

National Board Certification Help is Here!

MAEA Spring Conference – March 22-24, 2012 in St. Charles, MO

Peggy Bollman (AK) and Julie Tonkovich (CA) and I have presented this workshop several times at NAEA conventions in New York, Minneapolis, and Baltimore.

Good Luck candidates!

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Good Luck candidates!

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To join the national board yahoo group go to: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/emcart/> and make sure you say why you want to join. I do not let anyone just join, they need to be a candidate or be a NBCT. Please share this information with other art teachers

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The following information is from Chris Calohan, my mentor and friend. His advice has made a positive impact on my life as a teacher and mentor. I value his wisdom on this process and wanted to share it with you the candidates. My hope is that I can be as good a mentor and listserv owner as Sheree Renzel and Chris Calohan.

From **Chris Calohan** EAYA-ART, EMCART Past List Serve Owner

These suggestions were organized from advice offered through the EAYA-ART/EMCART Yahoo groups and have been used by art teachers as well as a variety of other disciplines going through the certification process. This is a collaboration with myself and many, many other NBCT's over several years, Sheree Renzel, being the first, Polly Sheehan, the most recent.

Making Good Choices:

When considering including a particular activity, be sure to analyze the activity or the contract in relation to the standards. If something appears routine, analyze it and show why it was not routine. Show how you build ongoing, two-way relationships rather than focusing on your own input.

How to Choose:

- Read the standards
- List activities relevant to information in the standards
- Look at resources (files, colleagues, personnel folder, old calendars, plan books)

- Evaluate list by matching evidence to the standards
- Remove items with little or no evidence or that don't show a significant impact on student learning
- Be sure that documentation is within the time limits specified (last five years.)

Activities should:

- Have significance in your teaching
- Have a positive impact on student learning
- Establish interactive communication with families
- Have gone above and beyond routine efforts to build communication
- Have treated parents and other adults as valued partners in student development (learning/achievement)
- Have connections that were made with the community that facilitate ongoing, mutually beneficial interactions between schools, students, and the wider community
- Have multiple paths to parents and other adults

Remember your family. Go to the important events in your children's lives and go out to dinner with your husband or wife from time to time. Stay up later to work but always tuck your children in at night and tell your family you love them.

Save the box. You have to return your documents in the original.

Use a yahoogroups, listserve for your discipline area. This group could be the best thing that happened to you during the NB process. The people on this list are helpful as mentors, technical writing coaches, and friends, and even though they are all over the country, they are just an email away.

Use other groups. Some states have monthly or bi-monthly meetings in conjunction with their state teacher's organizations. Some counties have meetings... check within your state. Go online in search for chat rooms concerning your subject.

This may not be a one-year process. Yes, some will attain that magic number of 275 in the first year...but many more do not. This is not a black mark on your teaching. You missed questions, did not make a correct reply, or misunderstood an objective... It is usually in your writing, not in your abilities as an educator.

Do not procrastinate. This is a process you can only put off for so long before the time bug bites you...and it will generally get you square in the fanny. The National Boards is-should be-can be-almost always is a major time consuming operation. Combine this with lesson plans, extra-curricular sports-etc., children, holidays, a nasty cold, your mother-in-law's extended annual visit and simple things like power outages...time suddenly gets pretty skinny.

Get organized. Different candidates used different systems. You can create a binder for each entry. Include the standards, requirements and rubrics for that entry. Don't forget a stocked pencil bag (pencils, sharpener, eraser, pens, sticky notes, white-out, sticky tabs,

structure, to formative and summative assessments, to lesson goals, overarching goals, to video-taping analysis, etc., should listened to the most...AND THAT MENTOR IS YOU.

