*Muddy Creek Charter School* 

Annual Report 2011-2012

**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, a 1-2 class,a 1-2-3 class and one 4-5 class. We also have four assistants to support literacy and math 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. Some positions are combined so that we can offer closer to a full time job for our staff.

**Results**

For the 2010-2011 school year:

Our scores are not as strong as they were last year. Our math scores stand out needing improvement. Math will be our focus for school improvement this coming year. Writing will continue to receive our attention as those scores were also weak. Several graphs are at the end of this report illustrating how many students exceed, met or did not meet State Standards.

The school year was a very good one for us. Behavior in particular was exceptional. Academics were good, just not outstanding as they were last year. We had three students with pressing social needs. Those needs were met so well that the parents of one of those children came before you last year testifying of a complete turn-around for their son regarding his school experience. Another parent told me it was the best year her 4th grade son had experienced. A third boy was attending a Corvallis school only half time due to extreme behavior problems. He came to us in March, experienced six suspensions along the way toward the end of the year. He attended Muddy Creek all day, every day with the exception of those days he was suspended. His last suspension was in late May. So he finished the year getting better and better.

Our experience is the same as any other elementary school in the District. We have students come to us, and find a better experience. We also have students leave us unhappy, and find something better either here in Corvallis or back in their home district. We also lose students to home schooling, as we gain students from home schooling.

The greatest development this past year is having the Corvallis Art Center join Muddy Creek Charter School in a partnership. We will work together this coming year working to integrate all of the arts into all of the academics. To give a boost to this effort, The Corvallis Art Center and Muddy Creek Charter School worked together to hire an art integration specialist. The new employee will work with the classroom teachers to integrate all forms of art into reading, math, social studies and science. We will start the year teaching the students about marimbas – how they are made and how to play them. We are hoping the outcome will be a Muddy Creek Marimba Band that will perform in the community.

**Executive Summary**

***Enrollment:***

Enrollment stands at 80 students, after averaging 72 last year, and 65 the year before.

***Academics***

Place and Project focus

* Study and repair Beaver Creek riparian zone
* Ocean habitat and wildlife concluding with a mosaic on our hallway by the office
* Recycling and energy construction
* Community service projects including ocean beach clean-up

Integration of Art

* Ocean mosaic and a mandala depicting Mary’s River watershed.

Service learning

* Stewardship (Clean-up of classrooms at the end of the day. Watering, planting and maintenance of school grounds)
* 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 (one class of 1-2, one of 1-2-3 and one 4/5, plus half-time K teacher

***Performance***

* Students meet and exceed in mathematics and reading as measured by OAKS with the 4th grade exception mentioned earlier.
* Parent survey indicates satisfaction

***Community Involvement and Events***

* 3000+ hours of volunteer service at the school (many more off site)
* PTO; jump starting running track for students and the community
* Afternoon Adventures, an afternoon program for ages 4 and 5
* Monthly meetings of Willamette Grange
* Provides employment in the community 5 out of 12 employees are local
* Art entries at Benton County Fair
* 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
* ~$18,000 to cover infrastructure and maintenance at Inavale site
* Fruitful occupancy of Inavale site
* Successfully educated 2 students from District schools that had been expelled or were attending only part days

***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. This past year was an exceptional year for student behavior and engagement.

**Grants**

* Gray- field science
* Corvallis Arts Center grants to provide mosaic and mandala

**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.

Our School improvement plan called for developing a school wide literacy plan with themes. All 4 classes follow the monthly themes.

**B. The School**

***B-1 Enrollment***

MCCS Model is increasing by about 10 each year. In the spring all classes were full with a waiting list at each grade level. 21 of the 74 students are from home school, which brings the district extra money.

MCCS reports enrollment figures monthly, in keeping with legal requirements.

***B-2 Class configuration***

At the end of the 2010/2011 school year class configurations are:

**Class Students**

K 16

1-2-3 24

1-2 15

4-5 22

**Total**  74

***B-3 Staffing***

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

**Executive Director** - Dan Hays

**Administrative Assistant** – Cedar Dunn/ Michelle Waddell

**Teachers** - Jenny Swanson (K), Leah Gorman (1-2-3), Bridget Baril (1-2-3), Tom Day (4-5)

**Testing Coordinator**- Melanie Kelley

**Educational Assistants**- Larissa Lasselle, Laura Oakes, Melanie Kelly

**Physical Education-** Marci Brown

**Afternoon Childcare**- Kari Evans

Half of the employees are carried over from the previous year. A new teacher was added (Tom Day). Our PE teacher was fully certified for the first time and shared with Garfield Elementary School.

***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 5.

Erik Swarzendruber, President

Anita Grunder, Secretary

Morning McCreary, Board Member

Betsy Dasenko, Board Member

Kriste York, Board Member

Elisa Fairbanks, Non-Member and Treasurer

Oversight is also provided by the Corvallis School District via a mutual calendar of responsibility, business, administration, and maintenance.

**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 and math 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 classrooms at Muddy Creek, major project work focuses on science and social studies themes that are rotated on a 3 year basis. For 2010-11, these themes were:

* **Habitats of Western Oregon**
* **Architecture (homes/old one room school)**
* **Nutrition**
* **Sun and Light**
* **Shoreline Science (oil spills, sea life, beach clean-up)**
* **Wildlife Projects**
* **Energy and Electricity**
* **Engineering**

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

* **4-H Wildlife Stewards Conference Presentations (second through fifth 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 third year of doing ecosystem restoration on school grounds was more limited than the previous two years as we were more on our own. Our school devoted one morning per term to all-school participation in this project. Plants were purchased with a grant from Benton SWCD.

***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 4 and 5 math classes, 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.
* **Beaver Creek Project.** Fourth and fifth graders partnered with the Fresh Water Trust to restore riparian areas near beaver ponds. Water was tested for quality, plants were selected and planted, and aquatic life observed and studied.
* **Study of the Oceans and Shore line.** All classes went to Newport 3 times. There they went their separate ways studying tide pools, land forms, sea life, and visiting the Hatfield Science Center.

***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 two grants from the Corvallis Arts Center the students participated in the April Celebration of Youth Art project. Students created mosaics of ocean life and a mandala of the Mary’s River watershed.
* These two projects prompted the Corvallis Arts Center to seek a partnership with Muddy Creek Charter School. In this partnership we have hired an art specialist to assist classroom teachers to integrate art into all instruction. We have been integrating art into science and social studies, but we will now integrate art in reading and math as well.

***PE***

This year, the school staffed a PE teacher that taught all grade one through grade 5 students three times a week for one half hour at a time. I found the work of this highly trained teacher from Oregon State to be a major influence on the behavior of all students throughout the school day including the playground and lunch time.

***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.
* **Whole-school trip to local land owners forest** Early in the school year we went to a landowners property near school for a hike up on to a plateau observing forests and meadows. At the top we could look down on Muddy Creek School and the Beaver Creek watershed.
* **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.

***C-2. Literacy***

* Our philosophy is to use phonics and skill development mixing in whole language to promote a love of reading and opportunity to read chapter books. All classrooms have:
  + 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 Kindergarten class sponsored an 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 4-5 math class, the Kindergartners and their buddies counted, weighed and drew graphs about 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 participates 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**