NBPTS Certified Staff Salary Bonuses

Budget Language

$67,709,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2026 and $71,946,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2027 are provided solely for the following bonuses for teachers who hold valid, unexpired certification from the national board for professional teaching standards and who are teaching in a Washington public school, subject to the following conditions and limitations:

i. For national board certified teachers, a bonus of $6,514 per teacher in the 2025-26 school year and a bonus of $6,514 per teacher in the 2026-27 school year;

ii. An additional $5,000 annual bonus shall be paid to national board certified teachers who teach in either:
   A. High schools where at least 50 percent of student headcount enrollment is eligible for federal free or reduced-price lunch,
   B. middle schools where at least 60 percent of student headcount enrollment is eligible for federal free or reduced-price lunch, or
   C. elementary schools where at least 70 percent of student headcount enrollment is eligible for federal free or reduced-price lunch;

iii. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) shall adopt rules to ensure that National Board Certified Teachers meet the qualifications for bonuses under (b) of this subsection for less than one full school year receive bonuses in a prorated manner. All bonuses in this subsection will be paid in July of each school year. Bonuses in this subsection shall be reduced by a factor of 40 percent for first year NBPTS certified teachers, to reflect the portion of the instructional school year they are certified; and

iv. During the 2025-26 and 2026-27 school years, and within available funds, certificated instructional staff who have met the eligibility requirements and have applied for certification from the national board for professional teaching standards may receive a conditional loan of $1,425 to apply towards the current assessment fee, not including the initial up-front candidacy payment. The fee shall be an advance on the first annual bonus under RCW 28A.405.415. The conditional loan is provided in addition to compensation received under a district's salary allocation and shall not be included in calculations of a district's average salary and associated salary limitation under RCW 28A.400.200. Recipients who fail to receive certification after fully exhausting all years of candidacy as set by the national board for professional teaching standards are required to repay the conditional loan. OSPI shall adopt rules to define the terms for initial grant of the assessment fee and repayment, including applicable fees. To the extent necessary, the Superintendent may use revenues from the repayment of conditional loan scholarships to ensure payment of all national board bonus payments required by this section in each school year.

Proviso Purpose

The purpose of this targeted funding is to grow the number of highly accomplished teachers working with students that need them most, through statewide coordination and oversight of the National Board Certification Program (NBCT). The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) provides an advanced voluntary certification process for teachers and other certificated instructional staff in 25 different certification areas. Teachers throughout Washington seek quality professional development that is evidence-based and proven to elevate teaching practice through a rigorous, student-focused process, that leads to the highest level of teaching certification in the nation. This program is essential in keeping this highly sought after advanced certification accessible for all teachers in Washington. Supplying the annual bonus and reducing the financial barriers to pursue certification aligns to the state goal of providing effective education by incentivizing national board certification, increasing teacher retention, and giving more students access to accomplished practitioners.

Services Provided

A full-time Program Supervisor manages all the elements of the National Board Program. NBCT bonus eligibility is determined and verified annually, then transmitted via school apportionment to LEAs. An additional bonus of up to $5,000 (prorated by FTE) is provided to eligible NBCTs working within "high poverty" schools. Loan application updates, communication, review, eligibility determination, approvals, and coordination of loan fund designation to NBPTS on behalf of approved candidates is managed by the Program Supervisor in alignment with the implementation of the proviso. The NB Program Supervisor also manages all customer service needs, OSPI NB website maintenance, clock hour procedures, and provides policy interpretation and guidance. Lastly, the NB Program Supervisor leads the OSPI National Board Regional Coordinators (RC) network of RCs assigned to support districts within each ESD in expanding NB cohort access, delivering monthly virtual webinar and information sessions, as well as triangulating candidate support efforts with Washington Education Association (WEA) and the Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (CSTP). The NBCT Network contracted services, the Program Supervisor's salary-benefits, and other operational costs of the execution of the NBPTS proviso (approx. $250,000) has been funded by multiple other programs throughout OSPI.

Criteria for Receiving Services/Grants

Teachers must be certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and employed full or part-time by a Washington K-12 public school or district on an instructional contract. WAC 392-140-970 through 392-140-975.

Beneficiaries in the 2025-26 School Year

Number of School Districts: 248

Number of Schools: 1,798

Number of Students: N/A

Number of Educators: 7,348

Number of NBCTs in High Poverty Schools: 2,633

Are Federal or Other Funds Contingent on State Funding?