The MAGIC is in the document you get on that sliver and blue disk. Print every single page, read-re-read-read every single page. Highlight the bold print, highlight those things in italics, make notations, synthesize, make synopsis...do whatever it takes to thoroughly understand what the board is looking for. It is spelled out in clear, cold, but exceptionally concise print. **THIS IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.** This just might separate those who pass and those who do not. It matters not who is giving you information. In the end, it is you that must know your subject matter, your students, your lesson goals, and above all, it is you that must truly understand and embrace the standards and goals set forth by the National Boards. Every single person we know that passed on the first try tells the same story: I wrote to the standards, to the level 4 rubrics and answered each question thoroughly. I knew what was expected on each entry, I knew where to find the data that concerned video-taping, analysis, and those wonderful acronyms like KOS, GCL, CK, IS...etc., etc., etc.

Mentors are your friends. If someone is reading for you, do not get upset if you have to rewrite...

Mentors will not do your work. It is your job to read and study the instructions and standards. Mentors may ask you questions of what you have written, but cannot tell you what to write.

This is a thinking process... When a new candidate requests a mentor, those willing to help you will contact you directly. But do not expect a mentor to "give you the answer". A good mentor, like a good teacher, will guide you, through Socratic questioning and critique, in order to help you find the answer that best suits your entry. When we received responses from our mentors it was a blow to find out that all the work we had already completed was weak and did not address the standards or answer the questions for each entry. However, we did not want a mentor who treated us with kid gloves nor one who was simply there to pat us on the back and tell us "good job." We knew we were good teachers, but going through this process made us reflect more about our teaching and has changed what and why we teach the lessons we do. We honestly don't think we would have passed without the help of this group and our mentors.

Write to the rubrics. How you are graded is spelled out in your book. Write to the rubrics. Read the level 4 rubric over and over and make notes where you show you are reaching each level of the rubric...must be absolutely clear and consistent evidence. Go through the section entitled, How You Will Be Assessed...knowing what they are going to grade you on is half the battle.

Write, read, refine, rewrite. Over and over and over until you get it right.

The process is about you as a teacher. It is not about the best lesson plan or talented students...it is about what you do with what you have. It is about reaching the students, not about the 'perfect' lesson plan (there is no such thing.) There is always a student to re-teach, a piece of instruction missed, an interruption in scheduling, and on and on. It is about how you worked around and through these events and made it work, the

success of the students, the re-teaching, the reflecting of the successes and shortcoming. (But now may not be the time to experiment with a lesson that has never been taught.... You will be under enough stress without trying a glass slump mold for the first time.)

It is not about the best lesson ever taught, the best kids ever in a classroom or the best video ever produced that will determine your success, or lack thereof in this process. It is a thorough understanding of the guidelines that are set to the entry portfolios and all the wonderful on-line tutorials that are going to determine whether you get that letter that says, "Congratulations! You are a National Board Certified Teacher," or whatever it says if you do not pass. Every one of us who passed and are online is here to assist you on this arduous journey, **but YOU have to do your homework**. We may guide you, but **WE WILL NOT DO YOUR WORK FOR YOU**.

Get organized in your writing. Example: The key for some was developing a system for organizing entries in such a manner as to have a good part of the writing started before actually completing the classroom work using a three-part system: First, type out each question asked in the entries and put these in bold print. Second, assess each of the standards to be address and picked one or two particular questions that might best serve to exemplify these standards. These can be italicized. Third, begin to write to the level four rubric in a suppositional frame of mind. "I am going to demonstrate how art is made by... I will use _____'s work to show how she struggled with.....," etc. (Others in the direct method. I demonstrated how art was made by...) You can use this writing as a fill in the blanks exercise systematically going through each question with this format. This style writing makes you write to the rubric, understanding how the standards worked within the framework of each question, and underscores what you are going to have to do to prove-demonstrate-exemplify-analyze-reflect...in each question. In your final writing you can leave part or all of the question in bold as an intro to the paragraph.

You can address the "Overarching Goal" in bold print. It is important to ensure the assessor doesn't have to guess to what you are alluding. Make it as simple as possible. (But overuse of bold and italics may cause confusion to the reader.)

