

## Local Schools



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# Poplar Bluff Earns National ESEA Award for 3rd Year in Row

FEBRUARY 25TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

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A Poplar Bluff elementary school has been nationally recognized for its exceptional student achievement for the third year in a row.

Oak Grove was one of two federally-funded schools in Missouri and only 73 in the United States to receive the 2019 National ESEA Distinguished School award Wednesday, Feb. 5, in Atlanta. The other Missouri school was New Madrid, also located in the Southeast region of the state.

"Your dedication and hard work never go unnoticed," stated R-I Assistant Superintendent of Business Dr. Amy Jackson, congratulating Oak Grove Principal Jenifer Richardson. "You are a remarkable leader and have worked tirelessly for many years to ensure our students' success and teachers' success!"

Oak Grove was selected for 'exceptional student performance and academic growth for two or more consecutive years,' which is one of three award categories. On the Missouri Assessment Program test in the 2018/19 school year, the elementary school scored 85.5 percent proficient or advanced in math, up from 84.5 the previous year, and 81.9 in English language arts, an increase over 75.7 during 2017/18.

Lake Road was named a National ESEA Distinguished School in the same program category in 2018. In 2017, Oak Grove first earned the honor, formerly known as the National Title 1 award, for 'closing the achievement gap between student groups for two

or more consecutive years.’

In its school biography on the network website, Oak Grove attributed its recent accomplishments in part to community partnerships that include AmeriCorps, the Boys and Girls Club, its Bright Futures Site Council, the Butler County Community Resource Council and an active Parent Teacher Organization, supporting activities such as power hour, the lunch buddy program, the Jingle Jog, Math-A-Thon and more.

“The work that I’d say has driven our success is the collaboration taking place among our teachers, but it takes every single person—day in and day out—to make this happen, and you can’t let up,” Richardson said. “We have the framework in place that guides us, but we have flexibility within that framework because things are constantly changing, and you need to readjust and recalibrate for each individual kid every year in order to achieve maximum student performance.”

Since 1996, the national program has highlighted up to two selected schools per state that have successfully used federal funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to “improve the education for all students,” including those who are “economically disadvantaged,” according to a press release from the overseeing association.

Pictured: Oak Grove Principal Jenifer Richardson accepts the National ESEA award earlier this month in Atlanta, with support on stage from (left to right) teachers Becky Ingle, Carey Wilkerson and Gabby Bullock; R-I Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Patty Robertson; and Title 1 Director JoAnne Westbrook.

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

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