

Web connects students with distant voyagers

Class tracks journey, chats with mariners circumnavigating Africa

BY CHERYL BURKE
 NEWS-TIMES

CAPE CARTERET — When White Oak Elementary School art teacher Suzanne Wallace, an avid sailor, was selected to sail this summer through the Mediterranean Sea aboard a 600 B.C. replica of a Phoenician ship, she wanted to incorporate her students in the experience.

"Part of our mission as crewmembers is to act as representatives for the voyage and work toward educational goals, which we have been doing all year," said Ms. Wallace. "Due to technology, we (her students) have been able to travel the world

this year, following their tracking, blogs, videos, newspaper articles, etc.," she said.

Since the beginning of the school year, her art students, as well as the entire school, have been following the progress of the 70-foot *Phoenicia*, which launched in August 2008 from Syria on a three-year expedition to recreate the first circumnavigation of Africa, believed to have been accomplished by Phoenician mariners 2,600 years ago.

A multinational crew of sailors, artisans and others has manned the ship, which will end its journey this summer when it

docks back in Syria. Ms. Wallace will join the crew for the last leg of its journey.

The crew includes a shipboard artist, Danielle Eubank of Los Angeles and London, assigned to document the journey in a similar fashion that ancient mariners documented their travels — through drawings and paintings.

Ms. Wallace, who has communicated with Ms. Eubank all year, saw a golden opportunity to create an art project for her third-grade students, who have been studying about reflection and abstraction, two concepts

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White Oak Elementary School third-grader Indira Brown shows her painting to International artist Danielle Eubank, who is the shipboard artist for the *Phoenicia*, a replica of an ancient Phoenician sailing vessel that's on a three-year expedition. (Cheryl Burke photo)

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used by Ms. Eubank aboard ship.

So for the last two weeks, via a free call, chat and video program on the Internet called Skype, Ms. Eubank has been working with the students. The international artist recently came off the ship to paint some of the works from her travels in her Los Angeles studio. She will then rejoin the ship.

From her studio, Ms. Eubank has shared tips on painting landscapes and reflections, sharing examples of her work with the budding artists. In turn, students have created artwork, which Ms. Eubank critiques during conferences.

Once students complete their paintings, they will be featured in a student art show that will go up April 1 at the Western Carteret Library in Cape Carteret through April.

Friday, third-grader Indira Brown held up her painting of mountains for Ms. Eubank to see. Indira planned to add the reflection of the mountains to her painting this week.

"Very nice," said Ms. Eubank, whose image was projected on a monitor as well as on a large screen.

In addition to viewing student artwork, Ms. Eubank shared her experiences aboard the ship and answered questions about her profession.

"Do you like painting better on the ship or in your studio?" asked one student.

Ms. Eubank admitted it was easier to paint in her studio because of the challenges she faced aboard ship from things like wind and wave motion.

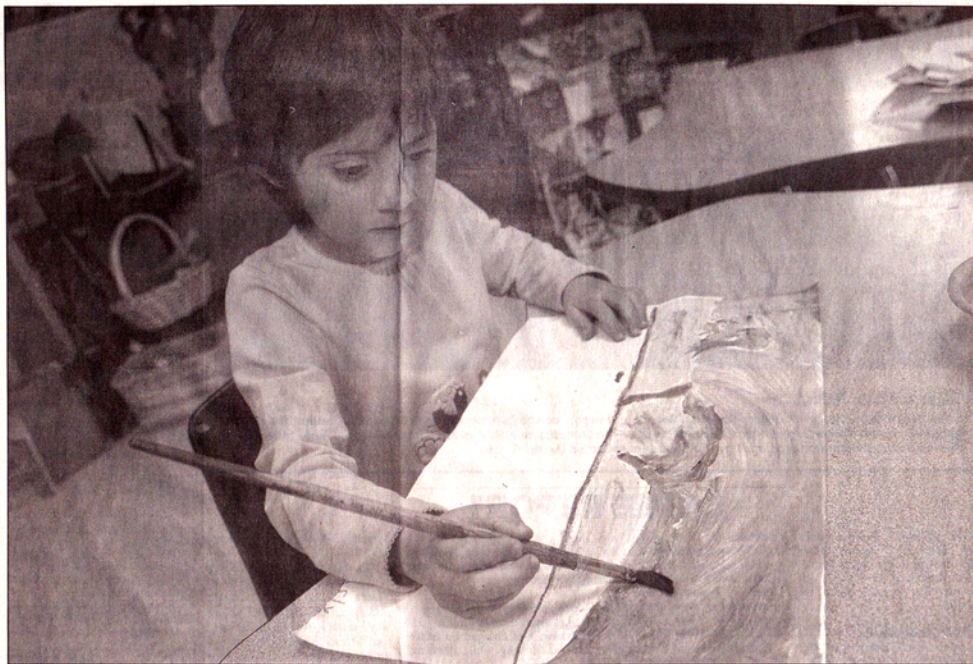
"Is it hard to paint a reflection of a boat?" asked another student. Ms. Eubank said it was.

"What age did you paint your first reflection picture?" asked third-grader Max Egerton.

"At 33 — a long time ago," she jokingly said.

Ms. Eubank also talked briefly about the artists that have inspired her work, such as Picasso, Michelangelo and Matisse.

She encouraged students to not get frustrated when they



White Oak Elementary School third-grader Carly Cole works on a painting she created as part of a project with an International artist who travels the world aboard a replica of an ancient Phoenician ship. (Cheryl Burke photo)

work on their reflection paintings.

"The most important thing is that you have fun," she said. "It will be hard work, but that's what makes it rewarding when you're finished."

Third-grader Gabby Jeltema said she has enjoyed doing the project with Ms. Eubank.

"I think the project is really fun," she said. "I like her talking about the *Phoenicia* and that they (ancient shipboard artists) had to paint what they saw."

Third-grade classroom teacher Julia Page said the project has helped her students with several subjects.

"It helps them with geog-

raphy, social studies and art," she said.

Third-grade teacher Averi Henderson agreed.

"They're also talking about careers," she said. "It's great that they're talking to someone who has accomplished so much in their career."

Ms. Eubank said this is the first time she has worked with a group of students and has enjoyed her experience.

"It's a lot of fun," she said. "It's great for the students to talk with an actual artist."

Ms. Eubank added she would be willing to work with other classroom teachers.

Ms. Wallace said she's look-

ing forward to her trip this summer, when she will get to work with Ms. Eubank. She's also grateful for the opportunity to sail on the historic voyage, which is headed by Philip Beale, a British businessman,

shipbuilder and adventurer.

"I come from a family of sailors," she said. "I found out last spring about the project and wanted to go last year but I couldn't get off school. When I applied as a crewmember and they found out I was a teacher and had my captain's license, they were excited."

Ms. Wallace added that technology has opened up many new educational opportunities

for classroom teachers.

"There's not very many students who get to see an actual international artist at work in their studio," she said. "But now with Skype you can go into

their studio by phone without taking an actual field trip to the studio."

For more information about the *Phoenicia*, go to: phoenicia.org.uk.