



SPECIAL EDITION



Issue 2, 2018

SSD Teacher of the Year Helps Students Achieve Full Potential

Growing up in a family of educators and spending time in her mother's special education classroom had a big impact on Leigha Brede, who has been named SSD's 2018 Teacher of the Year.

As an SSD teacher at Hazelwood Northwest Middle School in the Hazelwood School District, Brede said supporting student growth and achievement are her greatest accomplishments so far in her education career. Continually raising the bar for students allows them to develop a different mindset, she said.

Brede has been a teacher at SSD for six years. Prior to working in the middle school, Brede was a resource teacher for third- through fifth-grade students. She currently co-teaches math at Hazelwood Northwest, and mentors other teachers in order to strengthen the teaching profession.

Brede said she believes student success can be attributed to building relationships with students, instilling student confidence and collaborating with staff.

"As a teacher, you have to be willing to take risks," said Brede. "I set high expectations with students and plan with intentionality. When you build relationships with students, they will grow and be successful. They take accountability for themselves."

In addition to success in the classroom, Brede participated in the SSD Teacher Leadership Academy, and is a member of Hazelwood Northwest's Building Leadership Team and the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports committee.

Hazelwood Northwest Middle School teacher Jessica Pickert, who co-teaches with Brede, said Brede's devotion to her profession goes above and beyond her job description.

"Leigha helped move 15 out of her 24 students in our co-taught pre-algebra classes out of the below-basic category on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) test. She even moved one student from the below-basic category to the advanced category," said Pickert.



As part of her project for SSD's Teacher Leadership Academy, Brede focused on the effect of co-teaching on eighth-grade math. "She determined that her co-taught math classes were performing the same as, if not better, than the other general education classes on common assessments," said Pickert.

Last month, Brede was selected as one of SSD's nine Key to the Classroom Award winners. The Key to the Classroom Award honors SSD's top teachers for their creative approaches to student learning, innovative programming and commitment to student success.

Next year, Brede will represent SSD in the statewide competition for Missouri Regional Teacher of the Year, a program sponsored by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. ■

Turn the page to see a complete list of this year's staff award honorees and Special Ambassador Award winners.



Go to www.vimeo.com/ssdstlco/TOY2018 to watch a short video and hear more about Brede's impact on students.

SSD SALUTES STAFF, COMMUNITY FOR EXCELLENCE



SSD HAS A WIDE RANGE OF AWARD PROGRAMS TO RECOGNIZE INDIVIDUALS WHO CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUCCESS OF STUDENTS WHO RECEIVE SERVICES FROM SSD. THIS YEAR'S WINNERS ARE:

Special Ambassador Award Winners

The Special Ambassador Award is the highest recognition given by SSD. The award is presented to community members who demonstrate an extraordinary commitment to the students and/or staff of SSD.

GROUPS

- **Eureka High School Best Buddies**
- **Lutheran High School South**
- **Marquette High School Dazzlers**
- **Oakville High School ANP Buddies**
- **Pattonville High School SROs – Officers**
Michael Mooney & Mark Storer
- **Scholastic Book Fairs**

INDIVIDUALS

- **Dr. Michael Fulton**, Superintendent, Pattonville School District
- **Dr. Paul Godwin**, Principal, Green Pines Elementary, Rockwood School District
- **Elizabeth Mauze**, Research Audiologist, Washington University
- **Stacey Miller**, Social Worker, The School District of University City
- **Keith D. Repko**, Medical Center Director, Veterans Affairs St. Louis Health Care System

Key to the Classroom Award Winners

The Key to the Classroom Award honors the top teachers at SSD. The SSD teacher and location to which he or she is assigned are:

- **Thomas S. Bamvakais**, Vocational Skills Program, SSD
- **Leigha Brede**, Northwest Middle School, Hazelwood School District
- **Anthony Forneris**, Northview High School, SSD
- **Jean Goldstein**, Brown Elementary, Hazelwood School District
- **Jennifer Paris**, Green Pines Elementary, Rockwood School District
- **Kyla Sewell**, Neuwoehner High School, SSD
- **Lisa Sinak**, Vocational Skills Program, SSD
- **Monica Sood**, Kellison Elementary, Rockwood School District
- **Wendy Zieleskiewicz**, Parkway Northeast Middle School, Parkway Schools

Visit www.bit.ly/SSD2018Awards to read more about each of this year's Special Ambassador Award honorees.

