



Video hook-up lets students quiz soldiers serving in Iraq

Troops tell why they joined, lessons learned in war zone.

By Gordon Wilczynski
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Ninth-graders Tyler Zaremba, left, and Morgan Collins prepare to question a soldier stationed in Iraq.

Macomb Daily staff photos by David Dalton

Students at Davis Junior High in Sterling Heights got a first-hand view Wednesday of the Iraq War.

Thanks to a computer hook-up, the ninth-graders of teacher David Adams spoke with four U.S. servicemen stationed in northern Iraq.

The students asked the soldiers what they do for recreation and how they are treated by Iraqis. The students said they were surprised by some of the answers, including that most Iraqis say they like President George W. Bush and are glad U.S. troops removed former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein from power.

The soldiers displayed a sense of humor despite the pressures of combat.

"We have multiple gyms we use here," one of the soldiers joked.

"We get a pretty decent amount of food here, including steak and lobster," said another.

The students asked the soldiers why they joined the military. One said his mother made him join and another said he joined because he couldn't find a civilian job.

The program was arranged through Freedomcalls.org, which often links soldiers overseas with their families in the United States. There is no cost to classes that converse with soldiers through a video conference site.

"Every day we cover daily global event issues," Adams said. "My students worked on a list of questions to prepare for the interview and I know they put a lot of work into it."

Michele Lowe asked the troops how often they get to talk to their families. One told her that if he wasn't talking to the Davis Junior High ninth-graders he would be talking to his wife.

"I was surprised that they were carrying guns," Lowe said. "It was really cool to talk to the soldiers."

Michele said her father, Tom Lowe, reads everything in newspapers and magazines about the war. She said he often shares his knowledge.

Steve Czyz was interested in whether being in the Middle East has changed the soldiers' thinking about political and religious beliefs.

One soldier said it hasn't changed their political beliefs but they now know more about Muslims.

"One of the soldiers told me that his wife is a Muslim and being around them has helped him better understand her beliefs," Czyz said.

David Difalco said he learned that the soldiers keep a weapon with them at all times. "I asked if they ever got shot or injured and they said there have been a few close calls but nothing serious," he said.