The one most important piece of advice I can give anyone is to **use the "language" of the National Boards, BUT, and this is very important, in such a manner as to have directed meaning**. Many candidates began each section with the words or paraphrased words of what they were asking for. They also went through the standards book and did the same to justify or elaborate upon things they had written about. This can be helpful in organizing your thoughts as well as giving back what you think they wanted to hear.

Use the language to answer the questions. Many entries are weak because of unanswered questions or the language used did not prove use of the standards.

The writing process. First write about what occurred, not what will occur or what you hope will occur or what you think will occur. You do not receive credit for what has not happened. Get a list of past tense verbs from any Resume website as they are varied and are Action words. Good writing focuses more on How you know it's so or Evidence and Why (so what?) it's worth knowing or Significance.

The guiding questions used by assessors found in your scoring guide are indeed the real thing. The items found in each are the major components of what assessors are looking for. Supporting details give your entry (any entry) a "convincing" air. As you are writing, remember, you are not aiming for the Pulitzer Prize -- this is a technical piece -- give information and do it in a concise manner, giving as many supporting details as possible to make your entry more convincing. Stick to the facts, and remember, assessors may not be from your state so they may not know what the acronyms you typically use mean. Spell it out. If you use bolding, italics or underlining use it sparingly as overuse makes the entry difficult to read and information hard to find.

Straightforward, plain talk is much more effective in providing scoreable evidence. Whenever possible, candidates should "show" rather than "tell." For example, instead of saying "I value student choice and inquiry," they should describe their lesson that gave students choices and opportunities for inquiry. Most entries require a reflection section. Many candidates make the mistake of recapping the rest of the paper in this section. A reflection is NOT a summary. Assessors look for examples of thoughtful insight.

Avoid as much as possible any use of the verb to be...is, are, was, were, have, has etc. Use an active voice. Example: instead of saying "I was the collaborator" say "I collaborated." It sounds simple but if a candidate really avoids the use of to be verbs and writes in active voice the entry sounds more powerful! Do not write in the passive voice (A meeting was held) instead of using active first person (I held a meeting).

Keep focused. Do not become so wrapped up in describing the activity they don't leave enough space to qualify it by explaining how learning took place and how they knew learning took place. Answer each question individually and then put it all together. When writing, type out each question and answer it, then leave it there for later when you proofread to remind yourself of what you are trying to prove or explain. Later, when printing the final copy take out the questions and put all the answers together as one piece of writing and if necessary tweak it so that the writing flows from one paragraph to the next.

Know the difference between descriptive, analytical and reflective writing. The analytical writing required by the NBPTS process requires you to make some on-the-spot decisions about "what it all means. You are required to give your interpretation of what student responses mean about what the students do and do not understand and know.

Descriptive: What happened in the classroom.

Analytical: how, why or in what ways....

Reflective: self-analysis, did it work, why did it work, what was the impact, what will change...

Understand the terminology. Make certain you know the difference between a concept and a procedure. Teaching the steps for adding fractions is not teaching a concept, it is a procedure. Having students "write" about the steps for adding fractions is also a procedure. Remember.... the featured entries are supposed to be examples of your

BEST classroom practices. Best wishes and good luck to all candidates!!! Read the sections on descriptive, analytical and reflective writing.

Entry 4 Think quality not quantity. Several accomplishments may be combined into one general accomplishment. **Most of us started on Entry 4.** Entry 4 first challenges you to begin writing to the NB standards. It is the entry that is weighted the least insofar as your overall score, but the entry you most likely will find one of the hardest because you are writing about yourself and your wonderful contributions to your students, the community and parents.

Tie it all to student learning. It is wonderful that you do these things, but if you cannot show how they improved student learning do not use the accomplishment. If you use your Masters Degree in entry 4, write how it impacts student learning. How are the students receiving the best that current educational research has to say about best practice? How are you modeling life long learning for your students? Can you give an example of something that you learned in your Masters' classes that you have incorporated into your daily teaching? How are you modeling for your colleagues that you value continued learning, and perhaps even inspiring them to do the same? Have you shared any of your strategies with other teachers, others on your team, etc.?

Explain any acronym used in describing your lessons.

