Southeastern Oklahoma State University
Resource Center for National Board Candidates
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This manual is designed to provide valuable information and practical suggestions for Southeastern Oklahoma State University students and graduates who are interested in pursuing National Board Certification. However, for official information regarding National Board Certification, candidates should visit the official website of the National Board (www.nbpts.org) or the official website of the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation (www.ok.gov/octp).

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Section 1: Description of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Organization and Purpose

(The information contained in the following section was obtained directly from the NBPTS website: http://www.nbpts.org (to open the hyperlink right click on the hyperlink and check open hyperlink)

What is the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards?

“NBPTS is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan and nongovernmental organization. It was formed in 1987 to advance the quality of teaching and learning by developing professional standards for accomplished teaching, creating a voluntary system to certify teachers who meet those standards and integrating certified teachers into educational reform efforts.”

Why become a National Board Certified Teacher?

Just as other professions, like doctors and accountants, have a system of national certification, the National Board provides an opportunity for teachers to become nationally certified. National Board certified teachers are highly accomplished teachers who have met high and rigorous standards. As a result, teaching and learning are improved in the United States. Additionally, National Board Certification meets the U.S. Department of Education’s definition of “highly qualified” as outlined by No Child Left Behind.

What is the history behind the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards?

In 1985, Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, suggested a system of national certification. Later, the Carnegie Corporation of New York funded the establishment of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, following the recommendations of the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy’s Task Force on Teaching as a Profession.
“The task force’s final report—A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century—released on May 15, 1986, called for the creation of a board to ‘define what teachers should know and be able to do’ and ‘support the creation of rigorous, valid assessments to see that certified teachers do meet those standards.’ In addition, it is important to note that the majority of board members who provide leadership and decision-making are current classroom teachers.

What are the Five Core Propositions of National Board?

The following propositions characterize National Board Certified Teachers:

**Proposition 1:** Teachers are committed to students and their learning.

**Proposition 2:** Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.

**Proposition 3:** Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.

**Proposition 4:** Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.

**Proposition 5:** Teachers are members of learning communities.

Section 2: Tour of the NBPTS Web Site and Resources Offered

The official website of the National Board is: [http://www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org). This website offers a plethora of information for individuals interested in National Board Certification. Specifically, the website offers information in the following categories:

1) **Become a Candidate:** Potential candidates need to check out this tab first. Under this tab, potential candidates can find information related to the benefits of certification, available certificates (including fields of NB
certification and how to go about choosing the right certification area), eligibility requirements, fees and financial support (including fee assistance, links to state information, financial assistance to veterans, low-interest loans, and available scholarships), and an application to start the certification process.  http://www.nbpts.org/become_a_candidate

2) For Candidates: Under this tab, current candidates will find the information they need to assist them as they work toward National Board Certification. Specifically, the “my profile” sections enables candidates to monitor their status online. In addition, there is information about certification areas (including standards for all available certification areas), the portfolio, the assessment center, scoring, candidate support, and retake candidates.  http://www.nbpts.org/for_candidates

3) For NBCTs: The information contained here is designed for current National Board Certified Teachers. It provides opportunities for NBCTs to connect with fellow NBCTs, and provides additional information on network affiliates, professional development, recruitment, certification renewal, and graduate credit.  http://www.nbpts.org/for_nbcts

4) The Standards: It is crucial that candidates have an in-depth knowledge of the National Board Standards. It is here where candidates can find information on the five core propositions, as well as access complete standards information for each of the 25 certificates currently offered by NBPTS.  http://www.nbpts.org/the_standards

5) Products and Services: Under this tab, individuals can find information about becoming a Take One participant, access an online store, learn about candidate support training and the State Farm Virtual Leadership Forum.  http://www.nbpts.org/products_and_services

6) Resources: The Resources tab contains a link to individual states’ information, including local contact information, scholarship opportunities, and funding incentives from each state. In addition, a NBCT Directory is available which lists contact information for all currently certified teachers.
Information on publications, research, copyright and permissions, and higher education opportunities are also available. [http://www.nbpts.org/resources](http://www.nbpts.org/resources)

