



Kentucky Department of
E D U C A T I O N

Office of Educator Licensure and Effectiveness

I'm an NBCT... Now What?

A Guide to Effective Utilization of National Board Certified Teachers



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Part 1: An Introduction to National Board Certification

Understanding the National Board Certification Process

Across the country, National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) represent some of the most accomplished and reflective practitioners in the profession. National Board Certification, administered by the [National Board for Professional Teaching Standards](#) (NBPTS), is widely recognized as a rigorous, voluntary process through which teachers demonstrate advanced knowledge, skills, and practices aligned to high and comprehensive standards for effective teaching.

At its core, National Board Certification is grounded in the belief that teaching excellence matters and that accomplished educators are essential to student success. The certification process is built on the [Five Core Propositions](#), which describe what teachers should know and be able to do. These propositions emphasize a deep commitment to students and their learning, strong subject matter expertise, thoughtful management and monitoring of student progress, reflective practice, and participation in learning communities. There are sixteen content areas and four developmental levels in which teachers may certify.

The certification journey requires teachers to engage in an intensive analysis of their instructional practice. Candidates must complete and achieve passing scores on the following four components:

- a. Content Knowledge
- b. Differentiation in Instruction
- c. Teaching Practice and Learning Environment
- d. Reflective Practice

Through this process, teachers critically examine their decisions, evaluate their instructional impact, and articulate how their practice supports equitable access to learning for all students.

While the process is demanding, it is also transformative. Teachers who pursue National Board Certification often report significant growth in their instructional effectiveness, confidence, and leadership capacity. The experience cultivates habits of reflection, inquiry, and collaboration that extend far beyond the certification itself.

For districts and schools, NBCTs represent a powerful and often underutilized resource. Their expertise can support instructional improvement, mentoring and coaching, curriculum development, and professional learning initiatives. Understanding the National Board process is a critical first step in recognizing the depth of knowledge and skill NBCTs bring to their work, and in building systems that leverage their expertise to strengthen teaching and learning across districts.

This guide is designed to help educational leaders realize the value of National Board Certification. By beginning with an overview of the process and its principles, we lay the foundation for effectively engaging NBCTs as catalysts for continuous improvement and student success.

Benefits of Certification in Kentucky

In Kentucky, NBCTs receive meaningful professional and financial recognition. In accordance with [KRS 157.395](#), NBCTs are awarded a \$2,000 annual salary supplement for the duration of their active National Board certification. This supplement is also included in calculations for retirement benefits, adding long-term value to certification.

National Board Certification also supports advancement within Kentucky’s professional rank system. Teachers who achieve NBCT status may apply through the Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB) for a permanent rank change:

- Teachers holding Rank III certification may apply to advance to Rank II, and
- Teachers holding Rank II may apply to advance to Rank I.

Importantly, these rank changes are permanent. If a teacher later chooses not to renew their National Board Certification after the initial five-year certification period, they will lose the \$2,000 salary supplement, but retain any rank advancement already awarded.

To continue receiving the annual supplement, teachers must remain in roles aligned to their certification. In accordance with Kentucky statute [157.395](#), the supplement will end if an NBCT is no longer serving as a classroom teacher or teacher mentor in the area of their National Board certification.

Impacts of National Board Certified Teachers

A substantial body of research demonstrates that National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) contribute positively to student learning outcomes and serve as a reliable indicator of advanced teaching effectiveness. The findings below synthesize key evidence to inform district-level efforts to strategically leverage NBCT expertise.

1. Consistent Positive Effects on Student Achievement

Across multiple large-scale and longitudinal studies, students taught by NBCTs demonstrate higher academic gains than peers taught by non-certified teachers (Vandevoort et al., 2004).

- Average effects are commonly estimated at approximately one to two additional months of student learning per academic year.
- These gains have been observed using value-added measures, standardized assessments, and district-level evaluations, strengthening confidence in the reliability of findings.

Implication for districts: NBCTs represent a validated source of instructional expertise that can directly improve student academic outcomes when strategically placed and supported.

2. NB Certification as a Signal of Teacher Effectiveness

Research consistently finds that National Board Certification distinguishes teachers who are more effective at advancing student learning (Cavalluzzo et al., 2014).

- Studies across multiple contexts (e.g., Chicago, Kentucky, Washington) conclude that certification serves as a credible, performance-based indicator of teaching quality tied to student outcomes.
- Rigorous analyses show NBCTs outperform similarly experienced peers, reinforcing that certification reflects instructional expertise rather than years of service alone.

