



# The National Board Resource Center

## ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

### *Using Illinois NBCTs to Lead School Improvement*

#### Overview

The purpose of this paper is to explore leadership by National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) as a critical element for improving schools and student learning in Illinois. It builds on a previous publication entitled "Using Illinois NBCTs to Improve Student Achievement."

A growing body of independent research shows that NBCTs are more effective at improving student achievement than their non-board certified counterparts. Several national studies, using different methods and samples, provide evidence that students of NBCTs at both the elementary and secondary levels outperform their peers on standardized tests and other measures of learning (Bond, 2002; Cavalluzzo, 2004; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004; Vandevoot, Amrein-Beardsley, & Berliner, 2004). In one study, researchers found that those gains went beyond higher test scores, adding up to learning improvements equivalent to more than a month's worth of additional time in the classroom (Vandevoot, Amrein-Beardsley, & Berliner, 2004). The positive effects of having an NBCT for a teacher are even greater for minority (Cavalluzzo, 2004) and low-income (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004) students.

This second paper on NBCT leadership highlights

- Results of a survey of Illinois NBCTs about their leadership roles to improve student learning,
- Voices of Illinois NBCTs and other educators engaged in leadership for student learning,
- Illinois initiatives designed to promote NBCT leadership for student learning, and
- Research-based strategies for Illinois leaders to create the conditions for NBCTs to lead school improvement focused on student learning.

Increasing demands for school accountability, coupled with research-based evidence that NBCTs positively impact student learning, have resulted in heightened attention to ways that schools can effectively utilize the expertise of NBCTs on a broader scale. In order for this to occur in Illinois, educational leaders must set the conditions that allow NBCTs to successfully assume leadership for school improvement by

- Designing a variety of leadership roles that use the expertise of NBCTs to improve student learning,
- Providing Illinois NBCTs with leadership training and support to improve schools, and
- Creating the conditions, especially in high-needs schools, to allow NBCTs to collaborate with colleagues and implement best practices to help all students learn.

Lynn Gaddis, NBCT, and Stephanie Epp, NBCT  
Co-Directors  
National Board Resource Center at Illinois State University

#### Illinois Initiative

#### State Action for Education Leadership Project

##### A Seamless Route to Leadership for Illinois NBCTs

The Illinois State Action for Education Leadership (IL-SAELP) project, funded by The Wallace Foundation, focuses on strategies to address the conditions that enable effective leadership and leadership development in Illinois schools. Aligned with the goals of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, these strategies center on strengthening leaders' decision-making authority and ability to address issues of student achievement and stimulating administrator preparation and professional development programs that focus on improving student achievement. One specific IL-SAELP initiative will work with universities around the state who already support NBCTs to develop a seamless route to Illinois Type 75 certification for NBCTs who wish to become instructional leaders. Offering this seamless route to Type 75 certification will provide Illinois schools with instructionally savvy teachers prepared for leadership positions aimed at improving student achievement. A second certification under consideration is that of teacher leader. This certificate will give an additional career path opportunity to NBCTs and other accomplished teachers who do not want the responsibilities of a Type 75 certificate but wish to lead instruction either at the school or district level.

"One of the ways Springfield schools enacts our commitment to the improvement of teacher quality is through support of those who seek and receive National Board Certification. We believe that recipients of National Board Certification represent an important resource, not only to their students, but also to their teaching colleagues. Each NBCT has publicly demonstrated professional expertise in both content knowledge and pedagogy. As a district, we would be remiss in our failure to acknowledge this accomplishment. To this end, our Board of Education celebrates the achievement of National Board Certification through public recognition and a salary award. We are currently exploring possibilities with NBCTs for tapping their expertise and interest as mentors within our New Teacher Induction program, as professional development providers, and as hosts of observation/demonstration classrooms. By the conclusion of the coming school year, we hope to have in place defined opportunities for NBCTs in which they will continue to grow as teacher leaders, hone their professional skills, and assist others in the improvement of professional practice."

