National Board Certification Cohort

Introduction

Improvement of educators' instructional practice, including professional responsibilities as a teacher-leader and reflective practitioner, are goals identified in The Nevada Educator Performance Framework (NEPF). These goals align with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) qualities of accomplished teachers. National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) are recognized for meeting the highest standards in the profession. Five core propositions create the foundation for National Board Certification. The first four propositions focus on what accomplished educators should know and be able to do regarding instructional practices. The fifth proposition addresses teachers as members of a learning community, assuming leadership roles and responsibilities.

Successful certification requires that candidates engage in scrupulous reflection of their content and pedagogical knowledge as well as their students' achievement. Peer-reviewed research reports students of NBCTs achieve at higher levels than non-board certified teachers (i.e., Cowan & Goldhaber, 2015; Vandervoort, Beardsley & Berliner, 2004). Studies also confirm NBCTs adopt leadership roles in their schools and districts (i.e., Cannata, McCrory, Sykes, Anagnostopoulos, & Frank, 2010) with their most significant leadership roles supporting student and teacher learning and a collaborative culture (Swan Dagen, Morewood, & Smith, 2017).

Given the highly rigorous certification requirements, it is not surprising that candidate attrition rate has been reported at 37% to 55% (Coskie & Place, 2008; Sato, Wei, & Darling-Hammond, 2008). Therefore, establishing a cohort-structured learning community of teacher candidates in the northeastern Nevada region is essential for strengthening candidate resolve to complete the process. The National Board Certification Project (NBC Project), developed by the Northeastern Nevada Regional Professional Development Program (NNRPDP) was designed to support a cohort of educators on their journey to earn National Board Certification or renewal of certification. Specifically, support was provided for participants to examine their teaching practice, analyze results of that practice, and implement necessary change in accordance with National Board Certification component requirements. This report accounts for the first year of a two-year project.

Outcomes from the first year of the NBC Project were three-fold. First, participants would feel supported while working through the component requirements. Second, participants would change their instructional practice according to component requirements. And, third, participants would grow as teacher-leaders.

Instructional Context

Generally, teachers in the northeastern region of Nevada are engaged in multiple learning opportunities required by their respective districts. Some districts have teachers learning new curriculum materials, attending multiple PD sessions to support implementation. For example, both Elko County and Humboldt County have adopted new reading and writing curricula all K-8 teachers must learn and effectively implement. White Pine County K-12 teachers are learning

new technologies and applications of STEM instruction. Given these district initiatives, many teachers admit feeling overwhelmed and unlikely to take on additional professional development.

A survey designed to measure teacher interest in the cohort was sent through email to all K-12 educators in the region. Survey responses were quickly returned indicating a high level of interest. We experienced similar initial high interest by teachers in our region the previous year related to a similarly rigorous year-long learning experience. Also similar to the previous year, only a fraction of interested teachers started the project with still fewer completing the project. This high attrition rate may be related to both the high bar for teacher performance from these projects and the competing priorities on an already limited amount of teacher time. Finally, there is a relatively small number of National Board Certified teachers in our region. White Pine, Eureka, and Lander counties have zero teachers listed in the NBCT directory. Humboldt County has two, Pershing County has three, and Elko County has eleven.

Initial Data and Planning
Despite existing demands on teacher time related to professional development, we were encouraged by National Board Certification cohort facilitators in both Clark and Washoe County already providing cohort support for NBC candidates to promote the benefits of National Board Certification and provide support for any teachers in our region wishing to work toward certification. Recognizing the positive outcomes for student achievement and teachers as leaders related to NBCTs we applied for and were awarded our own GTLF grant to provide support for teachers similar to what was being offered to NBC candidates in other parts of the state.
The grant was written to fund a two-year project. Project Year One (2017-18) included support for up to twenty-five teachers in the northeast region (Elko, Eureka, Humboldt, Lander, Pershing, and White Pine school districts) to complete Components Two and Four of the four component assessment portfolio requirement for National Board Certification. In Project Year Two (2018-19), the same educators from year one will be invited to continue with the cohort to complete Components One and Three, while twenty-five additional teachers will be offered the opportunity to begin their Components Two and Four. Therefore, two separate cohorts of educators will be supported in year two.

