



## The Oregonian

### This schoolhouse rocks

After-school classes at 46 metro-area schools include School of Rock at Dexter McCarty Middle School

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GRESHAM On a recent afternoon, sounds of guitar chords filled Dexter McCarty Middle School's music room.

"OK, everybody. Let's tune up and get started as quickly as possible," the instructor, Jenn Burleton, told the eager teens and preteens.

Near the drums, 13-year-old Caitlin Lehman sat backward in a blue chair, listening to a band of her classmates begin its two-song set.

They broke into the first chords of the Rolling Stones' legendary "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction."

"I've never heard this song before in my life," the seventh-grader told a nearby friend.

In the School of Rock, named after the 2003 Jack Black movie, the education is ongoing. McCarty Middle School is one of 46 schools in the Portland area offering after-school classes such as the School of Rock to students and community members through city, county, state and federal funding. The program, which started with 18 schools in 2001, is called the Schools Uniting Neighborhoods Initiative.

The SUN program set out to increase accessibility and learning activities at schools, and to create more support for schools within local and business communities. Several nonprofit agencies contract with SUN to provide opportunities within schools across the Portland area.

McCarty's program is run by Metropolitan Family Service, which is the largest provider in east Multnomah County. The annual budgets at each of the agency's 12 schools range from \$90,000 to \$140,000, said Tammy Spencer, Metropolitan Family Service spokeswoman.

At McCarty, 215 students have enrolled in the 21 classes offered so far this year, said Charlene Conley, the school's SUN coordinator. About 10 McCarty students have enrolled in the School of Rock class, which begins again in April.

Classes offered at schools are generally open only to the students who attend those schools, although some programs are available in the evening for community members. The classes vary based on the community's interests.

"My position here is to find out from the kids and the community what they want, and to provide it," Conley said.

The School of Rock kicked off last fall when Burleton held auditions.

Burleton, who had worked with high school students, found that instructing young teens with short attention spans can be a difficult but rewarding task.

"What I get out of it is the opportunity to maybe give kids the sense of the work ethic that really goes along with playing rock music," said Burleton, who volunteers to teach the class and is the show director of Shout-Out!, a Portland nonprofit music-education group.

That work ethic is something 13-year-old Jacob Hodges appreciates. The seventh-grader said he'd like to attend college on a music scholarship. In the meantime he practices at home on the \$300 drum set he bought with money he saved from holidays.

"I needed to practice playing with other people," Hodges said.

Sixth-grader David Vorobyov came to the class to learn different kinds of music. His father, a Russian immigrant, taught him to play a few chords from Russian songs last year.

Vorobyov said he used to think rock music was loud. Now the 12-year-old, who stands only a few inches taller than his acoustic guitar, jams to the music every chance he gets.

"It makes me feel good afterwards," he said. "Physically and emotionally."

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