

New sign at Washington Oak



Angelela Chapman/Daily Times

Don Jacques' fourth grade classroom at Washington Oak Elementary School in Coventry designed a new sign for their school.

Mitchell Parenteau (back row, left), 17, a student at Coventry High School made the sign a reality with the help of fellow student Ashley Jones (not pictured) and his teacher Gene Dufault (back row, center). On the right is (l-r) teacher assistant Terri LaCroix and teacher Don Jacques at the new sign that is now at the entrance to the school.

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COVENTRY—One class' service learning project will impact their school for years to come and everyone driving by will see it too.

Don Jacques' fourth grade classroom at Washington Oak Elementary School designed a new sign for their school and students at Coventry High School took their design and built the new sign.

Jacques said the students started work on the project in the middle of the school year and it was just installed before school got out last week.

Jacques made the project a combination of multiple math disciplines.

The measurements for the

sign were incorporated into math instruction, Jacques said.

From spatial arrangement to scale, students put into practice on the project what they had already been learning.

They worked on their geometry skills, Jacques said, with the students designing every aspect of the new sign.

The two posts of the sign are actually hexagonal in shape, having six sides, and made to look like real, wooden pencils.

Jacques said there was also a written component to the project.

Students "had to explain to me in writing what type of math skills" were used by the class to design for the new school sign.

The fourth grade classroom, when they had finished their

design, gave a full size drawing to students at Coventry High School.

From their design, Mitchell Parenteau, 17, who will be a junior at Coventry High School in the fall, built the sign that now sits at the entrance to Washington Oak Elementary School.

He even went out to get the proper wood for the project, he said.

Each letter on the front of the sign, Parenteau also spent time routing out.

The sign reads, "Welcome to Washington Oak Elementary School."

Below that are the words, "Respectful," "Safe" and "Responsible."

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For the words at the bottom of the sign, Parenteau did have to get a little creative, his teacher Gene Dufault said.

In order for them to be large enough to read, Parenteau put them each in a curve, instead of straight across, so they would fit better.

Parenteau said he loved the pencil posts as soon as he saw the students' design.

Also, right in the middle of the sign is a Washington Oak Wallaby, the mascot at Washington Oak.

Ashley Jones, who is another of Dufault's students, helped a lot with the layout, Dufault said. She also painted the Wallaby in the middle of the sign.

Parenteau is in Dufault's Woodshop Tech class at Coventry High School.

Dufault, when asked if his

students took off with the project, said, "Very much so."

He said he worked with them when needed, showing them techniques.

"I was just rubber stamping," he said.

Parenteau said he pictured it all in his head before they built the sign and they also drew it out on plywood before building the final product.

Jacques pointed out that it was not just a collaborative between his class and high school, but also the whole school community at Washington Oak.

It was the custodial staff that put the sign into the ground, he said.

The landscaping around the sign was done by a parent of one of Jacques' students. Jacques said he showed the parent what they wanted done and when he came in on a

Monday morning it was completed.

Before the new sign went up, there was only a small street sign indicating the entrance to Washington Oak Elementary School.

"People missed it," Jacques said, and would drive right by, even if you told them to "turn at the sign," Jacques said.

"They would tell us, "There is no sign," he said.

Now, the new sign is brightly-colored, Jacques said, described it as "whimsical," the way a sign at an elementary school should be, he said.

The colors too, are "kid-friendly," Jacques said, as Parenteau painted the sign with colors chosen by the students.

Dufault said he liked the colors too, noting they were "a different color scheme than we might do."