Chapter 1
National Board Certification in North Carolina: Five Motivators for Pursuit

Teresa Petty
University of North Carolina at Charlotte, USA

Amy Good
University of North Carolina at Charlotte, USA

Laura Handler
University of North Carolina at Charlotte, USA

ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study is to report National Board Certified Teachers’ (NBCTs) motivators for pursuing National Board Certification. The guiding research question for this study, “Why do teachers pursue National Board Certification?” was explored. A total of 496 NBCTs currently teaching in North Carolina public schools completed the survey questionnaire in which they responded to demographic questions, Likert item questions, and open-ended questions. Thematic analysis revealed several recurring themes that NBCTs revealed having influence on their pursuit of certification. These included impact on financial incentives, improved teaching, professionalism, challenge and encouragement from others.

INTRODUCTION
What is National Board Certification?
The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) was created in 1987 following the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy’s Task Force on Teaching as a Profession released A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century (1986), a report that highlighted the crucial role teachers play in the education of youth and focused on the pressing need to revive the teaching profession.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-0204-3.ch001
Members of the task force set forth a plan designed to develop, retain, and reward accomplished teachers through a system of advanced certification. The NBPTS was developed from the framework of these ideas.

In 1989, the National Board published *What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do*. This document elucidated the National Board’s Five Core Propositions for Teaching (NBPTS, 1989). The Five Core Propositions set forth the profession’s vision for accomplished teaching and emphasize the accomplished teacher’s commitment to advancing student achievement (NBPTS, 2014a). These propositions lay the foundation of all National Board Standards and those of National Board Certification (NBPTS, 2014a) and are as follows:

**Proposition 1:** Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
**Proposition 2:** Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
**Proposition 3:** Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
**Proposition 4:** Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
**Proposition 5:** Teachers are members of learning communities.

National Board Certification (NBC) is voluntary and consists of four components: 1) content knowledge, 2) differentiation in instruction, 3) teaching practice and learning environment, and 4) effective and reflective practitioner (NBPTS, 2014b). These components are demonstrated through a rigorous, performance-based portfolio process in which teachers evidence their accomplishments through reflection and analysis of their own instruction, including student work samples, video recorded lessons, and their own contributions for establishing a connection between the profession and the community. Candidates’ content knowledge is also evaluated at assessment centers across the United States, where they construct responses to prompts in a computer-based format. To begin the NBC process, candidates must hold a baccalaureate degree, a valid state teaching license for at least three years, and have taught in a public or private school for at least three years.

**Certification in North Carolina**

North Carolina leads the nation in total number of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs). The state accounts for 19% of the nation’s NBCTs, with Wake County having the largest number of any school district in the nation and Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district having the fourth largest number of board certified teachers in the nation (NCDPI, 2014a). Twenty-one percent of North Carolina’s teachers hold National Board Certification (NCDPI, 2014a). The State Superintendent, June Atkinson, commends North Carolina’s board certified teachers, stating, “…our students benefit from teachers who are engaged, interested in strengthening their craft, and willing to model life-long learning to their students…” (NCDPI, 2014a).

In North Carolina, the National Board process has long been valued since Governor James Hunt chaired the initial Board of Directors in 1987. The state has offered incentives for teachers who want to pursue certification, such as salary increase for the life of the 10-year certification, continuing education credits, low-interest loans to pay the certification fee, and three release days to work on completion of the certification portfolio. With incentives such as this, it makes sense that teachers would participate in this rigorous certification process; however, are there motivators outside of these that prompt teachers in North Carolina to seek NBC? The purpose of this research study is to investigate the reasons teachers