7) Get Involved: Whether you’re a teacher, administrator, school board member, parent, or business leader, you’ll find information here on how to get involved in the National Board process under this tab. [http://www.nbpts.org/get_involved](http://www.nbpts.org/get_involved)

Frequently-Asked Questions: This website also contains a “Frequently-Asked Questions” section that is very beneficial. If an individual has unanswered questions about the National Board Process, click on the links to “submit candidate questions” or “submit non-candidate questions” located within each “Frequently-Asked Question” section. The online inquiry service staff is very knowledgeable and sends responses in timely manner. [http://www.nbpts.org/help_and_faqs/help_and_faqs](http://www.nbpts.org/help_and_faqs/help_and_faqs)

Section 3: Description of the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation and its Respective Role in NBPTS Certification

(The information contained in the following section was obtained directly from the OCTP website: [http://www.ok.gov/octp](http://www.ok.gov/octp))

“In May, 1995, House Bill 1549 established the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation for the express purpose of developing and implementing a new competency-based teacher preparation, candidate assessment, and professional development system.” The vision of the OCTP is: “Student success through quality teacher preparation.”

In keeping with its purpose, vision, and mission, the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation is dedicated to the improvement of education in Oklahoma through support of teachers as they seek National Board Certification. Part of this support includes financial aid for teachers seeking certification and an annual stipend for current National Board teachers in Oklahoma. (See Frequently Asked Questions section for more information on financial assistance and annual stipends.)
Section 4: Tour of the OCTP Website

The official website of the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation is http://www.ok.gov/octp. The website contains a “National Board Certification” tab which contains information on the following topics:

**Financial Aid:**
http://www.ok.gov/octp/National_Board_Certification/Financial_Aid/index.html

**ELO Scholarship Application:**
http://www.ok.gov/octp/National_Board_Certification/ELO_Scholarship_Application/index.html

**Certification Areas:**
http://www.ok.gov/octp/National_Board_Certification/Certification_Areas/index.html

**Take One:**
http://www.ok.gov/octp/National_Board_Certification/Take_One/index.html

**Candidate Support Providers:** Oklahoma candidates can contact these individuals for support and questions. Contact information for support providers can be found at:
http://www.ok.gov/octp/National_Board_Certification/Candidate_Support_Providers/index.html

Section 5: Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What exactly does the certification process involve?**

In order to demonstrate your teaching practice, National Board candidates are required to complete two important components:

1) **Portfolio Entries:** Candidates are required to submit four portfolio entries, three of which are classroom based, where video recordings and examples of student work serve as supporting documentation. A fourth entry relates to accomplishments outside the classroom—
and how they impact student learning.
(http://nbpts.org/become_a_candidate/assessment_process)

2) Assessment Center Exercises: Candidates must demonstrate content knowledge in response to six exercises developed for a chosen certificate area. Candidates have up to 30 minutes to complete each exercise. Assessments are administered at over 300 computer-based testing centers across the United States. (http://nbpts.org/become_a_candidate/assessment_process)

2. How much time does the certification process take?

It has been estimated that an average of 200-400 hours of individual work are necessary to complete the process. Additionally, it may take up to three years to complete the process.

3. Who is eligible to apply for National Board certification?

There are three requirements that candidates must meet prior to applying for National Board certification:

1) Hold a bachelor’s degree

2) Have completed three full years of teaching/counseling experience

3) Possess a valid state teaching/counseling license for that period of time.
   (See http://www.nbpts.org/become_a_candidates/eligibility_policies for additional information.)

4. How much does it cost to start the certification process?
*nonrefundable application processing charge: $65
*nonrefundable initial fee: $500 (applied to the assessment fee)
*Assessment fee: $2,500
*other miscellaneous fees may apply

(See http://nbpts.org/become_a_candidate/fees_financial_support for additional information and a schedule of fee due dates.)

5. **What financial incentives or rewards are offered for obtaining National Board Certification?**

In Oklahoma, as per regulation and funding, a $5,000 annual salary stipend is given to National Board Certified teachers for the life of their certificate (ten years).

