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**National Board Teacher Certification:
Is it for me as Health Occupations Teacher?**

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An Overview

Over 10,000 teachers across the nation and all teaching areas have passed the rigors set by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and have earned national certification in their teaching content area. In 1999, career-technical teachers were able to participate in this process and over 250 career- technical teachers were certified in the first year. The intent of this certification process is to establish a norm that is able to identify accomplished teaching in any field and any location. The mission of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) is:

To establish high and rigorous standards for what teachers should know and be able to do, to develop and operate a national voluntary system to assess and certify teachers who meet these standards, and to advance related educational reforms for the purpose of improving student learning in American Schools.

Through this certification process, teachers are able to reflect and validate teaching styles that promote and maximize learning in the classroom and community. Any secondary teacher anywhere can participate in this process and explore their teaching methodology and means to improve their practice. A complete history of the development of the standards and assessment process may be reviewed at the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards website: www.nbpts.org.

The Initial Steps :

Once a teacher decides to be involved in this reflective exercise, an application must be completed through their school district or state department of education office for professional development. To help defray the cost of the process the Excellent Teaching Program Act of Florida pays for 90% of the certification fee. Other states have similar programs to reduce the application cost and this information is available on the NBPTS website.

The Portfolio

The application process has been completed and the “BOX” from NBPTS arrives. In the box are complete directions for the completion of the portfolio items and the

suggested timeline of completing the required written products. These written products must show evidence that the teacher has met the NBPTS standards through various classroom activities. Submissions for the portfolio include student work samples, videotapes of classroom instruction and interaction and written entries that provide a vivid and descriptive insight into what the teachers do and how they think in the classroom. Possible portfolio entries for a career-technical teacher may be to highlight small group interactions, skill demonstration and the use of assessment in the classroom. In addition, the teacher completes an additional portfolio entry on the teacher's interaction within and beyond the learning community illustrating connections to the school, community and industry. All of these entries are packaged according to the directions and shipped back NBPTS for review and evaluation.

The assessment center

The next step in the process is the participation in a one-day assessment center exercises in which 6 thirty-minute responses to prompts are generated. These responses should focus on content knowledge and contain appropriate strategies to teach the subject matter. The intent of the assessment center is for teachers to be able to demonstrate their knowledge with written responses to a prompt. Some of the prompts may be on career pathways, integration of academic and career education, high level thinking skills, employability skills, advances in technology and techniques and the transition from school to work. The best way to prepare for the assessment center is to conduct literature reviews on the subject matters, interview people knowledgeable in these areas and

discuss the possible prompts with other peers. It is imperative to put as much effort into the assessment center as into the written portfolio entries.

The Wait

The hardest part of the process is to wait for the results from NBPTS. The response time in 2000 was 6 months but has been increased to approximately 9 months due to the increase in the number of teachers participating in the process. A teacher that submits an application in the Fall, 2001 and completes the entries and the assessment center by the Summer, 2002 will receive the results in the Spring, 2003. The wait is long but the process of reflection and continuous improvement is worth enduring the arrival of the envelope with the results.

Personal Reflection

I completed the national certification process as soon as the assessments were available for career-technical teachers. It was a humbling experience to view videotapes of myself teaching and to realize that my strategies to engage the students in different subjects areas had missed the mark. In addition, I did not stick to my action plan and ended up spending some late nights completing the written documents. Between having a student accidentally stop a videotape during an awesome discourse between students about the difference between transparency and color hue of urine, lost papers and a scramble to find supporting documentation for the professional and community liaisons, it was a life-shaping experience. The positives far out way the negatives and I would

encourage anyone to get involve in the national certification process and discover what an accomplished teacher you are and will continue to be.

Helpful Hints and Tips for a the National Board Certification Process

1. Collect permission forms from all students in the beginning.
2. Plan early. Plan now. Stick to plan.
3. Buy the assessment and scoring kit.
4. Find someone to read over material either in person or through the email.
5. Answer every question and comments on the instructions sheet for the entries.
6. Type in 12-point font and then switch size and font to make 10 page limit.
7. Follow all of the instructions explicitly: margin size, page limit, headers, page numbers, and video length.
8. Videotape students “doing”. May need to use microphone on you.
9. Use standards in the commentary and cite the standards. Paraphrase the standards as necessary.
10. Highlight the standards and refer to them constantly.
11. Documented Accomplishments should be letters.
12. Highlight instructional technology as much as possible.
13. Paint the reader a rich, vivid picture of your classroom. Make them see it while they are reading the entry.
14. Focus on reflection and what you would do differently to improve the learning.
15. Keep as many different assignments and exercises from a lot of different students.
16. Use problem-based scenarios if possible.
17. Keep the box.
18. Check the box thoroughly before shipping. Have a friend double check it. It takes a full day to pack up the box and assemble parts.
19. Outline response before writing in the assessment center.
20. Do research for the assessment center and go prepared to the center. Information should be timely and reflect trends.
21. Sign up early for assessment center location and date.
22. Practice with the CD ROM to be able to negotiate the computer program in the assessment center.
23. Continue to exercise, enjoy your family and friends during the writing of the entries.