

## Local Schools



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# Eclipse, Space Balloons and Dr. Kaku

AUGUST 30TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Poplar Bluff, Missouri - A group of Poplar Bluff students not only got to view the solar eclipse in totality, but met famous theoretical physicist Dr. Michio Kaku and sent an experiment to the edge of outer space, all in the same day.

“This day was the culmination of why I became a teacher,” Junior High science teacher Ashley Woolard reacted. “I was able to become a page in these students’ stories. When these kids tell their grandkids about the 2017 eclipse, they will say they were in Mrs. Woolard’s science class.”

Woolard’s team at Junior High, along with Tana Bringer’s Middle School pod as well as Kathy Miller’s AP physics class at Senior High—about 200 students total—participated in the NASA sponsored event on Monday, Aug. 21, hosted by Southeast Missouri State University at Houch Field in Cape Girardeau.

The participating teachers, representing 17 area school districts, were invited after attending an eclipse workshop during the Collaborative Regional Education Academy in June at SEMO. The professional development was one of several voluntary opportunities made available to teachers over the summer, according to R-I Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Patty Robertson.

For the space portion of the program, classes placed items in test tubes to be launched in a high-altitude weather balloon 20 miles up. The High School chose seeds to test germination rate, Junior High selected antibiotics to check potency on a staph culture, and

the Middle School experimented with the toy Orbeez to discover how the environment affects the molecules. The balloons included cameras and will be tracked with GPS locators once the payloads return to Earth.

Later that evening Kaku was booked to deliver a keynote address about the future at the Show Me Center, and decided to make an appearance at the university's former band practice field during the day to visit with students.

Back in Poplar Bluff, the R-I campus community participated in activities related to the Great American Solar Eclipse, watching the stream provided by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and documenting the moon's coverage of the sun in science journals.

Pictured: The PBHS AP physics class awaits a total solar eclipse, which is when the moon completely covers the sun and the sun's tenuous atmosphere, the corona.

Photo and article submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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