

Local Schools



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TCC Lands Professional Development Grant

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The Poplar Bluff Technical Career Center has been awarded a competitive grant in excess of \$85,000 over the course the next five years for professional development and instructional coaching to help enhance the school's academic focus.

The Technology Centers That Work initiative, financed by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, is designed to align curriculum, instruction and assessments with rising workplace requirements to better prepare students for postsecondary studies and careers.

“The industry is not stopping, so if you're not constantly improving and innovative then you're stagnant and left behind,” explained Charles Kinsey, TCC director. “Just because we're meeting our goals and posts right now, doesn't mean we're moving forward.”

While DESE reported in 2018 that the TCC's graduation rate was 98 percent with an 89 percent placement rate for graduates entering college, the military or the job market, the successful grant submission demonstrates the staff's commitment to increasing the rigor and relevance of programs to be responsive to changing needs of the local industry, according to officials.

A team of technical career education consultants from the Southern Regional Education Board will visit Poplar Bluff in the near future to perform an audit of programs and procedures, then furnish a report with action step suggestions by the end of the calendar year. Finally, a workshop will be conducted with building leaders to identify priorities for a three to five-year plan.

“It requires courage and bravery from a director like Charles because he has got to be willing to allow a team to come in and look at everything they do, and go in the classrooms and observe,” said SREB school improvement consultant Gina Smith, who will chair the team. “I always tell them it’s going to help you go from good to great.”

Besides Cape Girardeau, the TCC is currently the only school in Southeast Missouri in the TCTW network of 19 awardees in the state, according to Smith. Goals include nine areas of focus such as embedding literacy and math readiness standards in classwork, and incorporating more project-based assignments into the programs. In the grant proposal, Kinsey also cited offering students stronger internships or pre-apprenticeship opportunities.

In addition to bringing more industry partners into the classroom and sending instructors to leading area technical career centers, some of the funding will be used toward rotating staff through a national conference to attend workshops designed to streamline efforts being made. Kinsey and building trades instructor Jody Cochran already began the journey this summer by participating in the 32nd annual High Schools That Work staff development conference in Florida.

“I can build a home very well, having over 20 years of experience, but on the teaching side you can always use some help and guidance for students who learn differently,” Cochran stated. “It’s only gonna help us in the long run.”

Pictured: The opening session of the HSTW Staff Development Conference last month featured speaker Gerald Robinson of the Center for Advancing Opportunity.

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

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