Component One is a computer-based assessment for candidates to show content knowledge in their certificate area. Component Two is an opportunity for candidates to highlight their ability to plan and implement appropriate differentiated instruction. Component Three is an opportunity for candidates to highlight their instructional planning and lesson delivery by submitting a video segment of their teaching. Component Four is an opportunity for candidates to present evidence as reflective and effective practitioner both in their classroom and beyond.

Thirty-five teachers signed up to participate in the NBC Project. The cohort launched in August with fewer than half this number, fourteen members representing three of the six districts in the region. Of the fourteen initial participants, six members attended all required sessions. This

report provides a view of learning and project effectiveness based on the experience as a whole by these six cohort members, three high school and three elementary teachers. One participant was a renewal candidate with fifteen to twenty years of teaching experience, and the remaining five participants indicate having six to ten years of teaching experience. All six teachers reported spending two to five hours a week as a teacher leader.

Of these six teachers two joined us using Interactive Audio Video (IAV), one from Eureka county, and one from Humboldt county. The others, three from Elko County and one from the charter school in Elko, gathered together in Elko at our provided meeting location where we could interact with the other two teachers. The NNRPDP facilitators also participated using IAV on occasion. For example, one facilitator, living in White Pine County, would join the meeting from Ely. Also, there were times when the outlying counties had an NNRPDP facilitator join them face to face.

Learning Design

Given the vast geographical distances between school districts, IAV was used for synchronous class attendance in combination with Google Drive tools for shared digital documents and access to agendas and session slides. Two JumpStart events were planned, one for each component. Component Two Jumpstart was held in August and Component Four Jumpstart was held in January. These days were targeted for intense investigation of the requirements and expectations for the component and to set goals, create plans, collaborate with colleagues, and consider evidence needed (see Appendix A for an example Jumpstart agenda). In between JumpStart events, eight support workshops occurred, one each month in order to provide feedback, revise implementation plans, build community, and create accountability (see Appendix B for an example support workshop agenda). Finally, in between support workshops, an email blast was sent to participants with tips, reminders, and encouraging comments (see Appendix C for an example email blast).

Each Jumpstart was a three-hour session and each support workshop was a two-hour session. All sessions were structured similarly with the extra hour in each Jumpstart used to study and discuss component requirements. A typical support session included five predictable structures listed and briefly described below.

- Getting Started, 15 min.
  We began each session checking in with IAV locations, gathering attendance, and signing into Google Drive. After accessing the necessary documents in Google Drive, we reviewed the session agenda and stated learning outcomes. Finally, participants used the rest of this opening block to complete the Current Pedagogical Practices Reflection form.
- Session One, Whip Around Check In, 15 min.
  This block provided opportunity for participants to share their progress, building community and giving one another tips and encouragement.
- Session Two, Sharing Work for Feedback, 60 min.
  This was a large block of time for participants to experience choice work time. Choices included working independently or collaborating with a facilitator or peer for feedback, or other forms of support guided by previously taught protocols.

- Session Three, Component Completion Plan, 15 min.
  This was reflection and planning time. Each participant independently completed a goal setting document called the Component Completion Plan. Participants updated their plan, revised previously written goals when necessary, and brainstormed and refined existing ideas for what they would do next in their classrooms.
- Wrapping Up, 15 min.
  We ended each session by checking in to see if participants added questions or comments to our "digital parking lot" followed by reminders, next steps, and time to complete the NNRPDP evaluation survey.

Measurement

The following section is organized into three categories based on the three project outcomes and associated measurements. For identification purposes, these categories have been given the following labels: Assisting Teachers, Instructional Practice, and Teacher Leadership.

Assisting Teachers, Outcome One:

Participants feel supported while working through the component requirements. Each Jumpstart and support session (n=10) concluded with time for participants to complete a five-point Likert scale questionnaire to address participant knowledge and understanding. Questions providing data for outcome one were: a) This training added to my knowledge of standards and/or my skills in teaching subject matter content, b) I will use the knowledge and skills from this training in my classroom or professional duties, and c) The training will improve my teaching skills. The questionnaire also included a short-answer written reflection related to outcome one.

Instructional Practice, Outcome Two:

Participants will change their instructional practice according to component requirements. During each session participants completed a written reflection questionnaire related to the given component. The questionnaire asked teachers to report if they had refined an existing instructional practice or tried a new instructional practice related to component requirements. They also reflected on what they might do differently if they used the given tool or approach again.

Teacher Leadership, Outcome Three:

Participants will grow as teacher-leaders. To measure participant self-reported leadership experiences, a pre/post Teachers as Leaders survey was given. This survey is divided into seven domains (see Table 16). In addition to these domains, there is a final section about teacher beliefs related to leadership.

