

NATIONAL BOARD

for Professional Teaching Standards®

Luke Correia-Damude :

Welcome back, everyone. Thank you so much for joining us. Once again, episode seven of National Board conversations. My name is Luke Correia-Damude and I am your host. Today we are going to speak with Catrina Parker. She is a National Board certified teacher from North Carolina. She was a math teacher that transitioned into being an education advancement coordinator. What that means is that she's actually working with teachers that are on their National Board certification journey. So she has such a huge wealth of knowledge. She's going to give you some incredible tips, inspiring insights, and a lot of motivation. So please stay tuned. I'm going to get right into this thing, because I'm so excited to speak with Catrina. Without further ado, I'm going to pass this to her. Here she is Catrina Parker.

Catrina Parker:

Hey everybody. My name is Catrina Parker. I live and work in the Raleigh area here in North Carolina. I'm married to a retired veteran and we have two children ages 14 and nine. I've been in education now for about 16 years or so. I started my career as a high school math teacher. I am a math lover. Most recently, I joined the district and regional support team at the North Carolina department of public instruction. So I currently serve as the educator advancement coordinator, and I'm excited to share that my primary role is to lead and support National Board certification in our state.

Luke Correia-Damude :

So not only are you a National Board certified teacher, but you are working alongside National Board certified teachers all the time. Why did you decide to do your certification in the first place?

Catrina Parker:

There was a small group of teachers at my high school and they decided to take the leap and pursue certification. I was in my fifth year of teaching, had just finished my master's program at NC state and I really loved this small group of people. We were a tight knit staff and I was inspired by their desire to improve their practice and really their commitment to students. North Carolina offers a pay differential for NBCTs. So that incentivized our decision to get started.

Luke Correia-Damude :

Yeah, this is a huge opportunity for teachers to get a bump in pay and get some great training and experience. Are you hearing teachers being more drawn to this by the financial incentive or is it the pursuit of their education and learning? What are teacher's talking to you about with this?

Catrina Parker:

So I think that's a great question. I think a lot of our teachers start to explore certification because of the incentive. Then they find when they dig in to the five core propositions and the architecture of accomplished teaching, that they really become hooked and want to move through the process to learn, to grow and really just to help children more effectively and efficiently.

Luke Correia-Damude :

Right. And for you personally, tell me just briefly about your journey with certification. Some hurdles maybe some, some things that you learned along the way?

Catrina Parker:

There were a lot of hurdles in my journey as I pursued certification. I often get asked in my current role, Catrina, do I have time to do this? Do you really think I can do it? Well, I can share that when I pursued, I was a single parent, at the time my husband was deployed. We had our son who was two and a half when I started my journey and there were often times throughout that journey when I had to stop, I had to take a step back recharge, kind of give myself some grace and then get back into it. I had a great support system, not only from my high school, but also in my extended family. It was a great experience. It was challenging, but I can honestly say I don't regret it. I would do it again and I would choose to do it during that time in my life.

Luke Correia-Damude :

So you're working with so many candidates and I'm sure you're talking with prospective candidates as well all the time. What are some misconceptions you hear from them or what are some fears that they have about starting their journey? Could you share some of these things with the audience?

Catrina Parker:

So I often hear from prospective candidates that they're worried about time, that they don't feel like they have time to go through this extra process. Teachers have full plates at school, at home, in their everyday lives. So they are hesitant to add something else to that already full plate. So when I start to ask teacher questions that are founded in the five core propositions, things like, are you committed to student learning? Do you monitor student learning and take responsibility for it? Do you know your subject and how to teach it? Do you reflect on your practice and grow from your experience? Are you a member of a learning community? Every time the teacher will say yes to every one of those questions. My response is, then you're ready to start your certification because the certification process is founded in those five questions, those five core propositions, and you're already working and engaging in those propositions every day. So you see, I think there's a misconception that the National Board certification process is different and extra something external to what teachers do every day. But the reality is they're already in the work National Board just provides a framework and a process that helps teachers engage in that work and improve that work and sharpen their skills.

Luke Correia-Damude :

And then on a more personal level for you, when you were doing your National Boards, you mentioned that you were kind of a single mother because your husband was deployed at the time. How did you get through that? What was that experience like? Can you offer some advice for other candidates that are going through a similar journey?

