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# A Qualitative Study of the Professional Development Impact of National Board Certification

Donna Newcomer

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A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IMPACT  
OF TEACHER PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program for Educational Leaders

School of Education

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2005

## Abstract

The study examined what perceived impact, if any, National Board Certification has had on the classroom practices of seven Nationally Board Certified Teachers. A qualitative design methodology was utilized through a naturalistic inquiry discovery approach. Two separate semi-structured interview instruments were verbally administered by the researcher in a one-on-one setting following an informal classroom observation made by the researcher and the principal present during and immediately following teacher completion of the National Board Certification process. In addition, researcher examination of portfolio artifacts provided evidence to determine congruency between defined board standards of what teachers should know and be able to do and participant portfolio development. A researcher journal provided additional support in identifying experiences, themes, ideas and/or biases in the data. Primary and secondary support themes surfaced from the data for both teacher and principal groups. Like primary themes were identified in perceived increase of teacher reflection and introspection, perceived increase of focus on student learning and perceived increase of teacher confidence and self esteem. Participant responses demonstrated that the in-depth reflection and analysis component associated with the voluntary process for examining classroom practice, served as a catalyst for enhancing perceived teacher confidence levels and teacher focus on student learning. Teacher efficacy levels increased as each candidate constructed new meaning and insight into personal teaching practices and, ultimately earned the National Board Certification title.

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“If there is no transformation inside of each of us, all the structural changes in the world will have no impact on our institutions.” –Peter Block (1993)

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In 1983, the report of the President's National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, created a major awareness among the public regarding the quality of public education. In particular, the report raised concerns about the assurance of teacher preparation programs to ensure that highly qualified teachers will be found in every classroom. Since that report was issued, similar reports have been published including: *Tomorrows Teachers* prepared by the Holmes Group; *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* released in 1996 by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (Hallinan & Khmelkov, 2001); *Interpret With Caution: The First State Title II Reports on the Quality of Teacher Preparation* (Huang, Yi, and Haycock, 2002); and, most recently, *No Child Left Behind Act* (107<sup>th</sup> Cong. 2001) which required states to begin reporting information on teacher quality in the 2002-2003 annual report. Each report attempted to outline the current levels of effectiveness in school improvement reform and how public education might stimulate more rigorous programs in preparing teachers and in providing continuous professional development.

However, it was within the 1986 Carnegie Forum report titled *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* that the establishment of a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards was recommended. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) was created in 1987 with a focus on a voluntary advanced certification for teaching professionals (NBPTS, 2003). More specifically, the National Board's mission fosters the quality of learning and teaching by

establishing and maintaining rigorous standards for what teachers should know and be able to do while advocating and integrating related education reforms into National Board Certification and simultaneously promoting the expertise of National Board Certified Teachers (1987). The process is not intended to replace state licensure for beginning teachers; rather, it is meant to enhance and complement current teacher certification standards.

### Statement of Purpose

NBPTS efforts have acted as a catalyst to transform teaching through, what the Board espouses to be, an in-depth and rigorous professional development process. According to Guskey (2000), enhanced teacher knowledge and practices should be the single most important outcome of any professional development activity and is also the most significant factor influencing the impact on improved student learning.

The Policy Position or the Five Core Propositions of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (2001) are as follows:

(a) teachers are committed to students and their learning, (b) teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects, (c) teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning, (d) teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience, and (e) teachers are members of learning communities.

The two key components of the process are that candidates complete portfolios and participate in on-demand tasks at assessment centers.

The purpose of this study was to specifically examine what perceived impact, if any, National Board Certification (NBC) has on the classroom practices of Nationally Board Certified Teachers (NBCT).

## Significance of the Study

Since 1987, NBPTS has received more than \$109 million in federal congressional appropriations to design the assessments used for the process of identifying certification recipients. Additionally, 35 states and approximately 400 school systems have provided financial incentives to encourage teacher participation in the process. Along with other states, the Maryland General Assembly enacted legislation in 1999 establishing a permanent program of state and local aid to pay the assessment fee for teachers in public schools seeking National Board Certification.

In 1999, the General Assembly enacted the Teacher Quality Act (as cited by MSDE, 2003). A provision of this act enabled the state to provide matching funds up to \$2000 to a Nationally Board Certified Teacher within local districts in Maryland. Table 1 references Maryland School Systems and the incentive allocation provided to Nationally Board Certified Teachers. For example, in Washington County, Maryland, NBCTs are given an extra \$2000 per year. It should be noted however, that these monetary incentives are part of annual budget considerations and are therefore subject to modification or elimination in any given fiscal year.

More recently, states have struggled to meet the fiscal and legal demands generated by the “No Child Left Behind Act” (2001). In particular, the legislation, which attempted to create a working definition of highly qualified teachers, created a ripple of confusion in relation to state certification requirements. Subsequently, the federal government allowed states to provide additional analysis of the “highly qualified” terminology as this concept related to state interpretation.

Table 1

*What Maryland Is Doing to Help Teachers with National Board Certification*

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Local School System	Incentive
Allegany	\$1180 per year
Anne Arundel	\$2000 per year
Baltimore City	\$2000 per year
Baltimore County	\$2000 per year
Calvert	\$2000 per year
Caroline	\$2000 per year
Carroll	\$2000 per year
Cecil	\$1000 per year
Charles	\$1830 per year
Dorchester	\$2000 per year
Frederick	\$1000 per year
Garrett	\$1000 per year
Harford	\$2000 per year
Howard	\$1000 per year
Kent	\$2000 per year
Montgomery	\$2000 per year
Prince George's	\$2000 per year
Queen Anne's	\$2000 per year

Table 1 (continued)

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Local School System	Incentive
St. Mary's	\$2000 per year
Washington	\$2000 per year
Wicomico	\$2000 per year
Worcester	\$2000 per year

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(Maryland State Department of Education, 2003-2004)

Maryland recently released a rubric which will allow teachers to determine their highly qualified status via a cumulative point system. The process credits years of classroom experience, education course work, and defined professional development activities, all of which need to create a combined total of 100 points in order to pass the “highly qualified” state requirement. Of particular interest for purposes of informing this study is the area referencing completion of National Board Certification, which will automatically provide Maryland teachers with the required 100 points needed for meeting the highly qualified status.

However, what still remains virtually unknown is if and how teachers participating in this intensive professional development process apply newly acquired knowledge and skills to impact classroom practice. Answers concerning what, if any, difference becoming a NBCT makes is largely based on assumptions about best practices in professional development coupled with early studies indicating a positive correlation

between NBCTs and student achievement. These studies may be limiting because of a lack of longevity research linked to student outcomes.

Additional research is also needed to demonstrate that the relationship between the National Board Certification professional development process and teacher application of new knowledge and skills is the most significant factor influencing student achievement (Guskey, 2000). In addition, clarification regarding the skills and knowledge of Nationally Board Certified Teachers prior to participation in the process may provide insights into how much the process actually changes teacher quality and development.

### Research Questions

The research questions that defined the purpose of this study were embedded in examining the professional development efforts associated with National Board Certification and attempted to delineate if and how Nationally Board Certified Teachers are applying new knowledge and skills.

The overarching question that guided this study was:

What perceived impact, if any, does National Board Certification have on the classroom practices of Nationally Board Certified Teachers?

The supporting questions for this study were:

1. What new knowledge and skills, if any, do Nationally Board Certified Teachers and their principals perceive they have acquired?
2. How do Nationally Board Certified Teachers and their principals perceive that they are applying new knowledge and skills?

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards represents a

prominent effort to raise the standards of the teaching profession by attempting to define standards of accomplished teaching. Teacher candidates gain recognition by participating in an intense assessment process with a desired outcome of attaining national certification. Emerging studies, both qualitative and quantitative, are producing mixed reviews regarding the impact and effectiveness of the process (Stone, 2002; Goldhaber, 2003; Bond, Jaeger, Smith, and Hattie, 2000). Additional research is needed to demonstrate how teacher participation in the National Board Certification process impacts a change in teacher practice.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Overview

The purpose of this study was to examine what perceived impact, if any, National Board Certification has on the classroom practices of Nationally Board Certified Teachers. This section will review strands of literature that contribute to an understanding of professional development impact on teacher practice and examine literature associated with the National Board Certification process as a vehicle for providing rigorous professional development to support teacher growth.

#### Trends In Professional Development

The past decade in education produced numerous trends and initiatives aimed at holding schools accountable for improving. An increase in student test scores represents the most significant criterion for demonstrating school improvement. Schmoker (1999) points out that the many trends and initiatives prevalent in education have done little to foster educator understanding of how to create clear and measurable goals to support collection and analysis of student performance data. In addition, the growing emphasis on the issues associated with how professional development impacts student achievement has generated questions and concerns regarding the content of what teachers teach and the methods they use to teach this content (Guskey, 2002). School systems utilizing taxpayer dollars to support additional training are under close scrutiny to demonstrate how their efforts are producing better results.

The past contributions of the teaching profession were often defined by the role and impact of the classroom teacher in isolation of the rest of the schoolhouse

inhabitants. But as forces outside the field of education in the private sector began placing greater pressures of accountability on measures of success, a new trend emerged whereby educators began examining success parallels in the business sector. Systems thinking (Senge, 1990) provided a framework in education for viewing the interrelationships between the parts as opposed to viewing components as separate and unrelated to one another. Links to systems thinking began to emerge identifying the significance of teacher participation in collaborative work with colleagues. Job-embedded approaches to professional development and increased opportunities for reflection (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997; Danielson, 2002) were identified as a means for supporting classroom and school-wide improvement efforts. Additional aspects, such as shared values within the school culture, are also viewed as variables that contribute to teacher commitment, effectiveness and student success (Gamaron & Grodsky, 2003).

Guskey and Sparks (1996) point out that the quality of any professional development activity is influenced by numerous variables that can be classified into three main categories: content characteristics, or the “what” of professional development; process variables, or the “how” of professional development; and context characteristics which constitute the “who,” “when,” “where” and “why” of professional development, which also involves the organizational culture. These three categories also form the framework of the Standards for Staff Development (National Staff Development Council, 1994). Each of these categories, when combined with the other two, is theorized to contribute to the success of any professional development activity in terms of the impact or level of effectiveness of the activity.

The growing use of terminology such as interdependency, collegiality, goal setting and action plans fostered the notion that schools would perform at higher levels as teachers learned to work collaboratively in teams (Schmoker, 1999). A new emphasis was placed on the success of change and innovations by taking a closer look at the social processes associated with them (Fullan, 1991). Little (1990) stressed the significance of teacher collaboration as a tool not only for examining practice but for examining the outcomes associated with those practices as well.

As the call for collaboration gained momentum, educators began to think differently about their practice. Lieberman (1995) argued for a “radical rethinking” of professional development delivery practices, or process variables, that would more fully involve teachers as learners. More specifically, Lieberman advocated for the transformation of schools into learning organizations in which teams work collectively to solve problems similar to current strategies utilized for student problem solving. In this respect, teachers learn through direct participation in the process rather than through the direct teaching, coaching or modeling that might be provided by others. Providing opportunities for teachers to reflect on their practices and to reshape their knowledge and beliefs about classroom practices has now become a critical aspect of job embedded professional development (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

Nevertheless, issues associated with understanding behavioral and attitudinal change processes related to professional development have proven to be a complex contextual ground for examining impact related to transfer and application of new knowledge and skills (Guskey, 2001; Fullan, 1991); however, in schools where a focus on continuous improvement has become the norm, teachers are more likely to continually

search for and engage in improvement efforts and demonstrate a change in teaching practices or behavior as a result (Fullan, 1990). As participation in the National Board Certification process is considered largely independent and self-reflective in format, questions have surfaced as to the lasting impact on any immediate changes in teacher practice (Ballou, 2003).

### Portfolio Development

The idea behind creating a portfolio has long been associated with professions such as architecture and fine arts. Portfolios have been utilized somewhat sparingly in the field of education, but more specifically in teacher development for almost two decades. In most education arenas, portfolios have been used as an instrument for documenting teaching accomplishments and have also served as a catalyst for generating reflective discussions surrounding best practices. In addition, portfolios are often used as evidence and support of performance in pursuing job opportunities in education-related fields (Knapper & Wright, 2001).

In recent years, the portfolio process has gained momentum as an effective professional development tool allowing greater opportunities for teachers to reflect on instructional practice (Bordo, Michale, Timmons, and Siddle, 1997). Such reflection assists the teacher to redesign and reorganize teaching practices while simultaneously enhancing skills in observation, self-evaluation and conducting research that opens new pathways for inquiry (Wildy & Wallace, 1998; Yoo, 2001).

