



DoDEA Pacific

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## Google Apps for Education offers new opportunities for student engagement and collaboration

By Lawrence Torres III

Students and teachers throughout DoDEA Pacific now have access to a powerful suite of online software and services from a world leader in online search and cloud-based technology: Google. Designed especially for educational environments ranging from K-12 schools to the university level, Google Apps for Education (GAfE) fosters unique opportunities for student engagement and collaboration. From synchronized documents and communication across multiple computers and mobile devices to interactive group projects to real-time homework support among peers, GAfE makes teaching and learning “anytime, anywhere, and on virtually any device” a reality.

Teacher and student-created documents, calendars and communications can be stored “in the cloud” on Google servers making them accessible from a PC at school, a laptop at home, or even a smart phone during an overnight sports trip.

While DoDEA has offered student email accounts for over eight years and various online collaboration tools in more recent years, GAfE provides a unified suite of free applications that many students and teachers are already familiar with through their personal Google accounts.

Students and teachers can make changes to documents, spreadsheets and presentations together and communicate ideas in real-time. Changes to documents are organized and logged so they can be reviewed later to see the progression of an idea or online assignment over time.

“By placing productivity software into the cloud we are now better able to foster a collaborative environment for our stakeholders,” said Evan Scherr, an educational technologist at E.J. King Middle/High School in Sasebo, Japan. Scherr, who recently became a Google Certified Teacher following a self-funded trip to a Google

training event in London, believes cloud-based technology like GAfE reflects the way schools, businesses and even government institutions operate today. “GAfE allows us, if used properly, a safe sandbox, or walled garden, to teach our students how to become digital leaders and take ownership over their digital identity. GAfE is relevant to the rapidly changing world that we live in today in the sense that we have a platform that can allow us to accomplish so much more with our learners and with each other.”

Clare Huff, a learning impairment teacher at E.J. King M/HS, began by exploring some of the Google Apps features to better communicate with his students, organize work and projects, and simplify data collection. Huff also watched some videos and looked at some Pinterest ideas of how it can be used to help in the classroom.

“GAfE has so much potential for collaboration with peers and getting

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information out to parents and students,” said Huff, who has been teaching for seven years. “I hope more teachers will begin to use Google Apps so that we can all connect with each other and our students on the same platform.”

Huff added that his favorite feature is the ability to work with Google Apps on a mobile phone, iPad, or any internet-connected device or computer.

“I like that I can send quick e-mails to students about upcoming meetings and answer their questions even when I’m not at school,” Huff added. “I have been able to use Google Apps for freshmen and sophomore class meetings by getting students to vote on t-shirt designs, fundraising and community service projects using Google Forms. It allows all of the class to get information and make their vote count even when they can’t attend a meeting. Also, the Google calendar has been great since you can share events and even add assignment due dates to calendars and push it out to students.”

GAfE is both cost and ad-free, includes 30 gigabytes of online storage, and provides content filtering to reduce the possibility of inappropriate use. The apps are used by over 20 million K-12 and university students around the globe including seven million in the U.S.

Beyond the classroom, Google Apps are also used by government agencies, five million businesses, and a wide range of other organizations around the globe.

Although DoDEA began exploring the idea of adopting GAfE more than two years ago, legal negotiations over the terms of use and an extensive security review were necessary before the rollout could begin. GAfE is voluntary for DoDEA teachers and is only intended for use by students in grades 3-12. Each school has flexibility to implement GAfE according to their own unique needs by disabling certain features or enabling features as needed or over time.

And while GAfE it is a highly-secure system, DoDEA officials noted in a memorandum last fall that it is not approved for storing personally identifiable information such as grades, health data, personal economic condition, family information or any other information that could be considered demeaning, abusing or harassing.

GAfE’s email client known as Gmail allows students and teachers to communicate directly or in small groups and is limited solely to those within the DoDEA directory.

Monitoring safe and appropriate use of any online resource is a shared responsibility. Parents are welcome to obtain their child’s password and monitor their activity on GAfE. If a parent has a specific concern or the student will not divulge their password, the school’s educational technologist can reset and provide a new password to the parent.

Policies and expectations for appropriate student use of GAfE are covered under DoDEA’s Computer and Internet Access Agreement that families complete when they register for their children for school. Inappropriate use has not been a problem so far for DoDEA Pacific schools that have started using GAfE and students are already seeing the benefits.

“With a google account, you literally have free access to everything,” said Melissa Howell, an eighth-grade student at E.J. King M/HS, “I personally like how I don’t have to rush to get things done on the school computers. I can simply go home, log in, and keep working. Also, I can easily contact anybody from our school.”

Teachers have also taken notice of how GAfE can be used to for project-based learning. “Students can collaborate on a document in real time,” said Cameron Taylor, world languages teacher at E.J. King M/HS. “Let’s say three students are working on a group project. Each student is at home and online at the same time and looking at the same document. Each student can make comments and edit the document in real time.

