



R3 Framework Evaluation Brief: National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Support Program

August 2023

Prepared by Measurement Incorporated

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is a highly touted professional teaching certification created by teachers that is obtained through a performance-based and peer-review process. The benefits of National Board Certification on teachers, students and schools are well documented¹. The certification process is rigorous, challenging, and time-intensive, and currently only four percent of our nation's teachers are National Board Certified. The state of North Carolina ranks number one across the country with 23% of its teachers being National Board Certified². State incentives and financial support for the process make it an attractive option for teachers in North Carolina.

Recognizing the value and rigor of the process, Pitt County Schools' (PCS) Department of Excellence, Equity, and Leadership (DEEL) has developed a range of supports for candidates pursuing their National Board Certification, with funding from its Teacher and School Leader (TSL) grant. These supports include:

- *National Board Mentoring Program*: This program matches National Board Certified teachers in Pitt County with PCS educators who are pursuing their certification. One mentor may be matched with up to two mentees, and mentors receive a stipend of \$500 per mentee. Mentors are expected to spend at least 12 hours during the school year supporting each mentee. Supports include answering questions about the certification process and providing feedback and guidance on draft submissions.

¹https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282008622_Impact_of_National_Board_for_the_Professional_Teaching_Standards_NBPTS_Certification_on_Student_Achievement; https://www.cna.org/archive/CNA_Files/pdf/irm-2015-u-010313.pdf; <https://www.teachhub.com/professional-development/2014/05/national-board-certification-why-and-how-to-get-it>

²https://www.nbpts.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2022_StateRankings_All_NBCTs_Percent-of-Teaching-Population.pdf

- *Attendance Area Leaders' Work Days*: Each attendance area in PCS has a paid National Board attendance area leader who is responsible for hosting three work sessions during the year. These sessions are held in a school building, mainly on Saturdays, for candidates to work on their components. Mentors may also attend the work sessions.
- *National Board Information Sessions*: These sessions focus on styles of writing for National Board submissions, and there are two information sessions offered per year.
- *Deep Dives on National Board Components*: There is one Deep Dive for each of the four National Board Components. Each goes into detail about the instructions and requirements for that component.

National Board candidates are required to complete four components to obtain their certification. Specific instructions and requirements for each component vary based on the certification subject area. It is suggested that candidates pair Components 2 (Differentiation in Instruction) and 3 (Teaching Practice & Learning Environment) together, as they both pertain to everyday work in the classroom. Component 1 (Content Knowledge) is the certification subject area test, and Component 4 (Effective & Reflective Practitioner) looks at how data drives teaching instruction. Most candidates submit one or two National Board Components per year, due to the volume and intensity of the work involved for each component, but this decision is up to each candidate, and some choose to submit more than two.

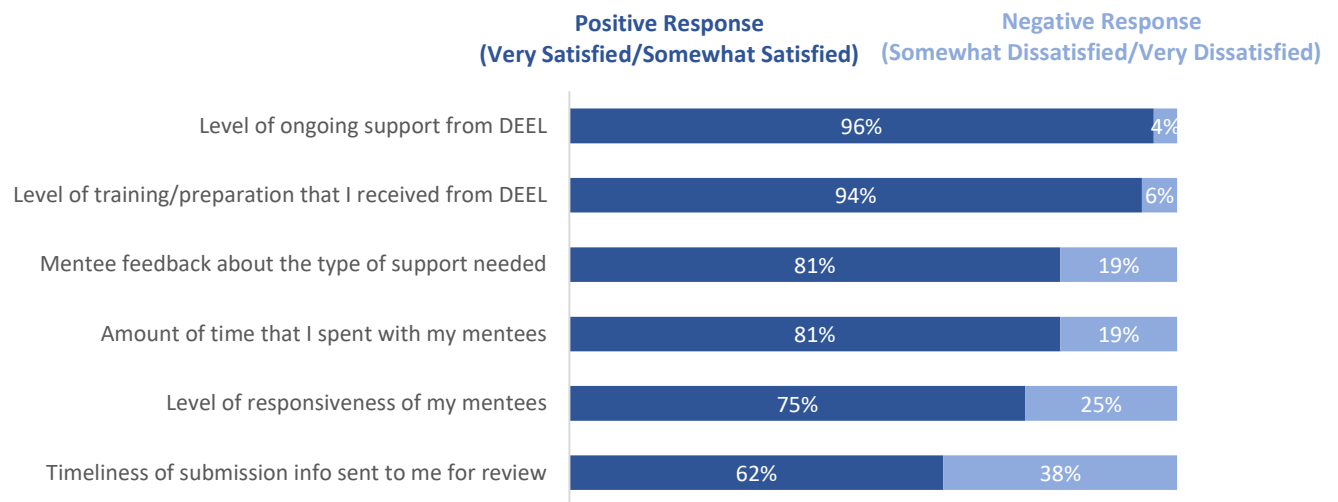
This edition of the R3 Framework Evaluation Brief focuses on the experiences of mentors and mentees within the National Board Mentoring Program. It summarizes feedback from surveys distributed in May 2023 to those who participated in the Mentoring Program during the 2022-23 school year. The response rate was 99% (52/53) for mentors, and 82% (71/87) for mentees. Findings are organized by three key questions:

