

## September eNews 2019



What do Netflix's *Black Mirror* episode "San Junipero," the Warner Brothers adaptation of Ernest Cline's novel *Ready Player One*, and Wego English classes have in common? Virtual Reality...

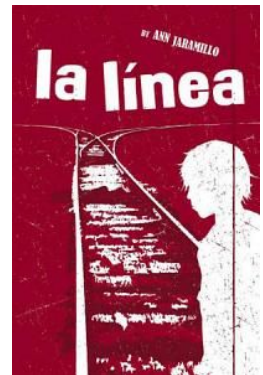


English 1 teachers **Jen Culbertson** and **Jen**

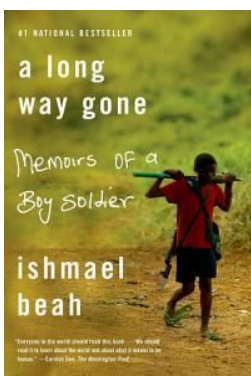
**Walker** introduced their freshman classes to Virtual Reality using [Google Cardboard](#) and apps such as Google Expedition and Google Street View to bring the novel [La Linea](#) by Ann Jaramillo and the memoir [A Long Way Gone](#) by Ishmael Beah alive in the classroom.

Virtual reality uses 3D images and a computer interface to enable viewers to experience people and places they would not otherwise encounter. Students can "visit" locations across the world using a variety of apps such as *The New York Times* Virtual Reality, Public Speaking VR, and *Life VR* as a virtual "field trip," which creates an inquiry-based classroom that is authentic and realistic.

Life in San Jacinto, Jalisco, Mexico, the initial setting of *La Linea*, differs greatly from West Chicago, so students use Google Street View to tour the city virtually and view videos in the VR mode to observe streets, homes, and community spaces to prepare them to understand the unlikely protagonist, Elena de Cervantes, and her brother Miguel as the two embark on a hero's journey from a Mexican ranch across the border to California.



Using VR, students consider questions such as "How do people live?" and "What are the biggest issues they face"? These prompts enable students to develop critical background knowledge.



Later this year, Culbertson and Walker's freshmen will again utilize VR to "travel" to Sierra Leone in West Africa prior to reading the coming-of-age memoir, *A Long Way Gone*, written by former child soldier Ishmael Beah.

Using the Google Expeditions app, students will participate in the interactive video, "Beating Ebola in Sierra Leone" and use the "trigger" button on the Google Cardboard device to click through the video and experience a West African market, wharf, hospital, and cemetery. Freshman English teacher Jen Walker describes the activity as

a virtual “scavenger hunt.” Students control the pace of their virtual trip and are able to investigate the aspects that are most interesting and significant to them.

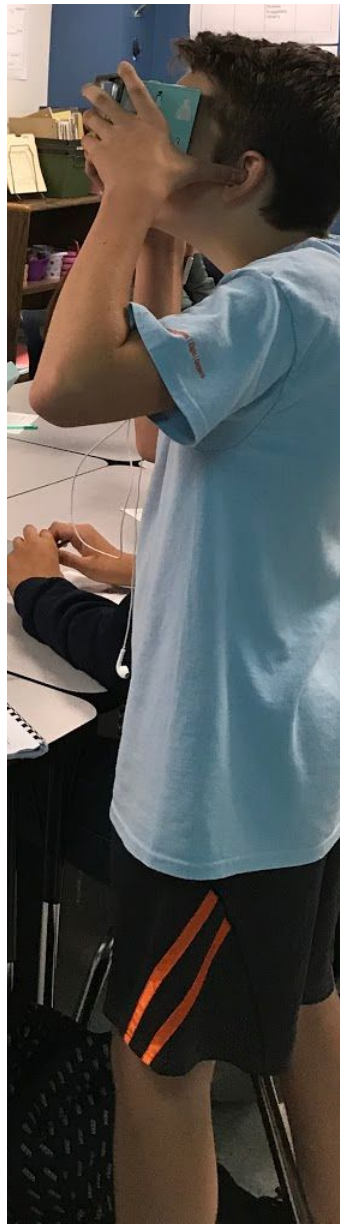
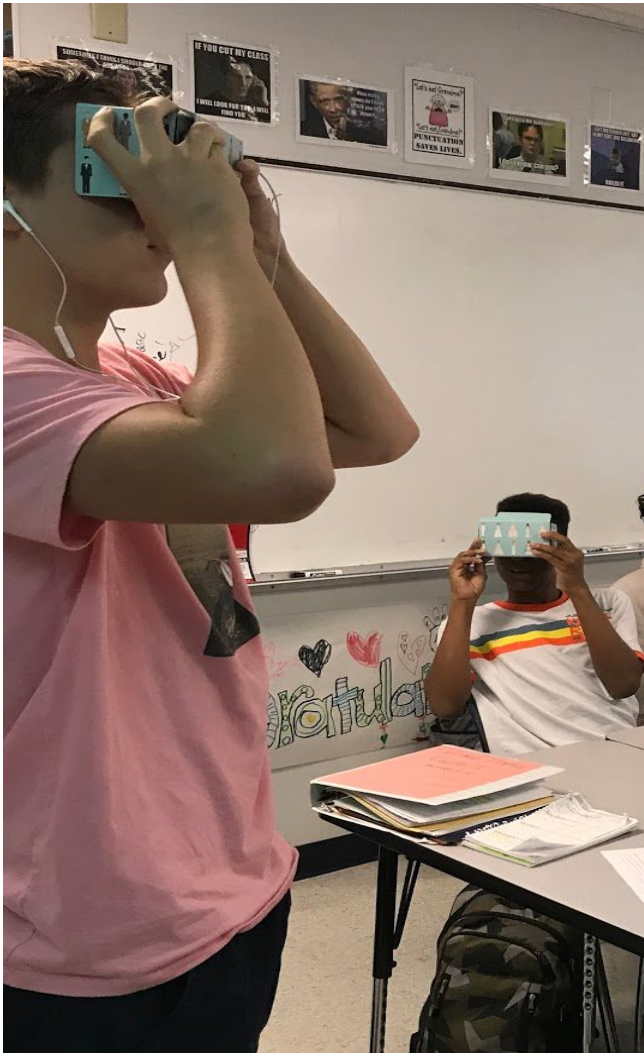
Although WCCHS has been 1:1 for five years, the new addition of Google Cardboard devices enables students to use their smartphones to take virtual field trips around the world, which builds background knowledge, empathy, inferencing ability, technology skills, and global citizenship. These devices can also be used in any