Table 1: *Teacher Leadership Domains*

Teacher Leadership Domains
Domain One: Fostering a collaborative culture to support educator development and student learning
Domain Two: Accessing and using research to improve practice and student learning
Domain Three: Promoting professional learning for continuous improvement
Domain Four: Facilitating improvements in instruction and student learning
Domain Five: Promoting the use of assessments and data for school and district improvement

Teacher Leadership Domains
Domain Six: Improving outreach and collaboration with families and community
Domain Seven: Collaborates with colleagues

Results and Discussion

Assisting Teachers

The data suggests the NBC Project accomplished outcome one: Participants feel supported while working through the component requirements. Across the ten sessions of data collection, teachers reported, on average, high satisfaction for having their needs met. Similarly, they reported ample opportunities for interaction and reflection in a setting enhanced by the quality of training. Table 17 shows each question and its corresponding score based on a five point Likert scale.

Table 2: Question Statements and Associated Scores

Question Statement	Overall Score:
The training matched my needs.	4.82
The training provided opportunities for interactions and reflections.	4.79
The presenters experience and expertise enhanced the quality of the training.	4.79

Additional evidence of outcome one accomplishments come from short-answer reflection statements. Example statements reflecting how the cohort structure helped teachers maintain focus:

- *Thanks so much for the clear instructions and direction. Setting those small goals helps me focus and getting ready for the bigger goal.*
- *I appreciated the process of sharing my students' work as well as the written portion of Component 2. It helped to know that I am on the right track.*
- *This was a very helpful training, receiving feedback on my work and knowing how to revise my writing to fit the component.*

Example statements reflecting how the cohort has provided support in general:

- *Thank you for providing support! It is extremely helpful in attempting to synthesize all of this information.*
- *Thank you! Working with [a facilitator] and [a peer] was very helpful in gaining an outside perspective about my lessons. It has helped me be more reflective about my teaching.*
- *This support group is very helpful and revitalizes my excitement and interest in helping my students gain knowledge by continuing to improve and create more engaging lessons even on days when I feel like a failure.*

Instructional Practice

The data suggests the NBC Project accomplished outcome two: Participants will change their instructional practice according to component requirements. Between September and April, seven Current Pedagogical Practice Reflection submissions were collected from cohort participants. Seventy-three percent of responses indicated trying something new, and seventy-

nine percent indicated refinement of existing practices. The following representative statements suggest teachers have changed their instructional practice.

"I stepped back more than before and let the students use more of their own thinking to solve a problem/complete an activity."

"I have used exit tickets in the past, however, now I am using exit tickets as a way for students to reflect on their misconceptions on a math topic from the day before. This has been giving students the opportunity to discuss particular misconceptions with their peers and opens up whole class discussion. My exit tickets have really been driving my instruction as I am reflecting on how to approach misunderstandings and offer more support for struggling students."

"I started having students rate themselves on a 1-4 scale more often because it gives me more information compared to the thumbs up thumbs down method. I have posted the student rubric around the classroom as a reference."

Teacher Leadership

It is difficult to determine if the NBC Project accomplished outcome three: Participants will grow as teacher-leaders. Given the level of dedication and commitment to attend all required NBC Project sessions and complete the two certification components, these teachers may show similar resolve when given a leadership opportunity. Although, the opposite may be true. It is possible, these teachers have more time to participate in experiences like the NBC Project because they are not performing additional teacher-leadership related tasks.

