Guillaume Bucher and Jennifer Choi are a volunteer team that bring very different life experiences to the RESET classroom. Guillaume hails from Strasbourg, an Alsatian city in eastern France, while Jennifer grew up in the Washington, DC area. With a Korean heritage, Jennifer comes from an academically focused family where science studies were strongly encouraged (her father is a Chemical Engineering Professor at the University of Maryland). By contrast, Guillaume’s father drove a truck for a living and Guillaume was not encouraged to pursue science as a career. It became a matter of pride for both him and his older brother to prove that they could do it.

Thoughtful and self-deprecating, Guillaume prefers planning the lessons and testing the hands-on experiments at home. Jennifer, outgoing and lively, prefers one-on-one interactions with the students instead. Guillaume hopes to one day get a position in the pharmaceutical industry, testing the purity and toxicity of products, while Jennifer would like a job in the renewable energy field. Guillaume and Jennifer have developed an easy friendship, and their different styles complement each other well in the classroom. Both love their RESET volunteer work.

Guillaume and Jennifer are volunteering at Clopper Mill Elementary school in Montgomery County, one of two RESET programs offered at the school this year. Friday’s session with teacher Claudia Austin’s precocious first graders was on what plants need to grow and the impact of excessive algae growth on lakes and rivers. Although the children struggled a bit with the word “algae” (it kept coming out “allergy”), they were clearly learning the impact of human activity on the lifecycle of fish.

Please remember . . . to have your students and teacher complete assessment forms at the end of your classroom program this term.

On RESET’s YouTube Site:

A wise nine-year-old addresses the school board on standardized testing:

www.youtube.com/user/resetonlinevideo

Science Quiz Answer:
About 25 grams
Ms. Austin, an active participant in the class, has appreciated working with her two RESET volunteers: "It has been wonderful to have Guillaume and Jennifer come to my classroom. My students look forward to Fridays because they know they will have a great experience learning science. Guillaume and Jennifer provided my students with authentic scientific experiences and opportunities to ask and answer questions about how people affect the environment. They were always patient, prepared and seemed genuinely interested in our community and how to support all students. As we have a large English learner population, they asked questions prior to each session on how to make their lesson’s content comprehensible to all students."

Guillaume had not been aware of the problems in finding qualified STEM professionals in the United States, and was puzzled that science is not a subject typically pursued by girls in this country, as in France girls are consistently top-ranking in science subjects. Jennifer, who has always loved science, has a special interest in communicating her passion for the subject to girls and “at risk” students. Partnering with Ms. Austin was an excellent fit, then, as Austin is currently pursuing a Master’s degree in STEM teaching, and is very passionate about making STEM appealing to girls and minority students. She even has her own STEM blog: https://stemteacherblog.wordpress.com/.

Last year, Guillaume accompanied his wife Hind to the United States after she took a job at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). Although he completed his PhD in 2014, Guillaume has struggled to find a job in this country without U.S. citizenship. To his credit, this didn’t discourage him from getting actively involved in his new temporary home: “I needed citizenship to find a job, but I didn’t need it to volunteer,” shares Guillaume. “When I was 7 or 8 a scientist came to my class and I was really inspired. I wanted to give back in the same way. It is great to see how the children smile and welcome us. They actually cheer when we arrive!”