1. What were mentor and mentee perceptions of the National Board Mentoring Program?
2. What were mentor and mentee perceptions of the range of support offered to National Board candidates in the district?
3. How could the National Board support provided by DEEL be improved?

Mentor and Mentee Perceptions of the National Board Mentoring Program

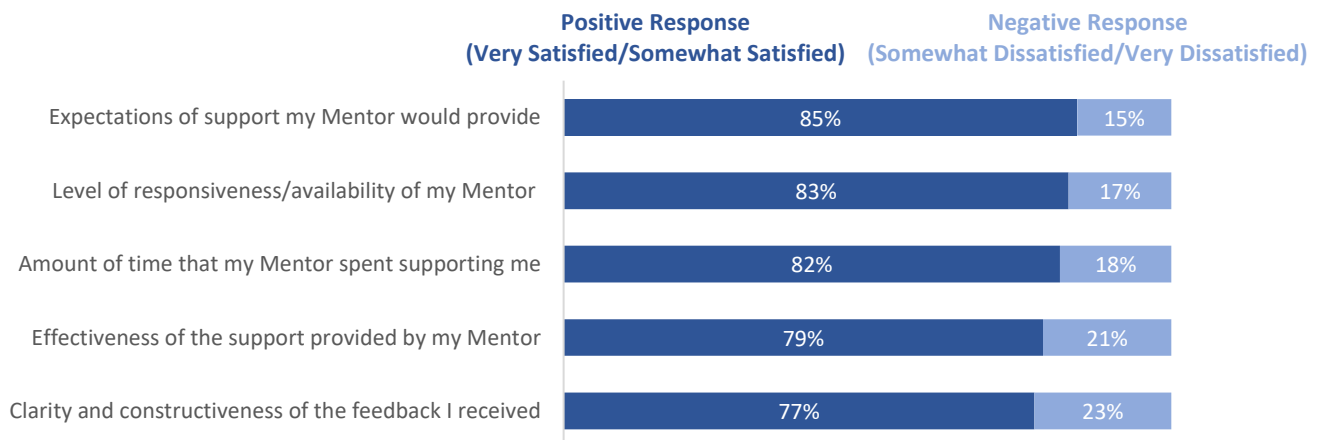
Satisfaction is one critical component of any mentoring program. Our survey findings showed that both mentors and mentees felt positive about their experiences. The majority of mentors —60% or more—were generally *Very Satisfied* or *Somewhat Satisfied* with all aspects of the National Board Mentoring Program (see Figure 1). The two highest rated aspects were the support and training mentors received from the DEEL office.

