

The Virgin Islands Consortium

CAHS Students Complete Centennial Collaboration Project With Peers In Denmark

Education / **Published On March 02, 2017 10:04 PM /**

Staff **March 02, 2017**



ST. THOMAS -- For the last six months, AP English Language and Composition students at Charlotte Amalie High School (CAHS) worked tirelessly on a collaborative research project with high school students in Denmark that shed light on an aspect of V.I. history they knew little about—the role Moravian missionaries played in the education of enslaved Africans living in the Danish West Indies in the mid-1700s, the Department of Education announced recently.

In large part, the students say their research, titled “The Centennial Collaboration Project,” showed that the missionaries were eager to come to the Danish West Indies to convert the enslaved to Christianity by teaching them to read the Bible. The slave owners

welcomed the missionaries, as they discovered the conversion of the enslaved resulted in less resistance to the inhumane conditions under which the slaves existed.

Now, the CAHS students will see their hard work come full circle. On Wednesday, March 1, they will welcome 24 Danish students from Haderslev Katedralskole high school in Denmark and embark on three days of research sharing, historical field trips and a roundtable discussion on how best to use the information they have learned to continue educating others.

On Thursday morning, both the CAHS and Danish students presented their research findings at an assembly in the school's Ruth E. Thomas Auditorium. Following the presentations, the students toured the historic Moravian churches on St. Thomas and immerse themselves in Virgin Islands' culture. The Danish students will also visit St. Croix while they are in the territory.

Students in Mrs. Elaine Jacobs and Wendy Andrews' classes, a total of 36, began the Centennial Collaboration Project at the start of the 2016-17 school year. It was inspired by Mrs. Jacobs' visit to Denmark in April 2016 with UNESCO's Transatlantic Slave Trade program. On that trip, Mrs. Jacobs made connections with a Danish teacher and they soon decided their students would work on a project together.

The months-long project was divided into three parts, including research, engagement of experts and collaboration. The students began by first generating questions to guide their research. They visited the von Scholten collection at the Charles Wesley Turnbull Regional Library, as well as participated in a lecture and used the library's online sources to conduct research. On these trips to the library, the students generated a working bibliography that comprised of primary and secondary sources.

With the aid of their teachers, retired educators, librarians and historians, the students also created a "portable library," comprised of a large box of resources for their in depth research that took place on weekends, holidays and during afterschool hours. A mobile library was necessary, Mrs. Jacobs explained, as many of the resources on V. I. history are required to remain in stationary, secure locations, such as libraries or museums.

The AP English students also engaged community members with expertise in genealogy, V.I. history and other relevant topics by going on field trips and welcoming these guests into their classroom. The students collaborated and shared aspects of their work with their Danish counterparts via Facebook pages created for the project, as well as group chats, video messaging and a blog.

Mrs. Jacobs and Mrs. Andrews are elated about the academic and personal growth their students exhibited throughout the process. They stressed that the project's goal was to promote students' ability to succeed in a global setting, as well as to promote their critical thinking, communication, literacy and analytical skills.

The community has rallied around the CAHS students as they prepare to host the Danish students, all of whom will be housed with local families, teachers and families of CAHS students. Each Danish student will also be paired with a CAHS student and will attend classes.

Some AP English students say they learned a great deal from the project.

“I learned a lot about V.I. culture, things that I’d never known before,” said Adonis Fung, who is originally from the Dominican Republic.

Sumaiyah Richardson said, “It clarified a lot of our history for me and also helped with time management, organization and learning how to work well within a team.”

Alanica Canonier said she also learned a lot about her home and it opened her eyes to significance of the many historic structures around Charlotte Amalie. Brianna Fuertes also expressed having a deeper understanding of the history of slavery on St. Thomas.

Special thanks to the following partners who contributed to the success of the CAHS Centennial Collaboration Project:

Beverly Smith, Susan Lugo and the entire staff at the Charles Wesley Regional Library

Retired librarian, Janet Burton and Social Studies teacher, Evans Williams

Dr. Ronald Harrigan

CAHS head librarian Celia Fahie-Barry

Sofia Aubin at the Caribbean Genealogy Library

Dr. Ruby Simmonds-Essanasen

Dr. Marilyn Krigger

Former Governor Charles W. Turnbull

V.I. Department of Tourism

The Friends of Denmark

Mrs. Charles-King of Social Studies

Mrs. Straun, Career and Technical Education

Mr. Iambekesy Richardson, technical assistance in production

English Department Teachers: Mrs. Alenia Buncome-Murraine, Manefa O’Connor-Francis, Ingrid Ayala, and Leontyne Jones

Principal Alcede Edwards

Parents, teachers and all local families serving as host families