

Local Schools



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Studio Jazz Band earns honors at Ellington Festival

FEBRUARY 23RD 2022 BY DEE LOFLIN

Studio Jazz Band earns honors at Ellington Festival

Several Poplar Bluff High School Studio Jazz Band students received outstanding musicianship awards during the Essentially Ellington Jazz Festival last month at the University of Missouri in St. Louis.

Students honored included Brileigh Cates – alto sax; Logan Hale – trumpet; Ja’Lonnie Johnson-Spann – drumset; and Brileigh Cates, Connor Jones, Diamond Weaver and Jonathan Moreno – saxophone section.

Band Director Stephen Winters, who learned of the awards last week, commented that the festival clinicians judging are always top-notch. “... They are all a part of the New York jazz scene and are at the highest level of jazz teaching and performance. Some of them perform with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra led by Wynton Marsalis.”

Other participating schools this year included Eureka, Lindbergh, Fort Zumwalt West in Missouri, and Mascoutah and Williamsville High School out of Illinois. “This is a festival that... usually attracts some very good bands,” Winters continued.

PBHS has participated in the Essentially Ellington Jazz Festival multiple times at the University of Missouri prior to a temporary hiatus because of the pandemic, and was also a part of the original festival at Webster Groves High School. The festival typically requires bands to play arrangements by Duke Ellington, but this year arrangements by Count Basie were also permitted.

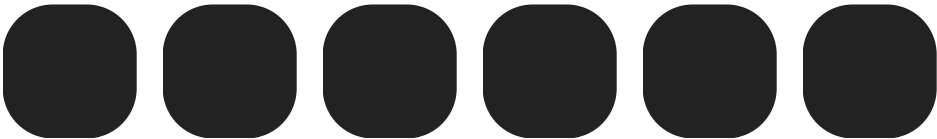
Pictured: Studio Jazz Band members (left to right) Connar Jones, Logan Hale, Diamond Weaver, Ja’Lonnie Johnson-Spann and Brileigh Cates recently received outstanding musicianship awards. Not pictured is Jonathan Moreno.

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

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TCC Hosts 55th Anniversary Tour during CTE Month

FEBRUARY 23RD 2022 BY DEE LOFLIN

TCC Hosts 55th Anniversary Tour during CTE Month

The Poplar Bluff Technical Career Center held an open house for stakeholders on Friday, Feb. 11, in celebration of its 55th anniversary as a school facility during Career and Technical Education month.

Since the TCC opened in 1967, over 4,500 regional high schoolers have completed programs tuition-free there in addition to at least 500 adult students recorded, Director Charles Kinsey told an audience of community leaders and educators, both current and retired.

“The nation’s skills gap is getting close to a critical state, if not already in disarray [on top of] the global pandemic, and has been fueling a renewed interest in CTE by elected officials and prospective students alike,” Kinsey wrote in a column series being published this month.

The TCC is resultantly experiencing record enrollment, as its sending schools have expanded to 10, including newly-forged partnerships with Dexter Schools and Westwood Baptist. The TCC boasts a graduation rate of 98.3 percent, and a placement rate—alumni entering the workforce, joining the military or continuing their education—of 89.97 percent, according to Kinsey.

“Desirable students have work ethic, show up and are teachable, plus have a base set of skills that make them functional on the job on day one – with minimal training,” Kinsey stated in another installment.

The guests of honor toured the facilities, and learned about the \$1.4 million in improvements over the last few years, according to Kinsey’s estimates. In attendance, former director Roger Slayton noted that he was responsible for the grant through the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education that established the east building in 2001, housing the then-new cosmetology program as well as the welding and auto collision repair programs.

Today the TCC also offers auto service technology, building trades, computer graphics & print technology, computer maintenance technology, computer science, culinary arts, health occupations and HVACR. Kinsey, who has dedicated 25 years to CTE both as a student and an educator, pointed out that five of his current instructors are alumni of the TCC, and the remaining six were involved in programs at other schools or else worked in the field.

To become an advisory committee member over one of the programs, or for additional information about the TCC’s various offerings, call 573-785-2248.

