

Dunckel student will travel to Peru as argonaut

John Szymusiak, an eighth-grade student at O.E. Dunckel Middle School in Farmington Public Schools, was selected as one of the student argonauts traveling to Peru with JASON X.

John was chosen as the representative for EDS, a founding sponsor of the JASON Project, and is the only Michigan representative in the program.

Each JASON Project expedition selects a group of students and teachers to serve as "student and teacher argonauts" who accompany the research scientists to the project's primary research site. The student argonauts serve as role models for students experiencing JASON in their home sites.

They work with the field researchers, experience directly the excitement of scientific investigation and communicate that experience to the millions of

fellow students watching the JASON Project broadcasts.

This year, more than 1,000 student applicants from the USA, Peru, Mexico, Bermuda and the UK were reviewed. From these applicants, 72 students progressed to the final round of selections. Twenty-five students were chosen from those 72 to participate in JASON X.

John will be in Peru with JASON X from Feb. 19 to March 7, 1999.

During his time in Peru, John will participate in the live telepresence broadcasts sent to PIN sites throughout the world (five live broadcasts are sent from the research site each day), perform experiments and investigations alongside Dr. Robert Ballard and

his team of researchers, and provide the "students' view" of the rain forest adventure through the daily JASON X On-line Journal updates.

The JASON Project was founded by Ballard, the discoverer of the wreck of the Titanic, in 1989. His goal in establishing the JASON Project was to "bring the thrill of discovery to millions of students worldwide."

By using the latest technological advances in telecommunications, computer systems, and the Internet, the JASON Project allows students and teachers to travel the world, to experience world-class scientific investigation first hand, and to get excited about science and technology.

Hands-on, inquiry-based learning is stressed throughout the JASON Project in such diverse curricular areas as geology, biology, chemistry, physics,

mathematics, geography, art, literature, culture and history.

In past expeditions, students and teachers explored the underwater world surrounding the Galapagos Islands, shipwrecks in Lake Ontario, volcanoes in Hawaii, and the wildlife of the Florida Keys.

Each expedition is designed to engage students in their own personal course of discovery and to motivate and provide professional development for teachers.

This year's JASON Project expedition, celebrating its 10th anniversary, undertakes a comparative study of temperate, tropical and fossil rain forests. The goal of this expedition is to unravel the mysteries of past and present rain forests, to explore how these critical ecosystems have changed and continue to change, and to gain knowledge for conserving these threat-



Traveling: John Szymusiak, an eighth-grade student at O.E. Dunckel Middle School in Farmington Public Schools, will go to Peru in 1999.

ened areas. The primary expedition site will be the Amazon Center for Environmental Education and Research (ACEER) located in the rain forest of Peru.

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science, 11.6; writing, 12.6.

■ Level 2 (meets state standards, endorsed): math, 37.4; reading, 43.4; science, 63.5; writing, 43.7.

■ Level 3 (meets basic skills, endorsed): math, 13.7; reading, 20.9; science, 20.2; writing, 28.9.

■ Level 4 (not endorsed): math, 18.3; reading, 14.7; science, 14.7; writing, 14.8.

Maxfield's idea isn't a new one. In June, he wrote a letter — on behalf of the Oakland County Superintendents Association — about the need for a moratorium and study period to state schools Superintendent Arthur Ellis.

"In the couple weeks after the (Nov. 3) election," Maxfield said last week, "We're going to encourage the powers that be at the state department, the legislative leaders, to convene a meeting to look at the fact that, in Oakland County, only one-third of the kids took the test."

If a study panel is able to soon convene, a parent informational meeting on what they discussed could be held in January or February.

"We need to de-mystify the test," Maxfield explained. "... The message we heard, over and over, was 'I'm not confident about what's going to happen with these scores. I'm afraid it might hurt my kid.' And, No. 2,

'He's been tested to death already.'

"You've got to break that cycle somehow. Our goal is not to kill the high school MEAP. There's more good than bad and it provides us with much-needed information. But that's only valuable if the vast majority of our kids take it."

In the Farmington district, participation in the test taken in May when other "high stakes" tests such as the ACT and SAT are given, was far worse than other Oakland County districts. The breakdown is as follows:

1. Not taking the test: Districtwide, the number of students exempted (in each subject) by their parents included: science, 579; reading, 582; writing, 583; and mathematics, 584.

2. Taking the test: The number of students taking those tested subjects included: science, 129; reading, 129; writing, 135 and mathematics, 131.

In Farmington, the latter numbers revealed a large drop from the 1997 test. According to Ernest Bauer of Oakland Schools, approximately 775 high school students took the math portion in 1997.

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