

Owensboro Public Schools

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Owensboro Public Schools' Instructional League to receive national Magna Award on April 6

The Owensboro Public School District is being recognized by the *American School Board Journal* and the National School Boards Association with a 2009 Magna Award for its Instructional League program. Owensboro Public Schools' Instructional League is one of 18 Magna Award and 15 honorable mention winners and from across the country that were chosen from hundreds of entries judged by the selection panel who look for fresh, exciting, and practical ways to encourage excellence in education. Magna Award winners are being announced in the April issue of the *American School Board Journal* and awards will be presented on April 6 at the National School Boards Conference in San Diego. School board member Cate Lauzon will accept on behalf of the Owensboro Board of Education.

“The program began in the fall of 2007 as a result of a discussion by school board members concerning local childhood obesity reports. They discussed ways to provide students with more opportunities to get physical exercise. The idea of league sports evolved,” said Dr. Larry Vick, OPS Superintendent. The Board reasoned that if they could conservatively budget money to run a free Saturday and after school league and get volunteers to help coach, they could provide league opportunities for boys and girls in grades 3 through 6. They felt that the physically active children would be healthier and increase skills developed through practice and games—such as teamwork, respect, loyalty, knowledge of rules, and sportsmanship. The Board hoped that some of the students would continue their interest in exercise and in team sports and eventually join middle and high school teams, thus, providing a feeder system.

The league became an immediate success with hundreds of students signing up to participate. It is evident that kids are excited and enjoying themselves. Something else exciting has taken place. Parents, grandparents, and brothers and sisters are coming to the fields and gyms to support the young athletes. In the first season alone, 300 boys and girls participated on 23 soccer teams at the Owensboro High School Soccer field at Shifley Park. In just its second year, league participation and the number of sports offerings has grown. This year, the September Series drew 150 young cross country runners after school one day each week in September. The league has expanded to include soccer, cross country, volleyball, basketball, flag football, tennis, softball, baseball, golf, and track and field for young students. This winter, 373 children have participated on league basketball teams. Spring sports will begin soon.

“The Instructional League is providing immediate benefits: sports instruction, exercise, parent involvement. Young athletes are very proud of their Red Devils' “uniform” and are forming friendships with future teammates at the league games. We have every reason to believe that we will see long-term benefits for our students from this program,” said Dr. Vick. League events are coordinated by Mark Moore, OPS 21st Century Programs Director, with the help of school 21st Century staff members and OPS Assistant Superintendent Brad Stanley.

The Owensboro Board of Education received a Magna Award in 2004 for the district's Healthy Lifestyles Initiatives. The school district serves approximately 4,300 students in preschool -12th grade.

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