



Early Childhood through Young Adulthood

EXCEPTIONAL NEEDS SPECIALIST

Assessment at a Glance

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*National Board Certification
Promotes Better Teaching,
Better Learning, Better Schools*

Choosing the Right Certificate

The National Board Certification® process offers experienced teachers the professional development opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and practices against high and rigorous standards. Candidates pursue certification by completing two major assessment components: a portfolio of classroom teaching practice and an assessment of content knowledge administered at a computer-based testing center.

The Early Childhood through Young Adulthood/Exceptional Needs Specialist certificate is appropriate for teachers who teach students ages birth through 21+ years* with exceptional needs, and who know the philosophical, historical, and legal foundations of special education. Read this document to learn the content and pedagogical knowledge you will be required to demonstrate for this certificate area and to measure your readiness to pursue National Board Certification.

Candidates applying for certification in the Exceptional Needs Specialist certificate area must select a specialty area when applying. The following path descriptions may help you determine the specialty area that best fits your teaching situation:

- **Deaf/Hard of Hearing (birth to 21+ years).** Teachers in this path work with students from birth to 21+ years of age with any degree of hearing loss, from mild unilateral to profound bilateral loss, in self-contained to home or generic education environments, and via multiple languages and communication modes.
- **Early Childhood (birth to 8 years).** Teachers in this path work with students from birth to 8 years of age with special needs. These teachers may serve families with children who have special needs in a family-centered approach to early intervention, children who are at risk for special needs, and children with a wide range of special needs.
- **Mild/Moderate Disabilities (5 to 21+ years).** Teachers in this path work with students from 5 to 21+ years of age with mild to moderate cognitive disabilities. The students served by these teachers may have learning disabilities, mild to moderate mental retardation, attention deficit disorders, developmental delays, autism, emotional disturbance, behavioral disorders, or health impairments.
- **Severe and Multiple Disabilities (5 to 21+ years).** Teachers in this path work with students from 5 to 21+ years of age with a range of cognitive abilities, often accompanied by sensory, physical, emotional, and/or health impairments. The students served by these teachers may have severe or profound mental retardation, traumatic brain injury, uncontrolled seizure disorders, dual sensory impairments, autism, neurological impairments, physical impairments, and/or health impairments.
- **Visual Impairments (birth to 21+ years).** Teachers in this path work with students from birth to 21+ years of age with visual impairment. The students served by these teachers may have low vision or severe to total visual impairment.

Refer to the *Exceptional Needs Specialist Standards* for a complete description of each specialty-area practice.

* Students need not be seen in the context of a classroom group. Teachers, working one-on-one with IEPd or IFSPd students under federal or state mandated special education laws are eligible to pursue this certificate. In most states the students included under these mandates would be ages birth to 21. In states where the mandate extends special education beyond age 21, teachers should contact NBPTS prior to applying to determine whether their teaching context meets the eligibility requirements for candidacy.

Below is a set of questions to ask yourself about your teaching practice. If you answer “yes” to these questions, you are ready to apply. For eligibility requirements and application instructions, read the *Guide to National Board Certification* on the NBPTS Web site (www.nbpts.org).

If you answer “no” to one or more of these questions, you may need to discuss your teaching situation with professional colleagues, your school faculty, a National Board Certified Teacher®, your faculty support group, or a local-level administrator who is directing a National Board program.

For the portfolio, will you be able to:

- demonstrate that your teaching practice meets the Exceptional Needs Standards?
- have access to at least 3 students* with exceptional needs during the 12 months prior to the submission of your portfolio entries?
- submit instructional materials and video recordings in English and/or Spanish showing your interactions with your students?
- demonstrate your ability to engage your student(s) in a Communication/Literacy lesson?
- demonstrate your ability to engage your student(s) in a Social Development lesson?
- show how you use assessment to inform your instruction?
- present evidence of how you impact student learning through your work with students’ families and community and through your development as a learner and as a leader/collaborator?

For the assessment center, will you be able to demonstrate content knowledge in:

- behavior analysis interventions?
- science and mathematics?
- social studies and the arts?
- transition planning?
- health, physical education, and leisure education?
- professional vocabulary?

