

NEXT GENERATION

"Next Generation" features the talents of our local students and school news and updates. All schools in the Applegate Valley are encouraged to submit art, writing, photography and any other creative pieces to gater@applegater.org.

APPLEGATE SCHOOL

Applegate School is proud of student accomplishments

We would like to acknowledge the Applegate School students mentioned below for their participation in the multi-school competitions listed, and also for consistently placing in the top three.

Battle of the Books. Bringing home the first-place trophy from the annual Three Rivers School District Battle of the Books Competition on April 25, were Applegate School Level 2 students—fifth graders Maria Cross, Lily Emmons, Carlen Nielsen, and Emma Singleton. Our Level 1 students—third grader Chris Hartley, and fourth graders Joaquin Martinez and Natalia Sahr—tied for third place.

Each student was required to read 10 books for the competition. Teams from each elementary school in the district competed after months of preparation to test their knowledge about the author, title, characters and plot of all 10 books. Congratulations to our amazing readers on your hard work and achievements!

Science Fair. Fifth-grade student Maria Cross was the second-place winner in the Three Rivers School District Science and Engineering Fair in the category of Animal Science & Microbiology.

The Science Fair is an opportunity for students in the school district to apply the scientific method to conduct independent research. The results of each student's research is presented in a district-wide science fair at the district office in Murphy, where the students' efforts are displayed and students are interviewed to determine the scientific merit. Judges award prizes to students who have used the scientific method properly and have demonstrated thoroughness in their studies and who then compete in regional, state, national and international science fairs.

Rotary Students of the Year. Eighth grader Josh Saunders and fifth grader Maria Cross were awarded the "Outstanding

Student" award by the Rotary Club of Grants Pass. Each year the Rotary Club honors a fifth-grade and an eighth-grade student by recognizing excellence in academic achievement, character, school involvement and service. Congratulations to Maria and Josh for their achievements and character.

Spelling Bee. We would like to congratulate third grader Laura Kliewer, fifth grader Carlen Nielsen, and seventh graders Caitlyn Rabjohn and Jasmine Williams for being chosen to represent Applegate School in the district-wide Spelling Bee.

Carlen Nielsen placed third at that district competition on April 14. Great job, Carlen! We are so proud of all of our Super Spellers.

American Mathematics Contest. Eighth-grade students at Applegate participated in the American Mathematics Contest (AMC), which consists of a multiple-choice exam designed to promote the development and enhancement of problem-solving skills. An AMC award is presented to the top three students from each participating school. Applegate student Moesha Guient earned the first-place award and Wyatt Arnsdorf earned second place.

Presidential Physical Fitness. Presidential Physical Fitness Award winners are Lexi Hill, Ronan Hodge, Isaac Hill, Teryn Powers, Azalea Stinson, and Masey Embury. These kids are seriously fit! This award recognizes students who achieve an outstanding level of physical fitness. To earn this award, students must score at or above the 85th percentile for their age level in five different activities testing their strength, speed, endurance, quickness, and flexibility.

Congratulations to all of these Applegate School students for their exceptional achievements.

Seana Hodge
shodge@siskiyou.com



Photos, from left to right,

top row: **Battle of the Books**

First place team—Lily Emmons, Maria Cross, coach Grandma Jean (thank you, Grandma Jean!), Emma Singleton, and Carlen Nielsen.

Third-place team—Chris Hartley, Joaquin Martinez, and Natalia Sahr.

Middle row: **Science Fair** winner Maria Cross.

Spelling Bee winner Carlen Nielsen.

Bottom row: **Presidential Physical Fitness Award**

winner Azalea Stinson, Isaac Hill, Ronan Hodge, Masey Embury, Lexi Hill, and Teryn Powers.

