

December 2024

Community Connections

Within our growing, diverse community, we sow the seeds of opportunities to raise prepared, resilient students



GES Family Literacy Night: A Pajama Party for Bookworms!

On Tuesday, October 8, Gervais Elementary School (GES) transformed into a cozy haven of stories and creativity as 300 students, parents, and teachers gathered for the much-anticipated Family Literacy Night. The evening was filled with laughter, imagination, and a shared love of reading, creating a warm and welcoming community celebration.

Excited students arrived dressed in their pajamas, clutching their favorite plushies. The gym buzzed with energy as kids proudly showed off their bedtime ensembles, turning the school into a delightful pajama party atmosphere. The excitement didn't stop there—the Woodburn Bookmobile, parked right outside, was a huge hit. Families browsed its collection, discovering new stories to enjoy together. Thanks to the generosity of the ODE Latinx Student Success Grant, every GES student received a \$20 voucher for Jessica's Little Book Shop, allowing them to choose bilingual books that reflected the rich diversity of the community. Watching students beam with pride as they picked out their own books was a highlight of the night.

Inside the school, the fun continued with a variety of hands-on activities designed to spark creativity and imagination. Families worked together to design vibrant bookmarks, a perfect keepsake for all the new books they were adding to their shelves. Students brought storybook characters to life by creating playful puppets, which quickly became the stars of impromptu puppet shows. Aspiring authors and illustrators eagerly wrote and illustrated their own mini-books, proudly sharing their creations with friends and family.

The gymnasium offered a special treat—a cozy reading corner complete with couches and rugs, giving families a chance to snuggle up and enjoy some quiet reading time together. The space, set up like a living room, added a sense of comfort and connection, making it easy for

everyone to lose themselves in the magic of a good story.

The night wasn't just about books—it was about bringing families together, fostering a love for literacy, and celebrating the power of stories to connect us all. As families headed home, arms full of books and hearts full of joy, the buzz of the evening lingered. GES's Family Literacy Night was more than an event; it was a reminder of the incredible community that makes the school such a special place. The excitement is already building for next year's celebration—pajamas and plushies included!



Twig Science Transforms Gervais Elementary School Classrooms into Labs of Discovery

Gervais Elementary School (GES) recently adopted Twig Science, an exciting new curriculum that brings science to life for students through engaging, hands-on experiences. At GES, we're helping students see themselves as scientists as they learn to explore the world with curiosity and scientific inquiry. For grades 3-5, we've integrated science and English Language Development (ELD) to support students' language skills as they discuss and document their scientific discoveries.

This approach uses science as a vehicle for developing language and literacy, making lessons meaningful and fun. GES students are even learning videography to capture and share their experiments through engaging student-created videos.



Teachers are seeing firsthand how much students love Twig Science:

"Kindergarten kids at GES love Twig Science. This curriculum offers an engaging, hands-on approach to science learning. We enjoy the inquiry-based activities and real-world applications. In our last unit, we took magnifying glasses outside to investigate living and nonliving things. The students thoroughly enjoyed this activity!"

— **Madelyn Mattar, GES Kindergarten Teacher**

"My students absolutely love Twig Science! When I ask them what their favorite subject is, they all say science without hesitation. The hands-on activities go beyond reading and notes—they bring learning to life. For instance, when we studied forces, students built models of swings, magnetic games, and marble roller coasters to explore pushes, pulls, and gravity. They're grasping science concepts deeply and are now fluent in using scientific vocabulary."

— **Taryn Hurst, GES 3rd Grade Teacher**

"In my 3rd grade class, students have been studying forces by designing a playground. We've done hands-on activities like creating model swings, magnetic games, and games focusing on forces such as gravity, pushes, and pulls. The students love engaging in science that connects with their interests and teaches them something new."

— **Andrea Stein, GES 3rd Grade Teacher**

"Twig Science is a hit, especially with the 5th graders, who talk all the time about how fun the experiments are. The curriculum offers so many hands-on experiences, which also benefit literacy skills. They do close readings of academic texts, pull out key words and facts, take notes, and annotate. Twig Science is a perfect blend of reading, art, math, and science."

— **Eliana Belle, GES ELD Teacher**



GES is thrilled to see the excitement Twig Science has ignited across grades, fostering not only a love for science but also valuable skills in language, literacy, and beyond.

We look forward to many more discoveries and milestones with our young scientists!

Cooking Up Success: Gervais High School Launches New Culinary Program

The aroma of fresh opportunities is wafting through the halls of Gervais High School with the launch of its brand-new culinary program, led by first-year teacher Maddy Van Dewalker. This exciting addition, made possible through a recent bond measure, is serving up Career and Technical Education (CTE) opportunities that promise to equip students with invaluable life and career skills.

