

Parents and Teachers Reflect on “A Journey to the Far East”

After the spring concert featuring music from Asia, parents were invited to reflect on the experience and the impact it had on them, and our school community. Their responses are collected here.

Why is it important to study other cultures?

I think it is important to study other cultures and their traditions because it helps to open your mind and give you a unique experience of the many different people around the world. The vocal music concert helped me to experience the way Asian people express themselves specifically in the area of music and song. I loved hearing a prayer, poem, folk song, lullaby, playful song, and hymn in the different languages. It was beautiful!

One important reason is to realize that we are more similar than we think. Our folk traditions passed on through music include woes about life, death, and also celebration and unity. Rhetoric and articulating our ideas are consistent throughout all cultures reflecting how we all feel very similar things across a variety of cultures.

It's important for kids to realize early on that everyone is different, and that our differences can be beautiful and inspiring.

Seeing Junior High children who are well adjusted members of their class with the confidence to sing in their native language: impressive! And they sang well!

It's important to study other cultures to foster empathy, appreciation, and understanding. It puts themselves in context with others and sets a foundation for curiosity and engagement. It takes away the fear of the unfamiliar, helping our children embrace different experiences with open-mindedness.

To help our children, and each of us, understand and grow in appreciation for the beauty of each individual, what makes them who they are, to see similarities and differences and not allow stereotypes to creep in regarding a generalization of people from different cultures. It helps each of us understand the world better, and not just our small corner.

It's important for us to study different cultures because we can learn and appreciate the differences and uniqueness of all as well as knowing we are all children of God.

It's important to study other cultures because it increases your awareness of diversity in the world to better prepare you for adulthood. Also, all of us have unconscious bias, so the more we can increase our awareness and education at an early age, the more accepting our unconscious will be as adults.

I think it is important to learn about cultures that are different than our own to understand and respect other cultures; to be a good friend, a good neighbor, good coworker, good classmate; to get along better with people from different cultures; to widen our knowledge; to live in harmony with differences; to open our heart a little more to others

We think it's infinitely important to study all cultures and cultivate appreciation for all people. We were proud beyond words to see Far East culture, language, and dance on display at our school community.

It is not only important but imperative to study (or, at least, be aware and respectful of) cultures different from our own as different cultures exist among us in our schools, neighborhoods, community

centers, towns, cities and institutions, among other places. Studying different cultures (other than our own) may allow us to begin to understand differences and perspectives of others (and ourselves). Understanding differences in cultural customs perhaps then begets respect, regardless of differences among cultures. Such a basis of understanding and respect seems healthy for differing cultures existing together within societies.

It has been an amazing opportunity for the students and families of the cultures to feel included, respected, and proud to be part of those cultures, while other students and families who are not in the cultures had a great and engaging event to learn and understand more about different cultures. I think, all the various concerts about different cultures so far have been a great way to show how beautiful and diverse our school is!

Did you learn anything or have something to share from your experience as an audience member?

I learned that when taught correctly, children express their natural musical nature easily with joy. They are appreciative to learn. Last night's performance was a clear example of how disdain is modeled or adopted through ignorance and conformity. So is joy and acceptance.

I was wishing I was one of the students so I could sing the songs! Our children gained so much because they got to connect with the Asian culture with music, song, dance and even playing the Taiko drums. It was truly a night of celebration!

What struck me the most was how COOL you make each culture seem whenever you feature a particular culture for a concert. I thought about how proud I would feel if I was from an Asian country...and how meaningful it would be to see your culture celebrated in a place where it does not belong to the majority of members. I hope people felt that way.

That lion dance was SO COOL, and it was even more fun to watch the students reacting to it!

The show had a great impact on my family members. They all said it was amazing and they loved it. Not only students but the adults have learned about the Asian favorite colors, the languages sounds, the lullabies, the amazing dragon dance, the kimono from one of the student singers. The best of all, my children had so much fun while learning songs, making art projects for the show, practicing moves that they did not realize that they were learning!

I was surprised how much the children ENJOYED the songs and were able to learn them in different languages. I learned about the folklore of Japan and China through the words and imagery of the music. And I learned about the different culture, music and dance of China, Japan, Vietnam, and Korea.