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Reviewing the Standards

The requirements for National Board Certification in the field of Early Childhood through Young Adulthood/Exceptional Needs Specialist (ECYA/ENS) are organized into the following Standards. The ordering of the Standards is designed to facilitate understanding, not to assign priorities.

Preparing for Student Learning

I. Knowledge of Students

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs consistently use their knowledge of human development and learning and their skills as careful observers of students to understand students' knowledge, aptitudes, skills, interests, aspirations, and values.

II. Knowledge of Special Education

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs draw on their knowledge of the philosophical, historical, and legal foundations of special education and their knowledge of effective special education practice to organize and design instruction. In addition, they draw on their specialized knowledge of specific disabilities to set meaningful goals for their students.

III. Communications

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs know the importance of communications in learning. They know how to use communication skills to help students access, comprehend, and apply information; to help them acquire knowledge; and to enable them to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships.

IV. Diversity

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs create an environment in which equal treatment, fairness, and respect for diversity are modeled, taught, and practiced by all, and they take steps to ensure access to quality learning opportunities for all students.

V. Knowledge of Subject Matter

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs command a core body of knowledge in the disciplines and draw on that knowledge to establish curricular goals, design instruction, facilitate student learning, and assess student progress.

Advancing Student Learning

VI. Meaningful Learning

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs work with students to explore in purposeful ways important and challenging concepts, topics, and issues to build competence and confidence.

VII. Multiple Paths to Knowledge

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs use a variety of approaches to help students strengthen understanding and gain command of essential knowledge and skills.

VIII. Social Development

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs cultivate a sense of efficacy and independence in their students as they develop students' character, sense of civic and social responsibility, respect for diverse individuals and groups, and ability to work constructively and collaboratively with others.

Supporting Student Learning

IX. Assessment

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs design and select a variety of assessment strategies to obtain useful and timely information about student learning and development and to help students reflect on their own progress.

X. Learning Environment

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs establish a caring, stimulating, and safe community for learning in which democratic values are fostered and students assume responsibility for learning, show willingness to take intellectual risks, develop self-confidence, and learn to work not only independently but also collaboratively.

XI. Instructional Resources

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs select, adapt, create, and use rich and varied resources, both human and material.

XII. Family Partnerships

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs work collaboratively with parents, guardians, and other caregivers to understand their children and to achieve common educational goals.

Professional Development and Outreach

XIII. Reflective Practice

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs regularly analyze, evaluate, and strengthen the quality of their practice.

XIV. Contributing to the Profession and to Education

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs work independently and collaboratively with colleagues and others to improve schools and to advance knowledge, policy, and practice in their field.

Read the Standards on the NBPTS Web site to ensure that you will be able to demonstrate your accomplishments and confidently satisfy the defined expectations for National Board Certification.

Demonstrating Your Teaching Practice and Content Knowledge

This section describes the portfolio entries and assessment center exercises for the ECYA/ENS certificate area.

Portfolio Entries

You will be required to submit four portfolio entries. One entry is based on student work samples, and two entries feature video recordings of student–teacher interactions in the classroom. The fourth entry relates to your accomplishments outside of the classroom—with families, the community, or colleagues—and how they impact student learning.

Following is a description of each portfolio entry.

- | | |
|---|---|
| Entry 1:
Assessment Informs Instruction | In this entry, you demonstrate your ability to investigate a student's learning or behavior need, formulate a meaningful question directly related to that student's need, design and/or select and then use an assessment tool(s), use the information gathered to implement new or modified goals and then instruct in order to foster the student's growth and development. You provide a Question Document, an Assessment Tool(s) Document, and a Written Commentary. |
| Entry 2:
Fostering Communications Development | In this entry, you demonstrate how you design and implement instruction that furthers student learning in communication or literacy. You provide evidence of your ability to plan and deliver instruction to a student of your choosing and analyze and reflect on your work with this particular student. You provide a Written Commentary in addition to your 15-minute video recording. Entry 2 is the preselected <i>Take One!</i> portfolio entry. |
| Entry 3:
Enhancing Social Development | In this entry, you demonstrate how you design and implement meaningful learning experiences to further an individual student's social development and facilitate that student's participation in a group and/or environment. You provide evidence of your ability to plan for and instruct a student of your choosing and analyze and reflect on your work with this particular student. You provide Written Commentary in addition to your 15-minute video recording. |
| Entry 4:
Documented Accomplishments: Contributions to Student Learning | In this entry, you illustrate your partnerships with students' families and community, and your development as a learner and collaborator with other professionals by submitting descriptions and documentation of your activities and accomplishments in those areas. Your description must make the connection between each accomplishment and its impact on student learning. |

Read the *Portfolio Instructions* on the NBPTS Web site to learn more about the requirements for preparing, developing, and submitting the portfolio component of your assessment.

