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What Is Accomplished Teaching?

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) seeks to improve the quality of education in America by establishing rigorous standards for accomplished teaching and certifying teachers who meet those standards. Before applying for certification from the NBPTS it is important to learn as much as possible about the standards they have established and to assess your practice against them.

There are Five Core Propositions that provide the framework for all NBPTS activities and assessments:

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.

These Five Core Propositions were used to write a set of standards that define accomplished teaching for each certification area. So, although the title of the organization implies a single set of standards, there are as many sets of standards as there are certification areas (i.e., the standards for middle school English teachers are different from those for high school math teachers or fifth-grade teachers, etc.). All standards are based on the Five Core Propositions but differ

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within the context of the age of the students and the subject area(s) being taught. In August 2003, there were 24 different certificates and therefore 24 different sets of standards.

In this chapter you will read and study the core propositions and the standards for your certification area, identify teacher behaviors that demonstrate each of them, and assess your own practice in relationship to them.

CORE PROPOSITION 1: TEACHERS ARE COMMITTED TO STUDENTS AND THEIR LEARNING

What does it mean to be committed to your students? What do you do as a teacher that shows your commitment to them? What (if anything) is the difference between commitment to your students and commitment to their learning? Following are excerpts from conversations with teachers about their classrooms. Each of these conversations demonstrates commitment to students and their learning.

1. In the past I have relied solely on written vocabulary tests when assessing student knowledge of French. I have come to realize that this form of assessment favors the visual learners and places students with other strengths (auditory, kinesthetic, etc.) at a distinct disadvantage. Consequently, I planned an activity where students were grouped according to their identified intelligence [as defined by Gardner]. Each group was asked to solve a problem related to the French culture in a manner best suited to them. Group projects were shared with the class in French. (French teacher)

In this conversation, the French teacher reveals how she accomplishes the following:

- Provides multiple contexts in order to promote learning and evaluation
 - Recognizes, respects, and accommodates individual differences
 - Learns from previous experiences and alters plans accordingly
 - Deeply roots instruction within learning theories
2. I was really surprised at the number of key signature mistakes that both girls made during the challenge. Both girls have been under quite an emotional strain from their home circumstances and showed signs of being embarrassed, so I did not want to pursue their evaluation in front of the class as I normally would. (Music teacher)

This music teacher demonstrates how he accomplishes the following:

- Knows students
- Recognizes that all instruction is diagnostic and adapts as necessary within a lesson

- Respects dignity and worth of each student
 - Is attentive to variability of students
3. This group of students has a difficult time with honesty, anger management, and impulse control. The social expectations that have been developing within this group are to learn to identify a problem and work it out without reacting with anger and dishonesty. These issues continue to be a barrier for Mark and have increased since the family has become more unstable. (Exceptional Education teacher)

This exceptional education teacher demonstrates the following:

- Teaches individuals within group settings
 - Emphasizes self-concept, social dynamics, civic virtues, and character development
 - Knows students
4. I use a wide variety of curriculum and resources for continuous assessment, instruction, and remediation along with a very structured behavior management plan when working with Suzette. The social skills curriculum is integrated with the art curriculum and addresses the following areas: respect, conflict resolution, anger management, friendship, and trust. (Art teacher)

This art teacher demonstrates the following:

- Extends mission beyond cognitive capacity
- Respects diversity within group
- Teaches individuals in a group setting

Now that you have some knowledge of Core Proposition 1, it's time to read it in its entirety. To find it, please visit the NBPTS Web site: <http://www.nbpts.org/about/index.cfm>. Click on the phrase "Five Core Propositions" and you will find complete descriptions of the propositions in a format that can be copied into a word-processing document or downloaded as a PDF file. After studying the full description of the proposition, read the following scenario, noting evidence of Core Proposition 1.

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Finding Evidence of Core Proposition 1

In the following scenario, a tenth-grade general math teacher is describing her approach to teaching statistics to a class of poorly motivated students. As you read the scenario, look for evidence of her commitment to her students and to their learning. As you find evidence, note it on the chart on the next page. The first section of the chart is done for you.