In Texas, there are not currently any state-wide financial incentives offered for obtaining National Board Certification. However, there are some local school districts (i.e.—Austin, Corpus Christi, Idea, Round Rock, San Antonio, Waco) that do provide financial rewards. For a current list of these incentives and districts, visit the National Board Website and following these links: Become a Candidate>Fees and Financial Support>Fee Assistance>State and Local Information (Texas)>Local Information. (http://www.nbpts.org/resources/state_local_information/Texas)

**Section 6: Financial Assistance**

(The following information regarding fee assistance in Oklahoma was obtained from the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation Website: http://www.ok.gov/octp)

**In Oklahoma:** “Education Leadership Oklahoma (ELO) is a challenge to Oklahoma teachers to participate and complete a process enabling them to
reach the highest standards of their field—National Board Certification. Administered by the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation, ELO funds candidate support for Oklahoma educators seeking National Board Certification. Since its inception in 1997, the ELO has funded over 2050 scholarships.”

Selected ELO participants proceed with the NBPTS certification process with exceptional support from the State of Oklahoma. This support includes scholarships that provide full funding for the $2,500 application fee. The ELO Scholarship application is available online at: [http://www.ok.gov/octp/National_Board_Certification/ELO_Scholarship_Application/index.html](http://www.ok.gov/octp/National_Board_Certification/ELO_Scholarship_Application/index.html)

Scoring criteria used by the Application Review Committee is also available online from the aforementioned website.

**In Texas:** Texas educators can apply for federal candidate subsidies. These subsidies have been provided through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Instructions for applying for federal candidate subsidies in Texas can be found at [http://www.nbpts.org/resources/state_local_information/TX](http://www.nbpts.org/resources/state_local_information/TX). Administered through the Texas Education Agency, these funds subsidize 50% of the application fee, with the educator being financially responsible for the remaining 50% unsubsidized portion.

For further information on Texas financial assistance, potential candidates should visit the National Board website ([www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org)) and follow the following links:

Become a Candidate>Fees and Financial Support>Fee Assistance>State and Local Information>Texas Link ([http://www.nbpts.org/resources/state_local_information/Texas](http://www.nbpts.org/resources/state_local_information/Texas))

In addition to federal candidate subsidies through the Texas Education Agency, many school districts provide candidate fee support. Among these
In General: Many generous companies also provide scholarships to educators wishing to pursue National Board Certification. The following is a list of some of these organizations: GlaxoSmithKline, State Farm, The UPS Foundation, Boeing, Edison International, Georgia Pacific, Pfizer, and Coca-Cola. For a complete list and instructions for how to apply for these scholarships, visit the National Board website (www.nbpts.org) and follow the following links: Become a Candidate>Fees and Financial Support>Scholarships.

 Eligible veterans can be reimbursed up to $2,000 for assessment fees by the Department of Veterans’ Affairs. For more information on this program, visit www.nbpts.org and click on the following links: Become a Candidate>Fees and Financial Support> Fee Assistance. An application for VA benefits can be downloaded at: http://www.gibill.va.gov/ or call 1-888-GI-BILL-1.

The American Federal of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA) also offer low-interest loans for educators wishing to pursue National Board Certification. For information on these loans, visit www.nbpts.org and follow these links: Become a Candidate>Fees and Financial Support>Fee Assistance. The official website of the American Federation of teachers is http://www.aft.org/. For information on National Board certification loans available through the National Education Association, visit http://www.aft.org/.

Section 7: Renewal of National Board Certification

National Board Certification lasts for 10 years. However, in the eighth or ninth year of certification, National Board Certified Teachers can begin the renewal process. While the renewal process is not as lengthy as the original
certification, it is important to note that it is still rigorous in nature. Both National Board Teachers who are currently in the classroom and those who work in some other education capacity are eligible for recertification. For specific information regarding the requirements for renewal, visit http://www.nbpts.org/for_nbcts/certification_renewal.

