



South Carolina  
Department of Education

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## Nearly 800 teachers achieve National Board certification; state retains third-place ranking

*EDITOR'S NOTE: A list of newly certified National Board Teachers will be available at [www.cerra.org](http://www.cerra.org) beginning at 10 a.m. December 16 through January 30, 2010. After the link at CERRA expires, NBCTs can be identified through a searchable database at [www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org).*

COLUMBIA – Another 799 South Carolina teachers have joined the ranks of those receiving the highest credential available in the teaching profession, up from 755 teachers in 2008, the [National Board for Professional Teaching Standards](#) has announced.

With today's announcement, South Carolina now has 7,297 National Board Certified teachers and maintains its third-place national ranking. North Carolina and Florida still rank first and second, respectively. This year marks one of the highest totals of South Carolina new achievers since the state began participating in the program. In 2003, the Palmetto State had 876 achievers, and in 2002, 1,073 teachers attained certification.

"I commend these outstanding teachers for aspiring to such high standards of excellence," said State Superintendent of Education Jim Rex. "Teachers tell me all the time that National Board is by far the most rewarding experience of their professional careers. Ultimately, it impacts where the rubber meets the road: teaching and learning in the classroom."

National Board Certified teachers now represent approximately 14.5 percent of the state's teaching force of nearly 50,000. According to the NBPTS, the newly certified teachers are spread among 62 of South Carolina's 85 school districts and three special schools. Twenty-nine districts had at least 10 teachers certify, and Horry County led the state with 76. Greenville County followed with 63, and Richland 2 and Lexington 1 had 54 each.

All four districts ranked in the top 20 nationally in the number of new NBCTs in 2009: Horry County (8<sup>th</sup>), Greenville County (10<sup>th</sup>), Richland 2 (16<sup>th</sup>) and Lexington 1 (17<sup>th</sup>). Greenville County (473), Richland Two (453) and the Charleston County School District (388) each rank in the top 20 nationally for total number of NBCTs.

One teacher achieving the national certification this year is Wanda Green, an elementary Montessori teacher in Calhoun County. The South Carolina State University graduate has earned 30 hours above the master's level. She began the NPCT process in 2007, the same year she won the

prestigious U.S. Department of Education’s American Star of Teaching Award honoring exemplary teachers for innovative teaching strategies and raising student achievement.

“I’ve always tried to keep abreast of developments in my field,” Green said. “I’ve always embraced change, and I’m constantly looking for avenues to improve.

“In my class this year, I have seven kindergarteners, two first-graders, five second-graders and six third-graders. Each child has to be taught on his or her individual level. That requires a well-rounded teacher who is able to diagnose student strengths and weaknesses and meet their challenges. The National Board process helped me reflect on my teaching practices, better identify my students’ strengths and weaknesses and meet them where they are.”

Grateful for her district’s support, Green said the national certification process is a very personal journey. “Achieving certification boils down to a teacher knowing her class, knowing her content area, but most importantly, knowing her craft. I highly recommend the program.”

Green is in good company. Federal education czar Arne Duncan said that while the NBC process is a tough one, teachers across the country have told him it’s the best personal development they’ve had throughout their professional careers.

“At the end of the day, it’s helping to transform our best teachers and taking them to an entirely different level,” Duncan said. “Arguably, it’s the most important growth and learning you’re ever going to have as a teacher – an unbelievably worthwhile experience.”

In June 2008, the National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academies affirmed that NBPTS and its advanced teacher certification program have had a positive impact on student achievement, teacher retention and professional development. The NRC study found that students taught by National Board Certified Teachers make higher gains on achievement tests than students of non-board-certified teachers.

The Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement ([CERRA](#)), based at Winthrop University, provides a support infrastructure to make teachers aware of the program and to assist them in navigating and completing the process. CERRA’s help includes a district liaison in each of the state’s 85 school districts, a Board Certification Network of South Carolina Educators and collaboration with the South Carolina Department of Education and other state agencies.

Across the country, most states provide salary incentives and cover the cost for teachers who pursue and achieve national certification. South Carolina gives a \$7,500 salary supplement for every year that they teach after receiving certification, for the 10-year life of their certificates.

Earlier this week, the Education Oversight Committee voted unanimously to cut the stipends which, along with related costs, cost South Carolina \$62 million annually. If state lawmakers act on the panel’s recommendation, it would only affect teachers who apply for or earn national certification after July 1, 2010. Teachers already certified or in the process of becoming certified before July 1 still would get the stipend.

For nearly three years, State Superintendent Rex has focused on improving teacher quality. He's made reinvigorating and elevating teaching a key component of his plan to improve student performance.

Rex has long advocated a comprehensive, outside-the-box look at teacher pay that awards financial incentives for good performance.

“Superior teaching leads to superior student achievement and should be rewarded,” he said. “That being said, it’s not surprising that when hundreds of millions of dollars are cut from K-12 budgets, there’s a call for a closer look at teacher bonuses. But South Carolina shouldn’t break its promise to teachers who are getting this stipend now or who entered the process because of it. And beyond that, we need to develop a new state teacher pay system that includes strong performance pay components.”

NBPTS is committed to increasing the number of certified teachers in high-need schools and in schools eligible for Title I funding, where teacher recruitment is often difficult.

Certification candidates undertake a two-part process that lasts one to three years. It requires them to reflect on their classroom practices, their understanding of subject material and their preparation techniques. In addition to preparing a portfolio with videotapes of classroom teaching, lesson plans, student work samples and reflective essays, teachers must complete assessment center exercises based on content knowledge that proves not only that they have mastered the subjects they teach, but also that they know how to teach them.

The National Board process defines the knowledge, skills and accomplishments that symbolize teaching excellence. It was created so that teachers – just as professionals in other fields – could achieve distinction by demonstrating through a demanding performance assessment that they can meet high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do.

CERRA is the oldest and most established teacher recruitment program in the country. It provides leadership in identifying, attracting, placing and retaining well-qualified individuals for the teaching profession in South Carolina. CERRA's programs have been adopted at school, district and state levels in more than 30 states in the United States.