

## Local Schools



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# Several TCC Students to Compete Nationally

APRIL 26TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

## Several TCC Students to Compete Nationally

The most in recent memory, 11 Poplar Bluff Technical Career Center students placed in the Missouri SkillsUSA contest held Thursday through Saturday, April 5-7, at the State Technical College of Missouri in Linn.

Out of 30 participants who advanced from the district to state level – Luke Cook, Hailey Garrett, Jeramiah Gracia, Nick Loyd, Lara Pierce, Nickalas Richards, Lane White and Levi White have qualified to vie in the national competition June 25-29 in Louisville, Ky.

In addition, the aforementioned students each received \$1,000-2,000 scholarships to Linn College, along with Brooke Francisco, Michaelyn Hatton and Tara Hutchinson, who also earned top placement.

“This is an exceptional, well-balanced group of kids that are here to learn,” said TCC building trades instructor Jody Cochran, SkillsUSA senior advisor. “To make it to state or nationals speaks for our school system and lets people know what kind of education they can get out here.”

State events that TCC students excelled in included barbering, carpentry technical information, cosmetology, cosmetology tech info, culinary arts, esthetics, nurse assisting, T-shirt design and team works. More than 3,000 students, educators and industry officials were in attendance.

The students going on to participate this summer plan to fundraise to offset uniform, registration and travel costs. Cochran referred to the opportunity as “life changing,” explaining that industry officials may be in attendance to recruit students into the workforce.

“When you’re getting national recognition—the top of the top—there are trade people set up wanting to hire these students,” Cochran said. “There are folks retiring and lots of spots opening, and opportunities to make good money and have a good job for a long time.”

More than 1,000 trade associations and labor unions actively support SkillsUSA through financial aid, in-kind contributions and involvement of their people in activities, according to a press release from the national organization.

Pictured: TCC students who medaled at the Missouri SkillsUSA competition were (front row from left) Jeramiah Gracia, Brooke Francisco and Hailey Garrett; (second row) Lara Pierce and Nickalas Richards; (third row, left to right) Tara Hutchinson, Michaelyn Hatton and Levi White; and (back row) Nick Loyd, Lane White and Luke Cook.

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

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# I Believe in the Power of Yet

APRIL 17TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

## I Believe in the Power of Yet

MAP scores and attendance at Eugene Field have increased while discipline referrals have gone down over the past several years, but perhaps more importantly, students are graduating the elementary school with tools to succeed in life.

Themed “I Believe in the Power of Yet,” the fifth annual Leadership Day on Thursday, March 22, featured songs, skits and videos of students showcasing the difference between having a growth versus a fixed mindset. Seven visiting schools exploring the program were in attendance, including North Elementary in Jackson, which has just completed the book study.

Leadership Day participants experienced the impact of the Leader in Me under which Eugene Field has achieved lighthouse status, the gold standard of the initiative. The teaching philosophy is based on Dr. Stephen Covey’s best-selling book, “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.”

“I can’t explain this. It would hardly (make sense) unless you watch the kids—they are just amazing,” said Dora Cole, a member of St. Andrew Lutheran Church. “I never watched kids grow like they do here. They are so confident with themselves.”

One of the habits students practice is to synergize. Cole, who accepted the award of Leader of the Year for the church’s long-standing school sponsorship, half-jokingly commented how she did not learn that word until she was in her 40s. And here students, grades 1-3, are showcasing their understanding of the value of working together.

First time attendee Dr. Ron Webb, pastor of Mt. Calvary Powerhouse Church, has authored a series of books, most recently: “Leadership from Behind the Scenes.” During the classroom tour portion of the program, Webb stated: “This is where it starts.”

Mayor Ed DeGaris has witnessed Leadership Day for the past few years. A graduate of the elementary school himself, DeGaris is the grandfather of second grader Ashton, his third grandchild to attend Eugene Field. Asked if the seven habits are spoken about at home, DeGaris replied without hesitation: “All the time.”

Also an alumnus, Gabriel Burke—now a Poplar Bluff Middle School student—provided a testimonial during the show, attributing his success as an A honor roll student who is active in the Junior Beta Club to the Leader in Me program.

“I was shy, scared and bashful,” Gabriel recalled. “The seven habits helped me be more social and active.”

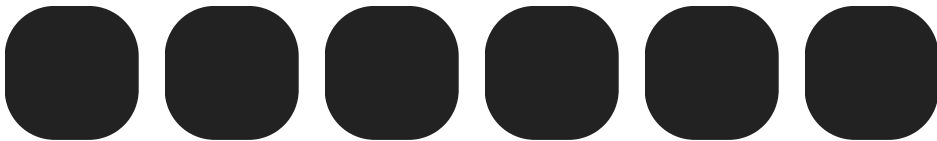
Pictured: The GLEEders open the event with a performance of the Eugene Field original, “Set it Off.”

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

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# National Technical Honor Society Spring Induction 2018

APRIL 17TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

## National Technical Honor Society Spring Induction 2018

Poplar Bluff, Missouri - A total of 19 Poplar Bluff Technical Career Center students were inducted into the National Technical Honor Society during the second annual induction ceremony on Thursday, March 8, at the High School.

In addition to receiving recommendations by program instructors, students must achieve a 9.0 cumulative grade point average at the TCC and an 8.0 non-weighted GPA on all other high school work, maintain 95 percent attendance and have good citizenship with no suspensions during their secondary education career.

“This is a great organization for the career center students to be recognized,” said Vo Special Needs Guidance Educator Barbie Hon, NTHS sponsor. “Vocational school has sometimes gotten a negative reputation for only having students that don’t excel in academics. However, we have several very bright students every year and this organization recognizes those students for their hard work and dedication.”

The local NTHS chapter was established in 2017 under the direction of Becki Shrum, now a MO Options teacher at the Graduation Center. The new inductees join nine seniors who were sworn in last year.

Pictured: Alongside Barbie Hon (far left) and TCC Director Charles Kinsey (far right), pictured (in alphabetical order) are Alana Adams, Eve Brazel, Ariana Burkhart, Michael Fox, Brooke Francisco, Tara Hutchinson, Jaykota Kearbey, Taylor Noel, Cody Osborn, Kaitlyn Ruminer, Autumn Stimmell, Ethan Tinnin, Randall White and Trevor White. Not present were Michaelyn Hatton, Lucas Nicolini, Clayton Riddle, James Hillis and Joseph Morlan.

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

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## Making It Happen

APRIL 05TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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### **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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