In preparing professional portfolios, Howard-Bubacz (as cited in Cushman, 1999), recommends beginning with a goal or standard that defines an aspect of good teaching and then defining the benchmarks that will serve as evidence of teacher progress toward

the goal or standard. Evidence such as journal writing, videotaping, lesson planning and the examining of student work should provide evidence and documentation of teacher work toward the goal. Howard-Bubacz also suggests the portfolio include written reflection that demonstrates self-assessment as well as impact on students and school culture. The end product should summarize the “what” and “why” of the teacher’s craft and cause continual monitoring and adjustment to instruction as he or she reflects upon the product (Cushman, 1999).

Similarly, teachers applying for National Board Certification must submit “entries” that document or demonstrate teaching performance. Several entries are part of a “portfolio” that the candidate mails to the board. The portfolio contents include two videos of a classroom lesson with the teacher’s written explanation; a documented accomplishment that describes how the candidate has worked with the families and communities of students, colleagues, and other related organizations; and a student work sample with an accompanying written explanation by the teacher candidate.

Assessment center activities must also be completed in addition to the portfolio exercise. The assessment center activities require completion of an essay test that measures candidate knowledge of the identified content area and measures how he or she communicates the content to students.

The portfolio is the most significant part of the process in terms of gaining an applied understanding of what candidates are learning. The literature surrounding teacher feedback on participation in the National Board Certification process consistently provides testimonials regarding teacher gains in becoming more reflective in their practice (Bailey & Helms, 2000; Gardiner, 2000; Jenkins, 2000). A closer examination

of the five Core Proposition Statements linked to teacher application of new knowledge and skills could provide additional insights and information regarding changes in teacher practice as a result of the reflection process.

### *Teacher Reflection and Inquiry*

The Fourth Core Proposition presented by NBPTS states: “Teachers must be able to think systematically about their practice and learn from experience. They must be able to critically examine their practice, seek the advice of others, and draw on educational research to deepen their knowledge, sharpen their judgment, and adapt their teaching to new findings and ideas” (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards website, 2003). National Board candidates are required to videotape classroom lessons and provide a critical written analysis to support their teaching performance and knowledge base. In this respect, each candidate is involved in purposeful thought with the intent of creating meaning and understanding of their practice.

It has been almost 100 years since John Dewey (1910) wrote about various modes of thinking. In particular, his work on the concept of reflection has earned attention in the field of education that has proven difficult to assess accurately when examining impact on teacher practice. However, Rodgers (2002) in her analysis of Dewey’s work, provides four criteria that characterize and define reflection as: a process of making meaning through understanding connections to experiences and ideas; a systematic and disciplined way of thinking that is rooted in scientific inquiry; a process that needs to happen through interaction and community with others; and, a process that demonstrates value of personal and intellectual growth in self and others. Rodgers also points out that, while reflection is a cognitive discipline, it also demands emotional discipline as the

individual engaged in the reflective process must, for purposes of accurate data collection, remain focused in the experience as it is occurring without distraction.

As Kraft (2002) points out, improvement in any teacher practice is more likely to happen when a deeper understanding of self and practice occurs, thereby causing a change in teacher action based on that understanding. Downey (2004) supports providing opportunities for teacher reflection as a means not for changing teacher behavior, but rather as a tool for influencing teacher thinking; the teacher, in turn, develops a desire to alter previous patterns of behavior that may be negatively impacting classroom practice. Such practices may be particularly useful following observations and classroom walk-throughs conducted by the supervisor. In a follow-up discussion with the teacher, the supervisor would initiate a reflective question that might lead the teacher to further examination of classroom practice.

In order to impact teacher practice, reflection processes must be viewed as purposeful and directed with the intent to understand and create meaning out of that which is observed. While National Board candidates are immersed in reflection as they critically examine their teaching practices, the lack of specific written or directed feedback from National Boards on participant performance creates further questions regarding the extent to which the process impacts classroom practice.

#### Evaluating Professional Development Impact

NBPTS promotes National Board Certification as a form of professional development and actively promotes testimonials from candidates that describe the experience in terms of the outstanding quality of professional development associated with the process. The heavily embedded self-reflection component has caused some to

question the propriety of the experience as a professional development model (Ballou, 2003) with no apparent follow-up questioning the sustained impact on classroom practice.

Providing opportunities for teams to gain a common awareness of purpose and each other can be a means for developing community toward common learning goals. Senge (1990) points out that while it is important for team members to value their individuality, the understanding of unique attributes and qualities of team members ultimately will foster the positive movement of the group goals. A one-shot approach to teacher training is often viewed more as an event and has proven to be ineffective (Sparks, 1997) in supporting school improvement efforts as well as teacher transfer and application of new knowledge and skills that might be obtained during such training. Providing follow-up time for team dialog and reflection fosters opportunity for interpretation and exchange of thoughts. Verbal processing among team members can be helpful in reflecting upon individual assumptions and possibly changing predetermined attitudes (Senge, 1990).

A long-standing and traditional requirement for professional development involves the attainment of additional education for teachers beyond the undergraduate level. Some educators view their participation in required graduate level course work as a time-related requirement needed to advance certification and may carelessly enroll in course work to simply “get it done!” instead of focusing on the impact and value that the course work might have toward supporting their professional development as a teacher. On the other hand, by the mere nature of the profession, many educators demonstrate desire and enthusiasm for opportunities to be characterized as life-long learners,

vigorously seeking out a continuum of ways in which to continue growth both personally and professionally.

Ultimately, teacher application of knowledge and skill has the greatest impact on student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Brophy, 1986). It is in the evaluation of this relationship between teacher application of knowledge and skill that the effectiveness of any professional development activity should be assessed in addition to its impact on student learning and overall school improvement (Guskey, 2000).

When evaluating results of professional development programs, the work of Kirkpatrick (1998), Guskey (2000) and Phillips (1997) provides the most useful framework for examining the effectiveness of program outcomes. Depending upon the desired outcome, varying levels of feedback may be obtained by participants ranging from reaction to the training, to a change in teacher practice and student learning; training that is viewed as having a positive impact on student learning outcomes will demonstrate the greatest return on the associated monetary investment.

Table 2 further illustrates the relationship between levels of evaluation of training and the expected types of results or changes associated with those levels (Killion, 2002). When professional development efforts are evaluated solely on participant satisfaction with the experience, it is not possible to determine how the satisfaction level will impact teacher transfer of knowledge and skills into classroom application. Therefore, the greater the level of evaluation, the greater the chance will be that information will be obtained regarding teacher transfer and application.

Table 2

Types of Results or Changes Associated with Levels of Evaluation of Training

Levels of Evaluation of Training	Results of Training			
	Change in Knowledge	Change in Attitude	Change in Skill or Practice	Change in Student Outcomes
1. Participant Reaction (Kirkpatrick, 1974)		X		
2. Participant Learning (Kirkpatrick, 1974)	X	X		
3. Organization Change/Support (Guskey, 2000)	X	X	X	
4. Application of New Knowledge (Kirkpatrick, 1974)	X	X	X	
5. Student Learning (Guskey, 2000; Kirkpatrick, 1974)	X	X	X	X
6. Return on Training Investment (Phillips, 1997)	X	X	X	X

(Killion 2002)

The difficulty in obtaining feedback on application and transfer at the conclusion of any professional development activity presents a major obstacle in calculating immediate returns on the investment (Phillips, 1997). NBPTS evaluates the portfolios and assessment center exercises of participants. Participants in the process do not receive feedback concerning their strengths or weaknesses; rather, they receive a score indicating they have either succeeded or they have not succeeded, making it difficult for a participant to evaluate, monitor and adjust their future level of performance. However, candidates have the ability to “bank” sections of the assessment that they have passed, which means that a candidate would not need to re-take that portion of the assessment on a second attempt at successful completion.

Although the National Board promotes the certification process as a professional development experience, the Board does not currently provide follow-up with successful candidates to evaluate for teacher change in practice, teacher application of new knowledge and skills, return on investment, or relevancy of the process in supporting current school reform issues.

### The Challenge to Demonstrate the Difference

The formation of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) in 1987 reinforced the importance of the impact that a knowledgeable and informed teacher has on the classroom by creating the National Board Certification process. The Board consistently promotes the process as a professional development activity that provides an option for teachers to examine their practice according to standards for what teachers should know and be able to do as defined by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Teachers individually volunteer to participate in the process and must initially decide if they believe they can meet the requirements of the certification process by studying the standards associated with their area of certification. Each area of certification provides eight to fifteen standards that the applicant should review prior to beginning the application process. NBPTS (2001) encourages applicants to reflect upon the following questions for each standard:

(a) What do you know and what are you able to do with respect to this standard? Be very specific; (b) How might you demonstrate proficiency with respect to this standard and how could you demonstrate to colleagues that you were meeting this standard? (c) How might you demonstrate interaction of two or more standards in aspects of your teaching, planning, managing or assessing instruction?

Candidates are required to complete portfolios, which incorporate and require in-depth analysis, reflection and revision of classroom teaching practices. Additionally, candidates participate in day-long written assessments at an identified assessment center. Ultimately, participants must demonstrate accomplished teaching and provide a rationale for decision making associated with their practice.

Successful candidates may opt to renew their certificate after ten years by participating in another National Board assessment activity. The National Board Certification process, which is under close observation by educators and policymakers alike, is the first of its kind, attempting to raise the standard of practice for educators throughout the nation.

While research on the evaluation of professional development impact as a result of participation in certification process is limited, the cumulative number of participants continues to grow, reaching over 40,000 nationally in 2004-2005. The state of Maryland currently recognizes 497 NBCTs.

As the number of successful candidates continues to grow, questions are now emerging regarding the assessment mechanics (Ballou, 2003; Sarafini, 2002), the merits of the assessment process as a professional development tool, and the contributions the process lends to accomplished teaching (Lustick, 2002).

The process is often described by participants using terminology such as highly “empowering” or “reflective” (NBPTS, 2001), thereby creating numerous questions regarding how researchers might immediately evaluate the program for effectiveness in relation to student outcomes or test scores. Additional concerns (Ballou, 2003) give rise to questions regarding what constitutes effective teaching practice, which may either encompass a more traditional prescriptive and structured approach to learning or more progressive approaches utilizing videos, presentations and reflective journal writing the latter of which more accurately mirrors the National Board Certification process.

In a study targeting the validity of the process in predicting the quality of classroom teaching and learning (Pool, Ellett, Schiavone, and Carey-Lewis, 2001), researchers found considerable variance in the quality of daily practices of Nationally Board Certified Teachers. Two teams each comprised of two members were used to collect the data for the study. One team utilized the district teacher observation and assessment tool while the second team collected interview data from NBC teachers as well as school personnel at the interview site regarding NBC teacher practice. Consistently NBC teachers characterized the NBC process as a good way to validate their teaching abilities and believed that the professional growth and recognition associated with the process were two key reasons for participating in the process. However, the overall analysis of data gathered from school administrators and colleagues in this setting

indicated that the teachers participating in this study varied widely in the quality of their teaching. Researchers of this study indicated that NBPTS certification may not be a sufficient process to guarantee quality classroom practice.

In his research with middle school science teachers, Lustick (2002) created a framework for comparing the responses of teachers who had just completed the assessment process with a group who had not yet begun. Using a grounded theory methodology, Lustick created three variables: before certification, after certification, and a pass/fail outcome. He then created a matrix describing four types of candidates most often observed, applying indicators of 'accomplished' or 'not accomplished' as identifiers, referencing the National Board's Standards of accomplished teaching. Lustick supported the notion that regardless of teacher style (traditional or progressive), the outcome of the process for accomplished teachers should not be to change their practice from one style to another, but rather to focus on how teachers might change or modify their approach in meeting the needs of all students.

Several early studies commissioned by the National Board Research Council (2001) initially produced positive findings. The first comprehensive study was conducted at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (Bond, Jaeger, Smith, and Hattie, 2000) and compared the teaching practices of NBCTs with other teachers and compared samples of student work from classrooms, also from both groups. The study reported that NBCTs scored higher in the identified dimensions of teaching expertise than those who did not obtain National Board Certification.

In two additional surveys commissioned by NBPTS (2001), positive findings were also reported regarding the impact of the certification process. In particular,

participants indicated that the process positively impacted their teaching practices having a strong effect on their teaching as well as interactions with students, other teachers, administrators and communities.

A study commissioned by the Board and conducted at Arizona State University (Vandevoort, Amrein-Beardsley, and Berliner, 2004) attempted to examine the impact that NBCTs are having on student performance. The study, which examined the results of varying standardized tests administered to Arizona students over a four year period in grades three through six, linked NBCTs to an average one-month gain in the performance of their students' when compared to other students in the same districts.

However, in a more recent study, Stone (2002) questioned value-added achievement gains of NBCTs using the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) database. Stone found no NBCTs meeting the defined standard of academic growth used to identify high performing teachers in the Chattanooga, Tennessee, incentive program.

