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Gardiner students design middle school for national contest

As architects gathered community input on the design of the new Gardiner Middle School, some of the most in-depth ideas came from a group of students who are part of a national school design contest called SchoolsNEXT.

Thirty sixth graders in the bilingual program at Gardiner work every day in class to design their ideal school. They brainstormed ideas, gathered input from professional architects, toured newly built schools, and surveyed teachers on their needs. After developing an initial design on paper, they spent several days doing the math required to build a scale model out of foam core.

“We based our design on a healthy lifestyle theme because good mental health and active bodies help us learn better,” said student Ava Hsieh. “Our plan includes a view of Mt. Hood, outdoor learning spaces, lots of windows, and roll up garage doors so we can connect with the natural world.”

“We want a school where we can learn outside with farm and gardening classes,” said student Keely Merter. “We want to include solar energy panels and recycling stations, plus a way to reduce food waste by ordering meals in advance.”

“This is the best project I’ve ever done in my teaching career,” said teacher Keely Rock. “I am amazed at the engagement, thoughtfulness, and focus my sixth graders have brought to this project. They are working to plan a space where all kids feel safe, connected, and inspired to learn.”

Six of the SchoolsNEXT students and six students from Ogden Middle School are also part of the school district’s middle school design team, where they work alongside architects, teachers, and administrators to provide input on the school that will replace the original Gardiner Middle School, built in 1954. The project is one of many funded by a bond issue approved by Oregon City voters in the November 2018 election.

While not every idea proposed by students will be part of the new Gardiner School, Bond Program Manager Wes Rogers expects the new building will include several items students prioritized. This may include clear story windows to let in natural light and learning stairs, a versatile space that can be used for presentations, gatherings, study, or socializing.

PHOTO: Sixth graders from the Gardiner Middle School bilingual program are designing their own school as part of the national SchoolsNEXT design competition.



Gaffney Lane students learn to swim

Students can learn a lot more in school than reading, writing, and math. At Gaffney Lane Elementary, they also learn swimming. Each year, students in grades two to five take swimming lessons and learn lifesaving skills at the Oregon City swimming pool.

The school's Parent Teacher Organization covers most of the cost, with families asked to contribute \$15 if they can.

“We live in an area where water is all around us,” said Principal Cyndi Borgmeier. “We need to make sure kids are comfortable in water. It’s essential to safety.”

PHOTO: Gaffney Lane students Emily Welsh, Lilly Blattner and Gabby Clinard took their swimming skills to the next level during a week of lessons organized by their school.



Oregon City registers fall kindergarteners

Students who will start kindergarten in Oregon City Schools next fall are invited to attend a Kindergarten Connect event at their neighborhood school. Students must be age five on or before September 1 to start school.

Kindergarten programs are located at Beaver Creek, Gaffney Lane, Holcomb, McLoughlin, Redland Elementary schools as well as and Jennings Lodge, which houses the Todos Unidos Spanish bilingual program, open to students from across the district.

Details about each school's event and a mapping program that shows the school for each address are available on the district website at www.ocsd62.org/. Families are advised to bring the child's birth certificate and immunization record as well as a piece of mail that shows their current address.