Genius Honors
Project teaches students best way to share what they know

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SOPHIA — Fifth-grade teacher Betsey Altman wants her students to have an impact on their community.
When the New Market Elementary School teacher assigned a Genius Honors Project to her technology class, she invested in the belief that knowledge creates changes and she wanted her students to know that, too.
Students chose their own topics and did their own research. Also students chose how they would use that research — with one big condition: It had to make an impact.

To aid students with the project, Altman took seven of her students to a conference by the N.C. Technology in Education Society (NC-TIES) in Raleigh on March 2. There, the students interacted with other teachers and students about creative ways to communicate a message and to share what they learned.
The results were seven students who found a voice, using the tools they learned in the classroom and the research they did on their own, to teach the rest of us something about what mattered to them. The products produced ranged from a visual slide show of the Vietnam War to a video of a freight truck rodeo.

BRAINIACS — Betsey Altman’s Genius Honors Project students include, from left, Olivia Walker, Madelyn Handy, Brandon Turner, Kevin Allred, Ty Davis and Reice Thurston. Not pictured is Jennifer Hurley.

Student Madelyn Handy realized her peers knew very little about what happened on 9-11. So, with the help of Storyjumper, a website providing parents and kids with tools for creating, sharing and reading children’s stories, she re-created the events so others would know “what brought us together.” A copy of her book, which will be published by Storyjumper, will be placed in the school library.

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Kevin Allred, who had uncles who served in Vietnam, wanted people to realize veterans of that war were “not given the respect they deserved.” His animora (visual slide show) focused on the “tough environment” of Southeast Asia and the lives of the American soldiers who fought there. His presentation is posted on the web.

Reice Thurston created a flyer, using the website S’more, on the influence of gaming on kids and teens, because he felt “there were some things parents need to know.” After discussing the types and content of video games, Thurston created a quiz using Kahoot!, an online site for creating learning games and quizzes, to test his readers. He wants to place his flyers in public places, like libraries and doctors’ offices, where parents can access them.

The remaining four students worked with topics important to them and to the community. They used technology to help create public service announcements, animations and video presentations to share with others what they learned. They were excited about the prospects of feedback and learned the value of sharing what they know.