

BRIDGING THE SCIENCE GAP IN RURAL SCHOOLS

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This article from ATD in the United States first appeared [here](#). The article describes a project in rural New Mexico where ATD has worked since 2012, particularly with the Native American Community.

“Where are you taking my bones!” exclaimed a preschooler, at Church Rock Elementary School in Gallup, New Mexico. The child did not want us to take down the Dinosaur Exhibit that we had set up in his school the week before. We reassured him that we were moving it to a different school so that other children would have the opportunity to enjoy the exhibit as well.

As our team members were taking down our science-themed discovery exhibits at Navajo Elementary School last December, two students ran towards us. It was an opportunity for a final, fantastic question, “What happens when you fall into a black hole?” they asked.



Interest, engagement, and passion from children are what parents and teachers strive for in our schools. Teachers know that these qualities need to be nurtured, so they jump at every opportunity they find to support their students' learning. These opportunities are crucial, especially in areas where resources are very scarce and schools can barely afford transportation costs to public libraries.

Reactions from the schools' staff have been overwhelmingly positive:

"The interactive exhibits have been awesome for our excited students!" – Wanda,
Instructional Coach, Navajo Elementary School

*"We have had a blast using the exhibit for the students.
Thank you for the opportunity!"* – Ramona, Intervention Teacher, Rocky View Elementary
School

Our Discovery Exhibit has reached more than 6,000 children in 15 schools and public libraries.



Our Exhibit has visited all these places!

As in many under-resourced rural areas in the US, New Mexico has recently ranked close to the bottom of all the states in terms of quality of education, graduation rates, and math and reading test scores. Among all the school districts in New Mexico, Gallup McKinley County schools continue to rank at the bottom of the board. With the county's poverty rate close to 40%, the future for the children in this rural area is rather grim.

In the years since its launch in 2014, our Discovery Exhibit program has seen unprecedented growth, having reached, more than 6,000 children in 15 schools and public libraries. ATD Fourth World has been working with students, teachers, and local artists to design and build these interactive educational exhibits, which are then made available to public schools, libraries, and community centers throughout the region.



Today's Fourth Industrial Revolution, as it is called, is transforming the world at a very fast pace. Some of today's jobs will disappear fast; a lot of new kinds of jobs are going to appear. Technology literacy, already necessary almost everywhere, is going to be prevalent in these future jobs. Preparing the children of today to develop these skills is not only essential if they want to be part of these changes, but is also a way to break the cycle of poverty.

ATD USA's vision is to keep bringing these science exhibits to the most isolated schools in Gallup, New Mexico, and nearby Native American lands. Based on the demand from local teachers, ATD will also start providing science kits that can be used in classrooms to support science education with hands-on activities.

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