



# Snow School, No Problem for visiting Hong Kong class

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A group of students and teachers from Hong Kong visited Corbin Intermediate School this week. In spite of having only one day to experience school in Kentucky because of Monday's holiday and the nontraditional school days the second half of the week, the students still participated in a number group activities, including playing American games, listening to traditional Bluegrass music, playing in the snow and visiting Cumberland Falls and KFC's Sanders Café.

By Christina Bentley Feature Writer | Posted 1 week ago

A group of fifth and sixth grade students and their teachers visited Corbin this week as part of an international exchange program with Corbin Intermediate School. In spite of Monday's holiday and the inclement weather that resulted in "nontraditional" school days Wednesday-Friday, the class still managed to get together throughout the week with their American host families to participate in a number of cultural and recreational activities.



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On Thursday, for instance, the students and their host families got together to visit with Virgil Bowlin, a local musician and music teacher, who shared traditional Appalachian music and its roots and variations. Bowlin demonstrated the banjo and mandolin, and some of the Hong Kong visitors demonstrated their own musical expertise on the piano.

Bonny Lam, one of the Hong Kong teachers accompanying the group, said on Thursday that in spite of the lack of school days, she thought the students had learned a lot. They had hoped to share more Chinese culture with the American students, including Chinese calligraphy and paper cutting, but the snow itself was a cultural lesson.

“Snow!” she said. “That’s something that we don’t have in Hong Kong. We got to slide down (sled) and play on the trampoline. Those are new, even for me as an adult. And also, you’ve got pets at home, but not small ones, not like rabbits, you’ve got big dogs. In Hong Kong, the flats (apartments) are so small, we usually just get small pets like hamsters and rabbits and turtles, and here we got to play with big dogs.”

According to Lam, students in Hong Kong go to school year-round with four long holidays spread throughout the year, about six weeks in the summer, two weeks at Christmas and Easter, and ten days for Chinese New Year. The school where she teaches is a traditional Taoist parochial school, so students also have days off for Taoist religious holidays.

There are other differences as well, she said, including a curriculum that is more focused and less varied at any given time.

“For them, I know that they have four classes in nine months,” she said. “We do four exams (classes) in a year. Also (CIS students) switch out of the classroom for every lesson, but in Hong Kong, students stay in the same classroom and teachers are the ones to switch. We’ve got more music lessons...and I think they’ve got more time to play. That’s very wonderful.”

The Chinese students are tri-lingual. Lam said they speak Cantonese, the language of Hong Kong, at home, but they learn both English and Putonghua (Standard Chinese, also called Mandarin) in school.

Lam said she thought the experience had been enriching for her students and that she hopes her school will make it an annual event.

“I think that children learn more when they travel and try to communicate,” she said. “That’s difficult in Hong Kong...(Coming here) you really get the atmosphere.”

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