The Adolescence and Young Adulthood/English Language Arts Portfolio

The portfolio of the Adolescence and Young Adulthood/English Language Arts assessment gives you the opportunity to sample and present your actual classroom practice over a specified time period. In this Intro, you will find an overview of the Adolescence and Young Adulthood/English Language Arts portfolio entries that includes descriptions of the four portfolio entries, the entry directions, and how the entries are scored.

Be sure to read the Intro and Get Started before beginning work on your portfolio entries; then read all of the materials for the entries. This will help you gain a sense of the "big picture," so you can make an overall plan for accomplishing all of the work of the assessment.

Get Started contains critical information, such as:

- specific approaches to studying the National Board Standards;
- important information to keep in mind throughout your work on the portfolio entries;
- a glossary of portfolio-related terms;
- explanations of the different types of writing required in the portfolio entries, with suggestions and examples;
- suggestions for reviewing your written work;
- detailed explanations about how to use videotaping equipment effectively; and
- optional activities for practicing analysis of student work and of videotapes.
What Shapes the Adolescence and Young Adulthood/English Language Arts Portfolio?

The National Board’s Adolescence and Young Adulthood/English Language Arts (AYA/ELA) assessment is based on the NBPTS Adolescence and Young Adulthood/English Language Arts Standards. All future references to the term "Standards" refer to the NBPTS Adolescence and Young Adulthood/English Language Arts Standards. The document articulates a vision of English language arts teaching and describes what accomplished teachers of adolescent and young adult English language arts students should know and be able to do.

The Adolescence and Young Adulthood/English Language Arts assessment provides a framework that, in the portfolio, affords teachers an opportunity to select examples of their practice that show how they embody the Standards. The Standards Committee for English language arts and the teachers involved in the assessment development agreed that the portfolio for Early Adolescence/English Language Arts (EA/ELA) and Adolescence and Young Adulthood/English Language Arts (AYA/ELA) should be the same. However, the similarity in framework still allows for and requires differences in the performance according to the developmental level of the candidate’s students. The portfolio is the opportunity to directly assess classroom practice; therefore, the portfolio of an adolescence and young adulthood English language arts teacher will provide evidence that reflects accomplished practice at the appropriate level of development for the students they are teaching. Each candidate’s work is examined by assessors who are themselves accomplished teachers in the same certificate field and who teach students at the same developmental level.

The portfolio is designed to assess a teacher's performance in a wide range of classroom settings. We encourage teachers to use more than one class in completing the portfolio entries in order to demonstrate the broadest possible range of their teaching practice. Teachers who have multiple classes that meet the age and content requirements should take advantage of these different classes when completing the classroom-based entries. However, if you have access to only one class that meets the age and content requirements for the certificate area, you may use a single class for all three of the classroom-based entries. When planning your schedule to determine the student work you will collect and the lessons that you will videotape, keep in mind the following requirements for the three classroom-based entries:

- The teaching that you feature must take place with a class that meets the age and content parameters of the certificate area. That is, 51% of the students in the class(es) that you use to complete your portfolio entries must be within the stated age range for the certificate area during the period you collect evidence for your portfolio. You may collect evidence for 12 months prior to your portfolio due date.
- The teaching that you feature in Entries 1-3 must come from different units of instruction, different lessons, and different points in time.

The entries have been designed for maximum flexibility. That is, you may sample from your practice in a number of different ways over a period of several months. Careful planning is essential in fulfilling the
requirements of this portfolio, which is why we have included time lines and other planning materials in the *Planner*.

While there is a separate statement of the specific scoring criteria for each of the portfolio entries, in general the *Standards*—and therefore, the assessment—rest on a fundamental philosophical foundation expressed in the National Board's Five Core Propositions:

- Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
- Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
- Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
- Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
- Teachers are members of learning communities.
The core propositions of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards seeks to identify and recognize teachers who effectively enhance student learning and demonstrate the high level of knowledge, skills, abilities and commitments reflected in the following five core propositions.

- Introduction
- What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do
- Policy Position
  1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
  2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
  3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
  4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
  5. Teachers are members of learning communities.
- Conclusion
Five Core Propositions

Introduction

In 1983, public concern about the state of American education was sharply heightened by the issuance of a federal report titled *A Nation at Risk*. The report provoked a wave of reform initiatives that engulfed the education community. Most of these programs, however, left out a critical element of the education equation: the classroom teacher.

If America is to have world-class schools, it must have a world-class teaching force. Many excellent teachers already work in the schools, but their work often goes unrecognized and unrewarded. As a consequence, many first-rate practitioners leave the schools, and others who could be exceptional teachers never consider teaching. Worse still, the knowledge and skills of the fine teachers who remain are often underutilized, their positive influence allowed only modest scope.

Three years after *A Nation at Risk*, in 1986, the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession issued a pivotal report, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*. Its leading recommendation called for the establishment of a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. The following year, this unique institution in the history of American education was born.

The National Board's mission is to advance the quality of teaching and learning by:

- maintaining high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do,
- providing a national voluntary system certifying teachers who meet these standards, and
- advocating related education reforms to integrate National Board Certification in American education and to capitalize on the expertise of National Board Certified Teachers.

National Board Certification, developed by teachers, with teachers, and for teachers, is a symbol of professional teaching excellence. Offered on a voluntary basis, it complements, not replaces, state licensing. While state licensing systems set entry-level standards for beginning teachers, National Board Certification has established advanced standards for experienced teachers.

Linked to these standards is a new generation of fair and trustworthy assessment processes that honor the complexities and demands of teaching. They focus on teacher work and the difficult issues that accomplished teachers confront on a regular basis. The NBPTS assessments for National Board Certification include having teachers construct a portfolio that represents an analysis of their classroom work and participate in exercises designed to tap the knowledge, skills, disposition and professional judgment that distinguish their practice.

At the time the National Board was founded in 1987, it was understood that a critical first task was the development of a policy that would spell out the National Board's vision of accomplished practice. In 1989, it issued its policy statement, *What Teachers Should Know And Be Able To Do*, which has served as a basis for all of the standards development work NBPTS has conducted. To this day, it remains the cornerstone of the system of National Board Certification and has served as a guide to school districts, states, colleges, universities and others with a strong interest in strengthening the initial and ongoing
education of America's teachers. It also holds the promise of being a stimulus to self-reflection on the part of teachers at all levels of accomplishment as well as a catalyst for healthy debate and the forging of a new professional consensus on accomplished practice in each field of teaching.
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What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do

In this policy, the National Board presents its view of what teachers should know and be able to do--its convictions about what it values and believes should be honored in teaching. This expression of ideals guides all of the National Board's standards and assessment processes.

The fundamental requirements for proficient teaching are relatively clear: a broad grounding in the liberal arts and sciences; knowledge of the subjects to be taught, of the skills to be developed, and of the curricular arrangements and materials that organize and embody that content; knowledge of general and subject-specific methods for teaching and for evaluating student learning; knowledge of students and human development; skills in effectively teaching students from racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse backgrounds; and the skills, capacities and dispositions to employ such knowledge wisely in the interest of students.

This enumeration suggests the broad base for expertise in teaching but conceals the complexities, uncertainties and dilemmas of the work. The formal knowledge teachers rely on accumulates steadily, yet provides insufficient guidance in many situations. Teaching ultimately requires judgment, improvisation, and conversation about means and ends. Human qualities, expert knowledge and skill, and professional commitment together compose excellence in this craft.

The National Board has led the vanguard effort to develop professional standards for elementary and secondary school teaching. The National Board Certified Teachers' stand for professionalism in the schools. The National Board's responsibility is not only to ensure that teachers who become National Board Certified meet its professional standards of commitment and competence, but also to maintain standards and assessments that are so well regarded that America's accomplished teachers will decide to seek National Board Certification.
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Five Core Propositions

Policy Position (Five Core Propositions)

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards seeks to identify and recognize teachers who effectively enhance student learning and demonstrate the high level of knowledge, skills, abilities and commitments reflected in the following five core propositions.

- **Teachers are committed to students and their learning.**

  Accomplished teachers are dedicated to making knowledge accessible to all students. They act on the belief that all students can learn. They treat students equitably, recognizing the individual differences that distinguish one student from another and taking account of these differences in their practice. They adjust their practice based on observation and knowledge of their students' interests, abilities, skills, knowledge, family circumstances and peer relationships.

  Accomplished teachers understand how students develop and learn. They incorporate the prevailing theories of cognition and intelligence in their practice. They are aware of the influence of context and culture on behavior. They develop students' cognitive capacity and their respect for learning. Equally important, they foster students' self-esteem, motivation, character, civic responsibility and their respect for individual, cultural, religious and racial differences.

- **Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.**

  Accomplished teachers have a rich understanding of the subject(s) they teach and appreciate how knowledge in their subject is created, organized, linked to other disciplines and applied to real-world settings. While faithfully representing the collective wisdom of our culture and upholding the value of disciplinary knowledge, they also develop the critical and analytical capacities of their students.

  Accomplished teachers command specialized knowledge of how to convey and reveal subject matter to students. They are aware of the preconceptions and background knowledge that students typically bring to each subject and of strategies and instructional materials that can be of assistance. They understand where difficulties are likely to arise and modify their practice accordingly. Their instructional repertoire allows them to create multiple paths to the subjects they teach, and they are adept at teaching students how to pose and solve their own problems.

