

Best of Fulbright ETA

Monthly Highlights

From November 2025 - April 2026



SPECIAL EDITION OF THE FULBRIGHT ETA MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

Compilation of the best articles from November 2025 – April 2026

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Book design by SUNVisual
Printed in the Republic of Indonesia

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Welcome to this special edition of the Fulbright ETA Monthly Highlight from Indonesia, where we have compiled selected stories from the Fulbright ETA Cohort 2025, covering the period of November 2025 through April 2026.

The seventeen (17) Fulbright English Teaching Assistants of the 2025 cohort and their host schools have completed their eight-month program in Indonesia. Throughout this period, they actively created dynamic English learning environments and fostered meaningful connections in the classroom and beyond, including through school-based initiatives, cultural exchange, and community engagement.

The Fulbright ETAs also took part in special occasions such as International Education Week, Ramadan celebrations, and the 250th anniversary of the U.S., enriching their engagement with students and local communities. In 2026, they also organized local WORDS Storytelling and Storybook Competitions at their respective schools, selecting one winner from each school to advance to the national competition in Jakarta in April.

As their time in Indonesia came to an end, they bid heartfelt farewells to their schools and communities, leaving behind strengthened cross-cultural understanding and contributions to educational development.

The following pages offer a glimpse into their experiences, highlighting their classroom activities, community engagement efforts, and contributions to fostering intercultural exchange.

About the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program and ETA in Indonesia

The Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program, one of the US State Department-funded Fulbright programs in many countries worldwide, places recent college graduates and young professionals as English teaching assistants in primary and secondary schools or universities overseas. The program helps improve international students' English-language abilities and knowledge of the US while increasing the US student's language skills and knowledge of the many host countries worldwide.

In Indonesia, the Fulbright ETAs are placed in high schools (SMA, SMK, and Madrasah) that assist local English teachers. The program has been running for over two decades, since 2004, affecting thousands of Indonesian students and their communities across the archipelago. AMINEF works closely with the Indonesian Ministries of Primary and Secondary Education and Religious Affairs to administer the Fulbright ETA program in Indonesia.

About the Fulbright ETA Monthly Highlights

The Highlights are informal stories submitted by the ETAs that recount their experiences with co-teachers, students, and community members where they are placed. We hope they are informative and capture the special value of this program.

We welcome your feedback and encourage you to sign up for The Highlights e-newsletter, delivered straight to your inbox. For both feedback and sign-up, please email us at

communications@aminef.or.id.

If you wish to catch up on our previous editions, they are available at the AMINEF website:

bit.ly/read-FulbrightETA-MH

Fulbright ETA Orientation

Welcoming the 2025 Cohort: Arrival and Orientation Highlights

We are pleased to announce that seventeen new Fulbright English Teaching Assistants (ETAs) from the United States arrived in Indonesia on September 15th, 2025, marking the beginning of their transformative journey. Each year, the ETAs' arrival signifies a special moment for AMINEF, furthering our continued mission of cross-cultural exchange and mutual understanding. In this article, we share some highlights and overview of how the ETAs spent their first weeks in Indonesia.

Following their arrival, the ETAs attended a one-day Arrival Briefing program in Jakarta on September 16th which included presentations led by U.S. Embassy officers, a panel with officials from various ministries of the Indonesian government, and informational sessions from AMINEF as the Fulbright commission in Indonesia. For dinner, they had the privilege of dining with the U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission, Heather Merritt, at her residence in Jakarta.

These activities gave ETAs the opportunity to establish connections with each other and important stakeholders of the program, as well as gaining insights into their roles at school and communities in Indonesia.

The next day, on September 17th, ETAs and AMINEF staff travelled to Yogyakarta for an intensive 2.5-week Orientation program. These weeks were spent immersing the ETAs in language acquisition, teaching methodologies, explorations of Indonesian culture, and briefings on program policies and responsibilities. ETAs stayed in homestays with local Yogyakartan families and engaged in language classes and enrichment sessions each day. Topics of sessions spanned cross-cultural understanding, Indonesian history, physical and mental health, educational systems in Indonesia, and much more.

Several distinguished guest speakers joined the Orientation program to deliver workshops and sessions with their local and international expertise: Dr. Baskara Wardaya, Scholar of Sahabat Insan; Gia Raharja, Advisor of Saling Jaga; Hafilia Ismanto, Managing Director of HRI & Associates; Dr. Itje Chodidjah, Senior Educational Training Consultant; Dr. Leo Uisetiawan, Doctor of the U.S. Peace Corps in Indonesia; Magdalena Rojas Lynch, English Language Fellow of the U.S. Regional English Language Office (RELO); Sakdiyah Ma'ruf, Founder of Our Voice Comedy for Change; and Tiara Puspita, Clinical Psychologist of the International Wellbeing Center.

During the final week of this year's orientation, the ETAs were joined by one representative teacher from each of their schools to complete joint workshops in pedagogy and team teaching. ETAs and their co-teachers collaborated to establish clear expectations, discover potential extracurricular projects, and practice co-teaching.

The orientation concluded with a mock teaching activity, providing teaching pairs with the opportunity to meticulously plan and present a lesson together in a monitored environment, allowing them to develop their co-teaching relationship and address challenges.

