

## Local Schools



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# PBHS Graduation Rate Exceeds 90% Goal

OCTOBER 05TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

## PBHS Graduation Rate Exceeds 90% Goal

Poplar Bluff, Missouri - Poplar Bluff High School's graduation rate was 91.8 percent this year, a gain of 4.2 percent over last year, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education recently reported.

School officials attribute the steady increase since 2011's 78.6 percent to the progress teachers are making in tracking data, building relationships, and generally working harder to engage students and ensure individuals obtain the knowledge necessary to advance.

"Much credit should be given to high school staff for their efforts during the student's final four years," affirmed Patty Robertson, R-I assistant superintendent of curriculum. "However, this is reason for all of us to celebrate. We begin laying an academic foundation and helping students to form dispositions about learning as early as 3 years old."

The Professional Learning Community model was one district-wide initiative implemented over the past several years that has built time into the academic calendar for educators to collaborate across subject areas, grade levels and school buildings. Capturing Kids' Hearts is the cultural piece that centers on building a positive discourse with students by establishing social contracts, among other tools, in various school settings.

The digital transformation, through which a district laptop has been supplied to each student, began at the Junior High and expanded to the High School, allowing teachers to supplement their lessons with educational resources available online that are vetted by

instructional coaches.

The Graduation Center allows students at risk of falling behind grade level due to various life circumstances a chance to catch up in a smaller classroom setting. Because of its success, school leaders are in the planning stages of expanding the non-traditional program into a full alternative school for students who do not excel in a typical campus environment.

Other opportunities tailored to upper grade levels include advisory during which students are provided a class period to check in with a designated teacher and meet with ‘lifeguards’ in each department if they are struggling to grasp a concept. The ICU, or intensive care unit, is a parental notification system utilized when students miss assignments.

Lastly, PB Writes is an activity that puts an emphasis on research and essay writing across all core subjects with monthly prompts designed to prepare freshmen and sophomores for the EOC and upperclassmen for the ACT.

“None of this makes [school] easier, it makes it more student-focused, giving kids opportunities they didn’t have before,” stated Mike Owen, PBHS principal. “These are extra things our staff and students are doing. The easy route would be to sit back and do what’s always been done.”

Owen, a first-year high school principal with five years of administrative experience in secondary education, noted that his pet peeve is what he refers to as the “phantom rule,” or things that are done a particular way simply out of routine. Crediting his predecessor Mike Kiehne for implementing many of the aforementioned initiatives, Owen said he believes the stage is set for him to make the necessary tweaks to improve programs, as his specialty is attention to detail.

“I’ve been in the district for 20 years and this high school did not always have the reputation that it has now,” said Owen, referring to all the dropout prevention measures being implemented today. A total of 340 students earned diplomas in the Class of 2017, marking the largest graduating class since 1980, according to district records.

“We are now a strength for the district,” Owen continued. “Our efforts are being noticed, and the results are showing.”

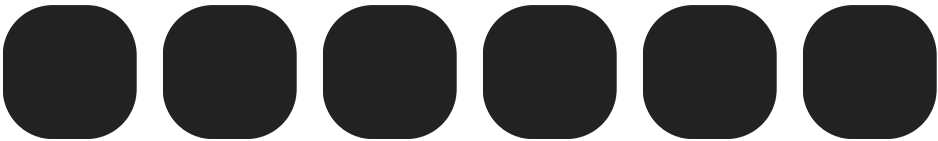
Pictured: Prior to commencement in May, members of the graduating Class of 2017 visit O’Neal in their gowns, an annual tradition at each of the elementary schools across the district.

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

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# PBHS Students Make All-District Choir

OCTOBER 05TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

PBHS Students Make All-District Choir

Poplar Bluff, Missouri - A dozen Poplar Bluff High School students were named to the Southeast Missouri All-District Choir, the most to qualify in recent memory, according to educators.

A total of 28 PBHS choral students auditioned on Saturday, Sept. 23, in Cape Girardeau. The finalists will rehearse and perform a concert on Saturday, Nov. 11, at Cape Central High School. The upperclassmen will have an opportunity to try out for the All-State Choir.

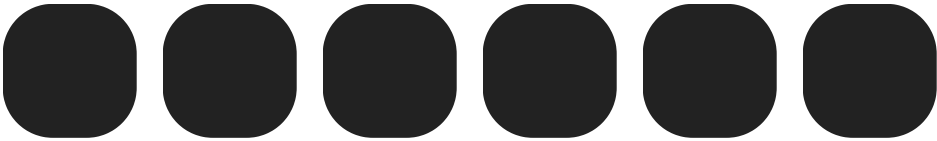
Pictured: (Back row from left) PBHS Director of Vocal Music Joshua Allen, and students Jillian Wendler, Hunter Ellis, Jacob Chippewa and Jayvon Holloway; (middle row, left to right) Natalie Hunsaker, Allison Knowlton, Ross Dare, Michael Allen Ward Jr. and Aaron Taylor; and (front row) Shelby Ross, Kerrigan Moore and Michael Joseph.