classroom in any discipline. Moreover, VR may be the future beyond classrooms and movie productions such as this summer’s remake of *Lion King*. In June, *Forbes Magazine* stated that VR may continue to expand in STEM education, architecture, real estate, job training, industrial design, and medical school - and it’s already right here at West Chicago Community High School.

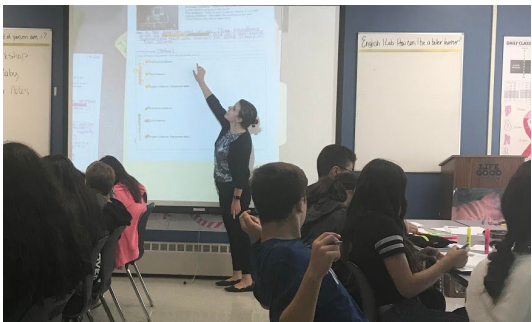


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Please view VR in action in the English classroom in the photos below.



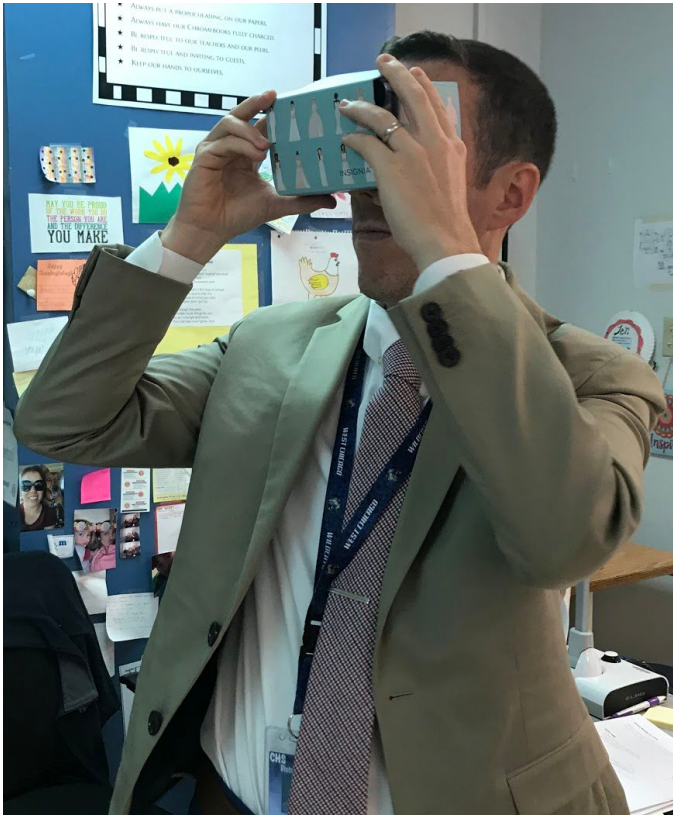
Caption: Culbertson and Walker's English 1 students on a virtual field trip to San Jacinto, Mexico



Caption: Mrs. Walker reviewing claim writing and identifying evidence from *La Linea*.







Caption: Wego Principal Dr. Will Dwyer, visiting an English 1 classroom and using a Google Cardboard to experience VR.