

# Community Roots School



**School Year 2009-2010**

## **Annual Report**

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## **1. CRS History**

The story of the birth of Community Roots School began when parents in the Silverton community were introduced to the Montessori educational philosophy. Several of these parents had children enrolled in a private preschool in a neighboring community that closed. A small group of parents continued to dream big. The idea was to have their children participate in a peaceful, child-centered educational system. Many parents in this small group embraced the Montessori philosophy but also struggled with the prospect of enrolling their children in private school for their elementary years. For other parents, they were very interested in the Montessori philosophy but private school was not an option for their families because a Montessori education can be very expensive.

Through discussions about a shared passion for the Montessori philosophy and a desire to have a public school option, parents struck upon the charter school concept. After a few meetings, it was decided that the concept should be explored with the other parents who were interested in a Montessori school in Silverton. A meeting at a local area restaurant was held in December 2007. The idea of Community Roots was hatched at that meeting.

A small group of individuals wrote and submitted an application for a charter school start-up planning grant to the Oregon Department of Education in March 2008. The grant application was successful and Community Roots School was awarded a \$55,000 planning grant. Assuming a charter school contract was negotiated by the end of the planning period, Community Roots School would be eligible for more than \$100,000 for each of the next two years for the implementation of the school.

This planning grant funded many activities over the next year including: community meetings and outreach, consultation for the charter application to the school district, start-up materials for the school and recruiting. Over 2500 volunteer hours were needed to research, design and create a charter application. Support from other public charter Montessori schools including Ridgeline Elementary in Eugene and Lewis and Clark Elementary in Gresham was invaluable.

In November 2008, the founding members (now a team of twelve individuals) submitted their application for the charter to the Silver Falls School District Board. The founding members were as follows: Bart Banks, Jacquie Curtis, Jennifer de Jong, Jennifer Kimball, Erika Lanning, Jennifer McCord, Matt Miller, Sarah Miller, Frank Petrik, Mandy Petrik, Jennifer Traeger and Miranda Traeger.

In January 2009, the charter contract was signed with the Silver Falls School District and in February 2009 legal nonprofit status was achieved, the mission statement and Board of Directors were established. Community Roots School opened successfully for the 2009-2010 school year with one classroom, two teachers and 30 children.

## **2. Mission Statement**

The CRS Board of Directors is driven by the mission statement created by the original group of founding members. At the beginning of each board meeting, the mission statement is read. The Mission Statement is, *“Rooted in our local community, we learn in an authentic Montessori environment, growing as conscientious and joyful learners, inspired to lead in the world community”*.

## **3. Board of Directors**

For the 2009-2010 school year, the Community Roots School Board was a five member body (in Fall 2010, a six position was appointed). Each board member is elected for two years. Terms of office are staggered so that no more than three positions become vacant in the same year. This serves to encourage continuity on the board. Members of the board serve without pay. Terms of office commence and expire with the school's fiscal year (July 1). Officers of the board are elected at the annual meeting (usually in May or June). Initial board members were Jennifer de Jong, Erika Lanning, Sarah Miller, Amanda Petrik, and Miranda Traeger.

In the summer of 2009, Board Member Erika Lanning resigned in order to assume a position as a paid part-time administrator for the school. In September 2009, Board Member Miranda Traeger resigned in order to officially act as the volunteer Chief Financial Officer. Later that year, Christine Golden and Karyn Albrecht were appointed to replace Erika and Miranda. For the school year 2009-2010, the board

consisted of Chair Person Sarah Miller (term expires 2011), Vice Chair Person Jennifer de Jong (term expires 2012), Treasurer Amanda Petrik (term expires 2012), Christine Golden (term expires 2011), and Karyn Albrecht (term expires 2011).

Sarah Miller, Chairperson, holds a Bachelor of Biology & Chemistry and a Master of Public Health degree. She is currently the Division Administrator for Policy & Planning at the Oregon Business Development Department. Sarah is a founding member of the Community Roots School. Sarah and her husband, Matt, have one son.

