are available to all National Board candidates, low-performing districts typically do not have the fiscal resources to offer local incentives. The use of state funds to support these districts and to attract qualified teachers to the process will have a positive impact on instruction and achievement.

District Incentives

An attached chart summarizes the variety of incentives that have been created for teachers seeking or earning Board certification in Illinois. Approximately 30 districts offer release time for workshops or portfolio development, one-time or annual financial incentives, compensation for professional development, or lane placement credit.

Matching the Illinois district incentives with numbers of NBCTs confirms the national pattern. Participation in the National Board certification process increases in districts that offer financial incentives to augment the state stipend. Only ten District 299 teachers sought certification in the 1999-2000 cycle. After a $5500 supplement was added to the state stipend the next year, the number increased to 228. Palatine experienced a comparable surge in participation after enacting its $2000/year stipend, with candidate numbers increasing from two in 1999 to twenty-four in 2000. Indian Prairie District 204’s new $3000 annual
stipend has led to a tenfold increase in the number of its teachers seeking certification in 2001-2002.

Palatine’s history prior to the creation of its $2000 per year incentive illustrates the importance of the political climate within a district. Palatine’s superintendent has been a long-time supporter of NBPTS certification, and the district employs its Board-certified teachers in a variety of leadership roles. Furthermore, the National Board core propositions and standards are integrated into the district’s professional development and teacher evaluation systems. Even before enacting its financial incentive in 1999, Palatine had 11 National Board certified teachers, substantially more than any other Illinois district at that time. Leadership at the building and/or district level can stimulate interest in the National Board certification process, even in districts that have not enacted financial incentives.

**Leadership Opportunities**

The National Board recently published the results of a comprehensive survey documenting the extraordinary range and depth of leadership activities of Board certified teachers. Yankelovic Partners, a national research marketing firm, conducted the survey in late 2000 and early 2001. Survey instruments were mailed to the approximately 4800 teachers who had achieved National Board certification prior to November 2000. The 46% response rate was impressive, especially in light of the length of the survey and the short response time allowed. The respondents reflected the national pool of NBCTs in geographic distribution, length of certification, and certificate areas.

Some key findings of the survey are presented in the “Leading from the Classroom” brochure (attached). NBCTs (99.6%) are involved in at least one leadership activity; on average, they are involved in nearly ten. A significant majority (94%) expressed the desire to be a leader in their profession and a willingness to devote the extra time and effort required to do so. The activities that commanded the greatest desire for personal involvement were mentoring new teachers, improving respect for the profession, and involvement in teacher training or teacher professional development. NBCTs reported no conflict between commitment to their students and involvement in leadership activities. In fact, respondents indicated their involvement in these activities increased their career satisfaction and their desire to continue teaching.

A sampling of certified teachers attending an Illinois NBCT conference this summer provides information about leadership responsibilities/opportunities within the state and teachers’ attitudes towards these options. The outlook of Illinois NBCTs is consistent with opinions expressed in the national survey. All viewed opportunities for involvement beyond the classroom positively, with frustration expressed by a few teachers whose districts provided no opportunities for leadership.
Mentoring within and outside their district was the activity most frequently mentioned by the Illinois NBCTs. Teachers also reported making presentations on a wide range of topics and receiving invitations to participate in forums and curriculum and policy councils. Many teachers spoke enthusiastically about participation in an international exchange program. Several NBCTs are involved in the design of a new National Teachers Academy that will open in 2002. Others have been recruited to teach in the Illinois Virtual High School. Illinois Board certified teachers enjoy being able to select leadership activities aligned with their strengths and interests and have no hesitancy declining activities of less interest or incompatible with their classroom responsibilities.

Special mention must be made of the extraordinary variety of leadership opportunities available to Chicago NBCTs. Both the Chicago Teachers Union Quest Center and the CPS Office of Teacher Recertification and Professional Standards have designed a wide range of special roles that tap the expertise of their certified teachers. Certified teachers conduct National Board recruitment sessions, facilitate cohort meetings, mentor candidates, deliver pre-candidacy sessions, read applications and portfolio entries, and serve on a variety of planning and policy boards. These varied responsibilities allow certified teachers to earn additional compensation beyond the initial one-time stipend. They also are building the capacity that will allow far greater numbers of Chicago teachers to seek National Board Certification in future years.

