

Experiencing the Taj Mahal

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District 54 teacher shares richness of Indian culture with students

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Cathryn Montoya/Staff Photographer

Fourth-grader Isha Jog performs an Indian dance during an Armstrong School assembly about India.

Armstrong Elementary School students took a field trip to India Tuesday without ever leaving the school gym.

They mimicked the sound and motions of fastening seat belts, after Rashmi Gandhi told them to buckle up, and settled in for some of the sights and sounds of India. It's a journey Gandhi has taken many School District 54 students on over the past 14 years, and she never tires of it.

"I just love to share my culture, my country, whatever way it helps them learn. Our culture is a very rich culture," she said.

Gandhi, a bilingual teacher at Churchill Elementary School in Schaumburg, has given the presentation at several district schools. The Tuesday presentation at Armstrong in Hoffman Estates, coincided with a schoolwide project on learning about different continents, said Naseem Alibhai, an Armstrong bilingual teacher. Students in all grades were learning about Asia.

Gandhi showed slides of Indian landmarks, such as the Taj Mahal in Agra and the Parliament House in New Delhi, demonstrated how to play

various instruments, including the sitar and tabla drums, and taught Armstrong staff a Gujarati stick dance.

The presentation also included dancing by two Armstrong students, Isha and Ishan Jog. Isha, a fourth-grader, performed a classic Indian Kathak dance in a bright yellow outfit with bells on her ankles. Her brother Ishan, a second-grader, performed a modern Indian dance that had both Indian and Western influences.

Gandhi used the school's principal, Pat Piech, to demonstrate how to wrap a sari, a length of 5 to 6 yards of cloth worn by women throughout India.

After Gandhi had finished wrapping the cloth around her, Piech took a turn around the gymnasium for the students and staff to see.

"I could hardly feel it, it's so light," she said after the presentation.

Schaumburg Township Elementary School District 54 serves students in Schaumburg and parts of Elk Grove Village, Hoffman Estates, Hanover Park and Streamwood.

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