



Muddy Creek Charter School

Annual Report 2012-2013

The Muddy Creek Charter School Vision and Mission

Vision:

Muddy Creek Charter School is a rural public school dedicated to the integration of an outstanding academic program with its community – the land and its people. We offer a joyful and creative educational experience where engaged students practice the skills they will need to be effective citizens and stewards in the future. Muddy Creek Charter School will serve as a model for preserving schools in rural communities.

Mission:

Muddy Creek Charter School was founded to provide an outstanding K-5 public educational program for children who reside in and around the Muddy Creek Watershed. In multi-age classrooms, the school will deliver a place-based, project-based, integrated arts and science curriculum grounded in its rural agricultural setting and commitment to community service. Diverse learning styles will be fostered. M CCS 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 M CCS 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

For the 2012/13 academic year, Muddy Creek Charter School (M CCS) was made up of a two half time kindergarten class, two 1-2/3 classes, and one 4-5 class. For the 2013-2014 academic year, we have done away with one classroom having three grade levels, keeping all classes except kindergarten with two grade levels in a classroom. We have four assistants to support literacy, math instruction, and children with special needs in the first through fifth grades. Our partnership with Corvallis Art Center adds an art integration specialist. This person helps us integrate the arts into all aspects of Muddy Creek curriculum. We also have a testing specialist, a PE teacher, an artist, a bookkeeper, and an administrative assistant. We will be adding some counselor time this year. As a community outreach we also offer an afternoon childcare program. Some positions are combined so that we can offer some of our assistants something closer to a full time job.

Results

For the 2012-2013 school year:

We received a designation of “outstanding” from the State regarding our performance as a school. Reading and Science scores are strong, while Math has been weaker. We have new math materials this year that will hopefully strengthen our performance. Writing will continue to receive our attention as those scores have been weak in the past. At the end of this report there is a test score graph illustrating how many students exceed, meet or did not meet State Standards.

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

Executive Summary

Enrollment:

Current enrollment stands at 100 students, after averaging in the 70s in previous years. I have added a graph at the back of this report to illustrate a little known or understood fact about the student enrollment at Muddy Creek Charter School. Around 30% of our student body was from outside the Corvallis School District. Most of those students come from Philomath and Monroe with a few from Albany.

Academics

Literacy and Math

Students are placed in small groups base on ability and skill usually numbering no larger than 12. The curriculum is sequenced from kindergarten into middle school so that our instruction is cohesive following predetermined skill development. We retain retired Corvallis teachers to coach our teachers in literacy and math.

Science and History Place-based Projects

Restoring plant life in the Rock Creek watershed
Restore Project – study of wetlands impact upon plants and soils.
Finley Wildlife Refuge –studying bird migration patterns
Raised-bed potato trials
Insects in Art, Reading, and the Muddy Creek watershed
Geology – rocks and land formations
Astronomy

Integration of Art

Paper Mache construction

Observation and sketching
"Peter and the Wolf" puppet show
Using various fibers to construct various objects in nature
Art through photography
One point perspective in drawing
Clay sculptures
Integrated art, literacy, and story-telling

Service learning

Stewardship (Clean-up of classrooms at the end of the day)
Watering, planting flower beds, maintenance of school grounds
Food bank (K)
Entertaining at an assisted-living facility
Composting food waste
Personal products drive for the homeless

Finances

Muddy Creek is operating in the black with 10% carryover to next year.
Income is mainly 80% of ADMw, Rural School Fund, and SYS State money
Grants and donations

Governance and staffing

The school is operated by Inavale Community Partners (501c3)
The school is administered by the Executive Director, administrative assistant, and Financial Officer
3 full-time teachers , and 2 half-time K teachers (2012-2013 academic year)

Performance

- Students' State test scores moved up a little bit. MCCS students tend to score about even with District students
- Parent survey indicates satisfaction

Community Involvement and Events

- 4000+ hours of volunteer service at the school (many more off site)
- PTO is active in fund raising and school support
- Afternoon Adventures, an afternoon program for ages 4 and 5
- Hosted Little Rembrandts program
- Provides employment in the community for residents of the area
- 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 for students living in the south area of the 509J School District
- Place-based rural/environmental education for K-5
- Productive occupancy of Inavale site, saving the District from maintaining or demolishing the building

Grants

- Gray- field science
- Scott Seed Bird Sanctuary Grant
- Corvallis Arts Center grants for artist residencies

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 was 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 restricted to, children who reside in and around the Muddy Creek Watershed. Its place-based curriculum is founded in its rural agricultural setting and commitment to community service. Learning takes 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 not only meet or surpass the state benchmarks but will also have a deeper understanding of their place in the world as measured by a portfolio of high quality projects, and 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 included service learning and fostered cross-grade relationships and daily physical activity in the form of P.E. or outdoor activity. In its first years, the school performed well academically and matched or exceeded district average in state testing (OAKS). Enrollment increased in 2012-2013 and academic performance, as measured by State testing remained high. The program expanded literacy support, the scope of projects and the integration of arts. Enrollment is projected to remain around 100 students. The school continues to operate within its fiscal constraints.

