

DOES IT WORK: WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

While many schools, districts and individual teachers attest to the positive impact of Board certification, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and education researchers have been eager to confirm and measure this success. Legislators, too, are curious about whether this is a wise investment, especially during fiscally challenging times.

After nearly 20 years of research, the picture is becoming clearer. During the past decade, research from states across the country has showed that students taught by Board-certified teachers learn more than students taught by other teachers.¹ The National Research Council reached this conclusion in 2008 in its comprehensive review of studies of National Board Certification up until that time.² Estimates of the increase in learning by students of Board-certified teachers are an additional one to two months of instruction. The positive impact of having a Board-certified teacher is even greater for minority and low-income students.³ Recently, Harvard University's Strategic Data Project (SDP) found that students of Board-certified teachers in the Los Angeles Unified School District made learning gains equivalent to an additional two months of instruction in mathematics and one month in English language arts.⁴ SDP found similar results in Georgia's Gwinnett County Public Schools.⁵

In February 2015, two separate groups of independent researchers released new studies finding Board-certified teachers are more effective at advancing student learning than non-Board-certified teachers. Research published in 2015 from Dan Goldhaber,⁶ a leading researcher who recently testified before the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, and his colleague James Cowan, finds that, in Washington, "Board-certified teachers are more effective than non-certified teachers with similar experience."⁷ This new evidence from Washington finds Board-certified teachers produce nearly six weeks of additional learning gains in middle school math classrooms.

New evidence from Kentucky and Chicago finds that National Board Certification is an effective signal of teacher quality across locales, test types and subject areas.⁸ This research also found that National Board Certification effectively "screens" applicants; in other words, teachers who achieve Board certification produce larger student gains when compared to teachers who pursue, but do not achieve, Board certification.