

Great Ideas for Great Public Schools

WASHINGTON

Bonuses attract more Board-certified teachers to high-needs schools

In October 2006, the Washington Education Association—in partnership with the National Education Association, the Center for Teaching Quality, and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards—held a summit meeting in Seattle attended by more than 200 of the state’s Board-certified teachers. Their mission: to address the vexing problem of **recruiting and retaining accomplished teachers in high-needs schools**. Before the summit, participants read a number of background papers and research summaries. After studying the research, educators and policymakers developed a comprehensive set of policy recommendations on recruitment and retention strategies for high-needs schools.

Positive results

- As a direct result of the summit, in 2007, the Washington legislature passed a statute that provides an annual base bonus of \$5,000 for practicing teachers certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.
- Teachers can receive a second annual \$5,000 bonus for working in a high-needs school (currently defined as an elementary school where at least 70 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, a middle school where 60 percent meet those criteria, or a high school where 50 percent meet those criteria).
- Before 2007, when these policies went into effect, about 9 percent of the state’s Board-certified teachers were in high-needs schools; this year, up to 25 percent are working in high-needs schools.
- The number of Board-certified teachers has grown by 500 percent in the last five years—the highest rate of growth in the nation. The number of minority Board-certified teachers is also on the rise.

Recommendations with the greatest impact

- Provide incentives to ensure that experienced principals lead high-needs schools
- Change the formula for calculating class size to reflect the real numbers of students in classrooms (not averages), with a maximum of 20 students at the elementary level and 22 at the middle and high school levels
- Provide a menu of incentives for teaching in high-needs schools such as housing allowances, additional class resources, classroom support (paraprofessionals), and loan forgiveness
- Create a more equal funding formula that takes into account the number of students who are English-language learners, the number of low-income students, high mobility rates, and other special characteristics
- Pay Board-certified and other accomplished teachers to serve as leaders and facilitators to help create professional learning communities

For more information:

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Great Public Schools for Every Student