

Community Connections

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



March 2022

Gervais School District

Aged buildings would get long-awaited upgrades if bond passes

A \$31 bond measure to support the Gervais School District will be on the May 17, 2022 election ballot, and the district is looking for people interested in helping spread the word.

The district is seeking volunteers to serve on a political action committee. These volunteers would be asked to attend community events and provide information regarding the bond to the voting public within the school district boundaries.

Information shared with the public includes how much it will cost the average voter, and where the money will be directed.

On average, a resident in the city of Gervais would pay \$28 a month, if the bond passes. A resident within the school district boundaries would pay \$37

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Gervais Elementary School makes space for a MakerSpace

Gervais Elementary School recently converted its library into a dual-purpose space. Half of the large space still contains a fully stocked library with books that both preserve the heritage of the district and new titles that reflect the value of diversity and representation of the school's current student body.

Using grant money from a partnership with the South Metro Salem STEM Hub, the other half of the library has become the school's MakerSpace. A MakerSpace is where students can create, problem-solve, develop skills and critically think using STEAM-based opportunities (STEAM stands for science, technology, engineering, art and math).

The Gervais Elementary MakerSpace contains five 3-D printers, many codable robots and a robot stage, Chromebooks for coding, indoor gardening and composting equipment, a fish tank where students raise salmon and trout eggs into small fry, an audio/visual green screen and recording area, flexible furniture, and supplies for exciting



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Gervais Offers Migrant Preschool

The Early Learning Center has received a grant through the Migrant Consortium at Willamette Education Service District to fully fund a migrant preschool classroom.

Director of Special Programs Sylvia Garcia, who runs the ELC through the district, will also be applying for a grant to expand the current Preschool Promise program. If that grant is approved, there will be enough funds to form another preschool classroom.

"With Preschool Promise, we already had a wait list before school started," Garcia said.

Preschool Promise provides high-quality and culturally-relevant early childhood programs to economically disadvantaged children. Families go through the state's Early Learning Division to see if they qualify for Preschool Promise.

"It's just really growing. Our daycare is full, people are still trying to get in. I wish we could let more people in, but we only have so much space."

Right now, the migrant classroom already has 12 students enrolled and three are going through the registration process — a full classroom is 18.

"Our community is so in need," Garcia said. "Once word is out that we have a migrant classroom, I would anticipate that we'll have a full classroom with a wait list." Anyone who would like more information on the migrant preschool program can contact Maricruz Camacho, home school/migrant coordinator, at 503-792-3803 x1022 or maricruz_camacho@gervais.k12.or.us.



New Gervais Middle School gym floor project lays foundation for improvements

While several maintenance projects are on the list to be supported by a bond measure, Gervais Middle School is doing what it can to improve things in the meantime.

One example is the Gervais Middle School gym, which has always had a concrete floor.

"Anytime it rains, kids would come in with wet shoes, and the concrete gets very slick like a tablecloth," Principal Bob Martin said. "We haven't had a lot of injuries, but it's not very safe. Plus running on concrete is not good for the joints."

The district was able to secure a multi-use rubber flooring that comes in 3-by-3 jigsaw pieces linked together by soft plastic snaps. The installation of the new floor on top of the concrete surface was completed in less than two days in late January.

"It has a little bit of give," said Mr. Martin. "It's a good multi-use flooring. The kids like it. The PE teacher likes it. It's better for students and athletes."

He noted that the high school uses the gym for warmups when multiple basketball teams play back-to-back in one night.

The new floor is courtesy of COVID-related money. The relief money had to be used for specific purposes, and the district went to its deferred maintenance list.

"We didn't have the money for it when it was built," Mr. Martin said.

Pending the passage of the bond this spring, Gervais Middle School would get a new multipurpose building with a stage, commons area, and cafeteria space. Right now, middle schoolers get their lunch at the high school, and, due to COVID distancing restrictions, some have to eat in a tented area.

"It's nice to share but there's a lack of identity for the middle school," Mr. Martin said. "It's not something you think of until you're in the situation. The new multipurpose building will have space that we can decorate the interior with whatever we'd like to see. It gives us more ownership of it."