Figure 19 shows pre/post data for each of the seven domains and beliefs about leadership. The overall change between pre- and post-survey data differs by one-tenth, from 3.93 to 3.82. There are several possible reasons for the similar pre/post results. First and foremost, is the survey completion dates. Although the survey was intended to be completed early in the school year during the Jumpstart for Component Two, it was completed mid-year during the Jumpstart for Component Four. Therefore, the pre-results represent participant responses based on their experiences and learning during our work with Component Two. Another possible explanation for the similar results is statistical ceiling effect, suggesting the instrument used is not sensitive enough to measure differences between pre- and post-results. Threats to internal validity such as statistical regression or testing effects may also be at play.
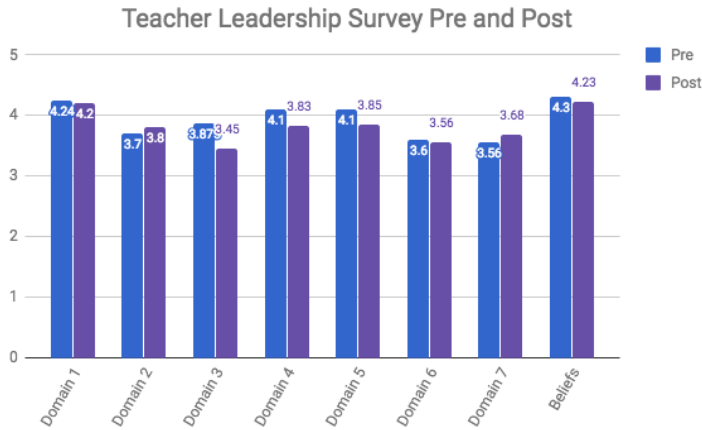
Figure 1: *Teacher Leadership Survey Pre- and Post-Data*

Results to Consider

What may be teased out of the teacher leadership data are the areas with lower scores. Teacher leadership associated with Domains Three, (lowest score of 3.45) Six, and Seven (second lowest score of 3.56) appear to be more difficult to experience than the other domains. Domain Three, promoting professional learning for continuous improvement includes the following qualifications: a) use of knowledge to promote, design, and facilitate job-embedded PD aligned to their school improvement plan; and b) use of knowledge of existing and emerging technologies to guide colleagues in helping students skillfully and appropriately navigate the universe of knowledge available on the Internet, use social media to promote collaborative learning, and connect with people and resources around the globe. These experiences require opportunity, confidence, and a deep understanding of Internet technologies used for teaching and learning, all of which seem difficult for many teachers to acquire.

To satisfy the requirements of Domain Six, improving outreach and collaboration with families and community, a teacher must work with colleagues to improve the educational system and generate more opportunities for student learning when working with families, community members, and other stakeholders. Similar to Domain Three, these experiences require opportunity, confidence, and a deep understanding of family and community engagement. Many teachers admit feeling intimidated or uncomfortable reaching out to families and community.

Domain Seven, collaboration with colleagues, requires teachers to communicate effectively with audiences such as parents and community members and represents and advocates for the profession in contexts outside of the classroom. This domain is similar to Domain Six with the added expectation of speaking up to advocate for the teaching profession. Again, this is difficult for many teachers if they struggle with confidence in doing work beyond the classroom.

Domains One, Two, Four, and Five require less attention beyond the classroom. Domain One requires teachers to strive to create an inclusive culture where diverse perspectives are welcomed in addressing challenges. Domain Two requires a teacher model and facilitates the use of systematic inquiry for ongoing learning and development. Similarly, Domain Four, facilitating improvements in instruction and student learning, requires the teacher to be a continuous learner modeling reflective practice based on student results. Finally, Domain Five, promoting the use of

assessments and data for school and district improvement, is not difficult as the culture of schools has become hyper-focused on assessment. The challenge with this domain is the requirement to collaborate with colleagues to use assessment and other data to make informed decisions that improve learning for all students and to inform school and district improvement strategies.

Conclusion

The National Board Certification Project (NBC Project), developed by the Northeastern Nevada Regional Professional Development Program (NNRPDP), was designed to support a cohort of educators on their journey to earn National Board Certification or renewal of certification. Specifically, support was provided for participants to examine their teaching practice, analyze results of that practice, and implement necessary change in accordance with National Board Certification component requirements.

All six cohort participants successfully submitted both components supported during the NBC Project. Data suggests the NBC Project clearly achieved two of the three intended outcomes: participants felt supported while working through the component requirements, and participants changed their instructional practice according to component requirements. As for the third intended outcome, it is unclear if participants grew as teacher-leaders. The pre/post data does not clearly show growth. This may have been caused by timing of survey administration or any number of internal validity concerns. Because this project will continue next year, we will revise our methods to measure teacher leadership growth. We may also include supports for teachers feeling less confident engaging with families and community beyond the walls of their classroom.

References

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Appendix A: Jumpstart Agenda

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NNRPDP NBCT Candidate Cohort
Jumpstart Day Component 4
Monday, January 8, 2018
5:00 to 8:30

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Candidate Center
Component 4 at a Glance
Today's Slides

5:00 to 5:15 Getting Started 15 min.
      Check in to IAV sights
      Gather attendance (each person will sign in on their own)
      Sign into Google Drive
      Go over agenda, get out your materials for Component 4

5:15 to 5:45 Session One: Introduction to Jumpstart Session (Sarah) 30 min.