RUCH SCHOOL

'Climate change': Classroom, community, and environment merge

"Make it Happen," reads a sign on the board. Goals have been listed, tasks distributed. Groups of eighth-graders at Ruch Community School are clustered around the classroom. One group designs a lesson on composting for the first-grade class. Another researches state incentives for renewable energy at schools. Several students discuss factors influencing the decline of honeybees. Others clink science glassware as they measure dissolved oxygen in an aquarium filled with Chinook salmon eggs.

Science teacher Ryan King views his job as "teaming with students to compress global issues down to their local relevance." He asks students: "What do you want to learn about this issue?" "How can we work together to envision solutions and imagine possibilities?" "Will we be active participants or passive bystanders in our community, our environment?" And he's amazed at what can happen when he moves aside and lets students take charge of their own learning.

How did this class come about?

In 2012, a group of parents and community members formed in response to a Medford School District budget deficit that threatened to close Ruch School. The goal of APPLE (Applegate Partners Promoting Local Education) was to ensure that Ruch would remain a vibrant part of the district by developing a unique school identity tied to the community and natural environment where students live.

Sustainability was at the heart of APPLE's vision: sustainability of the school and community, of course, which we understood to be in a symbiotic relationship. But we were also coming to understand the importance of *environmental* sustainability in that equation. In this valley—where vineyards are replacing orchards, debates persist over forest and wildfire management, GMO laws are evolving, the watershed is changing—sustainability issues are part of everyday life. It's important that young people learn to participate actively in these conversations.

With input from Ryan King (then a graduate student in Southern Oregon University's Environmental Education program), APPLE and Ruch School principal and teachers envisioned a community school where place-based learning revolved around projects related to the local environment. The superintendent and school board endorsed APPLE's proposal; the ground was fertile for the school and students to grow roots and let their potential bloom.

When Ryan King became the science teacher in 2013, teachers across grade levels had already begun incorporating place-based learning into their classes: farming worms, volunteering at an animal shelter, constructing a vegetable garden. Ryan tapped into that energy, developing a program to reflect the school's identity: a middle school sustainability class. Five locally relevant domains emerged: forests, food, water, energy, and waste. Within these domains, students undertake meaningful project-based learning.

Two months after welcoming new salmon eggs into the classroom, students released the grown-up fry into the Rogue River as part of the US Department of Fish and Wildlife's Salmon Watch Project. Students studied the salmon life cycle, habitat requirements, and cultural significance to the region. "Watching the salmon eggs grow up was really neat. We were able to track their development each day," says eighth-grader Tabitha Kohler.



Ruch School students removed parrot-feather weeds from a local creek.

"I love working outside, especially with my fellow Ruchians," says Nolan Bartlett, reflecting on his experience helping restore a local watershed. In partnership with the Lomakatsi Restoration Project, students planted tree saplings: ponderosa pine, Oregon ash, Oregon grape, incense cedar and big-leaf maple. In addition to learning about a healthy watershed, students removed parrot-feather weeds from a creek and met with natural resource professionals to learn about job opportunities in ecological restoration.

Eighth-grader Ivy Guss-Gonzalez notes, "Learning about sustainability has made me care more about the world." Ivy's comment suggests a counterpoint to the prevailing narrative of education, which is often driven by what is *not* working. Teachers find themselves in a climate of ever-increasing quantifiable accountability, new mandates, new academic standards, and new tests; in turn, a climate of fatigue, inadequacy, and apathy can undermine teachers' imaginations and sense of what's possible.

But a "climate change" is taking place at Ruch School. Focusing on what *might be*, Ryan King finds stamina in being a teacher-leader in a school that values sustainability and community. Together, he and his students ask: How might we make this world a better place, today and tomorrow? Together, they examine the *possible*, using *place* as the context, *projects* as the engine, and *sustainable communities* as the goals.

Margaret Perrow della Santina
541-899-9950

To learn about the sustainability class and current projects at Ruch School, visit the school website at www.ruchschool.org.



On Earth Day, Ruch School eighth-grade students teamed up with their elementary counterparts to clean up Cantrall Buckley Park, remove invasive species, reduce wildfire fuel, and enjoy a beautiful day.