

# Charlotte Danielson or National Board Certification: A Comparison and Contrasting of Two Major National Frameworks for Teaching

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## ABSTRACT

*Two well-known major frameworks to measure teacher performance and determine what a teacher should know and be able to do are undoubtedly the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and Charlotte Danielson's Framework for teaching. Charlotte Danielson has four major domains and National Board Certification (NBPTS) has five major core propositions. Although they differ in wording, there are many similarities. As of this writing the Pennsylvania Department of Education is in the process of adopting Danielson's Framework domains and is in the process of piloting a rubric for the four domains that will be used as its teacher evaluation/assessment system. This paper explores the differences and similarities of NBPTS and Danielson's Frameworks but doesn't advocate for either. It also explores whether an NBPTS teacher would fare well on Danielson's framework rubric given their similarities.*

## Introduction

Pennsylvania is in the process of adopting a rubric using the framework of Charlotte Danielson with four levels of competency to include distinguished, proficient, needs improvement or progressing, and unsatisfactory. It is a lot more detailed and intricate than the current employee evaluation form from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) which has assessment levels of unsatisfactory, satisfactory, and commendable. The current PDE evaluation form uses bulleted style descriptors along with check boxes for sources of evidence and a block for administrative comments on justification for evaluation. The Charlotte Danielson Framework Model that is currently being piloted in Pennsylvania is rather logorrheic in nature but the final assessment or evaluation can be narrowed down to a related totaled number depending on the value given each level of the rubric.

The state of New York has adopted the Charlotte Danielson Rubric as a teaching evaluation tool by their department of education (PR Newswire: United Business Media, 2012, para. 1). PR Newswire (2012) states that "by implementing the framework for teaching (FFT), schools ensure a consistent process for evaluating teacher effectiveness that is based on a solid foundation of research and is demonstrated to be strongly correlated to student growth" (para. 1).

Why use a framework at all? Charlotte Danielson (2007) gives six reasons why a framework provides beneficial assistance for the educational community.

- The preparation of new teachers
  - New teachers can follow the guidelines to monitor their own progress
- The recruitment and hiring of new teachers
  - Interview questions can be based from the framework

- A road map for novices
  - Other than student teaching, once a teacher is awarded their first teaching position are on their own and considered full members of the profession so a map such as this would prove invaluable
- Guidance for experienced professionals
  - This framework serves as an agreed-upon structure that leads to standardization of what a teacher should know and be able to do.
- A structure for focusing improvement efforts
  - This is what the evaluation rubric can attempt to do
- Communication with the larger community
  - Frameworks take the mystery out of the teaching profession for those who are not in the classroom, i.e., board members, superintendents, parents, etc. (pp. 11-13).

### **National Board Professional Teaching Standards**

The National Board for professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) offers an advanced teaching certification that compliments the state teacher's license that is valid for ten years. The certificate is achieved through a rigorous volunteer assessment program consisting of ten assessments using video-taped classes and written responses. The reason the NBPTS was developed was to create tools to define and measure teacher excellence. There are five core propositions on what teachers should know and be able to do. There are a total of 16 subject matter areas that a teacher can earn a certificate in within various developmental levels for a total of 25 certificates in all.

The major and most obvious difference between NBPTS and Charlotte Danielson's Framework is the fact that a teacher can earn a certificate in NBPTS and not in Danielson's framework. However, Danielson's Framework is being widely used for teacher assessment purposes. Also, there are five core propositions in NBPTS and four domains in Danielson's Framework. The similarities lie in these domains and core propositions but may be worded a bit differently.

The four domains in Danielson's Framework are:

- Planning and Preparation
- Classroom Environment
- Instruction
- Professional Responsibilities

The 5 core propositions of NBPTS are:

- Teachers are committed to students and their learning
- Teachers know the subjects they teach and know how to teach the subject to students
- Responsible for monitoring and organizing student learning
- Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from their experience
- Teachers are members of learning communities

Figure 1 looks at the comparisons of the two national frameworks and how they cross reference. NBPTS has two categories that engulf professional responsibilities and two for instruction.

