

‘Is your job hard?’

Gov. Kulongoski visits Seneca School.

SENECA — “If we could harness the energy produced from the students’ excitement in anticipation of your visit, we could run a power station,” Head Teacher Adele Cerny told Gov. Ted Kulongoski and first lady Mary Oberst on their arrival April 14 at Seneca School.

Cerny and Newell Cleaver, superintendent of Grant School District #3, gave the governor and first lady a tour of the school, taking time to view such highlights as the Seneca History Project mural and timeline, the computer lab, the gym, and each of the classrooms.

In each classroom, the governor visited with the students about the branches of government and what a governor does. He spoke about the beauty of this area and that he and his wife know it well since they enjoy hiking, camping and fishing in the Strawberry Wilderness.

Gov. Kulongoski enjoyed asking students where they live, and asking them about Seneca’s claim to fame in the Oregon Blue Book (the coldest temperature in Oregon at 54 degrees below zero in 1933).

In the first- and second-grade class, Jerry Carter showed the governor the old Hines Lumber Co. script (Seneca company money) and Olive Theatre tickets.

Will Meyer, curious about the name Kulongoski, asked the governor about his ancestors, and the governor pulled down the world map to point out Poland. The students shared where they travel from to attend school in Seneca: Seneca, Silves Valley, Canyon Creek, and John Day.

In the third- and fourth-grade class, the governor laughed when he was asked if his job was hard. Logan Delano asked, “What does a governor do?”

Kulongoski then explained about the branches of government. Garrett Carniglia said, “Today for the first time ever we had a governor come to our school. In our class, I was the first person to shake the governor’s hand.”

Elle Rawlins said that Kulongoski and Oberst thought



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In the first and second grade class, Jerry Carter (right) told the governor about the old Hines Lumber Co. script (Seneca company money) and Olive Theatre tickets.



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Gov. Ted Kulongoski and first lady Mary Oberst receive a gift tub from Seneca Mayor Linda Starbuck.

the timeline was really cool. After the governor moved on to the next classroom, Oberst thrilled the class by reading a story aloud to them.

By the time the governor arrived in the fifth- and sixth-grade class, their excitement and anticipation had built to such a high that his entry was greeted with a silent awe. He asked students where they live and learned that they come from all over, but none live in Logan Valley, where he and his wife love to camp.

When asked who had been to Salem, several hands went up.

In the junior high classroom,

students were struck speechless at the honor of having Kulongoski in their school. He tried to get them to talk by asking questions; after some collective murmuring, Jolynn Bishop became brave enough to initiate a conversation with him. He was interested to learn that the junior high class was going to Salem to visit the legislature on April 25, and he expressed regret that he wouldn’t be able to be there to greet them.

Brianna Murphy-Johnston, after being prompted by one of the governor’s staff members, casually asked the governor if he knew how long it took to get to Baker City (his next stop)

from Seneca.

The governor recognized the question as part of an ongoing discussion about the route he would take to get to Baker City. He wanted to drive via Logan Valley to Prairie City, but was disappointed because of the time factor and the snow still on the road. Just before leaving the junior high classroom, the governor noticed Connor Smith’s U of O jersey, so he exuberantly gave Connor a high five for his choice. Apparently, Kulongoski is a Duck’s fan, much to the amused consternation of some of the students. Had he been able to stay longer, he would have had a great discussion on his hands, as nothing fires up these students more than a good debate about the Beavers and the Ducks.

Before leaving, Kulongoski visited with Linda Starbuck, mayor of Seneca, about the challenges of economic development in rural areas. While visiting, the governor and his staff enjoyed refreshments provided by the Seneca School PTA.

Starbuck presented the Kulongoski and Oberst a gift tub of offerings from the City of Seneca, the Seneca School PTA and the Seneca School Foundation.

Oberst made a much-appreciated gift to the school of 100 books for the library.

• Submitted by Seneca School.