Interview with SSG Michael Haines regarding Hurricane Katrina

Teacher: Shannon Glaser
5th-6th grade science activity

ACTION PLAN FOR INTERVIEWING (API)
Oct. 2009 Teacher’s Workshop
Cal U Teaching with Primary Sources
Instructors: Roberts / Lonich
§ I. STANDARDS AND REFERENCES:

**Geography**

7.2.3. B: Identify the basic physical processes that affect the physical characteristics of places and regions (e.g. Extreme physical events: earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes).

**Earth Sciences**

3.5.4. C: Know basic weather elements
3.5.7. C: Describe basic elements of meteorology

**Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening**

1.4.8. B: Use primary and secondary sources

§ II. INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING MODEL (IBLM):

This class activity uses the following five-step IBLM:

1. Ask: Posing question, “What would happen if a hurricane was to hit Washington today?”
2. Investigate: Look online, at videos, photos, news clips, and so on, in order to generate a class discussion and ideas about hurricanes.
3. Create: Make a K-W-L chart using students’ ideas.
4. Discuss: Watch and listen to an oral history interview on the topic.
5. Reflect: Discuss the oral history. Go back and revisit K-W-L chart and original question in #1.

These IBLM steps will be referenced as they occur during the descriptive walk-through below.

§ III. DESCRIPTIVE WALK-THROUGH OF MY ACTIVITY

As part of a 5th-6th grade science lesson on “Weather and Natural Disasters,” I would include an activity on hurricanes and specifically discuss Hurricane Katrina. Since Katrina was one of the more recent and devastating storms, students may be somewhat familiar with it or even have a personal connection to it. This presents a true learning opportunity. I would incorporate an interview with a particular Katrina volunteer who will share what he experienced first-hand and help students to understand the magnitude of such an incredible force. For most students living in this area, hurricanes are something they only hear about on TV. With no concrete experiences of their own, a primary source
oral history interview would help students to “bring the event to life” and to provide in-depth awareness of the topic than the textbook would allow.

The person I choose to interview is my friend Staff Sergeant Michael Haines. He is in the Army National Guard and lives in Jacksonville, Florida. He volunteered in several areas of both New Orleans and Florida for several weeks after Katrina hit. He used to talk to students during school visits about volunteering and about the military so I know he is comfortable talking about his experiences. In preparing for the interview, I would email a basic data sheet to Michael to get information such as dates, places he helped in each town, his rank, title, people who were with him, who/what organizations he was affiliated with, etc. All data provided could be verified through other individuals, newspaper articles, etc.

My purpose in doing this interview is to show students what happens in the days, weeks, and months after a severe storm (such as Hurricane Katrina) hits the coastline. The major research questions that I will be asking include the following:

- When people are faced with losing everything, what do they do?
- What resources are there to help?
- How do people handle going without simple everyday things that we take for granted, such as: showering, sleeping, eating/drinking, communicating with family/friends, going to work/school, electricity and power, transportation, etc.
- When people of all ages, races, and backgrounds are faced with losses of material things, what is it like?
- What do the devastated areas look like after being hit by a hurricane?

Before the interview, I would lead a class discussion about hurricanes in general and Hurricane Katrina. I would start by asking, “What would happen if a hurricane was to hit Washington today?” followed by the research questions above. In sampling what students already know, this would constitute the “ask” section of the IBLM. We would also view video clips, look at the Internet, find
stories from several towns and people, and familiarize ourselves with some weather and hurricane terminology. During the discussion, students’ comments and questions would be put into a K-W-L chart. I would then base additional interview questions on the information the students want to learn. These actions would constitute the “investigate” and “create” sections of the IBLM.

I would start my interview with SSG Haines with the basic “who are you?” type questions. This is so that the class would get a feel for him and understand what he does. I would have him talk about what groups he is affiliated with and some of the different projects he has worked on. This information would mostly originate from the biographical form that he previously filled out. I would arrange the interview questions from very general to more specifically detailed about New Orleans and Florida. I would lead up to, in my interview questioning, the different types of help that people received and programs that are available to help victims maintain and/or return to their normal lives. I would encourage Michael to share personal stories about what he witnessed in different towns and explain why he chose to help then and why he continues to do volunteer work today. I would invite him to share the experiences he had with children and families and how it made him feel.

On either my next trip to Florida or Michael’s next trip to Pennsylvania, I would meet with him in one of our homes and conduct the interview in person. I would keep the setting casual and relaxed so that the focus would be on Michael and what was being said. I would be near him asking the questions and directing the conversation, but I would not be visible on the video. I would ask Michael to wear his uniform or whatever he typically wears while he is volunteering. I would use a video camera and tape recorder for both video and audio recording of the interview. With that media, it could be easily saved, edited, and used in almost any classroom. Cost would be minimal and possibly only one other person would be needed to turn on the equipment.

After conducting my interview, I would do any necessary editing of both video and audio to make it appropriate for the classroom. It could even be changed later to accommodate a different age
group or fit into a different subject. I would fact check dates, times, and places mentioned for accuracy. The students could initially watch it together as a class and later listen or view it individually or in small groups and discuss it or do another related activity.

After students watch and listen to the interview we would discuss it as a group. To meet the “discuss” section of the IBLM. This is when we would revisit the K-W-L chart and fill in missing or previously unknown information. I would allow students to re-watch or listen to the interview during center time. I would then give a quiz to assess student learning and understanding of Michael’s oral history interview material.

§ IV. MY ASSESSMENT TOOL

The final assessment constitutes the “reflect” section of the IBLM. The assessment consists of a 10 question short answer test to assess the students learning. Those questions follow:

1. What areas of the country were most affected by Hurricane Katrina?
2. Name 3 places where Mr. Haines did his volunteer work.
3. What types of work did Mr. Haines do?
4. What types of people were affected by Hurricane Katrina?
5. How long did it take the victims to get back to “normal”?
6. What were 2 of the organizations that helped the hurricane victims?
7. What happens to the debris and damaged property?
8. What were 2 reasons Mr. Haines gave for why he volunteers?
9. Approximately how many people were affected by Hurricane Katrina?
10. When and where did Hurricane Katrina take place?