

A Proposal for the Hernando County School Board

LUNCH WITH A VET

My name is Phillip Gray. I am a Disabled Vietnam Veteran living in Spring Hill. When my stepsons were in High School back in Indiana, their school had "Lunch with a Vet", which I attended. The idea was for Veterans to come and have lunch with high school seniors. During the lunch, the Vet would begin by telling the students a little about themselves and some of their experiences during their time in the military. I told my two stepsons (twins) to pick a table other than mine so they could get another perspective on military life. The program was a great success for both the Veterans and the students and was repeated, I understand, for several years to come.

NOTE: THIS IS NOT A RECRUITING TOOL FOR THE MILITARY!

Veterans would sign up to come to the schools to speak with students. The students would also have to sign-up to attend. When the Veteran signs up he will choose which high school he wants to go to. If the Veteran has no preference, then a high school would be assigned to him (generally based on his address). On Veterans Day the Veterans will go to the school where they are assigned and pick a table to sit at and pick out their lunch. A card on the table would list the Veterans name and his branch of service. The students would then enter and go to any table they want to. I think this should be limited to seniors, unless not enough seniors sign-up then juniors can attend as well. There should be no more than 6 to 8 students to a table, in my opinion. The Veteran would begin by introducing themselves and telling the students about their experiences in the military. I would like to see that this is limited to Veterans that served in a combat area. I think the students would gain a larger perspective of what military life is like from a combat Vet. The Vet would then open it up for questions from the students. In my experience, the questions were thoughtful and very informative. One note: The Veteran has the option of not answering a question if it might cause him to relive any experiences. After the lunch is over the students would write an essay on their experience and what insights they gained. I think this should be done on a county wide basis, as it would allow more students to benefit from this program.

BENEFITS OF THIS PROGRAM

The Veteran benefits by being able to share their experiences with a younger generation. In my experience this helped the Vet to come to terms with their PTSD and was a healing experience.

The student benefits by gaining knowledge from the Vet and getting a whole new perspective on what military life would be like. Further, the essays written by the students could be turned in for extra credit, gaining the student not just information by practical benefits.

I would be willing to go to each VFW in Hernando County and do my best to sign up Veterans to attend the "Lunch With a Vet." Students could also invite family members who are Combat Vets to attend as well. I am willing to do what ever I can to see that this program is a success.

Thank you for your time.

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Phillip
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Handout