Building Block Award Winners

The Building Block Award honors SSD's outstanding paraprofessionals for their contributions to the lives of students who receive services from SSD. The SSD paraprofessional and the location to which he or she is assigned are:

- **Karen Crews**, Rockwood South Middle School, Rockwood School District
- **Tiera Dunning**, Russell Elementary, Hazelwood School District
- **Renaee Hanebrink**, Parkway Central High School, Parkway Schools
- **Kelly Karas**, Eureka Elementary, Rockwood School District
- **Clara McLaughlin**, Brentwood Middle School, Brentwood School District
- **Jessica Poddig**, Neuwoehner High School, SSD
- **Leslee Rubin**, Parkway Northeast Middle School, Parkway Schools
- **Sonjoria Sydnor**, Ladue Early Childhood Center, Ladue Schools
- **Lindsey Voss**, Neuwoehner High School, SSD

Lasting Impression Award Winners

SSD honors other dedicated individuals within the District through the Lasting Impression Award. Created in 2006, it is awarded to SSD support staff who make a difference in the lives of students both within and outside the classroom.

- **Leah Becker**, Nurse, Early Childhood Centers, Parkway Schools and Valley Park School District
- **Patty Benner**, Audiology Assistant, SSD
- **Brandi Buffington**, School Psychologist, Fairway Elementary and Lafayette High School, Rockwood School District
- **Betty Davidson**, Area Coordinator, SSD
- **Jeri Frye**, Speech-Language Pathologist, Parkwood Elementary, Pattonville School District
- **Sandy George**, Secretary, SSD
- **Susan Gummersbach**, Vocational Resource Educator, North Technical High School, SSD
- **Jamee Heidmann**, Speech-Language Pathologist, Bayless Elementary, Bayless School District
- **Peggy Knippel**, School Psychological Examiner, SSD
- **Carrie Leipholtz**, Speech-Language Pathologist, Parkway Northeast Middle School, Parkway Schools
- **Greg Petersen**, Substitute Teacher/American Sign Language Presenter, SSD
- **Mickey Schuchardt**, Interpreter/American Sign Language Presenter, SSD

SSD Services Evolve to Meet Students' Needs

For students receiving SSD services, success has many forms. Success can be graduation, learning the life skills required to live independently, gaining the job skills to start a career or pursuing higher education.

SSD provides individualized services that are tailored to each student's specific needs to ensure that he or she is able to meet his or her goals.

Thanks to technology developments over the last several decades, the tools and services that SSD can offer students to help them be successful have improved dramatically.

"Devices are smaller now and more things are possible," said Laura Hayes, an augmentative communication specialist. "Just think about early cell phones compared to what we're using today — the same thing has happened with educational support technology."

For teachers and facilitators, these improvements have led to better and more uniform services throughout the county. For instance, the augmentative communication department provides low-tech and high-tech systems to support students' communication needs.

"Even in the 90s, communication boards had to be made by hand," said Alyson Diaz-Kleine, an augmentative communication facilitator. "Every Sunday we would cut images and pictures out of the newspaper to use as symbols. Now we can use (computer) applications to create several communication boards at once, using the consistent symbols across the District."

This doesn't just decrease the workload for staff members, it also improves student learning.

"A lot of communication is done through the use of symbols — that means they need to be consistent so that we're all speaking the same language," Diaz-Kleine said.

"The systems allow students who are unable to communicate effectively and to have their wants and needs met throughout the day," said Leslie McGilligan, an SSD augmentative communication facilitator.

Equally impactful technology changes over the years have been happening behind the scenes.

"Ten years ago we were a paper-based society," said Kathy Lalk, an SSD assistive technology specialist. "Ten years ago, only a few students would be provided computers and electronic devices. Now that technology is ubiquitous, teachers are encouraged to integrate the technology throughout the day," she said.

These improvements have increased the scope of services that the District can offer. For example, SSD conducts 75,000 screenings and diagnostic evaluations throughout the county, annually. Based upon these evaluations, department staff may recommend assistive listening devices for students. Without these efficient and effective communication processes, work on this scale would not be possible.

Efficiency also leads to faster service, which improves student outcomes. These screenings, especially early in a child's development, increase the chances for student success throughout a child's life.

