



NNRPDP National Board Certification Cohort: Year Two

Improvement of educator's 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. Students of NBCTs achieve at higher levels than non-board-certified teachers (i.e., Horoi & Bhai, 2018). Studies also confirm NBCTs adopt leadership roles in their schools and districts (i.e., Quinzio-Zafran & Wilkins, 2018) with their most significant leadership roles supporting student and teacher learning and a collaborative culture (Swan-Dagen, Morewood, & Smith, 2017). Most recently, data suggest cooperating teachers who are also National Board Certified were most effective in providing feedback to student-teachers preparing for the edTPA, a performance-based assessment for teacher candidates (Kissau, Hart, & Algozzine, 2019).

Given the highly rigorous certification requirements, it is not surprising 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 northeastern Nevada may be an essential support 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.

Instructional Context

The second year of implementation FY19 cohort participants were engaged in multiple GTLF (Great Teaching and Leading Fund) learning opportunities required by their respective districts. Given these district initiatives, many teachers admit feeling overwhelmed and unlikely to take on additional professional development. As a possible consequence, a year-two survey (2018) of northeast region educators indicated 33 teachers, compared to 67 teachers the previous year, were interested in obtaining National Board Certification.

When the reality of the rigor of the National Board expectations was understood and personal time values aligned, similar to year one, many of the year-two educators chose to discontinue the certification process. All but two indicated they would like to try again with our support in the future, but for a variety of reasons were unable to continue at the time. Reasons included new positions (teacher to administrator), family crisis, time to devote to the process, and “too much work to certify”.

Initial Data and Planning

Despite existing demands on teacher time related to professional development, NNRPDP coordinators were encouraged by others in both Clark and Washoe counties 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 teachers as leaders and student achievement 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. Year 1 (2017-18) included support for up to twenty-five teachers in the northeast region (White Pine, Eureka, Humboldt, Elko, Lander, and Pershing school districts) to complete Components Two and Four of the four-component assessment portfolio requirement for National Board Certification. In Project Year 2 (2018-19), the same educators from year one were invited to continue with the cohort to complete Components One and Three, while twenty-five additional teachers were offered the opportunity to begin their Components Two and Four. Therefore, two separate cohorts of educators were supported in Year Two.

Similar to year one of this two-year project, outcomes from year two 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. Additionally, the year two outcomes address two groups: Cohort One (those starting the certification process during the first year of the project and continuing during year two) and Cohort Two (those starting the certification process during the second year of the project).

Learning Design

Given the vast geographical distances between school districts, Interactive Audio Video (IAV) was used for synchronous class attendance in combination with Google Drive tools for shared digital documents and access to agendas and session slides. To facilitate two cohorts simultaneously, the NNRPDP Coordinators working with Cohort One during year one each took charge of one cohort during year two.

Jumpstart events were planned for both cohorts. The Jumpstart days were targeted for intense investigation into the requirements and expectations for the component and to set goals, create plans, collaborate with colleagues, and consider evidence needed. The Jumpstart for Cohort One focused on component three requirements. Cohort Two included two Jump Starts: the first focused on component two requirements, and the second focused on component four requirements. In between Jumpstart events, eight support workshops were planned, one each month in order to provide feedback, revise implementation plans, build community, and create accountability. Finally, in between support workshops, coordinators sent an email blast to participants with tips, reminders, and encouraging comments.

Cohort One Details

Cohort One started with five of the seven educators who completed year one. The two educators who did not return included a renewal candidate successfully renewing and a first-time candidate who successfully completed all four components earning certification that year. After receiving less-than-desirable scores from the year one completed components (December 2018) two of the remaining five Cohort One members decided to discontinue the certification process.

Thus, Cohort One in Year 2 was comprised of three educators, one high school teacher from Humboldt County School District (joining each meeting using the virtual meeting software ZOOM) and two elementary teachers, one from Elko County and one from the charter school in Elko. These three participants indicated having seven to eleven years of teaching experience and reported spending two to five hours a week as a teacher leader.

The NNRPDP Cohort One facilitator, living in Elko, joined the two local educators at a provided meeting location where they would virtually interact with the Humboldt County School District teacher.