Section 8: Peer Reflections of the National Board Process from local National Board Certified Teachers

Section 8 contains personal testimonies written by recently certified teachers and counselors from the southeastern Oklahoma region. These reflections were designed to provide insight and practical suggestions to make the National Board process easier for prospective candidates.

Lisa Jestis, NBCT, School Counselor at Northwest Heights Elementary, Durant, OK:

One thing I would like potential candidates to remember is “Perseverance.” This process is very rigorous but is also very do-able. You will be highly stressed for fear of failing. You will not have as much time for your family or be able to do the things you like to do in your time off. You must become an organized person in order to keep some sort of normalcy in your life. Half way through the process you might ask yourself, “Why did I do this?” You must continue to persevere. Find someone in the same field as you and keep in close contact with them. They will be able to help you persevere by encouraging you and your work during your discussions. I lacked fifteen points the first time and was so disappointed in myself because I did not pass. After I got over the shock, I knew I could not quit until I reached the goal. I began going to more meetings to carefully review the process and allowing a few more people to read over my work and give me their opinion. Remember, it is just their opinion! Rely more on the word of those whom you have the most respect. Too many opinions can be confusing. You should be very detailed and thorough when explaining the impact on student learning. A very simple thing
may have great impact on student learning but you have to clearly express that point to the readers and/or reviewers of your portfolio.

I think I learned so much more about the process by reading the advice given on the list serve website. I never participated in the discussion, but I had many of my questions answered just from going on occasionally and reading what others were saying. It turned out that someone else had the same questions I did.

Prepare yourself mentally and emotionally for the computer assessments. When the first question popped up, I thought I was going to shut completely down. I was very nervous and could not think straight for a moment. I had to practice calming techniques and self-talk just to get started. I was worried that I couldn’t say all I wanted to say in thirty minutes. By the third computer assessment, I was able to address the question with more confidence.

Keep an organized file box of your work. Divide it into the different categories you are working on. This will give you a place to stick all your spur of the moment ideas, artifacts and rough drafts. This makes it much easier to pull out when you are focusing on one area.

Establish a notebook of your completed portfolio to show to your family and colleagues. When you pass, you will want to reflect back on all your blood, sweat and tears. You will be proud of yourself and proud to help someone else. I hope you have found a few things I have said to be helpful. Good Luck!

**Darla Ellett, NBCT, Math teacher at Durant High School, Durant, OK:**

The National Board Certification process is time consuming, yet rewarding. At an Educational Leadership Organization (ELO) workshop for candidates, I picked up some valuable tips. The best was to be
organized. This is not a skill all people possess, but if you cannot force yourself to be tidy with your materials or particular with where you lay things, you will regret not honing this skill. I purchased a huge hanging-file Rubbermaid tub and file folders for each entry, each set of documents needed, NBPTS stickers, etc. I even included a file for the notes of encouragement people sent me as I worked on my portfolio. Take some time to get organized.

There were times that I was bogged down with details. Another tip I acquired from an ELO workshop was to ask myself the questions “Why am I doing this [lesson or activity or …] in my classroom?” and “How are the students impacted by it?” Everything you will do during the course of certification will be focused on how everything you do impacts the students. This is a harder task to accomplish than most because we spend so much time getting things done/taught that we have little time to reflect on what works, why it works, which students benefited from this and how to remediate for those who didn’t, what was effective/ineffective, what needs to be changed for the next time, etc. These are questions that we already ask ourselves but have only a conference period in which to answer. The certification process forces you to take a long hard look at those questions and to write detailed responses to most of these questions and more. Do not be daunted by this description. It was worth every grueling sentence I had to write. I find myself asking those same questions daily now, where before I might have asked them at the beginning and ending of a unit.