Assessment Center Exercises

This assessment is composed of six exercises that examine content knowledge specified in the NBPTS Standards. You are given up to 30 minutes to respond to each exercise.

Following is a description of each assessment center exercise.

- | | |
|---|--|
| Exercise 1:
Behavior Analysis
and Intervention
(Path Specific) | In this exercise, you analyze student behavior and construct a behavior intervention plan to further student learning. |
| Exercise 2:
Science and
Mathematics | In this exercise, you demonstrate your knowledge of major science and mathematics concepts. You are presented with a student description, a topic area, and a question or set of questions the student has asked about that topic. You plan a learning experience for a class and then adapt/modify that learning experience for the individual student described. |
| Exercise 3:
Social Studies and
the Arts | In this exercise, you demonstrate your knowledge of a social studies concept and your knowledge of cross-curricular integration. You are asked to discuss how the arts can be integrated into a content area of social studies to further student learning. |
| Exercise 4:
Transition Planning
(Path Specific) | In this exercise, you demonstrate your knowledge of transition planning. You analyze a student profile and discuss critical details of a transition plan. You provide appropriate recommendations for the program and supports needed to maximize the success of the transition for the student. |
| Exercise 5:
Health/Physical
Education/Leisure | In this exercise, you show your knowledge of health education, physical education, and leisure education. You are asked to analyze a student profile and state how the student will be affected in these areas: physical, emotional, and social development. You are asked to design goals and learning activities that provide opportunities for success and improved self-image, and also foster independence. |
| Exercise 6:
Professional
Vocabulary
(Both Generic and
Path Specific) | In this exercise, you demonstrate your knowledge of words belonging to the professional vocabulary. You are asked to define and discuss the critical details of words belonging to the professional vocabulary. |

Read *Assessment Center Policy and Guidelines* on the NBPTS Web site for more information about the assessment center component of the certification process. To locate an assessment center, visit the NBPTS computer-based testing Web site (www.pearsonvue.com/nbpts/).

Selected Assessment Center Exercises

The following sections contain selected exercises administered in a previous assessment cycle. These exercises present information that candidates saw on screen at the assessment center and include instructions for using the computer, stimulus materials (if applicable), and prompts requiring responses. These exercises have been included to help you become familiar with the structure of assessment center exercises and to help you understand the scoring rubrics. The exercise prompts in this section **do not** represent actual prompts candidates will see at assessment centers in the future.

Please note that assessment center exercises cover the **entire** age range of the certificate. Be aware that you are expected to demonstrate knowledge of developmentally appropriate content across the full range of your certificate.

Sample Exercise 2: Science and Mathematics

Exercise 2: Science and Mathematics - Candidate Name

🕒 Time Remaining 29:31

Introduction

In this exercise, you will use your knowledge of science and mathematics to discuss concepts, plan one integrated activity, and describe two specific modifications/adaptations you would make for a given student. You will be asked to respond to three prompts.

Criteria for Scoring

To satisfy the highest level of the scoring rubric, your responses must provide clear, consistent, and convincing evidence of the following:

- an in-depth discussion of the science and mathematics concepts;
- a worthwhile and integrated learning activity; and
- appropriate adaptations/modifications for a given student and purpose.

Directions

You may preview all of the prompts by clicking the "Next" button. The "Previous" button will enable you to return to any of the prompts in order to compose or revise your response in the space provided.

? [Help](#)

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[Next](#) →

Stimulus

You will find all of the following below:

- The name of a topic area in science.
- A brief description of a student.
- Question(s) the student described has asked you about the topic area.

Topic area: Biology; plant growth

Student: 8 years old; I.Q. of 60; legally blind

Questions: What makes plants grow?