Jennifer de Jong, Vice Chairperson, holds a Bachelor of Science degree in psychology. She is a Business Transition Manager with the Department of Human Services, Seniors and People with Disabilities Division. Jennifer is a founding member of the Community Roots School. Jennifer and her husband, Jeff Reilly, have three daughters.

Amanda Petrik, Treasurer, has a Master of Sociology, and is working toward her PhD in Sociology at Portland State University. Currently, Mandy is an experienced research support programmer and project manager at the Center for Health Research at Kaiser Permanente Northwest. She has expert knowledge of data files and structures. Mandy is a founding member of the Community Roots School. Mandy and her husband, Frank, have two children.

Karyn Albrecht served on the board of directors of Two Rivers Montessori School in Portland for four years, and was the administrator for that school before moving to the Silverton area. She was involved in the first year of operation at Springwater Environmental Sciences Charter School in Oregon City (now in their fourth year!) as part of a two-member parent team working with the teachers, board president, and principal to shape and put in motion the Environmental Field Study program curriculum. The Field Study program was the core focus of the school's charter and worked in conjunction with the Metro Natural Resources Planning Council. Karyn brings her experience leading a Montessori school, working with a new charter school, as well as her experience as a small business owner to the Community Roots School board.

Christine Golden has a bachelor's degree in nursing with a specialty in intensive care. For the past seven years, she has worked in health care management at Silverton Hospital. She has lead the breast cancer support group for five years and currently serves on the hospital ethics committee. She is also serving on the Silverton Planning Commission. She and her husband have six children, with two currently attending school in the Silverton School District. Her two oldest children were involved with Montessori education through The Franciscan Montessori Earth School in Portland.

The Community Roots School Board meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Monitor School. Special meetings are scheduled as necessary. Each meeting is conducted using Robert's Rules of Order and include noting attendance, reading of the Mission Statement, approving the consent agenda, asking for audience comments, a financial report, voting on action items and adjourning.

#### **4. Montessori Pedagogy Overview<sup>1,2</sup>**

The Community Roots School uses the Montessori curriculum which revolves around a fundamental belief that each child has an instinctive and spontaneous desire to learn. The Montessori method of education began in 1906 by Dr. Maria Montessori and was based upon her scientific observations of a group of sixty young children of working parents in Rome. In response to Dr. Montessori's repeated observations of children's' almost effortless ability to absorb knowledge from their surroundings, as well as their tireless interest in manipulating materials, she developed educational equipment, exercises and methods to encourage how the children learn "naturally".

In a Montessori environment, through collaboration with observant teachers who assist with goal-setting and assure steady achievement, children move themselves toward learning. The Montessori approach offers a broad vision of education as an aid to life. Montessori education is designed to help children's educational development as they grow from childhood to maturity. It succeeds because it draws its principles from the natural development of the child.

A key element of achieving the Montessori environment is the 3-hour, uninterrupted, work periods each day. Adults and children respect concentration and do not interrupt someone who is busy at a task. The school day revolves around the need for the 3-hour uninterrupted work period.

#### **School Day Schedule 2009-2010**

- 7:05** Option to catch the bus at Eugene Field
- 8:20** Bus children are dropped off at CRS campus / children driven by car; drop off at designated drop-off area at back entrance. A teacher will greet at the back entrance double doors.
- 8:30** Class begins. Late arrivals – check in at office
- 9:00** Three hour work cycle, meeting, lunch preparation
- 12:00-1:00** Lunch and recess
- 1:00-3:00** Large group lessons: botany, zoology, history, art, language, movement and music
- 3:25** School day ends - children being picked up by car leave at this time
- 3:40** Bus children leave CRS, arrive at Eugene Field at 4:00

Community Roots School follows the State of Oregon and Federal curricular requirements. In order to do so, the school has partnered with the Lewis and Clark Montessori Charter School of the Gresham-Barlow School District in creating and adapting appropriate curriculum alignments. Attached in Appendix 1 is one example of the Grade 1 Mathematics Montessori Curriculum Correlation to Oregon State standards, but all curriculum correlations can be found on our website <http://crmontessori.org/curriculum.html>. We currently have curriculum alignments for grades 1-4 in mathematics, arts, foreign language, and language arts, PE/health, science and social science.

