*Muddy Creek Charter School* 

Annual Report 2010-2011

**The Muddy Creek Charter School Mission**

Muddy Creek Charter School was founded to provide an outstanding public educational program for children in grades K-5 who reside in and around the Muddy Creek Watershed. The school will deliver a place-based, integrated arts and science curriculum grounded in its rural agricultural setting and commitment to community service. MCCS will be supported in its efforts by forging and maintaining partnerships with local landowners and agencies, OSU researchers and the community at large. Our success will be our children. The students of MCCS will not only meet or surpass the state benchmarks but will also have a deeper understanding of their place in the world as demonstrated by portfolios of high quality projects, and they will be well-prepared to transition into other schools for their continued education.

**Description**

Muddy Creek Charter School (MCCS) is made up of a half time kindergarten class, two 1-2-3 primary classes and one 4-5 class. We also have a two hour math teacher, and two assistants to support literacy instruction. There is a testing specialist, a PE teacher, a bookkeeper, custodian, and an administrative assistant. As a community outreach we also house an afternoon childcare program.

**Results**

For the 2009-2010 school year, all but one student in the 3rd, 4th and 5th grade met or exceeded state standards. This included reading and math for the three grades and science in the 5th grade. Writing sample scores rose to 66%.

**Executive Summary**

***Enrollment:***

Enrollment as of June 11, 2010 is 65 students. This is up from 62 students same time last year. We have expected enrollment for the 2010-2011 school year of 75 students. We also have a wait list for most grades.

***Academics***

Place and Project focus

* Restore
* Fossils
* Economics project raising and selling plants
* Mary’s Peak annual mountain day

Integration of Art

* Masks – through Corvallis Arts Center grant
* planets
* murals

Service learning

* Stewardship (grades 4, 5)
* Food bank (K)

***Finances***

• School operating in the black with 10% carryover to next year

• Income is mainly 80% of ADMw, grants and donations

***Governance and staffing***

* The school is operated by Inavale Community Partner (501c3)
* The school is administered by the Executive Director and the administrative assistant
* 3 full-time teachers (2 classes of 1-2-3 and one 4/5, half-time K teacher

***Performance***

* Students meet and exceed in mathematics and reading as measured by OAKS
* Parent survey indicates satisfaction (Appendix)
* Student survey indicates satisfaction (Appendix)

***Community Involvement and Events***

* 2000+ hours of volunteer service at the school (many more off site)
* Establishment of PTO
* Afternoon Adventures, an afternoon program for ages XX
* Community basketball
* Monthly meetings of Willamette Grange
* Provides employment in the community 5 out of 11 employees are local
* Craft project booth at DaVinci Days
* Lego league
* Rural fire safety workshop
* Marimba building workshop
* Tasting Table – a cooperative project with the Corvallis Environmental Center. This is a farm to table school project that is also being offered in other Corvallis schools. The project allows the students to have the opportunity to taste a food that perhaps they have never tried and it builds a connection between the local farms and the schools.

***Service to the 509J School District***

* Educational opportunity in south of district
* Place-based rural/environmental education for K-5
* $63,000 from ADMw
* ~$18,000 to cover infrastructure and maintenance at Inavale site
* Fruitful occupancy of Inavale site
* Summer workshop in digital storytelling
* Stream table

***Successful transfer of students***

Muddy Creek has students from Corvallis, Monroe and Philomath districts as well as several students previously home schooled. The transition from their home district has been seamless; communications between MCCS and the home schools have been effective and the students have thrived in their new environment. In one case a student from a Corvallis School had previously been expelled from his elementary school and now at MCCS is rising to the expectations and integrating into the school system.

**Grants**

* Gray- field science
* Corvallis Arts Center grant to provide mask making opportunity to students K-5
* OSU Folk Club Thrift Store grant aimed at library support

**Annual Report**

**A. Introduction. Brief historical perspective**

Muddy Creek Charter School opened its doors in September of 2008. As stated in the charter agreement, the mission of the school is to provide an excellent and innovative public educational program for children in grades K-5 in the Corvallis School District. It is aimed at, but not exclusive to, children who reside in and around the Muddy Creek Watershed. Its place-based curriculum founded in its rural agricultural setting and commitment to community service. Learning will take place through a combination of direct (traditional) and multidisciplinary, project-based instruction that also integrates art. MCCS will be supported in its efforts by forging and maintaining partnerships with local landowners and agencies, OSU researchers and the community at large. The students of MCCS will not only meet or surpass the state benchmarks but will also have a deeper understanding of their place in the world as measured by the portfolio of high quality projects, and will prove themselves well prepared to transition into other schools in the Corvallis School district for their continued education.

