



# Read Around the Planet Teacher Packet 2014



## What is the TWICE “Read Around the Planet” Event?

Read Around the Planet is a celebration of reading using videoconference technology. It is designed to promote reading and opportunities for classroom videoconference collaborations. TWICE, Michigan’s K12 Videoconference Organization, sponsors the activity. Polycom provides funding to support this project. Read Around the Planet is a celebration of NEA’s Read Across America as well as World Book Day.

*\*Disclaimer. While we are using this name to be inclusive to our international friends, this name does NOT guarantee U.S. schools an international connection. They will be matched randomly in this project with usually over 90% of the participating classes from the United States.*

**Grade Levels:** Pre-K – 12

**Languages:** English, English as a Second Language, French, Spanish, and Special Education



## Registration

Registration is online at <http://projects.twice.cc/> and more information about registration is found online <http://www.twice.cc/read/> and in the Coordinator and Tech Contact packets.

When you register, indicate ALL the dates and times you can possibly do. The registration system will match you with a class based on those times. It’s much easier to find you a partner class if you have entered all possible dates and times.



## Agenda

The following is a suggested agenda for your actual Read Around the Planet connection. Feel free to negotiate something different with your partner teacher.

- **5 min. Class Introductions.** Share the current time, current weather, teacher names, and grade level.
- **Class A leads the interaction.** Share your presentation or lead the activities you’ve planned for your partner class.
- **Class B leads the interaction.** Share your presentation or lead the activities you’ve planned for your partner class. (With young students, it works better to alternate several shorter activities between the two schools.)
- **Question and Answer time.** Have students frame the question. “In our town, we have three elementary schools. How many do you have?”
- **Reflection.** Discuss together. What similarities and differences did you notice between our two classes? What did you learn from the other class?
- **Closing.** A big round of applause, a goodbye cheer, a big thank you, etc.



## Preparation

### Learn about your partner class.

- Ask your videoconference coordinator (if you do not have a CAPspace account) or log into <http://projects.twice.cc> (under My Projects, Read Around the Planet) if you missed the late January email with your partner's contact information.
- Look up your partner school on a map (and/or Google). Discuss potential similarities and differences. Brainstorm questions.
- Email or call your partner teacher and touch base. Be sensitive to potential February break times. Use the phone if you can't get through via email.
- Get your partner teacher's home phone or cell phone number if there is a possibility of a snow day.
- Tell your partner teacher if you have a winter break in February, so she knows when you are unavailable.

### Consider what to share with your partner class.

- What are you currently studying in language arts (or your world language class)?
- What are students creating or writing that could be shared with the partner class?
- What could your class teach the partner class?
- What are the similarities in what both classes are learning? (Sometimes there is a similarity, other times there isn't. It's ok if your curriculums don't match. Each class will practice being a good listening audience for the other class.)

### Prepare your introduction.

Have a couple of students prepare and practice the introduction. Some possibilities include:

- Introduce class, school, and teacher name
- Introduce location and show a map
- Share something interesting about your location
- Share some pictures from your community



## Preparing the Presentation or Interactive Activities

### Brainstorm as a class what you could share with your partner class.

Here are some ideas from past participating classes.

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| ▪ Skits                          | ▪ Illustrations (check your document camera setup first!) |
| ▪ Plays                          | ▪ Dramatizations  |
| ▪ Raps                           | ▪ Student-created books                                   |
| ▪ Songs                          | ▪ Game shows or quiz shows                                |
| ▪ Original poetry                | ▪ Recitation of poetry                                    |
| ▪ Original songs                 | ▪ Student projects in your current curriculum             |
| ▪ Video clips of snow activities | ▪ Create biography dolls                                  |
| ▪ Persuasive essays              | ▪ Paint a mural   |
| ▪ Sign language                  | ▪ A news show about your community                        |

### Brainstorm as a class what visuals you might share with the partner class.

Videoconferencing is a visual medium, so think about how it will look. The amount of available preparation time may also dictate your ability to prepare visuals.

- What visuals will you use to enhance your presentation?
- Will students dress up in school colors, costumes, "Cat in the Hat" hats, or cowboy hats?
- Could the art class make a backdrop?
- What pictures can you share?

### **Brainstorm ways you could involve the other class.**

Some classes who participate in Read Around the Planet prefer to think of their time as “leading an interaction” vs. “presenting”. Either way is fine, but here are some ideas if you want to involve the other class. If they need any materials to participate, be sure to let them know ahead of time!