Maddy, a Salem-Keizer native, brings a deep passion for culinary arts to her new role. Though this is her first year teaching, Maddy has spent the past three years as an Instructional Assistant in Central Oregon, where she honed her love for education.

"When I saw the Gervais High School job posting last year, I jumped at the opportunity," she shared. "I've always dreamed of having my own culinary program, ever since I was part of one in high school. This is a chance to give back and share my passion for an industry I love."

The culinary program currently offers two classes: an introduction to foods class for both high school and middle

school students, and two periods of a high school-level Foundations 1 class, which dives into food service business principles. Each class blends hands-on cooking experiences with practical knowledge, from mastering basic recipes to understanding the inner workings of the food industry.

Maddy's favorite part? Watching her students grow. "Seeing how excited my students get when they can make something they thought they never could—that's the best feeling," she said. "I love providing them the tools to accomplish a very important life skill."

The program is already making waves, but the best is yet to come. Starting this spring, construction will begin on a state-of-the-art kitchen and classroom space, transforming the current outdated facilities into a hub of culinary creativity. Maddy can hardly wait. "The new construction is going to elevate what we can do in class. It's going to be amazing to teach in a space designed for this kind of learning."

She summed up her vision for the program: "Our new culinary program is designed to inspire creativity, teach practical skills, and prepare students for thriving careers in the food and hospitality industry. With hands-on learning in a state-of-the-art kitchen, we're equipping the next generation of chefs and entrepreneurs to turn their passion into a profession."

From the looks of things, the future of culinary arts in Gervais is not just bright—it's delicious.



Celebrating Good Deeds and Kindness with “PAWS”itive Program at Gervais Middle School



Recent Student PAWS recipients: Kristina Barsukoff, Leonardo Mendoza, Giselle Navarrete, Brantley Miller

Gervais Middle School has launched a new initiative that's making waves in the hallways and building a stronger sense of community among students and staff. The “PAWS”itive Program is a creative rewards system designed to recognize individuals—both students and teachers—who go the extra mile to spread positivity, help others, and create a supportive environment.

When students demonstrate positive behavior—whether through kindness, responsibility, or teamwork—they receive a small paw-shaped sticker. Along with the sticker comes a chance to pick a treat from the beloved snack pile! After writing their names on the stickers, students proudly add them to the Pawsitive Program bulletin board in the school hallway for all to see. The goal? To encourage students to collect as many paws as possible throughout the year, building a sense of pride in their achievements.

The PAWSitive Program isn't just for students; it's also helping to create a culture of mutual support and recognition among teachers and staff. During staff meetings, colleagues take the opportunity to acknowledge each other's efforts by awarding large paw stickers. These paws are displayed

outside classroom doors, highlighting moments when staff members went above and beyond to support students or their peers.

The PAWSitive Program has been a huge hit at Gervais Middle School, reinforcing good behavior and encouraging both students and staff to create a more connected community. The initiative places a strong emphasis on trust, communication, fun within structure, and maintaining a safe environment where everyone feels valued.

With paws accumulating on the bulletin board and outside classroom doors, the Gervais Middle School family is excited to see how these positive actions continue to grow throughout the year. Stay tuned for more updates on the PAWSitive Program—and if you spot someone doing something great, make sure to give them a paw!



This month, several staff members were honored with paws for their outstanding contributions:

Mr. Rudy Silva (Instructional Aide) – Awarded a paw by Maria Guerrero (Office Manager) for assisting a staff member who was injured by taking them to urgent care and helping a substitute manage the injured teacher's classroom.

Mrs. Amanda Braswell (Language Arts Teacher) – Recognized by Jennifer Rodriguez (Instructional Aide) for demonstrating great patience, structure, and adaptability in making her lessons accessible to all students.

Mr. Will Fenner (Language Arts Teacher) – Received a paw from Maria Torres-Tapia (Instructional Aide) for being flexible and adjusting assignments to meet the needs of both ELD and special education students.

Mr. Jacob Lundin (Long-Term Substitute, Special Education) – Applauded by Mr. Lucas Hill (Social Studies Teacher) for providing crucial support with test accommodations and helping struggling students.

Mrs. Arlette Tapia (Long-Term Substitute, Math) – Awarded a paw by Kim Vela (Science Teacher) for maintaining a calm and reassuring presence during parent-teacher conferences and offering assistance throughout.

This program is not only making our middle school hallways brighter but also fostering a community where kindness and support are celebrated every day. Keep those paws coming, Gervais Middle!