For the 2013/14 academic year our School improvement plan calls for developing a school wide approach to math that aligns with the Common Core State Standards. We have purchased new math materials for all grades. Training has begun for following the math and reading Common Core State guidelines.

B. The School

B-1 Enrollment

Muddy Creek is increasing by about 10 students each year. In the spring of 2013 all classes were full. Approximately 20 of the 100 students are from home school situations, and 30% of all students were from other districts, which brings 509J extra money.

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

B-2 Class configuration

At the end of the 2012/2013 school year class configurations are:

Class	Students	For 2013/2014
K	27	14
1-2-3	24	22 (1/2)
1-2-3	24	22(1/2)
4-5	25	23 (3/4) and 25 (4/5)
Total	100	106

B-3 Staffing (last year)

Of the 14 employees, half were from rural Benton County.

Executive Director - Dan Hays

Administrative Assistant – Betty Nickerson then Jennine Livengood

Financial Officer – Elisa Fairbanks

Teachers - Jenny Swanson (K), Michelle Reichelderfer (K), Leah Gorman (1-2-3), Melissa Champney (1-2-3), and Tom Day (4-5)

Arts Integration Specialist- Chris Neely

Testing Coordinator- Melanie Kelley

Educational Assistants- Kim Phillips, Ellen Deehan, Robin Stevenson

Physical Education- Morgan Bannister

Afternoon Childcare- Jennine Livengood, then Robin Stevenson

Half of the employees were here the previous year. Our PE teacher is fully certified

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. We started the 2012-2013 year with 5 board members, but by spring we were down to 3 members.

Erik Swarzendruber, President

Lise Hull, Secretary

Betsy Dasenko, Board Member
Melissa Harris, Board Member
Elisa Fairbanks, Non-Member and Treasurer

Last fall one member finished her 3 year term reducing the Board to 4 members. This spring another member needed to leave because of a heavy work load. The last few months have been very difficult for everyone as a 3 member board is too small to function smoothly. We are adding a community member in September, and another community member is considering joining the Board in October. Something we have learned in all of this change is the importance of diversity on a school board. So our hope is that we can gain a greater spread in the backgrounds of Board members.

Oversight is provided by the Corvallis School District regarding staffing, curriculum, and financial matters. We follow the Corvallis calendar except for the early release days.

B-5 Budget

The school has been financially solvent owing to careful budget management by Elisa Fairbanks.

The main income for MCCS is ADMw from the State, of which 20% is retained by 509J. Out of district students do bring in additional monies for the District.

In addition MCCS is funded by Grants and Donations

B-6 Physical Plant

This past year was our second since having taken over all responsibilities for the building and grounds. I think this serves 509J and Muddy Creek well. The savings we gained by not paying rent was used for maintenance issues. The boiler has been decommissioned and is no longer in use. In its place we have installed heat pumps to heat the building. The entire fresh air system has been redone with new equipment.

We have changed lighting in the classrooms to more energy efficient lighting, and insulated the ceiling in the old part of the building. Our water filtration system has also been refurbished. We are currently embarking on a step -by-step replacement plan for the roof.

C. Progress toward meeting MCCS academic goals and objectives:

C-1 Project and Place-based Learning

Project learning follows a 3 year cycle of science and social studies topics. Students engage with a topic, question, investigate (conduct field work), and share what they have learned. Whenever possible, projects are investigated through the lens of the place where children live or the school is located. The projects also give children an opportunity to apply literacy and math skills in an integrated context. Projects generally last for a few weeks or up to three or four months. Some projects are worked on intermittently, such as seasonal comparisons that will last the entire year. For 2012-13, these themes were:

- Farm Animals
- Birds/migration
- Water and weather
- Astronomy
- Wet Lands

US History
Economics
Food Chains
Engineering

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

- **4-H Wildlife Stewards Conference Presentations (second through fifth graders).**
- We again participated in this conference that was held at Jefferson Elementary
- Our students produced posters of their investigations.

School-wide Projects

RESTORE. This was our fourth year of doing ecosystem restoration on school grounds, but 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, and planted in the rain.

Community Service

- **Assisted Living** – Our kindergarten classes spent time entertaining the residents with music and song
- **Homeless People** – Our fourth and fifth grade class conducted a personal effects drive in the school to assist people experiencing homelessness
- **School Pride** – All classes participated in maintaining, cleaning, and enhancing the appearance and cleanliness of the school.

Art

Art was integrated with project learning as always. Murals, masks from other cultures, and mosaics comprise past projects. Now we are starting the process of learning how to integrate art into all academic areas as a way to help students better understand math, reading, and writing. Throughout this year we have discovered art integrations is easier said than done. However, we will persist.

