Blue Valley Teachers Measure Up — Again

Four teachers in the Blue Valley USD 229 school district have renewed the highest credential available to American educators as a National Board Certified Teacher through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).

A decade ago, during the 2003-04 school year, Jody Drake, Valerie Golden, Eric Kessler, and Pat Mairs went through the challenging year-long process of becoming National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs).

A year ago, they decided to renew their certificates as the life of their original 10-year certificates was soon to expire.

In late October the educators were told their work had measured up when they received notice their national board certifications were renewed.

Drake, a first grade teacher at Mission Trail Elementary School, renewed her certificate in early childhood/generalist.

Golden, an eighth grade English language arts & reading teacher at Overland Trail Middle School, renewed her certificate in adolescence and young adulthood/English language arts.

Kessler, a bioscience teacher at USD 229’s Center for Advanced Professional Studies, renewed his certificate in adolescence and young adulthood/science.

Mairs, a sixth and eighth grade social studies teacher at Harmony Middle School, renewed her certificate in early adolescence/social studies, history.

These four teachers are among the 64 NBCTs working in USD 229.

“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.”

A recent comprehensive study by the nonpartisan National Research Council found that students taught by board certified teachers make higher gains on achievement tests than students taught by other teachers.

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.

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