Some things had to be sacrificed. My family spent Friday nights out doing various things from seeing a movie to stopping for an ice cream cone on the way to the football game. For most of one school year, all of those things came to a near complete halt. A few additional changes were temporarily made as well, including having the kids do almost all of the dishes, husband took up doing the laundry, and weekends were now for the family to clean house, not mom. Everything is back to normal now (meaning I am the domestic slave I once was), but the family agrees that it was not too painful and “kinda worth it.”
The time spent working on my National Board Certification was a very detailed examination of my classroom processes. There will be times you feel like you cannot keep moving forward and you may even take a few steps back. Use resources available to you. ELO workshops, support groups, regional meetings, and packing parties were all valuable resources to me. Be confident in your work – you are the expert in your classroom. And finally, be sure to answer the questions.

Geovanna Davis, NBCT, Reading Specialist at Battiest Elementary, Battiest, OK:

I submitted my paperwork to see if I could receive a scholarship to pay for the process. I received it and went to my first meeting over NBCT in June of 2005. It was a bit overwhelming. There was a lot of information given in two days. I went away from that meeting in a daze. I began preparing notebooks for each entry. My certification area was Early and Middle Childhood Literacy: Reading / Language Arts.

I started gathering the materials I thought I would need to record my students and myself in my classroom. I had a file box (that quickly turned into four boxes) for materials, newspaper clippings, letters from parents and colleagues, student work samples, etc. I needed all of this for documentation for the entries.

The first week of school I sent home a permission slip to every child in the elementary and to all the staff including the support staff. I had to see who could be filmed and who couldn’t. I made a sign to hang on my door that said, “Filming for NBCT, Please do not enter.” I had a note pad attached in case I needed to contact whoever was at the door.

I set my video camera up before the first day of school. I wanted my students aware of it daily. At first they made faces and acted silly in
front of it. It was not even on for the first three weeks of school. They got use to it being there and didn’t pay it much attention by the time I started filming.

I filmed the classes I thought I would possibly use everyday. It didn’t matter what I was teaching, I filmed! Wow, what an experience that was! After watching hours of video, some with sound and some without (when I would forget to turn on the microphone), I began to see where the camera worked best and where the microphone picked up the best. I cut my filming down to certain classes.

I spent many hours typing up the answers to the entry questions. Evenings, weekends, vacation time, every minute I was not teaching and making lesson plans, I was typing on the entries. I hired my 14-year-old granddaughter to clean my house once a week. When I cooked, I would double it and freeze half for nights I didn’t cook. My husband was a real trooper. He learned to use the microwave and cook if he was hungry!

After the Christmas holidays, I didn’t have one entry complete. I went into a state of depression towards the NBCT process. I came in one evening right after school, exhausted and down. I told my husband I was sending in my letter to quit the next day. He said, “Go to bed! You’ll feel better tomorrow. Then you can make a decision on what to do.” I did; I slept until the alarm went off the next morning. I was in a great mood when I got up and that week I completed one entry. By the end of the next week, I had completed a second.

I completed all my entries by the date I had set the summer before. I was glad to pack it up and get it in the mail. I cried when I mailed it off. It was scary to hand over all that hard work. Of course I had a copy of everything in case something happened to it in the mail.

I received conformation in a few days they had received my package. My entries were mailed in March 2006; I took my six-question test in June. They had everything now; then the waiting started. I was told I
would not get my scores until Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving came and went—and no scores came! When I finally received my scores…I didn’t pass!!!!!!

Depression set in again. I had worked so hard. I cried for days. It was about three weeks before I even thought about seeing what I needed to redo. Both of my video scores were low, and I bombed one test question.

I went to Oklahoma City to a meeting with all the people who didn’t become certified. That really helped me feel better; I was not the only one that didn’t make it. I changed my attitude. *I decided if it were easy everyone would be National Board Certified.* I started back videoing my classes; I was a little more selective this time. I had another NBCT reading for me. This was a change from my first attempt.

It seemed easier the second time. I guess because I didn’t have as much to do as the first time. I had until April to get my two entries completed, and then I rescheduled my test question. I mailed in my entries near the end of March, completed my test, and began waiting again.

