

## Kids Around the World Story Time

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*Thomas Jefferson Elementary School  
Wassau, Wisconsin*

Twice a month, students and parents from Thomas Jefferson Elementary School attend a Kids Around the World Story Time. As each family arrives, they receive a book depicting a story from the country featured that evening. While teachers read from the book, families follow along in their own copy, which they get to keep for their home library. After the story, students present information about the country through music, art, theatre, dance, food, or costumes. So far, students have studied and presented such countries as France, Russia, Ireland, Australia, Saudi Arabia, and Africa. They have also learned about Native American cultures.

Thomas Jefferson Elementary School boasts a diverse student body. Forty-eight percent are Hmong and twelve percent are Hispanic. Native American, African American and other ethnicities make up the rest of the school community. The school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) wanted to encourage cultural understanding and tolerance, while also working to promote literacy. Kids Around the World Story Time allowed students to explore a culture in depth and design creative methods of understanding and presenting their knowledge.

This event required the help and assistance from parents, community members, students, and staff. Parents provided food, costumes, and choreography for the different cultural events. ATP members made a list of stories and countries to help the teachers. Community members provided rich cultural knowledge.

The ATP publicized the activity through fliers, word of mouth, and newspaper

articles. The evening events cost \$2500 to implement, and were funded by CESA 9, the Mayors Youth Fund and Title I.

Two hundred eighty students and 400 parents read and explored a diversity of cultures through Kids Around the World Story Time. "My child was very excited about sharing this evening with the families," one parent said. Thomas Jefferson Elementary School intends to continue reading its way around the world and plans to incorporate more community members in this journey.

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