Figure 1. % of Mentors by Level of Satisfaction



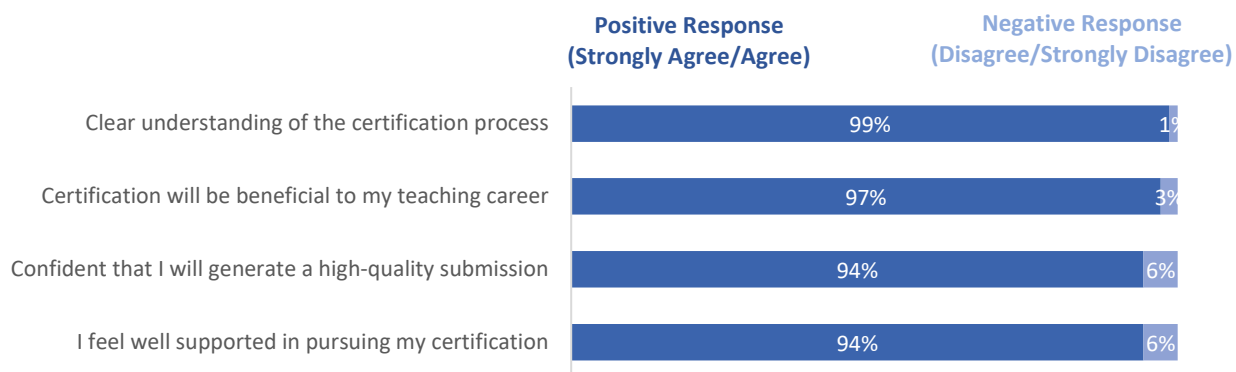
Mentees were also quite satisfied with the National Board Mentoring Program, as three quarters or more assigned *Very Satisfied* or *Somewhat Satisfied* ratings (Figure 2). Mentees felt most positive about the expectations of support their mentor would provide, and how responsive and available their mentors were during the program.

Figure 2. % of Mentees by Level of Satisfaction



Also important to the success of a mentoring program is the perceived benefit and value of the support to the participants. Our survey showed that mentees responded very positively when asked about the benefits of their participation in the National Board Mentoring Program. For example, nearly all *Agreed* or *Strongly Agreed* that they had a clearer understanding of the National Board Certification process, they felt well supported and confident in their submission, and believed that certification would be beneficial for their career (Figure 3).

Figure 3. % of Mentees on Perception of Program Benefits



When asked about the most valuable aspects of the National Board Mentoring Program, mentees cited their mentor as being beneficial for the reasons bulleted below.

- They appreciated having someone to review their submissions and offer honest and constructive feedback.
- They appreciated the first-hand experience mentors had, having gone through the same process themselves, which allowed the mentor to offer insight on the language and style of writing that would help mentees to be successful.
- They valued the opportunity to ask questions and clarify instructions, particularly given the complexity of National Board Component requirements.
- A few mentees stated that they found value in having a mentor who was certified in the same area that they were pursuing, as well as a mentor located in the same school building, which facilitated the scheduling of meetings.
- Overall, mentees felt that mentors offered them support, guidance, collaboration, encouragement, and accountability.

“Timely, supportive feedback. Encouragement. Reassurance, Overall, just keeping me on track/ positive about the journey.”

~Mentee

Mentors also perceived the mentoring program as valuable to them. For instance, several stated that they valued the opportunity to support mentees, provide feedback on their submissions, answer questions about the process, and help them to achieve certification. Some mentors who had received support with their own certification indicated that it was important for them to give back to other educators in the same way.

Mentors described the relationship as a collaborative process of sharing ideas, and some mentors came away with new ideas to implement in their own classrooms.

Mentors also mentioned the value in making connections and building relationships with colleagues through the National Board Mentoring Program. A few mentors felt that the experience had helped them to grow as a leader. In addition, the regular communication from the DEEL office was appreciated by mentors, as well as the support available to work through any concerns or challenges mentors experienced with their mentees.

“It builds relationships with other teachers that you would have never met before. The sharing of ideas between both mentors and mentees is a bonus. Mentors can learn from mentees as well.”