The orientation also featured two exciting educational excursions. In the first week, the ETAs visited Kebonagung Village, where they participated in traditional village activities such as field plowing, rice planting, and batik making, while practicing their new Indonesian language skills. On the first day after the co-teachers' arrival, ETAs and co-teachers embarked on a tour of Sambisari temple following their introductory ceremony.

Upon the successful completion of the intensive Orientation program, the ETAs and their co-teachers began the next phase of their journey, travelling to their respective sites on October 5th. This year, our ETAs will be teaching in public (SMA), vocational (SMK), and Islamic (MAN) high schools across Jambi, Padang, Lampung, Central Java, East Java, Central Kalimantan, South Sulawesi, Southeast Sulawesi, and West Nusa Tenggara. They have already been making a great impact in their first few weeks at school!



(First appeared in the **November 2025 Edition**)

Fulbright ETA Mid-Year Enrichment Conference



English Teaching Assistants (ETAs) and their co-teachers (Indonesian English teachers they work with at their schools) participated in the annual Fulbright ETA Program Mid-Year Enrichment Conference in Jakarta from January 19–23, 2026. The conference marks the halfway point of the grant and allows ETAs and co-teachers to share their experiences, learn best practices from one another, and deepen their knowledge of teaching, community building, cross-cultural communication, and problem-solving. These skills will continue to strengthen their collaboration in the second semester.

The ETAs led sessions, shared activity ideas, and worked with AMINEF behind the scenes to make the conference successful.

ETAs and co-teachers participated in various sessions, ranging from “AI and Counterpoint” to meetings with an Indonesian Government Panel. ETAs appreciated sessions led by their fellow ETAs, opportunities to learn from one another, structured work time with their co-teachers, and a visit to Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (TMII)—a park and museum that highlights the many facets of Indonesian identity. Co-teachers also enjoyed the sessions, particularly those related to cross-cultural communication, teaching, Community Engagement Projects, and scholarship opportunities in the US.

Each participant indicated they gained valuable new knowledge and insights from the conference. Participants were eager to return to their schools and incorporate new ideas into their classrooms.


(First appeared in the January 2026 Edition)







03



2026 WORDS National Storytelling and Storybook Competition

From April 8-11, 2026, seventeen high school students and their Fulbright English Teaching Assistants (ETAs) gathered in Jakarta for the National WORDS Storytelling and Storybook Competition. Held at @america, the competition and its accompanying activities have long been highlights of the program, offering students and ETAs the opportunity to bond over shared interests and unique experiences.

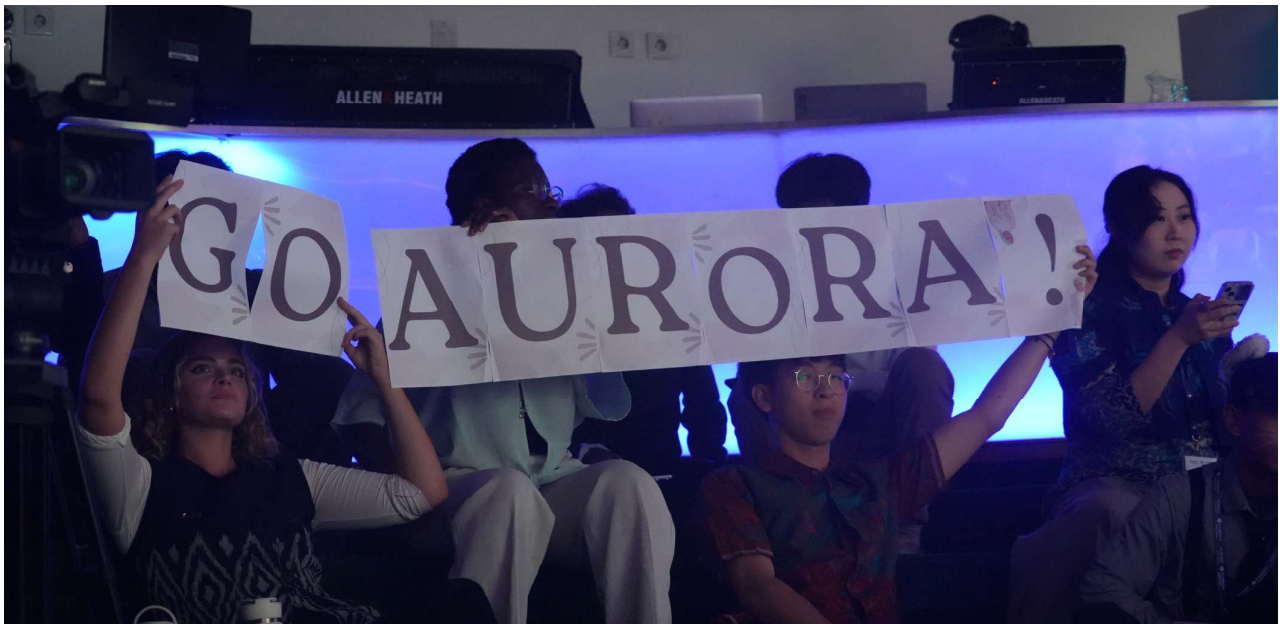
The 17 storybooks the participants produce will be printed by AMINEF and gifted to students and their respective schools, enriching English language resources for future learners.

