Hello from MJHS,

You may or may not have already heard from your son or daughter that we’re doing a 3rd quarter project in L.A. that is very 21st century.  The goal for a 21st century project is to prepare students for the realistic applications for skills that they will find in the workplace.  This project goal is to create a personalized learning experience for each student, one that comes from their own designs, but in the end, is put together in a traditional presentation format for an authentic audience.  The presentation component will mostly be a glorified show-and-tell on a website they’ll create during our class time, but will require a variety of language skills, applications, and will create a genuine learning opportunity different than they may have experienced in traditional classrooms.

Students will spend time in L.A. class over the next 6 weeks researching and documenting information, updating blog entries, attaching photos and videos, and gathering survey information.  They’ll learn how to properly collect and document research through an online service called NoodleTools.  Through their reading and research, we’ll visit our common core standards for reading informative texts and focus on identifying central ideas and summarizing. They’re going to learn how to create a website through a website called Weebly, and in doing so create a blog that will be updated every Tuesday and Thursday.  The blog writing will be exercises in sentence variety, paragraph structure, and proofing.  It will also be an exercise in writing for an extended authentic audience over a long period of time.  We’re going to spice things up with complex and compound sentences and learn to have a greater control over phrases and clauses.  This is just a short composition of a long list of common core objectives that the students will select from every Wednesday to update the project.  These “basics” as I’m referring to them will be the structure for the project and the students will be the motivating force.

Student project ideas seem be to centering around 3 categories.  These documentaries are on challenges, funds, or identity.  An example of a “challenge” one student may select is to walk her dog for 2 miles a day and document the experience, fitness, and details.  A “funds” idea might have something to do with baked goods and raising funds for a charity.  I have one student interested in a church dinner party in which the proceeds go to a canned food shelter.  The last “identity” category is about creating a webpage that provides the details about something that they’re interested in.  I have a boy who might create a webpage for the MJHS wrestling team, do a bio of each wrestler with testimony information, and include pictures and videos of their wrestling season.  I’ll have more information on these categories on my website after Monday of next week as more survey information comes on from the students.  Please speak with your son or daughter about the project and help them in thinking ahead and planning.  I hope to have the projects be minimal cost and no at all about money, but there may be some costs associated to the project depending on a student’s idea.  I’ve encouraged all students to speak with their parents about the project and these details to make sure that you’re on board.  I believe that this is a team effort between the three of us.

I’ll be dropping updates through email often enough, but feel free to email me back if you have any questions or would like to discuss the project otherwise.  Or, if you’d rather, I can arrange an open office time to discuss the project over a cup of coffee.

I can’t tell you how excited I am for this new adventure for the Green team.  I’ve lost plenty of sleep over the details already.  Below you can find a link to a dedicated website I’ve built to track the progress of the project as a whole and as it develops.  Please visit it throughout the progress and help support our kids in our community.

In the end, we’ll be putting on these presentations as part of class however I do plan on hosting a project symposium at the end of the 3rd quarter that will be open to members of the community.  The symposium will be a collection of select student presentations (a combination of my judge’s choice and hopefully some very stern convincing).  Students will turn teacher for this grand presentation and put on a glorified show-and-tell on the highlights of their project.  The symposium date will be announced later in the quarter as I work out the details with the busy MJHS schedule.

I hope you’re willing to be part of this new 21st century-style project with me.  Please let me know if you have any questions.

Ben VandenBerg
MJHS

HERE IS OUR LINK, CHECK IT OUT!

http://vandenbergprojects.weebly.com

P.S. There are alternatives to this project, but this is way cooler!  If you insist however, I’m happy to pull open my drawer of chapter exercises and worksheets. (or find some other kind of compromise):0)

Please know that I will be promoting student’s webpages and projects to members of the community. I’ve asked students not to put any personal information on their webpages. My hopes are to help students better understand the awesome community that they live in and to take advantage or learn about the complexities of using the resources that are available to them.

Please have a conversation with our son/daughter about the details of their project concept, guide them with the love that only a parent can have, and fill out the following survey information below.

Student’s webpage concept and idea is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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I am informed and aware that my son or daughter is designing a webpage for L.A. They may be working on the computer for an increased amount of time as this project may require an intense passion to do so. I am going to check with my son or daughter periodically on the progress of their project.

Student signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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I did send out an email with this letter attached and a link to my page, but if you did not get that and if you are interested in updates through email please provide your email address(es) bellow:

Yes, I would like updates sent to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Nope, I’m not interested in your updates.