

NEXT GENERATION | SCHOOL NEWS

Applegate School finishes school year on a celebratory note

The final days of the 2018-2019 school year opened up new experiences for Applegate students. Mrs. Halsted's second and third graders visited the fire station, where they learned how to evacuate a smoky room by climbing out a window and practiced knocking down cones with a fire hose. The students concluded their fun and informative morning with a lunch of pizza and mac and cheese. Hooray, and thanks to the fire crew.

Mr. Scull's fourth and fifth graders visited the High Desert Museum in Bend. They had the opportunity to explore lava caves and learn features of the high desert and its inhabitants.

Eighth graders had a fun trip to Wolf Lodge in Washington and capped the year with their moving-on ceremony and final dance.

All students had a great track and field day with races, relays, jumps, and ball throws. They hailed the final day of school, planned and staffed by Parent-Teacher Support Group (PTSG) members, as a wonderfully fun day. Students enjoyed water relays, snow cones, a craft station, cotton candy, and an epic tug of war. A big thank you to PTSG for this event and all their yearlong support.

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Applegate and Williams schools prepare for new school year

Summer fun, summer travel, and summer adventures are winding down. September calls students and school personnel to new learning experiences. Teachers prepare for new classes and new courses. Other school staff get ready for a new year of helping in classrooms and in various programs such as art, music, and technology.

Office staffs prepare class lists and schedules. Administrators check closely to see that all is ready to welcome the new student bodies. Custodians do the last bit of polishing floors and windows. Students go school-shopping and gather school supplies. The 2019-2020 school year is about to begin.

The Applegate and Williams communities extend their best wishes to all who lead our students to new adventures in learning. We express our thanks for all you have done and for all your willingness and dedication to make this new school year a happy and successful journey. May you know the support and gratitude of the school communities you serve.

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Ruch School's Field of Dreams

If you happen to be in the Applegate Valley and drive by 156 Upper Applegate Road, you will discover a beautiful playfield. Now, instead of wasps and star thistle, there are butterflies and green grass. You will see a track ready for health enthusiasts, dog walkers, joggers, and students chasing after the last of the summer sun. You will revel in the evidence that speaks of hard work, hours of fundraising, and undying support from community, funding organizations, and individuals who recognize the benefits that Ruch Outdoor Community School (ROCS) offers students, families, and community. You will find our "Field of Dreams"!

Words cannot express how humbled and fortunate we are that we can offer our families and community a safe space that inspires play, discovery, and an opportunity to "unplug" and get outdoors. Our students have waited for and anticipated this moment for a very long time, and it is finally here.

ROCS's mission and culture include many opportunities for students and staff to learn and play outside. Because some of the best learning takes place outside and in nature, our students benefit from the lessons and experiences that foster a sense of stewardship to the environment in which they live and learn. They develop a love and respect for the rivers, lakes, trails, and natural habitats that most of them call their backyard. Lessons with this focus make it more relevant to the students and applicable to their lives outside of school.



Ruch School's "Field of Dreams" is ready for students and community members to enjoy. Photo: Brandee Tolner.

To show our appreciation to all those who helped fund the new track and playfield, we are hosting a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on October 7. We invite everyone to join us in celebrating the collective impact that this demonstrates and see for yourselves the happy smiles that have resulted on the faces of our students, staff, families, and community members. What a great day it will be!

Important dates

- September 21: Pride Preview, 4 - 6 pm
- Second Wednesday of each month: PTO meetings, 3:30 - 5 pm
- October 7: Jog-A-Thon, 12 - 3 pm
- October 7: Ribbon Cutting, 12 - 1 pm
- November 2: Harvest Festival, 3 - 7 pm
- December 20: Winter Program, 6 - 7 pm

Thanks to everyone involved with ROCS, past and present. What an amazing community and a beautiful place to work and live! Come visit us—we will show you around and share all that we do!

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Initiative abounds in Three Rivers School District

BY RICH HALSTED

As a school board member, I remain very excited about how much Three Rivers School District continues to accomplish with limited financial resources. It is the brilliance of our entire team (teachers to bus drivers; aides to district staff; volunteers to administrators; maintenance to custodians) that continues to not only provide an excellent education for our students but also improve our district. I am humbled every time I shake the hands of new graduates, knowing how many people touched their lives and contributed behind the scenes before they crossed the stage.

Last year I wrote that I was cautiously optimistic that we were going to take our first step to reach our goal of an 85 percent graduation rate by 2023. That first step was more of a leap—we saw graduation rates jump by nine percent, from 68 to 77 percent.

Several initiatives led to this achievement, but the credit really goes to everyone who in some way impacted the lives of these students from kindergarten through their senior year. I remain confident that we will make another step when the class of 2019 data is released in late fall or early winter.

Being a smaller district with a supportive community gives us great flexibility when it comes to initiatives. Although the school board adopted the 85 percent graduation goal, this is more of a way point along the

larger strategy of preparing students for success after graduation.

It would take more articles than this one to describe all the initiatives happening in the district to improve the quality of our education, so I will focus on a couple that you may be unaware of: employment indicators and internships.

Employment indicators. These indicators come from our relationships with local businesses, resulting in metrics to evaluate students in qualities that employers look for in employees. Qualities such as professionalism and communication ("soft skills") are now being evaluated by staff to provide students with an assessment and feedback on how employers would see them, which give students the tools they need to be successful in the workplace. In addition, students with high ratings can bring a certificate to certain employers to receive priority for an interview.

Internships. An internship program started with a grant from the Ford Family Foundation to establish internships at Illinois Valley High School. This initiative grew quickly and now is a Josephine County-wide program with a number of other areas wanting to get involved. It has also drawn high interest from the state. To gain experience in a field of interest is an invaluable educational opportunity for a student. It is pretty inspiring to watch a student help with surgery on



Caps fly as Hidden Valley High School graduates of 2019 celebrate at the June 6 ceremony. Photo: Casey Alderson.

an animal or to visit a student working on a construction site. Local businesses are stepping up to help us help students discover their interests.

An initiative we are currently researching is the four-day school week. The benefits would be much more than simply saving money; they have a lot to do with the quality of life for both our students and staff. To reduce our busing by 9,000 miles a week and eliminate one day of long commutes would impact everything from safety to an expanded hiring pool. The school board is not taking this initiative lightly and will not make any changes until it has considered important aspects such as educational opportunities for the fifth day (my thoughts are music, art, STEM, etc.) and providing meals (our district includes four of the six poorest zip codes in the

state). We will also have public meetings and surveys to review with communities. And I believe that the concept needs to be tested at certain schools before moving forward with a district that is the size of Rhode Island. Needless to say, as board chairman this year, I wouldn't want to move forward without rigorous study, discourse, and full board support.

I am impressed by the quality of the young men and women who graduate from the district. Our funding challenges remain significant, but we make up for this with tremendous employees and volunteers. I appreciate any input about where we can continue to grow. We move our meetings around the district, so please check our website, threerivers.k12.or.us, for dates and locations.

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