

10 YEARS OF STORIES



STUDENTS JOURNEY AROUND A GEO-MAZING WORLD

In Mary Trichel's 6th grade World Cultures class at Atascocita Middle School, students have the whole world in their hands. By this writing, North America is probably in their stomachs.

Edible maps made from Rice Krispie Treats, including such topographical landmarks as Hershey Kisses symbolizing Mt. McKinley are just one of the innovative and enduring ways that students learn about geography.

Since 2005, the Humble Independent School District Education Foundation has supported Mrs. Trichel's program, **It's a Geo-Mazing World**, where students journey around the globe utilizing all five senses.

Tasting the maps, permitted only *after* correctly answering an oral quiz, remains a favorite learning experience for the students, says Mrs. Trichel.

"We're teaching them geographic literacy," Trichel explains about the curriculum she designed and implements with Priscilla Kovacik.

"When students start this class, some may not be able to identify a specific country on the map," she continues.

"When they leave, they not only are able to locate that country but they also can tell you something about its people and its culture."

Lessons learned in her 6th grade classroom provide a solid (and occasionally, edible) foundation for the HISD 8th grade U.S. History and 9th grade World Geography curricula.

Students begin their around-the-world trek with a self-made passport at the start of the school year. From there, they visit ports of call through extensive research on the class computers, selected regional literature, guest speakers, peer instruction from the 8th grade language classes and even the mummification of a grocery-store chicken.

“That lesson is a highlight for the students,” Trichel says. “Every new school year I get asked about the chicken and every year we do it to show the students how the Ancient Egyptians buried their dead.”

“It’s a long, smelly process but it’s branded into their memories. They love it. More importantly, they understand how and why the Egyptians did what they did.”

The chicken, along with other supplies and books, is purchased with funds provided by the HISD Educational Foundation. The funds allow students to create 3-D globes using beach balls and papier mache’, which are later used to research alternative energy sources. They construct vertical, as opposed to horizontal, timelines of World War II and study the countries involved and the lasting effects of global conflict. They have chopstick relays and make origami. They use sand trays to demonstrate their understanding of geographical terms like *isthmus*, *archipelago* and *fjord*. They have scavenger hunts using latitude and longitude. And, they investigate environmental impacts on world landmarks.

Lessons in Trichel’s classroom provide a diversely talented student body with opportunities outside a standardized test to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

Citing a “need for alternative performance assessments for our students of differing needs and talents,” Trichel and Kovacik grade their students through a variety of measures, not just written exams and papers. Research and collaboration are valued heavily.

“We do deep reading and deep research,” says Trichel, who lists some favorite websites and online blogs used in her class. “We use technology all the time to find answers.”

“The brain is a toolkit,” concludes Trichel. “The kids already have the kit. Our job is to fill it with the right tools.”

The Humble ISD Education Foundation, in over ten years of existence, has awarded more than \$4.28 million to Humble ISD educators to support innovative classroom enrichment projects. To ensure projects like these continue for students in Humble ISD, please visit www.humbleisd.foundation.org

