

## CORBIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS – PRESS RELEASE

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Corbin Fourth Grade Students Connect with Classroom in Hong Kong

“Does he have brown eyes?” “Is her hair blonde?” “Is he wearing glasses?”

These questions were asked as part of a “Guess Who” game played between an American classroom and a classroom in Hong Kong last Wednesday...the students played the game as if they were in the same school.

They weren’t even in the same country.

Mrs. Brittany Owens’ fourth grade class at Corbin Elementary connected with a class at St. Lorraine School, Guangzhou Panyu District, Hong Kong via videoconference at the Corbin Center.

“When asked to participate in the video conference with Mr. Bong’s class at York English Primary School and Kindergarten I knew I could not pass it up. Although I was apprehensive and a little nervous, I hoped the event would have a great impact on Mr. Bong, his students, our school, and my students. The impact that was received was more than I could ever anticipate,” Owens said.

The connection was initiated by Literacy Connections Coordinator Darva Gibbs. About 4 years ago, Gibbs had a Chinese student arrive in her 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class who had only been in the United States for a few months and did not speak any English.

“In trying to find resources to help this child, I contacted the school where we thought she had been enrolled,” Gibbs said. “Through a twist of fate, I found even more opportunities. The head master, Chun Bong, was shocked and fascinated to hear a person with an Appalachian dialect asking how to help a non-English speaking child.”

“He asked if we had the capability to videoconference and our relationship with our new friends had began,” Gibbs continued.

Due to the heavy government restrictions and censorship, this is the first time since then that Gibbs has been able to work with the Hong Kong school.

“As a part of the Improving Literacy through School Libraries Federal Grant obtained by Mark Daniels, we have expanded our program into Literacy Connections,” Gibbs said.

Mrs. Owens volunteered to work with Gibbs on the project and due to unforeseen circumstances, the videoconference was pulled together in only four short days.

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“Our technical support person, Rob Miller, worked like a madman to make this happen,” Gibbs said. “He was testing link-ups and removing barriers to our system that will allow foreign transmissions.”

The American students introduced the students in Hong Kong to the Hand Jive and the Hong Kong students taught the Corbin fourth graders how to do Tai Chi.

“It was pretty amazing!” – Katie Hopper, a student in Mrs. Owens’ class.

“Our link literally took an ‘act of congress’ since we went through the Hal Rogers Center in Somerset to make the connection,” Gibbs said. “We appreciate everyone who contributed to making this connection a success.”

Both classrooms also shared their pets and they were able to ask questions about their respective schools and education system. The Corbin students were able to interview Mr. Bong after his students had left, it was this segment that had the biggest impact on Mrs. Owens’ class. Mr. Bong shared how reading was taught at his school, using both Chinese and English literature...Mrs. Owen’s class learned about similarities and differences.

“Seeing you (Mr. Bong) with all those kids looking up to you it just made my day.” – Courtney Wrinn, a student in Mrs. Owens’ class.

Gibbs plans to continue the relationship with Bong’s private school to enhance literacy in our schools.

“Seeing you (Mr. Bong) with all those kids looking up to you it just made my day.” – Courtney Wrinn, a student in Mrs. Owens’ class.

Videoconferencing facilities are available for community use at the Corbin Center. Call 261-7739 for details on scheduling a videoconference.