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

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# Free Meals for Younger Grades Increases Participation

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## Free Meals for Younger Grades Increases Participation

Poplar Bluff, Missouri - Free breakfast and lunch is being offered this year to all students, grades pre-K through third, in an effort to help ensure children are receiving the proper nutrition throughout the school day.

Thus far the number of meals served at Early Childhood, Kindergarten Center, Eugene Field, Lake Road, Oak Grove and O'Neal has increased by over 100 students per day, Chartwells School Dining Services reported during the school board meeting on Thursday, Sept. 21.

“One of our goals here is to increase participation in our school cafeteria lines,” said Rod Priest, R-I assistant superintendent of business. “We do have a lot of kids that bring their lunch to school, which is fine, but we also want to encourage kids to enjoy a nutritional, well-balanced meal at no charge if they don't have the resources at home.”

Over the summer the district elected to take advantage of the Community Eligibility Program, which the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education rolled out in recent years for high poverty districts to streamline paperwork and eliminate any possible stigma for families.

Schools can be grouped together and a multiplier is used to determine the identified student population based on the current free and reduced lunch rate. In Poplar Bluff, removing the fourth grade from the elementary configuration caused the ISP to concentrate at the lower grade levels, where children in need tend to be more prevalent, according to officials.

“We're dealing with young families just getting started in their careers with entry level jobs,” Priest explained. “Fortunately, by the time the kid gets in upper grades, the free and reduced number declines, which we attribute to families getting more established in their jobs and the community.”

Efforts are also being made at the Middle School, Junior High and the High School to improve menu choices for students at a cost of \$1.55 for breakfast and \$2.25 for lunch, or 30 and 40 cents respectively under the National School Lunch Program. Chartwells leads a program called Chef2School during which an executive chef visits dozens of classrooms each month introducing healthy foods to students.

At Junior High, breakfast participation increased by about 100 meals since last week due to a new ‘grab and go’ offering after first period. The popular second chance breakfast was made available at Senior High beginning last school year. At the Middle School, a cart was placed in the lobby area of the gymnasium containing hot and cold items for bus riders.

The High School incorporated a made-to-order omelet option during 2016/17, and Middle School and Junior High will soon have fruit smoothie stations made by V8. Chartwells recently submitted a waiver under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act so whole grains in biscuits, noodles, tortillas and pizza crust are no longer required since the product seemed to be impacting participation company-wide.

“It’s a good thing for parents if they would take advantage of [Chartwells] and not send kids with a bagged lunch, because we offer them all five of the food groups. Each meal includes a meat, grain, fruit, vegetable and dairy,” said Dixie Hardin, food services director.

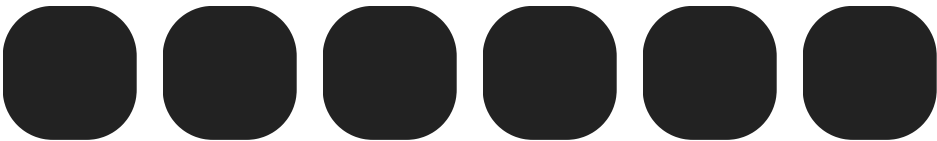
Chartwells Food Services Director Dixie Hardin is awarded by (left) Regional Vice President James Paladenic and District Manager Daniel Wolff the 2017 Compass in the Community award out of 65 districts for her leadership in efforts such as Mule Packs, the annual Community Thanksgiving and hosting a Christmas dinner for area children in foster care.

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

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## The Constitution Project

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SEPTEMBER 22ND 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

### The Constitution Project

Poplar Bluff, Missouri - A new class has been started at Poplar Bluff High School that partners with local industry professionals to take students through the process of investigating a mock crime, holding a trial and reporting about the proceedings.

The 19 students—selected based on academics, school citizenship and interest level—will be judged on merit in the disciplines of journalism, trial advocacy and crime scene investigation, with the highest scoring teams going on to compete against other schools before the Missouri Supreme Court.

The Constitution Project kicked off on Wednesday, Sept. 6, with PBHS joining a dozen other high schools, 250 students total, in Jefferson City to hear an overview from state leaders, including the Missouri First Lady, Dr. Sheena Greitens.

“I can remember as a student, experiential learning was the most powerful kind of learning because discussing and acting out a concept is more relevant than a teacher lecturing at you,” said social studies teacher Mitch Davis, who presides over the class. “Of course we all have to lecture, but this is a project-based learning class that teaches your rights as a citizen under the Constitution by acting those principles out.”

The founder of the program is Texas County Associate Circuit Judge Doug Gaston, who recalled that many young people were interested in exploring careers in forensic science and pathology after the crime drama TV series CSI came out, so he decided to “meet the students where they were,” and share his passion for the Constitution.