“If a mistake is made, they can go to the history feature and return to a previous edit. The students often share their work with me. Sometimes they are working on a document and I can comment on their work in real time and help them virtually.

“This is a great tool that is easily integrated into any subject and can promote student learning through inquiry and collaboration,” added Taylor, who has been teaching for 16 years. “I encourage teachers to make time to team with their ET and look at ways to use these tools to promote the inquiry and collaboration that our twenty-first century world expects of us.”

Eric Ebert, an educational technologist at Bechtel Elementary School, said another advantage of GAfE documents for teachers is the chat, comment, and revision histories, “When they’re finished, they simply send the link for the file to their teacher and the teacher

has the ability to ‘see the revision history’ and review the entire creation process of that file, including which students contributed to it and when.”

The teacher can use this to verify that the students actually worked as a group for the project instead of a single student doing most of the work

Ebert also noted that GAfE offers innovative ways for military-connected parents to stay engaged in their child’s learning. After a recent school event, a Marine parent asked Ebert if GAfE could be used to help his son with his homework since his unit was working long hours and he rarely arrived home before 10 p.m. With Ebert’s help, the parent was able to use his personal Google account to connect with a shared document from his son’s GAfE account. Now the student can get real-time help from his dad even when working late at the office or deployed downrange.

For all the sophisticated features, the success of GAfE in DoDEA Pacific ultimately depends on people power. Helping students unlock their full potential and fully prepare for college and career success remains the goal. Providing high-tech tools like GAfE for modern learning styles supports that goal by strengthening student engagement, digital literacy, and civic participation—both online and off.

To help teachers get started with Google Apps for Education, DoDEA Pacific Educational Technologist Lori Dean created a support site with project samples and training resources:

<https://dpi.pac.dodea.edu/ed/programareas/et/SitePages/GAFE.aspx>

More information about Google Apps for Education is also available here: <http://www.google.com/enterprise/apps/education/>

To learn more about how to become a Google Certified Teacher:

<http://www.google.com/edu/programs/google-teacher-academy/> ■







# DoDEA Pacific student, Stella German, named finalist in White House Student Film Festival

By Charly Hoff, APR

**W**ith more than 2,000 nationwide entries in the first-ever White House Student Film Festival, McCool Elementary/Middle School fifth-grader Stella German overcame very long odds to be named a finalist and earn a special invitation to personally screen her film for White House officials on Feb 28.

"I am looking forward to meeting the President, Mrs. Obama and their kids. I also look forward to watching my video in the White House theater," said German, who flew to Washington DC to visit the White House in a special ceremony for the finalists.

This is the first year for the nationwide contest which ran from Nov. 25, 2013 to Jan. 29, 2014. The competition was open to all K-12 students in the U.S. including students attending Department of Defense schools located around the globe.

Student films could not exceed three minutes and had to answer specific and complex questions: "What's your education story & how does technology and connectivity fit into how you learn at school or on your own? How do you imagine technology will change the educational experience for kids in the future?" Source: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2013/11/26/big-first-ever-white-house-student-film-festival>

Film entries were uploaded to YouTube and underwent an initial round of judging by a panel composed of White House staff members. Selected finalists, including German, were invited to attend a special screening at the White House in Washington, DC. The panel used the following criteria to select the winners: creativity in expression of the theme; originality of the submission, and; technical quality of the final video product.



Student winners received a special certificate and their films will be featured on the White House web site, YouTube channel, Vimeo, and other official social media pages.

In reflecting on her selection as a

finalist, German said, "I think that it is a great honor because there were over 2,000 students who entered this competition, and my film was selected to be viewed."

While German did most of the work herself, she did receive some assistance from Music Teacher Nicholas Trosclair at McCool E/MS, including separate sessions to record the song and video. "This was new territory for us, so we had to get creative. The hard part was figuring out how to align the video with the audio," said Trosclair, "After our two meetings during winter break, I transferred all the files for the music video to Stella's computer. Stella edited the actual music video [the final minute of the video] all by herself. I was blown away when I first saw it."

Fusing music and technology is a powerful approach to learning according to German, "I really enjoy music and technology because music really cheers me up. Since I'm used to making music videos, I can use that skill to make projects in school."

Trosclair agreed and said hands-on, active participation is more important than ever to how students learn today, "I feel as a teacher, I need to be sure not to get in the way of their potential ... students need to be equipped with the skills to be imaginative and creative in order to use what we teach them in ways we can't even imagine today. I try to create an atmosphere that allows students to use their imagination and be creative."

DoDEA provides a wide range of courses and extra-curricular opportunities in visual and performing arts across the Pacific including special intercultural exchange concerts and art exhibits, the Far East Honor Music Festival, Far East Jazz Festival, Far East Creative Expressions and the Far East Film and Entertainment Arts

Festival.