In his study targeting issues of racial bias, Goldhaber (2003) reported that, while African-American teachers are more likely to apply for National Board Certification than their white counterparts, they are 67 percent less likely ultimately to receive the credential. An explanation for this difference was not apparent in his research but was recommended for further study. Additionally, Goldhaber reported that educators of all races who receive the certification demonstrate higher standardized test scores and work in higher performing schools located in wealthier communities.

In a subsequent study Goldhaber (2004) utilized the North Carolina accountability system to examine the relationship between NBCTs and achievement levels of

elementary students. His research, based on student gains, indicated that NBCTs appear to be more effective than their non-certified counterparts. Additionally, the study references the significance of the process as useful in identifying who the more effective teachers are, drawing some question as to how much the process improves teacher effectiveness and how much it simply confirms an already effective teacher.

Such emerging research continues to raise questions regarding what new knowledge and skills Nationally Board Certified Teachers have gained and how these new skills are being applied to demonstrate a change in practice and prompted NBPTS to launch new research studies to further examine impact on quality of teaching and student learning.

### Conclusions

While it seems probable that teachers immersed in a year-long process demanding reflection on their teaching practices, a portfolio to support these practices, and preparation for a battery of assessment center exercises would gain some professional development benefit, questions still remain on how the process leaves any sustained impact on the individual or the profession. Current research and literature regarding the NBC process often present conflicting messages regarding how the process improves classroom instruction versus how the process identifies and confirms an already effective teacher. As Lustick (2002) points out, the question regarding what was learned from the process is more complicated than a simple pass or fail outcome that is awarded to participants. The fact that candidates bring a number of variables to the process, such as education level, experience and age, creates some obvious questions regarding the differences in present levels of knowledge and skill.

Much of the research that has been conducted on National Board Certification up to this point focuses on how the process interfaces with other variables, such as personality traits (Klotz, 2001); low performing schools (Linquanti & Peterson, 2001); state standards (Stone, 2002); provision of support frameworks for participation in the National Board process (Anderson, 2001); the degree to which National Board Certified Teachers possess greater characteristics of expert teaching than their non-certified counterparts (Bond, Smith, and Baker, 2000); and National Board standards as a predictable measure of quality teaching (Carey, Ellet, and Pool, 2001). Additionally, NBPTS continues to seek a broad range of proposals on topics related to impact on student achievement, adverse impact of National Board Certification, and psychometric and technical studies of the Board's assessment system.

After reviewing the current literature on the impact of National Board Certification, more information is needed to define how participation in the National Board process impacts teacher transfer and application of any new knowledge and skills gained by participating in the process. If the process indeed provides the in-depth professional development that the Board promotes, then it would be likely to expect that participants would be able to demonstrate a change in their practice. If a change in practice is not observable, the cost effectiveness of using this approach to identify and reward outstanding teaching is questionable.

CHAPTER III  
DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Overview

This study examined the perceived impact, if any, that participation in National Board Certification had on the classroom practices of Nationally Board Certified Teachers. Specifically, this study examined the professional development aspect associated with the National Board Certification process.

The following questions guided this study:

Over arching question:

What perceived impact, if any, does National Board Certification have on the classroom practices of Nationally Board Certified Teachers?

Supporting questions:

1. What new knowledge and skills, if any, do Nationally Board Certified teachers and their principals perceive they have acquired?
2. How do Nationally Board Certified Teachers and their principals perceive that they are applying new knowledge and skills?

A qualitative design methodology was utilized to address these questions through a naturalistic inquiry discovery approach. Qualitative research design allows for analysis of naturally occurring events, relationships and programs with no expectation of a predetermined course of action or outcome defined by the research (Patton, 1990). Additionally, in this study, qualitative design allowed the researcher to focus on the perceived impact of teacher practice as a result of participation in the National Board Certification process without placing constraints and expectations on research outcomes.

For purposes of this study, an attempt was made to understand if and how the candidates perceive the professional development processes associated with National Board Certification provided them with new knowledge and skills, and how and to what extent candidates are applying their new knowledge and skills. As data emerged, a naturalist inquiry discovery approach allowed the researcher to apply an inductive analysis strategy. Trends, patterns or themes that surfaced assisted the researcher in understanding and making meaning from the experience (Patton, 1990).

In the sections that follow the concepts identifying the research relationships, sampling context, data collection methods and data analysis methods will be discussed.

#### Research Relationships

The participants involved in this study are National Board Certified Teachers employed in Washington County, Maryland, Public Schools. I am currently a principal at an elementary school in Washington County. However, my interest in National Board Certification began during my tenure as supervisor of human resources in the same district. During that time period, I became a Maryland State Department of Education certification specialist and provided oversight for the committee that recruited and nominated the first round of teacher applicants to participate in the National Board Certification process under the newly established state incentive program. One of the teachers participating in this study received Board certification during this same time period. My role of support to National Board Certified Teacher candidates during that period was not clearly defined by the school system; however, I occasionally communicated with them as a means for assessing how the school system might provide support for their efforts by providing substitute coverage or video equipment.

Because of my role as supervisor of human resources and a former role in the same district as supervisor of staff development, I often had professional opportunities to engage in phone conversations or training opportunities where the teachers or principals involved in this study were present. In these roles, I was a visible employee that acted as a county-wide resource in varying capacities. In some prior professional capacity, I had professional knowledge of and interactions with each of the participants in this study. In this respect, my initial contact with the participants regarding this study was accepted and welcomed. A level of credibility had already been established, even though I did not subsequently maintain regular contact with any of the teacher participants. Although my prior interactions with teacher participants were limited and professional in nature, processes needed to be in place to ensure objectivity was maintained. In addition to other methods of data collection, keeping a personal research journal allowed me to monitor feelings or thoughts that might create bias or negatively impact the data.

Another significant part of the design and research relationship in this study is in identifying me, the researcher, as the primary research instrument (Guba 1981, as cited in Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen, 1993). As the primary research instrument, I was able to engage in direct contact involving personal interactions with participants as a method for fully examining and studying the impact of the National Board Certification process in their naturally occurring teaching environments. Such involvement assisted me in gaining additional insight and introspection in the analysis of data. Once again, ensuring objectivity through the use of a personal research journal assisted me in managing data that separated personal biases or feelings associated with my beliefs from the expressions and opinions of the participants.

## Sampling Context

Washington County Public Schools (WCPS) provided the setting for this study. Data for this study were collected from seven female Nationally Board Certified Teachers, five at the elementary level and two high school level teachers. Additionally, support data were collected from principals who were supervising the teachers during and just after their completion of the process. One principal has since retired. At that time, two of the principals each housed two candidates in their respective schools.

According to D.F. Lussier, Advisor to the President and Director of Research for NBPTS, located in Arlington, Virginia, the United States Department of Education recorded the total number of Nationally Board Certified teachers in 2002 as 11%, or 3,474 males and 89%, or 28, 665 females (personal communication, November 4, 2004). While the figures continue to show greater attainment on the part of females, Lussier pointed out that it is important to note that, “NBPTS developed and offered its elementary school certificates first, and nationally, these teachers tend to be predominantly female.” In addition, he pointed out that currently, approximately 55% of all NBCTs are elementary teachers, 26% are middle school teachers and 19% are high school teachers.

The seven participants selected for this study represent all Nationally Board Certified Teachers currently employed in WCPS prior to October 2004. Table 3 provides additional data regarding teacher background for this study. Of the seven, one is a library media specialist, one is a general music teacher, two are regular elementary classroom teachers, one is a high school English teacher, and two are county resource teachers, one of whom is serving the staff of an elementary school and the other serving the staff of a

high school. The five elementary teachers hold National Board Certification in one of the following areas: Early Childhood/Generalist, Early Childhood and Young Adulthood/Media, Early Childhood and Young Adult Music, and Middle Childhood/Generalist. The two high school teachers hold certification in Adolescence and Young Adult/English Language Arts. At the time this study was conducted, five of the participants had 20 or more years of teaching experience. One participant had 14 years of teaching experience, but began her career later in life after raising children; and one had eight years of experience; however, this was her second career.

Table 3

*Teacher Background Information*

Years of Experience Completed	Current Position	Certification Area	Year
8	Kindergarten	Early Childhood/Generalist	2003
14	Resource Teacher	Middle Childhood/Generalist	1999
20	Grade 1	Early Childhood/Generalist	2001
21	General Music	Early Childhood and Young Adult Music	2003
22	Resource Teacher	Adolescence and Young Adulthood/ELA	2001
25	Media Specialist	Early Childhood and Young Adult Media	2003
27	Language Arts	Adolescence and Young Adulthood/ELA	2000

Washington County Public Schools employs approximately 1,500 teachers, 130 administrators, and 1,000 support staff to serve 19,971 students in 46 schools. Student enrollment has increased by 500 during the past three years. The school system is the third largest employer in Washington County. Almost one-third of the current teaching force has 25 or more years of experience. Washington County Public Schools is a predominantly rural school district comprised of 88.1% White students, 8.8% African-American, 1.7% Hispanic, 1.2% Asian-Pacific Islander, and 0.2% American Indian. Approximately one in three students is living at or below the poverty level, with 32.8% of all students qualifying for Free and Reduced-Price Meals (FARM). Class size is one of the lowest in the state, with elementary teacher-student ratios averaging 1:19 and secondary ratios averaging 1:23. Standardized state test scores were in the top ten out of 24 jurisdictions in the state in more than half of the 18 areas tested (2002-03 Annual Report).

Patton (1990) describes purposeful sampling as an “information-rich” (p. 169) sampling approach that will “illuminate the questions under study.” Critical case sampling is a purposeful sampling strategy that allows the researcher to examine the data from a sample group (National Board Certified Teachers) that in some way is different from the norm (since most teachers are not Nationally Board Certified), and make some “logical generalizations” (Patton, 1990, p. 175), based upon similarities or common evidence within the group. National Board Certified Teachers, like all certificated teachers, have participated in teacher preparation programs; however, unlike other teachers, National Board Certified Teachers voluntarily participate in this rigorous

program of study to examine their practice according to standards for what teachers should know and be able to do.

The focus in the gathering of data for this study was on understanding what, if anything, was happening differently in this particular group of teachers to impact teaching practice. If a change in practice was determined, can the cause or determining factor be clearly linked to new knowledge and skills acquired through the National Board process or might other factors have contributed to the change, such as principal support or participation in other professional development opportunities during the same time period? If a change in practice was not determined as a result of participation in the process, can it be logically determined that the participant held the required knowledge and skills prior to their participation and that the process merely served to validate the already intact skills of the participant?

States and counties within Maryland tend to vary in the level of support provided to candidates seeking National Board Certification. Washington County Public Schools was selected as the research site for this project because the single-site sample provided for a common language and perspective among participants regarding process support and follow-up perspectives. Additionally, my personal familiarity with the level of support during the process and the follow-up provided clarity in my analysis of participant feedback.

All teachers in Washington County who have obtained National Board Certification prior to October 2004 were included in this study as a means for looking at transferability of emerging data regardless of certification area, grade level teaching experience, education, or years of experience. Therefore, trends, patterns or themes that

emerged for this critical case sampling of Nationally Board Certified Teachers would likely be true for all cases (Patton, 1990).

### Data Collection Methods

The combination of several data collection methodologies applied to a single study, known as data triangulation, serves to strengthen the results of that study (Patton, 1990). The purpose of the triangulation data collection methods used in this study was to limit or reduce the opportunities of bias that may occur when only using one data collection method. Additionally, the use of several data collection methods acted to support the study in terms of logical generalizations related to emerging trends, patterns or themes (Maxwell, 1996).

For purposes of informing this study, the following data collection methods were utilized:

1. A classroom observation of the Nationally Board Certified Teacher occurred jointly with the researcher and the principal who was present during and immediately following the National Board Certification process. This joint observation process provided some common ground for the subsequent interview process in order to examine what perceived impact, if any, the National Board Certification process has on teacher classroom practice.
2. A semi-structured interview (see Appendix) with the direct supervisor, or in this case the principal or assistant principal, of each participant occurred immediately following the observation to gather data on principal perception of new knowledge and skills, if any, obtained by the teacher and how the principal perceived the National Board Certified Teacher is applying new

knowledge and skills. Audio taping allowed for more detailed analysis and transcription at a later time so that the researcher was able to focus upon body language and gestures during the interview periods.

3. A semi-structured interview (see Appendix) with the Nationally Board Certified Teacher was conducted after the principal interview to gather data on teacher perception of new knowledge and skills, if any, obtained as a result of the NBC process, and how the teacher perceived she was applying knowledge and skills gained in the classroom. Audio-taping allowed for more detailed analysis and transcription at a later time so that the researcher could focus upon body language and gestures during the interview periods.
4. Researcher examination of portfolio artifacts was conducted to determine congruency between defined Board standards of what teachers should know and be able to do and participant portfolio development.
5. A researcher journal provided additional support in identifying researcher experiences, themes, ideas, and/or biases in the data.