Goals and Evaluation Criteria

Early in 1998, the Illinois State Board of Education invited representatives of teacher education institutions, the business community, parent organizations, regional offices of education, the teacher unions, P-12 administrators, and Board certified teachers to form an Illinois NBPTS Design Team. (The attached list details the current composition of the Design Team.) Since its inception, this group has formulated recommendations relating to Illinois National Board procedures and the equitable allocation of available resources. The Design Team devoted its most recent quarterly meeting to a re-examination of a long-term and several short-term goals for Illinois National Board activities and identified evaluation criteria for gauging success in reaching the goals.

Long-Term Goal

To increase participation in the National Board certification process and thereby institutionalize the standards and procedures in the professional development activities of all Illinois school districts by FY04.

The Design Team sees the National Board certification process as the most promising path towards improved teaching and learning. The process itself, with its intensive focus on articulating instructional goals, using assessments as
learning tools, and improving analysis of instruction and student work, serves as a model for standards-driven professional development. School districts that shape professional development around these components of the certification process should experience improved teaching and student outcomes while simultaneously preparing their teachers to stand for national certification. The Design Team sees the long-term goal of Illinois National Board activities as institutionalization of the process in the school districts of the state. However, intermediate steps (i.e., short term) are needed before the long-term goal can be achieved.

The Design Team proposes several short-term goals and identifies criteria or indicators for measuring progress.

**Short-Term Goals**

*Increased Participation*

**Goal:** Increasing participation among teachers in all parts of the state has always been a goal of the Design Team. The Team believes the ability of the process to change the way teaching and learning occur in a district or region is proportionate to the level of teacher participation in the process. The National Board standards and process provide a high quality professional development experience that has value for the candidate regardless of whether he or she is successful in securing national certification. The Design Team members believe the State Board has a special responsibility to emphasize the level of NBPTS participation as a criterion for the design of the program and evaluation of its success. The Team further encourages the State Board to pursue aggressively the participation of teachers from underrepresented populations and teachers in academically at-risk schools.

The presence of NBPTS teachers in a school can make a difference in the teaching and learning in that building. The current program should be significantly expanded to create a critical mass of Board certified teachers in all districts.

The value added by program completers and those who have earned national certification is particularly important for schools with high numbers of at-risk students. The Team advocates the adoption of a comprehensive effort to assure that teachers in academically challenged and/or high poverty schools have an opportunity to participate in the process and receive support from mentors, including Board certified teachers.

**Measure:** Data on the geographic distribution of candidates, the characteristics of candidates, and the schools and districts in which they work will be gathered...
and analyzed annually. Progress will focus on increased participation, including among teachers from underrepresented populations and at-risk schools.

**Increased Support Services**

**Goal:** The Design Team feels that expanded participation in the National Board certification process must continue to be linked to support services that make the process a positive professional development experience and lead to a high rate of completion. Colleges and universities, the Quest Center in Chicago, the Division of Professional Preparation at the State Board, and other entities provide opportunities for candidate support, with mentoring representing a technique employed frequently. The Team urges the State Board to expand available support services, particularly those that engage NBCTs with candidates (i.e., mentoring).

**Measure:** The quality of the support services can best be assessed by surveying participants and using the feedback in the design of future services. This assessment/redesign cycle links agency staff, NBCTs and current candidates in the continuous improvement of services. Further, Illinois’ attrition rate has consistently been below the national average, and staff will continue to monitor this rate to gauge the success of support services and to ensure the efficient use of public and private funds.

**Fully Fund The Illinois Teaching Excellence Program**

**Goal:** In 1999, the Illinois General Assembly passed The Illinois Teaching Excellence Program (105 ILCS 5/21-27). This program provided for the payment of $3000 one-time only stipends to National Board certified teachers who hold a Master Certificate and are employed in the public schools. The legislation also provided “an annual incentive equal to $1000” for each Master Certificate holder who agrees in writing “to provide 60 clock hours of mentoring” to classroom teachers. A $3000 incentive is to be available to those who perform at least 60 hours of mentoring to teachers in “schools on the Academic Early Warning List or schools in which 50% or more of the students receive free or reduced price lunches, or both.”