- **Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.**

  Accomplished teachers create, enrich, maintain and alter instructional settings to capture and sustain the interest of their students and to make the most effective use of time. They also are adept at engaging students and adults to assist their teaching and at enlisting their colleagues' knowledge and expertise to complement their own. Accomplished teachers command a range of generic instructional techniques, know when each is appropriate and can implement them as needed. They are as aware of ineffectual or damaging practice as they are devoted to elegant practice.
They know how to engage groups of students to ensure a disciplined learning environment, and how to organize instruction to allow the schools' goals for students to be met. They are adept at setting norms for social interaction among students and between students and teachers. They understand how to motivate students to learn and how to maintain their interest even in the face of temporary failure.

Accomplished teachers can assess the progress of individual students as well as that of the class as a whole. They employ multiple methods for measuring student growth and understanding and can clearly explain student performance to parents.

- **Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.**

Accomplished teachers are models of educated persons, exemplifying the virtues they seek to inspire in students — curiosity, tolerance, honesty, fairness, respect for diversity and appreciation of cultural differences — and the capacities that are prerequisites for intellectual growth: the ability to reason and take multiple perspectives to be creative and take risks, and to adopt an experimental and problem-solving orientation.

Accomplished teachers draw on their knowledge of human development, subject matter and instruction, and their understanding of their students to make principled judgments about sound practice. Their decisions are not only grounded in the literature, but also in their experience. They engage in lifelong learning which they seek to encourage in their students.

Striving to strengthen their teaching, accomplished teachers critically examine their practice, seek to expand their repertoire, deepen their knowledge, sharpen their judgment and adapt their teaching to new findings, ideas and theories.

- **Teachers are members of learning communities.**

Accomplished teachers contribute to the effectiveness of the school by working collaboratively with other professionals on instructional policy, curriculum development and staff development. They can evaluate school progress and the allocation of school resources in light of their understanding of state and local educational objectives. They are knowledgeable about specialized school and community resources that can be engaged for their students' benefit, and are skilled at employing such resources as needed.

Accomplished teachers find ways to work collaboratively and creatively with parents, engaging them productively in the work of the school.

**Supporting Statement**

We each remember the great teachers who touched our lives, kindled our interest and pressed us to do our best. We hold powerful images of such teachers. They exhibited a deep caring and love for children. They conveyed a passion for the subjects they taught, captivating their students with that passion. They approached their work with creativity and imagination, striving constantly to improve. As committed professionals, they were proud to be teachers.

The images of teaching that we share are deceptive as well as compelling. They emphasize teaching's external aspects, not its inner workings. If we fondly recall the great teachers of our past, we also typically see teaching as a humble undertaking. It concerns itself with the least powerful age group in society. It involves such seemingly routine activities as arranging seatwork, lecturing, reviewing and responding to students' efforts, and disciplining their behavior.
Historically, there is an enduring constancy in the organization of schools, of classrooms and of teaching itself. Self-contained classrooms, whole-group, textbook-centered instruction, teaching as telling, learning as the passive acquisition of facts, standardized testing — these patterns of schooling are as familiar as chalk dust. They constitute an unintended national curriculum that, as an unrelieved diet, does not adequately serve the educational needs of a diverse and dynamic society. Good teachers, of course, depart in many ways from these routines.

These pervasive images underestimate teaching's complexities and freeze the enterprise into forms that overlook its non-routine nature and the importance of independent professional judgment in the life of the accomplished teacher. But teaching is work of the most demanding sort, for teachers must make dozens of decisions daily, command a wide body of knowledge and skill, learn to react instantly, and be disposed to act wisely in difficult situations. And while there are principles and precepts, skills and techniques, to guide the work, teaching is also an activity with artistic aspects, a craft calling for reflection and judgment.

Although complicated, teaching nonetheless evokes simple, reductionist analysis. Much of the discourse on teaching and learning pulls apart what must be joined in practice. Chroniclers of teaching, for example, often assign the teacher's primary loyalty to the student or to the subject, with elementary teachers often characterized as "student-centered" and secondary teachers seen as "subject-centered." This dichotomy is false. Sound teaching merges commitment to students with allegiance to knowledge at all grade levels. All teachers must uphold the claims of knowledge, yet strive to build spacious avenues from such knowledge to students' understanding.

There is likewise a tendency to frame teaching either in terms of imparting valuable knowledge or as encouraging the acquisition of skills. But knowledge and skill are not disjoint. Knowledge — in the form of specific facts and organizing principles — is necessary to the exercise of most skills, just as a range of skills is necessary to the acquisition and construction of knowledge. Knowledge and skill cannot be pulled apart, nor can one assume pride of place over the other.

Another commonplace fallacy is to distinguish "basic" from "higher-order" skills, and to regard mastery of the basics as a precondition to advanced forms of reasoning and functioning. Accomplished teachers realize that higher-order thinking is the hallmark of successful learning at all levels. Students, for example, cannot become good writers without engaging in complex problem-solving processes, nor can they effectively learn basic mathematics simply by memorizing rules for manipulating numbers. There can be no neat division of teaching labor along a basic-to-advanced skills continuum. All teachers must concern themselves with higher-order skills, with the executive functions of reasoning, and with students' capacities to monitor their own learning.

To unify these dichotomies in practice however, requires skill, wisdom and judgment. Accomplished teachers constantly assess and adjust their practice to maintain fidelity to students and to subjects, to knowledge and to skills, and to basic and advanced functions. Professionalism in teaching entails the ongoing pursuit of these unities. Hence, teachers regularly find themselves confronting hard choices — sometimes sacrificing one goal for another, sometimes making compromises.

While teaching demands crisp reasoning and few settings yield to only a single approach, teachers do not have free rein to select any approach that strikes them as felicitous. Rather, their choices are anchored in their own experience and in the settled ground of the knowledge base that defines both efficacious and flawed practice. Being able to apply steady, disciplined judgment and reflective scrutiny within the bounds set by this constantly expanding body of knowledge is the hallmark of professionalism in teaching. As such, these values will be found at the heart of the standards the National Board will promulgate.
On the Commitment to Professionalism in Teaching

As its title indicates, the National Board is committed to professional standards for teaching. The term "professional" is an honorific in our society, and denotes occupations characterized by certain attributes. Chief among these are a body of specialized, expert knowledge together with a code of ethics emphasizing service to clients. The knowledge base typically provides substantial, but not complete, guidance for professional practice. Professionals possess expert knowledge, but often confront unique, problematic situations that do not lend themselves to formulaic solutions. Professionals must cultivate the ability to cope with the unexpected and act wisely in the face of uncertainty.

Professionals deal with urgent human problems: matters of life and death, justice, hope and opportunity. Essential to their work is the trust of clients. What warrants such trust is the obligation, upheld within the community of professionals, to pursue an ethic of service and to employ special knowledge and expertise in the interests of their clients.

These general observations apply to teaching, but with important distinctions. While teachers employ their knowledge and skill on students, they also strive to empower students to continue the quest for understanding, so that one day the pupil may surpass the instructor. In this regard, teaching is the most democratic of professions. It aims to place within the hands, head and hearts of students the means for them to teach themselves.

The ethical dimensions of teaching also distinguish it from other professions. Unique demands arise because the client's attendance is compulsory and, more importantly, because the clients are children. Thus, elementary, middle and high school teachers are obligated to meet a stringent ethical standard. Other ethical demands derive from the teacher's role as a model of an educated person. Teaching is a public activity; a teacher works daily in the gaze of his or her students, and the extended nature of their lives together in schools places special obligations on the teacher's behavior. Students learn early to read and draw lessons from their teachers' characters. Teachers, consequently, must conduct themselves in a manner students might emulate. Their failure to practice what they preach does not long elude students, parents or peers. Practicing with this additional dimension in mind calls for a special alertness to the consequences of manner and behavior. Standards for professional teaching ought, therefore, to emphasize its ethical nature.

What the National Board Will Value in Teaching

The rich amalgam of knowledge, skills, dispositions and beliefs that will characterize National Board Certified teachers are clustered under the five core propositions presented above. What follows is an elaboration of these principles that go to the heart of the National Board's perspective on accomplished teaching.
Five Core Propositions

Proposition #1: Teachers are Committed to Students and Their Learning

Fundamental to the teacher's credo is the belief that all students can learn. Furthermore, they act on that belief. Accomplished teachers like young people and are dedicated to and skilled at making knowledge accessible to all students, even as they acknowledge their distinctive traits and talents. Success depends on teachers' belief in the dignity and worth of all human beings and in the potential that exists within each child. Teachers typically do not work one-on-one with students for extended periods of time because they are responsible for groups. But within this constraint, they are attentive to human variability and its influence on learning.

Teachers Recognize Individual Differences in Their Students and Adjust Their Practice Accordingly

To respond effectively to individual differences, teachers must know many things about the particular students they teach: Alex has a stutter, Maria loves science fiction, Toby is anxious about mathematics, Marcus is captivated by jazz. But accomplished teachers know much more — whom their students go home to at night, how they have previously performed on standardized tests, what sparks their interest. This kind of specific understanding is not trivial, for teachers use it constantly to decide how best to tailor instruction.

As diagnosticians of students' interests, abilities and prior knowledge, skillful teachers learn to "read" their students. When planning a unit on aging, for example, they will anticipate what concepts and activities certain students may find problematic. Watching a student work on a computer, they will look for signs of progress. By keeping a finger on the pulse of the class, teachers decide when to alter plans, work with individual students, or enrich instruction with additional examples, explanations or activities.

Proficient teachers learn from their experiences. They learn from listening to their students, from watching them interact with peers, and from reading what they write. The information they acquire about students in the course of instruction subsequently becomes part of their general knowledge of education. Such monitoring and learning is no easy feat. What teachers are able to see, hear and learn is colored by their own prior knowledge and experience. Thus teachers must, in their efforts to work with children different than themselves, monitor both what they see and hear, and what is not so close to the surface. They must strive to acquire a deep understanding of their students and the communities from which they come that shape students' outlooks, values and orientations toward schooling.