- Ask your partner class **questions** related to your presentation as you go through. I.e. presenting state symbols: “What are your state symbols?”
- Ask your partner class to **guess** something (i.e. who do the biography dolls represent).
- Make statements about your class and have your partner class **decide** if they are true (touch nose) or false (touch shoulders).
- Share **riddles** for your partner class to solve.
- Give the other class something to **print** and fill out (i.e. lyrics to a song and fill in the blanks).
- Have your students dress up as a book characters and have the other class **guess** whom you represent.
- For middle or high school students, have your students perform or recite poetry with the other class acting as **judges**. (i.e. Poetry Idol).
- Create a Mad-Lib for your partner class to **complete**.
- **Teach** the other class something – a local saying, a local dance, how to make some local food, how to draw a book character, etc.
- Research your partner class’ town and create a presentation about similarities and differences that you learn. Prepare **questions** about facts or news items that you find interesting or are curious about.
- **Play** Wheel of Fortune with phrases, nouns, or sayings from your town or school. (This one should be 3rd grade or higher and watch the time!)
- For older students – middle or high school - write a story about characters who journey between your town and you partner class’ town. Share it during the RAP connection. (If you really want to get creative, use a wiki to write collaboratively and then meet in the videoconference to present it.)
- **Play** twenty questions. Be sure to review the rules of the game before you begin and give a clear idea of what they will be guessing. Example: You will be able to ask us 20 “yes” or “no” questions in order to figure out our mystery Dr. Seuss’ character.

### **Involve all students in the presentation.**

This list was created by Kim Pearce, Gatesville Intermediate School, 6<sup>th</sup> grade language arts teacher from 2006. Used by permission.

- **Art crew:** Design backdrop and paint.
- **Directors:** Usually one girl and one boy.
- **Stage-hands:** Move props.
- **Lighting and sound crew:** Turn on and off lights and/or adjust microphone.
- **Narrators:** Usually good readers who are not shy to speak in front of the camera.
- **Actors**
- **Costume and make-up:** Help put together costumes and help with make-up. (i.e. some classes wear Cat in the Hat hats and paint whiskers on their faces.)
- **Writers:** Help write and edit the script. Help with timing and what scenes can be deleted or added.
- **Cue card holders:** Hold up cards with lines on them for anyone who might get stuck. Hold up scene or act cards during a transition.
- **Question and answer team:** These students answer and ask questions to the other class at the end of the conference.
- **Judges:** These students watch the performance by both schools and write down any changes that might improve the conference for the next time. We must always learn from our mistakes.

- **Take down crew:** Cleans up after conference.

## Posters

If you decide to use posters for your presentation, try the following tips.

- **Simple Short Text:** Don't write too much on the poster. Write the key words.
- **Big Bold Text:** Any text that the other class needs to see or write down should be big & bold and written with dark colors. Use large text, strong contrast with no light colors for lettering, and very large pictures or drawings. Huge thick lines for drawing and writing are best. Test your poster by holding it up across the room to see if you can still read it.
- **Hold Still & Zoom In:** If the poster is moving around, the camera never focuses on it, and so the other class can never see it clearly. Hold the poster still and zoom in (or set a preset for zooming in.) Some classes even tape the poster to a chalkboard or set it on an easel to hold it still.
- **Read off the back:** If you read any notes from the back of the poster, it's easier to keep the posters still and therefore readable for the camera.



## Special Notes for Language Classes

While English is the predominant language for Read Around the Planet, some immersion, bilingual classes, and world language classes also participate in the target language. When signing up, be sure to indicate your language and level. However, note that due to the small numbers of these registrations, it is highly unlikely you will get a partner with native speakers or even the same grade level as your students.

Teachers have found that cross grade level connections between students learning a language can be very powerful learning experiences. For example, your high school Spanish students may be matched with a bilingual Spanish class. Here are some ideas for your language interaction:

- Create a skit for students to act out while practicing the language. Add some interaction by have the other students give a signal (stand up, thumbs up, etc) if the language use was correct.
- Have students read a story in the target language for the partner class.
- Have students lead a game show activity that reviews vocabulary or quizzes the other students.
- Students run a local news show in the target language.



## Preparing for Questions & Answers

The last 15 minutes of the connection are for questions and answers between the schools.

### Prepare your students to ask good questions.

- Learn about the different ways people live in the area of your partner school.
- Consider what kinds of questions could be asked based on their presentations.
- Practice asking a few questions.
- Depending on the age of your students, you may wish to have students prepare questions beforehand and write them on a note card to ask during the videoconference. This is your opportunity to help students understand how people live in different areas.

### Here are some suggestions for preparing questions:

- Show examples. As the teacher, you should also write some questions and show them to the students so that they can see how it should be done.
- Place the students in pairs and encourage them to select their best questions.
- Conduct a round robin elimination process. When your students have selected their best questions, ask each group to read their questions to the class. Eliminate duplicate questions among the groups.