An auditor, who also served as the committee chair for this research, was utilized to read transcribed interviews and review data as a means for ensuring researcher objectivity and confidentiality. A coding system utilizing the letters “T” and “P” identified teachers and principals and ensured participant anonymity. Upon completion of transcribed and reviewed interview data, participants also reviewed transcribed interviews to confirm interview accuracy and confidentiality. Each data collection method provided varied information to support the meaning and purpose of this study,

which is to examine what perceived impact, if any, National Board Certification has on teacher classroom practices.

### Data Analysis Procedures

Naturalistic inquiry relies on emerging trends, patterns and themes in the research to define theory rather than beginning with a theory to define the trends, patterns and themes (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen, 1993). The related process of inductive analysis supports the emerging trends, patterns and themes which provide constructs for making meaning and sense of the field data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data analysis in a naturalistic inquiry involves an analysis of data not only at the research site when data are collected, but also after data has been collected. This interactive process of data collection and analysis is a distinguishing feature of naturalistic inquiry that promotes an inseparable relationship between the data collection and analysis processes (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen, 1993).

Marshall and Rossman (1989) describe “modes” for an analytic procedure that involves: organizing the data; generating categories, themes and patterns; testing the emergent hypotheses against the data; searching for alternative explanations of the data; and writing the report. Each mode involves a process for reducing data into “manageable chunks” of information that enables the researcher to uncover and interpret the meaning behind the data. The triangulation of data collected for this study acted to strengthen and support similarities or differences as the data emerged. As Marshall and Rossman (1989) point out, “Raw data have no inherent meaning; the interpretive act brings meaning to those data and displays through the written report” (p. 114).

This study utilized the “constant comparative method” defined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as a step-by-step process for analyzing qualitative data. Prior to utilizing this method for analysis, raw data from transcribed interviews was audited for credibility and confidentiality. A coding and color-coding system was then set up as a means for quickly and clearly identifying themes and sources. Photocopying of coded data pages then allowed for pages to be divided into categories, areas, or themes of meaning for further analysis.

The researcher journal was also utilized to provide information regarding recurring concepts and themes that provided for the initial broad coding categories. Words or phrases highlighting these themes or recurring concepts were recorded as relevant data on card stock index cards as a means for creating and refining categories and themes. As the categorizing process continued, card stock cards were compared and contrasted for similar or different meanings and placed in appropriate matching categories using a file folder system. This narrowing process is described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as the “look/feel-alike” criteria for describing and categorizing emerging qualitative data.

Ultimately, refined categories of meaning emerged through the inductive process allowing for the identification of themes that were categorized as either strong or supportive in analyzing and interpreting data.

In summary, the purpose of this study was to examine what perceived impact, if any, National Board Certification has on the classroom practices of Nationally Board Certified Teachers. A qualitative design methodology with a naturalistic inquiry discovery approach was utilized in an attempt to understand how the professional

development processes associated with National Board Certification impact teacher practice. The constant comparative data analysis method was utilized to identify emerging trends, patterns or themes that surfaced to assist the researcher in understanding the impact that the National Board process has on teacher practice.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Background

This study examined the perceived impact, if any, that participation in National Board Certification had on the classroom practices of Nationally Board Certified Teachers. Specifically, utilizing a qualitative naturalistic inquiry discovery approach, this study examined the professional development component associated with the National Board Certification process.

The following questions guided this study:

Over arching question:

What perceived impact, if any, does National Board Certification have on the classroom practices of Nationally Board Certified Teachers?

Supporting questions:

1. What new knowledge and skills, if any, do Nationally Board Certified Teachers and their principals perceive they have acquired?
2. How do Nationally Board Certified Teachers and their principals perceive that they are applying new knowledge and skills?

An interview guide (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) and questions were developed based on topic and focus of inquiry relevant to three types of questions: knowledge questions, feeling questions and opinion questions. An informal classroom lesson observation then provided an initial context for the follow-up semi-structured interview format with seven Nationally Board Certified Teachers and their principals. A total of

twelve interviews were conducted separately and in isolation from other research participants. The audio taped interviews served as data for the study.

In addition, participant portfolios were reviewed to determine congruency with NBPTS Core Propositions. A researcher journal provided additional support in identifying experiences, themes, ideas and/or biases in the data.

### Primary and Secondary Themes

After each transcribed interview was analyzed, teacher reflection and introspection, focus on student learning, and teacher confidence and self-esteem emerged from the data as the three primary themes both teacher and principal groups. A separate differing fourth theme was identified for teacher and principal groups. With both teacher and principal groups, secondary themes were also identified.

The four primary themes extracted from teacher data were: (a) teacher reflection and introspection, (b) focus on student learning, (c) teacher confidence and self-esteem and (d) affirmation and validation. Three secondary themes extracted from teacher data were: (a) teacher as life-long learner, (b) teacher collaboration and community and (c) teacher focus.

The four primary themes extracted from principal data were: (a) teacher reflection and introspection, (b) focus on student learning, (c) teacher confidence and self-esteem, and (d) teacher focus. The two secondary themes extracted from principal data were: (a) teacher as life-long learner and (b) teacher affirmation and validation.

Table 4 presents a summary of primary themes and demonstrates the commonalities between both groups in three of the four themes. In addition, secondary themes that emerged from both groups are summarized in Table 5.

Table 4

*Primary Teacher and Principal Themes of Perceived Impact*

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Teacher Themes:	Principal Themes:
(a) teacher reflection and introspection	(a) teacher reflection and introspection
(b) focus on student learning	(b) focus on student learning
(c) teacher confidence and self-esteem	(c) teacher confidence and self-esteem
(d) affirmation and validation	(d) teacher focus

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Table 5

*Secondary Teacher and Principal Themes of Perceived Impact*

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Teacher Themes:	Principal Themes:
(a) teacher as life long-learner	(a) teacher as life long-learner
(b) teacher collaboration and community	(b) affirmation and validation
(c) teacher focus	

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### Teacher Perception: Reflection and Introspection

The Fourth Core Proposition presented by NBPTS indicates that it is important for teachers to be able to think systematically and critically about their practice, learn from experience and draw upon current research. According to NBPTS, such systematic thinking requires master level teachers to develop skills that will deepen their ability to reflect on their teaching as a means for improving their practice. The data from this study consistently revealed teacher reflection and introspection as the major perceived area of impact from participants.

Teacher participants were initially asked to describe what they learned by going through the process.

I think the biggest skill you learn when you go through the process is how to reflect on everything you do. You reflect on every child that you teach and the fact that a couple of the portfolios require you to video tape yourself really gives you a view of yourself as a teacher. It's just a very reflective process and it requires you to scrutinize your teaching and try to improve and really teach for a reason and not just because that's what you are supposed to be teaching, but rather, strive that each child is learning (T1, interview, November 2004).

I learned to look at the reason why I do something and what the kids are supposed to get from it and not just that I've got to cover the dictionary, but why and what are they supposed to gain from it (T2, interview, November 2004).

I gained a lot of self-knowledge and self-awareness. It's really weird, because to say, reflect on your teaching, sounds like you just need to focus. But you really do need to spend a lot of time watching videotapes of yourself asking, why did I teach something this way and how could I teach it better? (T3, interview, November 2004).

I learned to evaluate what I do and why I do it. That first year afterward, I would come upon an activity that I had always done and say, why did I always do that? Really reflecting on what I do, I gained a tremendous amount in looking into why I do what. I spend a lot of time thinking about how do I teach my kids to read, to process math concepts (T5, interview, November 2004).

It's a very humbling experience. You think that you know who you are as a teacher and then you watch yourself day in and out and self-evaluate every single second you are in the classroom. So, it is probably one of the most beneficial staff development pieces of my education because I began to truly evaluate what I do and I continue to do that. I was not already self reflective. I didn't know what about what I was doing in my practice that made me successful (T6, interview, November 2004).

I think any time you critically look at yourself on a video and you see the little quirks, the tone and mannerisms that you present. I think that in itself teaches you a lesson, and you learn from that. When you sit down and analyze work, you realize often times that there are things that students are doing right that you don't recognize. I learned a lot about myself as a person, and I learned that I had the ability to dig deep within myself and see it through (T7, interview, November 2004).

The process is a highly individual process except for candidates who opt to seek out support through the internet or within local school jurisdictions where others have already acquired National Board status. Feedback during the process is not provided by NBPTS, and at the completion of the process participants are given a point score lacking any written feedback as to their target deficiencies. Several teachers provided comments on how they reflected on their practice during the process or how they reflect now.

The number one thing you have to ask yourself is, did the child learn and did I address the learning opportunities for those who come with a lot of experience? Did I further their understanding and did I help address the needs of the child who didn't really have any background knowledge? I think when you are reflecting, you are always critiquing whether you accomplished what you set out to do and what did the children learn (T1, interview, November 2004).

When you reflect on your practice on a continual basis—it's not just, sit down, complete your portfolio, you're done, you can go! The year that you spend on National Boards, or two or three, can be three years of in-depth self reflection—the accountability piece was there—but I never looked at it as to see why (T6, interview, November 2004).

Participants most often viewed lack of feedback from National Boards in the final score as a helpful means for causing them to dig deeper into their practice.

A lot of people get very upset that first year when you don't pass the process and you get no feedback; but it's just the whole thing about teaching a man to fish. If they would have told me what I did wrong, then I would have easily been able to jump through those hoops. By not telling me, I had to discover it and I learned it better. I do think that it's just too easy to just say, fix this (T3, interview, November 2004).

I had to figure that out because they didn't give me any feedback. They said, here is your score and you've got to figure out what you are doing wrong! And it wasn't until the second year until I had to look at why I didn't do well in that, that I changed how I teach everything. But I had to see it myself and come to that point—what can I do differently? National Boards spend a lot of time with, not, what did I do wrong, because all they are doing when they are reading is looking for what you did right. Here you have evidence of this and this, not what you did wrong. You have to dig deep and no one else can tell it to you (T5, interview, November 2004).

It would have been great! You know, that is in place. When we graded for National Board we had to create anecdotal records, and I don't know why they don't just give it back to the candidate for feedback. On the other hand, I did have to be very reflective and work to figure out what I was going to do during that second year. I was devastated when I didn't get it the first year. Then, I just decided, well, there must be room for improvement, and there was (T6, interview, November 2004).

You only get your score back, but I think there is great power in looking at what you have done, and then re-analyzing it, and say, gee, I didn't score very well in this particular portfolio entry. What could I have done better? And see, you're back into that same mode. You are analyzing the body of work, and it's figuring out the puzzle yourself (T7, interview, November 2004).

Teachers were asked to talk about how the decisions of what they teach and how they teach it looks differently today as a result of their participation in the NBC process.

I think you reflect more deeply because when you reflect, to me, it's about how could I have done that differently, or changed to meet the needs of the child. The real concern is that there is not a lot of time to reflect. We are kind of time constrained (T1, interview, November 2004).

I think I reflect throughout the entire lesson. And sometimes where I think I am going within the lesson. I end up in another spot, and that's because I'm reflecting while I am teaching and I'm having to redirect and I'm having to change so that it's not just about getting to where I need to go today because we

will get there tomorrow. So I think I'm doing more reflection during the heart of my teaching (T5, interview, November 2004).

It starts from who are my students. Before National Boards I would have assumed that I could have grouped them however it would have worked out, and it may have. Now, I have specific strategies that I discovered during the process to improve my craft that I use on a daily basis (T6, interview, November 2004).

Well, obviously, we are all impacted by the state curriculum. We have to teach according to what our county assesses. But when I look at what I am teaching today, I want to make learning as meaningful as possible. I started to realized that you really only have so many opportunities each and every day. You know those windows of opportunity open and close everyday, whereas before, I don't know that I thought about it as much (T7, interview, November 2004).

As teachers progress through the National Board process, they must participate in several components including videotaping of self-teaching a lesson, portfolios, reflection journals and the assessment center. Participants were asked if they perceived any one component as having a greater impact on their classroom practice today.

I'm thinking of the portfolios over the assessment center because you had to create the lessons to meet the standards and then videotape it and then reflect on that versus the assessments which I felt did not require a lot of reflection whereas the reflection journals were in response to the lessons that you designed, implemented, videotaped and discussed. The whole reflection process, I am the kind of person that would go back and look at it and try to revamp it (T1, interview, November 2004).

The videos, I think that everyone ought to video tape their classroom more. First you have to get over looking at yourself, just the way you walk around, your mannerisms and the things you say. It really makes you look! You hear comments and things that you never hear, see things about the way you hand out papers and books. We really don't know ourselves until we've had an opportunity to do that (T2, interview, November 2004).

Participants were asked to comment on the probability that a teacher could go through this process and not gain any new skills or knowledge.

I don't see how, because you have to look into your teaching and think about the things that they are asking you that you don't get answers to without looking, reflecting and thinking (T2, interview, November 2004).