Teachers Have an Understanding of How Students Develop and Learn

In addition to particular knowledge of their students, teachers use their understanding of individual and social learning theory, and of child and adolescent development theory, to form their decisions about how to teach. They are familiar with the concepts generated by social and cognitive scientists that apply to teaching and learning. Moreover, they integrate such knowledge with their personal theories of learning and development generated from their own practice. For example, accomplished teachers know that old theories of a monolithic intelligence have given way to more complex theories of multiple intelligences.
Current thinking no longer casts "intelligence" as a context-free, one-dimensional trait. Instead, it recognizes different kinds of intelligence — linguistic, musical, mathematical, spatial, kinesthetic, personal. This perspective also holds that there are variations in the sources of intelligence (e.g., practical experience versus formal study) and the forms of intelligence (e.g., procedural skills versus propositional knowledge). Both their knowledge of these theories and their experiences in classrooms have taught teachers that each student has different strengths, perhaps even gifts. Teachers think about how to capitalize on these assets as they consider how best to nurture additional abilities and aptitudes.

Moreover, teachers recognize that behavior always takes place within a particular setting that, to some extent, defines the behavior. They know, for instance, that students who cannot flawlessly recite multiplication tables may still be able to multiply in other contexts (e.g., in calculating whether they have enough money for items at the grocery store). Accomplished teachers are aware that school settings sometimes obscure a clear vision of students' aptitudes and intelligences. Therefore, they strive to provide multiple contexts in which to promote and evaluate those abilities.

They also recognize the ways in which intelligence is culturally defined. That is, what is considered intelligent behavior is largely determined by the values and beliefs of the culture in which that behavior is being judged. Accomplished teachers recognize that in a multicultural nation students bring to the schools a plethora of abilities and aptitudes that are valued differently by the community, the school and the family. The knowledge, skills, abilities and dispositions that are nurtured in a Native American community in the state of Washington will differ from those valued in an Hispanic community in Florida. Likewise, those cultivated by a suburban community in Utah will differ from those developed in urban New York. Thus, teachers are attuned to the diversity that is found among students and develop an array of strategies for working with it. This includes providing educational experiences which capitalize on and enlarge the repertoires of learning and thinking that students bring to school.

**Teachers Treat Students Equitably**

As stewards for the interests of students, accomplished teachers are vigilant in ensuring that all pupils receive their fair share of attention, and that biases based on real or perceived ability differences, handicaps or disabilities, social or cultural background, language, race, religion, or gender do not distort relationships between themselves and their students. This, however, is not a simple proposition. Accomplished teachers do not treat all students alike, for similar treatment is not necessarily equivalent to equitable education. In responding to differences among students, teachers are careful to counter potential inequities and avoid favoritism. This requires a well-tuned alertness to such matters and is difficult, as we have only modest knowledge of human differences and how best to respond to them. Hence, accomplished teachers employ what is known about ineffectual and effective practice with diverse groups of students, while striving to learn more about how best to accommodate those differences.

**Teachers' Mission Extends Beyond Developing the Cognitive Capacity of Their Students**

Teachers are concerned with their students' self-concept, with their motivation, with the effects of learning on peer relationships, and with the development of character, aspiration and civic virtues. These aspects of the student — important as they are in their own right — are also essential to intellectual development. Proficient teachers consider students' potential in this broader sense when making decisions about what and how to teach.
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Five Core Propositions

Proposition #2: Teachers Know the Subjects They Teach and How to Teach Those Subjects to Students

If one cardinal precept of teaching is a commitment to the welfare and education of young people, the other is a commitment to subject matter. Accomplished teachers are dedicated to exposing students to the social, cultural, ethical and physical worlds in which they live, and they use the subjects they teach as entrees into those worlds. Thus, elementary teachers know about geography and its relationship to commerce and history. Foreign language teachers know how language and culture interact and fuse. But, it is not sufficient that teachers know the facts that fall into these different content domains. Understanding subject matter entails more than being able to recite lists of dates, multiplication tables, or rules of grammar.

Teachers Appreciate How Knowledge in Their Subjects is Created, Organized and Linked to Other Disciplines

Teachers in command of their subject understand its substance -- factual information as well as its central organizing concepts -- and the ways in which new knowledge is created, including the forms of creative investigation that characterize the work of scholars and artists.

Physics teachers know about the roles played by hypothesis generation and experimentation in physics; mathematics teachers know the modes of justification for substantiating mathematical claims; art teachers understand how visual ideas are generated and communicated; history teachers know how historians use evidence to interpret past events; and English teachers understand how historians use evidence to interpret past events; and English teachers understand the relationships among reading, writing and oral language. Many special education teachers have a slightly different orientation -- focusing on skill development as they work to help moderately and profoundly handicapped students achieve maximum independence in managing their lives.

Understanding the ways of knowing within a subject is crucial to the National Board Certified teacher's ability to teach students to think analytically. Critical thinking does not occur in the abstract, for the thinker is always reasoning about something. Proficient teachers appreciate the fundamental role played by disciplinary thinking in developing rich, conceptual subject-matter understandings. They are dedicated to exposing their students to different modes of critical thinking and to teaching students to think analytically about content.

Teachers represent the collective wisdom of our culture and insist on maintaining the integrity of the methods, substance and structures of disciplinary knowledge. In the face of pressures to portray knowledge in weak and diluted forms, they remain firm. Their role, however, is not just to reinforce the status quo. Rather, appreciative of the fact that there are multiple perspectives and interpretations in each discipline, accomplished teachers encourage students to question prevailing canons and assumptions to help them think for themselves.

It is sometimes assumed that elementary school teachers need not be equipped to approach their subjects critically. But all accomplished teachers, regardless of the ages of their students, are charged with teaching students about something, and in order to do so, they must appreciate its complexity and
richness. Teachers must possess such knowledge if they are to help their students develop higher-order thinking skills -- the hallmark of accomplished teaching at any level. Being able to engage elementary school children in the broad array of subjects they can profitably come to appreciate makes elementary school practice especially challenging. This does not imply that fourth-grade teachers should have the same command of biology as high school biology teachers. However, it does mean that they have an understanding of science that allows them to present basic precepts to their students and introduce them to the joy of discovering -- and thinking about -- the natural world of which they are a part.

**Teachers Command Specialized Knowledge of How to Convey a Subject to Students**

Knowledge of subject matter is not synonymous with knowledge of how to reveal content to students so they might build it into their systems of thinking. Accomplished teachers possess what is sometimes called "pedagogical content knowledge." Such understanding is the joint product of wisdom about teaching, learning, students and content. It includes knowledge of the most appropriate ways to present the subject matter to students through analogies, metaphors, experiments, demonstrations and illustrations. Subject-specific knowledge also includes an awareness of the most common misconceptions held by students, the aspects that they will find most difficult, and the kinds of prior knowledge, experience and skills that students of different ages typically bring to the learning of particular topics. Proficient science teachers, for example, know that some students have misconceptions about gravity that can influence their learning, while proficient art and music teachers know that young children arrive at school at various stages of maturity with respect to eye-hand coordination. Teachers use this knowledge of their students to structure instruction that facilitates further development.

Thus, subject-specific pedagogical knowledge is not a bag of tricks, but a repertoire of representations that combines instructional techniques with subject matter in ways that take into account the mix of students and school contexts that confront the teacher. Such subject-specific teaching knowledge embodies a way of reasoning through and solving the problems that arise in the daily work of teachers -- decisions ranging from what aspects of the subject matter to emphasize to decisions about how to pace instruction. In making these choices, teachers bring to bear their knowledge of students and learning and teaching and subject matter.

Professional teachers' instructional repertoires also include knowledge of available curricular resources such as primary sources, models, reproductions, textbook series, teachers' guides, videotapes, computer software and musical recordings. Their commitment to learning about new materials includes keeping abreast of technological developments that have implications for teaching; for example, how to engage students in the rapidly expanding field of computer technology, as well as how to use the computer to enhance their own teaching. Thus, able teachers keep current with the growing body of curricular materials -- including literature available through their professional organizations -- and constantly evaluate the usefulness of those materials based on their understanding of curriculum theory, of students, of subject matter, and of the school's and their own educational aims.

**Teachers Generate Multiple Paths to Knowledge**

Knowledgeable teachers are aware there is value in both structured and inductive learning. That is, while it is useful to teach students about the concepts and principles that scholars have generated in the various disciplines, it is also valuable to engage students in learning by discovery, where they themselves search for problems, patterns and solutions. Proficient teachers help students learn to pose problems and work through alternative solutions, in addition to teaching them about the answers that others have found to similar problems.

The posing and solving of problems on their own is central to the development of true understanding by students -- moving far beyond the rote memorization of facts, the easy manipulation of formulas or the
facile playing of a musical scale. Teaching for understanding requires students to integrate aspects of knowledge into their habits of thinking, rather than simply store fragmented knowledge bits. It also means learning to think in a nonlinear way, approaching issues from different angles, weighing multiple criteria and considering multiple solutions. Thus, in the eyes of the proficient teacher, "knowledge" is not conceived narrowly as a lower-level form of understanding. Rather, knowledge is cast in the richest light - as a combination of skills, dispositions, propositions and beliefs -- integrated and flexible, elaborate and deep. Furthermore, understanding involves the ability to apply such knowledge to problems never before encountered by teacher or student. Accomplished teachers appreciate that this is the kind of knowledge and understanding that counts, and that this type of learning cannot be rushed.
Five Core Propositions

Proposition #3: Teachers are Responsible for Managing and Monitoring Student Learning

Professional teachers hold high expectations for all students and see themselves as facilitators of student learning. To fulfill these responsibilities, teachers must create, enrich and alter the organizational structures in which they work with young people. They also find ways to capture and sustain the interest of their students. Because time is a precious commodity in schools, teachers attempt to make the most efficient use of it. To accomplish these tasks, teachers seek to master the body of generic pedagogical knowledge.

