My National Board Story: Jackie Stewart

Name: Jackie Stewart
Area of Certification: AYA Science
Your Professional Title: Honors & AP Chemistry teacher
School Name: Quincy Senior High Schools
District: Quincy Public Schools
Year of Certification: 2006
Year of Renewal (if applicable): 2015

Provide a brief description of your school and your students.
I teach at Quincy Senior High School and have taught in this school since 1993. I have taught all levels of chemistry: Honors Chemistry, AP Chemistry, General Chemistry, Introductory Chemistry. Quincy is a large town, somewhere around 40,000, with demographics that have shifted from professional to more blue-collar. More than 50% of our students are now on free/reduced lunches. We have a small but significant minority population and are working to better serve their needs, attempting to improve our poor past performance in that area. My classes serve a small percentage of the total population, the most motivated students.

Explain why you chose to certify (and if you renewed, why you chose to renew).
I chose to certify initially because I had watched a friend battle with her initial certification. It took her three years to certify and each year she became progressively more articulate about what she was doing and why she was doing it. I understood that the analysis was granting her an authority that was useful, and I decided to invest in that analysis.

Share the ways in which certification has transformed the way you teach and the way students learn in your classroom or school.
Unlike my friend, I certified in one year, so actually, I didn't learn as much from the initial process as she did. However, I did learn to better articulate what I was doing. I have also used evaluation processes and analytical processes as ways to force the creation of new and better techniques. Although I am always learning as a teacher, something about the evaluation and analysis of my teaching process pushes me to create and to articulate clearly what I am creating. I have learned to seek that motivation, because creating is one of my deep joys. For example, a couple of summers ago, I saw a Chemistry Escape Room modeled in Belgium. I seriously considered a trip to Belgium, but the notice was so short, I couldn't conceive of it. Instead, I spent a manic summer collecting various phenomena that could be used to create Chemistry Escape Rooms based on chemical phenomena, utilizing chemical resources in their solutions. My school funded the hardware portion of the Escape Room (banker bags, locks, etc), and I funded an exploration of clues (my donation). In 2018, my colleague and I created

and ran two Chemistry Escape Rooms: (Everything is on the Table), involving magnetic maps for the periodic table, UV beads and UV light, invisible ink clues in a physical scavenger hunt, and spectra clues in a digital scavenger hunt. I did use the first Escape Room in my evaluation that year, but this is actually a time where I tapped into a creative energy that I had missed & then used it for my evaluation… as opposed to using my evaluation to drive more creation. I do want to make clear that I always love creating regardless, but I find analyzing my own teaching process pushes me to do it even more. Last year, my colleague and I then presented our two Escape Rooms at Quincy Conference. Both of our sessions were full, and another QC presenter came despite not really liking Escape Rooms, but then was so excited by how it could be curricular, not just puzzles & games. She told me all the ways she could use this in Human Physiology. One of my favorite responses of all time.

Describe experiences and relationships that have developed because of your certification.

The Illinois Institute of Chemistry Through Computational Science (ICLCS) and my National Board certification led me to becoming a Chemistry National Board mentor for the Robert Noyce program at the University of Illinois, along with Marcy Vancil (lead mentor) and Gail Hermann (another Chemistry mentor and a close colleague of mine). When I renewed in 2015, I looked up the numbers for our program. When our program ended, there were 19 rural chemistry teachers who were National Board Certified. Fifteen of them were from our program. Between ICLCS and Noyce, that was 8 – 9 years of my life. I encounter our chemistry teachers often, on social media and at other workshops. Always delighted to see them. Mindy W, one of the mentors in this program came from ICLCS. I saw Jacob and Meaghan at a recent Pearson test analysis. Rodger B and Tom T are on my Facebook and always have intriguing insights. Plus, it is cool to see Rodger fly his plane and to listen to Tom's precise commentary on everything from current events to television series. I joined this program last year, and I really love the two teachers who were in my cohort. One was in Special Ed and just did some delightful science challenges with her junior high Special Ed students. The students were engaged by the challenges, and they were successful. I just love seeing what other teachers do. Looks like I have three more this year. We shall see how it goes!

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