PE

We are fortunate to have a strong connection with Oregon State's physical education department. Through this connection I am made aware of PE graduates available for part time work. This past year our PE teacher came to us from California. He provided 40 minutes of PE three days a week to the first through fifth grade students.

Music

We had a music teacher for part of the year providing music instruction Tuesday and Thursday of each week. Art and music were integrated into the musical play "Peter and the Wolf".

Multi-age

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

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. This bond also includes the parents, and parent familiarity pays dividends for both the student and the teacher. Therefore, the transition is more rapid to a working classroom focused on student learning is more rapid in a multi-age classroom.

Cross-age relationships are also promoted by our All-School Games program and our weekly All-School Meeting. At All-School Games, students meet weekly in mixed K-5 groups taught by one of the classroom teachers or an assistant. 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 topics that affect our entire school community.

Field Expeditions Supporting Project and Place-based Learning

- **Century Farm Project.** The older students visited a nearby century farm where they were able to learn about geese, ducks, filberts, and even the potential of solar power. This farm is converting nearly 100 acres of farm ground back to its natural state as a wetland. Over the next several years Muddy Creek will benefit from this partnership.
- **Muddy Creek Maze Annual Expedition.** Contributed to student understanding of local farm economy mixed with the fun of finding one's way through a corn maze.
- **Beaver Creek Expedition.** Led by partners Freshwater Trust and Marys River Watershed Council. Contributed to community service, place-based learning, and water project learning.
- **Finley National Wildlife Refuge** (3 visits, October, May and June). Contributed to place-based understanding of local ecosystems and history.
- **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 Kindergarten students visited a local wetland project(similar to, but a different farm from the one mentioned above) 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 in January.

C-2. Literacy

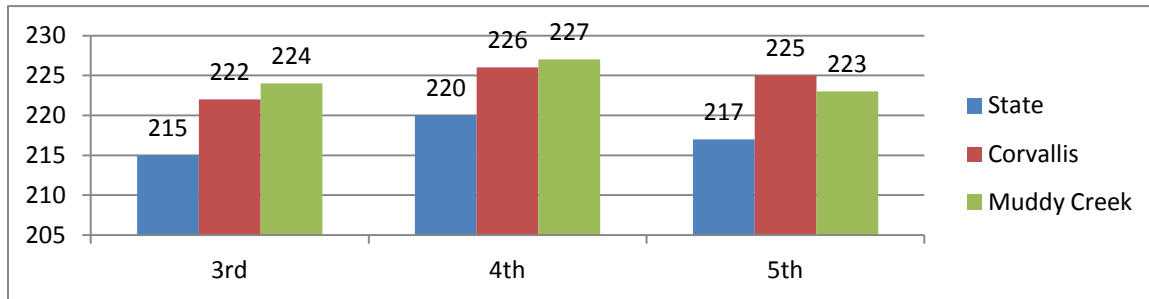
- Our philosophy is to use phonics and skill development mixing in whole language to promote a love of reading and opportunity to read chapter books. All classrooms have:
 - Many books of varying difficulty, both fiction and non-fiction
 - Writing displayed around the room
 - Many opportunities to develop 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 with 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

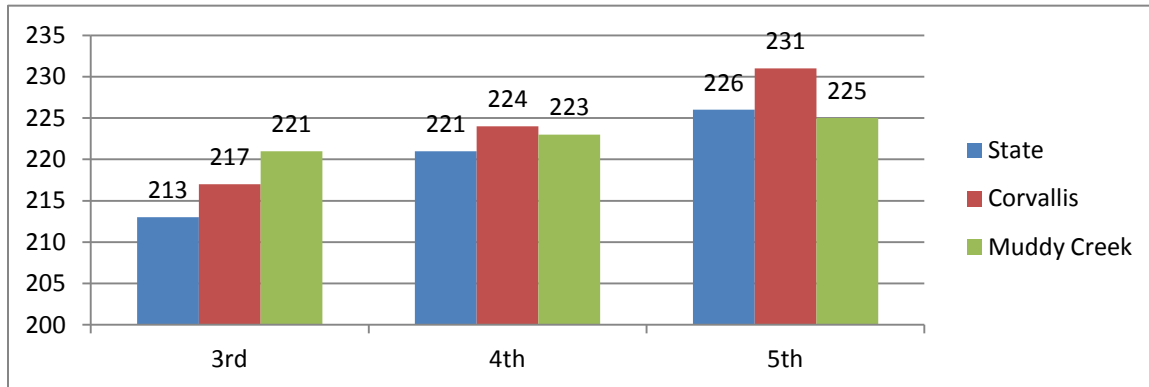
- **Food Drive.** The Kindergarten class sponsored an annual food drive at MCCS for the Benton County Food Share. The introduction included the need for food and the students learned a sharing song that became the theme for the project. At All-School Meeting, the students shared the song and explained how important it was to share our wealth. 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.
- **Stewardship.** The 4th and 5th grade class at MCCS participates daily in the cleanup 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

Reading Scores



Math Scores



5th Grade Science Score

