Written by MARK JAEGER
Wednesday, 02 June 2010 18:45

Middle school seminar opens doors to topics not normally taught in school

Eighth-graders at Ozaukee Middle School took up the challenge of doing research work to surprising levels during their seminar class led by teacher Kevin Luedtke.

It is the third year Luedtke has taught the class, expecting students to apply the research criteria of Bloom's taxonomy to subjects of their own choosing.

Using skills in science, math and English, the academic discipline follows the path of research, comparison, contrast, summarizing, comprehension, judging and finally creating.

As daunting as the jargon may appear, the students applied the approach with great enthusiasm because of the projects they pursued.

In all, 60 students presented 45 projects. The subject matter ranged from ponderous to just plain fun.

Kaylee Klopp and Emma Habich recreated their version of the MTV series "The Buried Life."

Similar to the movie "The Bucket List," the students created a list of 50 hope-for accomplishments, and then went to work accomplishing them.

The list defied simple description, and included Kaylee being duct-taped to a wall, and the duo sending shoes to the needy in Zimbabwe.

"We'll keep working on the list, even when the class is done," Habich said.

McKaylin Susen and Jennifer Einsenheim took their fascination with television in a different

direction, doing research on what is really involved in crime scene investigation.

“We both thought it would be a cool job, so we began doing the research. I like science,” McKaylin said.

That involved getting real supplies from a detective in the Cedarburg Police Department.

“It turned out to be a lot more work than we ever thought it would, but it is something I might want to go into after school,” Jennifer said.

That hands-on approach to career exploration is part of the motivation behind the class, Luedtke said.

“We know that students, who are in K-12 programs now, will face a much different world of careers and work than we currently face. As adults, these students will not only be likely to change jobs six, seven times or more, but entire career paths,” he said.

“In addition to the structure of the core subjects and exposure to the arts, we need to give students the tools they will need to become life-long learners. This course is designed to give students the opportunity to direct their learning as they research something they have wondered about, want to learn more about, or have a passion for.”

Maggie Parker used the seminar to research dog sledding, going to the extreme of getting in touch with the director of the famed Iditerod race.
She created a Web site and learned about the dog breeds and training.

“I now realize there is a lot more to dog sledding than getting some dogs and showing up for a race,” Maggie said.

A passion for baseball was the springboard for the seminar prepared by Jake Dupey and Marty Franzkowiak.

The research included uncovering how the game has changed over the years, especially with the evolution of equipment.

They also prepared slow-motion video of games, comparing changes in pitching and batting approaches over the years.

OZAUKEE MIDDLE SCHOOL students Devin Fowler and Jordan Jacobs did their eighth-grade seminar on great photographers, studying their lives and mimicking their style. Students presented 45 different research projects. Photo by Sam Arendt