Debbie Stewart recently found her work as an educator in the Seaman School District measured up to be worthy of the highest credential available to American educators. She successfully renewed her certification as a National Board Certified Teacher through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).

Last year the Logan Elementary School second grade teacher was one of 15 Kansas educators deciding if she wanted to go through the rigorous journey toward certification again. A decade ago, during the 2003-04 school year, Stewart went through the challenging year-long process of becoming a National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT). A year ago, she chose to attempt to renew her certificate as the life of her original 10-year certificate was soon to expire.

In late October Stewart was informed her certificate in early and middle childhood / literacy/reading-language arts was renewed. Stewart is one of nine NBCTs working in USD 345. A recent comprehensive study by the nonpartisan National Research Council found students taught by board certified teachers make higher gains on achievement tests than students taught by other teachers.

“This process of board certification is similar to how a doctor becomes certified in a special area,” said Dr. Roger Caswell, who assisted these teachers in their process to renew their NBCT status. “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.'”

The process is often misunderstood to mean a teacher passed a test or was nominated for the award. Alvin Peters, the director of the program that guides teachers through working towards becoming NBCTS, adds, “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.”

ESU’s Great Plains Center for National Teacher Certification maintains a 100% renewal rate with candidates achieving recertification on their first attempt. This is the ninth consecutive year the center's renewal rate has reached 100%. More information about ESU’s program can be found at www.emporia.edu/jones/nbpts/.

Kansas currently has a total of 368 national board certified teachers. Nationwide, the total number of national board certified teachers is more than 102,000.

###TEACH###