The structure of the Montessori classroom eliminates many of the discipline issues found in other classroom environments. In the first days of the school year, the students and teacher together developed basic class rules. If additional issues arose, the class as a community established ground rules so that they will be able to learn from the situation. The consequences for not following the ground rules and not accepting responsibility depended upon the severity of the issue and followed a hierarchy of consequences laid out in the code of conduct, including parent intervention and removal from the classroom or the school.

#### **5. School Configuration and Enrollment**

Community Roots entered into agreement with the Silver Falls School District to rent a portion of Monitor School for its first classroom. Two large classrooms on the upper floor of the original Monitor School served as office space, and the original classroom. A classroom full of Montessori appropriate materials and furnishings were ordered and received.

By September 2009, 30 children were enrolled for the first classroom. The first classroom was a combination of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. At different points in the academic year, children interested in applying were placed on a waiting list if the classroom was full.

In the first year, Community Roots School had an average attendance of 11.99 ADM (92.73%) in the first grade, 10.03 ADM (94.19%) in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and 5.77 ADM (92.74%) in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, for a total of 27.79 ADM (93.25%) out of 29.8 students enrolled.

Throughout the 2009-2010 school year, the board and staff planned to expand the school for the 2010-2011 school year to two classrooms accommodating 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> grades. With the addition of two assistants, Community Roots could accommodate up to 60 children.

#### **6. Policy Development Issues**

As required in its charter contract, the Community Roots School generally abides by Silver Falls School District policies on student behavior, classroom management, suspensions and expulsions. However, the Community Roots School board is continually adopting policy to meet the needs of the

charter school specifically. With assistance from the Oregon School Board Association Policy Group, in October 2009, the board approved current OSBA policies on “Education Records/Records of Students with Disabilities”, “Student Rights and Responsibilities”, “Student Conduct”, “Directory Information” and “Personally Identifiable Information”.

In November 2009, the board adopted policy on “Fiscal Policies and Procedures”, and “Grant Application Policy”. In April 2010, the board adopted an “Early Entrance Policy”. In May 2010, the board adopted the “Escalation Process” and the “Board Election Process”.

*Note: The Oregon School Board Association will hold a policy development session with the Community Roots School Board at its December 2010 board meeting.*

## **7. Staffing**

For the 2009-2010 school year, the Community Roots School Board hired a temporary part-time administrator (Erika Lanning) and two teachers. One teacher had Lower Elementary Montessori Training (Elizabeth Runciman), and the other had Oregon State Certification (Jennifer McCord). Ms. Runciman terminated her contract under mutual agreement in December 2009, but was quickly replaced by a teacher who had extensive Montessori experience (Adele Carey).

A rigorous recruitment effort resumed for a permanent Montessorian to teach the Upper Elementary classroom in 2010-2011. Also, recruitment efforts resumed for a part-time permanent administrator/director, as well as for two assistants (one full-time, and one part-time). The recruitment efforts were successful and highly qualified individuals were hired.

Jennifer McCord began her intensive Montessori training in the summer of 2010 in Texas. The Community Roots School board has also budgeted for consulting services for the administrator as well as for Montessori consultation in 2010-2011.

## **8. Student Performance Highlights/Parent Involvement**

The Community Roots School complies with state testing requirements, implementing OAKS testing on a computer where the children are able to complete the assessments at their own pace. The children are able to use Montessori materials to help in answering abstract concepts. The 3<sup>rd</sup> graders only were tested in Mathematics in the spring of 2010. Of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students tested (six total students), four students (66.7%) met or exceeded performance standards, one student (16.7%) nearly met standards, and one student (16.7%) were lower than standards and 0% were very low. In order to compare, the SFSD district 3<sup>rd</sup> graders were 77%, 7.8%, 12.2% and 3% respectively.

