

English learners and classmates hold cultural food exchange at CHS

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What started as a way for English language (EL) learners to practice speaking English turned into something much bigger.

school library, where some students brought traditional American dishes and others brought traditional foods from their cultures. The EL students mingled with their peers during the meal, sharing conversation and learn-

practice in compassion and reminded them that our immigrant students are still teenagers just like them - and that they want to have fun, too, but it's hard when everyone looks through you because you can't speak English."

to have a cultural food exchange ... They met in the school library and shared that meal together. There was great conversation, and some really great learning happening in that library."

Foods shared included casseroles, fried catfish, chips and dip, and macaroni and cheese from the psychology students. EL students brought pork dumplings wrapped in banana leaves, Ben ep (a Vietnamese flat bread), guacamole, Mung bean stuffed pastries, samosas, flan, and spring rolls.

Countries represented included Vietnam, Mexico, Philippines, Switzerland, South Korea and, of course, the U.S. Tables were decorated with tapestries and fabric hangings from different countries, along with memorabilia from different cultures.

"My students are surrounded daily with American culture and were able to share their home culture with peers who embraced it," Roberts said.

Dr. Brock Ratcliff, CHS assistant principal, said the idea was formed a few weeks ago, when a group of EL students in Julie Roberts' class visited Ottis' room for a "conversation" lesson.

"She wanted her students to have genuine conversations with English speakers," Ratcliff said. "Afterward, they had the idea



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Pictured (l to r) are, front row: Maymoumah Yafai; second row: Danielle Williams, Flavie Hamon and Mallorie Steen; third row: Soo Lee, Asharria Cavett, Kayla Johnson, Taylor Cardenas, Nicole Tzompantzi and Keshunna Scott; and back row: Nhi Nguyen, Lam Nguyen, Long Nguyen and Doan Nguyen.

"It turned into a way for them to make friends and become more comfortable in their school home," said Clinton High School sociology teacher Sherri Ottis. "It also gave them a chance to share their culture with the students in their new school, many of whom had never tasted some of the foreign foods."

EL students and psychology students had a cultural food exchange in the

ing from each other.

"The EL students had a chance to be the focus instead of another day feeling invisible because they can't communicate as well," Ottis said. "For the psychology students, it gave them



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Pictured (l to r) are: Velmante Smith, Manjot Singh, Jordan Grant, Aymen Aldalal, Omaaree Roberts and Son Nguyen.

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