At the beginning of the year I administered an interest inventory, a learning style inventory, and an attitude survey. Results showed that an overwhelming majority of the students enjoy sports and video games, are visual and tactile learners, and have little idea of the use of mathematics in their world. Our city supports a professional football team. Capitalizing on the students' interests, I met with representatives from the team and, together, we mapped out a plan of study. The class was given passes to attend the first home game of the season. After the game, students followed the progress of one player on the team, calculating averages, graphing yardage or points, and the like while the class as a whole followed the progress of the team in relation to other teams in the league. I ordered a subscription to the local newspaper so we could compare our data with the "official" data reported after each game.

All of the students embraced this unit except Sally, a shy girl who recently moved to the area and expressed no interest in sports. I asked her to help me organize the unit—keeping tabs on which players the students were following, checking to be sure their calculations were correct, organizing displays of the class data, and so on. Completing each of these tasks allowed her the opportunity to learn the material without having to be immersed in the sports themselves.

Assessment for this unit took many forms. Realizing that traditional tests would most likely cause the students to revert to their negative attitude toward math, I assessed student progress as they presented their statistics after each game, I presented them with "story problems" containing fictitious data in small group settings where they could solve the problems together, and I noted their responses to questions raised in class discussions. Of course, it's also important that students understand statistics in contexts other than sports, so we researched and analyzed other incidences of statistics and graphs we found in the newspaper and on the Internet.

Chart 1.1 Core Proposition 1: Teachers Are Committed to Students and Their Learning

<i>Core Proposition 1 Evidence</i>	<i>Is It There?</i>	<i>If So, Where?</i>
Knows students	Yes	<i>Based instruction on results of surveys; adjustment for Sally; alternative assessment</i>
Alters/adapts to students while teaching		
Deepens knowledge of students based in recognized learning theories		
Capitalizes on strengths to nurture weaknesses		
Provides multiple contexts when evaluating learning (not just tests)		
Is attuned to and capitalizes on diversity		
Recognizes that there are no favorites or throwaway children (all equal attention)		
Does not treat all students the same		
Is concerned with student characteristics		
Develops student character		
Develops student civic responsibility		

Notes to Yourself:

CORE PROPOSITION 2: TEACHERS KNOW THEIR SUBJECTS AND HOW TO TEACH THEM TO STUDENTS

How does a teacher demonstrate knowledge of content? Is it in the *things* that are taught, the *way* things are taught, or perhaps a combination of the two? What's the difference between knowledge of content and knowledge of the discipline? Is it possible to have one without the other? Is one more critical in the classroom than the other?

Core Proposition 2 defines content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and disciplinary thinking and describes teaching behaviors that indicate mastery of each. Following are excerpts from conversations with teachers about their classrooms. Each of these conversations demonstrates the teacher's mastery of content.

1. There has been a great deal of discussion among students and parents about the appropriateness of including the Harry Potter books in our school library. After debating the issue in class, the sixth-grade students hosted a public forum for the entire school community. Students from each side of the issue presented their arguments, and then they fielded questions from the audience. (Media Specialist)

In this conversation, the media specialist reveals how he accomplished the following:

- Develops critical thinking skills within discipline
- Applies content to real-world issues

2. After completing a simple one-day experiment with fresh cranberries, one of the students asked if the freshness of the berry would affect the results. Spurred on by this question other students began to ask questions—would the temperature of the berries change results? Would berry size make a difference? Capitalizing on this enthusiasm, I put aside my plans for the rest of the week and encouraged the students to create experiments dealing with variables of their choice. As a result, we didn't get as far through the written curriculum as other classes, but the students learned a great deal about the work of scientists! (Middle school Science teacher)

This science teacher shows evidence of Core Proposition 2 when she does the following:

- Extends teaching beyond facts to the way knowledge in the field is created
- Encourages critical thinking

- Helps students pose (and solve) problems
 - Solves problems new to both students and teacher
 - Recognizes that learning takes time
3. My class has been studying a variety of techniques to use when dealing with the public. The textbook contains many rich examples and nonexamples of conversations with customers. After reading and discussing these conversations, it became obvious to me that the students needed more hands-on experience in order to truly master the techniques. With the principal's blessing, teams of students created a product (employee relations) that was then sold to other students (customers) in the school store. (Career and Technical Education teacher)

This career and technical education teacher demonstrates the following:

- Provides practical application of content
- Employs methods most appropriate to content
- Employs multiple paths to knowledge

Now that you have some knowledge of Core Proposition 2, it's time to read it in its entirety. After studying the full description of the proposition, read the following scenario, noting evidence of Core Proposition 2.