Catrina Parker:

Sure. So what was most important for me is to set some goals, develop a plan and work that plan. I did have a great support system, but I had to schedule time within my work week and on the weekends to fit in those small opportunities to reflect. What I found is that the deeper I went into my components and into the process, that time was easier and easier to find because I was in this National Board head space. That's kind of how I describe it to candidates. I started to think and reflect when I was driving my son to daycare, when I was standing on duty in the hallway, as students answered questions in my classroom, and as I worked with them every day, things would spark in my mind and I would rush to write them down or make mental note of them. Then I was able to take all of those thoughts and sparks and small moments and piece them together in that quiet time that I had scheduled. It is going to take time to reflect, to write, to organize and what I always suggest to candidates is that they take it

component by component. I found it to be very helpful to make a plan. So for example, I might have a plan to start with component two this month, and I might focus on component two and make as much progress with that component as I can, until I move on to component three. So for me, taking it component by component step by step and moving through that plan really helped. Now, what I also share with candidates is that this is not a perfect plan, I definitely had to stop and adjust and ask for help. I leaned on my colleagues, not only in my building for feedback and for help, but also in my larger learning community in my district and of course within my family, because certification is really about growth. National Board certification is worth your time because you will grow. You will grow in ways that you can't anticipate. It's because of all the curves and spins that the journey takes you on. If there's ever a time ever a year to embrace that perfectly imperfect journey, I think it's this year. If we take that word grow and we kind of, you know, break it down letter by letter, forgive me, Luke, you know, once a teacher, always a teacher, you know, we can kind of get an idea of what certification means, how it works and how it changes candidates. So if we start at the beginning...

Luke Correia-Damude:

You're going to tell us that this grow is you're going to give us a little...

Catrina Parker:

is that okay?

Luke Correia-Damude:

Yes of course.

Catrina Parker:

So if we start at the beginning with "G". "G" is for goals and gaining confidence, certification grows your goals as a professional, and it allows you an opportunity to gain confidence, which propels the accomplishment of those goals. Interestingly enough, before certification, I don't know if I would have considered myself a leader or someone who people could get behind and follow, but certification elevated my teaching, my confidence, it empowered me and it challenged my thinking and pushed me outside of my classroom box and my personal teaching box.

Catrina Parker:

Next is "R". "R" is for resources. Certification grows your resources as an educator. When you begin, you join this amazing community and this community is talented and committed, and it's committed to helping all students succeed. You make connections, you learn and grow through those connections. You expand your toolkit as a teacher and within that expansion, you become better equipped to serve a range of students. If you put in the time now, and you sharpen those skills, you sharpen your practice. It'll save you time in the long run because you become better at what you do.

Catrina Parker:

"O", is for outlook and opportunities. Certification grows your outlook, and it grows opportunities for you and for your students before certification. I was a good teacher in college. I learned how to write a lesson plan. I learned a lot of mathematics. I sharpened my skill set there, but throughout certification, I learned how to be strategic when reflecting about the teaching and learning that was happening in my class on a daily basis. From there, I became more intentional in meeting students where they are and

helping them formulate a plan for their learning to really engage them in developing their own goals. After certification, I was simply a better teacher. I dare say, I may have even become a great teacher.

Catrina Parker:

Last is "W". certification can grow your wallet. As I've mentioned earlier, North Carolina offers a 12% pay differential for NBCTs and if you're a candidate living in a state that doesn't offer that type of incentive, I strongly believe that having NBCT on your resume can set you apart from others. It shows that you are determined, that you're committed to continuous improvement, and this can open doors for future advancement.

Luke Correia-Damude:

I think that this is super clear and I think when you're debating, whether or not you have the time to spend to do this National Board certification, just think about grow, think about these things. It hits points across the board. I think it's something really all all of these candidates and prospective candidates should remember, and teachers in general, even if you're not going on the journey in life, these are transferable words of wisdom too. So I guess the last thing I'd ask you, and I ask most of the teachers that come on on the show, what words of advice do you have? There are a lot of teachers listening to this. A lot of people about to go on their journey. A lot of people in the middle of their journey, what kind of wisdom can you impart, or some recommendations?

Catrina Parker:

Advice to anyone listening today is to be brave. You can do hard things. This is what we want for our students, we want them to be brave, and we want them to believe that they can do hard things. Lean into this perfectly imperfect school year. Leverage the unique time, learn and grow. Anything new and different is always challenging, but we teach our students that there is great opportunity in challenge. I believe that beautiful things come from struggle. Know that there is support out there, and that there's a community waiting to stand beside you and your students. As you take the leap to becoming a National Board certified teacher.

Luke Correia-Damude:

G.R.O.W. What an amazing acronym. Thank you, Katrina. That is really above and beyond. I was so happy to speak with you, and let's all remember to grow. So thanks a lot for speaking with us. My name is Luke Correia-Damude, and we have one more episode in this season. In the meantime, if you want to learn more about National Board certification, please check out the website at www.nbpts.org. I'll talk to you soon. Cheers.