“The biggest thing for me is to teach them that the reason the Constitution matters is the Constitution keeps you free,” the honorable judge said. “You can become what you’re meant to become in life because we don’t have a government that oppresses us, and that’s because the Constitution is not just a document, it protects our rights.”

The class was instituted in Poplar Bluff by Superintendent Scott Dill who, at his previous post, was the head of the first school district in Missouri to participate with Gaston in 2011. The Constitution Project began as a club at Houston Schools, expanding the following semester to all the schools in the county, and going statewide two years later. Last year, Missouri Congress passed a law allowing the curriculum to shape a credit-bearing elective.

“One of the opportunities in changing school districts as a leader—and regions of the state—is the opportunity to poach best practices,” Dill stated. “I’ve never been above looking across district lines to determine what will work best for our kids, without reservation, and making it our own. There’s a perception that districts are in competition, and that may be true in athletics and things like that, but ultimately our public schools stand united toward one common goal – and that’s ensuring our schools are working for our students.”

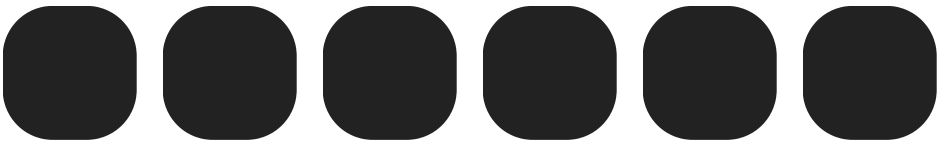
Pictured are PBHS students simulate how a bill becomes a law in the House Chamber of the Capitol.

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

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## Trap Members Drive Underway

SEPTEMBER 21ST 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

### Trap Members Drive Underway

Poplar Bluff, Missouri - The Poplar Bluff Trap Team is holding a membership drive in an effort to get more students involved at an early age, and ultimately keep the sport alive and strong.

“Americans haven’t had an Olympic bunker trap shooter since 1996,” said head coach Josh Wesemann, a Junior High social studies teacher. “Some countries can’t have an Olympic team because their laws don’t allow it, so we have to teach the next generation coming up [an appreciation].”

This is the third year Junior High students are able to participate on the team, after the Board of Education approved the expansion of the program to allow students to gain two more years of competitive experience.

Classified as an emerging sport under the Missouri State High School Activities Association, Poplar Bluff Trap was established in 2005 under the direction of then FFA sponsor Darla Nunn, who presently manages the ICU program at the High School. Nunn said the Friends of the NRA initially donated \$2,000 in equipment and shooting gear.

When Nunn’s successor Charles Kinsey, now the Technical Career Center director, took over the coaching position two years later, he helped secure some more NRA funding to do concrete work at the Poplar Bluff Gun Club, building multiple trap houses. The Midway USA Foundation also supplied an endowment of about \$120,000 to establish a budget for the team to cover the cost of entry fees and traveling expenses for meets going forward.

Kinsey said he can recall when Poplar Bluff had the only trap team in the area, besides Doniphan. Today there are several additional teams throughout the region that practice at the Gun Club. “That is a direct result of the Gun Club improvements and our school’s lead,” he said.

Trap is open to male and female students, grades 7-12. “Once you get your feet placement down and learn some other technicalities, it basically comes down to mental focus and consistency,” Wesemann explained.

Over the summer, PBHS senior Hannah Cash was named to the Missouri All-State Trap Team, among the top five in the state, and went on to compete at the Scholastic Clay Target Program nationals in Ohio. Hannah shot her first perfect 100 score at practice in recent weeks, simply attributing her motivation to a sibling rivalry with her brother Joseph, a trap standout from the PBHS Class of 2015. “I have to outdo him,” she said, half-jokingly.

There are opportunities beyond high school available to trap shooters who excel. “We’ve worked to get our Gun Club certified which means we can start hosting ATA (Amateur Trapshooting Association) events since our clays are considered registered targets. This helps kids get scholarships,” explained assistant coach Sandy Pike of the R-I Instructional Technology Department.

Katelyn Campa, currently a first grade teacher at Lake Road Elementary, graduated in the PBHS Class of 2010 with a scholarship to Lindenwood University in St. Charles, where she participated in trap, skeet and sporting clays. “It wasn’t a full ride, but it was definitely helpful,” Campa said.

The first trap meet of the 2017/18 season will take place next month at the Gun Club. For more information about the Trap Team, contact the coaching staff on social media at **[www.facebook.com/PoplarBluffTrapTeam](http://www.facebook.com/PoplarBluffTrapTeam)**. The cutoff date for students to sign up is Thursday, Sept. 21.

Pictured are Hannah Cash, Poplar Bluff’s own Annie Oakley, aligns her sight to shoot a clay target at practice.

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

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