Highlights throughout the year include the Geology Rocks Play, which was produced and performed by the children in May of 2010. The content of the play taught lessons on the water cycle, rock cycle, fossil fuels, plant life cycle, plate tectonics and earth science. The children also practiced their practical life skills by hosting a Mother’s Day Tea, and a Father’s Day breakfast. Music was integrated into the curriculum and at each event, the children performed as a group on their tin whistles. CRS was able to further integrate the arts by participating in the “Artist in Residence” program, with Ann Altman. Parent volunteers also were able to offer Spanish lessons a few days a week.

An involved parent group is essential to the everyday operation of Community Roots School, and parent involvement is extensive. Parent leaders headed up a “Community Building Committee”, a “Teacher Support Committee”, and a “Fundraising Committee” in our first school year. The Fundraising Committee succeeded in raising \$12,490 during 2009-2010. In addition to committee work, parents are actively involved in lunch and recess volunteering and offering specials such as Spanish, music and PE.

## **9. Oversight Visits**

As part of its sponsor responsibilities, members of Silver Falls School District staff made several monitoring and technical assistance visits throughout the school year. The sense of collaboration between the district and the school has become a strong foundation to quickly address issues as they arise and to ensure appropriate oversight and accountability. The Community Roots School Board Chair, Sarah

Miller, presented three or four times to Silver Falls School District Board meetings or work sessions to provide regular updates on its progress.

Donna Brant from the Oregon Department of Education visited Community Roots School in December 2009 for a programmatic site audit. Erika Lanning, Amanda Petrik, Miranda Traeger and Andy Bellando answered a series of questions regarding the financials and operations of the charter school. Donna toured the classroom and saw the children at work. Community Roots School passed the site audit with flying colors.

In April 2010, the US Department of Education visited Community Roots School in order to monitor the Oregon Department of Education's support of charter school start-up planning and implementation grants. Community Roots School was one of four schools visited. The federal auditors were aware of the recognition of the Silver Falls School District at the Charter School Conference as a supportive district. The morning was filled with questions regarding the start-up and use of grant dollars and efforts of support from both SFSD and ODE.

## **10. Financials**

### *Budgets*

Community Roots School submitted its first operational budget, for the 2009-2010 school year, to the Silver Falls School District in March of 2009. The budget was then revised and approved by the Community Roots School Board in November 2009 and again in April 2010 based on real expenses. At the end of the 2009-2010 school year, there were ample funds to roll over for the next year's budget. In May 2010, Community Roots School also opened a saving account in the amount of \$10,000 from its fundraising efforts for the year. Approved budgets are attached in Appendix 2, 3, and 4.

### *Fiscal Management*

The Community Roots School board purchased and adopted our Fiscal Policy and Procedures document from a firm that works specifically with charter schools. This document outlines appropriate and extremely detailed practices for our charter school. Along with the adoption of this document, the board has designated a Treasurer, Amanda Petrik, for oversight of the school's finances. The school had a volunteer CFO (Miranda Traeger) that was charged with the daily financials for the school, and the school's administrator was given very specific duties for financial oversight, as described by the Fiscal Policies & Procedures.

Silver Falls School District acts as the fiscal agent for the State School Fund funds as well as the Oregon Department of Education charter school start-up grant. Community Roots School opened a checking account to maintain its fundraised activities for the year. The State School Fund and grant funds were accounted for through the district's accounting software, OSAS, and the fundraised activities are accounted for through QuickBooks. Reports were created monthly for board approval for all streams of funds. Attached in Appendix 5 are the year-end financials for the school.

### *Audit*

CRS completed its first fiscal audit as required. The third party, auditor produced Financial Statement created by Pauly, Rogers & Co. is attached in Appendix 6 as well as their recommendations. The audit showed that Community Roots School has adopted a fiscal management and oversight that allows for a stable financial school to exist.

## 11. Charter Contract Compliance Requirements:

### Key Goals and Expected Outcomes from Charter Application

### Goal Status

High Academic Achievement – The curriculum will merge the *Oregon Standards* with the *Montessori Curriculum* and then integrate studies of our region’s history, culture, and natural environment. The richness and depth of this curriculum, combined with the motivating factors of the Montessori method, will engage and challenge students so that they work at their full capacity.

