

## COMMENTARY

# Results of a State Incentive Program on the Supply and Distribution of National Board Certified Teachers

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Our study examines results from Washington state's incentive program to increase the overall supply of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) while also increasing the proportion of NBCTs who work in "challenging" schools (as measured by high poverty rates). We focus on a period when an addition was made in the existing state incentive program to double the bonus provided to NBCTs if they worked in high-poverty schools. We describe how the supply of NBCTs has changed since the policy change was enacted, and examine the extent to which changes in the proportion of NBCTs working in high-poverty schools occurred. Using a longitudinal, multi-year design of existing state datasets, we examine the distribution, retention and mobility trends of the state's NBCTs from 2006-07 (baseline year just before the new bonus began) and in three successive years (2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-10). We created three groups for our comparative analyses: (1) NBCTs, (2) all teachers statewide, and (3) a group of teachers we created who were similar in demographics to NBCTs but who had not obtained the certificate.

When examining whether the overall supply of NBCTs increased, our results show that during the time period examined, the number of NBCTs working as K-12 classroom teachers in Washington state more than tripled, raising the proportion of NBCTs from 1.9 to 6.0% of the total teacher workforce. In addition, the proportion of NBCTs in high poverty schools increased from 1.3 to 6.5% of the teacher workforce in these schools (from a total of 79 NBCTs to 746 in 2009-10).

In our comparative analysis of retention and mobility, we found that NBCTs and our comparison group of non-NBCT teachers had similar rates of retention, but NBCTs showed a pattern of higher rates of mobility (movement between schools and districts) and lower rates of exiting the workforce. When comparing NBCTs in challenging schools to all NBCTs statewide, those in challenging schools stayed in the same school at higher rates from one year to the next, both in the baseline year and the first year examined, and the two groups had equivalent rates of retention from the second to the third year. Additionally, over the three year period, a greater proportion of NBCTs in challenging schools remained in the same school from one year to the next than other teachers in these same schools. Finally, we found that the most common pattern for increasing the number of NBCTs in challenging schools was for teachers within that school to earn NBPTS certification.

Our study suggests that the potential for increased compensation may have been a strong reason to pursue certification, particularly for those already working in challenging schools. In addition, providing bonuses to NBCTs already in challenging schools may have also worked as an incentive to retain accomplished teachers in hard-to-staff schools. On the other hand, it can

be argued that the challenging school bonus fell short by failing to move many teachers from non-challenging to challenging schools.

In the final section of our paper, we describe areas for potential improvement. First, the policy didn't reach all schools. Proportionately fewer NBCTs were located in challenging schools in small districts and rural or remote areas of the state. Another consideration would be to encourage groups of NBCTs to move together to challenging schools. Finally, the current policy could offer differential approaches to address local needs. Giving districts greater discretion or capacity in identifying from among their own schools those they deem "most challenging" might help them tailor the placement of NBCTs in the most strategic way.

*The [full study](#) can be found in "Results of a State Incentive Program on the Supply and Distribution of National Board Certified Teachers," Leadership and Policy in Schools, Volume 13, Issue 2, 2014.*

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