

OK, you are fabulous. You know you are. You are the star juggler in your school circus act, juggling administrative responsibilities such as ordering books, repairing them, shelving them, and putting them in the hands of students and teachers; juggling technology responsibilities that include teaching students and teachers how to effectively use hardware and software; juggling your teaching responsibilities; juggling all those committee meetings, professional conferences, and staff meetings. Am I missing anything? Oh, yes, what about a personal life? That you juggle with your extra hand!

YOU know you are good at what you do, and, if you are lucky, some of the staff at your school—including your principal—know you are good at what you do. But too many of us are the silent workers, the conscientious, quiet go-getters who get everything done, making it look as if it requires no effort. We need to make sure all our fellow professional teachers know we are also hard-working professionals. One way to do this is to obtain your National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification.

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DEFINITELY WORTH IT!

I know, I know. You have heard it's really hard and really time-consuming. Well, I have to admit that the time-consuming part is true. But for librarians, who have to manage time on a daily basis, it

You Can Get That National

Board

should be a snap. I will not concede that it is difficult, because I know you are already doing most of what is required to get your certification. You just need to write it down and tell the Board about it! And, aside from the rise in professional stature you will attain by getting your certification, the money is nice too. That's right—this is actually one thing we get extra money for doing. The amount varies from state to state, and you would need to check into the guidelines for your state, but most will reimburse the cost of getting the certification (\$2,300) at the very least. In Kentucky, we are reimbursed almost

the total amount, move up a Rank step and also get a \$2,000 stipend from the state. A glance at the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Web site [<http://www.nbpts.org/>] list of states that support certification includes Arkansas and Oklahoma, which pay 100 percent of the registration fee; Alabama, with a \$5,000 a year raise; and Delaware, with a 12 percent salary increase. Definitely worth it!

SOME HISTORY

Now that I have piqued your interest, here's some more background. What is the National



Certification

Board for Professional Teaching Standards anyway? "The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards was created in 1987 after 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* (May 16, 1986). The National Board is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan, and non-governmental organization governed by a board of directors, the majority of whom are classroom teachers. The other directors include school administrators, school board leaders, governors and state legislators, higher

education officials, and business and community leaders." (All information quoted in this article is from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Web site.)

Through committees of teachers and other experts, the NBPTS developed standards to define accomplished teaching in 27 content areas. For certification, the Board measures a teacher's practice against these standards in a process that includes teaching portfolios, student work samples, videotapes, and written exercises. It is valid for 10 years, at which point a teacher must seek renewal. Teachers who have obtained their

certification are making a difference wherever they teach. "The recognition, visibility, new roles and growth of the numbers of National Board Certified Teachers are affecting not only their classrooms, but also the culture of schools where they work. They are affecting how teachers are viewed by everyone from the education policy establishment to parents in the community."

National Board Certification was first offered in two areas in 1993–1994, and 86 teachers received their National Board Certification in January 1995. In November 2004, the Certification

NBCTs BY YEAR

School Year	Total
2003–2004	8066
2002–2003	8211
2001–2002	7894
2000–2001	6507
1999–2000	4727
1998–1999	2969
1997–1998	924
1996–1997	318
1995–1996	219
1994–1995	199
1993–1994	177
All Years	40211

From http://www.nbpts.org/nbct/nbctdir_byyear.cfm

Figure 1

was awarded to over 8,000 teachers, with the total number now certified exceeding 40,200. (See Figure 1 above.) Currently, there are approximately 20,000 teachers seeking National Board Certification.

THE LMS AND BOARD CERTIFICATION

The Certification for School Library Media Specialists (Library Media for Early Childhood Through Young Adulthood—Ages 3–18+) was first offered in 2001.

- In 2002, 435 library media specialists certified, out of a total 7,894 teachers.
- In 2003, 310 library media specialists certified, out of a total of 8,211 teachers.
- In 2004, 344 library media specialists certified, out of a total of 8,066 teachers.

That means there are 40,208 National Board Certified teachers and 1,089 of them are library media specialists. If we did it, so can you! To qualify to apply for National Board Certification, librarians must be a certified library media specialist with a bachelor's degree, have 3 years teaching experience, and be employed in a K–12 school.

OK, you're interested, you're excited, and you're ready to begin. What do you do first?

Go to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Web site and spend some time just browsing. Read the Five Core Propositions, the Standards for Library Media Specialist, and the requirements for

the portfolio pieces. You will have to complete four portfolio pieces that will include two videotaped teaching segments and some examples of student work. And, after you have submitted your portfolio pieces, you will have to complete an online essay-type test at a testing center. Now that you have just read all this, do you think you can handle it? I know you can.

