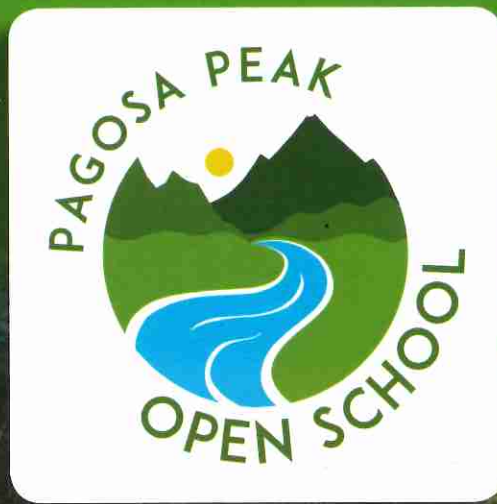


PAGOSA PEAK OPEN SCHOOL

Our First Year



OUR PROUDEST MOMENTS

1

Our first, second, and third-grade students published a book titled ***The ABC's of Gardening in Pagosa Springs*** that they dedicated to the Kindergarten class and presented to the public library.

2

We created a school garden that has six raised beds for perennial flowers, vegetables and fruit trees.

3

We took students on **30 field trips** throughout the year including to Hershey Ranch, Wolf Creek and Sonlight Camp.

4

Our Kindergarten students studied **20 classical and contemporary artists** learning their names, life history, and recreating their artwork.

5

All of our second and third-grade students participated in the ***Whatchamawhozits Children's Theatre Camp at the Pagosa Center for the Arts*** which ended in a performance of *Annie Kids* musical.

6

Our students wrote and directed a play titled *A Garden Fairy Play* as a fundraiser for the school garden. **They raised \$1,000!**

7

Our fourth-grade students built sandboxes for the Kindergarten students and helped them learn to read through a ***Buddy Reader Program***.

8

We worked with students to collect data about trash along the town's bike paths, to design animal character trash and recycle bins, and to present their findings to the town mayor and council. **The Mayor requested for this project to be included in the 2019 Pagosa Springs' town budget!**

9

Our fourth-grade students completed trail maintenance including signs at Hershey Ranch.

10

Our Kindergarten students **wrote and performed their own *Lady of Guadalupe* play** for a *Festival of Lights* celebration.



Photo of School Director, James Lewicki
(courtesy of Gabrielle Dorr)

MEET OUR SCHOOL DIRECTOR

James Lewicki, School Director for Pagosa Peak Open School (PPOS), is passionate about charter schools. He helped create one of the first charter schools in the nation in his late-thirties. Later, Mr. Lewicki went on to mentor more than 100 charter schools helping them get off the ground before landing at PPOS.

“A successful charter school has to be small, have a good culture, a staff that is unified, and the teachers must be learners. We are currently achieving that at PPOS.”

He also mentioned that it can take a charter school three to five years to really fine tune their vision. PPOS recently revised their vision and mission statements after their first year of school because they realized the original statements did not accurately reflect how the school has evolved.

“It is an important exercise to revisit why you started a charter school in the first place and see how your original vision has transformed into reality. Then you make changes based on what you see.”

The PPOS community was lucky to have Mr. Lewicki’s guidance as a consultant before our first year started and then as a director once we opened our doors in September, 2017. Although Mr. Lewicki is very busy running PPOS he always has time to talk about his passion for education.

“After our first groundbreaking year at PPOS, we are all really excited to see what innovative programs will evolve in the future.”

MEET MS. KARLA



Ms. Karla Parker Choat teaches Kindergarten at PPOS. She has built a strong academic foundation for her students this past year but she also considers herself a facilitator of learning. Ms Karla came to PPOS with an eclectic background and brings the richness of her life experiences to her classroom.

One of the passions that she incorporated into her classroom last year was her love of art. Ms Karla wanted to teach her Kindergarten class about some of her favorite classical and contemporary artists. She has always been delighted with how the children retain the artist

“I think people underestimate what Kindergarten students are capable of so I push to see how far I can go with them.”

names as well as the style, period and geography of their life and work.

“We had an ‘Artist of the Week’ and we began the school year with Georgia O’Keefe. I began the week with a ‘Read Aloud’ about the artist, then we would watch a video, we later had a hands-on project like drawing a flower from life, then we would refer back to O’Keefe throughout our week. The students are able to recite Georgia O’Keefe’s name and refer back to her work a year later. It was very exciting to witness.”

