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State Superintendent of Schools

TO: Local School System Superintendents

FROM: Mohammed Choudhury, State Superintendent of Schools 

DATE: Revised September 30, 2022 (Originally Released April 22, 2022)

RE: Blueprint for Maryland's Future Implementation Guidance:
Initial Eligibility for National Board Certification Salary Increase Incentives

All newly added information has been highlighted for your convenience.

The information in this document provides **guidance for local education agencies** (LEAs) to determine which teachers are eligible for the **NBC salary increase** incentives offered by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (*The Blueprint*). Md. Code Ann., Ed. [§ 6-1009](#). **Any individual who is determined and verified by an LEA and subsequently submitted to the MSDE to be eligible for the state share of a salary increase based on this guidance must also receive the local share amount from the LEA.** LEAs may choose to provide salary increases outside those provided via the Blueprint NBC salary increase amounts. However, any costs associated with supplemental increases in salary for NBC teachers above these statutory 'floors' are the sole responsibility of the LEA. **This guidance was developed in collaboration with the Accountability and Implementation Board and will be updated and reshared as more information becomes available.**

The Blueprint aims to elevate the teaching profession to a profession with status, compensation, standards, and career advancement comparable to other fields. Strategies include raising teacher salaries and supporting and encouraging teachers to access incentives and advance their career.

The High Quality and Diverse Teachers and Leaders policy area of *The Blueprint* eliminates the existing State NBC Program stipend and establishes the following financial incentives to be implemented by July 1, 2022:

1. Salary increases associated with having National Board Certification; and
2. Fee support for educators to fund their National Board candidacy.

Definitions

- **“Teacher”**: a *certified (see below)* public-school employee who is *primarily responsible and accountable (see below)* for teaching students in the class. “Teacher” does not include, unless otherwise provided: curriculum specialists, instructional aides, attendance personnel, psychologists, social workers, clerical personnel, an individual with a Resident Teacher Certificate, or an individual with a certification for career professionals. See Ed. [§ 6-1001](#).
- **“Certified”**: an individual holding a Maryland professional teaching certificate.
- **“Primarily Responsible and Accountable”**: A teacher of record, or co-teacher (including a special education teacher or ESOL teacher), *who delivers instruction and is responsible for a student’s or group of students’ academic progress in a Pre-K-12 public school setting, subject to local school system interpretation*. See [COMAR 13A.07.09.02](#).
- **“Working Time”**: For the purposes of calculating a teacher’s teaching time from their total “working time,” “working time” shall be defined as the individual’s total contractual working time, in hours, in a school year, rounded to two decimal places. If the contract designates non-working time (eg. lunch time), it should not be included in the total.
- **“Teaching Time”**: The amount of time, in hours, in a school year, a teacher is scheduled to be directly teaching students, rounded to two decimal places. The use of vacation time, sick time, or other paid time off does not affect this percentage.
- **“Percent of Time Teaching”**: Teaching Time divided by Working time, rounded to two decimal places multiplied by 100.

Overview

1. What incentives are available for Maryland teachers who hold or wish to pursue an NBC?

Fee Support: Maryland public school teachers interested in pursuing an NBC will receive funding to cover the cost associated with their National Board candidacy if they meet the applicant eligibility requirements. This is a shared cost program between the local school system and the Maryland State Department of Education where MSDE will cover 2/3 of program costs and LEAs will cover 1/3 of program costs. Public school teachers, who meet the definition of “teacher” and the eligibility criteria established by the [National Board for Professional Teaching Standards](#) (NBPTS) are eligible. If a participant leaves the program prior to completion, participants must repay the MSDE and the LEA for the program costs. See [Ed. § 6-1012](#)

Salary increases (increases beginning on July 1, 2022): Teachers shall receive the minimum following salary increases:

- NBC = \$10,000
- NBC + Teaching in a low performing school = an additional \$7,000

Continuing Professional Development credit: Educators who complete the NBC process are eligible for Continuing Professional Development Credits (CPDs), which may be used toward the renewal of their Maryland Educator Certificate. LEA CPD coordinators have the authority to issue CPD credits for the completion of the NBC process.

2. What is the difference between the “career ladder” and the initial NBC incentives identified in this guidance document?

