



Blue Heron Middle School teacher Jennifer Manning watches as students conduct an experiment to learn about viscosity during her science class Wednesday. She is one of six staff members in Port Townsend who were recognized recently as National Board Certified Teachers. (Jesse Major/Peninsula Daily News)

Six Port Townsend schools staff members receive national certification

By Jesse Major

Thursday, January 18, 2018 2:22pm | [NEWS](#) [JEFFERSON COUNTY](#)

PORT TOWNSEND — Five Port Townsend teachers and a counselor who earned National Board Certification recently will be recognized during the district's School Board meeting tonight.

Teachers Heather Sanders, Cherry Geelan, Jennifer Manning, Roger Mills, Brandi Hageman and counselor Kirsten Bledsoe each earned National Board Certification in December after a grueling three-year process.

“It’s not just getting a certificate, it’s about changing the way you teach so that your approach is holistic for the students,” said Leslie Shively, who facilitates the program in Port Townsend.

“We see that students are learning more, they are engaged more and are finding more academic success.”

Meeting tonight

The School Board meeting begins at 5:30 tonight in Room S-11 of the Gail Stuart building, 1610 Blaine St.

The certifications from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards means that Port Townsend School District now has 12 National Board Certified staff members.

They are among 5,470 people across the country who earned certification. On average, there were 109 teachers from each state who were recognized in December.

There are also National Board Certified staff members in Port Angeles, Sequim, Quillayute Valley, Cape Flattery, Quilcene, Chimacum and Crescent school districts, according to the Board.

Mills, a science teacher at Blue Heron Middle School, said earning the certification was one of the most difficult processes he has been involved with.

“I’m still trying to come to believe that I got it,” he said. “It was just so much work to get it done and to try to teach at the same time and still have stuff at home going as it should.”

He said without help from Shively and the others working on certification, it would have been impossible.

The process forced Mills to think critically about his teaching. Part of the process required him to write about 100 pages about teaching.

“I probably have the least amount of confidence in my writing ability out of anything I do, and having to put down everything you know about teaching into a limited amount of space was tough,” he said.

“It seems like a lot, but it wasn’t enough. It was really hard to distill everything into that amount of words.”

He said now he puts more thought into everything he does. Mills looks to make sure connections between lessons happen, that kids understand what he wants them to know.

“I put so much more thought into things,” he said, adding one of his focuses has been to make students more responsible for their own learning.

This involves having students explain concepts to each other and learning from one another.

“Anything you have to do yourself is more important to you than if someone just gives it to you,” he said.

Manning, also a science teacher at Blue Heron Middle School, said the process forces teachers to step up their game when it comes to teaching.

She said that because of the work required to earn certification, it’s the students who end up winning.

“It benefits the kids in that they are getting really engaging work and lessons,” she said.

Through the process, Manning and other teachers developed lesson plans that they will use for years to come, she said.

She said she is grateful that the Port Townsend School District supports staff members who want to earn National Board Certification.

“The district should really flaunt that,” she said.

Reporter Jesse Major can be reached at 360-452-2345, ext. 56250, or at jmajor@peninsuladailynews.com.



Blue Heron Middle School teacher Roger Mills talks with students about what they had just learned in his science class Wednesday. He is one of six staff members in Port Townsend who were recognized recently as National Board Certified Teachers. (Jesse Major/Peninsula Daily News)

PENINSULA
Daily News

© 2018, Peninsula Daily News and Sound Publishing, Inc.

[Subscribe](#) | [Sign-Up for Peninsula Daily News Newsletters](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Contact Us](#)