



Kenai Peninsula Borough School District
Golden Apple Award | February 6, 2017

Ms. Laura Johnson

Ms. Laura Johnson is an exemplary volunteer at Cooper Landing School.

Once a week she volunteers to teach art to the kindergarten through eighth grade students at Cooper Landing School. “She consistently finds a way to engage the students of every grade level,” said Susanna LaRock, school secretary. “If a lesson plan is geared toward a specific age group, Laura will personalize it so that it becomes interesting for every student in our small school. Students learn art skills and to talk about art, with terms like perspective, realism, and abstract. Ms. Johnson takes pride in displaying the student’s art projects in the halls of the school and keeping the school looking beautiful, which in turn encourages the children to do the same. Every art project is mounted and displayed beautifully, and our school always looks colorful and bright.”

Last fall at Halloween time, Ms. Johnson decided that it would be fun for the kids to do a mural of Edvard Munch’s *The Scream*. She spent hours at home drawing the general outline of the painting in mural size and making it into sections so that each student could paint a section. Then she came into the school and taught the students about the background of the painting, and about the artist Edvard Munch. She also taught about paying attention to colors and shades, and then gave each student their section. Ms. Johnson chose sections for students, ranging in age 5 to 13, according to each student’s ability and strengths. The finished product was fantastic—16 students with varying abilities created one work of art together.

Throughout the school years, Laura notices which projects students find most interesting. She then locates other similar projects to build on their learned skills. When she notices that one student has a harder time following the directions, and thinks more outside the box, she sits down with that student and teaches them how to do the project their own way, but to keep within the parameters of the assignment. Students at Cooper Landing School learn art skills and to talk about art, with terms like abstract, realism, and perspective.

Ms. Johnson puts in countless volunteer hours making sets for the school’s Christmas play. It is common for her to spend an entire school day working on sets, and she finds ways to involve the students in the process to encourage pride and ownership of the sets. Last year, the older students helped to decorate and design the set for the production of “How the Grinch Stole Christmas.” When Laura realized that the younger students did not have much of an opportunity to participate, she invited each of them to decorate stockings to hang by the fireplace. This year she was even more determined to make sure that every student participated in the set design, so she created window scenes, and every student, in every grade, made items that were displayed in the windows.

Cooper Landing School is welcoming and bright because Ms. Johnson volunteers with her heart and spirit, making a difference for each child.

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District Board of Education is proud to recognize Ms. Laura Johnson for her dedication to the students of the school district, past, present, and future.