These NBC incentives are a component of the career ladder and are required to be implemented prior to the implementation of the whole career ladder initiative. *The Blueprint* establishes a new career ladder that enables teachers to qualify for salary increases and evolving job responsibilities. More details can be found in [Ed. §§ 6-1001](#) through [6-1013](#). MSDE is collaborating with the Accountability and Implementation Board to define and clarify the implementation of the career ladder. This policy (Maryland National Board Certification Incentives) implements salary increases to start in July 2022 as required by statute. See [Ed. § 6-1009](#). Statute requires implementation of the full career ladder by July 2024. See [Ed. § 6-1002](#).

Eligibility
3. Who is eligible for the \$10,000 NBC general incentive salary increase <u>BEFORE</u> the formal adoption of a local career ladder?
<u>BEFORE</u> a local board adopts a career ladder and it is reviewed by MSDE and approved by the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) (See Ed. § 6-1002), all teachers (meeting the definition of “teacher”, as established in law and clarified in this guidance) with an active NBC who teach for at least the following percent of their work time based on the statutory requirements of career ladder implementation will be eligible. • Individuals whose job duties meet the statutory description of <u>NBC Teacher - Level 3</u> of the career ladder: must teach a minimum average of 60% of their working time. See Ed. §§ 6-1002(f)(3) and 6-1003(a). • Individuals whose job duties meet the statutory description of <u>Lead Teacher - Level 4A-1</u> of the career ladder: must teach a minimum average of 50% of their working time. See Ed. §§ 6-1002(f)(4)(i)(1) and 6-1004(b)(4). ○ The nonteaching duties of this person would include being responsible for mentoring peers and serving as an expert resource on content and pedagogy.
4. Who is eligible for the \$7,000 NBC low performing school incentive salary increase <u>BEFORE</u> the formal adoption of a local career ladder?
All teachers meeting the requirements identified under the general incentive (Question 3) who also teach in a school that has been identified as low performing using the State’s Framework for National Board Certified Teachers and Low Performing Schools.
5. Who is eligible for the \$10,000 NBC general incentive salary increase <u>AFTER</u> the formal adoption of a local career ladder?
Following the adoption of a local career ladder that meets the minimum statutory requirements, the eligibility criteria for salary increases will be based on what is established in the approved LEA career ladder.

6. Who is eligible for the \$7,000 NBC low performing school incentive salary increase AFTER the formal adoption of a local career ladder?

Following the adoption of a local career ladder that meets the minimum statutory requirements, the eligibility criteria for salary increases will be based on what is established in the approved LEA career ladder.

7. How is an eligible individual identified for an NBC salary increase?

LEAs are responsible for identifying eligible individuals for NBC salary increases through the process and methods determined by MSDE. The information reported to MSDE in terms of eligibility will be verified against the statutes and the parameters identified in this. LEAs will submit this information on a timeline developed by MSDE and in accordance with statutory requirements. LEAs will provide any ancillary documents requested by MSDE verifying eligibility determinations.

8. Are teachers in a co-teaching model eligible for these salary increases?

Yes, teachers in a co-teaching model (including a special education teacher or ESOL teacher) who may not be the “teacher of record” for the class may be eligible for these salary increases so long as they meet all other eligibility criteria. Co-teaching time shall count towards the minimum required “teaching time”.

9. Are school counselors and library/media specialists eligible for these salary increases?

Yes, any individual, regardless of job title (unless explicitly excluded from the definition of teacher), whose formal job responsibilities meet the eligibility criteria established in statute and clarified in this guidance may receive salary increases. See Ed. [§ 6-1001\(e\)](#).

For example, if a school counselor, in addition to their counseling responsibilities, is also a teacher of record for at least 60% of their working time, they are eligible.

10. Are there any scenarios where a teacher would lose a salary increase?

Yes, a teacher must maintain active NBC, teach for the required minimum average teaching time, and maintain any other statutory eligibility criteria. If the NBC lapses, the salary increase(s) will be removed at the start of the next school year. See Ed. [§ 6-1002\(g\)](#).

Further, any individual found to be eligible for an increase under this guidance who is determined to be ineligible once the career ladder is implemented will lose the salary increase.

11. Who is eligible for the Fee Support Incentive?

Public school teachers, who meet the definition of “teacher” and the eligibility criteria established by the [National Board for Professional Teaching Standards](#) (NBPTS) are eligible.

Salary Increases and Funding

12. Are salary increases stated under this policy only one-time increases or are they permanent increases?

All teacher salary increases remain active so long as the individual maintains all eligibility criteria.

13. If a teacher becomes eligible for a salary increase after the start of the school year, will they immediately receive the salary increase or need to wait until the following school year for the salary increase?