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DESTINATION**Finding Evidence of Core Proposition 2**

In the following scenario, a fifth-grade teacher is describing a portion of her science unit on the concept of matter. As you read the scenario, look for evidence of the components of Core Proposition 2. Note any evidence you find in the chart on the next page.

The objective of the lesson was for the students to develop their own working definition of matter. The children worked in small cooperative groups. Each person was assigned a role to encourage everyone's participation. I gave each small group a plastic bag full of items (wood blocks, sugar granules, soil, cotton balls, etc.). Other items/elements such as fire, air, heat, milk, and electricity were represented with words on index cards. I asked each group to make a chart using the headings "matter," "nonmatter," and "unsure." As the children began to work I moved from group to group asking questions that would encourage them to make careful observations, compare, and think about each item. At the end of the lesson, the speaker from each group shared their list of items that were the most difficult to classify. Some of the items that the children listed were air, water, steak, light, margarine, and fire. From the list, I realized that group definitions were not quite complete enough to distinguish matter from nonmatter. At the end of the lesson, I collected the children's journals in order to learn more about their thinking.

After reading my student's science journals and reflecting on the previous lesson, I realized that the children had some misconceptions about matter. Taking the concept further, I decided to conduct a class discussion and construct a class chart of all the definitions in order to reach a consensus. At the end of the discussion many students could say that matter "takes up space" and has "mass." However, they needed more time to test the items that appeared on their "unsure" list in order to build a more solid foundation for a more extended study of matter. Through questioning, I encouraged the children to think about how to conduct tests on items. Stations were set up with the materials necessary for the children to conduct their own tests (gram scales, paper bags, flashlights, balloons, etc.). As the children carried out their tests, I encouraged them to review their own definition of matter and make any necessary changes.

Chart 1.2 Core Proposition 2: Teachers Know Their Subjects and How to Teach Them to Students

<i>Core Proposition 2 Evidence</i>	<i>Is It There?</i>	<i>If So, Where?</i>
Understands role of disciplinary thinking		
Develops thinking skills within discipline(s)		
Encourages students to question recognized assumptions		
Demonstrates pedagogical content knowledge		
Combines knowledge of students and knowledge of content		
Encourages students to pose problems		
Uses multiple methods		
Develops nonlinear thinking		
Recognizes that learning cannot be rushed		

Notes to Yourself:

CORE PROPOSITION 3: TEACHERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MANAGING AND MONITORING STUDENT LEARNING

Is there a difference between managing student behavior and managing student learning? How do teachers maximize learning opportunities for all students in their classes?

Core Proposition 3 details a variety of methods that accomplished teachers use to ensure student engagement and learning. Following are excerpts from conversations with teachers about their classrooms. Each of these conversations demonstrates some aspect of managing and monitoring student learning.

1. In preparation for student-led parent conferences, each of my students reviewed all work that had been collected throughout the semester. They were required to choose four products that best demonstrated their growth since the last grading period. They assessed their work against the standards we had agreed upon at the beginning of the term and wrote new objectives for the next grading period. Prior to the parent conference, all students met with me to share and/or revise their portfolios. (Fourth-grade teacher)

This fourth-grade teacher demonstrates the following:

- Involves students in self-assessment
- Uses portfolio assessment
- Provides constructive feedback

2. My general math class had just completed units of study relating to measurement, geometry, and ratio. Even though the book had mentioned practical applications of each topic, the students' lack of interest in these critical topics was staggering! I invited a local architect to visit the class to discuss the role of mathematics in her work. At the conclusion of the presentation, the students were literally sitting on the edge of their seats, begging for more. (Ninth-grade math teacher)

