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Second-graders get first exposure to Hong Kong via teleconference

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NEWARK -- A Manchu princess met a movie star and tai chi was followed by the Hokey Pokey on Thursday morning as students in Newark connected with students in Hong Kong.

Second-graders at St. Francis de Sales Catholic Elementary School conducted a video teleconference with a class in Hong Kong in the school's second international cultural exchange.

St. Francis teacher Jill Merry said the school does teleconferences regularly with zoos, museums and other cultural centers around the country, but Thursday's teleconference was a first for the school.

"We do a lot of videoconferencing, but this is the first time with Hong Kong," Merry said.

Second-grade teacher Joyce Scullion has been working with the students for the past two weeks to learn more about Hong Kong and to prepare presentations for the teleconference.

St. Francis students dressed as American icons, such as a cowboy and a movie star, while their counterparts in Hong Kong shared a wedding dress, wedding traditions and Chinese folklore.

Second-graders generally study the continents, and the teleconference helped to make a more meaningful connection to what they learned in class, Scullion said.

"We're trying to get rid of some of the stereotypes," Scullion said. "It may be the child's first time seeing a person from another country, and it may be a child in Hong Kong's first time seeing an American."

Parents and students were excited about the teleconference.

"I think it's pretty amazing. I think it's great for them to see other traditions," said parent Pam Gialdini, who stayed to watch the teleconference.

Having exposure to another culture was an opportunity for gain some insight into other cultures, parent Dian Putman said.

"It gives them a chance to have some respect," Putman said.

The students were just as excited as their parents, Putman and Gialdini said.

"It was the first time I didn't have to fight (to get) him out of bed," Putman said.