The General Assembly provide only $75,000 in FY00, although an additional $1 million was appropriated in FY01. These dollars have been used to subsidize candidate application fees and provide support services to teachers pursuing National Board certification. In the past fiscal year, 133 teachers earned the Master Certificate and received the $3000 one-time stipend. Fifty-three teachers earned mentoring stipends of up to $1000 each for working with National Board candidates. However, funds have not been sufficient to pay the $3000 stipends for those mentoring in low-performing and/or high-poverty districts.
A FY02 appropriation request of $2.075 million was not received. With an anticipated increase of about 150 to 175 National Board certification recipients this November and with a candidate pool of nearly 400, the level of mentor compensation provided in FY 01 may not be possible in the current fiscal year. Moreover, as the program continues to grow (e.g., more participants, more certified teachers, etc.), the dollars necessary to fund the legislation will escalate. A conservative estimate of $3 million will be needed for FY03, and nearly $4 million in FY04. Believing that the positive impact of National Board certification multiplies when Board certified teachers work with other teachers, the Design Team urges the State Board to seek funding for this initiative at a level that will allow full implementation of the existing mentor compensation legislation.

**Measure:** The amount of funding and the number of applicants, NBCTs, and other teachers impacted by the expenditure level will determine the success of this goal.

**Alternative Models of Service Delivery**

Presently, several models of service delivery coexist in the state. The Chicago Teachers Union Quest Center and the Office of Recertification and Professional Standards of District 299 each provide comprehensive services to the Chicago National Board candidates with whom they work. Ten universities currently offer courses linked to the National Board Certification process and work with cohorts of teachers seeking certification. Weekly meetings are the norm for candidates in a university cohort or working with the Quest Center or the Recertification Office in Chicago.

Illinois teachers who apply for National Board certification through the State Board of Education are offered more limited support services. They are invited to attend three one-day workshops that address various aspects of the certification process. The State Board reimburses the travel expenses of candidates and mentors attending these sessions as well as the substitute costs for districts. The agency also recruits and trains NBCTs to serve as mentors to individual candidates or small groups of candidates. The size of the state and a commitment to taking teachers out of their classrooms no more than necessary make more frequent meetings inadvisable.

The following two alternative models of service delivery suggest approaches that might enhance support services for ISBE-sponsored candidates.

**Ohio Model: A System of Regional Support Sites**

Ohio operates its candidate support system through 18 regional sites. The state contracts with institutions -- mainly colleges and universities -- that submit proposals for mentoring programs. Each site is required to employ one or more NBCTs in the delivery of services. Candidates generally utilize the support
services at the closest site. The service providers receive grants of $5000 to $30,000 from the state, with institutions serving greater numbers of candidates receiving the larger grants. In rural areas, a site may work with only 8 to 10 teachers; the largest urban sites may have 80 to 100 candidates. Staff from the Ohio Office of Education feel that the regional support sites have been able to provide quality services to candidates in all parts of the state. They estimate the cost to be in the $300 to $500 per candidate range.

With approximately 400 Illinois candidates, statewide support service expenditures could approach $160,000 under this model. Currently, the State Board offers services to nearly 200 candidates, with the other entities (e.g., colleges and universities, District 299, etc.) providing assistance to the remainder. Although the Ohio model may require nearly the same level of funding, the quantity and quality of services might improve.

Marshall University Model: A Single Site with Telementoring

The Graduate College of Marshall University offers coursework and support services to National Board candidates in the southern half of West Virginia. The large service area and mountainous terrain limit the number of times National Board applicants can meet. The University has effectively used a software platform to facilitate communication between course instructors, NBCTs serving as mentors, and current candidates. All West Virginia public schools have internet access, insuring that all candidates can participate in the telementoring support services. This approach has proven very successful in a region where small numbers of candidates are separated by great distances.