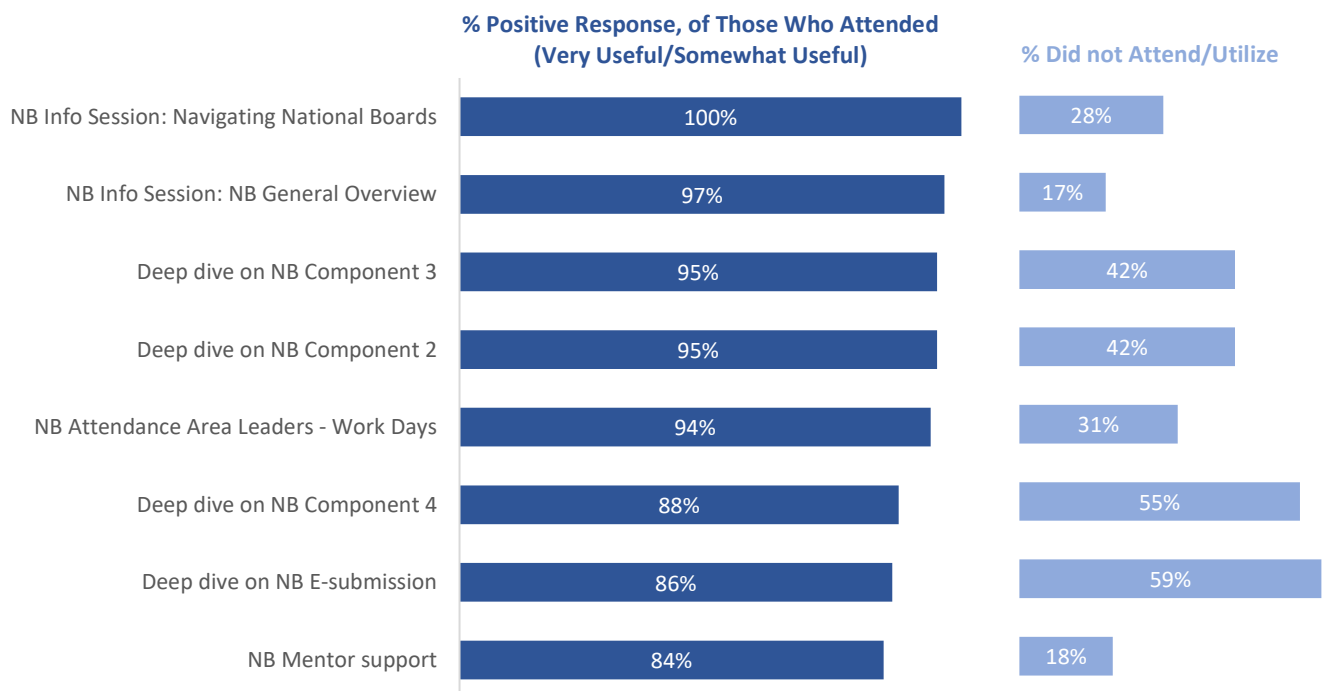
~Mentor

Mentor and Mentee Perceptions of the National Board District-wide Supports

As mentioned earlier, the DEEL office offers a range of supports to all PCS educators pursuing their National Board Certification. Our survey asked mentors and mentees about their experiences with the additional supports they attended or utilized.

We found that most of the National Board supports were well utilized by mentees, with attendance ranging from 60-80%. There were two exceptions: the Deep Dive on Component 4 and Deep Dive on E-submission which were attended by less than half of survey respondents. Despite the lower attendance for these sessions, the majority of mentees found that all sessions they experienced were *Very Useful* or *Somewhat Useful*. The National Board Information Sessions on “Navigating National Boards” and “National Board General Overview” were the most highly rated, followed by Deep Dive on Component 3, Deep Dive on Component 2, and National Board Attendance Area Leaders - Work Days (Figure 4, NB is used for National Board).

Figure 4. % of Mentees by Usefulness Rating and Attendance



In response to an open-ended question about the value of district-wide National Board support, Deep Dives and Information Sessions were mentioned most frequently by mentors and mentees as being valuable. Both groups found the Deep Dives very informative and especially helpful early in the school year to set expectations. Information Sessions provided a clear and detailed understanding of the process to mentees and allowed them to ask questions.

“The National Board information sessions were invaluable. I found myself repeating things that I got from those sessions to my own mentees.”

~Mentor

“The expertise shared during the Deep Dive sessions has been very helpful. I am so grateful to have people on the district level who have been available and willing to help answer any question that I may have.”

~Mentee

Work Days were also valued by both groups, as they offered a dedicated time and space where mentees could disconnect from work and give their undivided attention to their National Board components while surrounded by fellow candidates and mentors for support. Mentors felt that the district provided multiple opportunities for mentees to access support, regardless of discipline or location. Attendance Area Leaders were viewed favorably because they provided mentees with another point of contact, in addition to their mentors and the DEEL office.

Suggested Improvements to the PCS National Board Support Program

An area of keen interest to DEEL was hearing from participants about how the PCS National Board supports could be improved. To this end, our survey included open-ended questions for mentors and mentees to share suggestions for improvement. The responses have been grouped into themes below³.

