

**NEXT GENERATION | SCHOOL NEWS**

# In challenging times, teaching takes on heroic dimensions

BY JEAN HALL

Heroes work at Applegate School. Despite extended student absences and actual school closure for a week near the end of the first semester, the Applegate School staff diligently continued to create opportunities for learning and offer a variety of supportive measures to students in need. Now both staff and students rejoice over being “in person” again. Mrs. Halsted, second- and third-grade teacher, voices the staff’s positive report. “For the first time since this pandemic began, we are seeing real growth in student learning with having students in school.”

Mrs. Gourley reflects on her positive experience of the “in-person” environment at Applegate School. “Coming into Applegate as the new middle school teacher comes with its difficulties and anxieties, but with such a great group of students and staff to work with, the transition to this position has been amazing!” She describes her efforts to create a safe and inviting classroom by encouraging her students to practice kindness and positive thinking.

To facilitate these practices Mrs. Gourley invites the students to share about themselves and their feelings. At the beginning of each week, she encourages the students to share special moments from the weekend. At the end of the week, the class has a time to share moments from the week that they saw as bad, so-so, and good. Attempting to highlight the good, Mrs. Gourley joins in the sharing to show that adults also have difficult moments, but choosing to focus on the positive, they can change their outlook. Such “in person” sharing helps to create a loving and family-like classroom.

K-1 teacher Mrs. Hirschmugl underlines the necessity of “in-person” school. “Learning is social, and kids need to be together to learn from one another.” Besides this valuable social learning, K-1 students are making great strides in reading and math. After working on number recognition, number names, and values up to 20, kinder students are now adding and subtracting fluently, comparing two digit numbers and finding unknown numbers in an equation. These students have also learned letters and sounds and have begun to read. First graders are moving onto chapter books, and, along

with all the Applegate students, are excited to hold and read the books provided by a generous donation from the Grants Pass Kiwanis Club.

Both Mrs. Hirschmugl and Mrs. Halsted are grateful for Mrs. Daw’s music instruction and were pleased to have their students perform Christmas songs for the school. In this second semester, they are both looking forward to getting the SMART reading program back in person and doing some garden work with the help of White Oaks Farm. The students now also have the advantage of instruction from the new PE teacher, Mrs. Baertschiger.

Applegate students have enjoyed opportunities in music and art this past semester. Using bucket drums, Mrs. Daw taught middle-school students to read, echo, and play simple rhythms that included quarter, half, whole, and 16th notes and rests. They also worked on playing two parts at the same time, did a brief composition unit with writing rhythms, and explored Garage Band for their own compositions. In K-5, Mrs. Daw focused on reading rhythms, playing parts together, and creating rhythmic compositions.

Blending music with art, Mrs. Kappen had her students in the Art Elective program do a project of still life involving musical instruments. Students also had a lesson in one-point perspective and had the opportunity to paint some wintery scenes with acrylics, focusing on space between objects and distance. Mrs. Kappen plans to link art with native plants and garden flowers this spring when she has the students plant seeds and possibly draw plant diagrams.

Out of troubled times often step persons who see beyond difficulties, who, instead, search for new opportunities to serve. With creativity, dedication, and compassion they inspire us and give us hope. The Applegate School community is richly blessed with persons such as these, many of whom form the staff of Applegate School. We are deeply grateful for their quiet, but determined, heroism, and we hail them for their faithful service to our children in this difficult and challenging time.

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# Field school collaborative sprouts in Ruch

BY RYAN KING

Ruch Outdoor Community School (ROCS), a K-8 public school in the Medford School District, is continuing and expanding a multifaceted partnership with the Southern Oregon University Environmental Education (SOU EE) graduate program. ROCS’s pedagogical approach of place-based education aligns well with the rich field-based opportunities offered by the SOU EE graduate program. This school year, ROCS is inviting Jackson County Parks and the Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council to create the Southern Oregon Field School Collaborative. By adding these agencies to the existing partnership, the collaborative will further advance and widen both short-term and long-term goals, leveraging unique characteristics of our rural bioregion and improving school connectedness to the surrounding community.

