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2019-2020 SCHOOL YEAR

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DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Dear Families,

This report comes out this year not only as a way to reflect but also as a piece of a historical story. Last year when I wrote the letter for this annual report, I discussed transitions, grappling with complex concepts and pushing through. Never did I anticipate those words to mean recreating teaching and learning to support students through a 100-year pandemic. And yet, that's exactly what we did.

In March 2020, schools around the country spun on a dime. With safety and uncertainty in mind, teachers learned to work and teach from home: perched at their kitchen counters, and staying connected to students through online platforms they never relied on before. Like many others, we needed to decide how we would continue to hold onto our school's mission and vision in a distance learning environment. How would we continue to celebrate our students' learning like Ms. Bruno's class did with their community-wide Bird Festival? How would we continue the food security work of Ms. Lexi, keep the school garden going, or the field work like the Pika Monitoring that keeps our kids learning outdoors? We needed innovation.

Fortunately PPOS has a creative staff dedicated to our students. Field work became virtual nature walks, connection and culture became staff dance videos, a virtual spirit week, and postcards home. The garden moved into student houses and quarantine became more bearable with kits delivered by teachers to students. While the world was rocked by COVID-19, our school did push through. Our school did grapple. And together we managed to hold onto the things that make PPOS special.

None of this would have been possible without the families. Working alongside parents has never been so important, and we appreciated the team approach as the adults in our students' lives built homeschool spaces for their students, posted work and pictures online. and rearranged their lives to make sure their children continued to be a part of PPOS. Without you, our mission would have been nearly impossible to hold onto. Thank you for all of your support, and we look forward to a future where these teams continue to live, our students continue to thrive, and our community embraces innovation in the name of what's best for the youngest members of our Pagosa community.

-Angela Reali Crossland School Director

Angla Kali





PIKA MONITORING

On Wednesday, October 23rd, 13 6th graders from Pagosa Peak Open School (PPOS), set out on a 1mile uphill climb through early winter snow along the Continental Divide Trail with their teacher, Kelsey Wright, and Rockies' Community Naturalist, Keith Bruno, to initiate a long-term monitoring plot for the American Pika (Ochotona princeps). A little-known creature of the Rocky Mountain high country, the pika has been tagged as a sensitive species to the onset threat of a warming climate. This member of the order Lagomorpha (includes hares and rabbits) relies on the cooling shade of large rocks found among alpine talus fields to temperature regulate their denning areas. They feed on the young stems of grasses and flowers found nearby to their territories. They do not hibernate, and thus spend the majority of the warmer months gathering foods to cache in "haypiles" to provide winter forage.

Mountain Studies Institute, a non-profit mountain research engine located in both Silverton and Durango, CO, has worked as a regional contributor to Rocky Mountain Wild, the lead organization on the pika monitoring project, to offer a citizen science reporting portal for the San Juan Mountains. Citsci.org allows folks to "adopt" a site and make observations, confirming occupancy of pika in public lands locations. The information obtained by project participants, including weather measurements, terrain characterization, and photos of surroundings, provide project partners with the necessary information to determine how populations fluctuate over time and general phenological data for alpine environments.

After a 30 minute period of focused observation for visual and auditory detections of pika, the students set about noting GPS coordinates and weather, taking measurements of boulders onsite, looking for sign of new and old haypiles, and identifying other animal species nearby. These students will upload their data online and continue to manage the pika plot for future years.To get involved in the project, visit http://www.mountainstudies.org/pikanet

- by Keith Bruno



THE BEST AUDIENCE: PASTA & POEMS

I have performed for a lot of different audiences over the

years, but this crowd had me nervous. From Carnegie Hall to stand-up poetry slams, I thought I could handle any group of onlookers, but I had a feeling this audience would give me some real, raw feedback, for better or worse.

On November 12, 2019, I went before 26 students of Mr.

Davenport's 4th and 5th grade class, including my daughter, at Pagosa Peak Open School (PPOS) to perform six of my poems. Each poem is also a song I had written over the past 25 years, so I performed the poem/songs acapella or with guitar. This class had spent the first quarter of the 2019-2020 school year studying poetry, writing poetry, and they were preparing for a night of poetry performance themselves two nights later at PPOS's first Pasta and Poems event.

