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Eugene Field Becomes the Talk of the Town

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Poplar Bluff, Missouri - Eugene Field left attendees in tears of joy following Leadership Day on Friday, April 8, demonstrating why the elementary school is on track to become lighthouse certified, a prestigious designation currently held by only six schools in Missouri.

“Let your greatness shine” was the theme of the third annual event during which students put on skits involving public speaking, song, flag etiquette and science experiments all choreographed to showcase how the good habits they practice daily reflect in everything they do, both in and outside of the classroom.

“I feel as their coach they have a remarkable staff, everyone is absolutely committed and they genuinely love these kids,” Leader in Me senior consultant Dr. Paul Pitchford said regarding the certification process. “They’re really, really, really close. They just have a couple more things they want to perfect.”

An independent review team will visit Eugene Field in the fall to evaluate how deeply the school has embedded the program principles into its culture, and whether students are taking ownership of their learning and behavior, according to Pitchford.

Eugene Field received a grant from FranklinCovey’s I Am A Leader Foundation valued at tens of thousands of dollars during the 2013/14 school year to implement the school-wide program, based on Dr. Stephen Covey’s best seller, “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective

People.” The school informally piloted the program prior.

Chris Hastings, a semi-retired auctioneer, has volunteered in Eugene Field classrooms for five years and has witnessed the character growth of the students since the program was launched. “I’d say they have a better outlook on life in general,” Hastings commented.

Not only does the faculty instill the habits during every class, students live them out at home and through community service projects.

Stetson Pullun, 9, said her favorite habit is No. 7—to sharpen the saw—which is to maintain a balanced program for self-renewal in the following aspects of life: physical, social/emotional, mental and spiritual. The third grader explained how her mother has set up a lighted reading nook for her in a closet that she enjoys using after she puts her younger brother to bed.

“After doing a hard day of work, I want to,” said Stetson, referring to rewarding herself with some relaxation time. “Especially with a 4-year-old,” she continued to exclaim. “He follows me everywhere!”

Through the program, students track their own attendance, behavior and academics in data notebooks, and even lead parent/teacher conferences to discuss their progress and goals.

Incoming superintendent Scott Dill witnessed Leadership Day for the first time last week. He is a practitioner of the seven habits, but was impressed to see them applied at such a young age, he noted.

“It really permeates at this level,” Dill observed. “Producing assessment capable learners is not just setting the students up for success at school, but they are going to go on to become better citizens – better adults. It’s fantastic.”

Science leaders Jasmeka Harley (left) and Madison Ballew perform a foaming volcano experiment with PTO President Lori Amoss and R-I Chief Technology Officer Aaron Badgley.

Article and photo submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Coordinator, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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