Raymond Announced Runner-up for Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom Teacher of the Year Award

Congratulations to Raney Raymond of Seneca Elementary School, runner-up for the 2026 Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom Educator of the Year Award!

"This competitive award recognizes an outstanding teacher for their creative efforts to teach students about the importance of agriculture," according to the Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation website. "Agriculture in the Classroom is a nationwide educational program designed to help students develop an awareness and understanding that agriculture is the source of our food, clothing, shelter and other essentials," (oregonaitc.org).

"Raney has a gift for taking a lesson and making it something the children can see, touch, explore, and experience," said Stacy Durych, Head Teacher at Seneca Elementary School and teaching partner of Raymond. "Whether they're learning about agriculture, animals, plants, or the natural world just outside our classroom doors, she helps them see that learning isn't something that happens only in books. It's happening all around them."

Raymond grew up on a ranch in Grant County, which has given her a special perspective on agriculture in the world around her. "Each year, I am reminded how fortunate I am to work in a school that values the outdoors, nature, agriculture, and hands-on learning. In our small school community, agriculture is more than a subject or an occasional lesson – it is the foundation that connects much of what we do in science, social studies, and math." Raymond reminds her students often, "Science and agriculture are best friends."

Raymond has facilitated in-class lessons on gardens, beeswax, greenhouses, and more, as well as helping to facilitate many field trips to local ranches, dairies, the forest, and the Strawberry Mountains. "Agriculture gives students a meaningful way to see how the concepts they learn in the classroom connect to the world around them, Whether we are learning about soil, plants, animals, weather, changes in matter, natural resources, or problem-solving, I look for opportunities to connect those lessons to agriculture and our local environment."

One of this year's projects at Seneca Elementary School is their Forest School, giving students the opportunity to explore the woods in their own backyard throughout the school year. "As the science teacher, I love being able to use the forest right outside our school as another classroom," Raymond said. The students enjoy hiking the nature loop, completing scavenger hunts and relay races, and checking in on the nature around them. "She's learning and discovering right alongside the children, and I think there's something really beautiful about that," Durych said. "She cares about doing things well, she puts in the effort, and she genuinely wants to make a difference."

"Agricultural education has also allowed us to teach students about stewardship and responsibility for our natural resources," Raymond said, sharing experiences with the local fire department and Forest Service which has taught fire safety, land conservation, and protection of the environment. "Through these experiences, students are learning not only how agriculture impacts their lives, but also how they can become responsible stewards of the land and resources around them.

From the clothing they wear to the food they eat, Seneca Elementary students are proud to be learning about agriculture and its connection to everything around them. "In a small rural school, agriculture is a natural part of our community and our students' lives," Raymond shares. "My goal is to use that connection to make learning meaningful, hands-on, and relevant."

Being named runner-up in the Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom Educator of the Year Award has been a huge compliment to Raymond who is excited to share her love of agriculture with the students. "I am proud to create a classroom where agriculture, science, nature, and community come together, and where students can see that learning does not stop at the classroom door."







