

## **Story, photos: Japanese students share culture at Holy Cross School**

April 1, 2009. Students at Holy Cross School are learning what life is like for peers on the other side of the globe this week, thanks to six Japanese visitors.

The students, ranging in age from 9 to 13, have attended classes and field trips with Holy Cross students, and provided lessons on their culture. They're students of area native Andrew Bourdelais, who lives and teaches English in Japan and has family here.

Language barrier aside, the students have had a blast with their American counterparts, said Holy Cross principal Robin Jo Jen-sen. From learning new ways to play Rock, Paper, Scissors to discovering different foods, Holy Cross has embraced its visitors.



"I want to make sure our children's eyes and ears and minds and hearts are opened to other cultures and other parts of the world that we're all affected by," Jensen said. "And I think part of what we strive really hard here to do is to be current and be actively engaged in what's going on globally."

For the students, that has included simple things like learning the difference between the sound a cow makes as pronounced by American kids versus their Japanese counterparts.

The American students have been surprised to learn how much studying the Japanese students do, while the visitors have been surprised by the size of homes and meal portions here.

Holy Cross students have learned some Japanese, including words for greetings and different times of day.

"I think it's actually an honor to have these Japanese visitors come to our school," said third-grader Brody Stitz. The Japanese students' last day at Holy Cross will be Friday, and all said through Bourdelais' translation that they've enjoyed their time here.

Holy Cross hopes to keep in touch with the students after they return home, Jensen said.

"For the children to understand that there are other cultures," she said, "and people who are very different than we are, but yet very much the same — I think that's really the message, that we're all God's children, and that we all need to take care of one another, whether we're across the street or across the world."

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