Cohort Two Details

Cohort Two began with nine educators. Four educators were located in White Pine County and five were spread across Elko County in West Wendover, Wells, Spring Creek, and Elko. Three educators discontinued cohort membership after the initial Jumpstart recognizing they did not have time to complete the component requirements.

Thus, Cohort Two in Year 1 was comprised of six educators including two high school teachers, one from Elko and one from Wells, and one middle school teacher from Wells. The three remaining teachers were from White Pine and were teaching at the elementary level. These six educators indicated having a range from five to over 21 years of teaching experience. Four of the six did not consider themselves teacher leaders. The other two teachers reported spending three to four hours a week as a teacher leader.

The NNRPDP Cohort Two facilitator interacted with the Cohort Two members using IAV. The Cohort Two facilitator, living in White Pine County, joined the meeting from Ely. If the facilitator had been working in either Wells or Elko for the day, she would stay late to join the Cohort Two teacher(s) in that location.

Measurement

The following section is organized into three sections based on project outcomes and associated measurements: 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 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 included 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. A pre/post Teachers as Leaders survey (Swan-Dagen, Morewood, & Smith, 2017) was used to measure participant self-reported leadership experiences. This survey is divided into seven 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; Domain Six, improving outreach and collaboration with families and community; and Domain Seven, collaborates with colleagues. In addition to these domains there is a final section about teacher beliefs related to leadership.

Results and Discussion

The following section is organized into three sections each addressing data from both Cohort One and Cohort Two. For identification purposes, these sections have been given the following labels: assisting teachers, instructional practice, and teacher leadership. Cohort One, year two is identified as C1Y2. Cohort Two, year one is identified as C2Y1.

Assisting Teachers

The data suggests the NBC Program accomplished outcome one, participants feel supported while working through the component requirements. On average, both Cohort One and Cohort Two members reported 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 1 shows each question and its corresponding score based on a five-point Likert scale.

Table 1: Question Statements and Associated Scores

Question Statement	C1Y2	C2Y1
The training matched my needs.	4.9	4.8
The training provided opportunities for interactions and reflections.	5	4.8
The presenters' experience and expertise enhanced the quality of the training.	5	4.8

Instructional Practice

The data suggest the NBC Program accomplished outcome two, participants will change their instructional practice according to component requirements. Seven of the eight responses collected from C1Y2 while working on component three indicated a change in instructional practices. As an example, see the following participant reflection:

I have fully implemented the engineering design process and given students the ability to rebuild based upon their observations. I also implemented prices with the materials, which completely changed the process to science engineering based, to an added math component. During the rebuild, I changed the parameters for students to build their prototype. In the future, I think changes would depend on the specific lesson. I have also refined an existing approach. Also, I have changed how students interact with one

another. My students were having a difficult time taking turns when speaking. Through collaborative projects, it has helped me see how to readjust learning engagement so all students have equitable say in the learning process.

The data for C2Y1 suggest the NBC Program did not accomplish outcome two, participants will change their instructional practice according to component requirements. It appeared the only time cohort members gave any attention to the NBC components was during cohort meetings each time still developing an understanding of the component requirements. After completing five of the ten planned sessions, all six C2Y1 members reported a desire to discontinue their certification efforts. Two reported personal reasons related to home and family while the other four reported feeling overwhelmed with local work expectations.

Teacher Leadership: Cohort One Only

Note that the teacher leadership post data for Cohort Two were not collected. Therefore, this section will only address data reflecting teacher leadership changes between year one and year two of the three Cohort One members.