"Obviously, the earlier an intervention can get started, the better the outcomes as the student gets older," said Natalie Thiele, an SSD audiologist.

Interventions can take on a number of forms, from augmentative communication services, to music therapy, occupational therapy or one of the other services provided by SSD. Thanks to free-flowing communication, increased access to technology that supports education and access to additional digital resources, the services that SSD can offer to students and families are far more robust than even a decade ago.

These advancements over the last 60 years are driven by Special School District's core value of continuous improvement.

While technology has rapidly advanced and our understanding of student needs has changed, the District's goal has been constant — ensuring every student's success. ■



Catie Barnes, a student who receives SSD services at Steger 6th Grade Center, completes a writing assignment using assistive technology.

Learning to Lead

Congratulations to the 2017–2018 class of the Fred Saigh Leadership Program, who will graduate at 7 p.m. on May 2 at St. Luke's Emerson Auditorium. The yearlong program teaches leadership skills to high school students with disabilities. Participants visit St. Louis County government offices and jail, the Missouri State Capitol, Missouri Botanical Garden, the Holocaust Museum, St. Louis Post-Dispatch and St. Louis Public Radio. There is also a session about cyberbullying. Graduates return to their schools prepared to assume leadership roles. Applications and nominations for next year's class are due May 11 and are available at www.sef-stl.org/programs.

Save the Date

Special Education Foundation will host the Dianne Arbeiter Celebration of Success on June 7 at the estate of Dave and Suzie Spence in Ladue.

Register Today

There's still time to register for the Women Leader's Boutique, Luncheon and Fashion Show on April 20. Visit www.sef-stl.org/events.

Help SEF Help Kids

The SEF will participate in Give STL Day on Wednesday, May 2. Consider supporting students served by SSD by making a donation to honor a teacher at www.givestlday.org/sef.



Several SEF employees, including Karen Carter, volunteered to read to students at SSD's Ackerman School for Read Across America on March 1.

Photo by Anthony Volkman



Throughout the 2017–2018 school year, SSD will be celebrating the District's 60th anniversary. Watch for this logo for stories about our staff, students, families and others throughout our community who have partnered with SSD to help all students achieve success.

Share your SSD memories and stories with us: www.ssdmo.org/ssd60.html ■

Board of Education

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ASK QUESTIONS • MAKE COMMENTS • GIVE COMPLIMENTS

Let's Talk!™ **Get started at ssdmo.org**



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www.ssdmo.org

MISSION: In collaboration with partner districts, we provide technical education and a wide variety of individualized educational and support services designed for each student's successful contribution to our community.

VISION: Partners for every student's success

VALUES: student success • collaboration
• integrity • stewardship • continuous improvement • equity

Special School District Notice of Non-Discrimination and Accommodation:

Special School District does not discriminate or tolerate discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation against an individual based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation, ancestry, disability, veteran status, age, or activity protected by federal or state law in its programs, activities and employment and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. Direct inquiries and complaints under this policy to Special School District's Director – Compliance Liaison, 12110 Clayton Road, St. Louis, Missouri 63131, telephone (314) 989-8100 or to the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, One Petto Coat Lane, 1010 Walnut Street, 3rd Floor, Suite 320, Kansas City, Missouri 64106, telephone (816) 268-0550, fax (816) 268-0599, TDD (800) 877-8339, email OCR.KansasCity@ed.gov. Information about the existence and location of services, activities, and facilities accessible to impaired persons can be obtained from the Special School District's Director – Compliance Liaison at the phone number and address listed above.

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NEWS FROM SSD



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SSD Parent Advisory Council

The SSD Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is comprised of families advising and collaborating to improve the education, confidence and social outcomes of each student served by SSD.



The PAC consists of five parents or guardians — one member and four alternates — from each of the 22 St. Louis County school districts and from each of the five SSD special education schools. The parents or guardians of students receiving special education services in that district or school elect SSD PAC members.

For more information, visit the PAC's website at <https://tinyurl.com/SSDPAC>, email pac@ssdmo.org or call 314.989.8448 ext. 6650. ■

SSD Blueprint for Equity

One of the priorities of the SSD Board of Education is improving the equity of services available to students. The "SSD Blueprint for Equity" contains a summary of the District's current and upcoming efforts in this area. Visit www.bit.ly/ssdequity to learn more. ■