Absolutely not! No! And it is a myriad of benefits, not only the introspective aspects, but the consistency that now occurs for me in every class and every day, what did I do and how can I change? I am constantly evaluating and cognizant of who my learners are. But more importantly is the change from the emphasis on me in the classroom. It's absolutely not about me, it's about empowering them (T6, interview, November 2004).

All of the teachers had already completed a master's degree prior to participation in this process. Course work at this level often contains activities or opportunities for reflection and some participant responses were further probed to provide a comparison of the two experiences.

When I did my master's, I would sit in class and listen to people talk about this is what they did or that I've got to do this in my classroom and I'd think, whew! You've been out of the classroom too long! You don't get it! But it was always someone telling me what they did. This was an opportunity for me to say to myself, okay, you've always just done this. Why do you do it that way? (T5, interview, November 2004).

I think because it's so intensive and demands careful examination of your craft and what you are expecting your students to do. This process was the actual work—it was about what my work was about and really needing to look carefully at what I was doing and why I was doing it within my classroom and going from there with my students (T7, interview, November 2004).

One participant shared her thoughts regarding the commonalities or like characteristics of NBC teachers.

I would say that the only thing that might be in common would be that we all might be more reflective. It's not just, this is what you have to do, jump over it and you'll make it! That's not what it's about, and that was very frustrating for me going through the process because I just wanted to know what I was supposed to do. But that wouldn't have been of any value to me because I needed to see how I do what I do and why I do it (T5, interview, November 2004).

Principal Perception: Reflection and Introspection

Principals were initially asked to describe what they believed their NBC teacher(s) learned as a result of participating in the process. Three of the five principals commented on the merits of the process in relation to enhanced teacher reflection:

“I think it helped her to become more knowledgeable about how she looked and looks as a teacher in the classroom” (P3, interview, November 2004); “I think they became more aware of what they do that results in student achievement; more focused on the goal of student learning” (P4, interview, November 2004).

With both, they tried to integrate other subjects into their teaching; and they also became more cognizant of their teaching skills because they would videotape themselves and, I think they looked at that and obviously had to make some changes in how they delivered instruction. That’s probably the biggest change I saw because they actually spent time reflecting on their practice (P2, interview, November 2004).

When further questioned regarding perception of how the process improves or impacts teacher classroom practice and student learning, four of the five principals commented on reflective or introspective impact: “I think the information and what they had to go through allowed them to reflect and their willingness to take risks, I see it as a positive; I noticed that one definitely had students reflecting more” (P2, interview, November 2004); “Well, I think there’s a better awareness of not only having better behaved children, but also, these are the outcomes and how they are achieving them. Probably the main thing is awareness” (P4, interview, November 2004).

It’s a very reflective process and the teacher has to do a lot of this and personally, I think that’s part of the value in that it is a personal commitment and gives them the opportunity to reflect on their practice and who they are as a person and their relationships with children (P1, interview, November 2004).

Well, in my opinion, I think it makes teachers be more self-analyzing, makes them look more at what they are doing with the students, more at what successes they are having, what they need to do more of or less of. So I really think that whole approach of videotaping causes teachers to have to look at every aspect and not just generalities; but very specifically, National Boards makes you look at yourself as an individual and say, okay, how can I make my approach more effective for kids. How do I affect children and what are the results that I am getting from what I am doing is so important (P3, interview, November 2004).

Principals were asked to comment further on their understanding of how teachers were involved in reflection or to describe a process for how this occurred. “I can remember that they would talk to each other about ways to do things and I have seen some changes, so maybe they are doing more of that (reflection) on a regular basis” (P3, interview, November 2004).

Periodically we would dialog about what she was doing and she would share with me. Repeatedly, she mentioned the fact that she had to stop and think about what she was doing and reflect on her teaching, and she indicated that she had never done that before. Every now and then she would share with me parts that would go into her portfolio, but would mention on a number of occasions that reflection piece that gave her a different way of thinking (P2, interview, November 2004).

I think whenever you feel like you are going to be judged, you start monitoring the quality of what you do; and plus, I guess, somewhere in the process, they were seeing what others are doing. No one likes to see themselves on video, but you’re actually saying, was what I did effective? They become very aware of what they are doing (P4, interview, November 2004).

When asked about the components of the process and to express an opinion on the impact of any one component being greater than another, three of the five principals’ comments targeted reflection aspects that were embedded in the portfolio and videotaping process, while the other two principals did not feel knowledgeable enough to comment: “Based on what I saw, the portfolio. It’s application—putting together evidence of what they are doing in the classroom” (P4, interview, November 2004).

I think the piece where they had to videotape themselves made a big impact. I know that after they watched that, they questioned, boy, I didn't like what I saw! Is that the way I sound? I didn't like that! I think that made a big impact on them at the time. I do remember them talking a lot about the portfolio piece (P2, interview, November 2004).

I think the reflection piece, quite honestly; the portfolio, to a point, because you have to spend so much time collecting the information. I'm sure the assessment center had an impact, but I really don't know as much about that (P3, interview, November 2004).

### *Teacher Perception: Focus on Student Learning*

The First Core Proposition indicates that all teachers need to be committed to students and their learning. Throughout all interviews, frequent reference was made to the needs of the child and a change in teacher interactions with children. In some instances, teachers referenced their lack of desire to act as the controlling force in the classroom and to become better listeners of student input for direction. Teachers expressed a hunger to build better relationships with students and understand more about student thinking and to become more attuned to formal and informal data in their planning.

I think after completing the process, my view of the students is that when they come to school, we have a very microscopic view of that child and what's happening in their lives, and I think going through that process has opened my eyes to looking more at the whole child. But my main objective is to establish some confidence in all of those students because it is so easy with the child that is struggling to become frustrated and just want to give up (T1, interview, November 2004).

But I realize that it's become more important and rewarding for me to gain that personal relationship with them, so I'm working harder on that, in knowing which kids to respond which way to. I think I'm just more aware of personalities and needs. With some, I'm not reaching in educationally the way I'd like to be, but there's so much baggage sometimes (T3, interview, November 2003).

I learned how to really discipline my teaching to get a better control over the way I use time in the classroom, to give students more control over the classroom, sort

of let them go where their questions lead them instead of my feeling like we have to be here by a certain time. I try to pay more attention to what they have to offer rather than just me trying to give them what I know I'm supposed to offer them (T4, interview, November 2004).

Every student wants to learn and be successful. Giving students permission to design what they need your help with—they'll buy into it. This is just an incredibly important product of National Boards. I needed to understand how they learned, and that never occurred to me that that was so important! It doesn't matter who the student is; they have an ability to learn, and you have to discover it! (T6, interview, November 2004).

I think I learned to really focus on what each child needs, and what was that need. I really think it was caused by learning to critically look at each student's work and realizing that, wow! Kids learn so differently (T7, interview, November 2004).

Core Proposition Three indicates that teachers need to be responsible for managing and monitoring student learning. I questioned teacher thinking regarding how participation in this process affected the way in which they monitor and manage student learning.

In monitoring—that requires one to constantly be observing the child, taking anecdotal records and trying to determine when and why behavior occurs and trying to change it in a positive way. Especially in terms of student learning... more hands-on activities, which requires you to collect data on a student so that you can see their progress. We collect samples over time much like a portfolio so that you can see where the child started and whether he improved. It helps you to determine the kind of support that the child needs to improve and what kinds of materials, learning centers and resources you might need to support learning. The process also helps you to learn how to observe a child, not to be judgmental, but so that you can share with a parent to say, this is what I observed, and then you can come up with a plan with the parent to help support the child (T1, interview, November 2004).

I actually have my grade book on my Palm so I can easily mark down who is participating and who is not, more than I used to. I used to just say they either got it or they didn't because there was time in between and nothing ever connected, whereas, now we're expecting more and we've got to all connect (T2, interview, November 2004).

I am much more attuned to those running records and results. Before, it was a process I had to do because someone was asking for those results. I was willing to do them and group my kids because of it, but I used to think, I don't have this much time to invest in each kid! Now I think, what do you mean you don't have that much time to invest in kids? How can you not want to know exactly where everyone is (T5, interview, November 2004)?

I think I've always considered to some degree where students were. I started keeping a lot more anecdotal notes because I found real value in those little snapshots. When you put all of those snapshots together, you have a painting, a window into what is going on with that child (T7, interview, November 2004).

More attention to the individual child was also evident in responses regarding how teacher decisions about what they teach and how they teach it looks differently now.

I think I would not have engaged the children as actively in the process as I do now; and that's what takes a whole lot of time. When you listen to children, it takes time. I learned that it's important to give everyone a chance to talk. It's important for children to talk and I listen more. I don't try to talk them out of their thinking. I guess I like to build on the child's knowledge and I think I'm much more sensitive to their knowledge set now so that I can build my lesson on top of that so that I'm not teaching them things they already know or teaching them something that's so far above and beyond (T1, interview, November 2004).

Like I said, I got rid of some of the things I used to do because I did them just because someone said that you needed to do it. Now I look at what affects kids. I taught a lot of skills in isolation, now I don't (T2, interview, November 2004).

The questions and focus of some of the tasks for my portfolio forced me to focus a lot more on students. Teaching is student based, but a lot of it has to do with content and theory and being better myself. National Boards really made me realize that I already had everything I needed, but what I needed to do is tap in more to my students. My students don't need to know more of what I know; they just need to hone-in on the things they know and to polish their skills. Whereas teaching before was polishing my skills, teaching now is polishing their skills (T4, interview, November 2004).

I wanted there to be a lot more choices and not just one right answer and allowing them to see that, and so that's where I see that I've made major changes. In my language arts, I put a lot more control to my children. My children make a lot more choices; my children are guiding what I am doing with them, not through their knowledge of it, but by their actions, they are guiding it (T5, interview, November 2004).

Principal Perception: Focus on Student Learning

Principals were asked to talk about their perception of change in teaching practices or styles of National Board Teachers.

What I noticed from this observation was that there was a lot more vocabulary development, use of language, more specific talk. She was prodding more higher level thinking from the children. I think that there was more interrelatedness between the activities she was doing and she would repeatedly link whatever she was talking about to prior knowledge, to activities that they would be doing and helping the children make a connection to extend their thinking. She really seemed to be focused on what they are doing and leading them forward (P1, interview, November 2004).

I see more hands-on [activities]; I see more use of technology; I see her getting away from pencil/paper tasks and even the way she assesses children from that paper-pencil-all-the-same to short-answer things to more teacher observation and teacher conferencing with her students. Really, her whole approach seems to have gone more from, okay, I'm going to plan my lessons, to I'm going to plan for my children and students. There just seems to be less directing of children. I think she's taking in mind the individual children more than she did in the past (P3, interview, November 2004).

I don't think it changed their personalities. You know, we all have our teacher demeanors. I just think they gain more focus on student learning and much more confidence, so they get better at what they do, but I don't think it changes how they do it necessarily (P4, interview, November 2004).

Two principals provided comments on the impact they perceived the process had on the way in which teachers manage and monitor student learning.

I don't know what in-service she may have had in the interim, but there's definitely a change in the way that she approaches and manages children. Her classroom management is much more effective. She was able to involve the students. There were numerous opportunities for every pupil response, think, pair, share, and cooperative activities for children to be contributing and attending to the activities going on and I see that as a big change (P1, interview, November 2004).

It's kind of all under that umbrella of approaching students as individuals rather than groups, so I think that while she is committed to doing some assessments the same for the whole group because that is what she needs to do, but she was

making more accommodations for more children when she was teaching as well as assessing (P3, interview, November 2004).

One principal contrasted thoughts about how the NBC process prepares a teacher differently than a master's level program and the impact on the classroom.

I think it's because they are so closely connected to what they are actually doing—it's not about theory. In a master's program, I think it's possible for absolutely none of it to trickle down into your classroom, whereas with this, it's all about your classroom (P4, interview, November 2004).

### *Teacher Perception: Confidence and Self-Esteem*

Throughout the teacher interviews teachers frequently commented on their former perception of themselves as teachers. As the interview process proceeded, the data identified a clear theme regarding how the process enhanced teacher confidence and self-esteem. Validation, which was also frequently referred to in the same context as confidence and self-esteem, eventually emerged as another strong theme for teachers and will be addressed separately from self-confidence. Self-confidence first became evident when participants were asked their opinion regarding the value of the NBC process in terms of how it impacted classroom practice. “The value for me was that I needed that validation, and it has given me the confidence and self esteem to do what I do with an air of professionalism” (T4, interview, November 2004).

I think there are a lot of teachers that go into this process wanting to be the best they can be and I think it offers them an opportunity to demonstrate a commitment to education. It's a very respectful title that requires a lot of work, but it gives me some self-esteem that I'm a good teacher and I can prove to others that I am a good teacher (T1, interview, November 2004).

And it is, by far, the absolute best professional growth I could have ever asked for. I'd do it again, because I'm such a better teacher now. I run into my kids that I had five years ago and think, oh, I'm such a better teacher now; come back to me now because I can just take you so much further (T3, interview, November 2004)!

