

# Comal Independent School District

## NEWS RELEASE

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### Startzville fifth graders help peers 'sail' America through class project

A wonderful climate, great farming and delicious food were Cameron Stewart's selling points to convince her peers to book a trip to the Southern Colonies through her JCM Travel Agency.

"There is great food to eat including corn salsa, deer meat and beef jerky," Stewart told her potential clients. "Also, the trip is only \$150 in colonial money, and it covers everything including food, your stay at the hotel and your ship tour."



Stewart, a fifth grader at Startzville Elementary School, was in competition with other travel agencies, or groups of classmates rather, in booking a trip to one of the regions of the thirteen colonies.

The competition was part of the fifth grade class' Sail America Expo in which the students teamed up, created a travel agency with a name and logo, and then designed a perfect trip to the thirteen colonies. Agencies chose which of the three regions they would like to concentrate on and brainstormed what characteristics of their chosen region would interest travelers.

Cec Pearson, Startzville teacher and Sail America Expo coordinator, said this challenging project exceeded anything she dreamed of.

"The kids took hold of it and ran like wildfire," she said. "They learned everything I hoped they would and so much more. Every student was successful. Even

the ones who are typically so quiet and don't speak much were involved and having fun. It was one of the best learning activities we've done."

After putting together the perfect vacation to the thirteen colonies, the students then prepared their presentations for their third and fourth grade peers. As part of the presentation, the students used Mac laptops to create Keynote presentations that included pictures of the colonies, information on the region they would be traveling to, and trip costs.

Fifth graders Hannah Balcar, Dalton Carson and Regan Mickey prepared a vacation to the middle colonies through their Top Gun Travel Agency, and Mickey said her favorite part of the project was putting together the Keynote presentation.

"Making the slide show in Keynote was a lot of fun," she said. "It was pretty cool to set up. We learned a lot about the middle colonies when we were putting it together."

Pearson said the technology portion of the project made it that much more fun for the students.

"The technology the district has placed in our hands gave the students daily access to the computers to actually work on their projects fluidly and not just when they could get to the computer lab," she said. "Every day they came in ready and excited to get going. This is the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and we need to be teaching the kids of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the tools of the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

Startzville third and fourth graders visited each decorated booth or travel agency where they were enticed with foods, incentives and discounts. They were given tickets to "vote" or book a trip with their favorite travel agency. One travel agency from each of the five class periods were named winners.

"This was such a great way to learn about the thirteen colonies because it was totally student-centered," said Pearson. "Because of all the phases involved, there was repetition in the learning, but each piece was so unique that the students didn't see it that way. They really enjoyed this project and thought the whole thing was really fun."

IN PHOTO: Startzville Elementary School fifth grader Cameron Stewart (right) tried to win the vote of fourth grader Morgan Tunstall for a trip to the southern colonies through her JCM Travel Agency as part of the Sail America Expo class project.