2026 WORDS National Storytelling and Storybook Competition

WORDS is a national English language competition that brings together one student from each ETA host school. It follows a storytelling and storybook format, with entries centered on a specific theme—in 2026, the theme was **“My community.”** Participants were asked to share their thoughts and interpretations of what the theme of “my Community” meant to them through their stories.

Before competing at the national level, each participant entered and won their local school competition, an event organized by their ETA in collaboration with local English teachers. ETAs spent months attending info sessions, recruiting students, hosting brainstorming sessions and workshops, assisting with story development, and providing feedback on performance. Despite the challenges, both ETAs and students found the local WORDS competitions memorable and rewarding. (Check out the **February** edition of the Fulbright ETA Monthly Highlights for reflections on some of these local competitions!)





At the national competition, every student represented their school with pride. The storybooks were beautifully illustrated, and the performances on stage were as diverse as they were captivating. Friends, family members, and teachers from across Indonesia tuned in via @america's live-streaming platform to support the participants from afar. This year, AMINEF also welcomed a special guest audience from Universitas Negeri Jakarta and Universitas Dian Nusantara.

The judging panel included:

- **Douglas Ramage**, consultant, Fulbright US Student Research Program alumnus, and AMINEF board member.
- **Azalia Muchransyah**, filmmaker, writer, scholar, Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) Program, and DIKTI-funded Fulbright Grants for Indonesian Lecturers – PhD alumna.
- **Ahmad Fuadi**, writer, novelist, social entrepreneur, and Fulbright Master's Degree Scholarship Program alumnus.
- **Anna Grundström**, writer, performing artist and Fulbright US Student Research Program alumna.

Three students received special recognition for their outstanding performances:

- **First Place:** Florencia Kirana Wilman from **SMKN 6 Padang**
- **Second Place:** Putri Permata Sari from **SMKN 9 Padang**
- **Third Place:** Clarintha Glory Amungin from **SMK Raden Umar Said Kudus**