DoDEA Pacific also provides a variety of free musical instruments and sophisticated, industry-standard recording equipment and software for all schools. The recording capabilities are used regularly by music teachers to help provide students prompt feedback on their musical performances for reflection, analysis and improvement.

Trosclair said such resources were not available in other school systems where he taught prior to joining DoDEA a year ago, "This project would not have been possible in those other school systems. We did not have the resources or the technology. I feel very grateful to work in a school system that provides

students and teachers with the tools they need. Without these resources, we will never know what our kids are truly capable of. I hope this video shows adults what kids are capable of."

For her part, German is taking the exciting news in stride and remaining focused on the big picture, "I really want to be a doctor and also a professional singer, but I really need to study more math, science and other subjects so that I can be a doctor."

Whatever her chosen future career path, German will have a very special highlight on her resumé to treasure for years to come. ■

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/filmfestival>



McCool E/MS Music Teacher Nicholas Trosclair and Stella German





## White House announces selection of DoDEA Pacific teacher for prestigious national honor

By Lawrence Torres III

**M**arilyn Hawks, a third grade science teacher at Bechtel Elementary School in Okinawa, Japan, was selected as the 2012 DoDEA K-6 awardee of the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

Hawks was among 102 mathematics and science teachers named by President Obama on Dec. 20, 2013 for the prestigious PAEMST award which represents the highest national honor given to teachers of mathematics and science in the U.S. Each teacher was competitively selected by committees composed of prominent mathematicians, scientists, mathematics/science educators, district-level personnel, and classroom teachers.

Hawks said the PAEMST program process helped refine her teaching skills, which was a benefit for her students.

"I firmly believe that

encouraging children to wonder and ask questions about their environment leads to a lifelong curiosity and interest in science," said Hawks, who has been teaching for 36 years. "My classroom is filled with living critters, rocks, magnets, microscopes, and all things science. We are constantly asking questions and exploring the world around us."

Sheila Reed, also a third grade teacher at Bechtel ES, said her daughter Erin Walden never wanted to miss a day of school in third grade because she knew there would always be something interesting and exciting to learn each day with Hawks.

"Mrs. Hawks' habitat of hermit crabs, fish, frogs, turtles, a parakeet and silk worms is the class that students and their parents hope to be placed in," Reed said. "This type of environment, of course, provides stimulating learning opportunities, investigations, and the

chance for students to practice the responsibilities of caring for pets."

Reed said Hawks offered formal workshops in the district, gave countless hours of her own time to organize school-wide science fairs, set up various habitats for other classrooms and designed science centers for grade-level exploration days.

Walden said there are lots of reasons that kids who were in Hawks' class love science, but "one of those very important reasons is 'Mrs. Hawks taught them.'"

"Mrs. Hawks didn't teach out of the book as much as other teachers did," Walden said. "We learned by asking questions and then doing tests or experiments to find the answer. What I have discovered is that Mrs. Hawks is a spectacular scientist!"

Reed and Walden's comments were included in Hawks' three letters

of recommendation for the PAEMST submission. She also had to submit a resumé and a video component consisting of a videotaped classroom lesson corresponding to the topic or concept chosen and discussed in the Dimensions of Outstanding Teaching written response.

Hawk's 15-page response included her implementation of adaptive behavior studies which she observed during her visit to the Serengeti Plain in 2010, working together in small group settings in separate and distinct working stations, and the wearing of lab coats and its positive effects on each student which "demands focus and the application of scientifically-based behaviors learned and revisited throughout the year."

"I was raised on a farm in Washington state ... living on a farm in the first place really helped me," said Hawks, a Quincy, Wash. native. "These students want to know what is going on in the world. I want to help them find answers."

"I love it when kids come back to see me years later and say science is still their favorite subject," said Hawks. "I just had a prior student who is in the Air Force Academy visit and tell me he still loves science."

The Director of the National Science Foundation sent Hawks' recommendation to the Director of The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy where final selections were made. Hawks will receive her award at a Washington, D.C., on March 5. This year's winners can be found at

[http://www.nsf.gov/news/news\\_summ.jsp?cntn\\_id=129978&org=NSF&from=news](http://www.nsf.gov/news/news_summ.jsp?cntn_id=129978&org=NSF&from=news) ■





# Pacific Highlights



DoDEA Pacific HS students earned numerous accolades

## DoDEA Pacific students gain international government, leadership experience at Harvard Model Congress Asia

56 DoDEA Pacific students from 11 high schools joined more than 570 of their peers from 17 foreign countries for the Harvard Model Congress Asia Conference held in Hong Kong Jan. 9-12.