CRS purchased and integrated curriculums from Lewis and Clark Charter to align the Montessori curriculum with the Oregon Standards. A sample is attached in Appendix 1, the full alignments can be found at [www.crmontessori.org](http://www.crmontessori.org).

Strong Links with the Community – Local organizations and businesses will provide ongoing field study, workshops, and, eventually for middle school students, internships integrated with the curriculum and pursued over the long term.

Artist in residence, Ann Altman, from Silverton came each day for a two week period helping children complete a classroom art project.

Also, parent education nights were provided on a regular basis to bridge the school and the community. Teachers and administrators created events to inform members of the community. Children participated and directed curriculum demonstrations for parents.

Social Growth and Emotional Development – Students will realize the non-academic outcomes of the Montessori philosophy, such as respect for self, others, and the environment, self-motivation, and self-reliance.

Children helped make soap to benefit the annual garage sale. A parent came in and demonstrated how she makes soap for a living, then donated materials and time to helping the children make soap which was then sold at the garage sale. The curriculum allows for each child to develop on an individual basis. When a child feels confident and able to master a material on their own terms, they will be more likely to take risks and their affective filter will be lowered allowing for the development of their emotional and social being. Curriculum in Montessori fosters peaceful problem solving and relationship building between peers in a multi-age classroom. Materials are kept clean by the children fostering a care for the environment and children are internally motivated to help because they care.

Successful Montessori Program - Our program will satisfy the requirements of an accredited Montessori school by hiring Montessori certified teachers (or teachers who are actively pursuing Montessori certification) and implementing the Montessori curriculum. This will insure students' academic, social, and emotional needs are met.

Jennifer McCord is actively pursuing her Montessori accreditation. The initial hire of the lead teacher was a Montessorian, and after her unexpected departure, she was replaced by a Montessorian.

Active Parent Participation – Parents will feel committed to the school and their children's education and will contribute on a variety of levels.

Parents are able to devote time in the classroom as a volunteer to aid in material prep, aid for recess and lunch or as a "guest reader". A blog and picture site was created to help connect the parent with their child and used to inform them of the happenings within the classroom.

**Additionally, the Community Roots School will be consistent with all of the goals outlined in ORS 338.015**

**Goal Status**

a. Increase student learning and achievement;

All students gained in all areas of content. The math, language, science and history curriculum offers hands on materials for the child to follow up on work and enable the child to work at an advanced level of ability due to the control of error built within the material.

b. Increase choices of learning opportunities for students;

Children are given lessons on a daily basis and are given work to follow up on. It is added to the child's plan and the teacher monitors how and when the child completes this follow up work. It is a choice for the child within their work day, but is a work that will need to be completed within the week.

c. Better meet individual student academic needs and interests;

Each child is followed and carefully monitored for progress in each of the academic years. Children are able to study and research in areas of interest throughout the day as well. Projects, research reports and lessons on specific curriculum are accessed on a regular basis as a child requests and as a teacher sees an interest on the child's part.

d. Build stronger working relationships among educators, parents and other community members

Members of the community and school help coordinate events for the school. The events throughout the year are dependent on the help of the community. The annual garage sale, Homer Davenport Days, and other events that members and staff are able to participate together in raising awareness enable groups to form and converse on creating a strong school environment.

e. Encourage the use of different and innovative learning methods;

Montessori allows the observation of the teacher to help guide how to best serve the child. The teacher is able to develop a plan that will meet the needs of each student's learning style. If a child needs more structure, the teacher is able to devise a working plan for this student. If a child needs more concrete materials to help obtain a concept, the teacher will provide the lesson and the materials. If a child learns best through art, then paintings to go along with research is encouraged. Montessori is for the child and the teacher is to guide them along their path.

f. Provide opportunities in small learning environments for flexibility and innovation, which may be applied, if proven effective, to other public schools

Children are given many lessons in small groups that would transfer to other public schools well. Some examples of these activities are spelling groups, reading groups, and math groups where children are working on particular skills.

g. Create new professional opportunities for teachers;

Jennifer McCord has been taking part in professional opportunities by becoming trained in Montessori education at an accredited Montessori academy in Houston, Texas.

h. Establish additional forms of accountability for schools; and

Assessment forms, progress reports, report cards, and student information will inform others of child's progress.

i. Create innovative measurement tools.