Actions performed under the collaborative will create authentic experiential civic engagement in the outdoors for all parties, as well as natural resource stewardship that engages youth in service-learning projects. A number of interesting projects are moving forward. First, Cantrall Buckley Park will serve as host site for day and residential programs offered through the fall in the Field School capstone project offered by the SOU EE graduate program. One shared vision of the collaborative is to build permanent yurts at the park.

This will expand the usability for park patrons and for summer youth camps and ad hoc education programs for students in southern Oregon. Educational programs will have access to riparian areas, forests, and hiking trails. Lessons will align with state standards and fulfill Oregon Department of Education requirements relating to outdoor school. Second, ROCS will sponsor SOU EE graduate students as they complete practicum credits in the winter and spring terms.

Duties may include coordinating outreach with community organizations and assisting teachers with curriculum that focuses on place-based education.

Finally, ROCS recently completed the participant application for the Adopt A Park program at Cantrall Buckley Park. K-12 students in the Medford School District will participate in hands-on projects along the riparian zones with the Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council.



Middle-school students work with AmeriCorps member Hannah Borgerson (hat) to monitor the habitat of the riparian zone. Photo: Michael Buyaskas.



Seventh-grader Emmett Haughey takes the diameter measurement of native trees along the Applegate River. Photo: Michael Buyaskas.

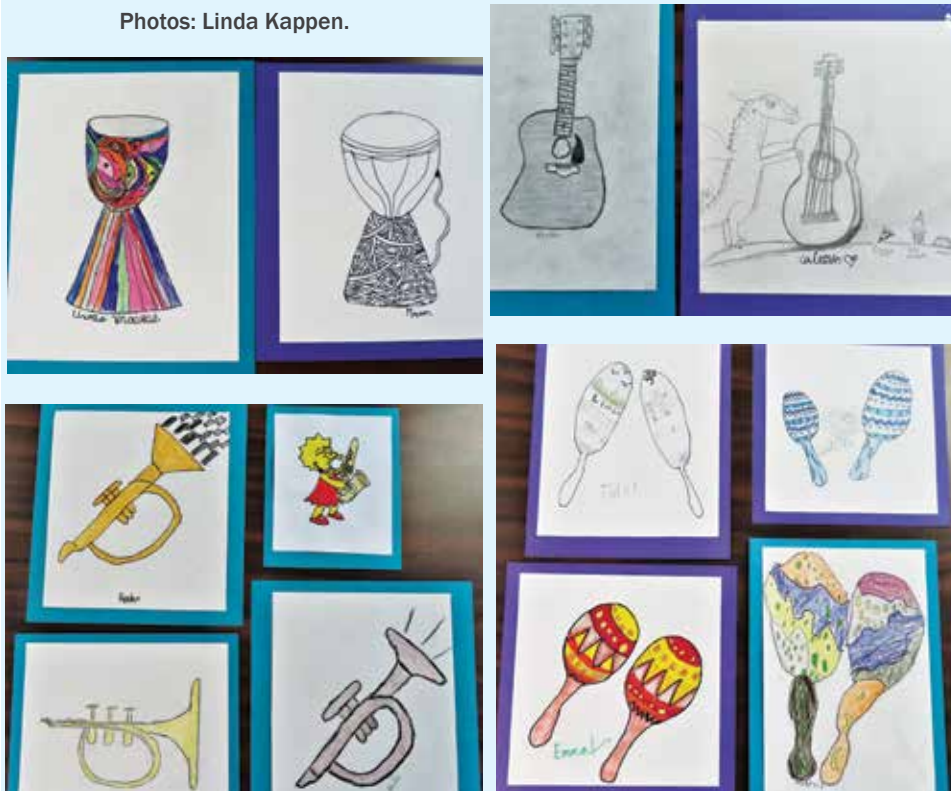
By working together, the Southern Oregon Field School Collaborative aims to complete these projects more effectively and efficiently, drawing on the unique resources of each organization. Numerous educational benefits result from more direct contact with nature, and a greater and more practical understanding of the environment and our place in it is certainly at the core of what the collaborative hopes to achieve in the years ahead.

For more information about the Southern Oregon Field School Collaborative, visit [ruchschool.org/in-the-news/the-southern-oregon-field-school-collaborative](http://ruchschool.org/in-the-news/the-southern-oregon-field-school-collaborative).

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**Samples of Applegate School student still lifes of musical instruments**

Photos: Linda Kappen.



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