

## Around the World Cultural Celebrations

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*Scott Elementary School and Ellsworth Elementary School  
Naperville, Illinois*

With students from many different cultures, ethnic groups, and backgrounds, two Naperville elementary schools used their growing diversity as the basis for successful schoolwide events for parents, students, teachers, and administrators.

Ellsworth Elementary had its first Cultural Celebration in keeping with the theme chosen by the School Family Community Partnership (SFCP) team for its activities for the year—Cultural Awareness.

The Ellsworth celebration was an evening of games, performances, art exhibits, craft demonstrations, food, and, most importantly, sharing cultures and customs. Among the countries represented were Greece, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, Sweden, Cuba, and India. As students entered the gymnasium, they received a color map of the world to guide them as they visited the various exhibits and presentations, many of them by parents and students.

“Each presentation was unique,” said the organizers. “Many included food to sample, crafts, language and alphabet skills to practice, photographs, maps, and cultural information.” Community members participated as well. The Naperville Cultural Center, for example, provided folk dancers from Lithuania and the Philippines, as well as Japanese origami instructors. “Art from Around the Globe” featured student projects, including Masi beads, African masks, and Chinese dragons.

The celebration began a few days before the evening event, when international students from nearby North Central College visited

Ellsworth to share their various cultures. These students were from Zambia, Korea, Japan, India, and Taiwan; many of them wore traditional attire and brought photos, maps, and art from their homes. They talked about the similarities and differences between growing up in the United States and their home countries.

“Around the World at Scott School” was the second successful multicultural fair at Scott Elementary, building on the positive response to its first fair, in 2005.

The school community transformed a dozen classrooms into an international festival. “When you entered the room, it would appear as if you had entered another country,” said one organizer. Parent volunteers created the displays and programs that typified the countries where they were born. Visitors could say “hello” in a different language, see what the various countries looked like, and participate in activities that acquainted them further with the countries.

In the gym, students and others performed music and dances from the various countries. Each student received a “passport” when he or she arrived at the fair; students could have them stamped as they visited different countries around the school. About 150 parents and 300 students attended the Scott fair.

Both Ellsworth and Scott wanted to bring their families together and reach out to the international families to make them feel welcome and included at the schools. “Everyone came together to share in the different cultures

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and learned something new from each country they walked into,” commented one Scott fair organizer.

At Ellsworth, the gym was filled to capacity—“historically rare for a new School Family Community Partnership activity,” said a committee member. “Teachers, students, families, and community members were present, observing, asking questions, and learning about the world together for a few hours.”

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