CSI Gervais 2022

Principal Ken Stott and his wife, Lauri, are putting on a community performance mystery called CSI Gervais, an event for the Gervais community they started several years ago.

The event invites all ages to come to the district campus to interrogate witnesses, search for clues and solve crimes.

CSI Gervais 2022 will be Saturday, April 9, from 1 to 5 p.m. Anyone interested in signing up a team of four to six participants can do so for \$20 per person (or \$10 for high school students).

To sign up, email Mr. Stott at ken_stott@gervais.k12.or.us.



Longtime administrator to retire from Gervais High School

After 41 years as an educator, 32 of which have been in Gervais, Principal Ken Stott has announced he will retire at the end of the school year.

There's hardly a job that Stott hasn't held at Gervais High School. He's been a science teacher, math teacher, food science teacher, athletic director, baseball coach, district math coordinator, district testing coordinator, site council chair, driver's education instructor, National Honor Society advisor, vice principal, middle school principal and high school principal.

"At a small school, everyone must wear a lot of hats to keep everything running!" he pointed out, adding that teaching science has always been his favorite. "(It) has always been the most enjoyable: lesson design, presenting content, designing activities and lab experiences, engaging with students on important topics like genetics testing. It's a toss-up between teaching biology and teaching forensics." While majoring in biology in college, Mr. Stott volunteered with high school students through a Christian ministry, and realized that he wanted to work with that age group.

"I have had the good fortune to work with so many excellent students who have brought their experiences, their curiosities, and their questions to class," he said. "It has been such a pleasure to help kids believe in themselves and see

their potential."

That curiosity of students will be among his favorite memories.

"I used to most enjoy the first few minutes of each class where I'd ask if there were any questions – on any topic," he recalled. "Some days there weren't any, but on so many other days a first question would lead to a second and a third, and so on, and soon most of the class was engaged."

Retirement won't mean slowing down for Mr. Stott. He hopes to travel with his wife, spend more time with his six children and (soon to be) 11 grandchildren, to be outdoors more and to volunteer, if he's able. With Mr. Stott moving on, vice principal Andrew Aman will be stepping up to fill the principal role.

"They are some large shoes to fill," Mr. Aman said. "Ken Stott has given so much to Gervais School District in so many different capacities and roles. He has given his life to this district. I will take many things from his mentorship and leadership, as will so many others that have had the privilege of knowing him."

He is truly a great man! It is exciting to fill the role, and I look forward to what the future holds for Gervais High School, while holding onto the legacy of what has come before."



Two Gervais FFA members run for state office

Dresen Ferschweiler and Uriel Aguilar Torres are running for Oregon FFA State Office. Election results will be revealed in mid-March at the Oregon FFA State Convention in Redmond.

If either is elected, they will give a year of service to the Oregon FFA Association, representing over 11,000 student members around the state, as advocates for agriculture, FFA, and Agricultural Education. Running for state office is a very rigorous process that includes two full-day interviews with a committee of students from around the state and giving speeches to convention attendees.

Dresen and Uriel are currently district officers, but are expected to retire at the upcoming 2022 Capital District Convention. Gervais FFA member Jennifer Ferschweiler will then run for a district officer position.

Dresen, Uriel, Jennifer and Jazmin will compete

again in the Sectional Public Speaking Contest, which follows district convention. Jazmin will compete in Beginning Public Speaking, Jennifer in Creed Speaking, Uriel in Advanced Extemporaneous Speaking, and Dresen in Advanced Prepared Public Speaking. This contest will determine if

any members will have the opportunity to compete at the state level.

Freshmen FFA members attended the Capital District Freshman Night where, as a chapter, Gervais FFA placed third in the knowledge test and Jennifer Ferschweiler placed third in Creed. The high school's Agriculture Program is in full kidding

mode, with 22 goats in the barn and more coming each day. The group has also been processing bummer lambs (lambs that have been rejected or can't be cared for by their mothers) by having the veterinary science class castrate, band and vaccinate them for tetanus, as well as give them a selenium boost to prevent white muscle disease.

