

**National Certification for Elementary Social Studies Teachers:
National Board for Professional Teaching Standards**

Ronald G. Helms, Ph.D.

Associate Professor
Wright State University
College of Education and Human services
370 Millett Hall
Dayton, OH 45435
937-775-3231
ronald.helms@wright.edu

SAVANT III@aol.com

Webpage: http://www.ed.wright.edu/cehs/fac_staff/helms/rhelms.htm

Dr. Ronald G. Helms
Associate Professor

SCHOOL: Wright State University POSITION : Social Studies Education Program/Technology

WORK ADDRESS: CEHS 370 Millett Hall

CITY/STATE/ZIP: Dayton, OH 45435-0001

OFFICE/HOME: 937-775-3231 937-433-2611 FAX: 937-775-4855

National Certification for Elementary Social Studies Teachers: National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

Introduction

A mission of Social Studies and the Young Learner is to provide the K -- 6 social studies educator with a variety of materials which reflect current NCSS standards and other professional standards. Recently NCSS announced that social studies teachers should give consideration to the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards(NBPTS.). Laffey (1998) indicated that K-- 12 social studies educators will be encouraged to be certified by the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards. Eagan, T. (1998). *Social studies teachers and national board certification*. National Council for the Social Studies, Anaheim, CA., a special presentation offered by The National Board for Professional Teacher Standards and the Educational Testing Service was provided for participants at the 78th NCSS Annual Conference in Anaheim, CA. This professional presentation will be followed by many other NBPTS sessions at the national and state levels.

National Board for Professional Teacher Standards provides high and rigorous standards for accomplished teachers The Guide to National Certification(1998) is recommended for all who would apply for certification. The URL for the NBPTS is <http://www.nbpts.org>, and the phone number for the NBPTS is 1-800-22-TEACH.

Authentic assessment

Authentic assessment has become a goal of many teachers, administrators, and curriculum developers for years. There are several models of assessment which are available for teachers. The concept of portfolio development is a solid concept (Helms, September, 1998). Please refer to the “Exemplars” section on the author’s page (http://www.ed.wright.edu/cehs/fac_staff/helms/rhelms.htm) for several examples of World Wide Web portfolio assessments. National curriculum leaders have long encouraged the development of student projects and exhibitions (Sizer, 1992). Goodlad's recommendation to provide future educators with multiple experiences in classroom settings further emphasizes the need for authentic assessment (Goodlad, 1990). Other electronic models are as follows: Scholastic’s Electronic Portfolio, the Grady

Profile, Astound, Hyperstudio, and Power Point. Indeed, any multimedia presentation software may be used to develop a template for student portfolios.

This article will focus on a dynamic method of student and teacher assessment: The National Board for Professional Teacher Standards (The National Board for Professional Teacher Standards, 1998).

The National Board for Professional Teacher Standards

The National Board for Professional Teacher Standards is an organization of teachers and many other educational organizations and associations working to promote the improvement of student learning. The central process of The National Board for Professional Teacher Standards is both student assessment and teacher assessment.

It is important to note that a majority of the board of directors of the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards is teachers. Teachers are clearly central to planning, implementing, developing, and modifying The National Board for Professional Teacher Standards policies and procedures.

The application fee for the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards certification process is \$2,000.00. Several states are strongly supportive of the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards process. At this time several state's Department of Education will fund the \$2,000.00 application fee for the qualified teachers applying for The National Board for Professional Teacher Standards certification. Previous references will provide teachers with this data. In addition several states and local school districts will pay additional stipends to those teachers achieving The National Board for Professional Teacher Standards certification.

Currently National Board for Professional Teacher Standards certification is available in the following areas:

- Early Childhood/Generalist (ages 3-8)
- Middle Childhood/Generalist (ages 7-12)
- Early Adolescence Generalist (ages 11-15)
- Early Adolescence/English Language Arts (ages 11-15)
- Early Adolescence/Science (ages 11-15)
- Early Adolescence/Math (ages 11-15)
- Early Adolescence/Social Studies-History (ages 11-15)
- Early Adolescence through Young Adult/Art (ages 11-18+)

- Adolescence through Young Adult/Mathematics (ages 14-18+)
- Adolescence through Young Adult/Science (ages 14-18+)
- Adolescence through Young Adult/English Language Arts (ages 14-18+)
- Adolescence through Young Adult/Social Studies-History (ages 14-18+)

The leaders of the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards are inservice classroom teachers. Facilitator training for university faculty and teachers is available at several National Board for Professional Teacher Standards Facilitators Institutes (Making Good Choices, 1998).

The author is a trained NBPTS facilitator, and is a P.I. for a NBPTS grant to work with teacher candidates.

Universities may offer facilities, course credit, and formal sessions for candidates for National Board for Professional Teacher Standards certification. The author has offered a number of inservice presentation on NBPTS for teachers. Colleges and universities are an integral component in preparing educators for National Board for Professional Teacher Standards certification (Helms, Finegan, & Herrelko, 1998).

Teaching and Learning Assessment

The National Board for Professional Teacher Standards Facilitators Institutes stresses the development of a support system for candidates. Teachers who are accepted for the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards Facilitators certification receive “the box.” An introductory session of the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards Facilitators Institutes explores “What’s in the Box?” “The Box” is about the size of two shoe boxes. The content varies with the type of national certification desired by the teacher candidate. A previous listing has cited the current certification areas. Each certification area has a specific assessment portfolio. Return mail envelopes and mail directions are specified. One of the requirements of “the box” or specifically the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards process is Video analysis of the record of evidence. Candidates must send video documentation of lessons. This is in addition to evidence of student assessments and student materials. Reflective statements must accompany the evidence. It is important remember that National Board for Professional Teacher Standards certification is a voluntary process (Guide to National Board Certification, 1998)

National Board for Professional Teacher Standards Propositions

National Board for Professional Teacher Standards has developed a set of five 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

If educators believe that these propositions are true, then these educators might consider National Board for Professional Teacher Standards certification and assessment. The successful candidate must hold a baccalaureate from an accredited institution of higher education. The candidate must have completed three years of successful teaching. And the candidate must hold a valid certificate (license) in the state in which the candidate is teaching.

