

Arts Missoula's K-12 Educational Outreach Services Digitalized

Data and Photo contributed by Udo Fluck

When Missoula County Public School classrooms temporarily closed on March 23, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Udo Fluck's K-12 intercultural and global educational outreach program had already offered over 200 seminars since the start of the school year. Fluck, who directs the Office of Global and Cultural Affairs in Arts Missoula, develops and teaches cultural and global perspectives and content, in elementary, middle and high schools, as well as in higher education. Through his Missoula program, he collaborates with over 30 teachers, in 8 different schools and inspires over 600 students annually!

Fluck, who loves to teach live in classrooms still had instructional commitments in Chief Charlo and Rattlesnake Elementary Schools to complete, when the measures to slow-down the spread of the coronavirus were put in place. Having students deprived of a worldview, was not an option for Fluck, who has offered over 1,000 documented seminars to date. *"Even parents have commented on how appreciative they are for Udo and his global and cultural competence-building seminars"*, states Barbara Matz, 3rd grade teacher, Rattlesnake Elementary School. The immediate need for the traditional curriculum to be converted to digitalized instruction, so kids could continue to learn at home, required some adaptative creativity.



Together with his teenage son, Fluck installed a small temporary studio in his garage, complete with a green screen background, microphone and lights (on loan from UM's Social Science Research Laboratory) and a teleprompter. He started recording his narrated PowerPoint presentations on Zoom, enhanced with interesting facts and photos about far-away places, using hats from around the world, as a show-and-tell. (Photo on the left with a Pakol from Afghanistan). Developing an online supplement to promote

intercultural understanding was the focus of Fluck's dissertation nearly two decades ago, and while instructional technology has changed significantly, much of the pedagogical approach can be adapted to fit today's instructional needs. In post-production, his son adds audio files of music instruments that are common in the country featured, or a short, related video clip. *"My students had the world opened up to them through a very engaging format"*, according to Carla Woehler, 2nd grade teacher, Chief Charlo Elementary. Fluck developed exercises, activities and knowledge assessments that provide diverse perspectives to students and deepens their learning.

As a result, Fluck's remaining seminars, which are free to students through a grant from the Phyllis and Dennis Washington Foundation, are now offered via the *MCPS Remote Learning Platform*. As a one-person teaching operation, with growing demand in MCPS schools for the program, Fluck was researching, early in the year, expansion opportunities, so additional schools in the district could join and benefit. *"Not being able to go into the classroom was a catalyst to rethink instruction that might just prove valuable post-pandemic"*, Fluck believes.