
Teacher brings Germany into the classroom

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STUART — There is less separation of church and state in Germany, where a crucifix can be found on the walls of public schools.

German students speak multiple languages fluently.

Perhaps the most significant difference between American education and Germany's learning process is German instructors spend a lot of time in the classroom.

Amy Kessler, a fifth- through eighth-grade teacher at St. Joseph Catholic School in Stuart, noted these distinctions as she

participated in a two-week travel seminar to Germany this past summer and is sharing her experiences with her students. She specifically wants to incorporate her newfound knowledge into the World War II curriculum.

"Many students have not had the opportunity to travel, so my experiences allow them to travel vicariously. Trips such as this allow me to transcend the textbook learning, and first-hand knowledge adds some spice to the curriculum," she said.

Kessler was one of 100 social studies educators selected to

tour Germany through the Transatlantic Outreach Program. TOP is a public/private partnership initiative of the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Goethe-Institut, Deutsche Bank and the Robert Bosch Stiftung.

Kelsey Smith, assistant coordinator of TOP, said students have difficulty understanding history, as it seems so far removed from them. TOP uses Germany as a basis of comparison and contrast to internationalize social studies curriculum.

"For students, it somehow becomes less fact-memorizing and fosters that healthy interest in truly understanding some of the

most remarkable events that have taken place not so very long ago. Seeing photos of their teachers not only makes the experience of learning that much more engaging and real, but also encourages students to get out there and see it themselves" Smith said.

The teachers also met with executives of the Federal Foreign Office as well as German teachers, students and authors. Participants toured the Reichstag and visited various examples of German culture and industry.

For more information, visit www.goethe.de/top.
