



Tiburon fifth-graders create court video series

By Will Jason
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Thanks to a class of Tiburon fifth-graders, children can now watch a series of videos that seek to demystify the court system. The videos have been posted on a new Web page, called Court for Kids, on marincourt.org, the official county courts website.

The five videos are each about three to four minutes long and include information about court processes and personnel, the role of attorneys and family law topics, such as divorce and adoption.

"Most kids, when they hear, 'court,' assume that court is just a bad place where people go to jail and get fines, but when you learn more about it and how complex it is, it doesn't just throw random people in jail," said Dylan Hankamer,

who worked on the videos last year as a fifth-grader at Bel Aire Elementary in Tiburon. "It gives you a chance to speak for yourself if you disagree with what officials say."

Plans for the video project began two years ago after Bel Aire Principal Patti Purcell joined the Marin County Superior Court's Community Advisory Committee, which was set up to improve court services and interactions with the public. Purcell suggested a children-oriented project and the idea evolved through discussion with other committee members.

The videos were produced during the 2010-11 school year by a fifth-grade Bel Aire class taught by Jamey Everett. With help from the court advisory committee, students visited the county court several times and

spoke with a family law attorney, a judge and other court officials and employees.

"Most of the research was done on their own," Everett said. "There weren't a lot of kid-friendly resources out there for them to read. They were analyzing websites and reading books on court that were not for their age level."

The students wrote scripts, recorded voice-overs and used the Web-based tools Pixton and Blabberize to create animated videos. The videos also include images of the Marin court.

In addition to learning about the courts the project was designed to teach English skills such as writing, editing, punctuation and spelling through a more interesting method than traditional textbook learning, Everett and Purcell said.

"We tried to do something that is a challenge-based learning project," Purcell said. "It's a real-world issue, it's not a textbook thing. ... They're given a challenge and they have to find a solution to it."

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COURT FOR KIDS

• The videos can be viewed at www.marincourt.org/court4kids.htm