Some of us saw it as, I think I'm a decent teacher, but I think I can be a lot better, and that's where I wanted to go. I think I was a decent teacher before; it was one of those big epiphany moments where I said, ahhh, now I get it! It was a big turning point in being able to take where my children needed to go and not just going down the line where I was told that I had to travel (T5, interview, November 2004).

I think the confidence level is one that needs to be talked about because I now have the letters behind my name. You know you can do wonderful things—the respect that you earn not only at a building level, but even at a county level and from the superintendent that I am a Highly Qualified teacher (T6, interview, November 2004).

I think that if everyone were to go through National Boards, I think there would be a lot of people who would now consider themselves good at what they do, whose eyes would be wide open at that point. It's such a demanding thing to do and if you are honest with yourself, you realize very quickly your areas of growth and almost proficient and areas of great strength. I really think that's what separates those of us that go through National Boards (T7, interview, November 2004).

Several teachers commented on how the process confirmed their perception of being a good teacher, and also helped them to see what they were doing right. "Well, I learned there were a lot of things I was doing right and some things I needed to improve on. My confidence level is up" (T3, interview, November 2004).

I think that prior to doing the National Board I thought I was a good teacher. Having gone through the process, I recognize that there is always more to do and a better way. None of us is perfect, but we need to strive to do the best we can. In many ways, it was a humbling experience (T1, interview, November 2004).

A lot of people ask me how National Boards has made me change, and really and truly, my analogy is the difference between baptism by water and baptism by fire. I mean, I was already a good teacher—it just sort of bumped me up a little bit and gave me renewal (T4, interview, November 2004).

I thought I was a good teacher, but I also think I'm a more powerful teacher and more student-directed now. I'm not so driven by test results or by someone coming into my room seeing a little snippet of what I am doing—I know the big picture. I am definitely more confident of my approach (T5, interview, November 2004).

I guess I saw myself as someone who was willing to do whatever I needed to do to become a good teacher—a sponge taking in a lot of information. I had had life experiences, but I never really thought of myself as an outstanding teacher. I had a certain level of confidence about it [NBC process] even though it was hard. I felt like I had what it took, but I would just never give myself credit for that in the classroom (T7, interview, November 2004).

Frequency of teacher reference to increased confidence levels prompted me to further probe the topic with participants. Prior to their participation in the process teachers often described their personalities as “driven” or as “striving for something more” to continue improving as a teacher. Principals also indicated they were good teachers with strong motivation and that confidence levels were evident in their teachers prior to their participation in this process. So it became perplexing to hear the teachers talk about how the process impacted their confidence levels: “Hands down, the thing that National Board did most for me was provide confidence and self-esteem—the assuredness that I know how to do what I need to do and I can do it very well” (P3, interview, November, 2004).

I get that kind of response from people a lot. I must just plain be an enigma because I never felt confident; I may have come across that way, but inside I just wasn't. I think I just knew that if I didn't eat up my job, it would eat me up. I had to attack it before it would attack me because there are so many things in this job that can get you down. Maybe I worked very hard at appearing to be confident, but I really wasn't. Now I really am and I don't work at it at all (T4, interview, November 2004).

First, it's a national validation and you must self-evaluate! Very seldom do you have in a master's program someone come in and ask you to talk about why you did what you did. But when you watch yourself teach, and you share that process—you give up the modesty. But the confidence comes from bearing your soul, having someone else tell you you've done a really good job and that you know what you are doing (T6, interview, November 2004).

Participants used phrases such as “started trusting myself” and “I became more of

a leader” to describe feelings and perceptions of themselves after successfully completing the process.

*Principal Perception: Confidence and Self-Esteem*

Principal perception regarding the value of the National Board process in impacting teacher practice also surfaced support of confidence and self esteem and, as one principal indicated, the increased “willingness to take risks I see as a positive” (P2, interview, November, 2004).

I believe they have to have a great deal of self confidence to get into the process, but I can see how the validation piece is, yes, okay, this is what I am doing and I am doing a good job of it! I think this process helps to tweek good teachers’ abilities and strategies. It raises the confidence that, yes! I can do this and now I’m nationally recognized, not just by my principal or teachers or the county. How I have national approval (P3, interview, November, 2004).

Yes, in the same way a diploma in a master’s program—something does come with that. Somewhere in your mind you say to yourself, job started, job completed, job well done, or something like that. I think going through the national process, not only did she open up her classroom and ideas to be judged, plus, she also made it the whole way through this process, and, it is right now a pretty small elite group that have done this. So, when someday it’s pretty commonplace, it may not have the same impact (P4, interview, November 2004).

I asked one principal to talk more about how he perceived the confidence aspect impacts teachers who are already strong.

Because I think teachers do so much of what they do in isolation, and so, even if you think you are pretty good at it, the only feedback you get is from kids for the most part, and you don’t have feedback from your peers. I think that because they have to videotape themselves and have others review it, it just sort of lays open, in a way that teachers don’t normally see their strengths, weaknesses, you know, being judged by peers. So doing this, and doing it successfully—I think that’s where some of the confidence comes from (P4, interview, November 2004).

Two principals provided some insights into how they perceive a change in teacher delivery style after participating in the process.

I think she was a good teacher before she went through the process, but I do notice a change in her classroom environment. I think she has a lot more up in her room now—more examples. She tied her lesson into mathematics today and I think she is doing a lot more of that. She seems to have more of a sense of humor now and she doesn't stop teaching now even though something may be going on. She finds ways to incorporate her instruction into addressing the issue. What I really noticed today was that those kids were really willing to take a risk—she seemed very comfortable with herself (P2, interview, November 2004).

I don't think it changed their personalities. You know, we all have our teacher demeanors. I just think that they gain more focus on student learning and much more confidence—so they get better at what they do, but I don't think it changes how they do it necessarily (P4, interview, November 2004).

When addressing how the process might impact the way a teacher contributes to a learning community, one principal again commented on confidence levels.

They are far more willing, in my experience, to share with the rest of the faculty; and again, that may relate to that confidence—because of what they learned during the process and because of that confidence, they are always willing to help with in-service; and, they have the respect of their peers and they become contributors that way also (P4, interview, November 2004).

#### *Teacher Perception: Affirmation/Validation*

Initially the area of affirmation and validation seemed to surface in connection with confidence and self-esteem. However, as interviews progressed, the topic clearly became a category of its own as the topic of validation and affirmation surfaced in all interview areas relating to teacher knowledge, opinion and feeling. A common statement among all seven participants was the feeling of validation often found in statements such as, “Overall, you know the parting line is, it is something that validates who you are as a teacher...” (T6, interview November 2004), and “I'm a good teacher and [now] I can prove to others that I am a good teacher...”(T1, interview, November 2004).

One teacher, when asked about the opinion of the value of NBC and how it impacts classroom practice made it clear that, “The value for me was that I needed the

validation” (T4, interview, November 2004). Another indicated that, “I learned there were a lot of things I was doing right...” (T3, interview, November 2004). The same participant also indicated that she believed validation was a part of the intent of National Board, even though she saw herself as a good and validated teacher before the process. A third teacher stated, “I think a lot of the standards reinforced what I already knew” (T1, interview, November 2004).

One teacher, who had completed the process several years ago and recently entered into a resource-teaching role, was asked if she had planned to leave the classroom after finishing the process.

No. I felt very validated as a teacher and it really took me 5 years to start feeling like I needed to make a change because I was really very content being in the classroom. My husband really helped me to start thinking more about impacting more than just my twenty students (T7, interview, November 2004).

As I questioned this participant further regarding what the process really did for her, she was quick to respond, “I think I started trusting myself—I trusted my instincts more” (T7, interview, November 2004).

One participant shared her feelings regarding how the education community now perceives her versus the community in general.

In the education community, I do have clout—clout is probably not a good term. Other teachers will come to me and say, I know you agree with me on this issue. You are the one that’s going to have to stand up—they are not going to say no to you. My peers say, you do it! They are not going to knock you down, but our community does not know what it means (T5, interview, November 2004).

Other participants discussed feelings they experienced as they moved through the process that also surfaced feelings of validation and affirmation.

Balancing your primary responsibilities, with how am I ever going to get this second full-time job finished and who is going to lose out? For me, that was the

most overwhelming part. I always had [teachers] tell me, it's going to be fine—so that was the prevalent feeling. Also, feelings that when I didn't get it the first time around that what I was doing was insignificant—that I did not demonstrate to someone's scale that I was who I thought I was. There was a real sense of disconnect then. It took me 3 days until I was able to shake it off (T6, interview, November 2004).

Exhaustion! Frustration—like I had made an over commitment of my time. I was a single parent and you know just teaching alone is an exhausting experience. I kept asking what did I get myself into? But then, this excruciatingly long wait to find out whether I passed, the anxiety associated with it; and finally the whole manner in which they say, okay, we will give you your grades before, and continuing to wait and check. When I finally got this thing, I really couldn't believe it and had doubts that I was reading it correctly! I just sat there and cried (T1, interview, November 2004).

I think what surprised, or pleased me, the most, is that the questions that came through [assessment center] was what I had prepared for—I got the question right—I knew, and it was for the very first time I think in my teaching career that I walked away from something knowing that I know how to do what I do. National Boards to me is just showing that you know how to do what you do and if after years of teaching—really if I couldn't have passed this on the first try, I would have been devastated! (T4, interview, November 2004).

#### *Principal Perception: Teacher Focus*

The fourth theme that surfaced for principals was that of teacher focus. This theme also appeared for teachers as a secondary theme, but did not emerge as a primary theme. Principal comment of teacher focus often arose in conversation with reference to teacher purpose, task commitment or goal orientation. For example, one principal described a teacher as “very goal driven—goal oriented; willingness to really be able to look at yourself and be critical of what you are doing” (P3, interview, November 2004). Another principal described teachers by stating, “I just think that they gain more focus on student learning and much more confidence” (P4, interview, November 2004).

I guess one of the strongest ones [characteristics] would be task commitment because it is long and grueling in addition to everything else they are trying to do. They have to be a committed person willing to go through all of that. Also, it's

someone who always wants to improve and develop as a teacher. So task commitment and self-improvement might be two of the things that would separate them from other teachers. She just seems to be more alive and involved with the children. There is an air of enthusiasm. Her room is brighter and more organized and deliberate—you see the purpose—she is much more purposeful in her language and her actions! It is just so evident that everything had a purpose and that was different than what I had seen in the past (P1, interview, November, 2004).

I think I learned how much drive and energy she had. Her willingness to put in whatever it took for her to accomplish her goal—she is very goal oriented and I think I didn't realize that until she started this process—how much she sets her goals. She looks ahead (P3, interview, November 2004).

But I do notice a change in her classroom environment—I think she has a lot more up in her room now—more examples. She tied her lesson into mathematics today, and I think she is doing a lot more of that (P2, interview, November 2004).

When asked to talk about the overall intent of the process, one principal again commented on teacher discipline.

I would think giving teachers the recognition that deserve it—creating and opening up a network of teachers that are well-trained and well-disciplined that can go out and share their expertise with other teachers (P3, interview, November 2004).

### Secondary Themes: Teacher Perceptions

Of lesser emphasis, but still relevant to the perception data for this study were three secondary themes. For teacher interviews, the secondary themes were: (a) teacher as life-long learner, (b) teacher collaboration and community and (c) teacher focus. The following presents a summary of those findings as related to this study in examining the perceived impact of National Board Certification on classroom practice.

Core Proposition Five indicates that teachers need to be part of a learning community by contributing collaboratively with other professionals. Teachers often

described their relationships that formed through the process with on-line support groups and connected those relationships to a desire to be a life-long learner.

To me, it means that you are willing to be a life-long learner, open to reading current educational books and research so that you can continue to build on your pedagogy. But being in community implies that you are collaborative and willing to meet with other teachers and discuss options and share, because many of the ideas and learning materials we learn from other teachers. It means reaching out through the internet and surrounding yourself with good teachers and you are involved in learning some of their processes and sharing your own as well. It's easier for me now, especially in our own county, because I think we have picked up on collaboration and reading groups. Also, the Board invites NBC teachers to meet together and discuss options and brainstorm (T1, interview, November 2004).

One teacher spoke of her increased on-line participation in learning stating, “we have an e-learning community—we share ideas, questions and help each other” (T2, interview, November, 2004). Later when the same participant was asked whether she would have gained as much if she had not had someone in her building to collaborate with when going through the process, she responded, “I may have because of the strong group on-line.” Another teacher voiced similar support for on-line community interactions stating, “...but also a lot of it is the community aspect, like where I started this Yahoo group and I talked, and still, I constantly get good advice from other teachers. I went down to North Carolina and met with a group of teachers that I met on-line” (T3, interview, November 2004).

Other teachers, while not as involved in on-line communities, spoke passionately about their perceptions of being part of a learning community in relationship to life-long learning.