Implication for districts: NBCT status can be used as a data-informed criterion for leadership roles, mentoring assignments, and instructional improvement initiatives.

3. Greater Impact on High-Need Student Populations

Evidence indicates that the positive effects of NBCTs are especially pronounced for under served student groups, including low-income and minority students (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2007).

Implication for districts: Strategic deployment of NBCTs in high-need schools or classrooms can support equity goals and acceleration of learning for historically under served students.

4. Measurable Gains Across Subjects and Contexts

While the magnitude of effects varies, research demonstrates NBCT impact across multiple subject areas, grade levels, and geographic contexts.

- For example, studies report gains equivalent to up to 1.5 months of additional learning, particularly in mathematics and middle grades (Cowan & Goldhaber, 2015).
- District-level analyses (e.g., Los Angeles) show statistically significant improvements in both mathematics and English language arts compared to non-NBCT teachers with similar experience (Strategic Data Project, 2012).

Implication for districts: NBCT expertise is broadly applicable and can support system wide instructional improvement efforts, not limited to specific content areas.

5. Instructional Practices That Drive Impact

Research suggests that NBCTs are more likely to engage students in higher-order thinking, meaningful learning experiences, and instructional practices that promote deep understanding rather than simple content recall. Such practices contribute to stronger student achievement outcomes and help build enduring academic skills (Smith et al., 2008).

Implication for districts: Leveraging NBCTs as instructional leaders, coaches, and facilitators of professional learning can extend these practices beyond individual classrooms.

Overall, NBCTs represent a critical lever for improving teaching quality and student outcomes at scale. Districts that intentionally utilize NBCT expertise, through leadership pathways, mentoring structures, and equitable placement, are better positioned to realize these benefits system wide.

Elevating National Board Certified Teachers

Finding ways to celebrate and elevate National Board teachers encourages others to certify and validates the hard work candidates have put into the process. It sends a clear message that advanced certification is valued and not invisible. Celebrating this achievement reinforces teacher excellence, student impact, and system-wide improvement.

The following are some easy ways in which schools and districts can acknowledge NBCTs without adding significant cost.

District Level Acknowledgments

1. Inviting newly certified NBCTs to district board meetings and publicly acknowledging their accomplishment
2. Adding an NBCT spotlight column to district newsletters
3. Highlighting NBCTs and their work on district social media or district website
4. Presenting NBCTs with a signed letter or certificate of congratulations from district superintendent
5. Considering NBCTs when searching for presenters or speakers at professional development events
6. Creating a district-specific email badge or signature

School Level Acknowledgments

1. Highlighting NBCTs on school bulletin boards or newsletters
2. Creating door signs, flags, or specialty placards denoting teachers as an NBCT
3. Presenting handwritten notes from administration/students congratulating teachers on their achievement
4. Creating opportunities for leadership within the school: leading professional development, coaching new teachers, establishing a learning lab inside the teacher's classroom, etc.

Part 2: Leading From the Classroom

Part 2 of this guide highlights some of the various leadership roles that can be taken on by NBCTs. Often, these teachers are looking for leadership positions that allow them to remain in the classroom setting. The following list describes each role, the associated responsibilities, and a rationale of the role being held by a National Board Certified teacher.

New Teacher Mentor

Description

The goal of new teacher induction and mentoring is to provide essential support to help beginning teachers launch successful careers. These programs aim to deepen teachers’ understanding of instructional methods, classroom management, school policies, and the specific expectations of their grade level or subject area.

Core Responsibilities

- Provide ongoing coaching and emotional support to new teachers
- Model effective teaching practices and facilitate classroom observations
- Assist with lesson planning, assessment design, and differentiation
- Offer feedback aligned to professional teaching standards
- Support onboarding into school culture and expectations

Relevance for NBCTs

NBCTs are skilled at reflecting on and explaining their own practice, which makes them strong guides for new teachers. They can break down effective instruction, offer thoughtful feedback, and help novices build confidence using proven strategies.

Instructional Coach

Description

An instructional coach works alongside teachers to strengthen instructional practice and improve student learning outcomes through job-embedded professional support. This role centers on sustained collaboration, including co-planning, modeling, observation, and feedback.

Core Responsibilities

- Conduct coaching cycles (planning, observation, reflection)
- Co-plan lessons and model instructional strategies
- Analyze student work and assessment data with teachers
- Support implementation of instructional frameworks
- Facilitate teacher reflection and goal setting

Relevance for NBCTs

NBCTs bring a strong understanding of how to connect teaching practices to student outcomes. Their experience analyzing instruction and adjusting based on evidence allows them to support colleagues in making meaningful, lasting improvements.