OPEN THE BOX, GET ORGANIZED, AND GET WRITING

The first thing you need to do at this point is to see what help is available to you. Many states offer mentors to help you, and some local colleges and universities offer classes or workshops, so check on those. Now, just go online and get registered. Once you have registered and paid your fee, you will get a box of materials in the mail. Keep this box because you will need it to send back your completed materials. Take everything out of the box, spread it out, look at it, and begin to plan. *Get organized!* Plan ahead, budget your time, figure out what you will have completed by certain dates, and give yourself a timeline for completion. You will have to submit your box of materials in March, so plan to finish a portfolio piece every couple of months, so you are not overwhelmed at the end. Think about which lessons you will use for the portfolio pieces and begin to pull together materials for the Documented Accomplishments piece.

It is perfectly fine to use the Standards to plan your lessons, since the Standards were designed to drive the way proficient teachers should be teaching. Did I say get organized? OK, I'm saying it again: Get organized. It is the most important advice I will give you. Talk to your fellow teachers and librarians to see who will collaborate with you, who will read your rough drafts, and who will let you cry on their shoulder.

Read over the descriptions of how to write your portfolio pieces and read over the standards. Now, do that again. And again! You will need to use that information hundreds of times before you finish, so become very familiar with it. Choose your very best lessons to write about—the ones that have worked for you and have helped your students to be successful. Remember—all your lessons should have an impact on student achievement, should include technology, and should involve parents and the community. Videotape several lessons with several classes, even if you don't think those are the ones you will use. You and your students must get used to being videotaped. You don't want to count on that one perfect lesson, then find out the battery on the video camera had gone dead or have one of your students threw up in the middle of the lesson.

But also remember that your lesson does not have to be perfect. This is an example of your teaching, and things can and do go wrong. It's how you handle the

unexpected that is important. Your writing will reflect the changes you will make and the components of the lesson that worked.

You will be putting together four portfolio pieces:

1. Instructional Collaboration

- 10 pages of written commentary
- Four pages of student work samples
- Three pages of documentation of collaboration

2. Fostering an Appreciation of Literature

- 12 pages of written commentary
- Four pages of instructional materials
- 17-minute videotape with 15 minutes of lesson and 2-minute pan of your library

3. Integration of Instructional Technologies

- 10 pages of written commentary
- Five pages of instructional commentary
- 20-minute videotape with two 10-minute continuous segments showing instruction

4. Documented Accomplishments

- 20 pages of documentation
- 12 pages of description and analysis
- Two pages of a reflective summary

Now, it's time to write and revise. Revise, revise, revise. Then revise again. Put your portfolio piece on the desk with the standards beside it. Cross off the standards you have addressed. One is not in there? Rewrite and add it. Strangely enough, when your portfolio pieces are long gone and you are a National Board Certified teacher, you will find you are planning lessons that incorporate those standards automatically.

Once you have everything written and beautifully printed and packaged, it's time to pack that box and get it sent in plenty of time to meet the deadline. *You must pack the box according to the specifications or your materials will not be graded, so be careful.*

THE ONLINE ASSESSMENT TEST

The next hurdle is to take the online assessment test. This consists of six exercises that you will answer in essay-style format on a computer at a testing center. The exercise areas are as follows:

- Organizational Management
- Ethical and Legal Tenets
- Technologies
- Collection Development
- Information Literacy
- Knowledge of Literature

You should do some reading for this test, mainly to review the latest research and to catch up on reading any children's literature you have missed. But you are already familiar with most of this material from working with it every day. There are sample tests on the Web site, as well as a tutorial to walk you through the online process.

OK, you sent in your box and completed the test—now what?

Now, you wait. All your work will be scored by library media specialists who have been trained by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Your scores will eventually be posted online (of course, only you will have access to them, using your candidate number). You must score 275 out of 400 and you may retake part of the test or redo a portfolio piece you did not score quite high enough on. There is no stigma attached to taking another year or two to complete the process. Many people do this. When you achieve that 275 or better, you will be doing a dance of joy through your school!!

Months after completing your National Board Certification, you will find yourself designing lesson plans that look eerily like those you completed to get your certification. Your teaching style has changed. You are incorporating more technology, collaborating more with your fellow teachers, and making an effort to involve parents in the learning process. Wow, getting your certification really did make a difference in your teaching! It is also making a difference in the lives of the students you are teaching. And isn't that the whole point of the certification process—to make a difference in our students' lives?

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HELPFUL SITES

Library Media National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

This is a listserv but also a Web page with lots of links that might help you:

<http://www.geocities.com/educationplace/lmnbpts.htm>

Lots of different resources to help you through the process:

http://www.oklibs.org/~oaslms/resource_page.htm