

PROFILE: MICHAEL BELL, NATIONALLY BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHER

Southern Art Teacher is department head; painted official portrait of State Superintendent of schools.

By Michelle Stephenson | December 31, 2010



Michael Bell is an accomplished [painter](#) in his own right, but he's also the art department chair at Southern High in Harwood, where he's been teaching for the past 15 years.

Bell tried for and passed his National Board Certification on the first try in 2010.

Bell said that it was a good year for him to have attempted the National Boards process because he really enjoyed the group of students from last year. Most of them graduated in June of 2010.

"It was a great group of students to go through the process with. They were just really special. They had the highest AP scores in the county too, so that was great," Bell said.

Bell said that the process of videotaping yourself is enlightening. "The video doesn't miss a thing. It is a practice I have kept even after national boards," Bell said.

He gave an example of how he usually moves around the classroom, checking in at each table and ensuring that the students are progressing without problems in a given assignment.

During one class, he noticed at the end of the class that a group of students hadn't progressed as far as some of the other tables, but Bell said he was confident he had given equal attention to each group within the classroom.

But when he began reviewing the tape, realized that he'd visited the one table on first pass, but then after a cursory glance that seemed to indicate they were moving along, he passed them by.

"There were three kids who were engaged, but maybe not as much as they should have been," Bell said. "It keeps you on your toes, your eyes can miss things, but with the video doesn't."

When he got his scores, he said the process of logging in and entering the identification number was a bit like playing slots, "you don't know what is going to come up on the screen," Bell said.

But he fared well, passing in all of his areas, including the art history exam.

"You can study all you want, and study all the art history books, but if an image pops up on the screen that you're unfamiliar with, it's hard to write about it," Bell said.

In all, he said that the process is like an intensive Masters degree.

You're reflecting a lot on your practice, and defending everything you are doing, which is something that any good teacher should be able to do," Bell said.