Teachers Measure Up – Again

Last year five teachers in Blue Valley USD 229 were among 14 Kansas educators deciding if they wanted to go through a rigorous journey – again.

Within the last ten years, Shawn Kovacik, Terrie Morris, Christie Purdon, Marsha Ratzel, and Marilyn Vaughan went through the challenging year-long process of becoming National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs). A year ago, they decided they wanted to go through the process to renew their certificates as the life of their original 10-year certificates were soon to expire.

This week all of these Blue Valley teachers found out their work had measured up – each receiving notice their national board certifications were renewed.

The teachers work in the following schools within the Blue Valley School District, along with the area they have renewed their certification in:

• Shawn Kovacik – Lakewood Middle School – Generalist / Middle Childhood
• Terrie Morris – Mission Trail Elementary – Generalist / Middle Childhood
• Christie Purdon – District Office, science coordinating teacher – Science/Early Adolescence
• Marsha Ratzel – Leawood Middle School – Science/Early Adolescence
• Marilyn Vaughan – District Office, literacy coach – Generalist / Early Childhood

“This process of board certification is very much like how a doctor becomes certified in a special area,” said Dr. Roger Caswell, director of ESU's program which assists teachers working toward national certification. “This is voluntary – no state, school district, or program is demanding them to go through this process. That’s why – a decade after earning their certification the first time – it’s a huge commitment to say, ‘Yes, I want to do it again.’"

While the process is often misunderstood to mean that a teacher passed a test or was nominated for the award, Caswell explained National Board certification is a different kind of honor. Teachers must submit extensive documentation of their instruction, including videos of their students at work in the classroom.

The accomplishment of national board certification benefits the teachers, the schools they work in, and studies have shown NBCTs improve student learning. And the program hosted at ESU, Great Plains Center for National Teacher Certification, benefits as it maintains a 100% renewal rate with candidates achieving recertification on their first attempt. More information about ESU's program can be found at www.emporia.edu/jones/nbpts/.

Kansas currently has a total of 323 national board certified teachers. Of those, 27 will have to be deciding soon if they want to go through the process again.