

# The Learning Curve

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Your weekly guide to students, schools, teachers and triumphs in Bibb County's Public Schools

## Bibb County Public Schools congratulates 11 teachers on earning National Board Certification

### Rigorous process focuses on self-analyzation and professional growth

The National Board Certified Teacher process was developed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards to help a teacher develop professionally by successfully completing a set of high and rigorous standards. Any teacher with a baccalaureate degree and three years teaching experience may participate. There are currently more than 40,000 certified teachers nationwide and almost 1,800 in Georgia. Recently, 11 Bibb County Public Schools teachers received their Certification, bringing the total number who hold this distinction in the system to 41.

"It's one of the most highly respected forms of professional development there is, and Bibb County is very lucky to have its teachers so interested in and excited about working towards it," says Education First Executive Director Julie Pennybacker.

"Being certified is a validation of the commitment you have made to students and learning, to being knowledgeable about what is taught and contributing to our school as a member of a learning community," says Queenie Brost, who works with non-verbal autistic students at Elam Alexander Academy and is now Certified as a Young Adult Exceptional Needs Specialist. "I am pleased and honored to be recognized for those characteristics."

"This is the most rigorous certification for our profession," explains Alexander II Elementary 6<sup>th</sup> grade math teacher Kristy Cummings, who earned her Certification as a Middle Childhood Generalist, covering all subjects. "I wanted to face the challenges it provided and strengthen my teaching practice."

To help them be more successful in the

process, Georgia teachers are required to take the Knowledgeable Teacher class before they can even be accepted as a candidate. After that successful completion and acceptance, they have three years to send all of their material in. Some completed in a year, and some took more than two. However, they all agree that it requires a lot of their time and efforts. Hundreds of hours of personal work, writing essays of more than 100 pages, a three-hour exam...all to be considered one of the nation's best teachers.

The NBPTS assesses the teachers on their portfolio, consisting of four sections, and a six-question written exam for some. Two sections of the portfolio are video tapes of the teachers giving lessons, with a written explanation describing what she's teaching and why they chose the method they're using. "I have not taped myself teaching in years," says Howard Middle 7<sup>th</sup> grade social studies and pre-algebra teacher Linda Davis (now Certified in Adolescent Social Studies). "Taping, watching, and then critiquing the lesson was very insightful."

"I really learned a lot from doing the taping of my classes," says Rutland Middle 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade gifted teacher Harriet Agen. "It helped me see my body language and how I could be perceived by my students. It also helped me see how my students respond to me and what they



The newest National Board Certified Teachers are honored at a recent Board Meeting.

respond best to."

The third section focused on student work. They had to send in specific examples, and write about "why it was assigned, how I assessed it, the feedback I gave, and how that affected my instructional plans," explains Alexander II Lead Math teacher Jennifer Doss (Certified in Early Adolescence Mathematics).

"This was the most difficult for me," explains Agen. "It really challenged me and forced me to stretch myself to see just what I wanted my students to learn."

The final section concerned personal documented accomplishments and how they contributed to student learning," explains Springdale Elementary 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher Janet Trotter (Certified as an Early Childhood Generalist), "including professional learning, collaboration with peers, and communication with parents."

Whether they've been teaching for only a few years or are close to retirement, each of them say it wasn't a question of whether or not they would work towards this goal, it was how much work they could put into it and how much they could take away from the whole process.

"I took the challenge because I knew that it offered tremendous professional development equal to an advanced degree," explains Carter Elementary REACH teacher Michelle Gowan, now Certified as a Middle

Childhood Generalist.

"I wanted the opportunity to better myself as an educator," agrees Westside High Special Education teacher Laura Smith. "It has made me more aware of what I do and how I impact the students."

"National Board has changed my teaching style because I am more of a facilitator in the classroom," says Weaver Middle 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade Gifted teacher Demetria Risper, Certified in Early Adolescent Language Arts. "Since I allow my students to take charge of their own learning, they are more interested in their assignments."

"I am much more aware of what I do each day and how I do it," adds Porter Elementary kindergarten teacher Cheryl Sjoquist, Certified as an Early Childhood Generalist. "I had begun to do things out of habit, unable to explain why I did them that way. I now stop and analyze things from the perspective of enhancing student learning."

Though each spent many, many hours of their free time compiling student work, trying to concisely and clearly explain each step in their lessons, and watching themselves teach, they all say it was worth it. The fact that it's a self-analyzing process means they – like the methods they learn to help educate their students – take control of their own learning process, making it that much more pertinent. "It is one of the best opportunities that I have had to reflect on my teaching and how it affects my students" says Westside High 9<sup>th</sup> grade Government teacher Donna Perkins, now certified in Adolescent Young Adult Social Studies History. "Since going through the process, I find myself reflecting more on how my teaching impacts my students' learning."

## February in the Bibb County Public Schools

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			<b>1</b> Pre-K registration at Burghard Elementary, Bernd Elementary, & Hartley Elementary  Northeast HS Orientation for Applying 8th graders	<b>2</b> Vineville Academy CRCT Informational Meeting, mandatory for parents of 3rd and 4th graders, 5:30 p.m.  Pre-K registration at Heard Elementary & Springdale Elementary  Differentiated Strategies in Math Workshop for Burghard 8:30-3:30	<b>3</b> Pizza Bingo, Heritage Elementary, 6:00 p.m.  Pre-K registration at Ingram-Pye Elementary, Bruce-Weir Elementary, & Union Elementary  Bibb County Elementary 24-Game Challenge Tournament, Porter Elementary, 9:30 a.m.	<b>4</b> Bibb County Spelling Bee, Vineville Academy, 10:00 a.m.
<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> Pre-K registration at Butler Early Childhood Center Pre-K registration at Heritage Elementary Geometry EOCT workshop for high school & middle school teachers, Hutchings High, 8:30 a.m.  High School Registration conducted at Applying MS, 8:30 a.m. - 2:30 a.m.	<b>7</b> Pre-K registration at Riley Elementary & Taylor Elementary	<b>8</b> Pre-K registration at Porter Elementary & Jones Elementary	<b>9</b> Pre-K registration at Skyview Elementary, Brookdale Elementary, & Hamilton Elementary	<b>10</b> Pre-K registration at Lane Elementary, & Morgan Elementary  Applying 8th Grade students tour Northeast	<b>11</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> Deadline to apply for Magnet Schools. Applications are returned to the Magnet School site.  Applying 8th Grade students tour Northeast	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> School Board meeting at Brookdale Elementary, 6:00 p.m.  "Parent Meeting" Dinner will be served! 6:00 p.m.	<b>17</b> Staff Planning – Holiday for Students  6th grade teachers training for Georgia Performance Standards, Renaissance Academy, 8:30 a.m.	<b>18</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> Holiday – System Closed	<b>21</b> Bibb County Supporters for the Gifted's Winter Celebration, Vineville Academy, 6:00 p.m.	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> Reading Circle, Weaver Middle, 6:00 p.m.  Springdale Elementary Silent Auction, 6:00 p.m.	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> Magnet Selection Day (List of accepted students will be available at BOE-Teaching & Learning Department).  Geometry EOCT workshop for high school & middle school teachers, Hutchings High, 8:30 a.m.	<b>28</b> Digi Block workshop for grades 3-5, Career Center Lab, 8:30 a.m.  Black History/Heritage Month parade at 2:30 p.m.				