

YHS science teacher earns national certification honor

By Earlene Ward - Special to the Sierra Star

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Dr. Gerard Klimbal, Yosemite High School science teacher, was recently notified that he has met the standards for National Board Certification in Adolescence and Young Adulthood Science with chemistry as his specialty area.

The certification is issued by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, which is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization.

The NBPTS Web site notes that "NBPTS is leading the way in making teaching a profession dedicated to student learning and to upholding high standards for professional performance. We have raised the standards for teachers, strengthened their educational preparation through the standards, and created performance-based assessments that demonstrate accomplished application of the standards."

Dr. Klimbal says the work for certification was rigorous and he worked on it for two years. This was the third time he tested for certification and, he says, "The third time's a charm."

He said he decided to go through the process because "I wanted to be a better teacher for my students; it makes you self-reflect on how you teach." He said the process also helps solidify the idea that you are doing a good job.

He said it was a lot of work and almost like working on his doctorate again. "It was a neat opportunity; it is not an easy road to travel but it's interesting," he said.

Dr. Klimbal says teaching science is a challenge because it is unique in that it requires a lot of hands-on work for the students to understand and appreciate the subject. Having adequate classroom space to be effective is always a challenge he said, along with the number of students in the class.

He thinks the most important aspect of education is "who's in front of the classroom. That person in front of the students can make or break."

Connecting with the students is important, he believes. He said a teacher has to realize that it will be hard for students to learn something that the teacher thinks is easy. That requires the hands-on approach and making the students understand and feel connected. He finds that humor helps and that it is important to use a variety of teaching strategies.

The work for certification included tests on the content area; a video tape of him teaching in front of the class; information about curriculum; professional development and a connection with parents and the community. YHS Principal Steve Raupp said Dr. Klimbal is the first YHS teacher to achieve national certification.

"Dr. Klimbal is to be commended for all of the hard work he put into achieving National Board Certification," he said. "He is an exceptional teacher and we are proud to have our first nationally certified teacher on the YHS faculty."

Dr. Klimbal has been at YHS for two years. He previously taught at Chapman University in the School of Education and the School of Sciences. Before that, he taught at Atwater High School and earlier at a parochial middle school. Dr. Klimbal teaches biology, Advanced Placement environmental science, International Baccalaureate chemistry 1 and 2 and physics. He graduated with distinction in 1996 from the doctoral program in curriculum and instruction from Northern Arizona University with an emphasis in science education.

He holds a master's degree in teaching of physical sciences from Northern Arizona University where he graduated with honors. His Bachelor of Science degree is in biology from Oakland University in Rochester, Minn.

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