I always have said that I am a life-long learner—you don't ever stop learning. There are always new strategies for delivering instruction. We can't become static in what we do. Information changes, and I think the socio-economic factor

has really changed and has made all of us stop and think about the misconceptions you know—that I had that we all want the same thing. It’s just not true. Being part of a learning community is great! (P7, interview, November 2004).

For me it just means that it’s a place I can go to get new information, new ideas, ways of presenting something that I have not taught or new, fresh way of something that I have taught before and that I can share my ideas with people who are willing to listen, learn, try it, and give feedback. It’s an elite little group where you get together with people of like minds (T4, interview, November 2004).

One final supporting theme for teachers was on teacher focus. While not given as strong an emphasis as the principal group, teachers did frequently refer to their focus in the context of the interviews. For example, when asked to talk about what they perceived they learned in going through the National Board process, one teacher talked about learning to budget her time more effectively saying, “I just learned how to really discipline my teaching to get a better control over the way I use time in the classroom” (T4, interview, November 2004). Another teacher similarly echoed her comment by stating, “You learn to look ahead a little further in your planning” (T2, interview, November, 2004).

Two other participants indicated how the process caused them to become more focused in their efforts stating that, “focus is probably the biggest change—it’s about where I want to be. I see the full picture a lot better than what I did” (T3, interview, November 2004). Another teacher, when talking about her classroom planning and teaching efforts, stated, “Whereas before I don’t know that I thought as much about it—I don’t think I was as focused—I think I learned to really focus on what each child needs, and what was that need” (T7, interview, November 2004).

### Secondary Themes: Principal Perceptions

As with the teachers, principal participants also had evidence of supporting themes. The two supporting themes extracted from principal data were: (a) teacher as life-long learner, and (b) teacher affirmation and validation.

A theme that was more evident with teacher interviews was that of affirmation and validation. While this theme lent itself to more of an internal and emotional process in teachers, it was a topic that principals also positively linked to the overall process. One principal laughed as he commented that when “you try to learn something and you find out you are already doing that, it makes you feel good about yourself. Maybe she just didn’t get enough positive strokes from her principal” (P5, interview, November 2004).

When asked to talk about why they believed that teachers opted to participate in this process, and the possible redundancy of something teachers already knew, validation was obvious in all responses: “Perhaps some of it was, but people need validation that what they are doing is effective” (P1, interview, November, 2004); “Again, they both take a lot of pride in what they do and they wanted to know that they were good at it...” (P4, interview, November 2004); “But I think part of it was also recognition at a National level” (P3, interview, November 2004); “...also that they wanted to be known as a better teacher, and I think they like the prestige of being a Nationally Board Certified Teacher, and that’s okay” (P2, interview, November 2004).

I think you have to have some kind of validation that what you are doing is right—I think that has to be built into the process. I think if everything feels brand new to them and all of a sudden they are thinking, I’m a terrible teacher, I don’t think that’s going to go well. I think there have to be some things in the

process that a teacher can say, well, yes, I do this, and here is my proof (P1, interview, November 2004).

Finally, principals voiced that they clearly saw the professional development benefits of this process in supporting the teacher as a life-long learner. Three of the five principals discussed teacher motivation to participate in the process as relevant to personal improvement efforts with comments such as, “I think they wanted to improve. I think it was a combination that they wanted to be better teachers and also that they wanted to be known as a better teacher” (P2, interview, November 2004); “The real motivation for most just seems to be because they want to grow as professionals. They are working with students and know how important the job is and they want to improve” (P3, interview, November 2004); “I think she wanted to become a better teacher and wanted to grow and saw this as an opportunity to grow. I feel sure she did gain from it” (P5, interview, November 2004).

One principal commented on the professional development aspect when discussing her feelings about having two teachers participate in the process.

I was happy because I think it sets a good example of professionalism—to be willing to go the extra mile to improve professionally. A downside is, like I said, suddenly they get offers to go and do other things. Now in the one case, she is still in the school and was able to help remediate other students in addition to helping other students so she had a major impact. In fact, our reading scores went through the ceiling! I attribute that to her—you know we were the most improved in the county (P4, interview, November 2004).

When questioned further about willingness to hire an unknown teacher with National Board Certification credentials, the same principal provided an affirmative response related to the professional growth attempts of the teacher.

Yes, I believe so because it definitely demonstrates that development of confidence and desire to grow professionally. I would be very confident myself

in that whatever that teacher is, she would have the willingness to keep on track and get better. I just think if you are willing to go through this and you already have your master's [degree], it makes a real strong statement about the kind of teacher you are. I have actually become somewhat of an advocate for trying to get teachers to go through the process (P4, interview, November 2004).

### Hypothesis

The primary and secondary themes that emerged from the data and were presented in this chapter provided the foundation for further examination and analysis of participant response in relation to the Core Proposition Statements and standards set forth by NBPTS. While the emergent themes provided evidence of focus in terms of primary or secondary impact, not all themes coincided with NBPTS Core Proposition Statements and standards. Unexpected feedback regarding increased self-confidence and validation will be discussed further in Chapter V, but ultimately led to a hypothesis regarding how the highly reflective process promotes increased self-efficacy.

The in-depth process of reflection associated with the National Boards program was a prominent strand woven throughout interview responses. The importance of the reflection process and taking "time to think" served, and continues to serve, as a catalyst for enriching and deepening NBC teacher understanding of classroom practices. The self-efficacy momentum gained as NBC participants constructed belief and meaning regarding their ability to teach well, reinforced a "belief in self" that subsequently impacts performance levels.

Chapter V will provide a summary, discussion and interpretation of the research questions and final research hypothesis in conjunction with current research and literature.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine what perceived impact, if any, National Board Certification (NBC) has on the classroom practices of Nationally Board Certified Teachers (NBCT). Through the use of a qualitative naturalistic inquiry approach, the study allowed me to examine the perceptions of seven Nationally Board Certified Teachers and their principals in an attempt to understand how teacher participation in this process is impacting their classroom practices. More specifically, I wanted to know what new knowledge and skills, if any, NBC teachers and their principals perceive they have acquired, and how NBC teachers and their principals perceive they are applying new knowledge and skills.

In this chapter, I will first present a summary of each of the research study questions, beginning with the overarching question and followed by a summary of each of the two supporting questions. In the final sections of this chapter, I will present interpretations and implications of my findings related to current literature and studies, limitations and future directions for further study and personal reflections and concluding remarks.

#### Summary of Research Questions

##### *Research Question: What Is the Perceived Impact on Classroom Practices?*

In Chapter IV, four primary themes were presented that emerged from the data to support the perceived impact of National Board Certification on the classroom practices of Nationally Board Certified Teachers. Commonalities regarding perceived impact on

classroom practices were found in both groups in three of the four primary themes: teacher reflection and introspection, focus on student learning, and teacher confidence and self-esteem. In addition, secondary themes emerged from both groups with one common secondary theme for both groups: teacher as life-long learner. Teacher data presented three secondary themes, while principal data presented two secondary themes.

With the exception of teacher collaboration and community found only in teacher data, all of the remaining six themes were found to be in common, either as primary or secondary classroom impact themes, with both groups. Three of the four primary themes for both teachers and principals are subjective and deal more with impact at a feeling level even though knowledge questions were given equal emphasis in the interview process.

Teacher participants provided detailed interview responses compared to their principals. One retired principal admitted from the outset that, while supportive of it, he was not very involved in or knowledgeable of the process. Subsequent responses from this principal provided little support data for this study. The remaining four principals were supportive of, and held some knowledge of, the process but indicated that they were only involved from a peripheral perspective unless the teacher actively sought out their input.

Principal interview feedback regarding perceived teacher impact was consistent with classroom observations that were conducted, and their understanding of the National Board process. In addition, principal responses aligned with the underlying mission of the NBPTS in advancing the quality of teaching and learning through the Five Core Proposition Statements.

Teacher interviews regarding perceived impact on classroom practices produced data supporting the defined standards for their certification area and also aligned with Core Proposition Statements; however, in four of the seven themes overall, data emerged that were unexpected and are not directly stated as expected outcomes in the National Board Core Proposition Statements or standards:

(a) I was particularly perplexed by teacher responses indicating merit in not receiving written or verbal feedback on the process other than in the form of a score. Teachers believed that lack of specific feedback caused them to dig deeper in analysis and examination of their practice.

(b) Throughout the interviews, teachers frequently commented on their perception of themselves as good to strong teachers prior to this process; principals also supported this perception and also felt that high levels of motivation were evident in teachers prior to their participation in this process. However, both teacher and principal groups perceived increased levels of confidence and self-esteem as a result of participating in the process.

(c) In addition to issues related to confidence and self-esteem, an unexpected finding was that of teachers frequently expressing feelings of affirmation and validation that they gained through their participation in the process. Teachers commented on new levels of respect that they perceived they had gained from peers, administration and central office personnel as a result of their National Board attainment. Again, I found this finding to be somewhat perplexing in that, according to their principals, each teacher had demonstrated accomplished teaching abilities prior to this process and had been

given such validation by principals through the county's formal teacher observation and evaluation cycle.

(d) Finally, supporting themes identified the importance of teacher as life-long learner, which for teachers also provided support for their perception of the importance of collaboration and community in learning. However, other than through on-line groups, there was limited evidence of teacher demonstration in this area outside their schools. Interestingly, participants did not feel that the NBC process was something that should be required of all teachers for fear there would be very few teachers who would remain in the profession. Such responses seemed in direct conflict with understanding the meaning of collaboration and community building within the profession to support widespread teacher growth as well as the efforts of NBPTS to raise the standards of the teaching profession.

*Research Question: What New Knowledge and Skills Are Perceived to Have Been Acquired?*

Throughout the interview process, teachers were asked questions, or their responses were probed in a variety of formats, to discuss what they perceived they learned in going through the process; to talk about how they perceived their teaching practices looked differently now than before participating in the process; to predict whether it was possible for a teacher to go through this process and not gain any new knowledge or skill; and, to compare the National Board process with course work associated with obtaining their master's degree. Principals were also asked similar questions regarding their perception of new knowledge and skills that teachers had acquired as a means for ascertaining discrepancies in the perceptions of both groups.

There were no instances in either principal or teacher responses where an attempt was made to delineate the difference between what was meant by knowledge versus skill.

Teachers and principals both commented on value in the reflection component associated with the process in examining what they do more critically, which also included increased self-awareness and self-knowledge. Teachers also frequently included comments regarding a closer scrutiny of why they do what they do and the processes associated with those teaching decisions. Although there was no prescribed formula for reflecting on a lesson, skill or concept, most felt that the portfolio process of videotaping and writing to specific prompts led them through the reflection process and ultimately taught them the value of critical analysis of their own practice.

Perhaps most enlightening and intriguing was the perception of the professional gains associated with participation in this process over other forms of professional development or formal course work. The personal and internal learning associated with this process, from both teacher and principal perspectives, communicated a feeling of tremendous positive impact and empowerment on teacher classroom performance.

Teachers clearly believed that the process confirmed most of what they already knew how to do, but voiced that they now had a clearer understanding of why they do what they do because they were so immersed in analysis of their practice. Participants did not believe that any formal course work taken ever provided them with a lens that allowed them to examine fully their practice in a way that answered the questions associated with what is important for students to know and be able to do, as well as what are the most effective teaching strategies to ensure student learning. They clearly voiced belief that their participation in this process, particularly in gaining an understanding of

the value of personal reflection on teaching practice, made a significant impact on their daily instructional planning and delivery and increased levels of confidence.

*Research Question: How Is It Perceived that New Knowledge and Skills Are Being Applied?*

Learning the value of reflection became a process that could be characterized as a new skill, but also seemed connected to teacher ability to focus and fine-tune their instructional planning and delivery. Teachers indicated their increased understanding of the value of reflection before, during and after a lesson, which seemed to also provide them with a vehicle for learning how to better manage their use of instructional time in the classroom.

Teachers and principals both voiced a perception of a greater focus on individual student response and needs, and were less driven by covering the material and more attuned to student feedback during any given lesson. Teachers, in particular, voiced high levels of confidence in their perceived ability to determine when and how to sway from their written plans to more fully embrace or engage student thinking on a topic or subject matter as a result of their participation in the process.

Confidence levels appeared high during classroom teaching and during the interviews. As I probed teacher responses regarding increased confidence levels during the interview period, teachers voiced increased confidence levels as a result of their intense and close examination of their teaching practices that caused them to gain new insights into instructional decision making as well as teaching style, interactions with students, and delivery strategies.

On numerous occasions during the interviews teachers made it clear that they felt increased levels of confidence in their daily approach to teaching, and perceived greater levels of respect in their interactions with peers, administration, and central office personnel as a result of their involvement in the process and ultimately achieving National Board Certification.