In its first year, the school built a strong foundation in place- and project-based learning, that includes service learning and fosters cross-grade relationships and daily physical activity in the form of P.E. or outdoor activity. In its first year, the school performed well academically and matched or exceeded district average in state testing performance (OAKS). Enrollment increased in 2009-2010 and academic performance, as measured by testing, has stayed high. The program expanded literacy support, the scope of projects and the integration of arts. Enrollment is projected to increase further. The school continues to operate within its fiscal constraints.

In the district assessment of school performance in 2008-09, two main subjects were flagged, one was need to improve literacy performance, particularly writing, and the other was to increase the school’s function as a community center.

**B. The School**

***B-1 Enrollment***

Enrollment in MCCS is by choice, so enrollment itself is a measure of the school’s success. Interest in the MCCS model is increasing as evidenced by our expected increased enrollment numbers for the 2010-2011 school year.

17 of 64 students are from out-of-district and at least 5 are from home school, constituting a net increase in students and in state funds to the 509J School District.

MCCS reports enrollment figures monthly and takes roll twice daily, in keeping with legal requirements.

***B-2 Class configuration***

At the end of the year class configurations are:

**Class Students**

K 13

1-2-3 14

1-2-3 16

4-5 22

**Total**  65

***B-3 Staffing***

Of the 12 employees, half are from rural south Benton County.

**Executive Director** - Dan Hays

**Administrative Assistant** - Gretchen Cuevas

**Teachers** - Jenny Swanson (K), Leah Gorman (1-2-3), Bridget Baril (1-2-3), Michelle Reichelderfer (temporary 4-5)

**Testing Coordinator**- Melanie Kelley

**Educational Assistants** (PE), etc- Angela Sanderson, Shayna Huter, Larissa Lasselle, Andrew Patterson

Janitor, Laura Oakes

Half of the employees are carried over from the previous year. A new teacher was added (Ms. Baril) to accommodate an expanding classroom. Ms. Reichelderfer substituted and then was hired as a long term substitute for the 4-5 teacher Kriste York on medical leave. During the year, there was turnover in the positions of Executive Director, Administrative Assistant, PE teacher, Janitor, and Afternoon Adventures supervisor and Bookkeeper.

The school is in a stable configuration. Most of the staff will remain the same next year, particularly the administrative staff and teaching staff. We will be hiring a new 4-5 teacher to replace the temporary substitute as Ms. York will not be returning.

***B-4 Management***

The Inavale Community Partner’s Board of Directors provides management, oversight and support to the school. The board may range in size from 3 to 9 members. Presently there are 4.

Anita Grunder, President and District Liaison

Tanya Freeman, Vice-President and Administrative Liaison

Morning McCreary, Treasurer

Erik Swarzendruber, Secretary and Community Liaison

Oversight is also provided by the Corvallis School District via a mutual calendar of responsibility, report schedule etc.

**B-5 Budget**

The school has been financially solvent owing to careful budgeting and vigilance.

The main income for MCCS is ADMw from the state, of which 20% is retained by CSD from in-district and 10 % each go to CSD and home district

In addition MCCS is funded by Grants and Donations

**C. Progress toward meeting MCCS academic goals and objectives:**

***C-1 Project and Place-based Learning***

Project learning is a cycle. Students engage with a topic, question, investigate (and conduct field work), and share what they have learned. Whenever possible, projects are investigated through the lens of the place where children live. Grades 1-5 use this learning cycle in our daily afternoon science and social studies coursework. The projects also give children an opportunity to apply literacy skills in an integrated context. Projects generally last for a few weeks to three or four months. Some projects are worked on intermittently, such as seasonal comparisons.

In the primary classrooms at Muddy Creek, major project work focuses on science and social studies themes that are rotated on a 3 year basis. For 2009-10, these themes were:

* **Earth Science (Mountains and Fossils).** Students traveled to Mary’s Peak and observed volcanic rocks that gave clues about the history of the Coast Range. They explored mountain building processes through hands-on experiences with play dough and model volcanoes. We explored local fossils through two fossil collecting expeditions to a private landowner site in Lebanon.
* **Migration.** Migration patterns of local animals (including gray whales, Canada geese, salmon, and butterflies). Students researched a migratory animal and wrote information books about the animals. The books were shared at a multi-class “Migration Party”.
* **Space.** In this integrated science and literacy project, students investigated the solar system. They also kept moon observation journals. Room 2 extended the project with a hands-on engineering project (see below).
* **Water.** This project was an investigation of the water cycle, weather, and local aquatic plants and animals.
* We also started our year long projects of weather and bird watching.  Not only is it exciting when the local and migrating birds visit our windows, but it provides opportunities to develop observation skills, color recognition, counting, art projects, prediction/probabilities and of course, the comparison of what comes to school might also be seen elsewhere in our community, state, country or other countries.