Sue Dole  
Deputy Superintendent  
Springfield School District No. 186

## Survey of Illinois NBCTs—Leadership Roles

In 2005, the National Board Resource Center at Illinois State University conducted a survey of 1,073 Illinois NBCTs to determine their current leadership roles, interest in new leadership opportunities, and perceptions of the kinds of training and support needed to assume new leadership roles (Gaddis & Epp, 2005). Nearly 600 Illinois NBCTs completed the survey, resulting in a 55% response rate. Their comments about teacher leadership bear striking similarities to those made by other NBCTs and teacher leaders in national studies (NBPTS, 2001).

### Current Leadership Roles

In Illinois, nearly all (92.2%) of the NBCT respondents indicated that they hold multiple leadership roles in addition to their full-time assignments as classroom teachers (83.7%); department chairs, instructional coaches, library/media specialists and counselors (10.8%); and administrators (2.2%). The additional leadership roles cited by these NBCTs included that of mentor, school improvement coach, literacy coach, professional association/union leader, tutoring coordinator, internal review or school improvement team member, grant-writer, curriculum developer, trainer for the Illinois Standards Achievement Test, and professional development provider. Over half (57.2%) of the NBCT respondents mentor their colleagues, and nearly one-third (32%) work with student teachers.

Just over half (51.3%) of the Illinois NBCT respondents indicated that they had assumed new leadership roles as a result of becoming a National Board Certified Teacher. These new leadership roles include providing instructional support to colleagues in key areas such as math and reading, opening a new school focused on reflective practices, mentoring new teachers, mentoring colleagues seeking National Board Certification, leading a school intervention team, coordinating national accreditation for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs, teaching at area universities, conducting action research, leading technology initiatives, and serving on various state advisory committees.

### Desired Leadership Roles

The NBCT respondents are committed to their work with students in classrooms and are also interested in new leadership opportunities pertaining to school improvement, student learning, and the mentoring and induction of colleagues into the profession. Table 1 outlines the most frequently selected leadership roles NBCT respondents would like to assume.

**Table 1. Desired Leadership Roles**

Teacher mentor .....	49.4%
Cooperating teacher/Supervisor for student teachers .....	45.2%
Adjunct faculty at a college or university .....	34.6%
Curriculum director .....	26.3%
Professional development director .....	21.4%
School improvement coach .....	18.5%
Department head/Chair .....	15.5%
Literacy coach .....	15.0%
Principal/Assistant principal .....	15.5%
New teacher induction director .....	7.5%

*(Percentages total more than 100% as respondents were asked to mark all leadership roles of interest.)*

## Preparation for Leadership

Respondents believed that the National Board Certification process equipped them with competencies for leadership in the arenas of effective instruction, assessment, parent and community involvement, data-driven decision-making, and promoting equitable practices within the school. Table 2 outlines the competencies most frequently selected by respondents.

**Table 2. Competencies for Leadership as a Result of National Board Certification**

Applying methods for effective instruction .....	94.0%
Using multiple methods to assess student learning .....	90.3%
Involving parent and community members in the school .....	76.4%
Promoting respect for diversity and equitable practices in the school .....	75.7%

*(Percentages total more than 100% as respondents were asked to mark all competencies gained.)*

When asked which competencies for leadership they would like to further develop, Illinois NBCTs wanted to know more about promoting student achievement in collaboration with their building- and district-level colleagues, mentoring, grant-writing, and providing effective professional development.

### NBCTs and the Type 75 Illinois Administrative Certificate

Most of the NBCT respondents (79.7%) of this survey do not hold a Type 75 Illinois Certificate. Of the 20.3% who do hold a Type 75 Certificate, 80% are not using the Type 75 in their current role. Of the NBCT respondents who do not currently hold the Type 75 Illinois Certificate, 78.4% would pursue an NBCT route to an Illinois Teacher Leader credential, if one were available. 44.3% would pursue an NBCT route to a Type 75 Illinois Certificate.