Teachers Call on Multiple Methods to Meet Their Goals

Accomplished teachers know and can employ a variety of generic instructional skills -- how to conduct Socratic dialogues, how to lecture, how to oversee small cooperative learning groups. Although much of instruction is determined by the content to be taught, there are some commonalities about teaching methods that guide their practice. They are aware of what can reasonably be covered in a 45-minute roundtable discussion, when to hold back and let students figure out their own solutions, and what types of questions provoke the most thoughtful conversation. But it is not sufficient that teachers know about different modes of instruction; they must also know how to implement those strategies. Traditional distinctions between knowing and doing have obscured the fact that thought and action interpenetrate in teaching -- knowing about something and knowing how to do something are both forms of understanding central to teaching.

Because students vary in learning styles and because different settings afford differing learning opportunities, accomplished teachers know when and how to alter the social and physical organizational structure of the learning environment. It is not enough to be a master lecturer, for there are many times when lecturing is not an effective way to teach. An outdoor experiment, a mock trial or an economic simulation, for example, may be more appropriate. Alternatively, a playlet or a debate might be a more effective way to engage students in thinking and learning. Teachers know about the breadth of options available to them, such as innovative instructional formats that involve discovery learning, conceptual mapping, brainstorming, working with computers, as well as more traditional tried-and-true methods.

Teachers not only have the opportunity to vary instructional settings and to employ a range of instructional materials, they also have the opportunity to call on various human resources to custom-tailor the working environment for students. Accomplished teachers know how to mobilize students to tutor their peers and how to engage aides and volunteers as teaching assistants. In schools where staffing arrangements are not fixed and inflexible, teachers also have a good appreciation of their colleagues' skills and the circumstances in which their colleagues' talents can best complement their own. Professional teachers wisely enlist the knowledge and expertise of their fellow faculty members in a variety of ways as they seek to provide their students with as rewarding a learning experience as possible.

Accomplished teachers also know the strengths and weaknesses of these options, and their suitability or incompatibility for certain students and groups. The settings that a teacher chooses are not just matters of personal preference, but are grounded in the literature of teaching. Teaching, to the accomplished teacher,
is an elegant web of alternative activities in which students are engaged with the content; sometimes with the teacher, sometimes with each other, sometimes alone.

**Teachers Orchestrate Learning in Group Settings**

Teachers know how to manage groups of students. They are responsible for setting forth the social norms by which students and teachers act and interact, helping students learn to adopt appropriate roles and responsibilities for their own learning and that of their peers. This includes teaching students to work independently without constant direct supervision by a teacher.

Accomplished teachers have developed systems for overseeing their classrooms so that students and teacher alike can focus on learning, not controlling disruptive behavior. Discipline and management techniques vary, and no one system has been proven most effective. Hence, proficient teachers consider the desired learning results, their knowledge of their students and the social context, and their own prior experience in selecting management strategies.

Teachers also know that different instructional formats often require different norms of social interaction. Accomplished teachers can alternate among organizational arrangements and understand how different structures cast students and teachers in different roles. Applying their knowledge of the relative strengths and weaknesses of different structures, they weigh these considerations when deciding which instructional strategy and organizational structure will best enhance student learning. They also continually search for new forms of organization that may expand their repertoire and prove effective.

**Teachers Place a Premium on Student Engagement**

Facilitating student learning is not simply a matter of placing young people in educative environments, for teachers must also motivate them, capturing their minds and hearts and engaging them actively in learning. Thus, the National Board Certified teacher understands the ways in which students can be motivated and has strategies to monitor student engagement. The teacher's role in building upon student interests and in sparking new passions is central to building bridges between what students know and can do and what they are capable of learning.

Proficient teachers also know that motivating students is not always equivalent to making learning fun, for learning can be difficult work. Developing an acute sense of one's body in dance, for example, requires intense intellectual and physical concentration. Writing a short story requires drafting and re-drafting, editing and re-editing, occasionally submitting oneself to the critiques of peers and teachers. To practice effectively, teachers need to know how to encourage students even in the face of temporary failure and the inevitable doubts that students meet as they push themselves to new affective, intellectual and physical planes. With such learning comes the real joy in education, the satisfaction of accomplishment.

**Teachers Regularly Assess Student Progress**

While teachers are not always the central actors in their students' educational experiences, they are ultimately responsible for the creation and maintenance of those experiences and bear a considerable responsibility for what students learn at school. Proficient teachers, therefore, can judge the relative success of the activities they design. They can track what students are learning (or not learning), as well as what they, as teachers, are learning.

Assessment in teaching is not a simple task; teachers must monitor the successes and failures of individual students and evaluate their classes as collectives of learners. Additionally, they make judgments about themselves as teachers in relation to those students and classes. Although these
judgments are interdependent of one another, they are not necessarily synonymous. One of the essential tensions of teaching is that teachers teach individual students, while managing groups. Accomplished teachers do not treat a class as a monolith. They know that a class does not learn; individual students do. But individuals neither learn the same things, nor learn at the same pace.

Accomplished teachers use information about how the students in their classes are doing "on average" as a guide to making judgments about the relative success or failure of an instructional strategy. But they do not forget that there are few average students. They know that some students have moved far beyond that "average" evaluation, while others trail. And while they have to make decisions about what to do with the class as a whole, proficient teachers find ways to accommodate what they know about individual students and what they are learning in their plans for the whole group.

Accomplished teachers understand that the purposes, timing and focus of an evaluation affect its form. They are astute observers of students -- their movements, their words and their minds. Teachers track student progress with a variety of evaluation methods, each with its own set of purposes, strengths and weaknesses. Their knowledge extends to creating their own, sometimes innovative, tools for evaluation, including portfolios, videotapes, demonstrations and exhibitions. In addition, they may use more traditional measures such as quizzes or exams. Sometimes teachers ask questions in the middle of a group discussion in order to assess how well students are following the presentation of information; or they may talk individually with students while they are engaged in independent work. At other times they watch their students' behavior as they read to each other or work in the laboratory.

Teachers frequently do not assign grades, for evaluation is not always for the purpose of recording grades; rather, it allows students and teachers to assess where they stand. Teachers also assess students to determine how much they have learned from a unit of instruction, be it a week on seeds, a semester of photography, or a year of athletic training. Student responses then contribute to teachers’ decisions about whether to reteach, review or move on. By continually adding to their repertoire of methods for assessing what students have learned, as well as constantly monitoring student progress, accomplished teachers are able to provide constructive feedback to students, parents and themselves. Finally, such teachers help their students to engage in self-assessment, instilling in them a sense of responsibility for monitoring their own learning.

**Teachers Are Mindful of Their Principal Objectives**

Teachers also know about planning instruction -- identifying and elaborating educational objectives, developing activities to help them meet their goals and drawing upon resources that will serve their purposes. Experienced teachers do not all plan alike. Some do not write elaborate plans prior to teaching, having automated their planning through years of experience in classrooms. Other teachers plan in detail (e.g., creating individual educational plans for special education students). No matter what form their final plans take -- scrabbles on a scrap of paper or lengthy and detailed outlines accomplished teachers can clearly articulate their goals for students.
Five Core Propositions

Proposition #4: Teachers Think Systematically About Their Practice and Learn from Experience

As with most professions, teaching requires an open-ended capacity that is not acquired once and for all. Because they work in a field marked by many unsolved puzzles and an expanding research base, teachers have a professional obligation to be lifelong students of their craft, seeking to expand their repertoire, deepen their knowledge and skill, and become wiser in rendering judgments. Accomplished teachers are inventive in their teaching and, recognizing the need to admit new findings and continue learning, stand ready to incorporate ideas and methods developed by others that fit their aims and their students. What exemplifies excellence, then, is a reverence for the craft, a recognition of its complexities, and a commitment to lifelong professional development.

Teachers Are Continually Making Difficult Choices That Test Their Judgment

The demands of teaching often present stiff challenges that do not lend themselves to simple solutions. Conflicting objectives regularly require teachers to fashion compromises that will satisfy multiple parties. A Western Civilization teacher, for example, attempting to reconcile demands for coverage with demands for indepth understanding, will do what is necessary to race from Plato to NATO, yet set aside time to develop in students the understanding that history is evolutionary rather than a series of events strung together chronologically. Likewise, a third-grade teacher will find a way to introduce students to the idea that writing is a thinking process, while ensuring that students are learning the basics of spelling and grammar.

Teachers also face choices that force them to sacrifice one goal for another. For instance, teachers who are committed to teaching mathematics for conceptual understanding want to teach students to see number relationships in the real world, to represent them with appropriate symbols, and to use their knowledge of mathematical formulas and computational skills to manipulate those numbers. Such teaching requires giving students time to frame their own problems, find their own solutions, and compare those solutions with alternatives posed by their classmates. Students who have learned through experience that math class involves filling out worksheets and doing problem sets may dislike the uncertainty inherent in problems with multiple or no solutions; they may be troubled that their teacher now wants them to discuss the reasons why a particular solution makes sense. Abandoning speed and accuracy as the criterion of success may temporarily jeopardize students' performance on standardized tests, even as the teacher fosters growth in the depth of students' mathematical competence. In deciding to teach in this way, a teacher risks alienating students, parents and administrators who have their own strong ideas of what math class is supposed to look like and the kind of competence it is supposed to yield.