Use specific examples.

Keep the core values taped to your monitor while writing. By having them right there you are constantly reminded of the focus of your writing. Before you begin writing for any section type all questions in and then answer them very directly. Then add details and names and other information. Getting your main ideas down first may keep your ideas and evidence clear.

Write to the question, not about the question.

Reflection is not a conclusion. There is no such thing as a perfect lesson or unit. Even the lesson where all objectives were achieved should have been more challenging. There is ALWAYS something you can do better, or a way for the students to learn more. So, rather than summarizing what happened, reflection must provide a plan for how to do it better next time, in addition to, statement about how well it went.

Use a technique called "Brain Dumping," in which you write everything you know about each category being addressed. The writing can incorporate "stream of consciousness" style. Don't worry about how to answer the questions at this point. Make sure you address the principles and elements of design in your brain-dump as these are obvious over-arching goals. You can also use webbing or mapping diagrams. Next, answer the questions. Go to your Brain Dump, web or map and insert your ideas into the questions in which they apply. Add the state and national benchmarks you are addressing. Go through the standards you are asked to address in each question and insert them where they apply, using some of the language used in the standards. Throughout your work, reference what you know about child development. Quote

Lowenfield, Piaget, Erickson, Steinberg and any other theorists you know about. You may need to do some research. Go to the scoring rubric 4 and ask if you meet the criteria.

One tip is to be sure nothing is abbreviated and all numbers are spelled out. Give full names for everything.

The assessments: The key to passing the assessments will lie in your understanding and practice geared to the scoring rubrics. Many credit passing with the practice that used the scoring guides, and the level 4 Rubric associated with each question that will be asked. Usually studying specific processes or of specific works is not nearly as important as studying for time periods, styles, aesthetics, innovations, criticism and media.

GREAT STATEMENT STARTERS

Upon reflection...

After observation...

This comment tells me that...

It is important for me to realize...

This is significant because...

This activity prompted me to...

Note that I now believe...

These comments indicate...

This could be more effective if...

Continuing to reflect on...

I focused on...because...

To promote (extend, refine, etc.) thinking...

I now have greater awareness...

I realized that...

The impact of this artifact...

The evidence of this collaboration was...

The intent of my question was...

This helped me to refocus on...

- The guiding questions used by the assessors found in your **scoring guides** are indeed the real thing. The items found in each one are the major components of what the assessors are looking for.
- **Supporting details** are a key element to each entry.
- Know the difference between a procedure and a concept. Teaching the steps to adding fractions is a procedure, not a concept. Having students write about the steps is also a procedure.
- USE the LANGUAGE of the BOARDS. You will find these words in your standards, scoring rubrics and scoring guides. However, don't make it only about using their words...the words have to be in the right and appropriate place to have any impact.

Analytical Writing depends on the interpretations the teacher makes of what happens, an explanation of why the elements or events described are the way they are. It shows the assessor the thought process you employed to arrive at the conclusions made about a teaching situation.

- Analysis is called for when a prompt asks how, why, or in what way(s). Analysis is required when teachers are asked:
 - To identify a particularly successful moment in a sample of teaching and why they regard it as successful
 - For a rationale
 - What a student performance suggests about their teaching (here the teacher uses the evidence of student work to explain and illustrate his/her practice and also to use his/her practice to explain and provide a context for the student work.

When a teacher is asked to analyze, his/her response should meet these criteria:

- The subject of the analysis should be available to the reader (e.g. the student work/video). If such an artifact is not available, a clear description of what is being analyzed must be given prior to the analysis
- The focus of the writing is not what happened (descriptive) but why it happened or what you did with the information you derived from an assessment or from a lesson (analytical)

Reflective writing is a different kind of analytical writing which always suggests self-analysis, or consideration of practice. Reflection includes written consideration of what a teacher will do next time based on his/her analysis of what happened and why it happened that way.

Reflection is called for when an entry prompt asks the teacher to consider the successes of their lessons, and what they would do differently, and why.

