



School *de Verano*

Making connections, closing the gap in Migrant Summer School.

STORY BY SUZI STEFFEN • PHOTOS BY CAMERON YEE

In the summer, teachers might want to sleep in. Instead, Ashland elementary school teacher Stephanie Bartlett wakes up in an RV parked in her the driveway of her daughter's Eugene house and starts preparing for class. Last summer, she looked over information about Pancho Villa or Subcomandante Marcos; this year, she's double-checking exercises on the geography of Oaxaca and Jalisco.

In the summer, kids should definitely get to sleep in. But in Junction City, Creswell and other far-flung Lane County outposts, older kids wake at 6 to prepare themselves and their siblings for the school bus that breaks the summer morning birdsong. They will spend this and many other days learning what Bartlett — Señora Steff, to her students — and others have to teach.

Señora Steff and her 28 fifth and sixth graders, along with 112 other kids and 18 adults, converged on Guy Lee Elementary School in Springfield Tuesday, June 27, when *la escuela de verano* began. The summer school for children of migrant agricultural workers, supported by funds from the federal government's Migrant Education Program and staffed by the Lane Educational Service District (ESD), runs for four weeks each summer. It gives students, director Guadalupe Moreno hopes, the opportunity to "reinforce their education and provide support in closing the achievement gap."

In 1965, the U.S. Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which contained a provision for the education of children of migrant workers. One goal of the federal program is ensuring that children of migrant workers keep up in school. That can be challenging if their families move around during the school year or between school years as opportunities for agricultural work wax and wane. Another goal is to help the kids "overcome cultural and language barriers" that might make it tough for them to succeed in a primarily monolingual school system.

Most of the pre-kindergarten through eighth grade students in the Lane ESD program speak Spanish as their first and primary language. Moreno, who is bilingual in Spanish and English, says that it helps the kids to know there are other students like them. "Sometimes, to be in a classroom with all Anglo students," she says, "it's hard — they get a little shy and don't want to raise their hands. But in a classroom with all Hispanic students, their confidence gets better."

Many of the teachers speak some Spanish, and a bilingual assistant helps in each classroom. The principal, Jackie Turle,

speaks "a little" Spanish. Last year was Turle's first with the school. She says, "I wen through a steep learning curve!" Hearing Spanish all day and having to listen carefully to a language she barely knew helped her understand "how exhausting it is to be an immigrant, how tired people are at the end of the day."

Research in bilingual education indicates that children who are literate in their first language learn a new language much faster, so instruction comes in both languages.

On the first day, after a quick breakfast of Rice Krispies and an apple, the kids poured onto the playground. Moreno blew a whistle and called, "*¡Todos los estudiantes!*" The lounging eighth graders walked as slowly toward the asphalt as some clearly terrified pre-kindergarteners. As they lined up by class, the students looked around for friends. "*¿Quién es?*" the teachers asked, checking names.

Pre-kinder began with kids sitting in a circle. Their teacher, Susie Kyle, strummed her guitar in the traditional tune of "Frère Jacques" but with different words: "*¡Buenos días! ¿Cómo está? Muy bien, gracias. ¿Y usted?*" Some of the children stared at her,