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Saluting National Board Certified Teachers

Hello, I'm Del Burns, superintendent of the Wake County Public School System.

As a school system, the most important thing that we can do to support learning is provide a quality teacher in every classroom. Retaining, recruiting and training great teachers is absolutely essential to reaching our vision of having every child graduating on time, prepared for the future.

We work hard to support and strengthen our classroom teachers. I'd put them up against any others; I'm that proud and that confident of their abilities.

But there are some Wake County teachers that have gone the extra mile -- who have taken additional time from an already busy week to refine their teaching skills even further. Those are the teachers who have earned certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Nearly 200 of our educators earned National Board Certification last year, bringing the total number of Wake County teachers who have earned this distinction over the years to 1,702. The Wake County Public School System is first in the state, and second in the nation, in the number of National Board Certified Teachers.

National Board Certified Teachers have been through a rigorous process of reflection, self-improvement, and outside assessment that recognizes and rewards great teachers -- and makes them better in the process. It takes anywhere from one to three years to become Board Certified. It takes long hours on top of a teacher's day-to-day responsibilities. Candidates are tested on their content knowledge, and must assemble a portfolio of their classroom practice, including samples of student work and videotapes of them at work in the classroom. One of the running jokes among Board Certified Teacher candidates is that you can tell how far along they are in building their portfolio by the point in which their families don't recognize them any more.

Not every teacher can commit that kind of time out of their personal lives. We have great teachers around our county who haven't yet achieved this honor. But those who have made a special showing of their efforts to improve their skills, and have developed the confidence to become accomplished leaders -- both in their own classrooms, and among their colleagues.

Our state is a national leader in supporting teachers seeking National Board Certification, and the Wake County Public School System is a national leader in the number of teachers who have accepted this challenge. The true beneficiaries of this are our children, who are learning and being taught in an environment that prizes high standards in our teachers AS WELL AS our students, and in which National Board Certified teachers serve as leaders and role models, advancing quality teaching across all of our 159 schools. To those teachers, I say, "thank you" for making our school system even better.

Thanks, and I'll talk to you again soon.