No, all salary adjustments for National Board Certification incentives will be reconciled one-time annually before or during the summer of the given fiscal year with no retroactive payments. *For example, in summer of 2023, MSDE will gather and reconcile current NBC teacher data with LEAs to get the most current list.*

14. Will salary increases be prorated for part-time teachers?

Yes, eligible teachers whose employment status is below 1.0 full time equivalent (FTE) should have their base salary increase by the full amount of all salary increases and then adjusted down to reflect FTE status. *For example, a teacher who is a .5 employee and who is eligible for the \$10,000 salary increase should receive a salary increase of $.5 * \$10,000$, or \$5,000.*

15. Does the Department cover its share of costs for the \$7,000 salary increase for an NBC teacher at a Low Performing school if the school is identified as Low Performing using the local flexibility option?

Yes, the Department will cover the State share of costs, whether the school is identified as Low Performing by the state definition or through the local flexibility option. To learn more, see the [State’s Framework for National Board Certified Teachers and Low Performing Schools](#)

16. When will MSDE determine the count of funded NBC teachers in a given fiscal year?

All salary adjustments related to National Board Certification incentives will be reconciled one-time annually before or during the summer of the given fiscal year. *For example, in summer of 2023, MSDE will gather and reconcile current NBC teacher data with LEAs to get the most current list.*

17. What portion of NBC salary increases are covered in the State Share, and what portion of NBC salary increases are covered in the Local Share?

The State Share of NBC salary increases for NBC teachers and NBC teachers in low-performing schools is, on average, half (.5) of the total salary increase. For example, for the \$10,000 NBC general incentive, the average State Share will be \$5,000.

The actual State Share of NBC salary increases for a LEA is wealth equalized so that districts with lower wealth on average, receive a larger portion of the State Share of State Aid for the Career Ladder program.

LEAs must provide the full salary increase to eligible teachers regardless of the wealth-equalized portion of funds an LEA receives from the State Share of State Aid.

18. How are the salary increases funded?

The salary increases required under the Blueprint Career Ladder shall be a shared cost between State and the county with wealth equalization as defined in [Ed. § 5-201](#).

The State Share is capped based on the increase amounts identified in [Ed. § 6-1009](#). However, the LEA may choose to increase any local share amount above the identified minimums. Collective bargaining will not alter the cap to the State Share.

The local share is equal to the total salary increase minus the State Share.

Beginning in FY 23, the State shall distribute the State Share and the county shall distribute the local share to the LEA. The LEA shall distribute the funds accordingly.

19. When do the other salary increases identified in the *Blueprint* take effect?

All other salary increases, including those associated with maintenance of NBC certification, take place upon formal adoption of a local career ladder. This must be implemented no later than July 1, 2024. See [Ed. § 6-1002](#) and [Ed. § 6-1009](#).

Low Performing Schools

20. Once a school is identified as “Low Performing”, will that school always be identified as “Low Performing”?

No. Low Performing schools will be identified annually using the defined methodology, known as the MSDE [Framework for National Board Certified Teachers and Low Performing Schools](#). A school may have the “Low Performing” designation added or removed each year. If an NBC teacher receives the salary increase for teaching at a school identified as low-performing and that school, in subsequent years, is no longer identified as low-performing, the teacher should continue to receive the supplemental low-performing school NBC salary increase. If a NBC teacher begins work at (either through transfer or new hire) a school that was previously identified as low performing but is no longer identified as low performing, that teacher would NOT receive the low-performing school NBC salary increase. If a NBC teacher is working at a school not previously identified as low-performing but is identified while the teacher is working at the school, the teacher becomes eligible for the low-performing school NBC salary increase.

21. If I am an NBC teacher teaching at a Low Performing school that is no longer identified as Low Performing, what happens to my salary?

An NBC teacher that receives the salary increase for teaching at a Low-Performing school will not lose the salary increase while teaching at the same school, even if the school ceases to be low performing. See Ed. [§ 6-1009\(c\)\(2\)](#).

