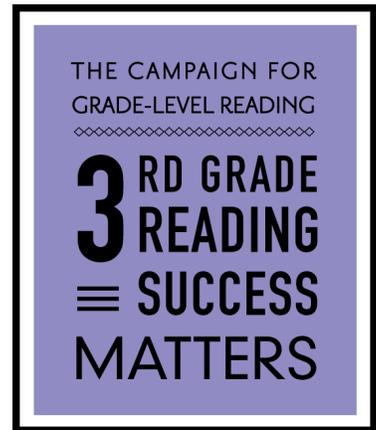


# BRIGHT SPOTS

Quality Teaching



## National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, Arlington, VA

Studying for certification through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), Annemarie Strom, a kindergarten teacher at Ellen Mitchell Elementary School in Chicago, quickly realized she wanted to improve how she taught listening, speaking and viewing skills.

“Particularly in today’s media-dominant society, I know that students need to be prepared to interpret and evaluate the media they encounter,” she says. So Strom embedded the skills in lessons related to her class’ study of the ocean and its participation in a school-wide “Read for a Cause” charity drive. Her kindergartners viewed public service announcements to learn how to make their own, and worked in teams to design messages that would motivate their audiences to help clean up oceans and beaches.

Through the NBPTS process, Strom also rediscovered the power of one-on-one conferences with her kindergartners about their writing. “As a result, student writing has improved,” she says.

Mitchell Elementary School is one of many schools and districts around the country to reinforce teacher quality and student achievement through National Board certification. Founded in 1987, the organization offers certification for teachers, school counselors and principals in most subject categories, pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Strom, for instance, is working toward a National Board certificate in Literacy: Reading-Language Arts.

To earn certification, a candidate must submit four portfolios demonstrating their teaching practices, each intensively documented. In addition, a candidate must pass a three-hour, six-question assessment of subject knowledge. “The process takes you back to the basics of assessment and lesson design, and encourages teachers to determine the ways in which we can capitalize on areas like student interest, classroom environment or the use of technology,” says Strom.

### WHO THEY ARE

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#### The National Board:

- Was founded in 1987.
- Began a voluntary certification program for teachers, school counselors and principals in 1994.
- Certified 6,266 U.S. teachers in 2011.
- Has certified a total of 97,291 teachers in the U.S.

**\$2,565 cost per candidate.**

### WHAT THEY ACHIEVE

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**Students taught by NBPTS-certified teachers make greater gains on state achievement tests than their peers.**

*\*Source: National Research Council, 2008*

**Gains made by students of 24 Arizona NBPTS-certified teachers on SAT-9 tests in reading were 1.3 months greater than those made by students of other teachers.**

*\*Source: Vandevoot et al, 2004, study of four years of SAT-9 data*

## Certification as Partner

Luis Soria, the NBPTS-certified principal of Mitchell Elementary since 2006, began encouraging teachers to gain NBPTS certification as soon as he arrived at the school. By early 2012, nine Mitchell teachers were board-certified, and four more were in the process. From 2008 to 2011, the percentage of Mitchell 3<sup>rd</sup> graders exceeding grade-level standards on state tests jumped from 0 percent to 39.1 percent in reading, and from 7.7 percent to 56.5 percent in mathematics. Other grades have seen similar improvement rates.

Soria says NBPTS certification has been a “co-relational impetus” to student achievement. “Given the deep conversations about instruction and curriculum design that the National Board hopes to create with its teachers, board certification is a partner to the way we design curriculum here — an important partner.”

## Learning Communities

“NBPTS certification creates a common language and work ethic of performance among teachers,” says Jerry Weast, the former superintendent of Montgomery County (Maryland) Public Schools (MCPS) and the man credited with closing the district’s achievement gap. “They become like a SEAL team: a high-performing group that knows how each other thinks. They’re all self-selected to do really hard work, and they can focus and refocus on what the children need.”

Across the country in Anthony, New Mexico, Elena Reyes, a teacher at Loma Linda Elementary School, agrees. “Before pursuing National Board certification, we teachers would plan together, but we really didn’t discuss our teaching practices in detail,” she says. “Now we really analyze student work, reflect on our teaching, and talk about what’s working and what’s not.”

For years, Loma Linda had the lowest standardized test scores in the district. Roughly 60 percent of the students are English language learners, and 98 percent qualify for Free and Reduced-Price Meals. Reconstituting Loma Linda for the 2010–2011 school year, Gadsden Independent School District required any teacher working at the school to either have National Board certification or commit to pursuing it. In early 2012, only five of the original teachers remained, but 19 teachers were in the full certification process. Eight more were in *NBPTS’ Take One!* program for teachers with less than three years experience. In 2010–2011, Loma Linda met Adequate Yearly Process for the first time.

It’s a process that makes a teacher get pretty ruthless with themselves with introspection and reflection,” says Michael Bayewitz, Principal of Broad Acres Elementary School, a Montgomery County, Maryland, public school that used National Board certification to help achieve big gains in third-grade reading. “It’s really taking a look at your own craft, your own practice, in a way that I don’t know any other program does.”

## CONTACT

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### **National Board for Professional Teaching Standards**

1525 Wilson Blvd., Suite 500

Arlington, VA 22209

1-888-780-7805

[www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org)

*Ronald Thorpe, President & CEO*

[rthorpe@nbpts.org](mailto:rthorpe@nbpts.org)

(703) 465-2174

## HIGHLIGHTS

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### **NBPTS Certification:**

- **Requires four portfolios that demonstrate and document teaching practice.**
- **Also requires passing a six-question, three-hour content knowledge assessment.**
- **Targets a specific subject and child development area.**
- **Takes 1 to 3 years to complete.**
- **Is valid for 10 years.**
- **Complements but does not replace state teaching license.**

### **NBPTS *Take One!*:**

- **Enables a candidate with 1 to 3 years teaching experience to try certification process.**
- **Requires only one portfolio submittal.**
- **Allows score to be banked towards certification.**