HMC Asia is a rigorous government simulation event for international students organized by Harvard students. DoDEA Pacific students attend HMC Asia as Far East delegates representing their schools' Model United Nations programs.

Read More: <http://bit.ly/1mJR1DU>

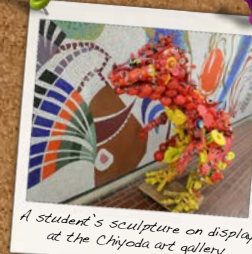


Photo courtesy of Angela Knight, Far East Press Corps

## Far East Journalism

Hosted by the New Sanno in Tokyo, Japan Feb. 3-6, Far East Journalism has been held annually for over 20 years. FEJ brings students from all over the Pacific together to learn and apply techniques in journalism, photography, broadcast news and yearbook layout.

Read More: <http://smu.gs/1g3OhFz>



A student's sculpture on display at the Chiyoda art gallery

## Far East Creative Expressions

DoDEA Pacific students and visitors view works of art on display in the Akihabara district of Tokyo during the 2013 Far East Creative Expressions Visual Arts Festival Dec. 19, 2013. Each year more than 100 student artists from DoDEA Pacific high schools join teaching and art professionals for an in-depth exploration of visual arts through painting, watercolor, printmaking, digital photography, jewelry design and mixed media.

Read More: <http://smu.gs/1huoXmV>



## NASA scientists visit Guam schools

A team from Airborne Tropical Tropopause EXperiment visited DoDEA Pacific schools on Guam as part of the ATTREX Guam 2014 Education and Public Outreach.

Read More: <http://smu.gs/1JEHqK>

## DoDEA Artist Spotlight

The DoDEA Artist Spotlight is a monthly artwork challenge open to current DoDEA students and is held on the DoDEA Facebook fan page. Students are encouraged to submit a work of art, including photographs, digital artwork, 2D artwork, or 3D artwork that relates to the monthly theme.

Read More: <http://bit.ly/1et3OM>



## Sullivans ES Heritage Fair

This week at the Sullivans School first grade classes took part in a Heritage Fair. This was a chance for each student to work with their families to research their family traditions and facts about a country that represents their heritage. This culminated in students sharing their heritage with other first grade students and parents. This was a fantastic opportunity for students to learn about the diverse cultural traditions represented in our community.

Read More: <http://smu.gs/1cevl67>



A student displays her work at the fair

## STEM Time!

Yokosuka MS Students study a clam worm in 6th grade Blue Ridge science at Yokosuka Middle School.



View photo online: <http://smu.gs/NBnCZL>

## Far East Basketball

Stunning 3-pointers, explosive rebounds and hard-court excellence were on constant display during DoDEA Pacific's 2013-14 Far East High School Boy's Division 2 Basketball Tournament at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan Feb. 17-19.

Read More: <http://smu.gs/1czv8qH>





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## Photo of the Month:



Students compete at the 2014 Far East Culinary Arts competition held on Yokota AB!  
View more:  
<http://dodeapac.smugmug.com/FarEastActivities/2013-14-Far-East-Culinary-Arts>

## Upcoming Dates

### MAR

- 8 Pacific Invitation Drill Meet
- 10-14 Terra Nova Testing
- 24-26 JROTC FE Drill Meet @ Kadena HS
- 25-26 Junior Science/Humanities Symposium @ Yokota AB
- 25-28 LinguaFest @ Okinawa

### APR

- 3 End of Third Quarter
- 4 No school for students - Teacher work day
- 7-11 Spring Recess
- 14 Begin Fourth Quarter
- 22-26 Honor Music Festival in Seoul, South Korea
- 23-27 Junior Science/Humanities Symposium in Washington D.C.
- 26-27 Guam Marksmanship Championship @ Guam HS

### MAY

- 19-22 Film/Entertainment Arts Festival in Okinawa
- 19-21 Far East D1/D2 Boys/Girls Track @ Yokota HS
- 19-22 Far East D2 Boys Soccer @ Perry HS
- 19-22 Far East D2 Girls Soccer @ Edgren HS
- 19-22 Far East D1 Boys Soccer @ Kadena HS
- 19-22 Far East D1 Girls Soccer @ Kinnick HS
- 22-24 Far East D2 Baseball @ Zama HS
- 22-24 Far East D1 Baseball @ Zama HS
- 26 Memorial Day

### JUN

- 12 End of Fourth Quarter
- 13 No school for students - Teacher work day

## Good to Know

**Say what?** *The Health Hazards of sitting*

### Military OneSource

The latest edition of the Military OneSource eNewsletter is available. *Highlights include:* how to maintain healthy habits during holiday festivities, planning a staycation, preparing for tax season and benefits of finding a mentor.

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/enewsletter>



## Feedback is welcome and encouraged!

Please send us any suggested improvements or stories you would like to see in future editions:

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