Such circumstances call on teachers to employ their professional knowledge of what makes for sound practice, with the interest of their students given paramount consideration. While more than one satisfactory path may be derived to balance non-complementary objectives, the teacher's decision will be grounded in established theory and reasoned judgment.
Teachers Seek the Advice of Others and Draw on Education Research and Scholarship to Improve Their Practice

Aware that experience is not always a good teacher, proficient teachers search out other opportunities that will serve to cultivate their own learning. As savvy students of their own teaching, they know the value of asking others to observe and offer a critique of their teaching. They also know the value of writing about their work and of soliciting reactions from parents and students. Thus, masterful teachers develop specialized ways to listen to their students, colleagues and administrators, and reflect on their teaching in order that they might improve their practice.

Able teachers are also students of education scholarship and are cognizant of the settled and unsettled territory in their field. They stay abreast of current research and, when appropriate, incorporate new findings into their practice. They take advantage of teacher centers and special conferences and workshops. They might conduct and publish their own research, if so inclined, for testing of new approaches and hypotheses is a commonplace habit among adept teachers, even if a normally overlooked and undocumented one.

Wise teachers understand the legitimacy and limitations of the diverse sources that inform teaching and they continuously draw upon them to enrich their teaching. Their enthusiasm for, and commitment to, continued professional development exemplifies a disposition they hope to nurture in students. Hence, the thinking, reasoning and learning that characterize first-rate teaching are doubly valuable: not only are thoughtful teachers able to teach more efficiently and effectively, they are also models for the critical, analytic thinking that they strive to develop in our youth. Teachers who are themselves exemplars of careful reasoning -- considering purposes, marshaling evidence and balancing outcomes -- are more likely to communicate to students the value and manner of such reasoning. Moreover, they model other dispositions and traits as well, such as a commitment to creativity in their work and the disposition to take risks in exploring new intellectual, emotional, physical or artistic territories.

Proficient teachers, then, are models of educated persons. Character and competence contribute equally to their educative manner. They exemplify the virtues they seek to impart to students: curiosity and a love of learning; tolerance and open-mindedness; fairness and justice; appreciation for our cultural and intellectual heritages; respect for human diversity and dignity; and such intellectual capacities as careful reasoning, the ability to take multiple perspectives, to question received wisdom, to be creative, to take risks, and to adopt an experimental and problem-solving orientation.
Five Core Propositions

Proposition #5: Teachers are Members of Learning Communities

Teaching most commonly is regarded as the daily conduct of lessons and the provision of learning experiences. But the work of teaching reaches beyond the boundaries of individual classrooms to wider communities of learning. In order to take advantage of the broad range of professional knowledge and expertise that resides within the school, accomplished teachers have a range of duties and tasks outside the direct instruction of students that contribute importantly to the quality of the school and to student learning.

There are two broad areas of responsibility. One involves participation in collaborative efforts to improve the effectiveness of the school. The second entails engaging parents and others in the community in the education of young people.

Teachers Contribute to School Effectiveness by Collaborating with Other Professionals

Teaching is often portrayed as the implementation of policy and curriculum developed by others -- as following orders. The National Board advocates a more proactive and creative role for teachers: engaging them in the analysis and construction of curriculum, in the coordination of instruction, in the professional development of staff and in many other school-site policy decisions fundamental to the creation of highly productive learning communities.

While state authorities and local school district leadership establish broad goals, objectives and priorities for the schools, professional teachers share responsibility with colleagues and administrators for decisions about what constitutes valuable learning for students. This includes their participation in critically analyzing the school curriculum, identifying new priorities and communicating necessary changes to the school community. Teachers' knowledge of curriculum and their students are essential to discharging these responsibilities effectively. But a readiness to work collaboratively on such matters and not blindly accept curricular conventions is also necessary.

Accomplished teachers attend to issues of continuity and equity of learning experiences for students that require school-wide collaboration across the boundaries of academic tracks, grade levels, special and regular instruction and disciplines. Such boundaries, constructed as much out of traditional patterns of school organization as out of instructional rationales, are often dysfunctional and damaging to student learning. National Board Certified teachers cultivate a critical spirit in appraising such schooling commonplaces, together with a willingness to work with administrators toward school-wide improvements that can include revision of organizational as well as instructional features of schooling.

The development of curriculum and the coordination of instruction are particularly important functions shared among teachers and administrators. Proficient teachers collaborate in planning the instructional program of the school to assure continuity of learning experiences for students. They possess the interpersonal skills needed to work on teams and a willingness to work together in the interest of the school community. Their understanding of the technical requirements of a well-coordinated curriculum enables them to participate in planning and decision-making within teams, departments or other educational units outside the classroom, laboratory or studio.
Consonant with their role in curriculum planning and coordination, teachers are aware of the learning goals and objectives established by state and local authorities. Professional practice requires that teachers be knowledgeable about their legal obligation to carry out public policy as represented by state statute and regulation, school board directives, court decisions and other policies.

Accomplished teachers also participate in the coordination of services to students. Today's schools include a wide variety of educational specialists, and with increasing specialization has come the need for coordination, lest pupils' educational experiences become fragmented. The increased practice of "mainstreaming" special-needs students to assure that they are being educated in the least restrictive environment has meant that general and special education teachers need to work with one another. Compensatory education programs typically involve teaching pupils outside regular school settings. The various forms of English as a second language, bilingual and English-immersion programs often require cooperation among teachers of non- and limited-English-speaking youth. National Board Certified teachers are adept at identifying students who might benefit from such special attention and at working in tandem with specialists.

In addition to working on the improvement of school-wide curricula and the coordination of instruction, teachers work together to strengthen their teaching. Sometimes they observe each other teach; at other times they engage in discussions about teaching; and occasionally they collaborate in trying out new instructional strategies. While the particulars of how teachers choose to improve their instruction will vary according to the structure of opportunity and a teacher's dispositions and interests, the principle underlying such engagement is the continuous pursuit of teaching excellence in the company of peers.

Strong schools emphasize a process of continuous improvement. They are organized to find and solve problems and to locate, invent and experiment with different methods of instruction and school organization. Teachers within such schools work not only on professional development, but also on school-wide improvements. This expectation is part of what constitutes a professional orientation to teaching and part of what distinguishes the professional teacher.

The conventional image of the accomplished teacher as solo performer working independently with students is narrow and outdated. Committed career teachers assume responsibility in cooperation with their administrators for the character of the school's instructional program. They are team players willing to share their knowledge and skill with others and participate in the ongoing development of strong school programs. This participation may take many forms, such as mentoring novices, serving on school and district policy councils, demonstrating new methodologies, engaging in various forms of scholarly inquiry and artistic activity, or forming study groups for teachers.

**Teachers Work Collaboratively with Parents**

Teachers share with parents the education of the young. They communicate regularly with parents and guardians, listening to their concerns and respecting their perspective, enlisting their support in fostering learning and good habits, informing them of their child's accomplishments and successes, and educating them about school programs. Kindergarten teachers, for example, can help parents understand that reading stories to their children is more important to literacy development than completing worksheets on letters.

In the best of all worlds, teachers and parents are mutually reinforcing partners in the education of young people. But three circumstances complicate this partnership. First, the interests of parents and schools sometimes diverge, requiring teachers to make difficult judgments about how best to fulfill their joint obligations to their students and to parents. Second, students vary in the degree and kind of support they receive at home for their school work. The effects of culture, language, and parental education, income and aspirations influence each learner. Teachers are alert to these effects and tailor their practice...
accordingly to enhance student achievement. However, when faced with an unavoidable conflict, the teacher must hold the interest of the student and the purposes of schooling paramount. Third, the behavior and mind-set of schools and families can be adversarial. Some parents are distrustful of the school's values, and the schools sometimes underestimate the family's potential to contribute to their children's intellectual growth. Students get caught in the middle, their allegiance to and affection for each party challenged by the other. Accomplished teachers develop skills and understandings to avoid these traditional pitfalls and work to foster collaborative relationships between school and family.

The changing family structure in our society creates new challenges as well, for there are now more youth with single parents, working parents and parents with inadequate income. Thus, creating home-school partnerships has become more difficult for teachers and parents in many communities. In attempting to work creatively and energetically with families in the interest of students' development, able teachers acquire knowledge and understanding of individual students' lives outside school. A teacher's foremost responsibility is to the intellectual development of our youth, but they are mindful of the broad range of children's needs, including the need for guidance and the strong presence of caring and nurturing adults. This is a difficult set of obligations to fulfill. On the one hand, teachers are prepared neither by training nor by role to serve as parent surrogates or social workers. The distinctive mission of teaching is to promote learning, a complex undertaking in itself. On the other hand, education's broad and humane purposes do not admit any narrow specialization. Students' physical, emotional, and social well-being cannot be separated from their intellectual growth.

**Teachers Take Advantage of Community Resources**

Professional teachers cultivate knowledge of their school's community as a powerful resource for learning. The opportunities are many for enriching projects, lessons, and study: observing the city council in action; collecting oral histories from senior citizens; studying the ecology of the local environment; visiting a nearby planetarium; drawing the local architecture; or exploring career options on-site. Any community -- urban or rural, wealthy or poor -- can be a laboratory for learning under the guidance of an effective teacher. Moreover, within all communities there are valuable resources such as other teachers and students, senior citizens, parents, business people, and local organizations that teachers can engage to assist, enhance and supplement their work with students. Teachers need not teach alone.

