

Seth Baker's National Board Story



Area of Certification: Mid Generalist
Your Professional Title: 5th Grade Teacher
School Name: Washington Irving Elementary
District: Oak Park D97
Year of Certification: 2017
Year of Renewal (if applicable)

This is my 27th year of teaching in Oak Park, Illinois. While student teaching in Oak Park 28 years ago, I witnessed how Oak Park values and advocates for a diverse community. At the borders, Oak Park is between two very different worlds. The Austin neighborhood of West Chicago on the East, and suburban River Forest on the West. Very few places in Illinois exist with such proximity to that range of socioeconomic and racial demographics. Oak Park works to bridge those worlds. I knew from my first moments in the classroom, I wanted to be part of this community.

As a teacher in Oak Park's public school system, I teach students who represent that diversity. Equity is often first in my mind as I design lessons and present instruction. My journey through National Board certification pushed me to open my eyes to this reality, and to take action to learn more about the students in my class. A major focus when I pursued National Board certification was to challenge myself to reflect on the teaching practices I used in my classroom, however gaining more authentic knowledge of students and having that drive my instruction has been the greatest shift in my teaching.

National Board certification has also given me the opportunity to pursue leadership positions in my district. This will be my 3rd year as a district National Board cohort facilitator, working directly with teachers as they become nationally board certified. While this position is by design one where I support colleagues, it has actually become another source of learning for me. Not only have I fostered stronger relationships with colleagues, but I have learned from their teaching journey, and have continued to reflect on my own. I look forward to continue this pursue in teaching excellence.