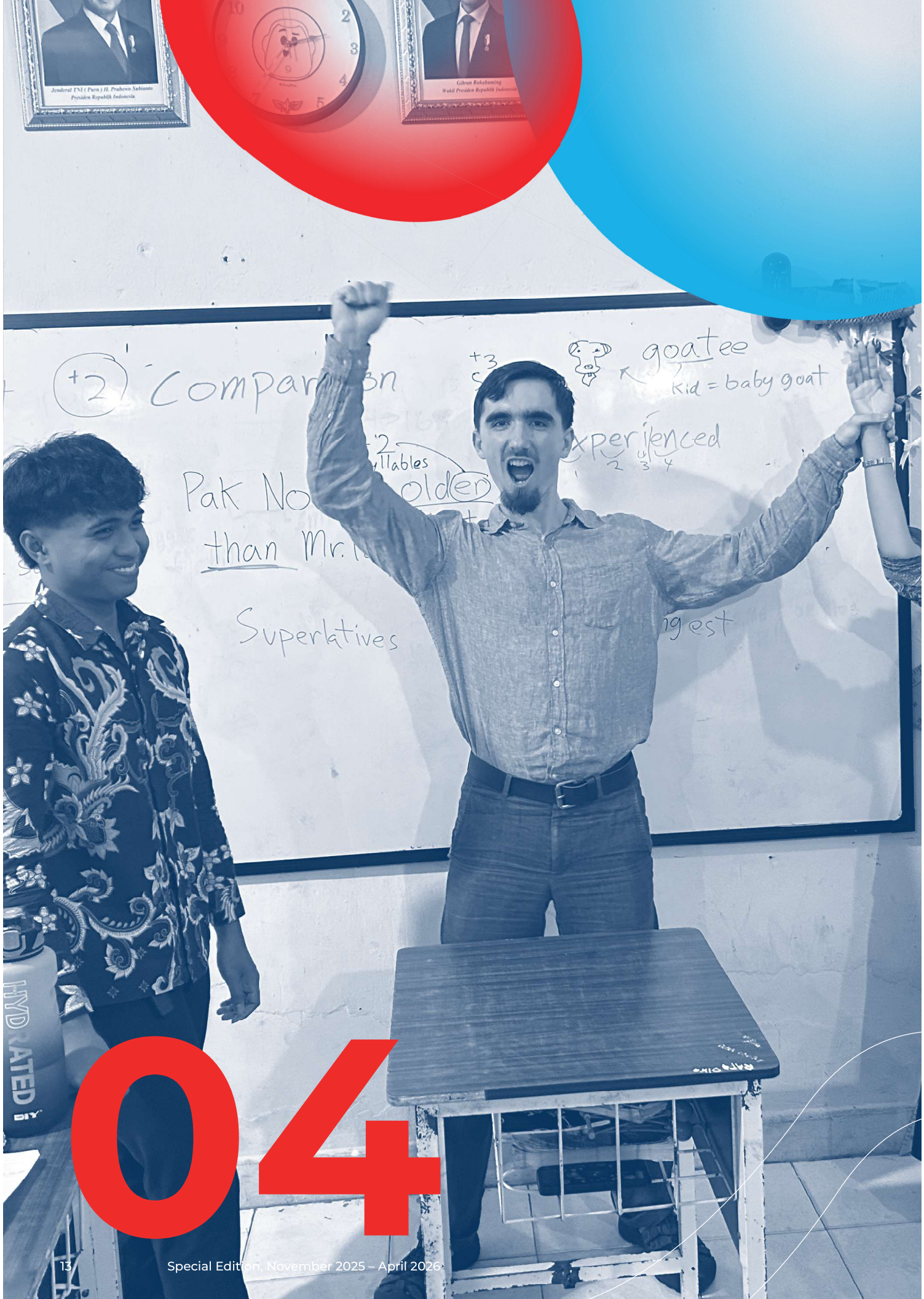


Florencia, the first-place winner, shared, "To me, WORDS represents the power of language to give voice to important stories and turn pain into understanding. Through my story inspired by the Galodo disaster in Padang, I wanted to show the strength and unity of a community facing tragedy. The theme "My Community" reminds me that true strength comes from resilience, empathy, and togetherness, and I am deeply grateful to AMINEF and Fulbright Program for this inspiring opportunity." Her sentiment was echoed by many participants, who agreed the event was overwhelmingly positive.

On an additional day in Jakarta, students and ETAs immersed themselves in cultural activities, including visits to the Indonesian UNESCO Office, MONAS, and the National Museum of Indonesia, followed by a Welcome Dinner. ETAs also organized additional programming during free time. Though many students wished the program lasted longer, everyone left with new memories, friendships, and a deep appreciation for the experience.

(First appeared in the April 2026 Edition)





+2

Comparison

+3



goatee

Kid = baby goat

Pak No

older

experienced

than Mr.

Superlatives

grest

04

School Activities / In The Classroom

During their grant in Indonesia, Fulbright ETAs' primary responsibility is to assist their co-teachers with planning and executing lessons in the classrooms at their site. These lessons are encouraged to incorporate interactive activities to foster engagement and active student participation. ETAs bring innovative learning strategies to their schools from their various backgrounds and experiences in America.

In the following pages, discover how **ETAs Payton, Christina, Jasmine, Andre, and Brianna** have participated in cross-cultural exchange.



Grappling with English Grammar

SMAN 3 Kota Jambi

When it comes to opportunities to make grammar lessons fun, comparisons are as good as it gets. At **SMAN 3 Kota Jambi**, **ETA Payton Storey** and co-teacher Bapak Nofriyen made the most of the class with many lively activities, including “whose shoes are bigger?” and “wow, you’re old.”

But the most exciting activity of all was the “SUPER SUPER-LATIVE SMACKDOWN!!!” (also known as an arm-wrestling contest). A boy and a girl (who we will call Rizqi and Zahra) faced off against Mr. Payton to see who was not just strong, nor stronger, but the strongest. Who would win?!



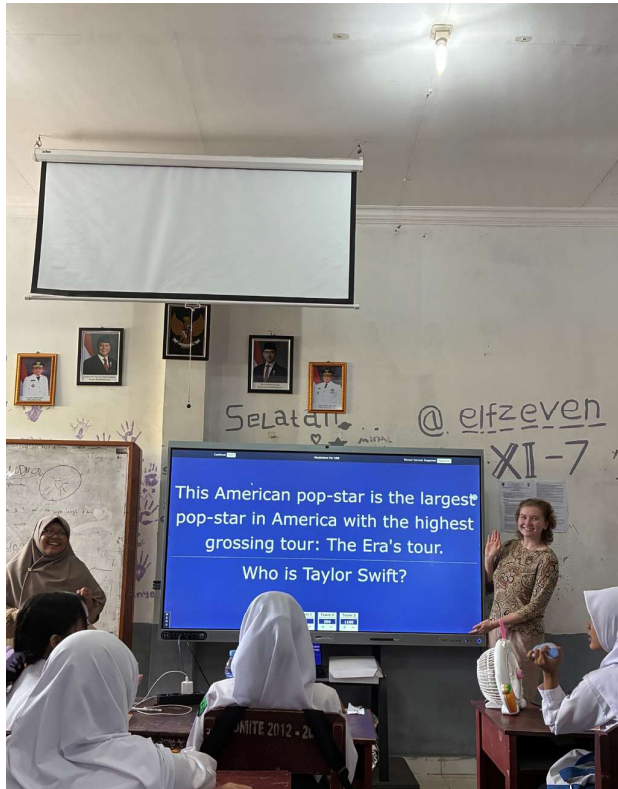
Rizqi and Mr. Payton started the showdown, tensions high, but after steady resistance, Rizqi won, to the cheers of all! Then he readied himself to face off against Zahra, who waited nervously nearby. How could she possibly win against Rizqi, apparently the strongest of the boys, who had won against even Mr. Payton?! But she steeled herself. Everyone stood staring in anticipation to see who would win, or how long she could hold out. Mr. Payton counted down. 3... 2... 1... Go!

The match began. And ended. Against everyone’s expectations (including her own), Zahra did not need to last long; during the lesson, she was reminded that she was not just strong or stronger than others: she was superlatively strong—the strongest! The classroom exploded with applause as her opponent crumpled. From that day on, everyone would always remember how to compare things in English and how fun learning grammar can be.



