

POMPEII-JAMES RIVER Mural

Caroline Long

In Goochland County, Virginia, where I teach, we are required to set a technology goal each year.

Goochland is interested in its teachers changing pedagogy and classroom practice through the teaching element, rather than just the tool.

John Hendron, supervisor of instructional technology and web-master, each year invites us to grow in this ever-changing field. To quote John: "G-21 is Goochland County's effort to bring twenty-first century skill awareness into the culture of the county's schools. We're doing this by

replacing our previous initiative of individual technology goals for each teacher with a twenty-first century blueprint that serves as a model, high-quality lesson plan for teachers, built around a project-based approach. The G-21 framework builds upon the ideas for twenty-first century skills from a variety of resources."

Mr. Hendron drafted the G-21 framework as a means to change instructional practice. Goochland took our already established framework of technology goals and expanded it. The new plan places more

focus on the methods of instruction and puts technology in the rightful place of supporting high-quality instruction.

A Call for Collaboration

As teachers, we were encouraged to think about our projects within collaborative groups at our schools. This was an art teacher's dream! I sent out a school-wide e-mail to invite teachers of any subject to collaborate with me on a project. Deborah Blackburn, our Latin teacher, approached me with an idea on Pompeii. Because the Latin



class and my art class met at the same time, we thought it was opportune for us to conceive of a unique idea that would be historical, hands on, and a creative collaboration.

A Commonality

After much thought, the commonality between ancient Pompeii and Goochland High School became the natural environment. Pompeii had Mt. Vesuvius and Goochland has the James River. Both flowed. One erupted. One flooded in the late 1970s but still flows.

Field Trip

Our idea was to learn about the culture of Pompeii and correlate it to the culture of GHS. Good fortune was on our side as the National Gallery of Art was showing the blockbuster exhibition, "Pompeii and the Roman Villa: Art and Culture around the Bay of Naples." So we hopped on the James River Bus Lines (we couldn't help but notice the irony of this) for an eventful trip to Washington, DC.

Back in the Artroom

There are eight tables in the art studio. Knowing that the James River was going to be the basis for our project, I divided the shape of the river into eight segments as it formed the southern boundary of Goochland.

Working together, each team of art and Latin students on a theme for their part of the mural and began sketching out their ideas. Ideas

included entertainment, sports, fashion, music, the weather, and the diversity of the GHS population. The Latin students provided the historical component

through a digital presentation on Pompeian entertainment, the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, religion, water supply, history of the excavations, building techniques, town planning, and architecture.

Meanwhile, in the ceramic studio, I made more than 5000 tesserae on the slab-roller for use in the mural. We began the project in October, meeting once a week to glaze the tesserae in

a variety of colors, and then drawing each teams' designs. Students applied mastic to their individual tesserae and placed them on a plywood base.

To keep the diversity and sense of ownership in each segment, students created a continuous red line through the center of each segment and a yellow line as a border. (Red and yellow are our school colors.)

The last tesserae was laid on April 30. We ended our G-21 project with a Greco-Roman Feast accompanied by the digital presentations, a group photo of the students in front of our mural, and a signing ceremony for a tablet in the shape of Goochland County that occupies the space below the mural. ☺

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Students compare characteristics of visual arts within a particular historical period or style with ideas, issues, or themes in the humanities or sciences.

WEB LINK

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