

Three area schools earn top marks

Princeville, Dunlap and Macomb high schools are recognized by magazine

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OF THE JOURNAL STAR**

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PRINCEVILLE — Working quietly and for years on what school officials say is producing a well-rounded student, Princeville High School is finally getting some attention, nationwide no less.

Located in the northwest corner of Peoria County and surrounded by miles of farmland, Princeville earned a spot among some of the top high schools in the country, as determined by U.S. News & World Report.

"I'm tickled," Princeville Superintendent Jim Colyott said of the "bronze" status bestowed by the magazine. Just 33 schools in the state earned that distinction.

"People just don't understand," Colyott said. "Our students have the opportunity to participate in multiple vocational areas and sports, the school play, the school newspaper, clubs and organizations ... (but) being a small school, we also depend on their participation."

Colyott said that has helped "developed incredibly well-rounded students."

Princeville is among just three schools in the Journal Star circulation area recognized this year.

Dunlap, frequently a top performer, was among 461 high schools nationwide - 34 in Illinois - to receive a silver medal. For Dunlap, it's the second in as many years.

Dunlap Principal Tom Welsh said school officials assess their students regularly and use academic interventions. Because of high mobility - receiving many new students each year - the school has a formal two-week orientation process, involving administration, teachers and fellow students.

"It's obviously quite an honor to be mentioned in a national publication - it's a credit to the teaching staff and hard work of the students," Welsh said.

Results are based on data from nearly 21,000 public high schools in 48 states from the 2007-08 school year used to produce an index score. Data was gleaned from reading and math results, also factoring in the percentage of economically disadvantaged students, to find which schools were performing better than their statistical expectations.

The top 100 high schools nationwide with the highest college readiness index scores were awarded gold medals. The only Illinois schools to be receive gold medals were three college-prep schools in Chicago.

The only other school in the area to receive recognition was Macomb High School, which like Princeville, earned a bronze.

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