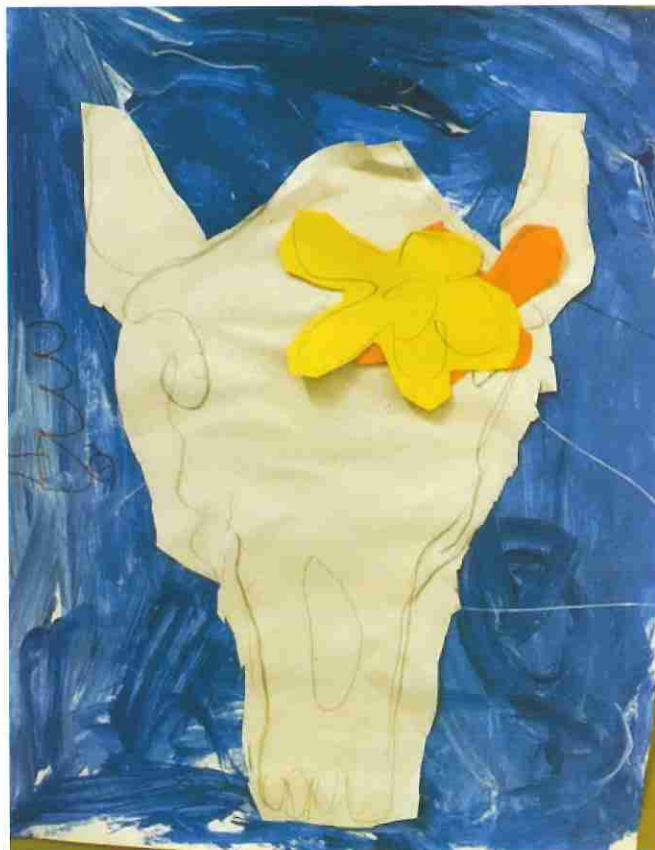
Ms. Karla’s approach to teaching Kindergartners how to read also proved to be innovative and highly successful. With the help of April Rossetti in the classroom they were able to divide the students into four groups based on their literacy centers two of which were teacher led. They also got the kids moving as part of the learning process which is something that is necessary for this age group.

“Miss April brought in and led the ‘Lively Letters’ curriculum which would teach them phonics through kinesthetic movement. Children learn in many different ways and this balance with academics and tactile learning reached the children that were behind who are now reading on a first grade level.”



What is Ms. Karla's secret to success as a teacher? She learns as much from them as they learn from her. She takes their ideas and runs with them which instills a sense of excitement for learning because the students feel that their inspirations are recognized and appreciated. Another added value of project-based learning is the confidence that children gain in the ability to guide their own learning process.

"I am a facilitator of the children's growth and passion for learning. I think people underestimate what Kindergarten students are capable of so I push them to see how far I can go with them. The outcome is very engaged and excited children with a strong foundation for a lifetime of learning."



Right page top: Ms. Karla poses with student during field trip.

Left page top: Kindergartners pose with an outdoor sculpture inspired by Andrew Goldsworthy. **Left page bottom:** Close up of a student's Georgia O'Keefe reproduction (courtesy of Gabrielle Dorr and Karla Parker-Choat)

INTERVIEW- PARENT & STUDENT

"I like how we are actually allowed to have ideas!"

-Bella, 9

One of our parents, Nadia Werby, sends her two children to Pagosa Peak Open School (PPOS). We had the pleasure of interviewing Nadia and her daughter Bella, 9, about their personal experience with PPOS this past year.

When asked what the school has meant to both of them they shared their thoughts about the teachers, school activities and philosophies they have enjoyed the most. Both felt the teachers were very dedicated to the students and that when problems arise the teachers deal with them immediately.

"I love how quickly things are resolved when an issue arises with a student. The school doesn't respond bureaucratically and take months to solve something. Their approach is to work with the family and to try something new immediately. It is very progressive," said Nadia.

Bella shared her thoughts on what she loves the most about being at PPOS.

"I like how we get to do a lot of projects at school. It's not just learn and do this very boring stuff. We actually get to do a lot of art, we even made our own garden and we



travel to a lot of places. We get to do things that other schools haven't even thought of," exclaims Bella.

