

Are you just surviving?

Explanation of Digital Story
Kristy Gollakner
Gwinn Middle School

Because my digital story does not cover every point asked for, I figured I'd include this explanation for the Trust as well. . . My video is currently "unlisted" on YouTube since I need to share it locally so much and don't want everyone to view it before I present it to them. The post is located at <http://youtu.be/k3Myajf-QI0>. You can view it by going to this link directly. A second link you may be interested in view is my "director's cut" where I have recorded my video a second time with a voice override to explain some of the stories behind the pictures and why I chose them for my "story." The link for this video is as follows:
<http://youtu.be/5IphWfowcJo>

My time spent in Tanzania, Africa was absolutely amazing. I have quite a collection of memories and adventures to bring to my students and community. I had built a website that allowed my family, friends, students, and community to follow my adventures while I was in Tanzania. I was able to blog my journal daily and publish it live whenever I could gain WiFi access at the lodges we stayed in. Since returning I have continued to build this site with photos and the videos I have created from my experience. The address for this site is as follows: www.africafrommetoyou.weebly.com. It is fun to share and even more fun to hear the comments and questions people have. I am honored that I've been asked to present for our school's start of the year professional development. I have also be asked to present at a fall conference held for area educators as well as be the keynote speaker for the "Young Women in Science Technology and Mathematics" conference held at a local university this spring. I have had many ask, so I will also arrange a community presentation to share my "story."

Many of the pictures and videos I gathered are perfect mini lessons that will support my curriculum (symbiotic relations between animals, habit challenges for wildlife, details on multiple biomes, lessons air pressure, weather, and physiology dealing with altitude, and more). I will be creating and using these mini videos as I go through the school year. Setting science aside, this experience also allows me to bring back some even more important life lessons. My all time favorite quote is, "Attitude: The difference between an adventure and an ordeal." This trip confirmed this and gives me a platform to show my students and community just how important attitude is in their lives. It is this "story" that I will share with many as I convey my experiences in Tanzania—"Are you just surviving?" It is this "story" that I give to you as an overview of my trip.

This trip doing "experiential science" has also inspired me to add more experiential learning to my classroom. I have always done a lot of hands-on lessons in my room, but I need to take things further. I plan to add additional experiential, real-world, experiences in my classroom and beyond. I am blessed to live where I do—the Upper Peninsula of Michigan is beautiful. If someone were to ask me what my passion is, I'd immediately reply that I live for backpacking and kayaking trips all summer and skiing and snowshoeing all winter. This trip made me realize how important it is for me to pass this passion on to my students like I have with my own child. This year I am going to create an extra-curricular outdoor adventure club. Students in grades 6-8 will be able to join this club for monthly hikes in our area—waterfalls, views of Lake Superior from great heights, ice caves, snowshoeing and much more. I'd eventually like to see this club develop to the point where students would have the option of doing a two night (or more) backpacking trip in the spring or early summer.

I live for adventure... and this trip proved that I need to get others in my community to live for adventure more as well!