Teachers also cultivate knowledge about the character of the community and its effects on the school and students. They develop an appreciation of ethnic and linguistic differences, of cultural influences on students' aspirations and expectations, and of the effects of poverty and affluence. Cultural and other discontinuities between home and school frequently can confound teachers' efforts to promote learning. Conversely, the cultural diversity represented in many communities can serve as a powerful resource in teaching about other cultures, in encouraging tolerance and understanding of human differences, and in promoting civic ideals. Accomplished teachers seek to capitalize on these opportunities and to respond productively to students' diverse backgrounds.

There is a balance here. Schools and teachers cannot alleviate all the social problems that they encounter. Yet teachers confront the human condition daily in all its variety, splendor and misery. They must be humane, caring and responsive to students and their problems, while they maintain a focus on their distinctive professional responsibilities.
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Conclusion

Accomplished teaching involves making difficult and principled choices, exercising careful judgment and honoring the complex nature of the educational mission. Teachers employ technical knowledge and skill, yet must be ever mindful of teaching's ethical dimensions. The primary mission is to foster the development of skills, dispositions and understanding, while responding thoughtfully to a wide range of human needs and conditions. Teachers owe joint allegiance to the forms and standards of knowledge within and across disciplines and to the students they serve.

They must acquire and employ a repertoire of instructional methods and strategies, yet remain critical and reflective about their practice, drawing lessons from experience. Teachers' professional responsibilities focus on instructing the students in their immediate care, while they participate as well in wider activities within the school and in partnership with parents and the community.

Teaching is often portrayed as an activity that conserves valued knowledge and skills by transmitting them to succeeding generations. It is that and more. Teachers also have the responsibility to question settled structures, practices, and definitions of knowledge; to invent and test new approaches; and, where necessary, to pursue change of organizational arrangements that support instruction. As agents of the public interest in a democracy, teachers through their work contribute to the dialogue about preserving and improving society, and they initiate future citizens into this ongoing public discourse. In the development of its assessment procedures and certification standards, the National Board has sought to represent these ideals faithfully and comprehensively.

Assertations about what teachers should know sometimes conceal inadequacies in the current state of knowledge. In this respect, teaching is not unlike other professions where practitioners confront unavoidable uncertainty in their work. However, the knowledge base for teaching is growing steadily. Professional consensus and research findings have begun to provide authoritative support for knowledge related to many of the tasks, responsibilities and results of teaching. But much remains to be learned.

The National Board draws on existing knowledge in developing its standards but also relies on the professional judgment of accomplished teachers and scholars in designing its assessment procedures. Recognizing that new knowledge about teaching is continually being formulated, the National Board continually reviews its work to reflect new findings and to update its standards and assessments as appropriate.

The National Board also considers the effects of school context on standards for teaching. The very existence of a National Board suggests common standards that prevail across teaching's many settings. However, teaching in an Alaskan village exacts demands different from teaching in Chicago. Teachers in both settings, though, blend and adapt their knowledge of teaching with their knowledge of the community in which they work to ensure effective student learning. For accomplished teachers, the wisdom of practice that they accrue depends on the settings in which they work, the communities they serve, and the students they encounter.
The assessment procedures developed by the National Board take context into account in a variety of ways. This is achieved by the use of assessment formats such as essays, videotaping and reflective commentaries. The National Board offers National Board Certification to all qualified teachers irrespective of the teaching environments in which they work. But the opportunities available to teachers to acquire and exercise many of the professional capacities and responsibilities endorsed by the National Board vary markedly from community to community. Some schools feature strong professional cultures whose norms support collaboration, innovative teaching, a high degree of collegiality, and participation in a broad array of professional activities. Other schools provide few such opportunities, and some even discourage such activity. To address this tension, the National Board's assessments acknowledge that there are multiple paths to meeting the standards, which take into account the diversity of teaching contexts.

These are the touchstones that guide the development of the National Board's certification standards and assessments. Our view of the responsibilities of the National Board Certified Teacher is deliberately complex and demanding, for this is how we see the work of American professional teachers, who are challenged to create excellence in education for all our nation's youth.

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Overview

Teachers who embark on National Board Certification® should expect some challenge, yet not assume that the entries are beyond their reach. The directions are long in some cases, but they have been written carefully and as clearly as possible.

The portfolio entries were designed to reflect, to the extent possible, activities that teachers engage in naturally during their work. For the most part they are intended to enable teachers to sample from their practice, and to encourage them to reflect on that practice through Written Commentaries. The entries were developed in collaboration with practicing teachers who verified their feasibility in school settings and their value as both assessment entries and vehicles for professional discussion and growth.

The Overview includes the following sections:

- The Three Types of Entries
- The Entry Directions
- How Assessments Are Scored
The Three Types of Entries

NBPTS portfolios assess a teacher's performance based on three distinct sources of evidence, which the teacher submits to NBPTS in the form of entries. The sources of evidence are:

- samples of students' work;
- videotapes of classroom practice; and
- documentation of accomplishments outside the classroom.

Under the headings below are summaries of the three entry types that all NBPTS portfolios share.

Entries Based on Student Work Samples

One essential source of evidence about a teacher's practice is student work: what are the students asked to do, how are student responses interpreted by the teacher, and what does the teacher do with the information the student work provides? Because there are many kinds of student work, portfolio entries of this type sample the types of student work that are most important to teachers in each certificate area.

As part of this process, each of the student work samples is individually contextualized and situated by the teacher, using a Written Commentary.

Note: No student work samples can be taken from a unit or lesson that is featured in either of the other entries. The students chosen should represent different kinds of instructional challenges for you. See the Entry Tracking Form in the Planner for guidance.

Entries Based on Videotape

There is no better evidence of what a teacher does than actual classroom practice. For this reason, videotapes of practice in varying situations and circumstances are essential evidence of the accomplishments of teachers. Therefore, portfolio entries of this type use videotape to sample a teacher's classroom practice across different concepts during the year, capturing different kinds of instruction and classroom interactions.

As part of this process, each videotape is individually contextualized and situated by the teacher, using a Written Commentary.

Note: The videotapes you make for these two entries must feature different lessons from different units. There must be no overlap between the lessons and units in these two entries or between any of the three classroom-based entries. This prohibition, however, does not apply to the students whose work you feature in the student work-based entry. It is permissible for these students to appear in a videotape.

Each videotape entry must be accompanied by a photocopy of a government-issued photo ID, such as a driver's license or photo ID card issued to non-drivers by a state, or a military ID. The photo ID should be enlarged to double its actual size, so that both your photo and your name are clearly visible. A sample of a photocopied, government-issued photo ID appears in Specifications.
Entries Based on Documented Accomplishments

The third essential source of evidence about a teacher's practice reflects aspects of teaching outside the classroom, such as a teacher's interactions with students’ families, with the school and local community, and with colleagues. Portfolio entries of this type center on documenting these kinds of interactions.

Note: A summary of the requirements, materials, and rules for submission for this entry and the other three entries is provided by the "Summary of the Portfolio Entries" in the Planner.
The Entry Directions

The entire portfolio consists of four separate entries—three classroom-based entries and one entry based on your documented accomplishments. What follows is an outline of the format for each entry, organized according to the section headings that are included in actual entries.

Please note that the directions for the fourth entry, Documented Accomplishments: Contributions to Student Learning—while not identical to the format outlined below—uses almost all of the same sections and headings.

The Opening Overview
Uses the language of the relevant Standards to describe the kinds of standards-based practice each entry is intended to elicit.

What Do I Need To Do?
Summarizes the actual requirements of each entry—what kind of evidence you must submit so that your response is scorable.

How Will My Response Be Scored?
Presents the scoring criteria that will be used by assessors to judge each candidate's response. Because the scoring criteria indicate the things that matter in each entry, you should ask yourself frequently as you assemble your response if there is strong evidence in your materials of each characteristic that is scored.

Composing My Written Commentary
Presents the detailed questions you must answer about the evidence of your practice in each Written Commentary and describes the sections into which you will organize your answers to these questions. It is not necessary to include the italicized questions within the body of your response.

To help you make decisions about how much to write for the sections of your Written Commentaries, a page length is suggested for each section. These suggested page lengths are provided merely as a guide for you to use as you prepare your Written Commentaries. If you find that you are able to complete a section using fewer pages than the suggested length for that section, you can use the remaining page count to complete another section of the Written Commentary. Keep in mind that your Written Commentaries must not exceed the maximum total page lengths established. However, you are not required to submit the maximum number of pages in order for your entries to be scorable.

Making Good Choices
Gives you concrete advice about ways you can plan your responses and choose your evidence so that your best practice is evident to the assessors who will score your entries. Because a large part of the outcome of this assessment depends on choices you can control, this section should be read carefully. The advice in this section is based on experiences to date with candidate materials, and offers what has been learned to steer you away from choices that would tend to disadvantage you in scoring.
**Making Good Choices: Videotape or Student Work**

 Presents the specific requirements for the evidence of your practice that a particular entry requires—either classroom videotape or student work. Read this section carefully and follow the instructions in Specifications. Not all of the entries require videotaped submissions. You should not submit videotapes for entries that do not require them.

**Making Good Choices: Instructional Materials**

 Presents the specific requirements for other kinds of evidence about what went on in your classroom on a specific occasion. This section includes information about submitting materials used in a lesson (such as software descriptions, assignments, and worksheets or other instructional handouts), and materials that provide background for a lesson (such as photographs of student work). The kinds of evidence required vary from one entry to another. Each entry contains specific instructions about the required evidence, as well as cover sheets designed for use with that kind of evidence.