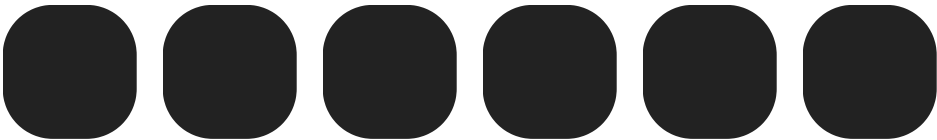
Pictured: PLTW computer science instructor Michael Barrett demonstrates a triple-pronged claw created in his class.

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

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Poplar Bluff R-I Earns Top Placement at Jr, Sr Beta Convention

JANUARY 11TH 2022 BY DEE LOFLIN

Poplar Bluff R-I Earns Top Placement at Jr, Sr Beta Convention

The Poplar Bluff School District qualified nationally in a total of 16 competitions at the recent state Beta conventions in which 113 R-I students participated in.

Piper Duncan of Poplar Bluff High School placed first in Division II Onsite Drawing; Kylie Darnell placed second in Division II Digital Art; Dean Hester placed third in Ninth Grade Math; and Adeeti Mishra placed fifth in Twelve Grade Math during the Missouri Senior Beta Convention held last month in Springfield

In addition, Emma Papanicolaou earned a Golden Ticket during the Solo Talent dance routine, further qualifying to perform as part of the opening ceremony of the National Beta Convention slated for July in Nashville. For the first time, PBHS also had a student run as a candidate for vice president of the student organization, according to co-sponsor Stephanie Kuper. “While we didn’t win, I am incredibly proud of the candidate, Nya Cram, and all the students who participated in the campaign skit,” Kuper said.

During the Junior Beta Convention, hosted prior at the Convention Center, the Poplar Bluff Middle School team of Camden Donnell, Bridget Popp, Clint Wallace and Addy Yarbrow placed first in Elementary Quiz Bowl – Oral, as well as second in Written; Mason Howell of Lake Road placed second in Elementary Speech; Jackson Kennedy of Junior High placed second in Seventh Grade Science; Tenley Moss placed second in Elementary Performing Arts – Solo; Christian Acevedo of Middle School placed third in Fifth Grade Science; Alex Gholson of Lake Road placed fourth in Sixth Grade Math; Connor Haywood of Middle School placed fourth in Sixth Grade Science; Nakayla Randolph of Lake Road placed fourth in Elementary Creative Writing; Ella Rushin of Middle School placed fourth in Elementary Black & White Photography; Emmalynn Dennis of Middle School placed fifth in Elementary Painting; and Molly Murphy of Middle School placed fifth in Elementary Drawing.

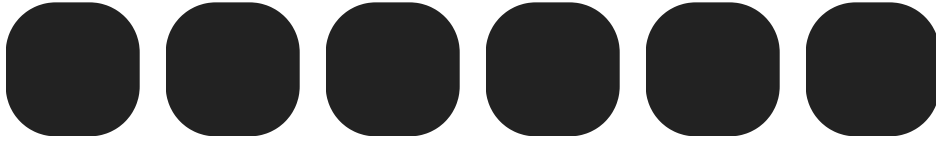
Each of the top five students, along with only a handful of Golden Ticket winners, are eligible to compete on the national stage this summer. Lake Road co-sponsor Kasi Aldridge noted that the elementary school Quiz Bowl team placed among the top eight, and she is “incredibly proud” of their “flexibility” in navigating the hybrid event of both virtual and in-person competition, considering it was just their second convention.

Poplar Bluff Middle School students (left to right) Camden Donnell, Addy Yarbrow, Bridget Popp and Clint Wallace placed first in the Elementary Quiz Bowl – Oral competition during the 19th annual Junior Beta Convention held in December in Springfield. Poplar Bluff High School senior Piper Duncan took first place in Division II Onsite Drawing during the 72nd annual Senior Beta Convention held last month at the Springfield Convention Center.

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

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Middle School Teacher Honored Regionally by McDonald's

DECEMBER 13TH 2021 BY DEE LOFLIN

Middle School Teacher Honored Regionally by McDonald's

A Poplar Bluff Middle School teacher was among a shortlist of area educators out of 724 total nominations to be selected in the second annual McDonald's Outstanding Educator program.

Aleanna Moore, who presently teaches fourth grade math, was reportedly one of nine regional honorees including a single grand prize winner.

