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Oak Grove Nationally Recognized for Student Success

MARCH 22ND 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Oak Grove Nationally Recognized for Student Success

Oak Grove nationally recognized for student success

Oak Grove earned national recognition for achieving the largest gains in the state for closing the achievement gap among student groups, according to Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education officials.

Missouri Assessment Program scores for English language arts jumped from 46.56 percent in 2016/17 to 81.33 the following year while math scores increased from 48.09 to 61.33 percent proficient or advanced, averaging a 24 percent improvement rate for subgroups, reported DESE's Amanda Cash.

The elementary school was recognized among 100 distinguished Title I schools across the country during the National Title I Conference held Friday, Feb. 9, in Philadelphia.

“They broke down the walls of the classroom and started looking across the whole building rather than strictly looking at the needs of their own classroom,” explained Patty Robertson, Poplar Bluff R-I assistant superintendent of curriculum. “The students can all get intervention if needed and the interventions are targeted to make sure kids learn. And if they don’t (learn), they reteach.”

Oak Grove Principal Jenifer Richardson, who Robertson called her hero, attributes the extraordinary success to initiatives implemented last year including the school-wide positive behavior support program, focusing on developing a common language for teaching social skills and providing positive reinforcement.

“Our teachers do a great job building confidence in students, making sure they know (their teachers) believe in them, and building that relationship,” Richardson said. “When students know you believe in them, (the students) work hard for it.”

Richardson also credits a reemphasis placed on educators collaborating in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for students, the foundation of the Professional Learning Community model.

“They didn’t buy a new program or spend money to accomplish this,” stated JoAnne Westbook, Poplar Bluff Title I director. Richardson added: “We changed the way we do business. My father always said, ‘Getting players is easy. Getting them to play together is the hard part.’”

Structured team meetings using data to drive instruction take place biweekly at Oak Grove. Reading interventionist Michelle Farmer said what used to be more of a pull-out model is now a full classroom of students working in small groups of differentiated instruction. Third grade teachers break down MAP test questions regularly and work on vocabulary building.

Farmer, who made note it is a group effort, admitted that the change made her a little uncomfortable at first being a 28-year veteran, but she is proud of her “Oak Grove family” for all the progress. “If the data shows it’s working, then it’s what’s best for kids,” Farmer concluded.

Pictured: Poplar Bluff personnel (from left) Michelle Bates, Patty Robertson, Jenifer Richardson, Christy Young, Ashley Blume, Staci Barker, Michelle Farmer and Kristie Robinson accept a national award on behalf of Oak Grove Elementary.

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

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Bank of Missouri Sponsors Tinnin Center Show for Students

MARCH 19TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Bank of Missouri Sponsors Tinnin Center Show for Students

The Bank of Missouri sponsors Tinnin Center show for Poplar Bluff R-1 students

The Bank of Missouri Poplar Bluff sponsored a performance of “Laura Ingalls Wilder: Voice of the Prairie” for Poplar Bluff elementary students held at the Tinnin Fine Arts Center at Three Rivers College.

Around 400 children saw the children’s theater show performed by the Imaginary Theatre Company of St. Louis and presented by the TRC Patrons of the Arts Society.

Pictured with the poster for the show are Kevin McCormick (left), Community Bank President of The Bank of Missouri Poplar Bluff, and Three Rivers President Dr. Wesley Payne.

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Professional Play Series Put on for Local Students

MARCH 13TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Professional Play Series Put on for Local Students

Poplar Bluff, Missouri- The children's play series presented by the Patrons of the Arts wrapped up on Friday, Feb. 23, exposing some students to theater for the first time.

Poplar Bluff students grades K-5 were provided an opportunity to see one of the following plays performed by the Repertory Imaginary Theatre Company at the Tinnin Fine Arts Center: "The Nutcracker," "The Country Mouse and City Mouse" or "Laura Ingalls Wilder: Voice of the Prairie."

"It was quite moving to see their expressions while they watched the characters from the story come to life on stage," said Teresa Webb, first grade teacher of Eugene Field. "I believe they walked away from the experience with a newfound appreciation of performing arts and gained a deeper understanding of the lesson learned from (the play)."

Getting to see the reaction of students was one of Webb’s “most treasured memories” of the school year, she continued. Faculty colleague Kristen Spain added that watching the faces of the students sitting on the edge of their seats, soaking in every word, was “priceless.”

“My Alanii Render now wants to grow up and be in performing arts in college because she was so inspired by one of the actresses that day,” said Spain of one of her first grade students. “In her words: ‘I didn’t know grownups could play and act silly on stage in front of kids and get paid for it!’”

Three Rivers College has been arranging for professional plays to be performed directly for schools within its service area for the past few years. The plays are free thanks to the Patrons of the Arts Society, which subsidizes the costs with help from business sponsors.