Professional Learning Facilitator

Description

This role designs, leads, and supports high-quality professional learning experiences aligned with school and district priorities. This role ensures that professional development is ongoing, relevant, and responsive to educator needs. The facilitator creates opportunities for collaborative learning, including professional learning communities (PLCs), workshops, and inquiry cycles, while promoting reflection and application of new learning in classroom practice.

Core Responsibilities

- Design and facilitate workshops, PLCs, and training sessions
- Align professional learning to standards and school improvement plans
- Differentiate PD for varying teacher needs
- Evaluate the impact of professional learning initiatives
- Foster collaborative learning environments

Relevance for NBCTs

NBCTs are not only effective practitioners but also thoughtful communicators of practice. They are well-positioned to lead adult learning by making professional development relevant, practical, and grounded in real classroom experience.

Curriculum Developer

Description

A curriculum developer leads the design, refinement, and alignment of instructional materials to ensure coherence, rigor, and accessibility across grade levels and content areas. This role focuses on creating standards-aligned curriculum that integrates effective instructional strategies, meaningful assessments, and opportunities for differentiation. The developer collaborates with educators to ensure curriculum resources are practical, culturally responsive, and address diverse student learning needs.

Core Responsibilities

- Design standards-aligned curriculum units and assessments
- Ensure vertical and horizontal alignment across grade levels
- Integrate differentiation and culturally responsive practices
- Review and revise curriculum based on student outcomes
- Collaborate with teachers and leaders on implementation

Relevance for NBCTs

NBCTs have a deep understanding of standards, content, and how students learn. This allows them to design curriculum that is both rigorous and accessible, with clear connections between instruction, assessment, and student growth.

Data Coach

Description

The Data Coach supports educators in effectively using multiple sources of student data to inform instruction and improve outcomes. This role involves building teacher capacity in data literacy, facilitating collaborative data analysis, and guiding instructional decision-making based on evidence. The data coach helps teams identify trends, set goals, monitor progress, and implement targeted strategies to address gaps in student learning.

Core Responsibilities

- Facilitate data analysis meetings with teams
- Support development of data-driven instructional plans
- Help teachers identify trends, gaps, and interventions
- Build teacher capacity in assessment literacy
- Monitor progress toward student achievement goals

Relevance for NBCTs

NBCTs regularly use evidence of student learning to guide their instruction. Their ability to interpret data and translate it into actionable teaching strategies helps others use data in more meaningful and effective ways.

Community Partner Liaison

Description

The Community Partnership Liaison serves as a bridge between the school and external stakeholders, including families, businesses, and community organizations. This role focuses on building and sustaining partnerships that enhance student learning opportunities, provide additional resources, and strengthen family engagement. The liaison ensures that partnerships align with school goals and contribute to equitable access to opportunities and supports for all students.

Core Responsibilities

- Develop and maintain partnerships with community stakeholders
- Coordinate programs, resources, and events benefiting students
- Facilitate communication between school and community
- Advocate for student needs and equitable access to resources
- Support family engagement initiatives

Relevance for NBCTs

NBCTs recognize that student success is shaped by more than classroom instruction. Their commitment to supporting the whole child makes them strong advocates for building relationships with families and community partners.

Lead Teacher

Description

The Lead Teacher provides instructional and organizational leadership within a grade level, department, or content area team. This role supports the implementation of school initiatives, facilitates collaboration among teachers, and promotes continuous improvement in teaching and learning. The lead teacher acts as a point of contact between staff and administration, helping to communicate expectations, guide team efforts, and support a cohesive instructional vision.

Core Responsibilities

- Facilitate team meetings and collaborative planning
- Guide implementation of instructional initiatives
- Support team goal setting and progress monitoring
- Serve as a liaison between administration and teachers
- Model effective teaching practices

Relevance for NBCTs

NBCTs are respected for their instructional expertise and professionalism. Their ability to model effective teaching and support collaboration makes them natural leaders within teams.

Peer Evaluator (Informal)

Description

The Peer Evaluator (Informal) provides non-evaluative feedback to colleagues to support professional growth and reflective practice. This role involves conducting classroom observations, facilitating reflective conversations, and offering actionable insights aligned to instructional standards. The focus is on building a culture of trust, collaboration, and continuous improvement, rather than formal evaluation or accountability measures.