Classes also completed smaller focused studies based on student and teacher interest.

* **“Mapping the School Field”.** Students used play dough to build two 3-dimensional model of the school field. One of the maps was then transferred to a 2-dimensional grid from a photograph of the model, using the SmartBoard technology. Students then constructed the map out of paper. The map was shared with the 4/5 class to help plan our school plant restoration area.
* **“Moon Munchies Engineering”. Building Growth Chambers for Plants on a Moon Mission.** Accepting a challenge from NASA (posted on their web site), the students designed plant growth chambers that could be taken to the moon. They learned the components of an electrical circuit to power the light. They made paper model prototypes. The students then bought materials for the growth chambers from a class store with paper money. With parent assistance, each group produced a wooden plant growth chamber of their own design with a working electrical circuit.
* **Tulip Test Garden.** Students investigated local climate and plant growth through participation in a nationwide project through the organization Journey North. In the fall, students planted tulips of a specified variety at a specified depth, along with schools across the country. All of the tulip gardens reported their planting on the Internet. Our students made seasonal observations in the tulip garden. Second and third graders compared their climate to “partner schools” using web-based maps. They also compared the timing of tulip emergence at our school with other places. The students discovered how early our plant emergence and blooming were compared to other places.
* **4-H Wildlife Stewards Conference Presentations (2nd and 3rd graders).** The 4-H Wildlife Stewards Conference gave the students another opportunity to share project work. Students produced posters of their investigations.

***School-wide Projects***

**RESTORE.** Our second year of doing ecosystem restoration on school grounds was very successful. Our school devoted one morning per month to all-school participation in this project. This is the time when the hands-on work needed to prepare the site and plant was carried out: laying down cardboard, moving leaves to kill grass, planting shrubs and perennials, growing milkweed and grasses from seeds, and laying a path. Partners also came to each RESTORE days to teach the children about the plants, wildlife, and history of the site, including Institute for Applied Ecology, Chintimini Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, Finley Wildlife Refuge, Benton County Historical Society, and Benton Soil and Water Conservation District. Plants were purchased with a grant from Benton SWCD.

**Grant from Gray Family Fund (Year 2**). We were funded generously by the Gray Family Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation to take repeated field expeditions to single sites to carry out science inquiry or community service.

* Our first round of field trips was to a private site in Lebanon, which is rich in marine fossils from the Miocene. Kindergartners explored the site and went to a rock shop. Grades 1-5 made two visits to the site. We collected rocks from 3 different areas and brought the fossils back to school to compare the 3 sites. Field guides and interviews with an OSU geologist helped the children to interpret the story of the site.
* First, second, and third graders went on three trips to Finley Wildlife Refuge to investigate the plants and wildlife at this natural area.

***Community Service***

* **Food Drive**. The Kinder class sponsored the first annual food drive at MCCS for the Benton Co. Food Share.  The introduction included the need for food and the children learned a sharing song that became the theme song for the project.  At All School Meeting, the children shared the song and explained how important it was to share our bounty.  The different classes were challenged to see which group could donate the most food in pounds.  Working with the 3/4/5 math class, the Kinders and their buddies counted, weighed and grafted the donated food.  Wild and fun project!    The Kinders then had a field trip to the Benton County Fairgrounds where the food was dropped off.  They also had the opportunity to count and bag potatoes and onions that were to be used in the Thanksgiving boxes for the local towns.  The director invited us to help again next year.  I hope to make this a yearly project for the Kinders.
* **Chintimini Wildlife Help Project.** Room 2 led an all-school drive to bring supplies needed by Chintimini Wildlife Rehabilitation Center during spring. Spring is the center’s busiest season because of the number of young animals hurt and abandoned.
* **Beaver Creek Project.** Room 2 partnered with Freshwater Trust to modify Freshwater Trust’s curriculum for watershed oriented community service **to** primary students**.**  After 2 classroom visits, Freshwater Trust and Mary’s River Watershed Council led the students to a private landowner site on Beaver Creek. Students looked for signs of beavers and learned about the organisms in the stream. A repeat visit is planned to do service for the site.