The costs of the technology are not fully known at this time. An annual subscription to a software platform such as WebCT or Blackboard, possible hardware purchases, and staff monitoring of the site represent potential expenditures. Furthermore, it is not known how many candidates and mentors the system might serve at one time. However, the technology represents a promising approach to working with National Board candidates as well as novice teachers through induction and mentoring programs. This approach also seems compatible with the provisions of the mentor compensation legislation.

Analysis and Implications for Policy, Budget, Legislative Action, and Communication

Policy Implications

States such as North Carolina and Florida have made National Board Certification a central feature of their efforts to improve teacher quality and have created incentives that ensure high levels of participation. The financial commitments made by these states have yielded impressive results. The 2377 North Carolina teachers who have earned Board certification constitute 3% of the
state’s teachers. In 2001-2002, Florida for the third consecutive year will have more than 1000 teachers seeking national certification.

Many states and school districts establish numerical goals and timelines for increasing their number of NBCTs. In its 1998 strategic plan, Palatine District 15 established a goal of at least two Board-certified teachers in each of its buildings by 2005. The Chicago Public Schools hope to have six National Board teachers in each of its schools. District 299 is working with Illinois State University to develop the leadership capacity within its teacher ranks to support rapidly expanded participation in the NBPTS process.

Soon after its creation in 1998, the NBPTS Design Team suggested a goal of 6300 participants completing the process by the close of 2004. The group felt this goal could be achieved by doubling the number of candidates each year between 1998 and 2004. The projected participation figures for the first three years (i.e., 100 in 1998-1999; 200 in 1999-2000; and 400 in 2000-2001) are close to the number of Illinois candidates (i.e., approximately 725) over this time. However, the 6300 target could be reached only by a continued annual doubling (to 800 in 2001-2002; 1600 in 2002-2003, and 3200 in 2003-2004), growth that is not possible at the current funding and staffing levels.

The most recent recommendations of the Design Team continue to define expanded participation in the National Board process as the overarching goal, while stressing the added responsibility of attracting teachers from underrepresented groups and academically and/or financially at risk schools. The Design Team’s recommendations offer an informed, responsible approach to defining the goals and evaluation measures for this initiative.

The Board has several available policy options:

- continue the program at its current level;
- expand the role of the State Board by increasing the dollars and human resources assigned to the initiative;
- reduce the role of the agency by shifting responsibilities to other entities, perhaps as represented by the Ohio model; and/or
- request appropriation levels sufficient to meet the provisions of The Teaching Excellence Program

Staff recommends the Board expand the program, particularly its participation level, and seek the funding necessary to pay the stipends detailed in the law. In addition to the options cited above, the State Board should authorize a study concerning participation incentives for teachers in low-performing schools.
Budget Implications

The budget impact is linked to the policy option(s) selected. For instance, a continuation of the program at its current level can be achieved at a steady-funding level of approximately $1.5 million. An expanded role for the State Board will demand an increased level of funding. If the Board should choose to adopt the Design Team’s target of 6300 participants, with 5600 of this number to occur in the next three years, a budget of $4 million to $6 million annually over this time would be likely.

It is not possible at this time to estimate the potential budget impact of participation incentives for teachers in low-performing schools. This information, however, will be developed in an authorized study.

Legislative Action

At this time, there is no anticipated legislative action required, except for seeking appropriation levels consistent with Board policy.

Communication Implications

Staff from the Division of Professional Preparation will work with the Assistant Director of Communication or his designee in developing a communication plan that: provides statewide information to teachers, administrators, school board members, and representatives of higher education; targets teachers in underrepresented populations; and promotes completion of the National Board certification process as a professional development activity that directly impacts student learning.

Superintendent’s Recommendation

That State Superintendent recommends that the State Board:

- endorse the long-term and short-term goals developed by the National Board Design Team;
- authorize division and technology staff to study the use of technology in the provision of support services for National Board certified candidates; and
- authorize appropriate agency personnel to conduct a study on participation incentives for teachers in low-performing schools.

Next Steps

State Board staff, pending Board endorsement, will develop the studies necessary to measure progress toward the long-term and short-term goals advocated by the Design Team. If authorized, a study will be conducted and
recommendations will be issued on incentives to recruit to the National Board certification process teachers in low-performing schools.