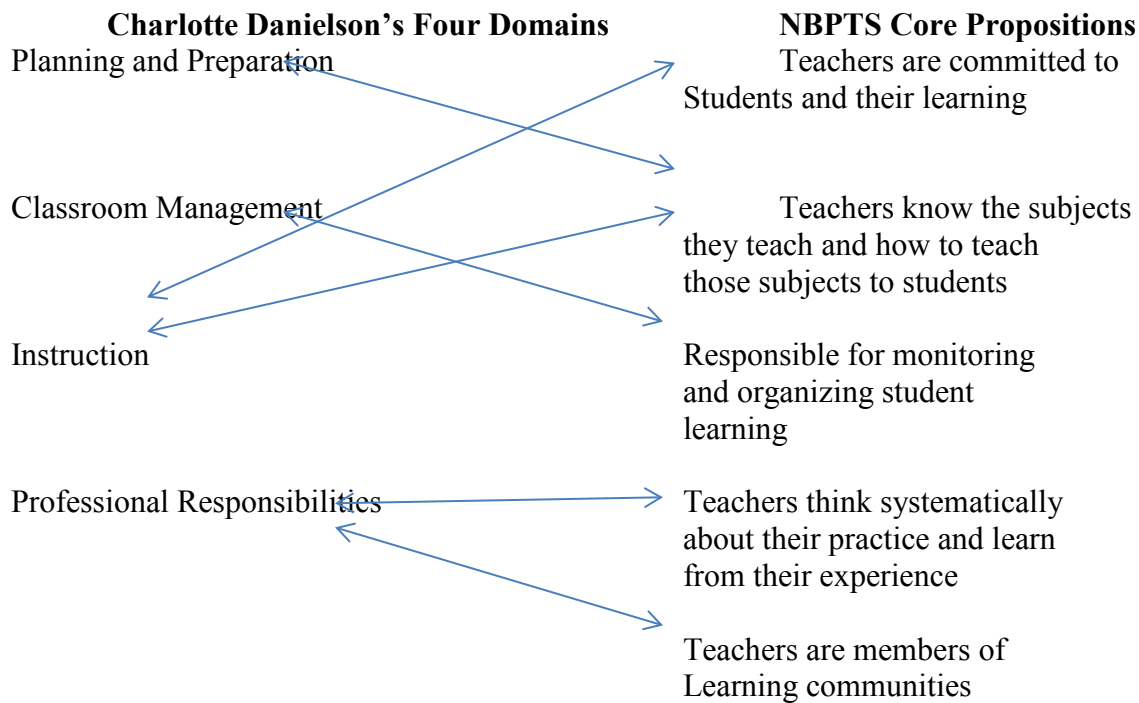


Figure1. Comparison chart of NBPTS Core propositions and Charlotte Danielson's four domains.

For Danielson's Planning and Preparation Domain, the NBPTS match is the number two Core Proposition; teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to their students. There are three very distinct similarities between the two frameworks in this category: Differentiated instruction, misconceptions and prerequisites, and the use of resources. For differentiated instruction, both frameworks agree that it is necessary to teach to all learning styles and abilities to achieve the same results. They both advocate building knowledge based upon knowledge of prerequisites and misconceptions. Both also promote knowledge and uses of diverse resources that extend well beyond the school and the district such as the internet, field trips, guest speakers, models, reproduction, videos, etc.

The differences in this domain are minimal. They consist of the heuristic learning approach, the use of technology, and measurement of accomplishment levels. NBPTS specifies the heuristic or self-discovery approach to learning. Danielson may allude to this approach but doesn't specifically mention it. The foundation behind Danielson's framework however is constructivism which lends itself well to a heuristic teaching approach. It is understood by Danielson's framework that technology is critical to strong teaching and according to Danielson (2007) the following regarding technology is stated:

Technology is indeed essential to good teaching; abundant research supports its inclusion in any comprehensive description of good practice. However, technology does not reflect the work of teaching; it is not what teachers do. Instead, it is reflected in the manner in which teachers do what they do.” (p. 32)

And finally, for purposes of teacher assessment, Danielson reflects levels of performance (unsatisfactory, needs improvement, proficient, and distinguished, while NBPTS simply defines what an accomplished teacher should know and be able to do.

We move on to Domain two where the likenesses also appear to be abundant and the differences minimal. Danielson refers to the classroom environment which correlates to core proposition three of the NBPTS standards called, “responsible for monitoring and organizing student learning (nbpts, n.d., p. 1). Danielson speaks of high standards in 2b in the Components of Professional Practice document (Danielson, 2007). In NBPTS core proposition three, we find the words high expectations being used (nbpts, n.d., p. 1).

Danielson speaks of equitable learning for students of all needs, and NBPTS alludes to differentiated instruction and attention to the various learning styles. The outcome should be the same for all students regardless of the method of delivery. When addressing discipline, the subtle difference is that Danielson articulates that there should be clear standards of conduct in which the students take an active role. NBPTS is a proponent of adoption of a discipline model and that the teacher should select management strategies based on knowledge of students, the social context, etc. Both of these strategies lead to strong classroom management and create a culture where students feel safe and valued.

