

Teasley Middle students hold mock ‘murder trial’

Kayla Elder

Teasley Middle School students gathered with technology in hand in the media center Friday to conduct a “murder trial” to find whether their defendant was guilty or insane.

Taking lesson plans to a new level, eighth-grade teachers Dr. Jennifer Reynolds and Greg Koch led students in a mock trial based on “The Tell-Tale Heart,” a short story written by Edgar Allan Poe in 1843.

“Our goal is to focus on the content standards, but make it engaging for the students and to integrate technology,” Reynolds said.

The trial included several roles that students applied to fill.

“We wanted to take it to another level. We had them fill out applications for roles, so they had to apply and tell us what they were interested in and what qualified them for the role and how it would further develop their skills in certain areas,” Reynolds said. “We wanted it to challenge them.”

There was a prosecution team and defense law firm with paralegal secretaries, assistant attorneys and lead attorney. Students could also be witnesses, including two arresting officers, a neighbor, psychiatrist and defendant, who was the accused caretaker of the short story.

For those students not keen on speaking in front of crowds, they could become newspaper reporters and television news reporters.

“This has been going on a week, so we had newspaper reporters reporting up to the trial so students with paper were writing their final reports, and we had a film crew,” Reynolds said.

The content objective of the project was for students to be able to analyze textual evidence in a short story and the language objective was for them to be able to defend a claim using Microsoft Innovative Educator strategies.

“Everyone here is trained in MIE strategies, so we tried to incorporate strategies that they can use to collaborate. The full collaboration was done using OneNote, where the students can go in and document their learning,” Reynolds said.

Reynolds and Koch partnered their resource and advanced language arts classes with community leaders to utilize literary knowledge with real world application.

“We did this last year, but our goal this year was to make it more technology based and for them to collaborate with the technology they had,” Reynolds said. “This was their end product and they did incredible. They took quotes from the text so it was all text based. Our final goal was to cite textual evidence that strongly supports and analyzes the text. They took it a step further in their higher depth of knowledge to apply it and evaluate it.”

The students even had a live Twitter feed going during the mock trial on Friday.

“They created everything, including the script. We had a few templates, police reports, plea documents and they took the lead,” Reynolds said. “Our students have been tweeting just to connect with other community members.”

The mock trial featured Judge John Cline as the judge, Mary Stewart Brannam as prosecutor lead attorney, Audrey Mullen as defense lead attorney and Matthew Azaroff as the defendant or the caretaker.

Sponsors of this project include Koch, Reynolds, Cline and Attorney Jessica Long.

http://www.tribuneledgernews.com/local_news/teasley-middle-students-hold-mock-murder-trial/article_2e86309a-9d78-11e6-b883-df0acf74c04e.html