

## Local Schools



TOP

# Making It Happen

APRIL 05TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Making It Happen

## Making IT Happen

Two district employees who work together to enhance student engagement received regional recognition in the field of educational technology integration at Poplar Bluff Schools.

Senior High Instructional Coach Stephanie Kuper was named Outstanding Young Educator and R-I Chief Technology Officer Aaron Badgley received the Technology Advocacy & Support award at the Midwest Education Technology Community conference held Tuesday through Wednesday, Feb. 13-14, in St. Charles.

Networking opportunities including that of the annual METC conference is where Kuper initially linked up with the Poplar Bluff instructional technology department, ultimately accepting a position with the district this school year.

“I wouldn’t have left my role for any other school,” Kuper stated. She previously served as an instructional technology specialist at the Regional Professional Development Center in Cape Girardeau, where she provided training for R-I faculty under the Missouri Collaborative Work program, laying the groundwork for teaching students to become assessment capable learners.

“Her (job) interview was one of the quickest interviews ever. We knew going in that Stephanie had a skillset we couldn’t pass on,” Badgley recalled. Badgley took his

administrative post during the 2014/15 school year upon working his way up in the department, and helped advance the district's instructional coach positions.

With the technology expansion and infrastructure upgrades that came after the district launched its 1:1 laptop initiative five years ago, the positions now held by Kuper and her Junior High colleague Keri Jameson were created to help instructors develop research-based learning strategies and model lesson plans.

"I knew that the instructional part was something that was going to be challenging for me when I took the job, that's why I'm fortunate to be a part of a skilled team that allows me to spend time outside of technical aspects of the job," Badgley explained. The goal of his team in the IT department is to keep the technology running smoothly in the background so learning remains on the forefront, he noted.

Kuper, who nominated Badgley for the tech support award, pointed out that many schools are behind because they have Google Hangouts or Skype blocked and other restrictions placed on extensions, while Poplar Bluff is fortunate to have an administration that sees the educational value of such tools.

"Aaron is unlike any other 'district tech guy'—if a teacher says, 'I need this... in order to...' Aaron bends over backwards to help make it possible," Kuper wrote in her submission. "He is an advocate for technology in education and ensures that the district is doing it right."

EducationPlus Consultant Jonathan Lee of the Greater St. Louis area nominated Kuper for the outstanding educator honor based on their collaboration through the RPDC. Following classroom teaching for several years, Kuper was on the forefront of receiving Google and Apple certifications in education in order to be versatile in helping teachers throughout the region. Now refining the building-wide culture at PBHS is her focus.

"When I was a teacher in the classroom, I was impacting the lives of 120 students," Kuper said. "I learned my true passion is helping teachers with new ideas and best practices, that way so many more students are impacted."

Pictured: Stephanie Kuper and Aaron Badgley display the 'Making IT Happen' awards they won at the METC conference earlier this month.

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

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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.

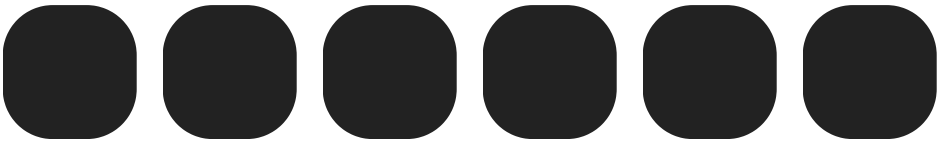
Pictured: Poplar Bluff personnel (from left) Michelle Bates, Patty Robertson, Jenifer Richardson, Christy Young, Ashley Blume, Staci Barker, Michelle Farmer and Kristie Robinson accept a national award on behalf of Oak Grove Elementary.

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.

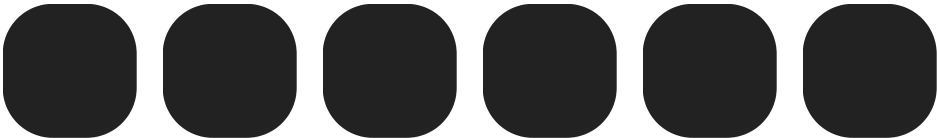
Around 400 children saw the children’s theater show performed by the Imaginary Theatre Company of St. Louis and presented by the TRC Patrons of the Arts Society.

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!'"

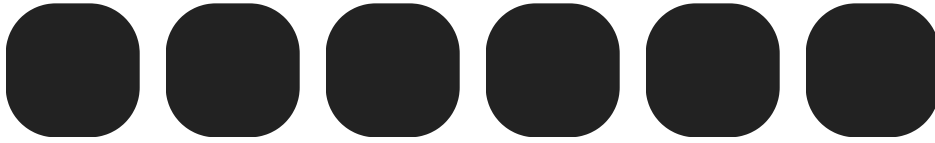
Three Rivers College has been arranging for professional plays to be performed directly for schools within its service area for the past few years. The plays are free thanks to the Patrons of the Arts Society, which subsidizes the costs with help from business sponsors.

"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

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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.

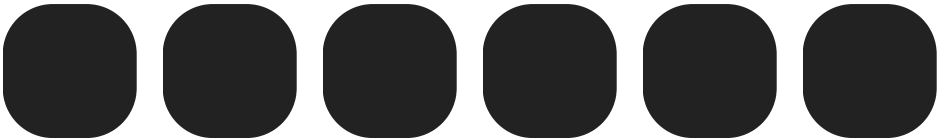
(Back row, from left) Counselor Tamara Day, and students Lina Dill, Geneva Taylor, Sophia Rowland and Kaylee Barbour; and (front row, left to right) Darian Strange, Sara Holland and Jillian Page. Not pictured is participant Destinee Howell.

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

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