Core Responsibilities

- Conduct non-evaluative classroom observations
- Provide constructive, standards-aligned feedback
- Support reflection and goal-setting conversations
- Promote a culture of continuous improvement
- Maintain trust and confidentiality

Relevance for NBCTs

NBCTs are trained to reflect on teaching using clear standards and evidence. This helps them provide feedback that is both specific and supportive, while maintaining trust with colleagues.

Classroom Learning Lab Facilitator

Description

The Classroom Learning Lab Facilitator opens their classroom as a demonstration site where educators can observe high-quality instruction in practice. This role includes intentionally modeling instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement techniques. The facilitator structures observation experiences with clear goals and supports pre- and post-observation discussions to deepen understanding and promote application in participants’ own classrooms.

Core Responsibilities

- Conduct non-evaluative classroom observations
- Provide constructive, standards-aligned feedback
- Support reflection and goal-setting conversations
- Promote a culture of continuous improvement
- Maintain trust and confidentiality

Relevance for NBCTs

NBCTs demonstrate high-level teaching in their own classrooms and can clearly explain their instructional choices. This makes their classrooms valuable spaces for colleagues to observe and learn from real practice.

NBCT Cohort Leader

Description

The NBCT Cohort Leader supports teachers pursuing National Board Certification by organizing and facilitating a structured cohort experience. This role includes guiding candidates through the certification process, providing feedback on portfolio components, and fostering a collaborative learning environment. The cohort leader ensures participants remain on track while building their understanding of accomplished teaching and reflective practice.

Core Responsibilities

- Facilitate cohort meetings and support sessions
- Guide candidates through NBPTS components and requirements
- Provide feedback on portfolio entries
- Support time management and goal setting
- Build a collaborative, supportive cohort culture

Relevance for NBCTs

NBCTs have firsthand experience with the certification process and understand its challenges and rewards. They can guide candidates with practical insight, encouragement, and a clear understanding of expectations.

Part 3: Logistics

Creating Hybrid Roles

Overview

Hybrid roles allow NBCTs to maintain responsibilities in the classroom while also taking on leadership functions that strengthen instruction and support colleagues. Rather than removing accomplished teachers entirely from direct student interaction, hybrid positions intentionally balance teaching with leadership, ensuring that expertise remains grounded in current classroom practice.

Purpose of Hybrid Roles

Hybrid leadership roles allow NBCTs to remain rooted in classroom practice while extending their expertise to support colleagues, students, and school improvement efforts. Rather than moving accomplished teachers into full-time administrative positions, these models intentionally divide responsibility between direct instruction and leadership functions. The result is a career pathway that keeps highly effective educators connected to students while leveraging their expertise across the school or district.

When creating hybrid roles, schools and districts should prioritize the following:

1. Balance and Sustainability

- Clearly define the proportion of time dedicated to teaching versus leadership. A common structure might include 60–80% classroom instruction and 20–40% leadership responsibilities, depending on the role.

2. Alignment to School Priorities

Hybrid roles should directly support school improvement goals, such as strengthening instruction, supporting new teachers, or improving student outcomes.

3. Clarity of Responsibilities

Clearly outline expectations, time commitments, and deliverables to prevent role ambiguity and overload.

4. Protected Time

Ensure dedicated time within the school day for leadership responsibilities (e.g., common planning time, release periods). Without protected time, hybrid roles can quickly become unsustainable.

Examples of Hybrid Role Structures

Schools can design hybrid roles that combine classroom teaching with one or more of the leadership roles outlined in this guide.

Hybrid schedules can be structured in several ways:

- Protected release periods during the school day (e.g., teaching 4–5 classes instead of 6)
- Part-day leadership assignments (e.g., mornings in the classroom, afternoons in leadership work)
- Alternating schedules (designated days for teaching and designated days for leadership responsibilities)
- Job-sharing or co-teaching arrangements that create flexibility for leadership duties
- District-wide assignments where teachers serve multiple schools while maintaining a reduced teaching load

Sample Hybrid Schedule

Time Allocation	Classroom Responsibilities	Leadership Responsibilities
80/20	Five periods teaching	One mentoring period, PLC facilitation, or family engagement
70/30	Four periods teaching	Two periods coaching, curriculum work, or data analysis
60/40	Three periods teaching	Leadership projects, demonstrations, professional learning, cross-school support

Scheduling Considerations

Effective hybrid roles require thoughtful scheduling. Be sure to consider:

- Reduced course loads or fewer course preparations
- Additional planning periods or common team time
- Strategic use of specialists or coverage to allow release time
- Flexible scheduling during key leadership activities (e.g., observation cycles, PD days)

Benefits of Hybrid Roles

- Students continue to learn from accomplished teachers who remain actively engaged in the classroom.
- Colleagues benefit from accessible, peer-based support grounded in real-time classroom practice.
- Schools build internal leadership capacity, reduce reliance on external consultants, and create more sustainable improvement systems.
- Hybrid roles offer meaningful leadership opportunities without requiring them to leave the classroom—supporting both retention and professional growth.

