

Using All the Tools in Your Toolbox

National Board, NB, certification is a beast! Let's just say it. However, truth be told...it is not the beast it used to be. In reality, it is rather tamable. If you do not believe me, just ask a candidate that certified under the old process. Now, before you get all annoyed at me, you need to hear me explain.

The National Board released ALL sorts of resources when the process was revised that simply had never existed before for candidates. Let me also add if you participate in a candidate support program, we have even more resources, but of course we differ from site to site. Let's start with the resources the National Board has provided for its candidates.

Another good way to think about this is the teacher-student relationship. You prepare your students for success. You teach, provide engaging opportunities to learn the skills, you provide study materials such as books and often even study guides. You remediate. You communicate. You prepare them for the assessment...but what happens if the students choose not to use the resources that you provided? Get it?!

These are YOUR tools.

- 1 **Registration Guide**, a step-by-step document that even include pictures. This document does not only include registration, but also explains the Candidate Management System.
- 2 **Guide to National Board Certification** - This is actually a rather short document for the NB, but boy, is it packed!! It has ALL the dates, fees, explanations of components, registration, withdrawal, retakes, appeals...you know, all those things you wonder about! It is right here. It explains the minimum floor score (no, this is NOT passing) that all teachers must achieve on each component.
- 3 **Scoring Guide** - As a teacher, you should really be able to consume and utilize this document. Read it BEFORE you start your components. Understand how you will be scored. It is all laid out, right here for you.
- 4 **General Portfolio Instructions** - This is the document that almost made me fall out of my seat! Did you know it has sample portions from written components not only that, but the samples are coded to demonstrate the writing modes of a NB teacher. We write to describe, analyze, and reflect. But wait, there is more! Also included is a glossary of how the NB defines terms, more specific information, do's and don't's, and a whole section on analyzing your videos and technical information for filming!!
- 5 **The Standards** - Awh, the bible for National Boards, the standards. Sometimes (often, if I am being honest) I wonder do candidates really understand this document? Have they read the whole document? Standards are what accomplished teachers in said certificate areas do, but here is the kicker...they are full of EXAMPLES!!! Teachers do not have to wonder how can I meet that standard!! All they have to do is read through their standards and implement, a wonderful resource not just for candidates but for ANY teacher.
- 6 **The Components** - How many times, have I been asked...what do I need to do for Component 2, 3, or 4? Ugh...the teacher in me realizes the moment I hear this question that whomever is asking has not read their component instructions! Now, before you tell me I am being harsh...on page 3, there is the subtitle specifically called...What Do I Need to Do. Boom!! **Read, you need to read.** That is what you need to do. Read it all. This document is amazing and laid out so well. It starts with an overview and then gives specific information, followed by the instructions and questions candidates need to answer, followed by (one of my personal favorites) the electronic submission at a glance (this allows you to see not only what to submit and its format but how everything fits together), followed by rubrics (We are all teachers here! This is GOLD! You speak the rubric language. This is what you must do to certify!), and then followed by forms. Some of the best advice I can give is read and reread your instructions.

Those are the resources available to everyone, now, I want to address the additional resources the **World Class Teaching Program at Ole Miss** includes. Again, all candidate support programs have developed or purchased additional resources. While we all differ a bit, but we all share the common goal to help candidates.

Mentors - We have face-to-face and online, all certified NBCTs. Consider the mentor, your cheerleader coach. They help guide and support candidates, but we expect candidates to have already taken advantage of the resources listed above. **A mentor is NEVER to be held responsible for a candidate's certification.** That responsibility lies directly with the candidate. Mentors read for candidates, provide feedback and suggestions. Mentors are sounding boards for good sound advice based on what they know about the process (again they are ALL accomplished teachers) and how to utilize the resources.

WCTP 601 - Every single resource we have is embedded in our online, self-paced Blackboard course, which was created in collaboration with Stanford University. This course embeds the above resources and let's be honest if you have seen it, you know it is hardcore. I have literally traveled across the country collecting resources for this course, but it is not something you can just click through on a Sunday afternoon. It involves a commitment of your time. There is a module for each component including the assessment, analyzing your scores, and advanced candidates, and a discussion board. There is much more, way more than I can explain. Just check it out and for goodness sake, use it if you have been enrolled. (Currently this is only available for Mississippi teachers.) At the end of the day, the National Board process is rigorous. It is a national process so that is to be expected. Teachers would do well to consider it a journey, one this is based on research and one that is obtainable.

I missed certification myself by one point the first time. We do not quit. We might get angry and that is okay as long as the anger is appropriate meaning...we do not blame mentors or the National Board. It is okay to be frustrated. When I received my new box (yes, I'm old school) I kicked it across the living room, and it felt good!! My advice to teachers is do not be afraid to pursue National Boards. When you make the choice to pursue it, utilize ALL of the resources. Do your homework. Work hard. Sort your own path, if you are not certified anyway, what does it matter if it takes two years to certify rather than one? You have THREE years to complete the whole process (MS will reimburse you!).

National Boards is doable. National Boards is worth it. The process will make you a better teacher. I once read where someone explained National Boards as a graduate course without the structure, meaning you have to set your own deadlines and make your own decisions about what you will submit. I think that is a solid description. Regardless of where you currently find yourself. Maybe you are now an advanced candidate and after reading this post, you are kicking yourself for not using all the resources you had available. Maybe you are a continuing candidate wondering where to go next or are you doing it right. Maybe you are a classroom teacher who has always wanted to do National Boards but thought it was too much. Regardless of where you are, take the next step. Really educate yourself. Use your resources and YOUR teacher sense to guide you.

If you have been thinking about it...it is time!! Join us.

We have an [interactive graphic on the WCTP website](#) to help you. Work your way through each step. Read everything attached and then send me an email. We are here to help you regardless of your situation. Just remember, there are lots of tools in your toolbox, but you have to take them out and use them to be successful.

Teach on, Tammy Kirkland, NBCT