The thing about kids, especially this age group, is they will give it to you straight. If you rock, you will know... if you blow it you will also, unfortunately, know. Impressively, they gave me their full attention and the questions that followed expressed true interest. Our conversation also took a few unexpected turns into the realm of overcoming stage fright and social-emotional issues.

"How do you overcome stage fright?" Oliver asked. "I have never actually overcome stage fright. I was super nervous singing for you today," I replied. "Really? So it's normal?" Oliver exclaimed incredulously.

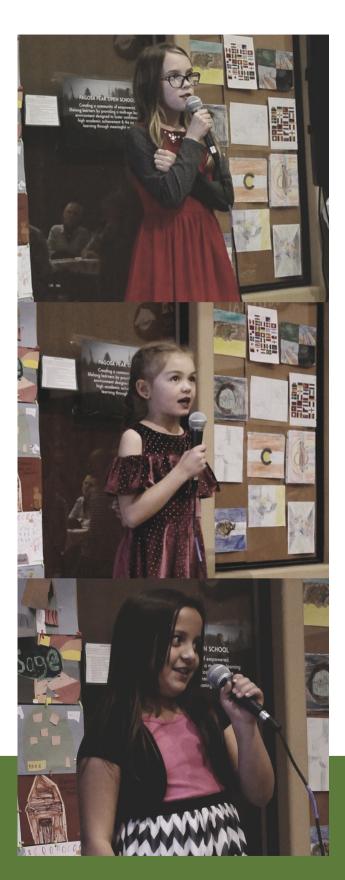
"Absolutely, in fact most performers have stage fright, you just learn how to push past and get on stage anyhow," I assured him.

"I had stage fright once," piped up Sheyenne. "My cousin off stage made me laugh and then I never had it again."

"Why did you start writing poetry?" Zaiden asked. "I started writing when I was 13," I answered, "I had just

moved to Florida from Ohio and I was a smart kid, the smartest in my class, and I was picked on and bullied a lot. Poetry, and then eventually songwriting, gave me an outlet. It gave me somewhere to put my emotions. A way to control them."

THE BEST AUDIENCE: PASTA & POEMS



"I used to get bullied," admits another student, "but one time I sang a song and my bullies thought it was really good, and then we became friends."

"You said you were not any good at guitar... you were really good!" Wyatt exclaimed.

"Thanks Wyatt, I practiced that song a lot, but compared to a lot of musicians, I am a beginner." I chuckled.

"How did you get good at writing poems and songs?" Zaiden inquired.

"The same way people get good at doing anything. You find someone who is the top of their field, like a good poet or musician, and you study them. You practice and practice and eventually you become a better writer. For me it took probably 10 years before I thought my work was any good. For most people the more you practice, the faster you become good." The encouragement and real conversation with these students brought me back to an age and time where poetry and songwriting helped me deal with tough parts of life, a time when my emotions were bigger than I was.

Their concern about stage fright was a big deal for some, and with good reason. Pasta and Poems was right around the corner. Mr. Davenport had invited all 26 families to attend. These kids were about to perform their own original poems in front of close to a hundred people.

A few nights later, on November 14, 2019, I watched each of these students get on a stage in the school's lobby and show off their writing and unique personalities. I cried and laughed and realized that these students had given me a gift. They encouraged me to get back on stages and perform. I am setting up auditions and getting back into a life of performing that I had thought behind me. And though Wyatt thought I was "really good" at guitar, I am also starting guitar lessons. -By Alison Beach



PIKA AFTER HOURS

I In the fall of 2019 Pagosa Peak Open School launched our new after-school wellness club called Pika After Hours. This was exciting start to health and wellness here at our school! This program was supported by two grants, one from TeamUp Americorps of SW Colorado and another from the Colorado Health Foundation.

Lexi, our 2019-2020 Americorps Member, helped to serve this club. She worked with students in the lunchroom, the classroom and, most importantly, the garden!