Implementation Tips

- Start small with clearly defined pilot roles
- Select NBCTs based on interest, strengths, and capacity
- Provide initial training and ongoing support
- Regularly evaluate workload and impact
- Adjust structures based on feedback from participants

Compensation Considerations

While National Board Certified Teachers already receive a stipend in recognition of their accomplished practice, many of the leadership roles outlined in this guide require additional time, responsibility, and expertise beyond the scope of a typical teaching assignment. For these roles to be sustainable, and for districts to fully benefit from NBCT leadership, it is important to provide meaningful compensation and recognition, even within budget constraints.

Assigning leadership responsibilities without additional compensation can lead to burnout, limit participation, and unintentionally signal that teacher leadership is undervalued. NBCTs bring specialized expertise and are taking on work that directly impacts school improvement, teacher development, and student outcomes. Compensation acknowledges the professionalism of these roles and helps ensure equity and longevity in leadership efforts.

Recognizing that budgets vary and may be limited, districts and schools can consider a range of compensation models, including:

Stipends for Specific Roles

Provide targeted stipends for roles with clearly defined responsibilities (e.g., instructional coach, mentor, cohort leader). Even modest stipends can demonstrate value and respect for the work.

Release Time or Reduced Load

Adjust teaching schedules to allow time during the school day for leadership responsibilities. This may include fewer course preparations, additional planning periods, or partial release from classroom duties.

Extended Contract Days

Offer additional paid days for work completed outside the regular school calendar, such as summer curriculum development or professional learning design.

Role Rotation Models

Rotate leadership roles among qualified NBCTs to distribute workload and allow more educators to participate without overburdening individuals.

Hybrid Compensation Models

Combine smaller stipends with release time or professional growth opportunities to provide balanced support.

Professional Growth Incentives

Provide non-monetary recognition such as leadership titles, career advancement pathways, conference opportunities, or priority consideration for district leadership roles.

Strategic Allocation of Resources

- School and district leaders can prioritize compensation by:
- Focusing funds on high-impact roles tied directly to instructional improvement
 - Leveraging grant funding or federal/state programs where available
 - Aligning compensation to school improvement plans and strategic priorities
 - Clearly defining scope of work to ensure stipends match expectations

Compensation should be paired with:

- Clearly defined responsibilities and time commitments
- Transparent selection processes
- Ongoing evaluation of the role’s impact
- Opportunities for feedback from NBCTs serving in leadership positions

A Balanced Approach

While financial constraints are a reality, it is essential to strike a balance between fiscal responsibility and honoring the expertise of NBCTs. Thoughtful compensation—whether through stipends, time, or professional opportunities—demonstrates a commitment to teacher leadership and helps ensure these roles are both effective and sustainable.

Conclusion

National Board Certified Teachers represent some of the most accomplished educators in our schools, and their expertise is too valuable to be confined to a single classroom—or lost to full-time administrative roles. Thoughtfully designed hybrid leadership positions provide a powerful solution by creating opportunities for these teacher leaders to influence school improvement, support colleagues, and strengthen student outcomes while remaining actively engaged in teaching. Whether serving as mentors, professional learning facilitators, curriculum developers, data coaches, or community liaisons, NBCTs bring credibility and practical wisdom that can only come from ongoing classroom experience. By providing protected leadership time, clear expectations, and sustainable support structures, schools and districts can cultivate meaningful career pathways that honor teacher expertise, increase professional satisfaction, and ultimately build stronger learning communities for educators and students alike.

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Contact Information

For questions on information covered in this guide and additional National Board Certification resources, check out The National Board page on the [GoTeachKY Website](#). You may also direct questions to nbct@education.ky.gov.

Additionally, you may reach out to KDE Program Consultant, Allie Green directly by email at allie.green@education.ky.gov or by phone at 502-892-6629.