



## **SERF Grants Bring Diverse Cultures to Classrooms**

by Dawn Solowey (Original Copy Submitted to Town Crier and printed on 4/8/2010)

Recent grants by the Sudbury Education Resource Fund (SERF) have brought the larger world and diverse cultures into the classroom. SERF ([www.serfsudbury.org](http://www.serfsudbury.org)) is a non-profit organization dedicated to funding student enrichment and curriculum enhancement projects in K-12 classrooms in the Sudbury Public Schools (SPS) and Lincoln Sudbury Regional High School (LSRHS).

One recent SERF grant funded sets of Canadian maps for two fourth grade classrooms at the Peter Noyes Elementary School. "Our grade 4 study of North America includes learning the provinces, territories, capitals, major cities and landforms in Canada," notes fourth grade teacher Shannon Famigletti. "In past years, we did not have maps for the students to refer to during our study," she reports. The SERF grant funded a total of 60 maps, so that each student could study and explore his or her own map. "Having a map to refer to obviously made the students' work easier," Famigletti says. A SERF grant funded world mythology books for sixth graders at the Ephraim Curtis Middle School (ECMS). Teacher Robin Sallese sought the funding in order to expand the curriculum - which had focused on Greek creation myths - to include creation myths from the Incan, Native American, Celtic, Norse, Chinese, African, Middle Eastern, and Australian cultures. Not only did the expansion better align the curriculum with state standards, but "the mythology picture books grabbed the students' interest, in a fun, multi-modal way," says Sallese. Using the SERF-funded books, the students explored "what we can tell about a culture from its myths as well as why cultures create myths," Sallese explains.

Another SERF grant at ECMS funded teacher resources on the ancient world for the seventh grade curriculum. Several years ago, Curtis had adopted the History Alive! Ancient World textbook, which explores the great early civilizations of Egypt and the Near East, India, China, Greece, and Rome. The SERF-funded teacher resources kit complements those textbooks, with a number of resources on the ancient world, including lesson guides, CD-ROMs, an interactive student notebook, and online resources. Social studies teacher Tammy Fox reports, for example, that using the interactive student notebook, students completed a graphic organizer, shaped like a pyramid, to diagram the various social classes of ancient Egypt, and then wrote and acted out skits about them. "I find that when students interact with the material rather than just reading the material, they *become* the people, and achieve a greater appreciation for ancient history," says Fox. Students have also used resource kit materials to document differences between ancient Athens and ancient Sparta, and then to debate the relative strengths of each city-state on topics such as government,



economy, education and treatment of women or slaves.

A SERF grant also funded Renaissance costumes for LSRHS students to wear during their first Annual Renaissance Madrigal Dinner in 2009, organized by then Choral Director Ruth Hartt. "Madrigal" is a type of vocal music composition from the Renaissance era. Students were involved in every aspect of the dinner: the mixed and select choral groups performed, and students wrote the script for the evening and served the meal. "This project broadened students' horizons in a variety of ways," Hartt reports. The students learned about proper performance in the madrigal style, and Renaissance music, culture, language and dance, and honed their performance and acting skills in the process. The dinner was a fundraiser that earned \$2,000 toward the LSRHS Select Chorus' trip to New York City to perform, by invitation, at Carnegie Hall. To award grants that bring cultures from around the world to the K-12 classrooms, and to fund other curriculum enhancement, SERF relies primarily on financial contributions from parents and community members in its direct appeal, which is currently ongoing. Donations may be made online at [www.serfsudbury.org](http://www.serfsudbury.org).