During the after-school program, she facilitated education around cooking, growing, and eating healthy food while connecting food systems to the overall curriculum of PPOS. "When I am not dreaming about the perfect urban farm/art experience, you can find me rock climbing, playing with my cats or listening to podcasts." Registered students participated in two sessions each day that included both food security/nutrition and physical fitness. The food security/nutrition session included gardening, cooking, nutrition, and many other topics. The physical activity session focused on physical activity and games from the SPARK after school program. Fitness goals were created and tracked throughout the program. In addition, students were provided with an after-school snack.

Pika After Hours were busy learning about compost and planting an

indoor garden! They sprouted radishes, lettuce, tomatoes, and basil. The

students focused on the Red Wiggler Worm and learning their role in our food

system which included feeding their worm farm with food scraps from their after-school snack.

As the

students continued to watch their indoor garden grow, they learned what helps and hurts a plant. They were excited to thin their radish plants out,

especially because they got to eat the extra peppery sprouts.

Pika After Hours also focused on food groups and what makes a good lunch. Students had a chance to create a healthier Lunchable which included a Grain, a Protein, and a fruit/vegetable. This is an introduction to how different food groups affect our bodies.



FOOD SECURITY TASK FORCE

On Saturday, January 25th the Pagosa Peak Open School (PPOS) Food Security Task Force (FSTF) left Archuleta County to explore how people in SW Colorado are tackling the huge problem of food security. The task force is comprised of nine 4th-6th graders who are trying to create change in Archuleta County starting within PPOS. The first stop on the trip was Fields to Plate Produce in Durango, a local farm with a greenhouse, sheep, and a dog named Oakley.

"They were very scientific, but we learned about the shelf life of produce and how hard it is to grow in a 90 day season," said 4th grader Zaiden.

An emphasis was made on growing root vegetables and eating seasonally. The next stop was Manna Soup Kitchen, also in Durango.

"The soup kitchen started because a lady died from not eating enough food and they didn't want that to happen again," remembered Amelie, another 4th grade student.

The tour led the FSTF through a commercial kitchen available to the public, a meeting room, a garden area, a greenhouse, the soup kitchen, and the many fridges and freezers needed to feed Durango's population. "The thing I remember most was the room storing all the supplies for the weekend backpack program. There weren't any fresh fruits or vegetables," said 6th grader Kaylee.

After eating some apple crisp made with commodity apples, the FSTF piled into the van and drove to Absolute Bakery in Mancas. As we waited for our food, the owner told the group about why farm to table is important to him. "The owner used to be a farmer so he thinks it's important to support people growing food in our area. He also wants us to remember how good we have it here. It's not like Africa where people barely have anything to eat," said 4th grader Bella.

The FSTF finished some of the best burgers they had ever eaten and drove the last leg of their journey. As they passed the Safeway in Cortez, they realized the people living in Mancas had to make this drive any time they needed groceries. The last stop on the trip was Spudfest at the Cortez Sharehouse. Produced by The Good Food Collective, Spudfest was created to celebrate

FOOD SECURITY TASK FORCE

the Potatoes for the People Project. The students ran between stands learning about groups like Cooking Matters, the Sharehouse, and local farms, eating potatoes and asking everybody in sight, "What does Food Security mean to You?" With answers ranging from "locking my food up" to "making sure everybody can access food in a dignified manner," the FSTF realized how many people are working on the problem.

The day was rounded out with a tour of the Sharehouse facilities which house a CSA (community-supported agriculture), The Good Samaritan Food Bank, and an artist studio.

"Maybe if we get people to draw food very closely, they will appreciate it more," wondered 6th grader Sarah Joy. Before we left, the Good Food Collective emphasized the importance of working together to solve Food Security and 6th grader Jessie Elledge won a new backpack.

After going over our notes from the trip, the FSTF has decided to create an animation video explaining what food security means to different people and why it is important. The task force also hopes to work with different groups to revamp the backpack program and reduce the stigma surrounding food supplements. -By Lexi Bernstein





BIRD FESTIVAL

Project Based Learning took flight last Wednesday evening at Pagosa Peak Open School. Kelle

Bruno's 1 st and 2 nd grade class has been studying different parts of bird bodies and their functions to

answer the question, "What makes a bird a bird?" Students began their inquiry in December and wrapped up their study with a celebration of learning that took place at PPOS on Wednesday, February 12th from 3:30- 5.