This ninth-grade math teacher demonstrates the following:

- Uses a variety of methods
- Uses outside resources
- Motivates by sparking new interests

3. There are a few students in this class who like to dominate discussions and have a hard time appreciating other points of view. In the past I have placed these students in the same group, but this time I chose to spread them out among the groups in an effort to help them develop

their discussion skills. I carefully placed them with students I knew would let them speak, but also would question and debate them if necessary. (Seventh-grade English teacher)

This English teacher demonstrates the following:

- Selects management techniques that encourage learning
 - Meets individual student needs within a group setting
 - Clearly articulates goals for individual students
4. Several students in this class have become much too dependent on their classmates and/or me when placed in problem-solving situations. For this reason, I required students to solve the area/perimeter problem individually and to record their solutions in their math journals. As they were working I roamed around the room, observing the problem-solving strategies of individual students and answering all questions by asking questions that would facilitate independent thinking. (Exceptional Education teacher)

This exceptional education teacher demonstrates the following:

- Assesses during activity
- Facilitates learning
- Monitors student engagement
- Focuses on learning, not behavior

Now that you have some knowledge of Core Proposition 3, it's time to read it in its entirety. After studying the full description of the proposition, read the following scenario, noting evidence of Core Proposition 3.

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DESTINATION**Finding Evidence of Core Proposition 3**

In the following scenario, a sixth-grade teacher is describing a map lesson. As you read the scenario, look for evidence of the components of Core Proposition 3. Note any evidence you find in the chart on the next page.

I teach a class of 32 very bright sixth graders for 100 minutes at the end of the day. The students vary tremendously in learning style, but they are quite similar in their tendency to tune out of an activity after about 10 minutes.

I wanted the students to compare and contrast a variety of maps in order to see the relationship between the purpose of a map and the symbols used on it and to identify elements that maps have in common. We began the class as a whole group discussion in which we listed the kinds of maps they had used in the past. I then divided the class into groups of four and distributed a different kind of map (or maplike device) to each group (shaded relief, digital elevation, road, property survey, ski trail, navigation chart, landscape plan, and construction plan). Groups were given 5 minutes to study the map, determine its purpose, and note symbols and other characteristics of interest appearing on the map. I monitored each of the groups during this phase of the lesson not only to make sure that they understood the task but to ask guiding questions when necessary. I rang a bell at the conclusion of the 5 minutes and gave students 1 minute of silent time to add individual comments to their notes. Maps were then passed to the group to their right, and the process was repeated. In this manner, all students studied eight maps in about 50 minutes. We then came together as a class and charted similarities, differences, possible uses, and common elements of the eight maps.

I was intrigued with the excitement level of students during this lesson. The short duration of each task coupled with the variety of maps worked well to prevent off-task behaviors and boredom. More significantly, however, I noticed that the leadership roles in each group seemed to change depending on the map being studied. For example, the tactile learners assumed leadership when the shaded relief map was being studied; those with spatial strength particularly enjoyed the landscape plans; the logical-mathematical students thrived with the floor, property, and construction plans, and Sam, who is unusually difficult to motivate, transferred his interest in boating to assume a leadership role with the navigation chart.

Chart 1.3 Core Proposition 3: Teachers Are Responsible for Managing and Monitoring Student Learning

<i>Core Proposition 3 Evidence</i>	<i>Is It There?</i>	<i>If So, Where?</i>
Alters methods to meet student learning styles		
Varies setting		
Varies materials		
Uses human resources		
Varies group size		
Encourages independent thinking		
Organizes with a focus on learning, not behavior		
Motivates students		
Monitors student engagement		
Assesses constantly		
Recognizes that teachers teach individuals while managing groups		
Recognizes that individual students will learn different things from the same lesson		
Recognizes that assessment is not always grading		
Provides constant feedback		
Clearly articulates goals and all choices based on them		

Notes to Yourself:

CORE PROPOSITION 4: TEACHERS THINK SYSTEMATICALLY ABOUT THEIR PRACTICE AND LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE

Teachers have to make choices throughout each teaching day. Among other things, they must decide what should be taught, how it should be taught, and how to motivate each student. How does a teacher acquire the information necessary to make each of these decisions? Core Proposition 4 describes a variety of methods that accomplished teachers use to update their skills and knowledge in order to ensure that the decisions they make are the most appropriate for their students. Following are excerpts from conversations with teachers about their practice. Each of these conversations demonstrates some aspect of thinking systematically about their practice.