Anecdotal records, DRA and informal assessments have enabled the teachers to assess children at any given moment to determine level and ability within a material and concept.

**26. a. (2) Description of instructional goals in relationship to Oregon's academic content standards and benchmarks**

**Goal Status**

The Community Roots School intends to mirror the instructional goals of the Silver Falls School District in relationship to Oregon's academic content standards and benchmarks. In the first year of operation, proficiency testing of third graders will provide baseline data that the Community Roots School will engage a Montessori consultant to review and help teachers modify teaching methods as needed. In the end, the goal is for all Community Roots School students to demonstrate proficient or advanced competencies in Reading, Written and Oral Communication, Mathematics, and Science

The students at The Community Roots School have come in at various levels of ability, ranging in three years above to three years below grade level with numerous students in between. To meet the needs of each child in the curriculum, a battery of assessments helped to determine where the children are and how to best serve them. Students were given a standardized test as well, which enabled a consultant to evaluate how we were performing within these goals and standards. There were numerous changes made and children reacted positively to the changes made to help them reach their goals.

## **12. Lessons Learned and Annual Goals for 2010-2011**

From communication with the parent community and staff, the Community Roots School Board is aware of the desire to be located in town. The school has faced struggles with the costs of transportation, and has chosen to use existing bus lines from the Silver Falls School District outlying schools.

In 2009-2010, the bus picked up the children at 7:00a.m. at Eugene Field, and then ran the Monitor route, dropping the children at 8:00a.m. at Monitor. Most parents chose not to use this long bus line, and carpooled out to the school in the mornings. The bus directly returned the students to Eugene Field at 4:00 after the Monitor route was finished.

Because of the transportation options, the CRS school day is significantly longer than other area elementary schools. Moving into Silverton will allow more flexibility with the school day, will eliminate the need for the children to ride 15-20 minutes each way to school, and will better integrate the school into the Silverton community.

The facilities search will be a significant endeavor that will take time. The Community Roots School Board created a facilities committee in 2009, which explored many in town locations including the St. Paul's Parish building and the Statuary. Extensive renovations and code requirements further limit the in town possibilities.

Community Roots School also struggled to recruit 1<sup>st</sup> graders, and is now aware of the need for a Kindergarten program. Being able to implement a Kindergarten program will allow Community Roots School parents to be able to choose a Montessori education without having to change schools, or find alternative Kindergarten options. Having a Kindergarten will also eliminate temporary enrollment of Kindergarteners in other schools within the district.

Maintaining an involved parent group is essential to the everyday operations of Community Roots School. Parents are imperative to fundraising efforts, staffing board committees, assisting in material construction, assisting the administrator in office, providing supervision at the bus stops, helping with lunch supervision, and even in doing laundry. The involved parent group becomes the "Community", and maintaining relations with the parents will help Community Roots School succeed.

The Community Roots School Board outlined the following goals for the 2010-2011 school year:

- Establish task force committee for facilities to find an in town location
- Establish a bus route that will allow CRS children to go directly to the school from the Eugene Field pick up site
- Establish task force committee for establishing a children's house and/or Kindergarten
- Establish working board committees and parent groups
- Fundraise \$10,000
- Expand the classrooms to serve 50-60 children in grades 1-4
- Establish two classrooms with two teachers, two assistant teachers and a part-time administrator
- Hire a business manager to maintain all financials duties
- Closely work with staff in order to track academic achievement

The Community Roots School Board outlined the following goals for the 2011-2012 school year:

- Expand the classrooms to serve 60-80 students in grades K-5
- Fundraise \$10,000
- Continue to track academic achievement, and establish academic goals

## References

1. **Lillard, Angeline Stoll.** Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius. New York: Oxford University Press. 2005.
2. **Lillard, Paula P.** Montessori Today. New York: Random House. 1996.