The Bird Festival included six interactive tables with educational posters written and illustrated by the students; the 1 st and 2 nd graders performed a bird-themed musical they wrote with the guidance of school music teacher, Perry Harper, the Artist in Residence and Conservatory Instructor at the Pagosa Springs Center for the Arts. The event included a live peregrine falcon onsite named Dooley, along with his handler, Pat Jackson, from the St. Francis Sanctuary and Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. Visitors to the festival were given the opportunity to dissect an owl pellet and attempted to identify the bones they found. Students were able to show what they have been learning as they guided their guests to the different tables where they could make a mold of multiple kinds of bird feet with playdough, experiment with different tools and bird food to understand how beaks are adapted to a specific diet, and get their face painted by a PPOS 6 th grader to resemble their favorite bird. Students also illustrated notecards that were available for sale by donation, the proceeds of which went to Audubon Rockies.

This bird study would not have been possible without the support from bird enthusiast and community naturalist, Keith Bruno, from Audubon Rockies, who came into the class multiple times to share his expertise with the students. As part of this unit, Keith worked with the 2 nd grade students to write a bird of the week article about Golden Eagles that was printed in The Sun. Another key support to

the success of this project was from the Foundation for Archuleta County Education (FACE). Keith and Kelle co-wrote a grant for funds to create an educational bird trunk and

BIRD FESTIVAL

received \$1,200 from FACE to build a trunk full of hands-on materials that can be used in classes of all ages to learn more about birds.

The trunk includes silicone molds of bird feet, a kit for owl pellet dissection, replicas of bird skulls ranging in size from a golden eagle to a hummingbird, bird identification and story books, and even an ostrich egg. The trunk is available for free to all educators in Archuleta county. Please contact Keith Bruno at keith.bruno@audubon.org if you

would like to share the trunk with your students.

The Bird Festival was a great success with a fantastic turnout of parents and family members. Pagosa Peak Open School has a

focus on Project Based Learning (PBL), a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to a complex question, problem, or challenge. The Bird Festival was a great example of how PBL engages students through hands-on inquiry, solicits input from community professionals to share their knowledge on a given topic.

and involves family members in student learning.

- By Kelle Bruno





Pagosa Peak Open School (PPOS), Archuleta County's only charter school, is centered around Project-based learning, aka PBL. They are dedicated to offering learning opportunities through real-world activities, multi-age classrooms, character development, and discovery-based education which is the essence of Project-based learning. But how does this learning style continue when in-person education is halted by a pandemic?

This past spring schools across the country scrambled to figure out distance learning, or more appropriately crisis learning, as COVID-19 caused the shut-down of in-person education nationwide. Pagosa Peak Open School faced transforming Projectbased, hands-on education into a digital format. Quite the task for a small, rural charter school.

With one day of training before the distance learning shift, staff became quick experts on digital platforms like Zoom and Google Classroom. School Director Angela Reali Crossland and Instructional Coach Emily Murphy helped the advisors brainstorm ways to take their PBL projects and connections home to the students.

"I wasn't sure how it was going to work," admitted

PPOS 4th and 5th Grade Advisor, Thomas Davenport. "Luckily, at PPOS, there are a couple of things that make our school special. First, we have two grades working together in mixed age classrooms, and I happen to teach in one of those. My relationships with my students are long running and well-established, and their trust in me is strong.

Second, we have been working hard to implement restorative practices instead of a traditional approach to discipline in our school since we opened. It has not always been easy, since it requires a change of mindset, but all the teachers agree that restorative ways of giving consequences to kids help them to actually take responsibility instead of just taking punishment.

All of that work has meant that my kids are used to having dialogue with me as their classroom leader and advisor, and they aren't shy about telling me and each other how they are doing. Distance learning has been hard on all of us, but with our relationships in place, we were able to recover a surprising amount of ground."