No for federal funds. However, functions of the program to implement or support the proviso are currently funded by other agency budgets. This includes the 1 FTE staff (funded by Certification), 9 Regional Coordinator contractors (funded by TPEP) and maintenance and updates of the conditional loan application (funded by Title II Part A). Ideally, these parts of the program would be covered by the proviso rather than supplemented elsewhere.

State Funding History

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2026	$67,709,000	$66,780,702
2025	$77,623,000	$64,592,344
2024	$68,070,000	$68,065,374
2023	$75,805,000	$66,159,966
2022	$71,644,000	$71,566,164

Number of Beneficiaries Per Fiscal Year (e.g. School Districts, Schools, Students, Educators, Other)

Fiscal Year	Number of Beneficiaries
2026	248 districts, 1,798 schools, 7,348 educators
2025	267 districts, 1,822 schools, 7,319 educators
2024	267 districts, 1,820 schools, 7,469 educators
2023	263 districts, 1,816 schools, 7,591 educators
2022	267 districts, 1,728 schools, 7,975 educators

Programmatic Changes Since Inception (If Any)

The beginning of the National Board program in Washington State was grant funded with sources outside of OSPI. The three foundations who provided start-up funding made it clear from the beginning that sustainability would be a state responsibility. There is currently no legislative allocation for programmatic or administrative costs. Allocation for the National Board

bonus has been sustained by the legislature since 2001, with multiple changes to the structure and amounts of the bonus over this multi-decade period.

High Poverty Schools Bonus

In FY 2008, the legislature passed HB 2262, which allowed the "base" NBCT bonus to increase by inflation/COLA and an additional $5,000 bonus for NBCTs teaching in "challenging schools" (later titled "High Poverty Schools"). High poverty schools are designated by the prior year's free and reduced lunch count for all students enrolled on October 1 of that year. In FY 2009, the high poverty school definition was set at 50% free and reduced lunch count for High Schools, 60% for Middle Schools, and 70% for Elementary Schools. In 2018, rules for designating high poverty schools were amended to include that free and reduced meal counts for schools participating in the federal meal programs Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or Provision 2 will be reviewed in either two years prior to participation in either of these programs to determine eligibility as a high poverty school. In 2022, schools who became ineligible as a high poverty schools between 2020 and 2021 were allowed to carry over free and reduced meal data from 2019 to determine their eligibility.

Washington State Conditional Loan Revolving Fund

In FY 2009, the final budget appropriated $3 million to initiate the National Board Conditional Loan Program. This $3 million was matched by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). $2.2 million was appropriated and expended in 2009. The remaining $800,000 was removed from the 2010 legislative budget. As a result, OSPI did not receive the remaining $800,000 matching grant from NBPTS. This appropriation, along with the federal grant from NBPTS, allowed OSPI to offer no-interest loans to offset the National Board candidate fee. **To date, more than 5,000 teachers have benefited from loans.** These loans are paid back to the state by the teacher upon certification by reducing the amount of their first NBCT bonus. Educators who expire their candidacy or withdraw from the National Board process are placed on a repayment plan. In 2010, this became a self-sustaining program.

National Board Assessment Revision

In 2017, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards completed implementation of major revisions to their assessment process. While standards and rigor of the process did not change, the cost to candidates and timeline changed. WA has redesigned all of the support structures in place to continue to provide effective support to candidates. Candidates are now able to complete the process between 1-3 years with up to an additional 2 years for retakes if necessary.

Program(s) Evaluation or Major Findings

Board Certification has been intensively researched for more than two decades. Studies report a vital finding: students of National Board Certified Teachers learn more than students in other

classrooms (Bastian, forthcoming; Cowan, & Goldhaber, 2015; National Research Council, 2008; Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2017). This impact is consistent across elementary, middle, and high schools in states and districts across the country. On average, the learning gains for students of Board-certified teachers are approximately equal to 1-2 months of learning (Cowan, & Goldhaber, 2015; Strategic Data Project, 2012; Strategic Data Project, 2012a). These studies also find that the impact of Board-certified teachers is greater for students from low-income backgrounds and for students of color (Cavalluzzo et al., 2014; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2007).