(First appeared in the **April 2026 Edition**)

America 250 Jeopardy Game SMAN 2 Palangkaraya



ETA Christina Stoll and her 10th- and 11th-grade students kicked off the new semester by playing an American Culture Jeopardy game in celebration of the 250th anniversary of the United States. The categories included Musicians, Cities, Presidents, Sports, and Random Facts. Students excelled at answering questions about basketball players and state capitals (where the hint often pointed to that city's basketball team), showing how sports can lead to international connections. They also learned some new facts about American culture from the game, such as President Franklin D. Roosevelt's role in World War II and that Stevie Wonder is a blind musician.

In a language sense, students practiced reading comprehension in a timed environment and answered clues using interrogative sentences. After the game, students discussed any questions they may have missed with Christina, allowing them to learn about American history and culture directly from an American. This was a great way to get students excited about learning English this semester.

(First appeared in the **January 2026 Edition**)

Defrosting After “Winter” Break SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Taman

In the first few days back after New Year's, **ETA Brianna Adu-Kyei** hosted a few gentle review sessions to get everyone at **SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Taman** back into the English-thinking zone. But how to get her students to dust off all those fiddly last-unit concepts? Games, of course!

First, she played Mad Minutes, a competitive relay where two teams of students each had to rush to answer the question first (correctly!) and get every member of their team to go once before the other team could. The questions covered parts of speech, simple present tense, simple past, present and past continuous, possessive pronouns and adjectives, and a few softballs, like adverbs of frequency. Sometimes she even threw in a fast one, like the four elements of narrative text. But her very capable class handled them with flying colors.

When the students finished up a little early, Brianna offered a game of Hesitation—where, with each word, the next student had to quickly pick something either related or rhyming (so “boys” could lead to either “girls” or “toys”). In the end, even she herself was eliminated... (Who knew she'd blank on “shard”?) But honestly, Brianna could not be happier about it.



(First appeared in the **January 2026 Edition**)

Where Words Float and Worlds Form: English Club in Virtual Reality (VR) SMKN 3 Kendari

In November 2025, **Fulbright ETA Jasmine Coley** introduced VR to her English Club at **SMK 3 Kendari**. The students were eager to try on the headset and experience virtual reality for the first time. They took turns playing Mondly: Learn Languages in VR. In this game, you practice speaking English and engaging in dialogue in everyday situations and environments. For example, the students practiced speaking to a hotel receptionist to check in to their room and to a server at a restaurant to order their dinner. This was eye-opening for the students because SMK 3 Kendari is a vocational school, and many of their career tracks involve working in the hospitality industry, such as hotels or restaurants.

VR is a bit of a sweaty experience, so living in a hot climate makes it fun, but only for a limited duration. Nevertheless, the students took full advantage of the time they had with the VR and focused on speaking as clearly as possible while practicing unique responses. After exploring VR, the students participated in a Spelling Bee competition. Then they had free time to explore other games Jasmine brought from the US, including a sight-word fishing game, Guess Who?, Connect 4, UNO, and more.

SMK 3 Kendari's English Club was jam-packed with exciting new activities that day, and Jasmine continues to offer fun and innovative ways for the students to practice their English.

(First appeared in the **November 2025 Edition**)



Simple Games for Simple Past Tense SMAN 1 Praya



On Wednesday March 11th, **Fulbright ETA Andre Edmond** incorporated a short, team-based game to enhance a classroom lesson on storytelling in dramas at **SMAN 1 Praya**. The students are preparing to create a short performance based on an Indonesian legend or myth of their choosing in small groups of 4-6.

Andre teaches 12 classes with over 40 students per room. For the game, each class was divided into teams of four with the objective of being the first to complete the task on the board. On the board, Andre had written 5 different present tense verbs for the students to convert into their simple past tense form. Although a simple game, it helped the students quickly test their ability to convert words in English into their past tense form.

A pair of students from each team would come up to the board to convert the word, working together before passing the marker to the next pair in their team. The students are practicing their use of the simple past tense, since it will be used frequently in their upcoming assignment.

While teaching at SMAN 1 Praya, Andre has brought several types of games into the classroom, involving Kahoot, card games, and dice to make the learning process for students more entertaining. Andre looks to continue “gamifying” English education for the students in his classrooms.

(First appeared in the **March 2026 Edition**)



05



Cultural Exchange

The main tenet of the Fulbright program is building mutual cultural understanding. Through the Fulbright ETA program, grantees have a tremendous opportunity to learn about the local culture at their site and share aspects of American culture with community members.

In the following pages, discover how **ETAs Jason, Aurelia, Sydney, Charlie, Ruby, and Navara** have participated in cross-cultural exchange within their respective local communities.

Thanksgiving Celebrations SMK 2 Krian Sidoarjo

On December 1, **ETA Jason Yan** at **SMK Krian 2 Sidoarjo** celebrated Thanksgiving with his school community. Collaborating with the English Club, he created a “What Are You Thankful For?” turkey display, a beloved tradition commonly used in American schools. Stationed in the school’s main area, the interactive exhibit invited teachers and students alike to write down their gratitudes and add them to the growing display. This activity not only promoted American values of thankfulness but also provided meaningful English writing practice.



Jason also introduced all the teachers of SMK Krian 2 to an American Thanksgiving classic by leading a hands-on cooking session for mac and cheese. Gathered in the school auditorium, the teachers formed small groups and worked together to follow the recipe under Jason’s guidance and that of his co-teachers. The session concluded with everyone enjoying the delicious results of their collaborative efforts, sharing both good food and good company.

