

NEXT GENERATION | SCHOOL NEWS

Applegate School goes the distance for learning

BY STEVEN FULLER



Mask-wearing Applegate School students have fun doing pumpkin math and Kandy Korn math.

New school year, new challenges. Each new school year has challenges, but this one stands in a class by itself.

Applegate School is in the unique position of serving students in both Jackson and Josephine counties. Although we had planned to have onsite, in-person instruction for K-3 students, Jackson County COVID-19 metrics mandated distance learning from home. Receiving this news a few days before school started, Mrs. Hirschmugl, K-1 teacher, and Mrs. Halsted, 2-3 teacher, had to do some fast re-programming. They put in many hours and said they “built some new brain pathways for themselves” to create their online “classrooms” through the Canvas Learning Management system in order to get their students and parents engaged while learning from home.

After two weeks of online learning, Applegate School was allowed to offer two hours of limited in-person instruction for K-3 students. The school offers bussing to any K-3 enrolled student for on-site instruction from 8:30-10:30 Monday through Thursday. While at school, students get core reading instruction, small-group reading instruction, recess, and math. The staff is doing its best to make the two hours as productive as possible, while also focusing on the social and emotional support that students need.

The annual Fort Vannoy Farms field trip was cancelled this year, so pumpkins were delivered to the school. The students had fun doing pumpkin math and Kandy Korn math.

All school staff members follow Oregon Health Authority and Oregon Department of Education guidelines for safety: small-group learning, cohorts that do not intermingle, health screening checks, hand-washing, face coverings, social distancing, and thorough cleanings throughout the day. The in-person instruction is optional for students, so Applegate School simultaneously offers distance learning opportunities for all K-3 learners. This requires teachers to plan for both online and in-person instruction.

Mr. Scull is working hard to make sure all curriculum objectives are being met in the online instruction for his fourth- and fifth-grade students. He notes that it is not unusual for a cat or dog to make its way into the camera and give our students an opportunity to share a

bit about their lives at home during this time. Mr. Scull acknowledges that his own skills in technology have grown by leaps and bounds, and the lessons are getting better and better as he continues to learn the media platforms that are available. However, he says he would never exchange online learning for the real deal with students present in person.

At the middle school level, Mrs. Daw says her students and their families “are doing such an amazing job in the midst of a less than ideal situation. They are showing true persistence and resilience.” In preparation for Halloween, students wrote their own short stories to share with the class. Mrs. Daw and fellow teacher Mr. Fall worked together on an online scavenger hunt to help with team-building and as an alternative to the usual Halloween party.

Other middle school activities show the creativity of the teachers. Seventh graders wrote opinion essays on “Columbus Day vs. Indigenous People’s Day.” Sixth graders made a salt-dough topographical map of the United States, a hands-on activity to counteract so much time spent in front of a screen. Edgar Allan Poe’s writing elicited a lot of lively chatter for eighth graders.

The entire Applegate staff is excited to see the students’ faces and hear their laughter, whether online or in person. The hope in Three Rivers School District was for schools to be open for all grades in the second semester. Unfortunately, the Josephine and Jackson County metrics do not allow Applegate to fully open at this time. Three Rivers School District is closely monitoring the situation, and we are committed to getting students in school as soon as possible.

We are deeply impressed by and appreciative of the support from students’ parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and everyone else who have been helping them get logged into online learning sites. We all look forward to the day when all the students can be back in school full-time. Meanwhile, teachers are on campus from 7 am – 4 pm, Monday through Thursday, with open office hours throughout the day for students or parents with questions or a need for help.

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Madrona Elementary School copes with COVID-19 precautions

BY KELLIE LOVELL

This has not been a typical first quarter to the school year, but the staff at Madrona Elementary School are determined to provide the best learning experience possible for their students. Since September, the Madrona Elementary School K-3 teachers and staff have worked diligently to provide their students with engaging learning opportunities onsite.

The school year began with a staggered start schedule the first week, with a third of the K-3 students attending one day that week. The following week students attended two days. This staggered schedule helped students understand and practice the new guidelines that align with ODE safety protocols.

The past eight weeks have highlighted the creativity and dedication of Madrona’s teaching staff. Unable to teach in the usual classroom manner, the fourth- and fifth-grade teachers have used online resources such as Canvas, Google Classroom, and Google Meets. Chromebooks have been provided to students who needed them, and online resources have been posted for parents.

Madrona Elementary School kindergarten through third-grade students have had the opportunity to enjoy the school’s new swing set and sensory walk. In addition, Fort Vannoy farms assisted in bringing the pumpkin patch to the school. Each K-3 student took a pumpkin home for the Halloween weekend. During spirit week on October 29, all Madrona students were able to show their spirit. Also, the first week of November, the kindergarten through fifth-grade students enjoyed virtual performances from the Traveling Lantern Theatre Company.

Guidelines and requirements from the governor and the Oregon Department of Education continue to arrive regularly. To



(Left) First-grader Kyra Laker. Photo: Amy Fogg. (Right) Second-grader Kaspen Yates. Photo: Julee Anderson.



Madrona students have fun on pumpkin-picking day. Photo: Kellie Lovell.

meet the occupancy standards set by the Oregon Department of Education and to reduce the number of students in each classroom, some changes in class settings will occur.

The next quarter will see continued perseverance from students, families, and staff. The creativity and dedication of the staff at Madrona Elementary School and the cooperation of parents and the wider community will continue to provide a safe school year and a successful learning experience for all our students.

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A butterfly story from Applegate School

BY JANIE BURSTEIN

The bus rolled in one day as usual at 8:30 in the morning. Now, at this time the sun is just peeking over the mountain, so it is still quite chilly.

Araya, one of our little second-grade girls, got off the bus and sat on the bench in front of the gym waiting patiently for the rest of the children to arrive so we all could head to class. She happened to glance down and saw one of Miss Linda’s beautiful, newly hatched, tagged butterflies sitting on the ground in the cold.

This little girl’s face lit up, and, because she is a gentle and kind person, she gently walked over and put her finger out for the little butterfly to climb aboard.

She was very excited and shared her new-found friend with her other schoolmates and with our kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Hirschmugl.

The little butterfly was quite attached to its new friend, as I could plainly see when I walked up to check on the excitement. There was no need to intervene.

We quickly decided it would be best to take a walk to Miss Linda’s butterfly garden and find a suitable flower on which to place this exquisite butterfly for safekeeping and nourishment until it was warm enough



A butterfly’s rescue prompted a thank-you from Miss Linda.

to take flight. We found a suitable Queen Anne’s lace flower, and the little girl gently put her finger next to the flower, helping the butterfly to climb safely aboard. We said our goodbyes and wished it happy travels.

Walking back to class, we took time to marvel at the fact that this butterfly would remember the little girl forever.

I told Miss Linda about the event later that day. Since she is a devoted butterfly lady and artist, she created a special butterfly card for this little girl, who greatly appreciated it.

Butterflies do spread joy and happiness to those who can take the time to stop and look!

Janie Burstein
Applegate School librarian