Student museums displayed at The Sullivans Elementary School

By Steve Parker,
The Sullivans Elementary School Public Affairs

Let's see, 24 students, 5.5 hours of instruction time, five days a week, 185 days a year, a choice of a bevy of high interest topics like conjugating irregular verbs, finding the least common multiplier or researching the gross domestic product of the state of Idaho. What's a self-respecting teacher to do to hold student interest and build enthusiasm for a subject? Why, open a museum, of course.

Student Rachel Armstrong portrays 1984 Summer Olympic gymnastics gold medal winner Mary Lou Retton during The Sullivans Elementary School Living Museum season held February through March.
Photo by Tanya Chambers

Several teachers at The Sullivans Elementary School creatively filled instruction time in just this way during museum season, which was held February through March. The live-action museums were staged by students and featured a large host of historical figures from many different eras, epochs and ages wandering the school and recounting their lives for all listeners.

Susan Davidson and Rose Christopher, two second-grade teachers, held a Living Museum Feb. 25. Students focused around the topic "People who made a difference." These students researched famous African-Americans by exploring databases on school computers. The students wrote at least six sentences in the first person about their chosen historical figure.

"My students were very proud of their performance," said Christopher.

Sullivans teachers Chrissy Tovar and Deborah Turner held a similar Black History Month study in the "B" building lobby March 4. Their wax museum highlighted "African-Americans who Changed Lives." Using books and search engines, the third-graders wrote a biographical narrative, chronicling important events in the lives of their person. Then, they rewrote it in the first person so they could retell it convincingly in front of museum visitors. Dressed as their historical figure, the children showed their knowledge and captivated their peers as they educated them on some of our country's most influential people.

"Some of the children memorized a full, typed page and recited it as the historical figure they were portraying," said Turner. "I was so proud of their hard work!"

Sullivans fourth-grade teacher Tanya Chambers also offered a presentation March 4. Her class presented a wax museum themed around famous Americans born in the Southeast region. Her students portrayed a diverse group of Americans from Pocahontas and George Washington to Stonewall Jackson and Maya Angelou. Her students researched their topics using databases, biographies and websites. They were required to memorize a one minute speech and use a costume or prop.

Teacher Michael Applegate presented a presidential museum the week of March 21-24. His was the only museum affected by the recent events in Japan.

"All of my students were required to complete the assignment, but only those who were still [here] were able to present," Applegate said.

All students received full credit though, present or not. Those who were still in school, approximately 11 total, presented speeches about different presidents. They also passed out historical "artifacts" or Popsicle sticks with each president's face on it. More than 25 classes saw the presentations for a total of about 200 students.

Many parents, students and other teachers visited Sullivans during museum season and enjoyed watching the students bring history alive. Fourth-grade student Deja Broughton enjoyed collecting many artifacts and visiting the Presidential Museum.

"I liked the museum because it had a lot of interesting things about the presidents," she said.

Kinnick stays open to educate, care for students

By Philip Bailey,
Nile C. Kinnick High School
Public Affairs

Challenges associated with the Sendai earthquake and tsunami March 11, and continuing concern over the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant have been difficult for everyone in Japan including the Yokosuka base community.

At Nile C. Kinnick High School (KHS) in particular, students, faculty and staff had to make sense of the tragedy and the difficult decisions that followed.

The voluntary authorized departure issued by the Department of State allowed eligible family members of Department of Defense personnel to depart Japan. Yet many in the community were torn between their love and support of family, friends and neighbors that would remain in Japan to carry on with humanitarian relief, recovery and defense efforts and the desire to voluntarily depart.

Through several difficult days, KHS teachers began planning for the continued education of their students despite rumors that the schools on base might remain closed until conditions stabilized.

When teachers were informed that their schools were going to reopen after all, new ideas on how to support students through the voluntary departure began to emerge.

There are several resources teachers are making available to help students keep up with their studies.

Some are utilizing the school's intranet website and individual teacher websites to coordinate assignments and projects. Others are using online quiz and test-taking sites to determine if students can demonstrate their understanding of the content.

Additionally, free, cloud-based services which allow students to create classroom presentations from anywhere in the world provide yet another way for students to remain engaged from afar until they can get settled at their new schools and communities.

Kinnick High School teacher Philip Bailey provides instuction for a biology class comprised of freshmen, sophmore and junior students April 5. There are several resources teachers are making available to help students keep up with their studies following a decrease in attendance due to the authorized voluntary departure.
U.S. Navy photo by MC2(SW/AW) John Smolinski

Some of the online resources include:

•Intranet:
http://login.kinnick.pac.dodea.edu/

• Gradespeed:
https://dodpacific.gradespeed.net/gs/

• Online Tutoring:
http://www.tutor.com/military

• Cengage Learning:
http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itweb/ddeahq?prod=SCIC

• Facebook:
http://www.facebook.com/dodea.pacific

Although online resources do not fully replace face-to-face classroom instruction when it comes to peer interaction or tackling difficult concepts, Kinnick teachers recognize that extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures.

Teachers are going beyond the classroom walls to continue supporting students that departed by helping them stay connected to their classmates and curriculum until they begin a new chapter in a new school or return to Yokosuka when the "all clear" is given.

At KHS, teachers are very concerned about the continuity of learning for all students during this challenging time. For our students that come to school each day here at Yokosuka and the others that are still finding their way back in the states, KHS is open and ready to serve. Call, log on or visit KHS if you need additional information.

Editor's note: Kinnick High School staff Ed Fogell and Vicki Boehler contributed to this article.

The editor asks:

Did you know, family members who departed prior to, or independent of the voluntary authorized departure are required to update their status in the Navy Family Accountability and Assessment System (NFAAS) once they have arrived at their displaced location?

According to the NFAAS website https://navyfamily.navy.mil, the system is intended to "account, manage, and monitor the recovery process for personnel and their families affected and, or scattered by a wide-spread catastrophic event."

Since the Department of Defense authorized the departure of family members March 17, many families have relocated to various displacement sites.

"If a family member has departed the area to the United States or any other location either the service member or the family member needs to log on to NFAAS and select 'displaced' from the drop down menu for each family who has relocated," said Greg Porter, Commander Navy Region Japan (CNRJ) director of Strategy and Future Requirements.

"There may be a misperception that this is only for those people who left under the voluntary departure authorization. Even if someone left on their own we still need to get a status update so we can account for them," he said.

CNRJ urges those who have not yet updated their status to log on to the NFAAS website located at https://navyfamily.navy.mil and follow the instructions.