Gervais High School Students Embark on EMT Training Through Chemeketa Partnership

Six Gervais High School seniors are taking a significant step toward careers in healthcare through Chemeketa Community College's Early College EMT program, supported by the Perkins Innovation and Modernization (PIM) grant. This marks the first year Gervais School District is participating in the initiative, and the response has been overwhelmingly positive.

The program, held at Chemeketa's Brooks Campus, is designed to introduce students to critical concepts and skills in emergency medical services. This fall, participants are immersed in foundational coursework, including Medical Terminology and an Introduction to Emergency Services. Starting in the Winter term, the students will delve into EMT-specific training, which features hands-on

medical labs to solidify their learning and prepare them for real-world applications.

The PIM grant, which focuses on enhancing healthcare and agriculture education in the region, provides high school students with free access to college courses and pathways into high-demand fields. Chemeketa's Early College EMT program enables students to earn college credits and work toward obtaining their EMT certification by the end of the 2024-2025 academic year. In addition to the EMT program, the grant supports a Medical Assisting track at Chemeketa's Yamhill Valley Campus, offering further opportunities for students to explore healthcare careers.

Looking ahead, the PIM grant aims to expand its offerings to include paid

work-based learning and job shadowing experiences, further bridging the gap between education

and employment. These initiatives highlight the growing partnership between Chemeketa and local school districts, opening doors for students to gain valuable skills and certifications that set them up for success in their chosen career paths.

The dedication of the Gervais High School seniors in this inaugural program underscore the potential of initiatives like the PIM grant to shape the future of education and workforce development in our region.



Bond Update

December 2024



As we head into January, I wanted to give everyone an update on the progress of the district's bond work. Some people are wondering when construction is going to begin. There are many tasks that are required to be completed before we can begin breaking ground. The district wants to carefully coordinate projects so that we are "touching it one time." For example, the high school roof is going to be replaced but we are also adding an extensive HVAC system to the building. We don't want to redo the roof to then have to rip a portion of it out to install the HVAC components. That would be a waste of time and money and possibly create issues with warranties and the effectiveness of the systems. Our motto right now is sometimes we have to go slow in order to move fast.

There will be some smaller projects completed in the Summer of 2025 but the most extensive work in all three buildings will begin in early 2026 with the summer of 2026 being "all hands on deck" and all projects finished by early 2027. As the district works through different phases of the

projects, we will have Open Houses where members of the public can see for themselves what is being done and ask questions.





Bond Advisory Committee:

This fall the district seated the Bond Advisory Committee (BAC) which is chaired by community members Denise Teixeira and Bob Zielinski. The committee meets every other month to receive updates on the progress of the bond and to ensure the projects being completed match what was promised to the voters. For a full listing of the committee members and to review the minutes of the first two meetings, follow this link <https://www.gervaisbond.org/bond-advisory-committee>. The next meeting is January 8, 2025, in the district office at 6:30 p.m.

Architects:

The district put out "Request for Proposals" (RFPs) for architect firms and selected Arcadis Architects. Members of this firm first began working with the district in 2019 on the Long-Range Facility Assessment and Planning document. They understand the values and priorities of the community as they facilitated listening and work sessions for voters during the last three years. In October and November, the architects began the Pre-Design work which included taking staff members on tours of recently constructed middle schools. Administrators and staff from GES, GMS, and GHS participated in multiple meetings to help guide the architects' work. The next phase will include bringing in other staff, students and community members to give input on the design of the spaces. Once this process is finished, the district will be able to publish a list of the specific projects happening in each building including time frames for the work.

Construction:

The district put out an RFP for Construction Manager/General Contractor proposals December 4, 2024, with a mandatory pre-bid meeting held on December 11, 2024. Construction companies interested in applying for the Gervais School District projects must turn in their bids by early January.

Construction Preparation:

The district has also been required to engage in surveying property lines, and studies such as geological, water flow and traffic to name a few. There are many more that need to be done as we begin to prepare for actual construction.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Dandy Stevens

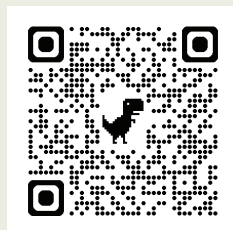
Superintendent

Dandy_stevens@gervais.k12.or.us



Gervais School District Website

To learn more and stay up to date with everything going at Gervais School District, **scan the QR code** to visit gervais.k12.or.us.



Gervais Bond Website

To learn more and stay up to date with everything going on regarding the Gervais School District Bond, **scan the QR code** to visit GervaisBond.org.