1. I love the new mathematics materials my school adopted this year! We are finally de-emphasizing rote calculation and concentrating instead on problem-solving approaches to mathematics. The parents are quite concerned and have requested that I ignore the new program. I feel certain that if parents understood the program, however, they would not be so displeased with it. Last night I hosted a math class for the parents. Although not all parents left the meeting totally convinced of the need to learn to think mathematically, they did begin to develop an appreciation for the new program. We agreed to continue holding “classes” throughout the year, and I agreed to watch the children carefully to make sure the new program doesn’t have a negative effect on their readiness for middle school. (Fifth-grade teacher)

This fifth-grade teacher demonstrates the following:

- Justifies difficult choices
- Conducts classroom research

2. I’ve been toying with the idea of implementing literature circles in my advanced English Literature class for several years. Last month a colleague and I attended several sessions at the International Reading Association conference that provided us with wonderful ideas and resources. Since returning from the conference we have met almost every day and have designed a system that we think will work. We plan to begin the new approach next semester. (High school English teacher)

This high school English teacher demonstrates the following:

- Is a lifelong learner
- Uses current information to make thoughtful teaching choices

3. While working on my master's degree I became aware of the multiple intelligences research of Howard Gardner. At the time, I was working in a school located in a largely middle-class community. It was incredibly exciting to see the positive impact of altering my teaching methods to accommodate the learning styles of my students. I now work at a low performing school where the curriculum is largely scripted and I am frustrated that I can no longer vary my teaching methods. There must be a way! (First-grade teacher)

This first-grade teacher demonstrates the following:

- Is a lifelong learner
 - Understands power of reflection
 - Conducts classroom research
4. Last week Sam posed a problem that no one in the class could solve—and neither could I! At first I was hesitant to admit that I didn't know the answer, but then I realized that I had been given a wonderful opportunity to model learning with the students! We identified resources that could be used to help us, and we have been working together ever since. (Eleventh-grade Science teacher)

This science teacher demonstrates the following:

- Models critical thinking
- Models risk taking
- Is a lifelong learner

Finding Evidence of Core Proposition 4

In the following scenario, a kindergarten teacher is talking about how she has attempted to solve a dilemma in her classroom. As you read the scenario, look for evidence of the components of Core Proposition 4. Note any evidence you find in the chart on the next page.

Writing is an important part of my kindergarten curriculum. At the beginning of the school year most of the children tell their stories through pictures. Moving young children from the pictorial to the written word is a challenging responsibility. In October I was fortunate to attend a writing inservice that provided me with specific mini lessons I could use to improve student writing. After returning to the classroom, I couldn't wait to practice what I had learned, especially using a scoring rubric to assess the students' drawing and writing. It was the first tool I had ever seen to monitor and measure the growth of individual students and the class as a whole.

A month after attending the workshop and modeling the mini lessons I did not see the results I had hoped for. My students were still relying mostly on pictures and using few or no letters in their stories. They seemed to be spending a considerable amount of time off task during their writing time. The new scoring rubric confirmed that the children were not making the progress I had anticipated. Less than half of my class scored a Level 3 out of a score of 6. I wondered if the children needed more time and modeling or if the time they spent talking to each other was getting in the way of the writing progress.

I shared my concerns and work samples with a fellow teacher who attended the same writing inservice. I requested that she visit our classroom during writing time to observe the children and make notes about the conversations that were taking place as well as who was on and off task. I also asked her to score a class set of writing prompts using the rubric we were given in the workshop because I wanted someone impartial to score my student's writing. I was anxious to receive constructive feedback to find out more about my children and their writing.