**Format Specifications**

 Presents detailed guidelines you will need to follow when preparing the materials that you will submit. This section contains information relating to all submitted components for each particular entry, such as the Written Commentary, student work, videotapes, and instructional materials, as well as specifications regarding issues such as limits on page length, margin size, videotape length, and font.
How Assessments Are Scored

All entries are scored by teachers practicing in the same content area and at the same student developmental level as the assessment they are scoring. The assessors are carefully trained over several days to apply detailed scoring rules. The scoring rules clearly articulate the criteria that are to be applied in the evaluation of candidate responses. These criteria reflect the Standards that the entry was designed to measure.

Assessors use a four-level rubric to score each candidate's response, where a Level 3 or Level 4 score represents accomplished teaching practice and a Level 1 or Level 2 score represents less than accomplished practice for that particular entry. The "How Will My Response Be Scored?" section in the entry directions provides the Level 4 criteria that are used by the assessors for that particular entry.

At each of the four levels of the scoring rubric, the same Standards-related criteria are applied. However, each level of the scoring rubric differs in the quality of the evidence that is expected. For example, if Knowledge of Students is a Standard measured by an entry, the Level 4 rubric will refer to clear, consistent, and convincing evidence of Knowledge of Students while the Level 2 rubric will refer to limited evidence of the same Standard.

One of the fundamental principles underlying the evaluation is that entries are scored only on what candidates are specifically asked to do. For example, if the entry directions specifically ask a candidate to demonstrate how to use assessment in the featured instructional sequence, Standards language relevant to use of assessment will be articulated in the "How Will My Response Be Scored?" section and evidence supporting a candidate's use of assessment will be valued by the scoring rubric. Conversely, if an entry does not require a candidate to demonstrate use of assessment, Standards language relevant to use of assessment will not appear in the "How Will My Response Be Scored?" section and a candidate's use of assessment will not be valued by the scoring rubric.

Keep in mind that each entry is scored independently of the others. When an entry asks for background or contextual information, be complete, since an assessor for one entry will not see your other entries.

The National Board Standards for the Adolescence and Young Adulthood/English Language Arts certificate area are addressed within the portfolio and assessment center assessment process. Although the portfolio entries address many of the Standards, they may not address all of them. Standards not addressed by the portfolio will be addressed during the assessment center portion of the assessment.

When all of your portfolio entries and assessment center exercises are completed and scored, your total weighted scaled score is computed. This is done by applying a set of weights to each of your entry and exercise scores to compute the total weighted scaled score. For the Adolescence and Young Adulthood/English Language Arts certificate, the weights are set at 16% for each of the three classroom-based portfolio entries, 12% for the Documented Accomplishments entry, and 6.67% for each of the six assessment center exercises. Therefore, the total weighted scaled score is the product of each exercise score multiplied by the weight for that type of exercise. The total weighted scaled score is then compared to 275, the performance standard established by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Board of Directors. A candidate whose total weighted scaled score is 275 or greater is recognized as an
accomplished teacher and is awarded National Board Certification. A candidate whose total weighted scaled score does not meet 275 is not yet certified and for the following two years has the opportunity to retake certain portfolio entries or assessment center exercises in order to meet the performance standard of 275.

A candidate does not have to receive Level 3 or Level 4 scores for every entry and exercise. A high score on one may compensate for a lower score elsewhere. Access the scoring guides from the link provided below for more information about scores. More detailed information about scoring is provided on the NBPTS Web site when scores are released.
Guidelines

Read and follow the entry directions carefully. The scoring guidelines that assessors use are inherent in the directions; only by following the directions will you be sure to provide the assessors with adequate information.

If, for example, an entry asks you to provide information about the students in a particular class, be sure to do so because it means you will be evaluated on the Standard in your certificate area related to your knowledge of students. Similarly, if the directions specify that you submit a videotape that contains 15 minutes of continuous instruction, do not submit a tape of a full 45-minute class. If your submission departs from the entry directions, your score may be reduced.

Following Directions

There are a few critical rules that you must follow to ensure that your portfolio materials are eligible for scoring. They are as follows:

- You must follow the directions for the Written Commentary that are provided with each entry and respond to each of the topics or questions given with those directions. Use only Times New Roman 12 point font and double-space all text. Consult "Formatting Written Materials" in Specifications for guidance about type.
- The length of the videotape you submit must conform to the directions in the entry to which you are responding, edited only as specified in the entries. Stopping and restarting the camera will be regarded as editing, except as specified in entry directions. Turning off the microphone during taping will also be regarded as an edit. You must use a separate videotape cartridge for each videotape-based entry. Use only new, blank, standard VHS videotape cartridges. Do not use miniature or adapted formats, such as VHS-C. Do not use Super VHS videotape cartridges. Do not submit videotapes recorded in extended play (EP); submit videotapes recorded in standard play (SP) only.
- You must focus on different units and different lessons for each classroom-based portfolio entry. See the Entry Tracking Form in the Planner.
- Your Candidate Release Forms and the Candidate Attestation Form must be completed and included in your submission.
- A copy of the Contextual Information Sheet must be completed and included in all four portfolio entry submissions.

Any violation of these rules will render a submission unscorable.

Guidelines includes the following sections:

- Naming Persons, Institutions, and Places
- Completing Portfolio Forms
- Collaboration
Intro

Naming Persons, Institutions, and Places

In your Contextual Information Sheet and Written Commentaries, you will need to refer to students and possibly to parents, colleagues, and other adults. In these and all materials you submit with your portfolio entries, you must refer to other persons in ways that preserve their anonymity, except as noted below. This means that your written materials, student work samples, and instructional materials should not show both the first and last names of any person. Exceptions include Student Release Forms and Adult Release Forms, which must contain full signatures, but which you do not submit with your portfolio; Verification Forms, which require the full signature of the person who verifies your accomplishments in the Documented Accomplishments entry; and documentation in the Documented Accomplishments entry, which is permitted to contain names under certain conditions. Follow the instructions regarding names in the Documented Accomplishments entry carefully.

As much as possible, people and places should be cited in your work without being identified by name to ensure that the scoring of your portfolio is as anonymous as possible. In general, it is better for you to refer to people and places by initials or first names only. Your goal in referring to people or places is to convey to assessors information about your teaching practice in the clearest way possible. It is better to be clear and general when making such references than to use unnatural constructions such as "John Doe University." Below are guidelines on how you should refer to people, institutions, and places in your written work.

In your Written Commentary, student work samples, and instructional materials, if you refer to:

Children or Students
Use first names only. If you choose to feature two students with the same first name, use first names and the first letter of the last names.

Parents or Legal Guardians
Identify these adults by referencing their relationship to the students, for example, "Marie's mother." Parents should receive the same kind of anonymity as students.

Other Teachers, Principals, School Employees, or Administrators
Use "a colleague" or "the principal" if possible. If necessary, refer to the person by first name only. For example, "John, one of our math teachers…"

Your School, School District, or Facility Name
Use the initials of the name, followed by the words that identify the level of the school, and do not identify its location. For example, you would use "JM Middle School," or Sunny Cottage would become "SC School."
Your City, County, or State
Refer to "my city/county/state."

A College or University
Write "a four-year college," "a graduate program," or "a two-year college."

Your Own Name
Be sure to remove your own name from student work with correction fluid, and do not include your own name in your Written Commentaries. If you are quoting a student, use "Joey then said, 'Mrs. S., why do we need to…' " or something similar.
Completing Portfolio Forms

Student and Adult Release Forms

The Student Release Form is designed to secure the permission of persons appearing in a videotape or for the use of student work as part of your submission. For each classroom-based entry, you must obtain a Student Release Form for every student who appears in a videotape and for every student whose work you submit. Any adult, such as a student-teacher, teacher's aide, parent, or colleague, who appears in a videotape or photograph must sign an Adult Release Form for the use of his or her image.

Do not submit Student Release Forms or Adult Release Forms with your completed portfolio. It is your responsibility to keep these release forms on file.

The Student Release Form and the Adult Release Form are provided in the "Cover Sheets and Forms" section of the entry directions. Print as many copies as you need. One release form is sufficient for all appearances and uses of a student's work in your portfolio. In order to have the appropriate release form on file for each entry, you may make photocopies of signed release forms, so long as one of the forms on file is the original signed form.

The Student Release Form has been translated into 19 of the languages most commonly used in the United States. Translated forms are in Specifications. If a particular translation has not been provided in these 19, the candidate should work with the student to translate the release form language orally to parents or guardians.

The translated Student Release Forms are in Adobe® Acrobat® PDF format. To read these documents, you need to install Acrobat® Reader software on your computer. You can download the free software by following the instructions provided by Adobe Systems. A link to Adobe's Web site is provided below. As you prepare your portfolio, keep in mind the following:

If a parent or legal guardian does not give you permission to videotape a student or to submit student work, you must ensure that the student does not appear in your videotapes or photographs and you must not submit any work done by that student. Similarly, if an adult who is in your classroom does not give you permission to videotape him or her, you must ensure that the adult does not appear in any of your videotapes.

We strongly recommend that you obtain permission for all of your students (and anyone else who may appear in a videotape or photograph) as soon as possible after receiving your portfolio kit. If you do this, you will not have to be concerned about release forms later in the process. Previous candidates have reported that it may help to make this process more efficient and effective if you write a cover letter to your students' parents that explains the purpose of the assessment. Your letter should state that the NBPTS assessment is about your practice, not the students, and also explain why the permission is important to you.
Candidate Attestation Form

You must complete, sign, and submit this form to verify that you have obtained release forms for all individuals who appear on videotape or in photographs or whose work you submit as part of your portfolio. This form can be found in the "Cover Sheets and Forms" section in Get Started and will be submitted in the Forms envelope.

