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Photo courtesy of St. Bruno Parish School

This Local Teacher Played Trombone in Zero Gravity for Science

And she involved her students in the experiments.

BY LAURA BENGIS

Researchers and flight coaches weightlessly float toward the familiar sound of a trombone. It isn't the straight notes it sounds, but its unusual presence aboard a zero gravity flight that draws this curious audience.

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at [St. Bruno Parish School](#) in Dousman.



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opportunity to attend a microgravity workshop and propose research ideas to test aboard a zero gravity flight.

While aboard, Werner conducted four experiments that created visual representations of sound in a zero gravity environment including studying the speed of cake sprinkles as they react to pitches and forming three dimensional sound waves with styrofoam beads.



Photo by Jeff Coffey for the Department of Defense

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Werner even collaborated with her students while in flight to compose a piece of music

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And that wasn't the only student-centered experience that Werner's flight inspired for students at St. Bruno. The PE classes completed an "astronaut training" unit, Spanish classes studied related vocabulary, theater arts classes engaged in zero space play acting, and eighth grade science classes showcased Werner's flight experiments with a school-wide demo day.



Werner says the supportive staff at St. Bruno is an important part of her story. "They were right there with me. I've appreciated all the work that they've put in and all the things they did to make this a school-wide thing."

In preparing for the flight, Werner regularly collaborated with Dr. Kevin Crosby, Director of the Wisconsin Space Grant Consortium and Professor of Physics and Astronomy at Carthage College. After earning necessary approvals, filing paperwork, and receiving a bit more training in what to expect, Werner was cleared for flight in May.

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Photo courtesy of St. Bruno Parish School

“It was crazy,” Werner says. “There’s no explaining it, because it’s just nothing I’ve ever felt before.”

Zero gravity flights—like Werner’s—are created by parabolic flight. A plane flies at a 45-degree angle at one speed, then decreases altitude and speed, creating a window of 22 seconds of weightlessness. Werner’s flight completed a series of thirty 22-second sets of zero gravity.

“If you’ve been on roller coasters, or even like driving a car and gone over a hill extra fast and you feel that little rise in your stomach, that’s basically what they’re doing,” Werner says.

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curriculum to science.



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At the end of the month, Werner will attend LiftOff through the Texas Space Grant Consortium, a workshop that invites 50 teachers from around the world to work with astronauts, engaging in simulations and collaborating with other teachers.

“It seems like every time I talk to another teacher, I get another idea for my own classroom,” Werner says.

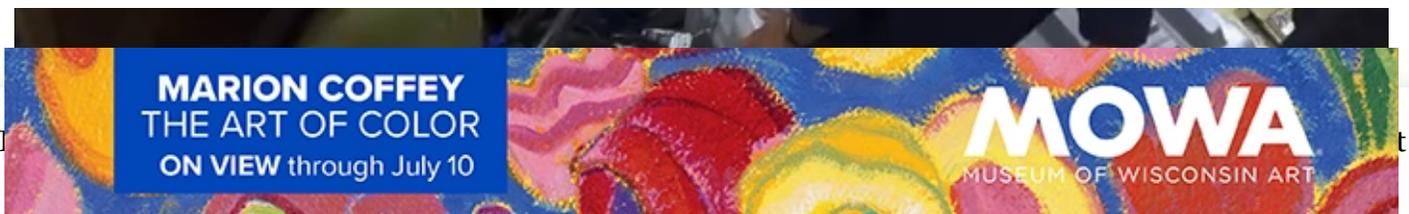
She also says the lessons she’s shared with students go beyond the walls of the classroom.

“[The experience] really showed me that a lot of times if you think you can’t do it or you’re not good enough, that’s only coming from you, and you just need to fight through that and believe in yourself.”

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