The same teacher requested that I observe her writers workshop. After we had visited each others' classrooms we sat down and discussed what should come next in our writing programs.

Chart 1.4 Core Proposition 4: Teachers Think Systematically About Their Practice and Learn From Experience

<i>Core Proposition 4 Evidence</i>	<i>Is It There?</i>	<i>If So, Where?</i>
Is a lifelong learner		
Makes informed choices and justifiable compromises		
Seeks advice from colleagues		
Welcomes observations		
Understands power of reflection		
Stays current (professional development)		
Conducts classroom research		
Recognizes the significance of professional development		

Notes to Yourself:

CORE PROPOSITION 5: TEACHERS ARE MEMBERS OF LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Accomplished teachers interact with a wide variety of communities. They enjoy rich partnerships with parents and the local community, they participate in school and districtwide inservice activities, and they contribute significantly to professional organizations. Core Proposition 5 lists a variety of learning communities available to accomplished teachers and tells how involvement in them can significantly impact student learning. Following are excerpts from conversations with teachers about their practice. Each of these conversations demonstrates some aspect of their involvement with learning communities.

1. Realizing how important it is to integrate academics into my physical education curriculum, I chose to attend several mathematics workshops during our systemwide professional development day. Upon returning to the school, I met with each of the grade level teams in an effort to correlate my activities with their curriculum needs. (Elementary Physical Education teacher)

This physical education teacher demonstrates the following:

- Collaborates with colleagues
- Develops curriculum
- Shares expertise

2. In the past few weeks Sally has become quite withdrawn and seems to be losing a great deal of weight. Yesterday I arranged for Sally to visit with the school counselor. At the conclusion of the session, the counselor provided insight into Sally's problems and helped me plan future lessons for her. (Middle school Social Studies teacher)

This social studies teacher demonstrates the following:

- Identifies special needs students
- Collaborates with specialists

3. Last year I served on the school district textbook adoption committee. Rather than merely reading through the texts and making a decision, I chose to involve teachers in my school. I provided each team member with lessons from each of the texts. After teaching each lesson, we met as a team to discuss the appropriateness of the lesson for our students as well as the appropriateness of the content in general. I felt certain that my final vote on the committee represented the views of the entire team. (English as a New Language teacher)

This teacher demonstrates the following:

- Is a team player
 - Coordinates instruction
4. I begin each year by making home visits. Meeting the students and parents/guardians in the comfort of their own homes helps to open lines of communication. At these meetings I share a bit about the curriculum and procedures of the class as well as information about myself, the students share a bit about themselves, and the parents discuss issues of concern they might have about the year. I also collect data at these visits in regard to how the parents/guardians might be able to contribute to the class throughout the year. As a result of these visits, students are more comfortable when they come to class on the first day, and a significant two-way communication system is begun with families. (Exceptional Education teacher)

This exceptional education teacher demonstrates the following:

- Engages parents and community

Finding Evidence of Core Proposition 5

In the following scenario, an elementary teacher is talking about a summer literacy program. As you read the scenario, look for evidence of the components of Core Proposition 5. Note any evidence you find in the chart on the next page.

The principal and teachers at our school were concerned that students were reading below grade level when they were being promoted to the next grade. As an elementary school teacher who has always had an interest in literacy development, I was eager to serve on a committee that would design a 4-week summer literacy program for teachers and students. This committee consisted of two classroom teachers, our curriculum resource teacher, and our school principal. We sought help outside of our school by inviting a literacy coach from our county administration office and a reading recovery teacher from a neighboring school to help us design our program.

It was decided that an important component of our program would be to include a teacher-coaching model. One to two teachers a week would join a classroom to observe, experience, and try new reading and writing strategies while teaching alongside the lead teacher. We hoped that this model would not only improve the literacy skills of the students attending summer school, but ultimately impact the entire school as a greater number of teachers became involved in the program.

The program we designed was implemented the following summer. The students who attended showed significant gains, but the highlight of each week may have been the reflection and discussion time the teachers shared after the students left every afternoon. This time was spent talking about what had occurred in the classroom and linking our experiences to the latest research in literacy development. The result of this reflection and discussion time was a deeper understanding through critical analysis of our teaching practices. We found that we were learning from each other.

