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Teacher of the Year Promoted Internally to Lead Lake Road

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Poplar Bluff, MO - Distinguished elementary educator Rondi Vaughn has been hired to succeed Erica Weadon as principal of Lake Road Elementary

Having split her career between Eugene Field and Oak Grove over the course of two decades with the Poplar Bluff School District, Vaughn now intends on bringing with her best practices from each elementary building.

“It’s the same curriculum and same achieving excellence (mission statement), it’s just seeing education through a different lens,” Vaughn said. “I plan to take the greatness from each of the buildings I’ve been in, and hope that I can continue to build on the work that makes Lake Road amazing.

Input on leadership qualities was solicited from Lake Road faculty before the Board of Education approved Vaughn's internal advancement in March, after Weadon announced that her family would be relocating. A Campbell native, Vaughn can recall substitute teaching a teenage Weadon back at Holcomb High School, where Vaughn was encouraged by an administrator to pursue a career in education.

She earned her master’s degree in curriculum and instruction from William Woods University in Fulton, and more recently another master’s in elementary administration from Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau. Vaughn began her tenure teaching elementary school in Kennett in 1998.

“I didn’t instantly know I wanted to be a principal, it just evolved as I had instructional leadership opportunities within our PLC (professional learning community),” Vaughn explained. “You have to develop your teachers; they’re the most important resource for delivering instruction and student success. I have been in their shoes; I’m gonna be facing the challenges with them.”

Lake Road was the first school in R-I history to earn the coveted National Blue Ribbon award. Earlier this year, the elementary school received gold level recognition under School-wide Positive Behavior Support and was named a national showcase school through the Capturing Kids’ Hearts initiative once again.

This year Lake Road will complete its phase-in plan of expanding the configuration to include grades 1-6 to combat the results of a population shift within the district. The school board approved the purchase of a modular classroom in February to house elective classes, subsequently opening up two classrooms per grade level in the main building.

Vaughn was named the 2020 Teacher of the Year at Eugene Field, a Lighthouse School under the Leader in Me program, based on Dr. Stephen Covey’s best-selling book, “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.” Vaughn happens to be the eighth teacher at Eugene Field to go on to become a school administrator either within the district or the region since implementing the leadership program. She says the habits have made an impact on both her professional and personal life.

“You have to hold onto your ‘why,’ and that’s your hope,” Vaughn stated. Vaughn was previously named the 2012 Teacher of the Year at Oak Grove, the second school within the district to receive the Blue Ribbon award. She was a part of the groundwork there under the SW-PBS system

“Mrs. Vaughn obviously has a tremendous teaching pedigree and is immediately equipped to continue the advancement of the good work Lake Road is engaged in,” said Dr. Scott Dill, R-I superintendent. “In terms of her mindset, she has a servant’s heart when it comes to leadership, and in my mind that’s the only way to approach such a position. She understands that the opportunity to lead is really the opportunity to be of service.”

Pictured Rondi Vaughn enters her 23rd year as an educator leading Lake Road Elementary, one of two Blue Ribbon Schools within the district.

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

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