

Wednesday, January 19, 2005

Video visit precedes real one

Students welcome their counterparts in Dijon, France

By William Croyle
Enquirer staff writer

Mimi Hagedorn knows how to keep her students excited about learning.

The French teacher at Bishop Brossart High School brought in former Xavier University basketball star and current NBA player Romain Sato for a day last year to teach French.

This past fall, she took her classes to a Civil War site so they'd be better prepared to talk about local history with some French students they'll host this spring.

On Tuesday, they met those students through a videoconference - technology that blew the kids away.

"This was really cool," said junior Kari Becker, 17. "The kids are thousands of miles away and we can see them."

The conference was held downtown at the law office of Dinsmore and Shohl. It was set up by the French-American Chamber of Commerce Greater Cincinnati Chapter.

Sixteen students from Bishop Brossart, five from Villa Madonna Academy, a dozen at duPont Manual High School in Louisville and 40 at Lycee Charles de Gaulle in Dijon, France, hooked up for the two-hour call.

Students talked to each other with microphones while looking at each other on a large screen.

There was about a two-second delay in the transmission, but the sound and video transmissions were clear.

"It was amazing," said junior Taylor Slusher from Villa Madonna. "It's definitely a great advance in technology."

The French students will come to Kentucky for two weeks in April, staying with students here and in Louisville. In June, the American students go to France for 19 days.

"Just the recognition of their partners personalizes the whole experience - it hit home with them today," said Hagedorn.

"It takes it out of the classroom, out of the textbook and into the world," added Jacqueline Van Houten, world language consultant for the Kentucky Department of Education.

Hagedorn does the exchange every two years. This is the fifth time with de Gaulle.

During the conference, the American students introduced themselves in French. The French students spoke only in English.

"I've never been to the USA," said student Margaux Fritsch. "I'm looking forward to discovering as many things as possible."

Christen Kelly, a senior at Bishop Brossart, has been e-mailing Marie Lambert-Muyard, the student she's paired with.

"I want to improve my language skills and learn about a different culture," said Christen. "And Marie likes to do theater and dance and so do I. She'll be here for my senior play and she's very excited."

E-mail wcroyle@enquirer.com



Kari Becker, 17, (left) and Dan Weber, 17, students from Bishop Brossart High School, along with Taylor Slusher, 16, (behind Kari) of Villa Madonna Academy, show photos of area landmarks to exchange students in France.