***Art***

Art is integrated with project learning with a weekly block devoted to project art, and additional time where appropriate. For example, in the study of water, murals of a healthy stream were painted.

* Through a grant from the Corvallis Arts Center the students participated in the April Celebration of Youth Art project. Students created masks and wrote poems to accompany the works. The project culminated in a field trip to the Arts Center to view their work along with work from other 509J students.
* From our Art curriculum we had been learning about stencils and collage, so we extended into a study of Eric Carl and his art. We used the techniques from this study on our migration projects.

***PE***

This year, the school staffed a PE teacher that taught half-hour PE classes to 1-2-3 students 2 days per week and 4-5 students 4 days per week. 1-2-3 students had active time led by the classroom teachers on the afternoons that they did not have PE instruction. Health instruction was delivered by the classroom teachers during the project block. For example, 1-2-3 students did a focused study on dental health. The school-wide participation in the Corvallis Environmental Center Farm to School Tasting Table project also had a health focus.

***Multi-age***

Our multi-age classrooms reflect our school’s philosophy that social development is as important as academic development. As a younger child in a multi-age classroom, students see leadership modeled by the older children. Older children have the opportunity to be the classroom leaders. This is especially valuable for less outgoing children who might not have taken on a leadership role in a single-grade classroom.

Multi-age classrooms also give children and teachers the chance to form strong relationships that last beyond a single year. In traditional, single-grade, classrooms, much of the beginning of the year is devoted to relationship –building and assessment. In multi-age classrooms, that period of time is shortened because of the strong existing relationships among students and between teacher and students. Therefore, the transition is more rapid to a working classroom focused on learning.

Cross-age relationships are also promoted by our All School Games program and our All School Meeting. At All School Games, students meet weekly in mixed K-5 groups taught by one of the classroom teachers. They play active games, which is part of our PE program. At a weekly All School Meeting, students have a chance to meet, share, and celebrate important milestones for community members. The children also have the chance to raise and discuss issues that affect our entire school community.

**Field Expeditions Supporting Project and Place-based Learning**

* **Mary’s Peak Annual Mountain Day (all-school).** Contributed to school community building and helped to make geology studies place-based.
* **Muddy Creek Maze Annual Expedition.** Contributed to student understanding of local farm economy.
* **Peterson Butte Expeditions** (October and May) (Grades 1-5). Contributed to project learning through field investigation of fossils.
* **Science Factory Planetarium (Eugene).** Contributed to project learning in space study.
* **Beaver Creek Expedition (Room 1 only).** Led by partners Freshwater Trust and Marys River Watershed Council. Contributed to community service, place-based learning, and water project learning.
* **Wings of Wonder Butterfly House, Independence,** OR (Room 1 only). Contributed to understanding of butterfly life cycles as part of project learning.
* **Corvallis Art Center and Corvallis Public Library** (all-school). All-school trip to view the school’s work completed with an ArtCentric visiting artist.
* **Finley National Wildlife Refuge** (3 visits, May and June). Contributed to place-based understanding of local ecosystems.
* **Mary’s Peak Whole School Field Trip.** Our first field trip as a whole school was to hike Marys Peak.   In the K class, the focus was to take them to the top where they could look out over the land where they live.  On the hike, we were “nature detectives” looking for familiar as well as new sightings of wildlife.  Back in the classroom, we read The Big Hill by Joy Cowley and we wrote our own story using our hike on Marys Peak as a guide for the story.  We made a group painting of a big hill which is still part of our mural on the hall wall.
* **Pumpkin Patch.** We visited the local pumpkin patch on Llewellen Rd.  The owners of the Muddy Creek Maze were willing to include a wagon/tractor ride into the patch for the Kinders.  The snacks were purchased at Gathering Together Farm on Grange Hall Rd. This trip was also a part of the literacy program.  We read stories about pumpkins and the many things that can be made with them.  The children drew pictures and wrote about their trip to the pumpkin patch.
* **Local Wetlands.** The Kinders visited a local wetland project a mile from the school.  On the tour we looked at bird boxes with swallows building their nest, identified birds, hiked through the wetlands looking for native plants and signs of the native mammals that we studied back in January.  Stan Steele is interested in having the students plant milkweed and revisit to see what happens to the wetlands as it ages.  We added a wetland to our farm mural.