Procedures

National Board for Professional Teacher Standards certification requires the reflective construction of a teaching portfolio. The record of evidence must be in written form and video form. The two video entries must be classroom based, and the videos must support the written documentation. Generally the record of evidence is concerned with comprehension of higher level thinking skills, stimulation of the learning process, discovery and inquiry, intellectual engagement, and reflection (by both teacher and student.)

Another component in National Board for Professional Teacher Standards certification is a full day at an approved assessment center. The assessment center is computer based and typically consists of four ninety minute sessions. The assessments will vary according to grade level and content level of each assessment. This means that Early Childhood/Generalist (ages 3-8) candidates will be assessed differently than Adolescence through Young Adult/Social Studies-History (ages 14-18+) candidates. The candidates will be given a time period in which they may report to the assessment center.

Each portfolio entry and each assessment center activity will be carefully evaluated and scored. The scoring rubric is part of the initial materials provided to the candidates. Thus the components of the final score are the videotapes, student work samples and teacher comments, and the written responses at the assessment centers.

The National Board for Professional Teacher Standards national office is located in San Antonio, TX. This office has established varying dates for applications, portfolios, and assessment centers. Due date on portfolios will vary between April and June. Notification of certification will occur between November and December.

Elementary Certification: Social Studies

Currently the NBPTS certification areas for elementary social studies teachers are the following certificates:

- Early Childhood/Generalist (ages 3-8)
- Middle Childhood/Generalist (ages 7-12)
- Early Adolescence Generalist (ages 11-15)
- Early Adolescence/Social Studies-History (ages 11-15)

Primary grade teachers would apply for Early Childhood/Generalist certification. Upper elementary teachers might select from Middle Childhood/Generalist (ages 7-12), Early Adolescence/Generalist (ages 11-15), Early Adolescence/Social Studies-History(ages 11-15). As a university facilitator, the author has worked with teachers seeking multiple NPPTS certificates. Currently, this practice is not recommended during the same academic year.

As expected all of the generalist certification area require demonstration of integrated teaching accomplishments. Thus the generalist route would require the teacher to submit documentation in writing, mathematics, social studies, and science. The Early Adolescence/Social Studies-History(ages 11-15) certificate is much more focused on social studies. The key entries in this certification are teaching reasoning through writing, making real world connections, facilitating real world connections, and fostering small-group interactions.

Conclusion

The certification areas do have common elements. Teachers are specifically required to submit student submissions to writing prompts and to analyze the student writing. Two twenty minute video tapes must be submitted. One tape involves whole class instruction; the second tape involves small group interaction. The tapes must be uninterrupted and unedited.

Student and teacher release forms must be signed and mailed to NBPTS. Specific forms must be used. All entries must be documented and verified. The certification process is rigorous, structured and demanding.

The certification process may require five to seven months of preparation. NBPTS recommends the following time schedule:

Month One

Read directions on portfolio, plan, have release forms signed, and work on practice exercises.

Month two

Collect documentation and compose descriptions of student work; begin video taping.

Month three

Continue progress

Month four

Select video entries and compose written commentaries; Select student writing samples and compose written commentaries; Begin self- assessment of teacher entries

Month five

Complete all drafts; copy all materials; mail materials to NBPTS for assessment.

NBPTS requires formal assessment at designated assessment center. These assessments consists of four 90 minute exercises that are competed on a computer. The exercises assess a teachers content and content pedagogical knowledge.

University or other support groups may provide fall galas and banquets to honor the process(rather than the actual certification.) The teacher candidates are notified in November of their status. State and National web pages will list the successful candidates. Several states will hold celebrations in December or in January in the state capital.

NBPTS has recently developed a “banking process.” This process allows an unsuccessful candidate to “bank” those components which were judged successful. The candidate would then be required to resubmit documentation for areas which required improvement.

References

John Goodlad, *Teachers for Our Nation's Schools*. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1990).

Eagan, T. (November 21, 1998). *Social studies teachers and national board certification*. National Council for the Social Studies, Anaheim, CA.

Ronald Helms, "Electronic portfolio assessment : Adolescent to young adult" (Paper presented at Division of Professional Practice and Research Wright State University, Hillsboro, OH. September 28, 1998).

Ronald Helms, Colleen Finegan, & Janet Herrelko, "National Board for Professional Teaching Standards" (Paper presented at Ohio Confederation of Teacher Education Organizations, Columbus, OH. October 15, 1998).

Martharose Laffery, "National Board certification enhances professionalism of social studies teachers" *The Social Studies Professional* 147 1998: 7.

The National Board for Professional Teacher Standards (1998). *Guide to National Board Certification*. (Washington, D.C).

The National Board for Professional Teacher Standards (September 10-12, 1998). *Making Good Choices*. The National Board for Professional Teacher Standards Facilitators' Institute. Columbus. OH. .

The National Board for Professional Teacher Standards, *What Every Teacher Should Know*. (Washington, D.C.: The National Board for Professional Teacher Standards,1998).

"National Board Assessment" (Paper presented at the 78th NCSS Annual Conference, Anaheim, CA. November 21, 1998).

TheodoreSizer. *Horace's School: Redesigning the American High School*. (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1992).