“Having a variety of opportunities in the arts education is so important for our students. These experiences help kids develop on many fundamental levels,” stated Patty Robertson, R-I assistant superintendent of curriculum. “Some students find their ‘voice’ while studying the arts. Creative expression is also a great way to build self-confidence.”

Pictured: The cast of ‘Voice of the Prairie,’ (from left) Lana Dvorak, Jeanitta Perkins, Charlie Barron and Aaron Orion Baker, answer questions from fifth graders following the performance.

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Businesses Sponsor Girls State Group

MARCH 08TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Businesses Sponsor Girls State Group

Businesses sponsor Girls State group

The largest number of Poplar Bluff High School juniors in recent memory will be participating in American Legion Auxiliary Girls State this summer at Central Missouri University in Warrensburg, thanks to several generous community sponsors.

During the seven-day program from June 24-30, student delegates nominated by teachers will form a local government structure through a mock election and carry out responsibilities and duties as assigned, writing and voting on bills. After taking an exit exam, students can earn college credits.

“No one ever goes and doesn’t have a good time,” said PBHS counselor Tamara Day, who helped secure the sponsorships so the students can attend for free. “It’s an amazing experience that teaches leadership and knowledge of the fundamentals of government, and oftentimes brings them out of their shell.”

Business sponsors include Endeavor Home Care; First Midwest Bank; Kevin Barbour Jr. of Kraft, Miles and Tatum; Dr. Teri Page of Pearle Vision; Nathan Maurer on behalf of Poplar Bluff Realty; the Rotary Club of Poplar Bluff; Rowland Family Dentistry; and Southern Bank.

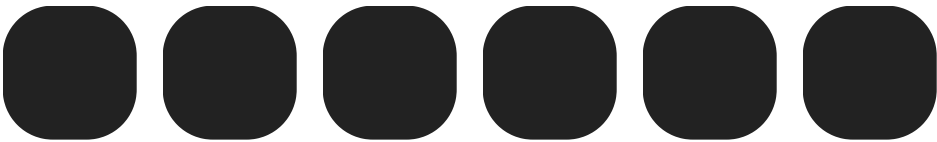
(Back row, from left) Counselor Tamara Day, and students Lina Dill, Geneva Taylor, Sophia Rowland and Kaylee Barbour; and (front row, left to right) Darian Strange, Sara Holland and Jillian Page. Not pictured is participant Destinee Howell.

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

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PBHS Continues to Offer ACT for FREE Despite State Cut

FEBRUARY 12TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

PBHS Continues to Offer ACT for FREE Despite State Cut

Poplar Bluff, Missouri - The Poplar Bluff School District will offer the ACT exam to High School juniors one time free of charge in April.

The college admissions test, previously state-funded, was cut from the Missouri budget this school year. To eliminate the possible barrier preventing students from exploring college options, the R-I Board of Education voted unanimously in November to pick up

the tab – at a discounted group rate.

“Our local board was gracious enough to allow us to do this,” said Scott Dill, superintendent. “It’s one of those threshold moments in a student’s academic career that may be a deciding factor in whether or not a student extends education to a post-secondary environment.”

Student ACT participation more than doubled since the fee was waived during 2014/15, according to information PBHS Principal Mike Owen reported to the school board. In a survey asking over 300 juniors whether they would be interested in taking the exam voluntarily, at no cost, half signed up.

Over 60 percent of PBHS students go on to college, according to the district report card recently released by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Of that percentage, about 20 percent of graduates go straight to four-year higher education institutions.

The ACT is accepted at all universities in the United States, and is the predominant college placement test used in the Midwest, according to Tamara Day, PBHS counseling department head.

“With the opportunity to take it for free, a student who may be wouldn’t have taken it otherwise, could score better than they imagined, and realize: ‘I am college material. I have what it takes,’” Day stated.

The four-hour test will be offered free of charge on Tuesday, April 3, at PBHS with a make-up date of Tuesday, April 24. The test may be retaken up to six additional times at a cost of \$46 or \$62.50 including the writing component.

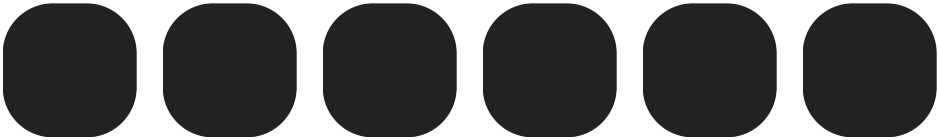
For more information, contact the counseling center at 573-785-6471.

Pictured: Dr. Regina Williams, PBHS guidance counselor, hosts the first of a series of CAPS (college application party and scholarship) meetings on Tuesday, Jan. 30, in the cafeteria to assist senior advisory classes in applying to colleges or submitting scholarship applications.

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

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