***C-2. Literacy***

* Our classrooms are set up to encourage reading and interest in reading
  + Many books of varying difficulty, both fiction and non-fiction
  + Writing displayed around the room
  + Many opportunities to develop language and vocabulary
* Forty minutes per day of literacy groups
  + Ten minutes of spelling, phonics or vocabulary development
  + Thirty minutes of reading instruction at their ability level (guided reading)
* Children are read to for 10-15 minutes per day, stories, poems, etc.
* Children are given up to 30 minutes a day to read books of their choice
  + DEAR (Drop Everything And Read)
* There is a read-at-home program starting at a 15 minute expectation and moving up to as much as a 30 minute expectation
* A year-long plan that includes skills, strategies and topics to be taught.
* Reading is integrated into all subjects throughout the day – this is where our place-based and project-based learning plays so well.
* Literacy includes four areas
  + Reading
  + Writing
  + Speaking
  + Listening

***C-3. Service Learning***

* **Food Drive.** The Kinder class sponsored the first annual food drive at MCCS for the Benton County Food Share.  The introduction included the need for food and the students learned a sharing song that became the theme for the project.  At All School Meeting, the students shared the song and explained how important it was to share our bounty.  The different classes were challenged to see which group could donate the most food in pounds.  Working with the 3-4-5 math class, the Kinders and their buddies counted, weighed and grafted the donated food.  The drive culminated in a kindergarten field trip to the Benton County Fairgrounds where the food was delivered.  They also had the opportunity to count and bag potatoes and onions that were to be used in the Thanksgiving boxes for local recipients.
* Stewardship. The 4th and 5th grade class at MCCS participate daily in the care-taking of our facility. They take care of recycling, garbage disposal, putting away play equipment, disinfecting doorknobs and other heavily touched areas. They take great pride in their work as they learn to care for their surroundings while being responsible.

**C-4 Test Results**

**Muddy Creek Charter School**

**Parent Satisfaction Survey**

**Spring 2010**

1) Your child’s grade

K (4) 1 (2) 2 (4) 3 (1) 4 (0) 5 (2)

2) In these five academic areas, indicate how you feel about your child’s progress.

**Reading** too little (0) some progress (1) progressing well (3) really good year (6)

**Writing** too little (0) some progress (2) progressing well (7) really good year (1)

**Math** too little (0) some progress (3) progressing well (4) really good year (3)

**Science**  too little (0) some progress (1) progressing well (6) really good year (4)

**Social Skills** too little (1) some progress (0) progressing well (4) really good year (5)

3) Is homework

just right (3) not enough (5) too much (0)

4) Are you clear about what place based learning is?

yes (7) no(1)

5) Does your child talk about outdoor learning on the school grounds?

yes (7) no (1)

6) Has your child learned about the history of the area or about the natural features?

yes (6) no (2)

7) Do you think your child is developing a sense of community?

yes (6) no (2)

8) Rate the MCCS performance in the following areas.

**Physical Education** none (0) not enough (2) adequate (4) great (1)

**Art** none (0) not enough (2) adequate (4) great (2)

**Outdoor Learning** none (0) not enough (0) adequate (3) great (6)

9) Do you feel your child is safe at school?

yes (7) no (0)

10) Share with us any comments, concerns or ideas that would help us make MCCS a better school.

* Not enough communication, particularly about student work
* Class size is important to us
* The sense of community is great
* Need a music program

**Muddy Creek Charter School**

**Student Satisfaction Survey**

**Spring 2010**

1) Your grade?

K(3) 1(1) 2(2) 3(1) 4(0) 5(2)

2) How much do you like school?

It is hard (0) It is ok( 3) I like it a lot (5)

3) Do you have friends at school?

No (0) A few (2) Some(1) A lot (7)

4) Name three things you like most at school.

Math (2) Science (1) Reading/Writing (2) Lunch (1) Recess (5) Friends (2)

5) For you, is school -

Easy (4) Sometimes hard (5) Really hard (0)

6) Which subject do you like the most?

Reading (4) Writing (1) Math (1) Science (2) Spelling (0)

7) Do you have homework?

No (1) Once in awhile (6) Couple of times a week (2) Every night (0)

8) Do you get to learn things out-of-doors?

Yes (8) No (1)

What?

Plants, planting, watching trees, field trips, bugs, animals, science

9) Do you know what community service means?

Yes (8) No (2)

10) What have you done that is community service?

* + Cleaning road side
  + Food drive for Chintimini Wildlife Refuge
  + Cleaning classrooms
  + Food for poor people
  + Mowed lawn for grandparent