*"I believe that as we increase the number of NBCTs in our district, we are more likely to address the mandates of NCLB. Not only are NBCTs more adept at solving classroom learning issues, they are more willing to do so. Out of 38 NBCTs in our district, nine currently serve as department chairs. In addition, two are currently serving as building technology directors and another is an assistant principal. In addition, NBCTs serve as facilitators of the new teacher induction program, NBCT mentors, staff development organizers, and assessment coordinators. Several NBCTs have been instrumental in the development of new courses to serve our at-risk, low-achieving populations."*

*Samantha Dolen, NBCT  
Science Department Chair*

*James B. Conant High School, Township High School  
District No. 211*

## Independent Research: Conditions for Effective NBCT Leadership

### NBCT Leadership in Low-Performing Schools

Linquanti and Peterson (2001) found that NBCTs in low-performing schools in California improved the “professional culture and quality of teaching in low-performing schools” if administrators (a) understood and supported the National Board Certification process; (b) ensured “priorities, expectations, and management practices aligned to National Board tenets and processes”; and (c) used the expertise of NBCTs in a variety of leadership capacities. They also found that teachers in low-performing schools should be encouraged to pursue National Board Certification over time in a tiered, developmental process, and to use the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) as part of “built-in” time within school routines to discuss accomplished teaching that promotes student learning.

### NBCT Leadership in Urban Schools

In conjunction with The Chicago Public Education Fund and NBPTS, Berry and King (March 2005) profiled NBCT initiatives in four urban centers—Chicago, Illinois; Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina; Los Angeles, California; and Miami-Dade County, Florida—to outline several strategies for bringing NBCTs and other accomplished teachers into the schools that need them most. According to the participating NBCTs, the following conditions must be in place for them to effectively lead school improvement initiatives in low-performing schools:

- Principal leadership must be good—NBCTs do not want to work for ineffective principals.
- Administrators must understand the National Board Certification process and the potential benefits of working with NBCT leaders to improve student achievement.
- NBCTs need access to leadership training.
- NBCTs and other accomplished teachers want to work with “kindred spirits” and have time to collaborate.
- “Accomplished teachers need smaller ‘case’ loads so they can get to know students and their families well.”
- NBCTs need access to instructional resources that support their use of best practices.
- Accomplished teachers, and all building staff, need ongoing training to build a collaborative learning community.
- Though ranked as least important by the participating teacher leaders, NBCTs and other accomplished teachers “should expect salary and/or other incentives to teach in low-performing schools.”

### NBCTs’ Leadership in Rural Schools

Berry, Johnson, and Montgomery (February 2005) conducted a case study of how a rural school in North Carolina, with 60% of students living in poverty, tapped the talent of its nine NBCTs out of 25 teachers to transform teaching and learning. Within five years, the school moved from 56% of students at or above grade level to 83% of students at or above grade level.

“As a result of their own certification experience, NBCTs can speak convincingly about the value of conducting regular classroom assessments and engaging in personal reflection; inviting ‘critical friends’ to observe in classrooms and offer constructive criticism; and using self-improvement strategies such as analyzing videotaped lessons, sampling student work, and reading and critiquing professional literature. In addition, NBCTs try out and model new instructional strategies.” These rural teachers and administrators understand how to use the NBPTS process and NBCTs to improve student achievement throughout the school.

## Illinois Initiative Urban Summit for NBCT Leadership

### Chicago Leads National Summit on Using NBCTs for School Improvement

The Chicago Public Education Fund, The Chicago Public Schools, and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) convened a national summit of four urban school districts with large numbers of NBCTs to consider how to increase the number of NBCTs and how to effectively use NBCTs to improve schools. The Chicago Public Schools set a goal of increasing the number of NBCTs teaching in the district from 380 to 1,200 by 2007. Arne Duncan, Chief Executive Officer of Chicago Public Schools, says that “the effort to increase the number of master teachers is central to the district’s plan for improvement.” The Chicago Public Education Fund has raised \$2.4 million for the NBPTS project in Chicago. The four districts—Chicago Public Schools, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina; Los Angeles, California; and Miami-Dade County, Florida—will continue to work with the Chicago Public Education Fund, NBPTS, and others to maximize the impact of NBCTs on teaching and learning in our nation’s urban centers.

