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PBHS Named National Beta School of Distinction

DECEMBER 18TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

PBHS Named National Beta School of Distinction

National Beta has named Poplar Bluff High School a 2018/19 National School of Distinction for the chapter's boost in membership and commitment toward academic achievement, exemplary character, and demonstrated leadership and service to others.

Membership has increased last year to present from 16 to 91 students, according to instructional coach Stephanie Kuper, who sponsors the organization along with guidance counselor Sara Holloway.

“This prestigious honor is a true indication of Poplar Bluff High School's dedication to academic excellence, leadership development and commitment to celebrating their student's achievements,” said National Beta's Chief Executive Officer Bobby Hart in an issued statement.

Founded in 1934, National Beta is the largest independent, nonprofit, educational youth organization in America. The organization recognizes outstanding achievement, promotes character and social responsibility, encourages service involvement to school and community, and fosters leadership skills.

Pictured with school sponsors Stephanie Kuper and Sara Holloway (front, right), the PBHS Beta Club participated in the annual Missouri Senior Beta Convention in Springfield over the weekend for the first time in more than a decade.

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

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Extreme Math Class Captures Student Interest

DECEMBER 12TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Extreme Math Class Captures Student Interest

Poplar Bluff, Missouri - Six graders were issued surgical masks and latex gloves upon entering math class on Thursday, Dec. 6, at the Poplar Bluff Middle School.

A scenario about a zombie outbreak was detailed over the SMART Board using the online tool Flippity, and students had to problem solve in groups in order to unlock the cure.

While it appeared to be a game upon first glance, the purpose of the activity was to prepare students for an exam the following day that would involve unit rates, proportions

and measurement conversions.

“They’re reviewing without realizing they’re reviewing for the test,” teacher James Hunt explained. “I try to help them study without making them feel like they’re studying.”

Hunt, a third-year faculty member, goes over the top transforming his classroom the day before each chapter test. Other classroom themes this semester have included Legoland to review ratios and the ‘decimal diner’ in which Hunt dressed as a chef wearing an inflatable suit with self-contained ventilation. He said he is willing to “look ridiculous” if it means improved outcomes.

Student Elerik Stotts’ favorite activity was when he got to be an agent of the FBI and catch a diamond thief in a makeshift jewelry store, he said, noting he did very well on that unit.

“I don’t like boring classrooms because I can’t sit still long enough,” the 12-year-old said. “It’s probably one of the best math classes around.”

The parent of sixth grader Kassidy, Tori Russell, commented how she likes hearing about the creative learning techniques after her daughter returns home from school.

“Kassidy has told me several times how much more she enjoys school this year and her grades have shown improvement,” Russell said. “Thank you, Mr. Hunt, for finding ways to keep our kids engaged and wanting to learn!”

Having the appropriate administrative support is also key for an unconventional teacher. As luck would have it, Hunt’s boss, Dr. Brad Owings, could recently be spotted greeting students in the morning while wearing a red and white Christmas suit that illuminates, and the principal is known to swap the color of his neon shoelaces to coincide with the seasons.

“Rita Pierson, notable educator, says ‘Kids don’t learn from people they don’t like,’” Owings said. “Mr. Hunt does a great job in engaging students and making them like school.”

A time commitment that goes above and beyond is also necessary to maintain Hunt’s teaching style as well as out-of-pocket expenses, but the young educator has a number of online sources such as Teachers Connect and We Are Teachers that he frequents to secure materials. He has had iPads and Kindle Fires crowdfunded in the past through the channel

Donors Choose. To avoid “teacher burnout,” he said he networks with other instructors across the country and shares lesson plans through social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter. “It’s about following the right people,” Hunt suggested.

Besides the changing ambiance, Hunt’s classroom features flexible seating – video game chairs and miniature barstools. He and colleague Krystal Dover, a fourth-grade teacher, are experimenting this school year with self-paced learning. Students take pre and post-tests, and advance in small groups only after they have obtained a given skillset.

“I feel like when the students are engaged and expectations are set high, students will reach their fullest potentials,” Hunt stated.

Pictured: Middle School students complete an online scavenger hunt using Google Chromebooks on Thursday, Dec. 6, in James Hunt’s math class.

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

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Governor Signs Legislation at Poplar Bluff High School

NOVEMBER 07TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Governor Signs Legislation at Poplar Bluff High School

Poplar Bluff, Missouri - Missouri Gov. Mike Parson signed the STEM Education and Computer Science Bill into law during a school-wide assembly held for the occasion on Tuesday, Oct. 30, at Poplar Bluff High School.

Passed during a special legislative session in September, House Bill 3 will allow districts to count computer science courses as high school graduation credit instead of just an elective; create a related certification program for teachers; establish a fund for financial support; and develop a STEM career awareness program online for younger students by the 2019/20 school year, according to lawmakers.

“Improving our workforce is a top priority with this administration, and in order to help move Missouri forward, we need to expand opportunities for our students,” Parson said in an issued statement. “Missouri currently has a high demand in this field, and by signing this bill, our students will be able to get the proper training to succeed in computing jobs.”

The 57th governor told the student body that Missouri is “short 10,000 jobs in this arena.” Parson was accompanied by state Sen. Doug Libla of Poplar Bluff, who served as handler of HB 3. Libla previously promoted the bill during a student assembly hosted at the Junior High in February, when he noted that the coursework would have a coding and programming emphasis.

“Computer science being offered in our schools is so important in preparing our students for the Missouri companies that desire and depend on these skills,” Libla stated this week. “Thousands of high-paying jobs are available right now all across Missouri.”