To follow Governor Polis'sCOVID guidelines, PPOS

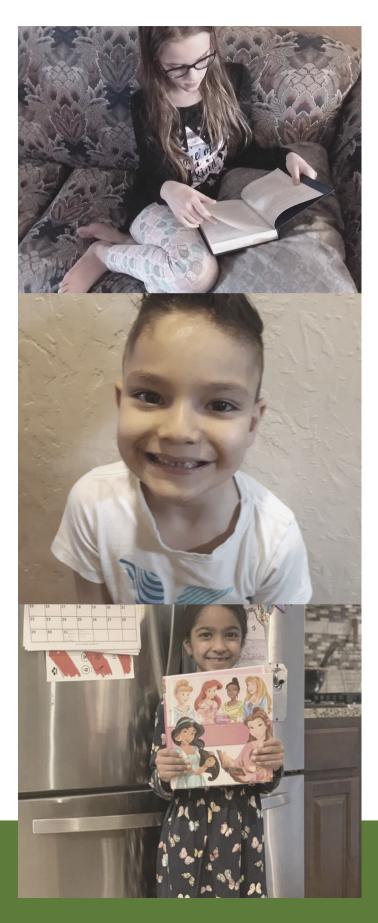
established a mixture of take-home and digital methods to continue teaching students. Each advisor created choice boards tailored towards their class where students can choose from activities from different categories. They included reading, writing, math, social studies, music & fun, Spanish and PE. Important Projectbased learning work was incorporated into both the daily Zoom circle time and choice boards.

These PBL projects ranged from home gardening to the creation of a class family cookbook. Some students engaged in a discovery of the aspects of Pagosa's water and others studied the American Revolution. While one class witnessed the metamorphosis of butterflies, another class created their own version of a business "Shark Tank".

"6th grade has spent distance learning diving into business and economics," shares Kelsey Wright, PPOS's 6th Grade Advisor. "We have taken the popular TV show "Shark Tank" and focused on creating our own version. Each student worked on creating a business or a product that would benefit the teenage population in Pagosa Springs. After learning about what it takes to create a business or a product, they made a pitch to present to our very own Pagosa sharks! Due to the distance learning, each student recorded their pitch for our very own episode of shark tank to share with the community!"

Lexi Bernstein, Pagosa Peak Open School's AmeriCorps Team Member, challenged the whole school to a take-home gardening project.

"At PPOS, we believe there is no better way to learn about healthy food choices than by growing our own food!" Lexi noted.





"While embracing distance learning, we have tried to incorporate as much experiential learning into the new structure as possible by sending home a planter kit. Included inside the kit was everything necessary to start seeds in recycled planters including soil, containers, seeds, and an instructional guide.

Three weeks later, students saw their first sprouts and recorded their observations of the lettuce, tomato, spinach, and pea plants growing in their window sills."

PPOS 1st and 2nd Grade Advisor, Kelle Bruno pivoted her entire cookbook PBL project. "Before COVID, we were working on a unit titled "My Unique Family Project" where we were discussing the differences in our families through reading story books and sharing about our families," Kelle explained. "My original plan had been to have a class potluck where families could bring the food from the recipes they shared in the cookbook.

"However, distance learning made that impossible, but I thought we could still make a cookbook to showcase family recipes. We began discussing recipes during our daily "connection circles" through Zoom. We looked at many types of cookbooks and talked about what we liked about them (big pictures) and what we did not like (strange formatting and no pictures). I did lessons on how to follow a recipe, how to write a recipe, how to draw food, the importance of food traditions within our family history, and we discussed our favorite foods.

"I asked parents to send me a copy of a family recipe and requested that students draw

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either the finished product of the recipe or an ingredient that went into the dish. I think the book came out great! I used a program called "Create My Cookbook". I have had lots of positive feedback from parents and the kids were excited to see their work!"

Robyn Villarreal, the 2nd and 3rd Grade Advisor, overcame obstacles around translating her PBL water project to distance learning. "We had one water monitoring kit, so we had to divide the kit up for 3 groups.

"One group is in charge of testing the pH, nitrate, and phosphate levels. Another group is testing for coliform (a type of bacteria), checking the water temperature, and looking for bugs in the water or in the mud around the water. The last group is checking for dissolved oxygen in the water, the biochemical oxygen demand, and they are on bug duty also.