(First appeared in the **December 2025 Edition**)



Ramadan Reminiscing: Iftar Traditions in New York and at SMK Negeri 9 Padang

SMK Negeri 9 Padang

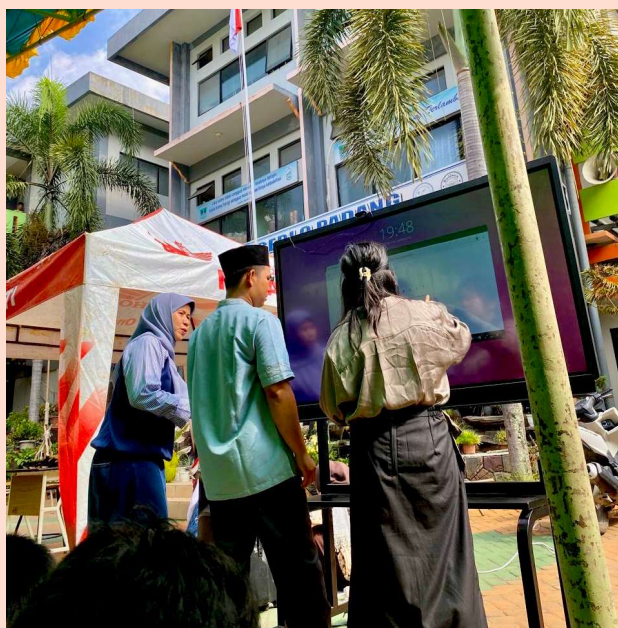
During the last week of pesantren (religious school) at **SMK Negeri 9 Padang**, **ETA Aurelia Tan**'s schedule was packed with bukber plans, where you buka puasa (open fast) bersama (together) with friends and family. On Monday, March 9, she broke her fast with the U.S. Consul for Sumatra Lisa Podolny, alongside Padang-based alumni of U.S.-Indonesia exchange programs. The following Tuesday, Aurelia and ETA Navara Syed joined American Corner Padang for a discussion on Ramadan in America as well as iftar.



Most exciting of the week was three days of back-to-back English Ramadan activities at SMKN 9. The morning of Wednesday, March 11, students gathered in the courtyard to join a virtual talk with Hafiz Muhammad Mustafa. Mustafa gave students a tour of BICC Masjid Bilal in New York City, where his father is the imam. He shared his favorite Ramadan memories of potlucks at the mosque for iftar. Students were interested in knowing whether children in America also receive money on Idulfitri, known as THR (the answer is yes) and whether fireworks are also used to commemorate Idulfitri (the answer is that it depends).

On Thursday, March 12, Aurelia and her English Club students bukber at a local restaurant! Before another bukber with the OSIS that Friday (also attended by ETA Payton Storey), she and her students gave out 100 portions of takjil, snacks prepared by SMKN9 students to break fast with, to passerby outside of school.

(First appeared in the **March 2026 Edition**)



Purple, Green, Gold, and Grammar: Mardi Gras Comes to Makassar

SMKN 8 Makassar

At **SMKN 8 Makassar**, **ETA Sydney Grafals** brought Louisiana energy to campus with a Mardi Gras celebration. As part of America250, commemorating the 250th anniversary of the United States, the school highlighted one US state and a celebration uniquely rooted in American culture: Louisiana's Mardi Gras.

In the weeks leading up to the event, Mardi Gras was integrated into English lessons through procedural text activities. Students practiced reading comprehension by following step-by-step instructions to create their own masquerade masks. Using sequencing words and new vocabulary, they cut, colored, and decorated with focus (and plenty of glitter).

At lunch, all English classes gathered on the field for a presentation on the history of Mardi Gras and its celebration in the US. Students learned about parades, beads, krewes, and king cake before putting their knowledge to the test through themed English games. Each student received a slice of cake, and cheers erupted when one student found the tiny plastic baby traditionally hidden inside a king cake for good luck.

The celebration ended with students wearing their handmade masks while Sydney and the English teachers tossed beads and small toys from the school balcony, closing out an America250 highlight that connected Makassar to Louisiana through language, culture, and fun.

(First appeared in the **February 2026 Edition**)



“I Have a Dream:” SMAN 1 Kalianda’s MLK Day Celebration

SMAN 1 Kalianda



ETA Charlie Cushman hosted a special session of the SMAN 1 Kalianda English Club dedicated to discussing Martin Luther King Jr. Day and celebrating the 250th anniversary of the USA. Charlie began the meeting by showing an excerpt of Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, followed by an introduction to who MLK was and the message for which he stood. Next, Charlie taught about the belief enshrined in the U.S. Declaration of Independence that “all men are created equal.”

Students also learned about ways in which this belief has not always held true, as they explored oppression, racism, and segregation. This helped students understand Dr. King’s speech and the broader civil rights movement of the mid-20th century, giving them a more nuanced understanding of the U.S. in its 250th year. Next, students compared the idea that “all men are created equal” to Indonesia’s Pancasila, the country’s national creed, and its belief in “social justice for all Indonesian people.” Students drew similarities between how both nations have at times fallen short of these visions, yet how the goals remain invaluable ends to which to aspire.