Working together to plan and implement a summer school that would impact students and teachers led to a new form of collaboration. The following school year teachers across grade levels were continuing to discuss how new strategies were impacting their teaching and their students.

Chart 1.5 Core Proposition 5: Teachers Are Members of Learning Communities

<i>Core Proposition 5 Evidence</i>	<i>Is It There?</i>	<i>If So, Where?</i>
Collaborates with colleagues		
Is aware of and respectful of state and federal mandates		
Identifies special needs students and arranges for specialists to assist		
Is a team player		
Engages parents and community		

Notes to Yourself:

SUMMARY OF THE FIVE CORE PROPOSITIONS

The Five Core Propositions provide the framework for the entire National Board Certification journey. As generic competencies, they describe the state of the art for all teachers, no matter what subject or grade level they may teach. All accomplished teachers are committed to their students; are subject area experts; have a repertoire of effective teaching strategies; adapt methods and materials to the needs of individual students in their classes; motivate their students; intellectually engage their students in learning; constantly reflect on their practice, making changes as appropriate; involve parents and community in the learning of their students; and dedicate themselves to lifelong learning. When viewed individually, the Five Core Propositions may seem a bit overwhelming. Do *all* accomplished teachers, for instance, do *all* of the things listed in *each* proposition on any given day? Probably not.

Perhaps it is a good idea to consider the propositions in a broader context. As you studied them, you probably realized that, although there are five different propositions, there is quite a bit of overlap among them. That is to say, the activities of teaching may very well fall within more than one proposition, and some may fall into all five! Consider the teacher who invited the architect into her classroom. Was she

- providing multiple contexts to promote learning? (Core Proposition 1)
- using subject knowledge as an entrée into the real world? (Core Proposition 2)
- using human resources to motivate students? (Core Proposition 3)
- seeking the most current information about the subject? (Core Proposition 4)
- engaging the community? (Proposition 5)

When taken together, the propositions guide the daily work of all accomplished teachers. In the next few pages you will begin to reflect upon your own practice in relationship to these Five Core Propositions as applied to your specific certificate area.

THE STANDARDS

You have examined the Core Propositions, and now it is time to read the standards for your certification area. Each certificate area contains a set of approximately ten NBPTS standards that are based on the Five Core Propositions. The main difference between the two documents is the specificity of the standards. Whereas the core propositions define accomplished teaching across all grades and ages, the standards define accomplished teacher behaviors appropriate to the age of the students you teach and the content you present to them.

The standards provide the framework for describing your practice. They stress the importance of understanding the developmental age of the students you teach

and the need to create environments that involve students in meaningful learning. They identify the strategies, methods, and practices that accomplished teachers use to teach diverse groups of students, and they emphasize the importance of developing collaborative partnerships with parents, colleagues, and the community.

The standards for each certification area are available for purchase and in PDF format on the NBPTS Web site (<http://www.nbpts.org>—Click on Candidate Resource Center, then, on the new page, click on Certificate Knowledge Center). You will need access to a copy of the standards for your certification area to complete the following activities. While you're visiting the Web site, you might also want to take a few minutes to read how the standards were developed.

Studying the Standards

It is impossible to overstate the importance of the standards for your certification area. Throughout the application process you will be asked to describe how your practice demonstrates each of the standards of accomplished teaching. One National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) likes to tell people that she kept a copy of her standards under her pillow in hopes that the information would drift to her brain while she slept! The standards are fairly lengthy documents and can be difficult to read. However, they are well worth the effort. Studying them will help you define what good practice is and help you identify the elements in your own teaching that qualify you as an accomplished teacher.

The following activity provides you with a strategy for familiarizing yourself with each of the standards in your certification area. You will want to repeat this process with each of the standards, but please take your time. At the end of this exercise you should feel comfortable with the standards for accomplished teaching and have completed a pretty thorough self-assessment of your practice.