22. How is a school added to the list of Low Performing Schools?

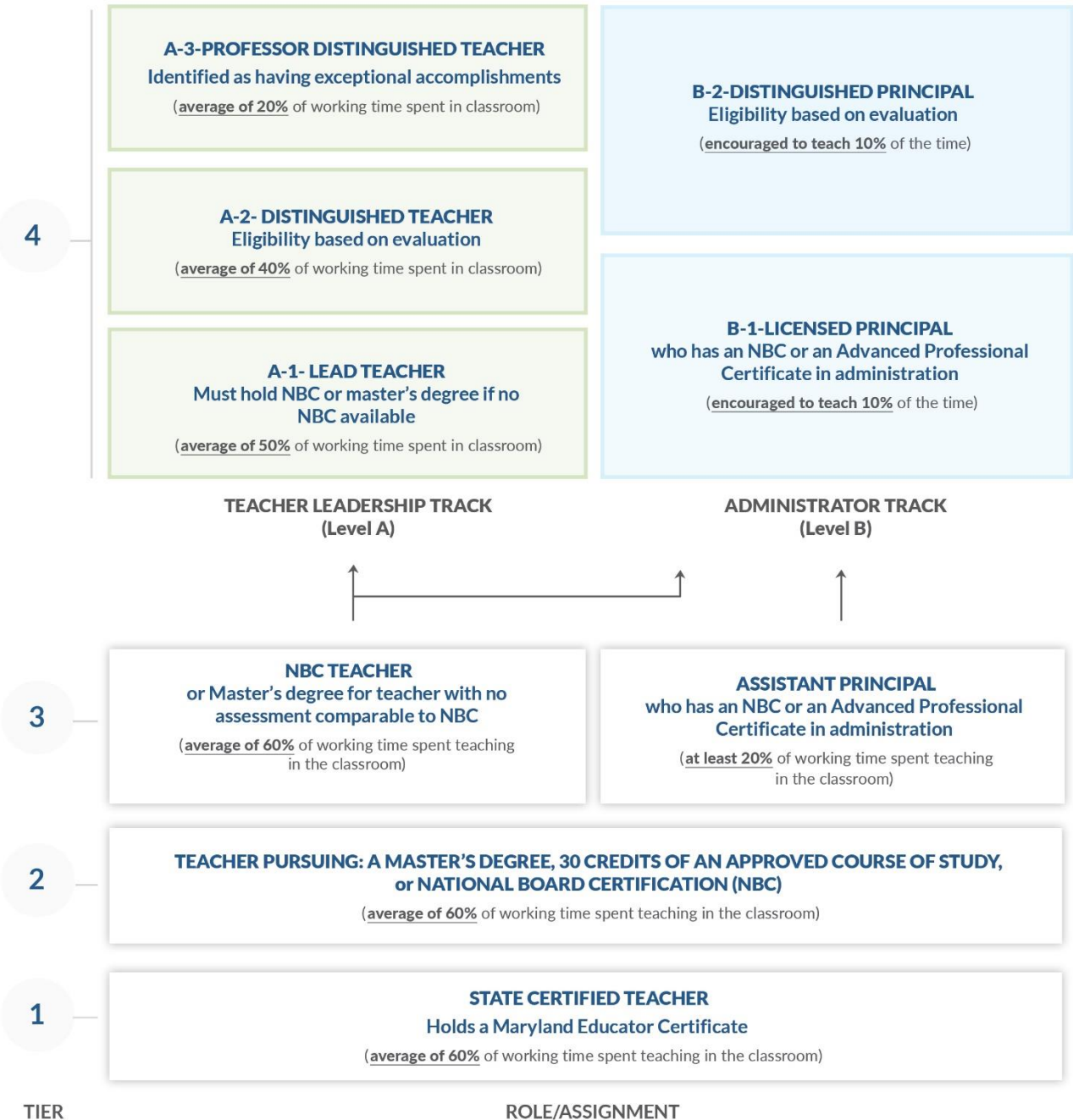
Only MSDE or a local education agency can add schools to the list of Low Performing Schools. MSDE will identify schools eligible for the program each year using the MSDE [Framework for National Board Certified Teachers and Low Performing Schools](#). Maryland public schools earning a 1- or 2-star rating in the Maryland Accountability System in two of the last three available years of data meet the State definition. Each local education agency will also have the flexibility to identify up to 10 percent of the low performing schools within their district.

23. How will funding operate for an eligible teacher who is assigned to teach as an identified low performing schools for some of their time with the remaining time being assigned to a school that is not identified as low performing?

Eligible teachers who are assigned to split their teaching time between schools with only some of that time spent in an identified low performing school shall receive the FTE equivalent of the \$7,000 increase. For example, a teacher who is 0.5 in a low performing school and 0.5 in a non-identified school shall receive an increase of \$3,500 (this is in addition to the full \$10,000 incentive offered to all eligible NBC teachers).

BLUEPRINT FOR MARYLAND'S FUTURE

Maryland's Career Ladder for Educators Outline



Per Ed. § 6-1001 through § 6-1010