Finally, students brainstormed a list of important issues in their own communities. In pairs, students picked an issue and wrote and performed their own short “I Have a Dream” speech, in which they identified a problem and envisioned a better future. Overall, students enjoyed learning about MLK and U.S. history while practicing their English skills and discussing important local topics.

(First appeared in the January 2026 Edition)



Sprinkles, Stars, & Stripes, Oh My! SMK Negeri 8 Makassar

To celebrate her students' triumph in a school-wide poster making contest, **ETA Ruby Mead** hosted a donut party wherein students played American culture trivia in honor of the nation's 250th year of independence.

Eager and always competitive, the 11th grade Computer and Network Engineering (TKJ) students put their best effort forth to guess the identity of major American popstars and political figures, what the stars and stripes on the American flag actually represent, the legacy of Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement, and more.

Following their victory, the top five winners received Chicago flags, Cub's baseballs, Bull's hats, and Garrett's cheese and caramel popcorn--all hallmarks of Miss Ruby's hometown. After devouring a donut (or two) each, the class celebrated further by learning the dances to key moments in modern day American culture: that being Cotton Eyed Joe and the Cha Cha Slide. Led by Ruby, the students danced until they dropped in elation and (minor) heat exhaustion.

The afternoon, filled with sprinkles, photos, and festivities, served as an apt reward for their hard work, resilience, and dedication to studying English.

(First appeared in the **April 2026 Edition**)



Padang in Recovery: Communities After the Floods

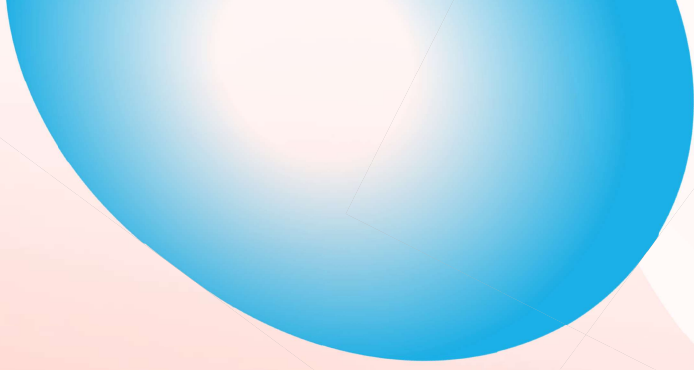
SMKN 6 Padang

In the aftermath of the flooding in West Sumatra, **ETA Navara Syed** collaborated with a grassroots organization that aims to protect women and children in West Sumatra. After being connected with the group via student teachers from **SMKN 6 Padang**, Navara delivered games and snacks to local children who had lost many of their belongings, including their homes, to the floods. The effort was directed by a local woman, Ibu Fani, who organizes activities from her home in Padang.

Navara and friends went to Ibu Fani's house to collect donated materials and then drove with her to a neighbor's home on the western side of Padang. Here, families had gathered in the sitting area of a house that had been offered for the activity. Various activities were organized for the children who had gathered. Navara and the other participants prepared materials and led chants and games for the children. They colored, played games, and chatted with the local children, hoping to give them some relief during this difficult time. After spending a few hours with the children, Navara and the group distributed snacks and other small gifts, sharing a very heartfelt goodbye with them.

(First appeared in the **December 2025 Edition**)





08.17
06.97
04.01

FULBRIGHT INDONESIA AMINEF

Community Engagement Project

Kulon Progo SMK Teacher's Cultural Exchange Day

Mr. Jackson Harris

11 February, 2026
Gorokh Srik, Ngemplak, Kulon Progo

FULBRIGHT Indonesia AMINEF

06



Community Engagement

ETAs also engage with their school communities through extracurricular activities and projects. They combine their interests and passions with an understanding of community needs to join or create clubs and events that further strengthen their connection and impacts at their schools.

Let's find out how how **ETAs Alice, Victoria, Nia, Emiko, Iyasha, and Jackson** engaged with their school communities.

From Central Java to New Hampshire: SMK Raden Umar Said's Pen Pal Exchange
 SMK Raden Umar Said Kudus



ETA Alice Rodi's highlight of January was the continuation of her first Community Engagement Project: a pen pal exchange between **SMK Raden Umar Said's** English Club and middle school students at Windham Woods in New Hampshire.

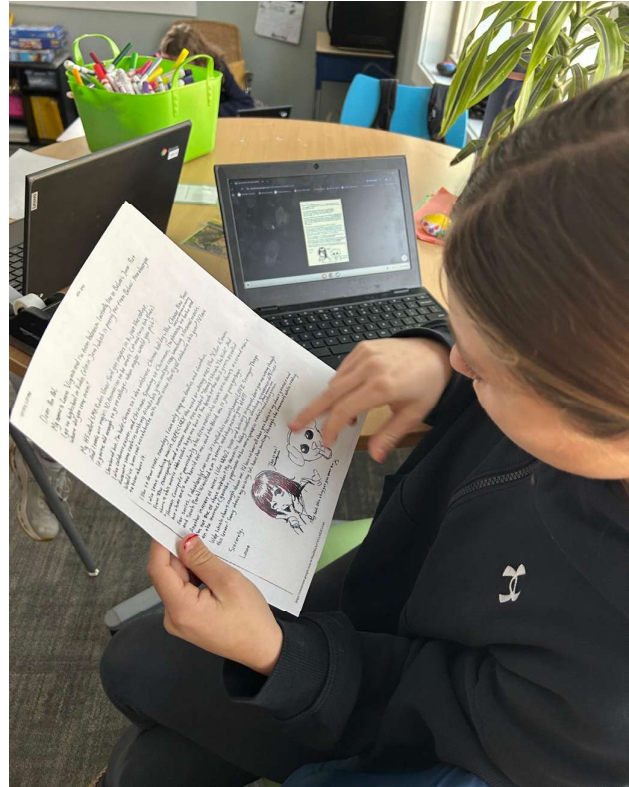
The project was inspired by pen pals Alice had as a child and was born out of an interest in collaborating with her sister, Caroline, who is also a teacher. With this project, Alice and Caroline set out to facilitate cross-cultural communication and improve their students' writing skills.