National Board Mentoring Program

- *Clarify time commitment/communication expectations (4 mentors & 7 mentees):* Several mentors mentioned that they often had difficulty getting in touch with their mentees. Similarly, several mentees stated that they felt their mentors were too busy and not available for support. It was suggested that more detailed expectations for time commitments and communication schedules would be helpful to address this disconnect.
- *Improve the matching process (10 mentees):* Some mentees who did not have a mentor in the same certification area felt that this would have helped their experience and suggested that this be a priority for future matches.
- *Create a pacing guide (3 mentors & 4 mentees):* Both groups commented that developing a timeline with regular check-in dates would be helpful for mentees, so they do not get behind schedule, and for mentors so they are not pressured to conduct a lot of reviews right before the submission deadline.
- *Start earlier in the year (6 mentors):* Some mentors felt that it would be helpful for the mentoring program to start much earlier in the year, including marketing the program to teachers, matching mentors and mentees so they can begin working together, and setting an earlier deadline for decisions on component submissions.

“Maybe have required draft submission dates to mentors for people receiving the grant to keep them on schedule. This would have helped me because I kept putting off the writing and focusing on the classroom.”

~Mentee

“Anything that would encourage the mentees to reach out/respond/ask for more assistance – at times I felt like I was not doing enough.”

~Mentor

³ To be included, a theme had to appear in comments from at least three respondents.

- *Increase in person interactions (4 mentors):* A few mentors requested more opportunities to meet with their mentees face to face. Two of these respondents suggested holding a mentor/mentee “Meet and Greet” group session at the beginning of the year to help develop relationships and set the tone for the program.
- *Ensure mentors are recently certified (3 mentees):* A few mentees mentioned that because National Board Components have changed in recent years, mentors who completed their certification several years ago were not always able to answer questions because they were not familiar with the new guidelines.

District-wide National Board Supports

- *Increase the number of sessions (3 mentors & 8 mentees):* Both groups requested more frequent Work Days and Information Sessions, as they were very helpful resources.
- *Widen the variety of session times (4 mentors & 4 mentees):* Respondents recommended that sessions (Information Sessions, Work Days and Deep Dives) be offered during the school day, to increase accessibility for those who were unable to attend evenings or weekends. It was also suggested that by offering Deep Dives earlier in the year it could help mentees with planning, and a Work Day later in the year would be helpful to those still working on their submissions closer to the deadline.
- *Offer support by certification area (4 mentees):* A few mentees were interested in seeing district-level support specific to certification areas, which could be accomplished through a cohort model.

“I would continue everything that is in place right now. I think our district does a great job of supporting candidates through the process and I'm proud to be a part of it.”

~Mentor

Summary

During the 2022-23 school year, the DEEL office implemented various supports for PCS teachers who were pursuing their National Board Certification, including a comprehensive mentoring program. Our survey sought feedback from mentors and mentees about their experiences in the National Board Mentoring Program and with other National Board supports provided by the district.

“The district was very supportive. It was actually unlike anything I’ve experienced while working for PCS besides the meetings for 1st year teachers.”

~Mentee

The data presented in this brief demonstrate that both groups had high levels of satisfaction with the Mentoring Program. Most mentors were very satisfied with the support and training they received from the DEEL office, and mentees were generally pleased with how responsive and available their mentors were. Mentors found value in their role supporting mentees, and they enjoyed the collaborative process of sharing ideas and feedback while building relationships with colleagues. Mentees appreciated the first-hand experience mentors had with certification, which allowed them to provide insightful and constructive feedback on submissions, as well as general guidance, encouragement, and accountability.

The majority of mentees found all of the district-wide National Board supports to be useful, especially the Information Sessions and Deep Dives. Mentors agreed with the utility of these sessions, which provided detailed information and helped to set expectations for the certification process. Both mentees and mentors also appreciated the Work Days which offered mentees an opportunity to step away from day to day obligations and focus solely on their National Board Components, with the support of mentors.

Respondents’ constructive suggestions will help to further strengthen the PCS National Board Support Program. Their suggestions included: making certification area a priority in mentor/mentee matches, further clarifying role expectations and time commitments for mentors and mentees, increasing support on pacing guides and deadlines, offering a wider-variety of times for Work Days and Information Sessions, and starting the program earlier in the school year.