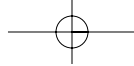
You will be reading each standard in your certificate area *three times*. As you read each standard, keep the following questions in mind:

- What would accomplished teachers do or say that demonstrates the standard in their practice?
- What proof is needed to show that a teacher meets this standard?

Procedures:

1. Read the entire standard straight through without taking notes. This will give you a broad overview of the content.
2. Reread the standard, noting things that you already do that demonstrate the standard in your practice. Many teachers prefer to jot notes directly in the margins of the standards document.
3. Read the standard one more time, noting those things that you don't presently include in your practice. Consider how you could include them.

Many teachers find it helpful to organize their thoughts about each standard in chart form. The following chart was completed by a high school science teacher.



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As you can see, the teacher has realized that, although he already uses both formal and informal methods to assess his students, there are some areas that he could strengthen in order to meet the assessment standard for his certificate area. You will find a blank copy of the “Analyzing the Standards” form in Resource 1 of this book. Completing one chart for each of your standards will help you reflect on how they apply to your teaching.

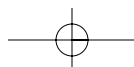
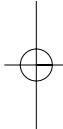
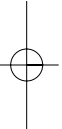


Chart 1.6 Analyzing the Standards

Standard # 10: Assessment
(Write the title of the standard here)

Evidence of This Standard in My Practice

<i>Key Word or Phrase</i>	<i>What I Do</i>	<i>What I Could Do</i>
Formal methods	Weekly exams	
Informal methods	Portfolios of lab work	Lab assessments; analyze thought processes while in lab
Ongoing	Portfolios	Observe daily to help direct future instruction
Beyond facts to processes	Portfolios	Analyze novel problem
Before instruction	Analyze content to be taught	?????
During instruction	Observe during labs; listen during group discussions	Ask facilitative questions while observing
After instruction	Factual exams	Write an essay; construct concept map
May be more than one day		Rethink use of exams as teaching tools
Student self-assessment		Have students select work to include in portfolio (maybe more than teacher assigned labs)

Is there anything in your practice that seems to be contrary to the standard (i.e., something that you might want to change)?

I seem to rely too heavily on formal assessment (exams); I need to turn more of the assessment over to the students—help them use science processes within assessments. I also need to find out what it means to assess *before* instruction.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Must I do all of the things mentioned in the Core Propositions and the Standards in order to be considered an accomplished teacher?

No. The Five Core Propositions and the Standards for each certificate area describe the ideal teacher. Accomplished teachers constantly strive to meet the standard but often fall short. The key to accomplishment is self-awareness and persistent efforts to improve areas of weakness in order to ensure maximal student learning. That being said, it is important that candidates demonstrate accomplishment of most of the characteristics described in the two documents.

Suppose I'm weak in one area: Should I wait until I've improved my practice to begin the National Board process?

Not necessarily. Considered by many to be one of the most powerful staff development tools available today, the National Board's Five Core Propositions serve as the basis for preservice as well as inservice education throughout the country. It's important to note, too, that the NBPTS recognizes the professional development aspect of the process by allowing teachers 3 years to achieve certification (candidates must complete the entire process in the first year, but they may bank points and redo sections as desired over the following 2 years). As you reviewed your practice against the Five Core Propositions and Standards, if you found only a few weak areas in your teaching, you will most likely improve on them while completing the process. If you found many disagreements between your practice and the standards, you may wish to wait a while longer.

What if I don't agree that something in the standards is good teaching, or if it doesn't work with my students?

This is a very good question! Perhaps the answer lies in the number of disagreements you find between the standards and your own beliefs about teaching and learning. If you find many points of departure, the process could be a long and painful one for you. If you find only a few, you will most likely have no problems at all.

I teach in a low-performing school where the reading curriculum is scripted and I'm forbidden to vary from the text. There's no way I can show that I adjust methods and materials to the individual needs of my students. Should I forget all about National Board certification?

Not necessarily. Many elementary school teachers in your position have found ways to demonstrate their ability to adapt curriculum to the diverse needs of their students through use of integrated curriculum (i.e., teaching reading within the context of science). In the next chapter of this book you will be guided through the requirements of each portfolio entry. Keep the limitations of your situation in mind as you complete each of the tasks.