- Revise the questions. When the elimination process is completed, each student should have at least one unique question to ask in the interview. It is okay if the question has been rewritten to include aspects of duplicates that were eliminated.

Alternatively, **plan to mute both classes** for 1 or 2 minutes and brainstorm questions to ask each other. You'll find this short pause in the videoconference will increase the quality of the students' questions.

- Consider what feedback you might want to give your partner class.
- What constructive comments could you share?

### Set up the questions.

Question time is much more effective if students set up the questions. For example,



- My name is Jane. In our community, we enjoy winter sports such as skating and skiing. What do you do for fun in the winter?
- My name is John. Our school day starts at 8:30 am and ends at 3:30 pm. What time does your school day start and end?

## Teach/Review Listening Etiquette

Review how to be a good listener.



- Explain to students that the other class can see them during the whole videoconference.
- Remind students (and practice) of good listening posture and behavior.
- Encourage students to respect the hard work of the other class, just as if they were in the same room with your class.

## Tips and Technology

- Plan to arrive in your videoconference room early enough to set up and orient your students to the technology.
- Organize your students for the session. Place the students who have speaking parts near the microphone.
- Practice your presentation with the equipment prior to the videoconference, if possible.
- Be prepared to fill in 5 minutes or so in case of technical issues at the beginning of the conference. (Students could bring books to read; or you could bring a book to read-aloud.)
- Make sure all students are on camera.
- Be sure you know how to mute and unmute the microphone.



## Celebrate & Share!

- Invite parent helpers to listen, observe, or even assist.
- Put up a bulletin board in the school hallway with pictures from the connections and a map showing all the places your school connected via videoconference (for Read Around the Planet or all year!).
- Write up the event for the school/district newsletter.
- Invite the press to come and report on the celebration.



## Commitment

When you register, you and your colleagues are committing to videoconference with your partner class. If you give incorrect information, the class you are matched with will be left without a partner after weeks of preparation. **Please double check everything before you register!!** Make sure you, the teacher(s), and the technician are all available for the days your school is participating in Read Around the Planet. When a class backs out of this event, it is almost impossible to find someone for the partner class to connect to. This means disappointed kids, and we don't want that!



## What If?

### What if I'm having trouble with preparation?

- Choose something simple that ties in with your current studies. This doesn't have to be a huge production!
- Talk to your media specialist or videoconference coordinator to get ideas and assistance.

### What if I can't contact my partner teacher?

- Did you try phone as well as email? Sometimes email gets caught in spam filters. Call!
- Talk to your videoconference coordinator. Find out if they were able to make a successful test call. If so, plan on the videoconference anyway!
- Your videoconference coordinator can also contact your partner teacher's coordinator to get assistance in hearing back.

### What if I need to cancel?

- Don't cancel! You've made a commitment to your partner class. Instead **reschedule!** Teachers understand. Life happens. Jury duty, snow days, testing, unforeseen events scheduled by the district... all these things can happen.
- March is reading month! **Reschedule.** It's great to read in April and May as well! **Reschedule.**
- Follow through on your commitment to your partner class.
- If all else fails, persuade another teacher in your school to take your place. Don't disappoint the students in your partner class!



### What if we have a snow day?

- First, if you think there is a possibility of a snow day, get your partner teacher's phone number. Call her first thing in the morning if you have a snow day.
- Then **reschedule** for another day. Reading is a great learning experience whether it's March, April, or even May!

## Extending the Learning

Many classes participating in Read Around the Planet choose to continue the collaboration. Here are some suggestions:

- Share special items from your community with the other classroom (leaves, natural objects, candy, gifts, etc.).
- Be pen pals! Videoconference later to meet pen pals again.
- Write thank you letters to each other to practice writing friendly letters.
- Share pictures via email, Flickr or a wiki of topics that came up in the question time.
- Send your school mascot or a teddy bear to the other class. Have them take pictures with it at various places in the school and town. Write a diary for the bear's adventures. Then send the mascot/bear, pictures, and diary back to the partner class. If mailing is an issue, email a picture or drawing of your mascot.
- Share with each other about what was learned on your spring field trips.
- Share literature circles.
- Read the other books in the book series you presented or they presented, and then videoconference to discuss the books.
- Share instructional ideas (if classes are using a similar program).

- Save your partner's contact information for next year's Read Around the Planet and videoconference with them instead of getting a new partner (i.e. skip official registration to get a random partner).
- Save your partner school's contact information and do all of your Read Around the Planet connections next year between your two schools (i.e. skip official registration with random partners). *It's ok, we don't mind!!*