The 2018 Cowan and Goldhaber report on the impact of bonuses for NBCTs in high-need schools fits within this context. The study uses a novel research design to provide new evidence on the role the bonus has had in strengthening teaching and learning in high-need schools. It finds:

- The Washington Challenging Schools (High Poverty Schools) Bonus led to higher teacher retention in high-need schools
- The Washington Challenging Schools (High Poverty Schools) Bonus led to more teachers pursuing Board-certification in high-need schools
- The Washington Challenging Schools (High Poverty Schools) Bonus led to increased recruitment of Board Certified Teachers in high-need schools

Since the implementation of the High Poverty Schools bonus in 2008, the percentage of NBCTs working in High Poverty Schools has increased by almost 20% (35% of total NBCTs). Educators pursuing National Board Certification who work in High Poverty Schools has also increased by about 30% of the yearly cohort (47% total candidates).

Major Challenges Faced by Program(s)

This is a high-profile program that contributes to OSPI and the Governor's priorities. Support for the NBCT bonus is critical and continues to grow as the number of educators pursuing certification increases.

Since the revised NBPTS process began in 2014-2015, OSPI adjusted the conditional loan amount to $1,425 (the cost of three of the four components) from the original $2,000. Candidates are required to purchase their first of four components out of pocket before the loan payment is made. This ensures a candidate's commitment to the rigorous process. Since a candidate can complete the four components over the course of three years and they are not required to submit or pay for everything in one year, some candidates are withdrawing from the NBPTS process midway through their candidacy. OSPI currently does not have the capacity or resources to track partial loans as opposed to tracking one lump sum.

Rule changes to teaching certification requirements made by the Professional Educator Standards Board in response to ESSHB 1341 in 2017 removed the mandate for teachers to pursue National Board Certification as one of two options for maintaining state certification in

earning the professional teaching certificate. However, on a nationwide scale, Washington continues to have the largest growth in new NBCTs and candidates.

In both 2020 and 2021, NBPTS offered a series of exception options for candidates and renewing NBCTs during the COVID-19 pandemic. This allowed a refundable withdrawal, deferment of payment to future years, and extensions to candidacy and renewal windows. Although the assessment rules were also adjusted to support teaching in a virtual setting, many candidates chose to postpone their National Board Certification, resulting in lower candidate counts and newly certifying NBCTs during these years, as well as fewer NBCTs renewing than leaving the profession or retiring. This also created challenges in tracking conditional loan repayments as candidacy was extended beyond the 5-year maximum in some cases that would typically trigger an invoice for repayment.

Additionally, the paper-trail tracking of conditional loans has created delays in loan transmittal and repayment. OSPI is working internally to secure funding for application development so that this system can be improved.

As the budget language specifically requires the allocation of funds in this proviso be solely for the purpose of NBCT bonuses, program costs are not currently supported by the proviso. This includes maintenance costs, salary for supervision of the program, and contractor budgets. Instead, OSPI has turned to other agency budgets to cover these program costs as available. This strategy will become increasingly challenged with other budgetary reductions across the agency.

Future Opportunities

The future holds great promise for the National Board Certification program. Washington state is regarded nationally as a model state for recruitment, retention, and triangulated support for National Board candidates and NBCTs. Several states use Washington as a model to implement similar bonuses, loan programs and support structures. OSPI has been asked by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards to give presentations to other states' candidate subsidy administrators and has been consulted by other states seeking to implement similar programs. This past December, Washington was ranked 4th in new NBCTs, 2nd in renewing NBCTs, 3rd nationally in total number of NBCTs, and continues to have one of the highest number of candidates in process or beginning their certification. There are 32 school districts recognized by NBPTS as accomplished districts for their percentage of educators holding National Board Certification.

OSPI contracts with active NBCT teachers from all around the state to create and enhance professional development for candidates and NBCTs, ensuring that all candidates have an opportunity to receive support through their certification journey regardless of geographic location. OSPI is currently updating our conditional loan online application and repayment process to be streamlined within the Education Data System (EDS). The tracking of all loan

applicants, candidate cohort participants, and loan repayments will be housed within the online application. OSPI plans to roll out these updates by 2026.

Other Relevant Information

This program is one that is extremely important to educators throughout the state. This advanced voluntary certification is essential to elevating the teaching profession to the heights of professions such as medicine, law, and architecture. National Board is one of the best ways to retain and reward accomplished educators. NBCTs also contribute significant leadership to schools and districts across the state. This program serves as a signal for the status of effective education in Washington. It is unique to have a program that the Governor, Washington Education Association, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Washington State Legislature all agree is a valuable tool for promoting rigorous standards for educators.

Schools/Districts Receiving Assistance

Click here to see a list of all OSPI grant recipients in the 2026 Fiscal Year.

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