5:45 to 7:15 Session Two: Digging into Component 4 Documents (Holly) 90 min.

7:15 to 7:45 Session Three: Data Collection: Teachers as Leaders Survey & Planning Doc (Holly/Ketra) 30 min.

Teachers as Leaders Survey 20 min.
- Access the form
- Complete each item
- Submit form

Component Completion Plan 10 min.
- Access your Component Completion Plan you started at our last support day
- Update your document by noting anything completed
- Add New Goals brainstorm or refine existing ideas for what you will do next in your classroom

7:45 to 8:00 Wrapping Up (Sarah) 15 min.
- Digital parking lot check in
- Next Steps

Evaluation - NNRPDP Survey

Appendix B: Support Workshop Agenda

NNRPDP NBCT Candidate Cohort
Support Day Component 4
Monday, January 29, 2018
5:00 to 7:00

Component 1 window March 1 to June 15
Candidate Center
Component 4 at a Glance
Today's Slides

5:00 to 5:15 Getting Started 15 min.
      Check in to IAV sights
      Gather attendance (each person will sign in on their own)
      Go over agenda, get out your standards graphic organizer
      Reflection - Current pedagogical practices reflection

5:15 to 5:35 Session One: Whip Around Check in 15 min. (2 to 3 min. each)

5:35 to 6:45 Session Two: Choice Work Time 70 min.
- **10 min.** make a plan for your work time. **Talk with others, set goals.**
- **60 min. Work time.**

Items you may need:
Artifact share and feedback using a modified tuning protocol and your component 4 rubric
Modified Tuning Protocol
Warm, Cool, Hard, feedback given during protocol
Pocket Guide to Probing Questions

6:45 to 6:50 Session Three: Component Completion Plan 5 min.
- Access your Component Completion Plan you started at our last support day
- Update your document by noting anything completed
- Add New Goals brainstorm or refine existing ideas for what you will do next in your classroom

6:50 to 7:00 Wrapping Up 10 min.
- Digital parking lot check in
- Next Steps
- Evaluation - NNRPDP Survey

Appendix C: Example Email Blast

Study the Architecture of Accomplished Teaching!
C4 INFO: Candidates, you know that one of the most important documents in your NB toolbox is the Architecture of Accomplished Teaching (AAT). This is the NB version of a unit/lesson plan. If you are working on C4, have you realized that the steps they ask you to take in the Assessment section, follows the AAT? The directions are set up to guide you to show the AAT. When you plan, teach, and assess the unit of study you use for this part, you are demonstrating how you incorporate the AAT into your teaching practice. That is powerful evidence! I have a acronym I use for the AAT (if you have any of my books, you'll see it): SSTARS. S = Students (Knowledge of Students); S = Set Goals; T = Teach; A = Assess (Formative, Student Self Assessments, Summative); R = Reflect; S = Start Over (Use the data/your experience to decide the next steps). Understanding this will help you digest what is asked for in C4. - Bobbie McKee Faulkner

Have you wondered about these same questions?
NBCT Support Group FB page member wrote:
C4 question - if you are using the professional learning to address your student need, then on the Professional Learning need Q2 "Describe the evidence you provided of how you met the learning need," it says to show evidence of the impact of your actions on student learning. This is going to be virtually the same as the answer to Q2 on Student need form, where you show evidence of impact of collaboration on students. Anyone use the same thing? It makes sense to me, but the overlap concerns me.
Responses that seemed helpful: Posted by Bobbie Faulkner
- They are not asking about the same thing. On the PN form you talk about/show evidence about the LEARNING you did to meet the need you described. One way to show evidence of impact is to explain a before/after comparison. The question on the SN form is about COLLABORATION. The impact collaboration had on student learning. The PN learning and the SN collaboration are not the same. Hope this helps.
- I've posted a few times about this dilemma - the advantages/disadvantages of having the PLN and the SN connected. When connected, you may feel like you're repeating info/evidence. If connected, there will be more overlap, but everything shouldn't be identical. In your writing, try to look at the evidence from the 2 points of view, or "lenses of the 2 needs, especially when analyzing and reflecting. Connected, yes...identical, no."

I know this is a lot of information! Hopefully, you will find some of it helpful! See you next Monday, February 26th!