How much does a plant grow each day?

Retired Prompt 1

- Discuss the science concept that would answer the student's questions.*
- Discuss the mathematics concept that would answer the student's questions.*

Retired Prompt 2

Describe one integrated science and mathematics activity that would clearly engage all students in learning these concepts.

Retired Prompt 3

Describe two specific modifications/adaptations you would make to this activity for the given student. Explain what the student will be doing and how the modifications/adaptations will promote the given student's learning of the science and mathematics concepts in the topic area.

Sample Exercise 5: Health/Physical Education/Leisure

Exercise 5: Health/Physical Education/Leisure - Candidate
Name

🕒 Time Remaining 29:31

Introduction

In this exercise, you will use your knowledge of health, physical education, and leisure to analyze a student profile and discuss goals and appropriate learning activities, which will provide opportunities for success and improved self-image and will foster independence. You will be asked to respond to three prompts.

Criteria for Scoring

To satisfy the highest level of the scoring rubric, your responses must provide clear, consistent, and convincing evidence of the following:

- an in-depth analysis of a student profile and a thorough discussion of how this student may be affected in the areas of physical health, emotional health, and social development;
- a thorough discussion of student goals in the areas of health education, physical education, and leisure education; and
- an informed discussion of two learning activities directly related to the goals you identified that will provide opportunities for success and improved self-image and will foster independence.

Directions

You may preview all of the prompts by clicking the "Next" button. The "Previous" button will enable you to return to any of the prompts in order to compose or revise your response in the space provided.

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Profile

John is an 8-year-old with spastic cerebral palsy that affects both sides of his body. The left side of his body is more limited in function than the right. He can walk independently for short distances (less than 100 yards). He can get up from the floor with assistance. He isn't able to use both hands together, and he cannot use his left hand functionally. John spends at least 50% of the day in his wheelchair, as he tires easily. He cannot speak but does use a computerized voice output device for communication. The device needs to be mounted on a table. He comprehends two-step directions.

Retired Prompt 1

Discuss ways in which the student identified may be affected in the areas of physical health, emotional health, and social development. Discuss one example for each area. Be specific. Be sure your response relates directly to the student profile.

Retired Prompt 2

Design school-based goals for this student in the areas of health education, physical education, and leisure education. State one goal for each area. Be specific in your discussion and be sure the goal is directly related to the strengths and needs of the student described in the student profile.

Retired Prompt 3

Design two developmentally appropriate learning activities that are directly related to the school-based goals discussed that will provide opportunities for success and improved self-image and will foster independence.

Understanding the National Board Scoring Process

All portfolio entries and assessment center exercises are scored by teachers practicing in the same content area as the assessment they are scoring. The National Board's carefully trained assessors use scoring rubrics to evaluate candidate responses. The rubrics clearly articulate the criteria that are to be applied in the evaluation of your responses. These criteria reflect the Standards that the entry is designed to measure.

Assessors use a four-level rubric to score each candidate's response as shown below.

Rubric Level	Score Range	Quality of Evidence
Level 4	3.75–4.25	Clear, consistent, and convincing
Level 3	2.75–3.74	Clear
Level 2	1.75–2.74	Limited
Level 1	0.75–1.74	Little or no

The Level 4 and Level 3 score ranges represent accomplished teaching practice. You do not have to receive Level 4 or Level 3 scores for every entry and exercise. A high score on one may compensate for a lower score elsewhere. Read the *Scoring Guide for Candidates* on the NBPTS Web site for your assessment.

Your Total Weighted Scaled Score

When your portfolio entries and assessment center exercises are completed and scored, your Total Weighted Scaled Score is computed. This is done by applying a set of weights to each of your entry and exercise scores.

For the ECYA/ENS certificate, these are the weights:

- 16% for each of the three classroom-based portfolio entries
- 12% for the Documented Accomplishments portfolio entry
- 6.67% for each of the six assessment center exercises

Your weighted scaled score for each entry or exercise is calculated by multiplying the raw score by the appropriate weight, shown above. Your Total Weighted Scaled Score is the sum of the weighted scaled scores for all entries and exercises plus a 12-point uniform constant. For example, if your weighted scaled score is 263, you would receive a 12-point uniform constant score, and your Total Weighted Scaled Score would be 275. This number is then compared to 275, the performance standard established by the NBPTS Board of Directors.

