

Mentor's introduction

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While collecting and analyzing data for a study on National Board Certified Art Teachers in 1999, Kathy Unrath became interested in the certification process and possible long-term outcomes of its successful completion. She was impressed by the litany of passionate responses to questions about why teachers attempted certification. When 91% of the survey respondents indicated that they were motivated to begin the certification process because of its potential for professional growth and development, she wanted to know why.

The candidates often described the process as the most intensive, rewarding and powerful of professional development experiences (Kantner, 2000). Kathy is interested in understanding what produced such a profound impact on the practice and the profession of veteran teachers.

She is convinced that the act of profound analysis and reflection in the process of portfolio construction has permanently changed the way National Board Certified Art Teachers see and understand their subject, their students, and their profession. Did they see themselves as reflective practitioners before the process began? What part of the process made the profound impression on the National Board Certified teachers or does the impact lie in the depth and breadth of their experiences over a sustained length of time? What specific aspects of the portfolio experience had the greatest impact on their practice? Has the experience had a lasting effect on their teaching and on their students?

What evidence do they have of the change this experience imposed on their professional lives?

Kathy decided to investigate the core of this transformational experience and she theorized that the profound reflectivity of the portfolio process could hold the answer.