

Naselle eighth graders go to court — for field trip

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NASELLE – The eighth grade Pacific Northwest History class went to court Thursday, May 5 in South Bend. No they weren't on the ducat and no crimes were committed, rather they went on a field trip with Rob Dalton and Principal Karen Wirkkala to see Superior Court Judge Mike Sullivan on the bench and directing court proceedings.

One of the cases involved truancy and had "quite an impact on our students" according to Dalton. "When kids see another student shackled and in a navy blue jail outfit for skipping school, it makes an impression. Judge Sullivan, a former geography teacher, loves having kids come to his courtroom and he is very entertaining and does a great job of answering our student's questions. This is the fourth class I've taken to the courthouse," Dalton explained.

"I learned more on this trip that I did all school year," Amethyst Wirkkala said. "This was one of the best field trips our class has ever taken."

Students sat in the jury box during the hearings and later when court was in recess they took pictures with Judge Sullivan and some wore his robe and sat in his seat on the bench. The students learned that "passing the bar" means that the person can actually go past the actual bar in the court that separates the general public and people involved in the court proceedings.

They learned what a bench warrant was and how bail works. Many did not know that District Attorney David Burke is also the county coroner. DA Burke spent about half an hour answering student's questions on a wide variety of topics.

The students were told that meth is the most common drug problem in the courts. Dalton said, "Most of all they got the clear message that you should go to school or go to jail which they heard Judge Sullivan tell every kid that day in the hearings."