Principals also voiced their observation of increased confidence levels in watching these teachers during the classroom visit. Even though most did not feel that the overall teaching styles had changed, they did perceive that teachers were more confident in their abilities and more focused in their instructional delivery.

#### Interpretations and Implications

##### *Time to Think*

The act of thought is a perplexing phenomenon. For most, the course of a busy teaching day leaves little time to stop and follow a reflective course of action; yet, the more time that we take to more fully examine and immerse ourselves in understanding a particular action or phenomenon, the more likely we are to develop a deeper understanding of ourselves in relationship to that phenomenon (Kraft, 2002).

In this study, the process of reflection seemed to be the catalyst for all other themes associated with this study when examining the associated learning experiences of the seven teachers. Obviously there are some chicken-or-egg issues that are associated with teacher characteristics, such as environment, years of experience, motivation, personality and so forth that are in place before their participation in this process. However, the purpose of this study was to determine perceived impact, and the

consistency of responses among the teachers clearly communicated the impact of their participation in the reflection process as the driving force in the emerging themes.

Some believe that the term reflection has become an overused and, in some instances, misused term in education (Kraft, 2002; Ziechner & Liston, 1996). However, most proponents of effective schools research support the practice of teacher self-evaluation as a valuable learning tool (Strong, 2002). Action Research is one such practice that has fostered teacher examination of classroom practice and is recognized as a method for empowering teachers to reflect on their work with other colleagues to positively impact changes in classroom practice (DeMulder & Rigsby, 2003).

The process of National Board Certification clearly represents an attempt to assist a teacher in thinking critically about the craft of teaching but, more specifically, the process forces a teacher to focus fully on the planning, delivery and assessment strategies associated with their own teaching practices and student learning. Teachers immersed in National Boards must dig deep within their thinking to analyze what they believe is important for students to know and be able to do as aligned with National Board standards.

While most models and theorists today would advocate that the most beneficial form of teacher reflection should occur within a learning community (Schmoker, 2004; Joyce, 2004), the National Board process, by nature of the design, falls somewhat short in this area. As NBC teachers continue to grow in number, an increase in related learning communities seems likely. Teachers found some level of support from either another NBC teacher or a candidate within their building, or they found support through on-line contact with the same. However, in terms of the professional development gains for

impacting school improvement efforts, the process is currently limited because of the lack of simultaneous impact within a school community (Guskey, 2005; Mitchell, 2005).

Nonetheless, the perceived positive impact of the overall reflection process for individual teachers became most evident when unsuccessful first-time takers commented on the value of not receiving anecdotal feedback on their performance. While initially frustrated by their unsuccessful results, each found the process to be purposeful and worthy in terms of the time involved to further reflect, understand and improve upon their teaching behavior (Downey, 2004). Each participant went on to achieve National Board Certification in the second year. As Serafini (2002) points out, it seems very likely that the reflective and systematic thinking associated with this process, coupled with the National Board standards, has the greatest impact on teacher practice over the other NBC components. The actual assessment center component associated with the process involves a narrative or essay response, using a word processor.

As the experiences of these seven teachers continued to unfold, it became increasingly obvious that their participation in this process taught them much about the importance of reflecting on their instructional practices and what was important for students to know and be able to do. Through their reflection process, the teachers in this study came to realize the importance of ensuring student acquisition of knowledge rather than continually adhering to curricular time constraints. This realization has major implications that should be considered in curriculum design workshops and in the development of scope and sequence time lines when looking at factors influencing student performance. Unfortunately, many of our decisions about student learning are

based more on time in terms of content that needs to be covered than what students actually acquire as a result of instruction (Guskey, 2005).

*Final Hypothesis: A Belief in Self*

An unexpected theme in this study that ultimately led to the final hypothesis was that of teacher perspectives associated with increased levels of self-confidence and validation. Teachers participating in this study clearly demonstrated a desire to meet the challenge of a national validation process. Self-efficacy and associated themes of increased self-confidence and feelings of validation as a result of their participation in the process emerged during the first teacher interview. It was fascinating and concerning that these seven already successful teachers felt the process enhanced their confidence levels and validated them as teachers.

Bandura (1993) theorized teacher efficacy is a type of self-efficacy, which results when people are engaged in a cognitive process that allows them to construct beliefs or meaning regarding their ability to perform well. Hoy and Miskel (2001) define a cyclical nature in self-efficacy whereby greater efficacy leads to increased levels of persistence, which then leads to increased performance levels that cycle back to increased efficacy.

When questioned further regarding their participation in formal course work, continuing education degrees or mandated professional development and feedback from principal evaluations, teachers concluded that such forms of validation did not produce the same effect and increased levels of confidence as the National Board process. The distinct difference in this study was found in teacher ability to deeply reflect upon and construct meaning from their personal teaching practices in a voluntary context. Formal

coursework, required professional development and principal evaluations are generally required as part of requirements for employment or state certification.

Bandura (1993) indicates that among self-influences, there is none more significant than personal belief regarding ability to exert personal control over thought, feeling, behavior and motivation. Strong teacher efficacy impacts teacher instructional practices (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990) and has been shown to impact student academic achievement (Ashton & Webb, 1986). In addition, the evidence of increased teacher focus on student interests and learning has also been positively linked to strong teacher efficacy (Ashton & Webb, 1986).

These findings have tremendous implications when looking at the current structure of professional development and formal coursework in which teachers often lack input, are not provided with choice, and in many instances do not see the relevance of the activity in relation to their classroom practices. We already know that our ability to create successful change within the schoolhouse is most impacted by what is happening in the classroom (Guskey, 2005). This study, coupled with the research of others regarding teacher efficacy, would indicate the merits of increased opportunities for teachers to construct meaning from their own practice in positively impacting classroom practices.

#### Limitations

This study attempted to focus on what, if anything, was happening differently in the classroom practices of seven Nationally Board Certified Teachers. The major limitation of this study and most others associated with similar research revolves around the limited number of Nationally Board Certified Teachers in a common setting.

Additionally, only female participants were involved in this study; therefore, the study may be limited in terms of generalizing the impact findings given the fact that nationally, a larger percentage of NBCTs are female.

Finally, the limited understanding and involvement on the part of the principals in the NBC process may also impact the generalizations.

#### Future Research

As a result of this study, the following are recommended as areas for possible future study:

(a) A study utilizing a pool of NBCTs in one school setting would provide some solid evidence of how groups of teachers or true learning communities comprised of NBCTs participating in this process impact overall school improvement efforts;

(b) A study focusing on NBCTs certification renewal and what sustained changes in teacher practice have occurred over a period of time would provide additional information regarding long range impact of NBC on classroom practice.

#### Personal Reflections and Concluding Comments

This study allowed me to explore the professional development journey of seven Nationally Board Certified Teachers, all of whom completed the process within the last five years. Candidates typically find out each year in the month of November if they have passed the process.

At the conclusion of this study, I had the opportunity to speak with an NBC teacher candidate who had completed the process and just found out that she fell short of passing by 5 points. She willingly shared with me her positive insights and feelings about the process and was more than ready to tackle next steps to successfully complete

the certification. Her enthusiasm and motivation to push forward with the process even after a year of intensive self-examination further illuminates that participant gains associated with this process are obviously far more complex than a simple score. Like the teachers in this study, this NBC teacher candidate is also highly regarded and dedicated in her teaching role and is already viewed as a leader among her peers.

Do the knowledge and skills that teachers gain from participation in this process make a difference in their professional practice? Clearly the answer to this question is “yes” as indicated in the findings of this study when associated with the literature regarding reflection and teacher efficacy, and by the standards set forth by NBPTS. Not as clear, however, is how those gains translate to impacting student learning outcomes; such measures of progress are more gradual and the variables associated with student learning are much more difficult to isolate.

I have learned from this study that collecting data to demonstrate participant use of new knowledge and skills associated with rigorous and personally challenging forms of professional development can be as complex as determining the impact of increased levels of wisdom on our daily interactions in life. However, this study does provide important evidence demonstrating that people are more likely to change what they do when they are shown a truth that influences their feelings over being given an analysis that shifts their thinking.

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## Appendix

### Teacher Interview Questions

## Teacher Interview Questions

### Category I: Knowledge questions:

1. What did you learn by going through the National Board Certification Process?
2. Compare and contrast your classroom teaching practices before and after your participation in the NBC process.
3. Talk to me about what new knowledge you believe you gained from your participation in the NBC process.
4. Describe what new skills you believe you gained from your participation in the NBC process.
5. How does the new knowledge and skills that you acquired from participation in the NBC process “look” in your classroom? Give me some examples.
6. How do you think that your participation in the NBC process impacted your classroom teaching practices?
7. Describe ways in which you continue to “maintain the momentum” of your learnings (i.e., how are you continuing to grow your knowledge and skill base in your practice as an educator?)
8. Describe the components of the NBC process that you believe most impacted your classroom practice (i.e., portfolios, assessment center, reflection journals, etc.) and give me some examples of why.

Category II: Opinion/Value Questions:

1. What is your opinion about the value of the NBC process and how it impacts teacher practice?
2. In your opinion, would it be possible for an individual to participate in the NBC process and not acquire any new knowledge and skills? Explain.
3. Talk to me about what you believe the intent of the National Board Certification process is in terms of the overall outcome for participants?
4. Talk to me about the motivation of teachers involved in the National Board process.
5. What is your opinion of this process as a voluntary certification?
6. Talk to me about your perception of yourself as a teacher before participating in the NBC process.
7. Talk to me about how a poor teacher participating in this process could become a better teacher.
8. In your opinion, how would an average teacher handle this process? Talk to me about the skills, knowledge, behaviors and attitudes they might need to exhibit to pass the process?
9. What characteristics do you think NBC teachers possess over other teachers?
10. In your opinion, does the NBC process help teachers to be better equipped with reform issues such as NCLB, AYP, etc.? Explain.
11. Tell me about teacher education programs today and compare/contrast those programs with the National Board process.
12. Tell me why you decided to participate in this process?

Category III: Feeling and thought questions:

1. What kinds of feelings did you experience as you moved through the process?
2. Describe how you feel the things you learned during the NBC process were similar to or different from the things you already knew about effective classroom teaching.
3. What were the most frustrating aspects of the process?
4. Talk to me about how you feel the process helped to improve you as a teacher and/or how the process validated your abilities to be an effective teacher?
5. How did you feel when you heard that you had passed the process?
6. Do you feel you are more motivated to teach now than before participating in the process? Explain.
7. Think back to the time before you began the process, now that you are finished; what was your understanding at that time of the process that you were beginning?

## Supervisor (Principal) Interview Questions

### Category I: Knowledge questions:

1. What did you learn about watching a teacher going through the National Board Certification Process?
2. Compare and contrast your knowledge of (NBC teacher's) classroom teaching practices before and after her participation in the NBC process.
3. Describe what new knowledge you believe the NBC teacher gained from participation in the NBC process.
4. Describe what new skills you believe the NBC teacher gained from participation in the NBC process.
5. How do you think the new knowledge and skills that the NBC teacher acquired from participation in the NBC process "look" in (NBC teacher's) classroom?
6. How do you think that participation in the NBC process impacted classroom teaching practices?
7. Describe ways in which the NBC teacher has worked to "maintain the momentum" of new learnings (i.e., how have you continued to grow your knowledge and skill base in your practice as an educator?)
8. What components of the NBC process do you believe most impacted the classroom practice (i.e., portfolios, assessment center, reflection journals, etc.) of the NBC teacher. What are some examples?

Category II: Opinion/Value Questions:

1. What is your opinion about the value of the NBC process in improving teacher practice?
2. In your opinion, would it be possible for an individual to participate in the NBC process and not acquire any new knowledge and skills? Explain.
3. Do you think the NBC process identifies good teachers or do you think the process creates stronger teachers? Explain your answer.
4. Do you think all teachers should be required to participate in National Board Certification? Why or why not?
5. Do you think (NBC teacher) was a good teacher before participating in this process?
6. Do you think any teacher could pass this process if they worked hard enough? Explain.
7. Do you think any teacher that completes the process is a good teacher? Why or why not?
8. What characteristics do you think NBC teachers possess over other teachers?
9. Do you think that teacher education programs are effective at preparing teachers today? If so, why do you think that we need a National Standards Board to provide the NBC process?

Category III: Feeling and thought questions:

1. How did you feel about (NBC teacher) participating in this certification process?
2. Did you ever feel like the process was redundant of things (NBC teacher) already knew and was doing in the classroom? Explain.
3. As the principal, what were the most frustrating aspects of the process in supporting the (NBC teacher)?
4. Do you feel that the process helped to improve (NBC teacher) or that it was more of a process that validated her abilities to be an effective teacher?
5. How did you feel when you heard that (NBC teacher) had passed the process?
6. Do you feel (NBC teacher) is more motivated to teach now than before participating in the process? Explain.
7. Did you feel as though you understood the National Board process before (NBC teacher) participated? Explain. Do you feel you have a different level of understanding now? Explain.