Nadia and Bella talked about how the teachers and staff at the school make them feel like family.

"The teachers are really committed to every child. It's a small community of people so it's almost like a family and no-one is going to get left behind and I love that feeling," said Nadia.

Bella also shared how the teachers specifically supported her learning experience through her own ideas.

"I like how we are actually allowed to have ideas. We will ask the teacher if we can do something based on an idea that we have and they encourage us to follow through," said Bella.

One of the highlights for Nadia and Bella this year was being able to participate in the theatre camp as part of school. The camp is put on by the Pagosa Springs Center for the Arts and is something that Bella had participated in for the last three years. When PPOS school director learned about the camp, he worked with Laura Moore, camp director, to incorporate it into the school's curriculum for the entire second

and third grade classes.

"They accommodate what the kid's interests are. We were concerned that Bella wouldn't be able to participate in the theatre camp this year because PPOS is a year round school. When the school heard about the theatre camp, the school said that they would work it in since it is a hands-on learning experience for the students," said Nadia.

Both Nadia and Bella are looking forward to where the next school year will take them!

Above: Nadia Werby and her daughter Bella during an interview July, 2018. (courtesy of Gabrielle Dorr)

How Is PPOS Funded?

State and Federal Funding



PPOS is a public school so we receive funding from both the State of Colorado and the federal government for each student enrolled in the school. Funding for education comes from state, local property and federal taxes.



Per pupil funding (state)*



Colorado Charter Start-up Program (state)*



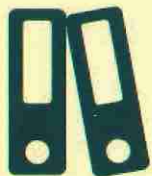
Title I and II funding (federal)*



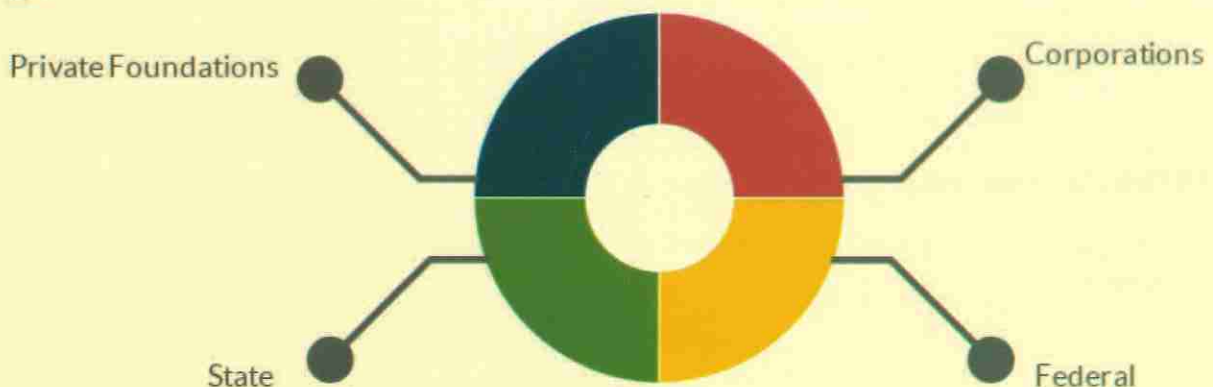
Capital construction (state)*

* Shows percentage of total State and Federal funding.

Grants



We apply for grant funding to support student-led projects, our building purchase, school supplies, transportation, etc.



Private Donations

Donations allow us to be more flexible with where our money goes such as hiring more support staff, purchasing our building and taking students on field trips.

WHAT IS A CHARTER SCHOOL?

- Charter schools are public schools and tuition-free!
- Charter schools operate separately from the school district and has its own board of directors.
- Charter schools are accredited.
- Charter schools accept students with IEP and 504 plans.
- Charter schools ARE mandated to participate in state testing.
- Charter schools offer a place for alternative learning experiences.

WHAT IS AN OPEN SCHOOL?

The term “Open School” comes from the belief that children have a natural desire to learn. This desire is cultivated by giving children many ways to seek knowledge specifically through what interests them the most. In open school environments, children are introduced to “hands-on” learning and guide their own educational experiences. Teachers are there to assist the learning process by observing, guiding, and providing materials for the students. This type of learning gives children more confidence and real-life skills. PPOS is an open school that emphasizes place-based, project-based and mixed-age learning.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT US!

WWW.PAGOSAPEAKOPENSCHOOL.ORG