The Capital District recently held a speaking contest, and Gervais students participated with glowing results:

Dresen placed 1st in Exempt & Prepared Advanced Public Speaking.

Uriel placed 2nd in Advanced Exempt Speaking.

Jennifer placed 2nd in Beginning Exempt Speaking.

Jazmin Salsedo placed 3rd in Beginning Public Speaking.

Lauren Ferschweiler placed 4th in Advanced Public Speaking.



MakerSpace

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maker-projects that combine art, engineering, science, and more.

Students in grades K-5 access the MakerSpace throughout the week. Led by library media specialist and school STEAM coordinator Elizabeth Obendorf, students explore new and challenging learning opportunities in an environment that activates their curiosity and excitement, whether it's using recycled materials to build towers and bridges, creating tactile learning experiences of making letters and numbers with Play-Doh, or hearing from industry experts like



biologists from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

"They're getting to learn things they never would have done in their classroom," Ms. Obendorf said. "They're able to do more hands-on activities, and that's sometimes more memorable for kids."

Ms. Obendorf insists the MakerSpace does not diminish students' access

to literacy. In fact, she's a big advocate for "STREAM" (the R stands for reading), and will introduce a MakerSpace concept to a class by reading aloud a book on the topic at hand.

"I design activities and lessons surrounding the theme of a book," she said. "Kids can read and not get anything out of it, but reading comprehension improves when they can relate it to what they're doing."

She said coding is one of the most popular MakerSpace activities.

"It's teaching very basic skills, but they really like it," she said. "You can use your finger to guide something through a maze. Then they have to figure how to type out that action. As an adult, it's easy, but as a kid it's complicated. What's awesome is that I can sign in on a desktop and can check on every student's progress."

As the building's STEAM coordinator, Ms. Obendorf sends STEAM resources to other teachers, sharing creative ways she's incorporated STEAM activities into lessons. Not only is she excited about the MakerSpace, but Ms. Obendorf can tell the students are too.

"They're so happy and they're always asking questions," she said. "The greatest thing about the MakerSpace is they have to learn a lot of important skills: problem solving skills, very basic life skills that sometimes get overlooked, learning the most efficient way to do something. I think they're learning basic skills that are making their lives easier in the classroom."

Follow Ms. Obendorf's adventures with students on Instagram at @ges_steam.

Bond Measure

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a month, on average. This is based on the average assessed value (this is lower than market value, which is what a person could sell their home for). The average assessed value within the city of Gervais is \$145,000 and \$210,000 for all properties in the Gervais School District boundaries.

The Gervais School District has not passed a bond since the 1990s and the aging facilities show it. Some things the bond would improve:

Gervais High School

A bond would support an aging facility, including an update to chemistry labs' equipment, ventilation systems, chemical storage and technology. The agriculture building has an inadequate ventilation system. The leaking roof creates a bucket maze throughout the halls during heavy rains. Bond money would go toward fixing these issues, as well as building two additional classrooms, renovating existing classrooms, and securing the front entrance. On the athletics side, the bond will go toward remodeling a weight room/wrestling space, locker rooms, a concession stand with bathrooms, the press box, bleachers, scoreboards and field lighting.



Gervais Middle School

During an architectural assessment, it was determined that the classrooms at the middle school are too small and too few. A bond would mitigate these issues, and would also include the building of a multipurpose structure that would support cafeteria usage as well as STEM and other classroom initiatives.



Gervais Elementary School

A bond would replace an outdated heating ventilation and air conditioning system, as well as the elementary school's old windows and roof. The bond would also support a covered play area to accommodate recess during inclement weather — something needed since the gym is in use by PE classes.

Additionally, if the bond passes, the state of Oregon will issue a grant of an additional \$4 million to the school district. Additionally, the district is applying for a \$2.5 million seismic grant, which will largely go toward remodeling areas of the high school. We won't know until May if we receive this grant.

The Community Sports Development Council in Salem has awarded the Gervais School District with an \$800,000 grant to pay for an artificial turf soccer and football field. The district will try to gain sponsorships for the remaining \$380,000 but bond dollars could also be available.