"We're excited to recognize those who go above and beyond for our students through the Outstanding Educator awards," stated local McDonald's owner/operator Shannon Davis in a press release. "Our teachers are constantly adapting to whatever is thrown at them,

while making sure the youth in our communities succeed!”

Moore has served at the Middle School for the past five years, before which she was employed at Oak Grove and Lake Road Elementary, respectively. Her tenure in public education began in 2008 in the North St. Francois County School District, teaching grade four the entire time

Her colleague, Kendra McLevain, nominated her last month when submissions were being solicited via Facebook. “She is the most dedicated teacher I know,” McLevain wrote in part. “She is kind, compassionate, and caring and always puts her students’ needs first. She goes the extra mile for each and every student.”

McLevain elaborated that Moore is a “helpful and inspiring soul” and it is universally recognized among her co-workers. In fact, Moore was named the Middle School Teacher of the Year by her peers in 2018.

At the end of the month, Moore will receive a \$100 Visa gift card, which she said she plans to use toward classroom headphone sets, a ‘best teacher ever’ coffee mug, and 25 free McDonald’s coupons to give out to students at her discretion.

According to Amanda Campbell, who handles the public relations for McDonald’s locally, Davis “loves recognizing educators” and plans to continue the contest for years to come. In addition to a Poplar Bluff location, Davis owns a total of 18 McDonald’s restaurants throughout the region.

Pictured: Middle School teacher Aleanna Moore (right), a 2021 McDonald’s Outstanding Educator, poses with her pod-mate, Kendra McLevain, in the fourth grade wing.

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

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Chess Club Takes Off Among Poplar Bluff Middle Schoolers

DECEMBER 13TH 2021 BY DEE LOFLIN

Chess Club Takes Off Among Poplar Bluff Middle Schoolers

About 100 students signed up for the opening day of Chess Club at the Poplar Bluff Middle School, immediately placing the after-school group next to Junior Beta as the upper elementary's most active.

"I didn't know chess is this popular," fifth grader Elan Hocke commented. Elan previously was a member of a small community club, but since he no longer has the time after riding the bus home, he said he usually just plays chess alone

When Principal Dr. Josh Teeter took over at the Middle School last year, he had plans to launch a club, but COVID-19 protocols prevented it. He also attempted to start one in his former post at Junior High, but said he was never able to put in the time necessary to promote it, plus he was contending with other interests like gaming.

"My goal for this whole thing, you know, if I ruled the world, would be to turn this into an elective class," Teeter said. "Like sports, it gives kids another outlet.

"I struggled in math in Middle School, but no one could beat me at chess," continued Teeter, "so I knew I had brainpower."

The Middle School purchased 30 chessboard sets with instructions included from Wholesale Chess, and borrowed 10 more from another campus. Several students brought their own boards as well.

For the inaugural meeting this month, students who already knew how to play were paired with those who did not. Going forward, Teeter said the format would operate much like class in that there will be whole group as well as individual instruction. Tournament teams may emerge if enough students become serious.

The activity was so well-attended that it already has been divided into two weekly sessions instead of one, with multiple teacher chaperones. Fourth grade meets in the cafeteria from 3-4:30 p.m. on Tuesdays, and grades five and six gather on Thursdays.

“Chess is what smart people do,” Teeter stated. “The kids don’t know this yet. They just think it’s fun.”

According to the principal, there are more possible variations in the first 20 moves of chess than atoms in the observable universe. Students who play for just one hour per week can improve their academic outcomes by 10 percent, he went on, and even higher when they compete at the tournament level.

Teeter noted on the permission slips to parents and guardians that chess could improve a child’s social-emotional development, cognitive abilities, communication skills and strategic planning.

Having played since he was 12 and competitively by age 14, Teeter was one of the founding members of the community chess club earlier this spring alongside Junior High math teacher Brett Russell, and an educator from Westwood Baptist Academy.

With a stroke of luck, Dane Mattson, a grandmaster from Minnesota now residing with his wife in the Doniphan area, began participating with the group. Teeter hopes to invite Mattson, who is employed by Chess.com, to serve as a guest speaker for the students in the future.

Pictured: Fourth graders Baylee Ward and Elijah Mohr of Madison Copeland’s class contemplate the ending sequence of a chess game.

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

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