

§ 115C-296.2A. National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification participation fee grant program.

(a) [Establishment of Grant Program. –] Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-296.2, to the extent the General Assembly provides funds for this purpose, the Department of Public Instruction shall establish a grant program for qualifying public schools to improve teacher quality and mitigate learning loss by reimbursing teachers for the cost of the participation fee for National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification.

(b) Definitions. – The following definitions shall apply in this section:

- (1) Public school. – Any of the following:
 - a. A school in a public school unit.
 - b. A school providing elementary or secondary instruction operated by The University of North Carolina under Article 4 or Article 29 of Chapter 116 of the General Statutes.
- (2) Qualifying public school. – A public school that meets any of the following criteria:
 - a. Is identified as a low-performing school pursuant to G.S. 115C-105.37 or G.S. 115C-218.94.
 - b. Enrolled a student body in the school year prior to the application for reimbursement consisting of at least ten percent (10%) of students identified by the Department as at-risk students.

(c) Grant Applications and Approval. – The governing board of a qualifying public school may apply to the Department of Public Instruction for grant funds to reimburse teachers employed in the qualifying public school for the cost of the participation fee for NBPTS certification. The Department shall develop criteria and guidelines for governing bodies of public schools that receive grant funds to follow when administering the reimbursements. The criteria shall include at least the following:

- (1) Governing bodies of public schools receiving grant funds shall prioritize reimbursements for teachers based on the need of the school where the teacher is employed at the time of the reimbursement, including at least the following criteria:
 - a. A teacher employed in a qualifying public school with more qualifying factors, as identified in sub-subdivisions a. and b. of subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of this section, shall receive priority over a teacher employed in a qualifying public school with fewer qualifying factors.
 - b. For teachers employed in qualifying schools pursuant to sub-subdivision b. of subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of this section, teachers employed in schools with a higher percentage of at-risk students shall receive priority over teachers employed in schools with a lower percentage of at-risk students.
- (2) Governing bodies of public schools receiving grant funds shall not require a teacher to complete the NBPTS certification process in order to receive a reimbursement.

(d) Report. – No later than January 15 of each year in which funds are awarded, the Department shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division on the impact of the program, including at least the following information:

- (1) Governing bodies of public schools applying for and receiving grants.
- (2) Number of teachers receiving reimbursements.
- (3) Demographic information of teachers receiving reimbursements.

- (4) Employment status of teachers receiving reimbursements, including the public school where the teacher is employed and whether the teacher remains employed with his or her original qualifying public school.
- (5) Licensure areas of teachers receiving reimbursements.
- (6) Effect of the program on the performance and growth of students taught by teachers receiving reimbursements. (2023-134, s. 7.40.)