R-I Superintendent Dr. Scott Dill introduced the distinguished guests, who also included Rep. Steve Cookson of Poplar Bluff and PBHS alumnus Phil Bounds, a retired NASA

employee. In the Poplar Bluff School District, the first dedicated STEM class—with an interdisciplinary focus on science, technology, engineering and math—began being offered as an enrichment in 2016 at the Middle School.

“We owe it to our students to provide opportunities to explore and learn about this burgeoning field through the application of an online delivery system,” Dill said. “By promoting unfettered access to this vital curriculum, we ensure that all students have the tools requisite to their future personal success as well as safeguarding the economic stability of our community, the region and the state.”

Pictured: Accompanying Gov. Mike Parson as he signs HB 3 are (seated from left) retired NASA employee Phil Bounds, Superintendent Dr. Scott Dill, Sen. Doug Libla, and (standing) Rep. Steve Cookson, along with the PBHS Student Council.

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New Early Childhood Groundbreaking

New Early Childhood Groundbreaking

Several dozen school supporters participated in the groundbreaking ceremony for the state-of-the-art Poplar Bluff Early Childhood Center on Thursday, Oct. 11, at the Kindergarten Center campus.

R-I Superintendent Dr. Scott Dill reflected about starting his career in Poplar Bluff two and a half years ago at the conclusion of a string of major construction projects. He joked how he would like to “take credit” for the work, but instead recognized his predecessor Chris Hon, who was in attendance.

Dill went on to explain that the Early Childhood Center was the second and final phase of the long-range plan approved by voters with the passage of the 2014 levy measure. The 34,000-square-foot preschool facility designed by Dille and Traxel Architecture will create an “environment that’s going to engage the needs of learners for generations to come,” the superintendent said.

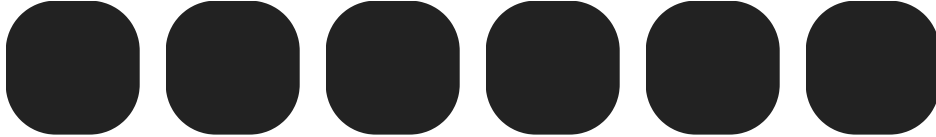
Brockmiller Construction of Farmington was awarded the project bid upon receiving a unanimous vote by the Board of Education in September, and began site work at the beginning of October in order to meet the completion deadline of November 2019.

On the backend of the relocation, the vacated Mark Twain building on North Main Street will be converted to a dedicated alternative school. Administrators are presently in the “envisioning and dreaming” stage of planning, Dill made note, including piloting virtual course offerings through Launch.

Pictured from left to right: Dr. Scott Dill, R-I superintendent; Colin Rogers, Brockmiller vice president; Jerrod Murphy, board member; Ken Davis, board vice president; Dr. Cynthia Brown, board member; JoAnne Westbrook, ECH principal; board members Roger Hanner and Heather Tuggle; Ben Traxel and Brett Dille of Dille and Traxel Architecture; John Scott, board president; and Steve Halter, Poplar Bluff Chamber president. Not pictured is board member Alana Robertson.

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

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PBJHS Math Teacher Starts Fishing Club

OCTOBER 17TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

PBJHS Math Teacher Starts Fishing Club

A first year Poplar Bluff Junior High faculty member has gone above and beyond his job duties of teaching math by encouraging students to take up the pastime of angling.

Brett Russell chaperoned 14 students on the first of a series of fishing expeditions on Thursday, Oct. 11, in a pond owned by New Covenant Fellowship Church off Kanell Boulevard.

Sponsored by the Missouri Department of Conservation, the PBJHS Fishing Club plans to meet on a weekly basis after school as weather permits.

“There’s been a decline in license sales nationally,” said Salvador Mondragon, MDC fisheries management biologist based in Cape Girardeau. “We just want to get them outdoors and exposed to nature.”

Mondragon, along with angler education assistant Caleb Jansen, will be facilitating four of the lessons covering: equipment, casting and proper fish handling; how to tie a knot and bait a hook; five common Missouri fish – their anatomy, habitat and life cycle; and fishing with lures/fishing regulations.

The MDC offers the two-hour classes for free through the Discover Nature – Fishing program. A renewable \$500 education grant will be made available to the club to finance a classroom set of rods, bait purchased locally and travel expenses for fishing trips planned, according to the facilitators.

The club initially started at the end of last school year when Russell, then a student teacher for Chris Wheat, made a pact with outgoing eighth grader Tysen Huddleston. Russell promised to take the students fishing if Tysen improved his grades.

“He worked super hard and I gave my word to the kiddo,” recalled Russell, noting: “I’m passionate about fishing.”

Several years ago, Russell became temporarily disabled due to what was later diagnosed as a rare form of arthritis, he explained. When his mobility eventually returned with treatment, he developed a new appreciation for maintaining an active lifestyle, he continued.

Before suffering from the condition, Russell admitted that all he wanted to do with his time was play video games. He referred to his misfortunate as “The Monkey’s Paw,” a famous short story about interfering with fate.

“We live in such a beautiful place; you can drive 5 or 10 minutes in any direction and get in some quality fishing,” Russell commented. “I just want them to raise their eyes from their phones, get interested in the environment and enjoy the days they live in the world, whether through fishing or whatever.”

Pictured: Caleb Jansen of the MDC talks to the Fishing Club about the various types of bobbers, which he explained serve as indicators.

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

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