"We put all the materials they would need to complete the testing, with instructions, in a ziplock bag and handed them out with their packets. They are testing our river water, the river where the hot springs enter the river, lakes, ponds, and sink water. They record their results and I put them in a graph so we could analyze them together. Our end product is to take our findings and make different PSA's around the community to tell the community what we have found in our water quality."

One very timely PBL project during the spring, as people across our nation debated constitutional rights, was Thomas Davenport's 4th and 5th Grade class's exploration of the American Revolution. "Through a wonderful partnership with Josie Snow at the library, I was able to obtain and distribute a whole library of books on the American Revolution for kids," he explained. "It gave us all plenty to talk about. Even though we were far apart, our relationships kept us so connected that we were able to read the Declaration of Independence and select articles from the US Constitution together as a class which was something I wanted to ensure happened this year.

"As we finished up our examination of our founding documents, it became clear to me that the kids had been successful with a number of different American Revolution-related activities from our previous choice boards. It wasn't long before the kids were practically telling me that we had enough material to hold an exhibition night, just like our exhibition night at school would have been – only virtual!

"We wrapped it all in a fun theme related to the show "Some Good News", an uplifting news show that was being published weekly on YouTube due to everyone in America needing a pick-meup during quarantine. The kids all prepared slideshows and documents. Using Zoom we were able to invite parents and grandparents to our very own episode of "Some Colonial Good News," showcasing all the uplifting stories the kids cooked up set in the late 1700's."

Every year Pagosa Peak Open School's Kindergarten class ends the school year with a butterfly release. "The kindergarten class witnessed the miracle of butterfly metamorphosis," illustrates Karla Parket Choat,

PPOS's Kindergarten teacher. "Each student received a baby caterpillar and pop up mesh habitat in their take-home paper packet. Our driving question for this Butterfly Project was: 'How can the study of butterflies improve our understanding of the natural world?'

"During our PBL Core Zoom classes we observed, documented, and drew the process of metamorphosis as we witnessed the transformation of our baby caterpillar to a butterfly together. Once the caterpillar created a chrysalis the students carefully transferred their chrysalis to the mesh pop up habitat.



"While we waited for the magic to happen,

students shared a butterfly challenge together in our zoom PBL Core class. Students dug up new butterfly facts to share with the class and show their drawings of butterflies. When the butterfly emerged, students learned to care

for their butterfly for two days. Then, after observing, and caring for their butterfly, they released the butterfly to be free to pollinate."

"This is a rite of passage for the students as

they "fly' into their next stage of learning as first graders," explained Parker-Choat. Even amongst the challenge of distance learning, this year's Kindergarten class experienced this rite of passage, virtually, but still together.

As Pagosa Peak Open School moves forward towards whatever form of education the 2020-2021 school year morphs into, whether that be all in-person instruction, distance learning, or a hybrid of the two, one thing is for certain. This small charter school in the middle of the San Juan Mountains has proven the ability to adapt and carry Project-based learning through whatever challenge they may face.

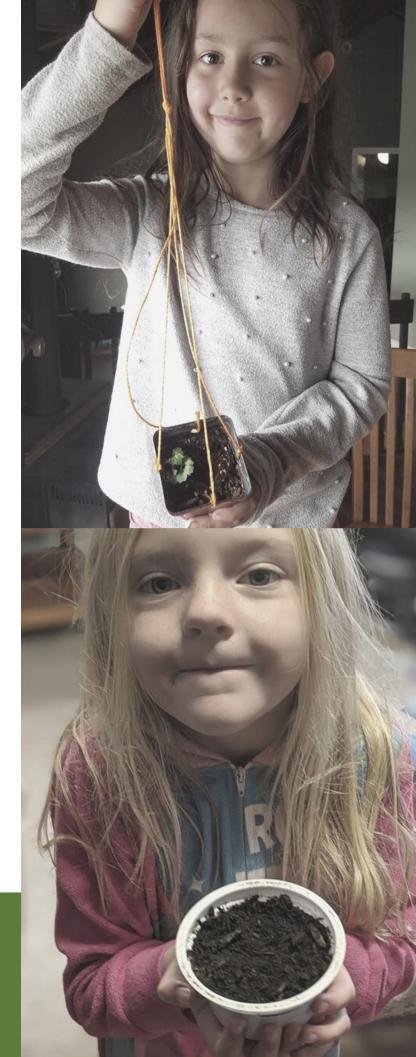
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Planting at Home!!