Domain three of Danielson’s Framework addresses instruction and actually aligns with two NBPTS core propositions: One – Teachers are committed to their students and learning and two – Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to their students. A major category in Domain One of Danielson proposes that expectations for learning, directions and procedures, and explanation of content are clear to students. NBPTS (n.d.) describes accomplished teachers as possessing what is called “pedagogical content knowledge,” which is defined as a joint product of wisdom about teaching, learning, students, and content. “It includes knowledge about the most appropriate ways to present the subject matter to students through various delivery methods” (p. 11). Another likeness is assessment. Danielson advises assessment through student involvement; self-assessment by students; progress monitoring by students and teachers. NBPTS offers that teachers place value on student engagement and uses strategies to monitor it. As far as differences in domain three, Danielson is very specific about oral questioning and encouraging high levels of questioning. NBPTS speaks more to engagement and does not specifically mention oral questioning. NBPTS does however; indicate a need for “Socratic Dialogue” which entails learning through the Socratic Questioning tactic (Socratic Questions, n.d., para. 1).

Domain four, the final domain in Danielson’s framework, relates to professional responsibilities and connects directly with core propositions four and five of NBPTS. The teacher reflection component in 4a of Danielson’s fourth domain states that “a teacher’s reflection accurately and effectively assesses the lesson’s effectiveness” (Danielson’s

Framework, n.d., p. 4). The NBPTS (n.d.) states that the “masterful teachers develop specialized ways to listen to their students, colleagues and administrators, and reflect on their teaching (p. 17). The professional development portion of Danielson’s Framework aligns with NBPTS’s proclamation that teachers are “lifelong students of their craft” (nbpts, n.d., p. 16), and this is regarding pedagogy and content area.

Danielson’s domain category 4d addresses participation in professional communities. The distinguished teachers involve themselves in mutual support and cooperation, and promote a culture of inquiry. There are two broad areas of concern for NBPTS regarding professional communities: improving the effectiveness of the school, and engaging parents and others in the community in the education of young people.

The last similarity in this domain is the communication with families. Both frameworks propose that to enhance student learning, it is imperative to have families engaged in their child’s learning. NBPTS cautions that the changing family structure such as single parents, both parents working outside the home, and parents with financial needs provide special new challenges for teachers and it is important to learn how to be creative in reaching out to these parents and drawing them into their child’s educational experiences.

Two minor differences in these domains relate to using data to help guide and plan curriculum and teaching methods, and showing professionalism. Danielson’s framework addresses both of these categories and NBPTS addresses neither. Since the adoption of the No Child Left Behind Act, data collection to improve teaching and learning has become very important and is not only the responsibility of administration but also now the responsibility of teachers. If teachers do not create their own data, they should at least be able to interpret from data provided to them and make the necessary adaptations to conquer any shortcomings. As demonstrating professionalism, it is an essential component if you are going to use a framework for assessment and evaluation such as Danielson’s. Educators need to look at the comprehensive teaching professional and professionalism as crucial in that so many young lives are dependent on role models to pave the way towards strong and responsible citizenship. Since NBPTS does not have an instrument for teacher assessment and evaluation, it may not be critical to include professionalism into their comprehensive package of what a teacher should know and be able to do.

So given the above information, it would seem safe to say that National Board certified teachers would do very well on the Danielson assessment rubric. Their similarities lend themselves to cross assessment and if a teacher mastered either one of these frameworks, their students would benefit greatly. The differences in the two frameworks are so subtle that it would take a master teacher no time to develop skills in areas that he or she has not been familiar.

Ideally what should occur is teacher self-assessment using Danielson’s Framework. Teachers would have to find comfort with assessing themselves honestly and removing the wall of fear that traditionally comes with evaluations. What we should be careful of here is the difference in meaning between evaluation and assessment. Evaluate means “to determine the significance, worth, or condition of, usually by careful appraisal and study.” Assess means “to

determine the importance, size, or value of” (Merriam Webster, n.d.) as in assess the problem or assess if there is a problem. So when an administrator evaluates a teacher, he or she is placing a worth on another human being’s skills. When an administrator assesses or a teacher self-assesses, they are looking for the size or value of a problem or even if a problem exists. If the problem or lack of teacher skill in a certain area exists, one can then make improvements based on the assessment. After assessment, the administrator and teacher should concern themselves with what can be done to ameliorate any problems or skill deficiency that was revealed during the assessment process in order to benefit students. The administrator then merely becomes the facilitator to make sure that the teacher goes through the right professional development needed such as a workshop, mentoring from a fellow teacher, a coach, the administrator, or research.

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