A candidate whose Total Weighted Scaled Score is 275 or greater is recognized as an accomplished teacher and is awarded National Board Certification. A candidate whose Total Weighted Scaled Score does not meet 275 is not yet certified and for the following two years has the opportunity to retake certain portfolio entries or assessment center exercises in order to meet the performance standard of 275.

Things to Keep in Mind

The National Board Standards for the ECYA/ENS certificate area are addressed within the portfolio and assessment center process. Therefore, you should keep the following in mind:

- Although the portfolio entries address many of the Standards, they may not address all of them. Standards the portfolio does not address may be included in the assessment center portion of the certification process.
- Each entry is scored independently of the others. When an entry asks for background or contextual information, be complete, since an assessor for one entry will not see your other entries.
- At each of the four levels of the scoring rubric, the same Standards-related criteria are applied. However, each level of the scoring rubric represents a difference in the quality of evidence demonstrated by the entry or exercise. For example, if “Knowledge of Students” is a Standard measured by an entry, the Level 4 rubric will refer to “clear, consistent, and convincing” evidence of that Standard while the Level 2 rubric will refer to “limited” evidence of the same Standard.
- One of the fundamental principles underlying the evaluation is that responses are scored only on what candidates are specifically asked to do. For example, if the directions specifically ask you to demonstrate how to use assessment in the featured instructional sequence, evidence supporting your use of assessment will be evaluated based on the scoring rubric. Conversely, if an entry does not require you to demonstrate how to use assessment, it will not be evaluated.

Beginning Your Journey toward National Board Certification

The first step on this journey is to make a commitment, but what does this commitment involve? First-time candidates apply and complete their assessments in an initial candidacy period as shown in the timeline below. For candidates who are not successful in their first try, there is a 24-month window, following the receipt of scores, in which to retake assessments and/or resubmit portfolio entries in order to achieve certification.

You may wish to start with the *Take One!* program that requires submission of a single portfolio entry for scoring. The preselected portfolio entry required for *Take One!* is identified as part of the portfolio entry descriptions on page 5. You can choose to transfer your *Take One!* score to National Board Certification within three years of completing the *Take One!* process. Read *Becoming a Take One! Participant* on the NBPTS Web site to learn more about the requirements.

If you choose to pursue National Board Certification, there is also a financial commitment for which support is available. Visit the NBPTS Web site to learn about federal, state, and/or local funds available to support National Board Certification and *Take One!* fees. Be sure to check with your local, district, or state educational officials for incentives (such as salary increases and bonuses) that may be offered for achieving National Board Certification.

The following timeline provides a snapshot of your schedule of commitments. Read the *Guide to National Board Certification* on the NBPTS Web site for complete information.

Certification Planner

Step	To Do	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
1	Send forms and fees to NBPTS:				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> application nonrefundable initial fee (\$500) all eligibility forms balance of full fee (totaling \$2,500) 	Jan. 1 — Dec. 31			
2	Develop portfolio entries and submit them to NBPTS:				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive portfolio box after submitting initial fees. Submit all four portfolio entries at once after submitting all fees and eligibility forms. 	Jan. 1 — Mar. 31			
3	Schedule your assessment center exercises:				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> after submitting all fees and eligibility forms at least 30 days before the test date 		Jan. 1 — Jun. 15		
4	Obtain your scores online:				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access <i>My Profile</i> to learn about your scores and certification status. 		Dec. 31	Dec. 31	Dec. 31
5	Continue the journey:				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you did not achieve certification, decide whether to retake assessment center exercises and/or portfolio entries. Submit retake application and fees. 			Jan. 31	Jan. 31
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retake selected assessment center exercises. Submit selected portfolio entries. 			Jan. 1 — Jun. 15	Jan. 1 — Jun. 15
				Jan. 1 — Apr. 15	Jan. 1 — Apr. 15

Having made the commitment, many teachers who pursue National Board Certification become role models and leaders in their schools and districts, earning a greater voice in what happens and having a very positive effect on their students' experiences. On your journey, you will benefit directly from your candidacy, taking part in what many have described as the best professional development experience of their lives.

Produced for the



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