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# A guide on the trail to certification

## Q How do you coach teachers for National Board Certification?

Our district has set up a formal process to help teachers districtwide with the process of National Board Certification. I meet with candidates at least once a month, more often as the year goes on, and we specifically address the work that teachers are doing with their portfolios. We look very closely at the process, analyze the portfolio, look at the standards, discuss work samples, talk about the technical aspects of videotaping, talk about the requirements for portfolios in terms of timelines; we do some critical brainstorming about the focus of each other's work.

Overall, my role is to support teaching, to be an instructional leader. The most important thing I've needed to know is what constituted high-quality teaching practices. I got my teacher certification as a second career. First as a parent, then as a volunteer in the school, then as a teacher, I

saw student engagement as a really important issue. I saw some of the older students not being quite as motivated and less engaged. We worked with teachers to figure out ways to make these kids more engaged.

In the classroom, I look for the kind of dialogue going on between the teacher and the student, but also among the students: lively discussions, people looking for different angles of the problem, critical thinking. If students are learning to analyze, then there's effective teaching going on. I try to help teachers learn how to manage their time; I work on helping teachers learn to ask more open-ended questions, not just purely recall facts, getting students to respond to that kind of question to get them engaged.

The point is to get a bigger cadre of effective teachers in our district. That's the bottom line. We ask, were the teachers able to be National Board Certified? But the most important thing is that they were able to spend time critically analyzing their practice — that's the goal. ♦

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