When my NBCT friend called and told me scores were up, I waited until about 10:00am before I checked them. When I went on-line, the first scores I pulled up were the 2006 scores. Of course it said I didn’t pass. I was upset again, but I looked up what I messed up on this time. It was the exact same scores as the year before. I then realized I was in the wrong part of the scores. I went into the 2007 scores……I PASSED….. I was a NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHER!!!!!!! I called my husband. I was crying so hard he thought I didn’t pass again. He said, “It’s okay. You can do it one more time.” I ran down the hallway and met my principal. She knew I passed. She said she could tell by the smile on my face, behind the tears.
It was a hard and very taxing process on my family and me. When teachers/people ask was it worth the time and effort spent on the whole process? I say, “YES”, I’m a better teacher because of it. The whole NBCT experience makes you look at everything you do and say in a classroom and you ask yourself this one question, “Will this lesson impact my students’ learning or is it just fluff?”

I believe the NBCT process is worth all the time and the tears...because you look at your teaching in a different way. You will be a better teacher, and you will impact your students’ learning in ways you never dreamed about before you became NBCT.

Linda Condor, NBCT, School Counselor, Washington Irving Elementary, Durant, OK:

The National Board process is a time commitment. The process is affirmation that one should never stop learning. No doubt when you begin the process you will ask yourself, “Why did I do this?” It can be quite overwhelming when you begin the process and see the work and timelines ahead of you. As you begin to reflect on your goals, purpose, effectiveness of the practice and the rationale for your professional judgments, you begin to further understand and define the importance of knowing about your students’ backgrounds and achievement. I now reflect on each child each day and make changes as necessary. It is a challenging professional development experience which encouraged me to reflect critically on the interface of my counseling methods and students’ development. Pursuing National Board Certification gave me the opportunity to reflect on my counseling practices. My counseling has been forever changed as I enriched my techniques to meet the needs of my students. The certification process is designed to provide an opportunity to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and abilities in situations across a range of ages and topics of the certification field. I was in my 37th year of teaching when I earned my certificate. My principal stated in a news release, “This is a wonderful career achievement for Ms. Condor and a reflection of her dedication to her profession.” I can truthfully say that the process is both challenging and rewarding. It is one of the best professional development opportunities for educators seeking to enrich the lives of students.
Barbara Routledge, NBCT, Foreign Language Teacher, Durant High School, Durant, OK:

The principle advantage of the NBPTS certification was individual growth. This process required dedication and a desire to improve my own teaching. The NBPTS was a learning process that consumed a great deal of time in which I needed my family’s support. Furthermore, I met a lot of people through this process who were willing to coach and assess my progress. These individuals inspired me to improve as a person and a teacher. Another important process in the National Board Certification was research. The majority of everything I read was finding sound research to support or criticize teaching methodologies and to make changes accordingly. For me, the complexity of NBPTS has allowed me to continually reach out of my comfort zone to include the five core propositions as an educator.

For new candidates, I would strongly suggest saving messages, emails, and documentation of parent conversations, etc. Also, learn as much as you can about current research. Gather your accomplishments for the past five years and start writing. You can edit as you go along. Understand the National Board writing and testing process. Organize and start early. Once you start the process, stay with it! It’s worth it!

Section 9: Research Related to NBPTS Certified Teachers

More than 150 research studies have investigated the impact National Board Certification has on student achievement. In summary, most research indicates that National Board Certification has a singular impact on teacher performance and student learning. There is also research to support that NBPTS teachers produce students who do better on standardized testing. For links to this research, visit the National Board website (www.nbpts.org) and following the following links: Resources>Research (http://www.nbpts.org/resources/research). This link contains PDF attachments to the following resources:

1) A Research Guide on National Board Certified Teachers
2) 55,000 Reasons to Believe: The Impact of National Board Certification on Teacher Quality in America

3) NBPTS Data Request Form

4) NBPTS Research Pocket Card

For further information on research into National Board Certification, visit the National Resource Council (NRC) of the National Academies: (http://www8.nationalacademies.org/onpinews/newsitem.aspx?RecordID=12224)

**Section 10: Serving as an Advocate or Mentor for NBPTS candidates**


For more information on mentoring candidates, visit http://www.nbpts.org/get_involved.