Candidate Release Form

The Candidate Release Form records your permission to have your assessment materials evaluated by NBPTS assessors, used for educational research, and your awareness that all assessment submissions, copies, and entries belong to NBPTS. You will complete a release form for each portfolio entry. These forms are found in the "Cover Sheets and Forms" section of the entry directions. All Candidate Release Forms are submitted in the Forms envelope.

Candidate Final Inventory Form

In the "Cover Sheets and Forms" section of the entry directions, you will find the Candidate Final Inventory for the entry. You must complete this inventory and sign the statement that follows it. All Candidate Final Inventory forms are submitted in the Forms envelope.

Contextual Information Sheet

This form appears in the "Cover Sheets and Forms" section of the entry directions. It is designed to gather information about your overall teaching context. Complete and copy the form as instructed below. Note that, although you will submit this form with each of your entry responses, you may need to complete it only once or twice, copying it for the remainder of your entries. Read the instructions that follow carefully. The instructions are repeated in more detail on the form itself.

If you are teaching in only one school, and all of the students you feature are from the same school, you will complete the Contextual Information Sheet once, make copies of it, and enclose a copy of the form in each of your entry responses. If you are teaching in more than one school, the aspects of your teaching may vary between schools because of differences in the broader context of each school. If your entries feature students from each of these schools, complete separate Contextual Information Sheets for each different school setting. Make copies of the different sheets and include in each entry the sheet that applies to it. Remember that each entry gives you a further opportunity to give details about the particular students or class you are teaching for that entry.

Classroom Layout Form

This form is found in the "Cover Sheets and Forms" section of the videotape-based entries. The purpose of the form is to allow you to draw by hand the layout of your classroom at the time of the taping so that assessors can better understand the videotape. However, you may instead print out a drawing made on a computer or use an existing classroom diagram, so long as the features of your classroom environment are clearly represented. A classroom layout is required for all videotape-based entries.
Collaboration

We encourage you to collaborate with your colleagues—have them help you videotape, watch and analyze the tapes, read and comment on your analyses and on the student work you have chosen. This can be one of the most fruitful and satisfying parts of the assessment process. **However**, all of the work you submit as part of your response to **any entry must be yours and yours alone**. A link to the National Board's Ethics Policy is provided below.

This means that your written analyses, the student work you submit, and your videotapes must all feature teaching that **you** did and work that **you** oversaw.

If you work as a member of a team of teachers, you have an excellent opportunity to collaborate with other members of the team who are going through the assessment. However, if you work in a team teaching setting, you should review your responses carefully (perhaps with one or more of your colleagues) to ensure that your responses all feature teaching that you did and work that you oversaw.

It is mandatory that different videotape segments, separate and different analyses, and separate and different student work samples be submitted by **each** candidate, regardless of the candidate's teaching situation.

If you submit materials identical with those of another candidate, **both of you will be disqualified from the certification process**, and the organization or entity funding your certification assessment fee, if any, will be notified of this disqualification and the reason.
Additional Considerations

The information in this section does not apply to all candidates. This section describes the Spanish Language Option, which candidates who deliver instruction in both Spanish and English may wish to avail themselves of; rules for submitting work that includes languages other than English and Spanish; and guidelines for requesting accommodations for disability.

Spanish Language Option

The Spanish Language Option allows candidates to submit student work and videotapes in Spanish. The Spanish Language Option provides an opportunity for generalists and content area teachers who have a large number of Spanish-speaking students in their classes and who therefore deliver instruction in both English and Spanish to become National Board Certified within their content area. This option is available to candidates in all certificate areas except the English Language Arts and the World Languages Other than English certificates. (Note that Early and Middle Childhood/Literacy: Reading-Language Arts candidates may elect to use this option.)

Candidates who exercise the Spanish Language Option complete the same portfolio entries and assessment center exercises as their certificate-area colleagues; however, these candidates may submit student work and videotapes for the portfolio that are in Spanish accompanied by an English language translation. The Written Commentary accompanying each portfolio entry and the responses to the assessment center exercises, however, must be in English. A written English translation of any written student work and/or a written transcription in English of any videotape evidence submitted in Spanish is required in order for the responses to be scored. Candidates must also check the appropriate box on the entry envelope label indicating that evidence in Spanish is enclosed, or the response will not be scored. English language translations must meet all format specifications for written portfolio materials and must include the candidate’s ID number, the entry title, and any necessary student identifiers in English. Pages containing translations do not count against the page totals specified in the entry directions.

Languages Other Than English and Spanish

We recognize that languages other than English and Spanish are frequently used in the classroom. Therefore, student work samples and videotapes may include brief expressions or phrases in a language other than English or Spanish. The inclusion of such expressions or phrases must be limited since assessors will not have fluency in languages other than English or Spanish. If expressions or phrases in languages other than English and/or Spanish are included, candidates should include brief explanations in the Written Commentary that accompanies each portfolio response. Candidate responses containing student work samples and/or videotapes that require assessors to have fluency in a language other than English or Spanish, or which require significant explanations or translations, cannot be scored in this administration.

If the majority of your instruction takes place with students for whom English is a new language, the appropriate NBPTS certificate may be either the Early and Middle Childhood/English as a New Language (EMC/ENL) certificate or the Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood/English as a New Language (EAYA/ENL) certificate. To help you make the decision regarding whether to pursue certification in one of the available certificate areas, you should discuss your teaching situation with
professional colleagues, your school faculty, a National Board Certified Teacher®, your faculty support group, or a state-level official who is involved with a fee subsidy program.
Nonstandard Accommodations

If you believe you need accommodation because of a disability, you should submit a request for accommodation as soon as possible. If you have not already received a form for this purpose, a link to the National Board's Nonstandard Testing Accommodations policy form has been provided below or you may call 1-800-22TEACH to request a form.

If the accommodations you need are for the portfolio phase of the assessment process, such as a large print version of the portfolio, please submit the accommodations form (along with the required documentation of your disability) immediately, if you have not already done so.

If the accommodations you need are for the assessment center phase of the process, please note that it takes approximately six weeks from the date your accommodations form and documentation are received to process the request and have the accommodations available at the assessment center. Once accommodations have been approved, you will receive notification of the accommodations with instructions for making your appointment at the assessment center. You will be unable to make an appointment until you receive this confirmation.

The National Board's Nonstandard Testing Accommodations policy and forms are in Adobe® Acrobat® PDF format. To read these documents, you need to install Acrobat® Reader software on your computer. You can download the free software by following the instructions provided by Adobe Systems. A link to Adobe's Web site is provided below.
Specialty Area Selection

Candidates who are pursuing certification in the following certificate areas must declare a specialty prior to attending the assessment center:

- Adolescence and Young Adulthood/Science
- Early Childhood through Young Adulthood/Exceptional Needs Specialist
- Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood/Career and Technical Education
- Early and Middle Childhood/English as a New Language*
- Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood/English as a New Language*
- Early and Middle Childhood/Music
- Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood/Music
- Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood/World Languages Other than English

If you are a candidate for one of these certificate areas, and did not indicate your specialty area on your Candidate Application, you should call 1-800-22TEACH (1-800-228-3224) immediately to provide this information. If you do not notify NBPTS of your declaration, you will not be able to make an appointment for the assessment center. If you are unsure which specialty within your certificate area best fits your teaching situation, you should refer to the appropriate Standards for the best description of specialty areas practice.

*If you select Path 1, Adolescence and Young Adulthood/Science, you will also need to select from the specialty areas available under Adolescence and Young Adulthood/Science.
Verification of Eligibility

If you have not already done so, complete and return the Eligibility Verification Forms. If you need Eligibility Verification Forms, a link to the National Board's Eligibility Verification Packet is provided below. Candidates for National Board Certification must meet the following employment and education requirements prior to collecting evidence for any of the portfolio entries.

You must:

- possess a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution. (*If you hold a degree awarded by an institution outside the United States, there are provisions. Please access the link below and refer to the Eligibility Verification Forms for details.*)
- have completed three years of successful teaching (or school counseling if applying for the ECYA/School Counseling certificate area) at one or more early childhood, elementary, middle, or secondary schools. (*Teachers or counselors with students who are over the age of 18 years must be teaching or counseling students at the pre-K–12 level and in pre-K–12 settings. If you are teaching students over the age of 18, there are provisions.*)
- hold a valid state teaching license (or valid state license as a school counselor if applying for the ECYA/School Counseling certificate area) for each of those three years. (*If you were not required to hold a state teaching license or school counselor license for the three years of teaching or school counseling experience, there are provisions. Please access the link below and refer to the Eligibility Verification Forms for details.*)

Please go to the link below for explicit instructions about filling out these forms. **You must do this now** because completion of the forms requires that you send them to your employer and in some cases to the educational institution from which you received your baccalaureate degree.

**Eligibility Verification Forms must be returned to NBPTS by the deadline given in the National Board Certification Assessment Calendar. A link to the calendar has been provided below. If you do not submit these completed forms you will not be able to take the assessment center exercises, you will not have your portfolio scored, and you will not receive a score report. You are responsible for confirming receipt of these forms by NBPTS. After submitting your forms, you can check the status of your eligibility online by accessing the National Board Registration & Information Center (NBRIC). To access NBRIC, use the Managing Your Candidacy link provided below.**

If you are not sure whether you meet the eligibility prerequisites for National Board candidacy, more complete information can be found on the NBPTS Candidate Guide Web site. A link has been provided below.