

**BACK TO SCHOOL AT OCS!**

Welcome back! We are excited to begin year 109 at Onion Creek School! Throughout this year, we will be sharing some of the history of our community school, as well as some exciting new plans for the future. In this first issue, we thought it would make sense to start all the way back at the beginning of Onion Creek and the small schools which combined to create Onion Creek School as we know it today.

After the Washington Territory was established in March 1853, logging, mining and gold strikes brought many people to Stevens County. In 1875, there were 5 public schools in the county; by 1893 there were 107. When Onion Creek was opened to homesteading in 1900, local families started forming schools that were close to their homes. The earliest known school, the Lotze School, was formed in 1902. This school later moved up Bodie Mountain and was known as the Wall School. It, along with Onion Creek Falls (the Elgie School), eventually became part of the Northport School District. Two other Onion Creek schools, the Briggs (Domitrovich) School and the Skelton (Missouri) School merged to form Onion Creek School District #30 in 1915.

Consolidation of school districts was common during this time period, largely due to the introduction of the school bus which made being able to walk, or ride a horse, to school less essential. Speaking of riding to school, we are featuring our teachers this month, and two of them actually rode their horses to Onion Creek School when they were students here!

A lot has changed since those times, but the original one-room school house still stands, and has housed generations of students—some of whom have come back to work as part of our wonderful staff!

**SPOTLIGHT ON OUR TEACHERS!**

The staff at Onion Creek School believes that all children can learn at high levels, and continuously examine their practice to ensure that they hold rigorous, consistent standards and expectations for all students. Instruction is personalized and differentiated. Our multi-age classrooms enable students to create connections and mentorships with students across grade levels, as well as provide stability in their relationships with staff. We are happy to introduce our new Primary Class Teacher, **Madeline Vega**, as she and her colleagues share their stories in their own words.



Hello, I am **Madeline**! I grew up in Colville and was raised learning the value of education, the strength of family, and the importance of kindness. Prior to becoming a teacher, I was a Job Coach for individuals with disabilities and a Health Education Facilitator through the U.S. Peace Corps. I discovered my passion for teaching and positively influencing children while I was a Peace Corps volunteer in South America. My teaching experiences have centered around making learning fun with hands-on experiences and developing growth mindsets in my students. Through this experience I formed strong bonds with my students and community. I graduated in 2022 with a Master's degree in Teaching and Learning just two months after the birth of my daughter and decided to stay home and focus on being a mom. I taught as a substitute with the Colville School District and have been in other teaching roles outside of the traditional classroom environment. I am now ready to begin my career and Onion Creek seems like the perfect fit for me. This is my first year with my own classroom and I am so excited to be part of the Onion Creek community as the Primary Teacher! My favorite thing about Onion Creek so far is how welcoming and supportive everyone has been.

Hi, I'm **Shannon Kearney**. My family and I moved to an 80-acre ranch in the Colville area in 2005. Soon after we moved here, I heard about the cool little school in Onion Creek. In fact, I applied and was hired to be a long term substitute preschool/kindergarten teacher in the summer of 2006. That is how my journey at the Onion Creek School started. Eventually, I was hired to teach full time and just finished my 9th full-time year at OCS.

While working at OCS, I was asked to go back to school to become a special education teacher. I agreed and graduated with my Masters in Special Education in December, 2021 and became our certified SPED teacher. I really enjoy connecting with the kids and seeing the growth that they make educationally as well as socially and emotionally throughout the year.

I enjoy when kids ask a question and we go on an unexpected educational walk because the kids want to know more about a topic. I don't have all the answers so we all get to learn together. For me, it is very important to be able to say, "I am not sure about that answer." I will often say, "Let's look it up and learn more." I feel that it is extremely important for kids to realize that adults don't always have the answers and that adults make mistakes as well. I am not above apologizing to a student for telling them a wrong answer, or looking up information in front of them if I'm unsure. My philosophy is that if we expect for kids to be open and honest with us, then we need to model that in our teaching and interactions in the classroom.



Hello I'm **Dani Arnold** and I began my career at OCS in 1974 when I was a 1st grader in Joel Anderson's first class. My family moved to Onion Creek that summer, and I attended Onion Creek School from 1st through 6th grade. And, yes, I rode my horse to school!

Last June, I completed my 31st year as a teacher at OCS! During that time, I have taught every grade level in Onion Creek School. When we decided to add 7th grade to Onion Creek School, I taught preschool/kindergarten in the morning, and then middle school in the afternoon—that was fun!

I am proud to say, I successfully attained my National Board certification (NBPTS) as an Early Childhood Generalist, and have held this certification for 20 years. I also enjoyed serving our community as the leader of Mountain Riders 4-H for 23 years. I continue to enjoy each new class and the opportunity to provide in-depth learning opportunities centered around student interests.

Now, you may be wondering who the other horseback rider was...and it was our Principal and Middle School Teacher, **Alyson Clendenen**. While she has assumed many administrative responsibilities, Alyson continues to challenge and engage our middle schoolers each morning in a way that has been described by both students and her fellow educators as magical!

The OCS News Flyer is one of the ways we hope to inform you of events and activities happening at Onion Creek School; it is distributed to boxes at the base of most of our roads, at the Onion Creek Store, and at the School. We also encourage you to visit the OCS webpage ([ocsd30.org](http://ocsd30.org)) and our Facebook page to get additional details and information about our students' learning adventures!

Thank you for your interest and support,  
Elissa Dyson for the Onion Creek School Board