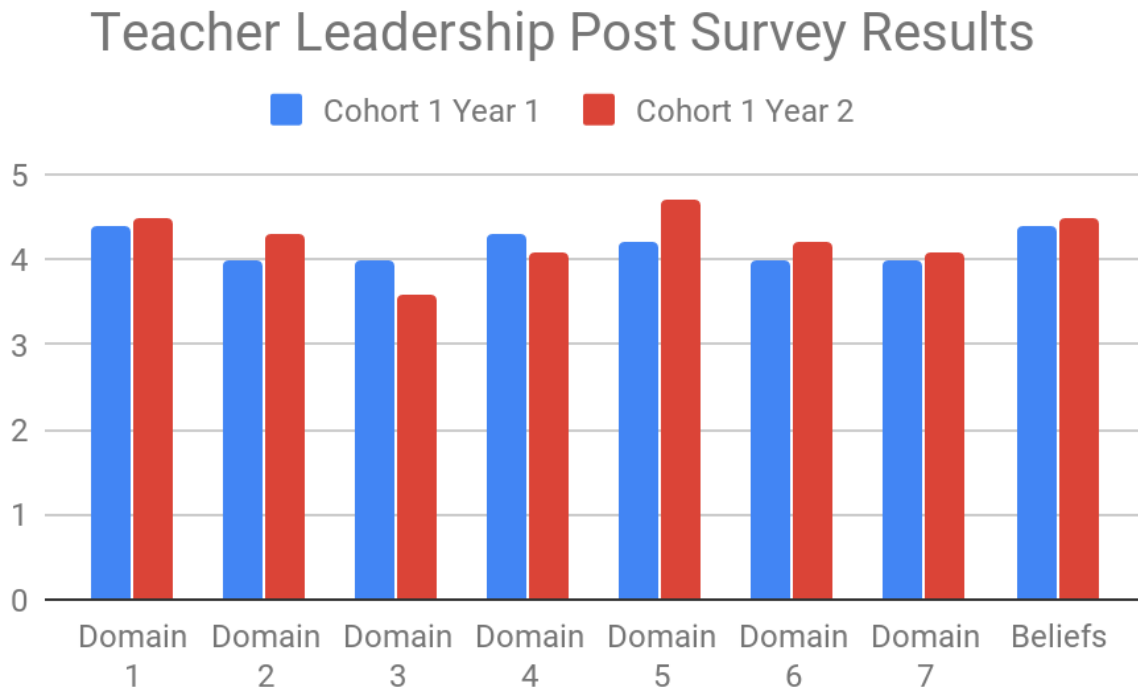


Figure 1: Teacher Leadership Post Survey Results

Comparing teacher leadership survey data between year one and year two suggests Cohort One educators increased in their teacher leadership experiences over the two-year cohort

experience in all domains other than Domains Three and Four. Figure 1 provides a comparison of survey results between years.

Generally, C1Y2 data indicate an increase in teacher leadership related to six of the eight reported categories. These six leadership areas include a) fostering a collaborative culture, b) accessing and using research, c) promoting the use of assessments and data for school and district improvement, d) improving outreach and collaboration with families and community, e) advocating for student learning and the profession, and f) a belief in self as a teacher leader.

Specific survey items with decreased scores in Domain Three include a) facilitates professional learning among colleagues, b) provides constructive feedback to colleagues to strengthen teaching and improve student learning, and c) identifies/uses appropriate technologies to promote collaborative differentiated professional learning.

Specific survey items with decreased scores in Domain Four include a) uses 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, and b) promotes instructional strategies that address issues of diversity and equity in the classroom and ensures that individual student learning needs remain the central focus of instruction.

These two decreased score results are not surprising given the second-year component focused on the individual teacher and analysis of their teaching. Less emphasis was placed on collaboration with colleagues and the integration of technology, both emphasized in the components from year one. Additionally, these experiences require opportunity, confidence, and a deep understanding of Internet technologies used for teaching and learning as well as issues of diversity and equity. These lower self-report scores may indicate a deeper awareness of knowledge in these areas, thus recognizing what they are not yet doing in their classrooms.

Conclusion

The National Board Certification Project, (NBC Project) developed by the Northeastern Nevada Regional Professional Development Program (NRPDP) was designed to support two cohorts 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.

The data for Cohort One suggest the NBC Project clearly achieved the three intended outcomes. The educators felt supported while working through the component requirements and

reported changing their instructional practice according to component requirements. Additionally, the Cohort One members grew as teacher-leaders over the two-year process.

The data for Cohort Two suggest the NBC Project clearly achieved the first intended outcome: participants felt supported while working through the component requirements. Due to limited data, it is unclear if the participants changed their instructional practice according to component requirements or grew as teacher leaders.

There are a number of conjectures regarding the attrition rate of Cohort Two. Although these teachers reported feeling supported (the first intended outcome), this particular group, during this particular year, required more than feeling supported. After personal conversation with NBC cohort facilitators in both Clark and Washoe counties, they also reported an unusually high attrition rate among participants this year.

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