

Boise State, charter school collaborate on programs

Kindergartners don colorful home-made wings and avian headdresses and “fly” around the room. A gaggle of Boise State art education students, adult volunteers and teachers supervise the action. Bird songs end in laughter. Excitement, and a few unglued feathers, fill the air.



Wearing a hummingbird costume, Boise State student Sheila Boester works with Anser kindergartners.

Eggs-actly what’s going on here? It’s just another day at Anser Charter School in Boise — albeit one that’s gone to the birds. Under the direction of Boise State doctoral student Kathleen Keys, art education students recently worked with Anser kindergartners to design costumes as part of an intensive, hands-on exploration of the world of birds.

The art project was just one of a number of recent endeavors that have brought town and gown together at Anser’s River Street campus. Since it opened in 1999 as Idaho’s first charter school, Anser has teamed with Boise State on a multitude of programs that have benefited both institutions.

“It’s so powerful for [Boise State] students and professors to be here ... there are many opportunities for growth,” says Darrel Burbank, (MS education, ’76), executive director of Anser.

Adds Jonathan Brendefur, a Boise State education professor who teaches math classes to Anser sixth-graders that are observed by both teachers and university students: “This is a chance to promote professional development, and it also gives me an opportunity to work in an elementary classroom and try out new ideas.”

Recent collaborations range from teaming university students with Anser students as “writing buddies” to promote literacy, to bringing Anser students to campus to learn how to use video equipment and make commercials, to introducing Anser students to rope climbing and other physical education alternatives. Boise State graduate students have conducted research projects in Anser classrooms, and the university and charter school have also teamed to bring internationally known education experts to Boise for public presentations.

Suzanne Gregg, (Ed.D. education, ’99), is Anser’s instructional guide, a position that involves teaching teachers and assessing the school’s curriculum. She also teaches Boise State education students in a comprehensive literacy class that meets after hours in an Anser classroom. “It’s great to meet at Anser because I have all the materials right here. It makes the class authentic ... they can see how things are set up in a real classroom,” Gregg says.

Programs that bring university faculty and students to the charter school are integral to Anser’s mission, Burbank notes. “We set out in our vision to be a professional development school. Our collaborations with Boise State support that vision.”

Boise State tower providing signal to Highway 93 corridor

A new wind-powered tower built by Boise State Radio’s 24-hour news station KBSX-FM began providing a radio signal for a remote area of Nevada in late November. The area previously had no reliable signal of any kind.

Funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce Public Telecommunications Facilities Program, the transmitter sits high atop Ellen D. Mountain in north-eastern Nevada. Because wind gusts are often between 80 and 100 mph, engineers decided to harness the wind to power the transmitter.

The tower will provide service to the Jackpot, Nev., area as well as to the thousands of people who travel the Highway 93 corridor between Twin Falls and Wells, Nev., each day. The coverage area also includes northwest Elko County as well as rural areas of Cassia, Twin Falls and Owyhee counties in Idaho.

Steiner heads

Twice each month, a dedicated group of teachers, librarians and Boise State University students has gathered at a local public school or library to talk about a shared passion: Children’s literature and which new books should receive the prestigious “Teachers’ Choices” seal that recommends them for classroom use.

The group, under the direction of Boise State education professor Stanley Steiner, has reviewed about 400 new children’s books since last September as part of the national project sponsored by the International Reading Association. Boise is one of seven sites across the United States participating in the project; each site ranks its top choices and about 30 books are eventually selected as “Teachers’ Choices,” indicating they have been field-tested by teachers and have the poten-

—Janelle Brown