At Pagosa Peak Open School, we believe there is no better way to learn about healthy food choices than by growing our own food!

While embracing distance learning, we have tried to incorporate as much experiential learning into the new structure as possible by sending home a planter kit. Included inside the kit was everything necessary to start seeds in recycled planters including soil, containers, seeds, and an instructional guide.

Three weeks later, students saw their first sprouts and recording their observations of the lettuce, tomato, spinach, and pea plants growing in their window sills.





6th Grade Quarantine Kits



On April 28, 2020 Ms. Kelsey, our 6th grade advisor, took a little field trip. She made quarantine survival kits and delivered them individually to each of her students. Ms. Kelsey relished the joy of seeing their smiles as they accepted their gifts.

Each kit contained a squishy or sticky lizard for the moments when they are stressed or frustrated and they need to squeeze something. She packed a bouncy ball and googley eyes just for fun as well as a pencil for the moments when they can't seem to find one or need to doodle.

In every kit Ms. Kelsey packed a wooden puzzle piece. She asked every student to decorate their puzzle piece because they are all a big piece of the class. When they are allowed to be back together again, the 6th grade class will assemble the puzzle, representing the importance of each student to the class as a group.



Virtual Spirit and Nature Walk Weeks



As the world socially distanced due to COVID 19, Pagosa Peak Open School encouraged families to engage in Virtual Fun Events and share photos each day.

In March 2020 our families showed their spirit for a Virtual Spirit Week. In April 2020 our families participated in a Virtual Nature Walk Week.

Families had fun dressing up and getting out into nature.

We believe that staying connected is essential to cultivating our culture especially in this time of social distancing.



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Virtual Spirit and Nature Walk Weeks



Funding Overview



STATE & 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 the state, local property and federal taxes.

GRANT SUPPORT

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

PRAIVATE 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.

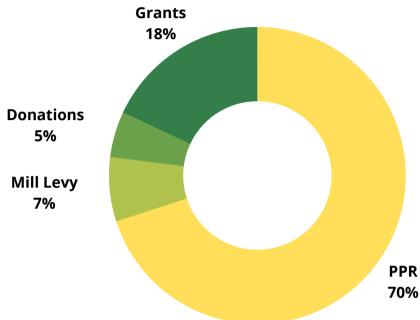
PARTNERS/PATRONS

Colorado Health Foundation, LPEA, Wend Ventures, Ballentine Family Fund, CERF, FACE, Rotary Club of Pagosa Springs, AmeriCorps/United Way of Southwest Colorado Pagosa Brewing Co., Courtney King Studios, Audubon Rockies, Geothermal Greenhouse Partnership, Southern Roots Farm

Our Mission: Creating a community of empowered, lifelong learners by providing a multi-age learning environment designed to foster confidence, high academic achievement, and the joy of learning through original and meaningful work.



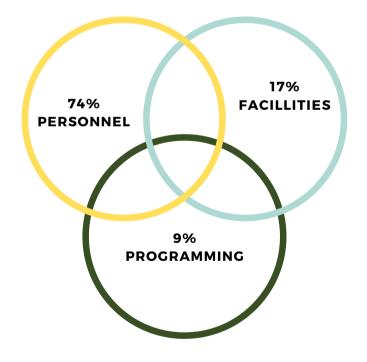
PPOS Overall Funding



Pagosa Peak Open School receives funding from PPR (Per Pupil Revenue - State), the Mill Levy, private donations and grants (private foundations, state, federal and corporations).

How We Spend Funds

Pagosa Peak Open School spent 17% of funding on Facilities (\$184,077), 9% on Programming (\$106,500) and 74% on Personnel (\$818,557).





What is a Charter School?

- Charter schools are public schools and tuition-free!
- A charter school operates 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 the open school environments, children are introduced to "hands-on" 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. Pagosa Peak Open School is an open school that emphasizes Place-based, Project-based and mixed-age learning.

Find out more about us! www.pagosapeakopenschool.org

