Seaman Teacher Measures Up – Again

Susan Swanson 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 Pleasant Hill Elementary School Kindergarten teacher was one of 13 Kansas educators deciding if she wanted to go through the rigorous journey toward certification again.

A decade ago, during the 2004-05 school year, Swanson 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 Swanson was informed her certificate in early to middle childhood/literacy: reading language arts was renewed.

Swanson is one of eight 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 Alvin Peters, the director of the program that guides teachers through working towards their national board certificates. “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. Peters added, “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.”

Emporia State’s Great Plains Center for National Teacher Certification maintains a 100% renewal rate with candidates achieving recertification on their first attempt. This is the tenth consecutive year the center’s renewal rate has reached 100%.

Kansas currently has a total of 394 national board certified teachers. Nationwide, the total number of national board certified teachers is more than 106,000.

More information about Emporia State’s program can be found at www.emporia.edu/jones/nbpts/.

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