

Local Schools



TOP

Making It Happen

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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.

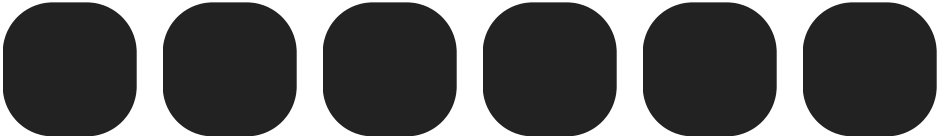
"When I was a teacher in the classroom, I was impacting the lives of 120 students," Kuper said. "I learned my true passion is helping teachers with new ideas and best practices, that way so many more students are impacted."

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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