It was exciting to see 'authentic' representation. It was a very informed performance and it was also fun to see parts (solos/lion dancers from Pius) that featured native speakers. It allowed the kids to learn from each other and share their culture with the larger community.

I loved the seeing the pure joy on the children's faces during the exhilarating Lion Dance, and how these talented performers echoed and magnified the sweet 1st graders' Dragon Dance using the art students' beautiful hand-made masks. I also loved the kids' expressiveness of emotions during Chong Er Fei, and

the exciting Taiko drums performance! The concert was a wonderful way to share the beauty of different Asian cultures through a lovely, thoroughly enjoyable event featuring our K-4th graders singing and reciting poetry in several different languages, dancing, twirling scarves, drumming, and playing a variety of musical instruments for a standing-room only audience, building students' and attendees' appreciation of different cultures. Thank you Humanities Nebraska for investing in St. Teresa School to help our community better appreciate the humanities!

We've seen this appreciative form of performance at St. Teresa before and would love to see it continue especially in knowing and appreciating other cultures and most so of those that our student body represents!

I love that our children pick up new languages so quickly. Even our five-year-olds have been singing the songs after simply watching and hearing our son sing them at home. They are still talking about it days later. I love how excited the children were to celebrate and learn about different cultures and share what they learned at home, teaching us the words of the songs and meaning behind them.

The performance last night was an incredible portrayal of the cultures of several countries in Asia through vocal and instrumental music, dance, and visual arts. I love that my children are being taught about cultures that are different from their own, and especially in such an integrated way, as nothing highlights the beauty of a culture quite like the arts does. Many different cultures are represented by the families that make up our school, including a few from Asian countries. When all the students in our school learn about the cultures of their peers, and especially when they encounter such beauty while learning about them, it fosters understanding, familiarity, and respect for others. Ideally that will lead to greater unity in our student body, school families, and community. Thank you very much to Mrs. Schilmoeller and our school!

The program was so impressive. The kids did a fabulous job. This have so much respect for you and it shows with how they follow your commands. I thought the show was a great show of the respect and acceptance we have in our community.

It was apparent that the children were embracing the cultures represented in the program throughout their performance, noticeable by the vigor and joy with which their performance was delivered. It was also impressive considering the amount of material that was performed by children of such a young age, as that also figures that same amount of material was taught, learned, choreographed, practiced and then delivered in front of an audience. Kids are capable with good instruction.

This concert opened my eyes to the beauty of the Asian culture's music. It is important to study other cultures in order to appreciate the gifts that they have to share. It also helps to develop appreciation and compassion for persons of other cultures.

I thought it was wonderful to see our students with Asian backgrounds shine as they led some of the prayers and songs. It was also awesome to see students without an Asian ancestry singing in other languages and having fun with the music!

I loved seeing different cultures showcased both for myself and for my children especially in a somewhat "vanilla", middle class Midwestern area. We especially enjoyed seeing the incredibly talented lion dancers. That was incredible!

It is important to study other cultures to gain an understanding and respect for others. As Father said last night, Catholic means universal meaning we are all part of the faith. By understanding other's cultures we can grow deeper in our faith and how we all are a family in the Church.

Those who sang other parts in Japanese or Vietnamese sounded so authentic! Loved it!

3rd and 4th Grade student comments / remarks made on thank you notes:

“It’s important to study other cultures because you get to learn and have other points of view about ways of doing things. I am super scared of performing in public but you made it really fun!”

“It is important to study other cultures and languages because you will not judge the people, and because you will know what they mean.”

“It was cool to learn words and gestures from other languages.”

“It is important to study other cultures because we communicate with other people if we can speak their language.”

“Dear lion dancers, I like the costumes! You did really good! We were surprised! I liked the blinking of the lion!”

“Your lions are scary but really cool! You guys are fun!”

“Thank you for doing the lion dance! It was so, so, so, so, so, so, so cool!”

“Thank you for performing for us; I have never seen anyone dance like you.”

“Dear Lion Dancers, I liked watching you eat my cousin.”

“Dear Lion Dance Team, thank you so much for coming to our school and doing one of the coolest dances I have ever seen.”

“Dear Lion Dancers, I about fainted because it was so cool! Thank you so much for doing it! I wish I could see that every single day!”

“Dear Ngoc, thank you for speaking Vietnamese and singing at our concert. I love how you express your culture!”