



Students at Glenwood School pose with the dresses they made to send to Africa.

Photo by Claire Alexander

Small School, Big Opportunities

Glenwood School students learn more than academics

By Jeanie Senior

As superintendent/principal of Glenwood School, Shane Couch administers a school with 65 students in grades K-12.

That is a bit different from the high school he attended in Wenatchee, which had a 2,000-member student body.

But Shane, who has been at Glenwood for eight years, knows that small can work. Students at Glenwood are exposed to academics, career and technical education, arts, music and sports.

There is a lot of community involvement. Every other month, there's an all-school enrichment day that features local artists, crafts persons and others.

One particularly ambitious program was all about Africa. Students learned about the vast continent, played African games, listened to African stories, ground

corn with two stones, made toys from discarded bits and pieces, mastered a few phrases in Swahili, and helped make 57 cotton dresses to send to Africa. School lunch consisted of African dishes, and students prepared more African food for an afternoon buffet.

Math teacher Claire Alexander, who suggested the Africa theme, took dozens of photos of the students that day.

"Look, you can tell in their faces how focused they are," she says.

For all-school projects, students are divided into multi-age groups.

"Something pretty positive about small schools is that older kids help the younger kids," says Shane.

He considers the enrichment days—and their diversity—key to lifelong learning.

"There's more to being a citizen than strictly regimented academics," he says.

According to Shane, the school's graduation rate is usually 100 percent of each senior class, with most graduates going on

to a university, trade or vocational school.

Among other offerings at Glenwood is a pre-K class for children 3 to 5 years old that meets for two hours a day, five days a week. Shane says the early classes mean those smallest students transfer into kindergarten as readers.

There is also an inclusive Spanish language program that starts in kindergarten and, as part of the elementary curriculum, continues to grade five.

School counselor Bridget McLaughlin, who teaches the Spanish classes, learned the language as a Peace Corps volunteer in Panama. When she introduces conversational Spanish to kindergarteners, "they get it just like that," she says. "They are sponges. I told them they have the potential to be bilingual by the time they graduate."

Spanish is optional in middle and high school, but she says the parents are supportive, and the kids enjoy it.

Leading a tour of the school, Shane walks along hallways brightened with



Left, the greenhouse, garden and solar array at Glenwood School.



Bottom, Pam Keithly in the school's kitchen pantry, with squash from the school's garden.

It represents both a lot of history and the consolidation of numerous small country schools. The area's first school opened in 1877.

The newest additions to the campus are behind the school, and include a big 5.76-kilowatt photovoltaic array, which went online last summer and now feeds electricity back into the power grid.

The project was funded by Bonneville Environmental Foundation's Solar 4R Schools program and Mount Adams Resource Stewards, which wrote a grant for the solar array. It is the first installation of its kind in southwest Washington.

The project is intended to be a teaching tool to educate students about alternative energy. The solar array came with a curriculum and hands-on educational materials, including solar ovens and small windmills. There also are mini solar panels and multimeters.

In back of the school is a system equipped to trap and save rainwater and

dew runoff from the roof, to be used for irrigation. Two garden plots are also in back—a community project that has yielded quantities of fresh produce for student lunches and the community.

There is a sizable greenhouse where garden seedlings are grown, both for the school gardens and for sale to the community.

In Glenwood, which has a short growing season, the seedlings give gardeners an advantage.

Cook Pam Keithly, a longtime gardener, planned the school garden. She says the school earned about \$600 last year from sales of flower, herb and vegetable starts. Another sale is planned for June.

Members of the community and students help plant the gardens. Every Wednesday evening during the growing season—up to October 1—a group got together to weed, harvest and fertilize. When the first hard frost loomed, "I picked everything I could," Pam says.

The gardens have been highly productive, enriching the school lunch program. Cooking staff serve fresh produce, but also preserved some of the harvest, cooking and freezing the pumpkins, for example, and pickling beets.

"We grew pumpkins, zucchini—we just used the last head of red cabbage—potatoes, tomatoes, hot peppers, green peppers, beautiful cucumbers," says Pam.

A rack in the pantry still holds an assortment of squash, to appear at a future cafeteria meal.

Asked if students reject any of the vegetables, Pam shakes her head.

"Not when they hear they came from the garden," she says. ■

Track the output of the Glenwood School solar array and compare its output to other Bonneville solar arrays in the region at www.solar4rschools.org/schools/glenwood-school.

student art work—framed pictures, decorated tiles, painted paper salmon, thread art and more. He encourages the exuberant decorations.

"When I first came here, the walls were bare," he says.

The school, located on 18 acres with an up-close view of Mount Adams, replaced a building that burned three decades ago.