Reflection is not a summary of the entry. To do so is the bug on the windshield at 70mph...bleeuf, you're outta there.

MORE STUFF

CLEAR, CONSISTENT, and CONVINCING

The three C's are Clear, Consistent, and Convincing.

(Concise is not an NB rubric word but means get to the point, no fluff. Many teachers make this mistake.)

Your writing must be **clear**, meaning the reader does not have to do any guessing, interpreting or figuring out, **concise** in that it gets to the point quickly, not in a flowery way, and most important **convincing**. Your writing needs to state your case (to the point) and be proof that you met the standards.

Clear - Understandable. State what you intend to say, don't expect us to surmise anything. Make sure the scorers can understand what you are writing about. Avoid terms that are

not commonly known. They will not take the time to look up any unknown words or acronyms. Be specific. Scorers want info to be clear and to the point. They do not want a lot of "fluff and stuff".

Consistent - Constant, unswerving. Not deviating from the focus.

Convincing - Believable, credible, persuasive. Showing that you know what you're talking about and cite several examples. Be sure to support your information. Data without support is useless.

They really go together. The assessor will be determining whether the candidate has provided evidence that clearly proves he/she meets the standards for that entry.

To receive a score of "4" an entry must CONSISTENTLY provide CLEAR evidence that CONVINCES the assessor that the standards are met.

An entry that receives a score of "3" CLEARLY demonstrates that the candidate is an accomplished teacher. There may be some unevenness in the entry - some aspects may be more CLEAR than others – the evidence is not CONSISTENT or there may be some weaknesses that make the entry less CONVINCING.

RATIONALE

A rationale is a *reason for doing something*. Accomplished teachers think about WHY they are teaching something. Because it is cute or fun is not an effective rationale. It MUST help the student grow academically – which is your goal.

EFFECTIVE RATIONALE

I see effective rationale as being a *clearly stated reason* for what you are doing, why you chose to do it, etc. This is part of everything being tightly woven and all relating to your goals. Clearly, consistently and convincingly explaining why you did what you did. Show there was a reason and a specific outcome planned. EFFECTIVE RATIONALE is a good reason for doing something. It should be based on what promotes student understanding and academic gains.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY

An instructional strategy is something you do to accomplish your goal. *This is HOW you teach something and why*. It could be guided reading, shared reading, co-operative grouping, inquiry learning, direct instruction. Accomplished teachers also have good reasons for choosing the WAY they teach. An instructional strategy is a specific way you decide to teach to accomplish the learning. You think about the students in your classroom and decide based upon their needs and strengths.

EVIDENCE

Evidence is simply proof, facts, data, verification, support, and demonstration that you did what you said you did. Evidence is anything that supports a claim. What "stuff" do

you have that supports your you did? What data, student information, etc that shows that you reached your goal? Don't get caught up in educational terms to tell something. Show evidence of it - proof that something was effective or some misconception changed. Show through your writing that your goals are accomplished. Demonstrate with examples, not just empty words. Flowery language is not evidence. It needs to be specific measurable proof-over and over again. The teacher can show this best by clearly, consistently, and convincingly stating what happened. I did this or said this because... I knew it would... The results showed..., etc.

ETHICS - EQUITY, FAIRNESS, AND ACCESS

Think of the Hippocratic Oath - DO NO HARM. Teaching with basic ideas of what is proper and acceptable for your community and for you as a professional. Teachers should be supporting students and families emotionally and academically. How do you equalize and make fair the learning field? How do you individualize your instruction? How do you make all materials accessible to all students and involve them and their thinking and give them opportunities to speak and share their learning?

REFLECTION

First of all, let's find out what reflection is NOT. It is NOT retelling what you did. *Reflection is a hard, thoughtful look at what you just accomplished and how it turned out.* I wanted to accomplish... and I think I was able to do... I would have like to have seen Sierra... I will continue to work on...Maybe I should have tried...I think I would have been more successful if...I was encouraged when Brett...I will try this again because... I will add...next time because. Let the assessors know the good and the bad of what you planned and carried out.