

Congratulations to Harlan County Public School teachers Amy Cottrell and Rachel Yost on obtaining their National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification. Last fall, Cottrell, a primary teacher at Wallins Elementary, and Yost, a primary teacher at Rosspoint, completed a three-year program to achieve a Teacher Leader master's degree from Morehead State University.

"They have obtained the highest certification you can have in our profession," Superintendent Brent Roark told the Harlan County Board of Education during its regular monthly meeting on Thursday. "Mrs. Cottrell and Mrs. Yost are in a very elite group. We are pleased to honor your accomplishment."



The program included a certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

It is a not-for-profit professional organization, created and governed by practicing teachers and their advocates.

The founding mission of the National Board is to advance the quality of teaching and learning by:

- Maintaining high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do;
- Providing a national voluntary system certifying teachers who meet these standards; and
- advocating related education reforms to integrate National Board Certification into American education and to capitalize on the expertise of National Board Certified Teachers.

Recognized as the "gold standard" in teacher certification, the National Board believes higher standards for teachers means better learning for students. Candidates must demonstrate advanced knowledge, skills, and practice in their individual certificate area by completing four components: three portfolio entries and a computer-based assessment.

National Board Certification is the most respected professional certification available in education and provides numerous benefits to teachers, students, and schools. It was designed to develop, retain and recognize accomplished teachers and to generate ongoing improvement in schools nationwide.

According to the nbpts.org website, only three percent of teachers nationwide have received these qualifications. As of 2018, Kentucky ranks eighth nationwide with 3,795 national board certified teachers (NBCT).

Cottrell and Yost join three other teachers in the Harlan County Public Schools with the certification. They are Tami Brock, Harlan County High School; Chamayne Johnson, Wallins Elementary and the central administrative offices; and Kristen Lester, currently at Black Mountain Elementary School.

Through the collaboration between the Harlan County School District, Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR)-STEM initiative, and Kentucky's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, they also completed a two-week STEM curriculum through Project Lead the Way.

"SOAR-STEM is a bold, unique initiative to develop the world's largest workforce trained in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), and centered in Kentucky," says Rodney Hitch, director of Economic Development for Kentucky's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives.

In addition to the degree and certifications, each graduate received a laptop computer, presented by Kentucky's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives; an iPad and VEX Robotics Kit from the Toyota Foundation, Appalachian Research Commission and Kentucky Department for Local Government.

Cottrell's certification is listed as Literacy: Reading-Language Arts-Early and Middle Childhood. Yost's certification is Early Childhood/Generalist.