“At the Chicago Public Education Fund, we believe that leadership is the single most important factor in an organization’s success. The Fund believes National Board Certification is one of the most effective ways to legitimately identify teachers who know instruction and can drive improved student achievement. NBCTs offer The Chicago Public Schools an unprecedented opportunity to identify some of their most talented teachers, team them with effective principals, and support them in improving whole-school performance.”

*Janet Knupp  
President*

*The Chicago Public Education Fund*

## Research-based Strategies to Use NBCT Leaders for School Improvement

National Board Certification is embedded throughout the Illinois licensure system as the only means to achieve the Illinois Master Teaching Certificate and an option for achieving or renewing the Illinois Standard Teaching Certificate (Presley & Cameron, 2005). According to the Illinois Teaching Excellence Act, Illinois Master Teachers are eligible for a \$3,000-a-year stipend and mentor compensation. It makes sense to utilize these existing policies to maximize the impact of these accomplished teachers on student learning and school improvement in Illinois. Research results and Illinois initiatives suggest a few key policies that the state could adopt to use NBCTs as leaders of school improvement:

- Recruit and grow clusters of NBCTs in high-needs schools and create structures that will allow them to collaborate with one another and their colleagues on issues of student learning (University of Chicago's Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2001).
- Expand the array of leadership opportunities available to NBCTs to improve student learning and schools.
- Provide leadership training and routes to credential NBCTs as leaders.
- Continue the work of the Illinois NBPTS Comprehensive Support System through the National Board Resource Center at Illinois State University to create and disseminate resources to improve teaching and learning in Illinois, train NBCTs, and coordinate the work of NBCT regional and local coordinators to provide professional development.

"In the beginning, the motivating force in our district was the \$3,000 master-teacher stipend earned from the state for 10 consecutive years. As the candidate cohort journeyed through the process, their conversations became more and more about teaching and learning, research, and trends and issues relevant to the classroom. My dream is to one day have a district where being a National Board Certified Teacher is the norm and a goal all teachers have. It is the children who benefit from having been taught by a National Board Certified Teacher."

*Frances Karanovich  
2004 Illinois Superintendent of the Year  
Macomb Community Unit School District No. 185*

## Illinois Initiative National Board Resource Center at Illinois State University

### NBCTs Designing School Improvement Resources

In 2005, the National Board Resource Center at Illinois State University convened a group of NBCTs from across Illinois with successful experience in raising student achievement and improving schools. These NBCTs worked with the National Board Resource Center staff to outline key strategies for NBCTs to support teachers in their schools and districts to improve teaching and learning. Products included facilitators' working agendas, PowerPoint presentations, materials, and resources for NBCTs to deliver effective professional development to improve student achievement in schools. Materials are currently being developed to train NBCTs through the Illinois NBPTS Comprehensive Support System. Ten regional and 40 local NBCT coordinators will arrange training in all areas of the state. All materials and resources will be disseminated through the National Board Resource Center at Illinois State University's Web site so NBCTs in all schools and districts will have free access.

"We have a district goal of 25% of our teachers becoming NBCTs. Our school board and central office are in full support of the program, and our candidates are provided support by our National Board director and current NBCTs. The National Board process helps us truly start to understand the powerful impact we can have on student learning. Every teacher in our district has praise for the personal growth the process generates. This new insight translates into a passion to improve the learning environment for all students. Our students truly get better teaching from National Board Certified Teachers."

*Jeanie Probst, NBCT  
Principal, Highland Middle School  
Highland Community Unit School District No. 5*