

Shorn for a good cause

Kinnick High principal trades hair for better test scores

BY ALLISON BATDORFF
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — There's a touch of the sadistic in a public shearing, but on center stage, David Tran smiled the whole time.

Well, almost the whole time.

His smile flickered as the first pass of the electric razor balded him on one side. It faltered again when a Nile C. Kinnick High School student handed him a heaping handful of his hair. Principal Tran, now wearing a mohawk, held on to the hair tightly.

Showing neither hide nor hair of male-pattern baldness, Tran is proud of his black locks, he said Tuesday. But he wagered his head on academic excellence.

He proposed this: If this year's ninth-graders improved their overall TerraNova scores by five percent, Tran would sport a mohawk.

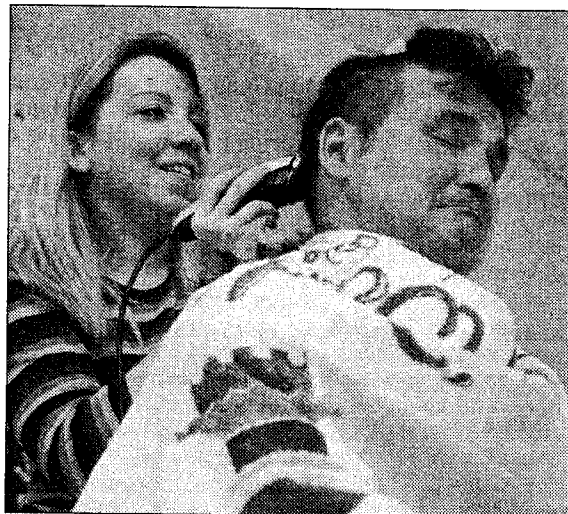
The students themselves chose the mohawk from other Tran torture options, including wearing a tutu or kissing a pig. The incentive was the brainchild of Kinnick's student-led Continuous School Improvement Jr. team, and Tran volunteered for the job.

"I'm never making a bet with you guys again," Tran told the freshmen Tuesday after volun-



PHOTOS BY ALLISON BATDORFF/Stars and Stripes

"It feels funny," said Nile C. Kinnick Principal David Tran of his new mohawk Tuesday. Tran wagered his head against the ninth-graders' TerraNova test scores. Below left: Tran grimaces as his hair is shaved. Right: Freshmen Donovan Whitehead, front, and Kevin Pinchart, behind, capture the moment.



shared him in front of the entire class. "I honestly didn't think you had a snowflake's chance in Africa. You guys are really smart."

The freshmen improved 5.8 percent over last year's ninth-grade scores in the standardized test that assesses students in reading, language arts, math, science and social studies.

If their scores had hit 7 percent better than last year's, Assistant Principal Shelly Kennedy would

"I'm lucky this year," Kennedy said. In response to students' comments that she's next on their list, she said: "Let them come."

Freshman Mackenzie Horsefield found the whole thing "hilarious."

The funny factor heightened their motivation to do well on the TerraNova, she said, and Tran's mohawk is a visual symbol of their accomplishment.

"We deserved this," Horsefield

Plus, "Principal Tran looks better now," said Camille Lai, adding "I can't wait to see Ms. Kennedy with green hair next year."

The only change that ninth grader Donovan Whitehead would make is to dye the mohawk pink, he said.

Tran said he'll wear his mohawk for a while, but it will be gone by graduation, he said, and his "new 'do" might not do for handing out diplomas.

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