**National Board Network: Op-ed**

Your Title Here

Your Name Here

I’ll never forget the first time I saw learning happen in my classroom.

I was a new teacher. I had been trying to reach a student who often hung back, who didn’t clamor to be heard. I walked over to her desk and took the time to connect with her on her level. All of a sudden, I saw the light behind her eyes. Something clicked in her brain. She was learning.

Every day since, I’ve walked into my classroom with the goal of recreating that moment over and over and over again.

That moment of connection between teacher and student is the single most important factor for student academic success. Which is why it’s more important than ever to help teachers continually improve, to ensure we can make learning happen for every one of our students.

For 30 years, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has been helping teachers become the best teachers they can be.

As a Board-certified teacher, I can unequivocally say that the Board-certification process was the most challenging and rewarding professional development experience of my career.

Board-certified teachers are not only required to show a mastery of our subject matter and an ability to connect it to real-life, but we also learn how to reflect on our practice to improve our teaching and help students grow and achieve. We do all this through a comprehensive process focused on student learning. The process involves reflecting on what we are doing in the classroom, while collaborating with others to share knowledge and strategize about how to reach students more effectively.

To earn my Board-certification, I had to build a portfolio of my work and my students’ work to show how I was advancing their learning. I also had to meet the National Board’s standards --developed by committees of outstanding educators -- that define what an accomplished teacher should know and be able to do.

Study after study has shown that it works. Students of Board-certified teachers learn more — and the impact is greater for low-income students. Nationwide, more than 122,000 educators have earned National Board certification. These are teachers who teach to those high standards based on a comprehensive assessment and often become outstanding teacher leaders in their schools, districts, and states.

Insert state- or district-specific paragraph here, something like:

In the 152,000-student Wake County public schools, where I serve, nearly 3,000 teachers have earned National Board certification—at more than 20 percent of our workforce, this is the highest rate of any district in the nation.

Throughout the certification process, I engaged with other educators to share ideas and best practices. Currently, XX candidates pursuing Board certification in my state are using the certification process to build learning communities and to lead their own professional growth.

And, because I was able to become part of a learning community, the impact of Board-certification didn’t start when I officially became a Board-certified teacher. It began when I first launched the process.

Most teachers I know want to belong to a learning community. They want to connect their learning to practical needs for the classroom and tap the expertise of other teachers. To that end, school systems across the country are using the certification process in new ways to improve professional learning for large portions of their teaching workforce.

The National Board recently revised the Board-certification process to ensure it meets the needs of today’s teachers, while maintaining the same high standards of practice. The revised, streamlined process can now be completed in one to three years, at a lower cost.

Perhaps the best thing about the board-certification process is the fact that it allows teachers to be learners themselves. Just as students often learn more deeply through inquiry and guidance, teachers also want to discover insights for themselves and connect their own professional needs with others.

I became a teacher because I love giving my students the gift of knowledge. As a Board-certified teacher, I am constantly learning new ways to help my students find the light behind their eyes.

In order to become the best we can be, teachers need to learn. The Board-certification process has helped me to keep learning and growing for my students.