Given the cost of sending physical letters between Indonesia and the United States, this pen pal program is being conducted virtually: letters are handwritten by students, photographed and uploaded as PDFs, emailed to Alice or Caroline, respectively, and printed out before distribution (so as to maintain the excitement of receiving physical letters).

Back in November, SMK RUS students wrote their first letters to Windham Woods students during English Club, prompted by questions like, "What is your daily routine?" "What are your hobbies?" "What are some traditions and holidays from your culture?" and "What is school like in the US?" During the following month, Windham Woods students wrote their responses. Alice received these correspondences in mid-January, marking the end of the first round of exchanges.

Alice, Caroline, and all of their students are thrilled to continue this program. With four months left in the semester, they are on track to complete two more rounds of exchanges.

(First appeared in the **January 2026 Edition**)



Hula in Bandar Lampung SMAN 5 Bandar Lampung

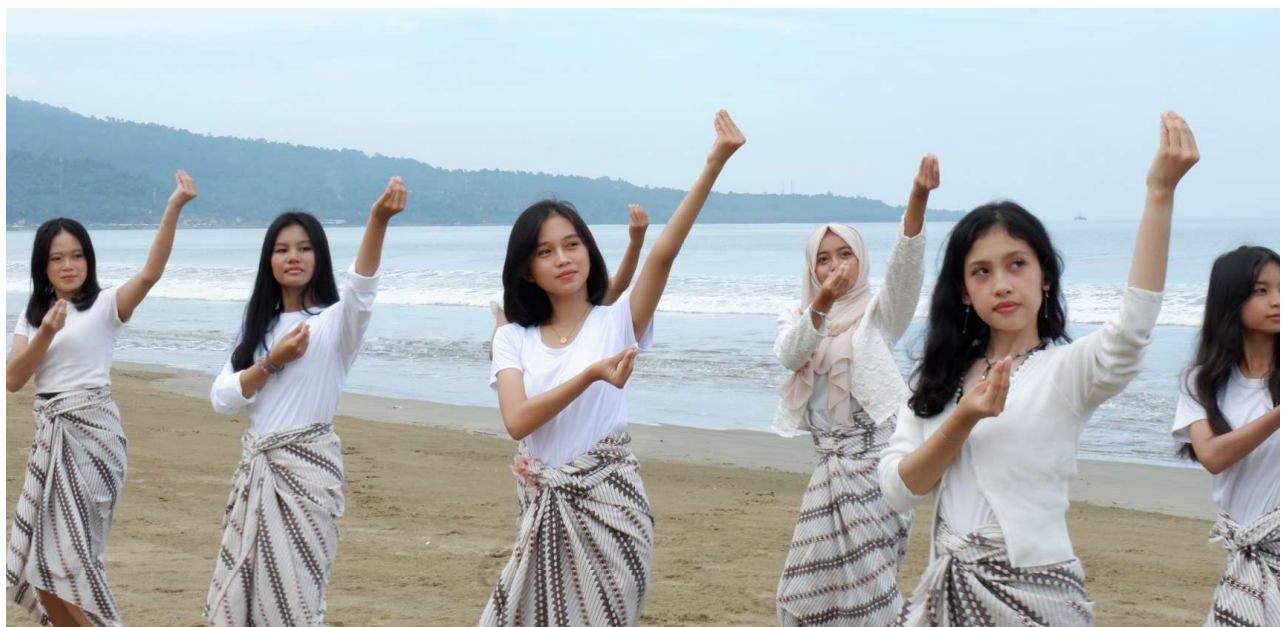
This year marks the 250th anniversary of American independence and the 67th year of statehood for Hawaii. Many people abroad may associate the United States with Hollywood films or McDonald's; however, having been born and raised in Honolulu, Hawaii, **ETA Victoria Djou** experienced America in a different way from fellow ETAs. While Hawaii is part of the United States, it has its own language, traditions, and art forms, all of which are elements of American culture that Victoria wanted to share with her school community.

From February 15 to April 25, Victoria led a community engagement project introducing the Hawaiian tradition of hula dancing to her school. Hula is more than a dance; each movement tells a story rooted in Hawaiian history and culture.

Students learned two songs: Ke Anuenue, which celebrates the beauty of the rainbow, and He Mele no Lilo, which tells the story of Hawaii's last King and Queen. Before each practice, Victoria guided discussions on the lyrics and their cultural significance to the dance. For the final project, students traveled to Kalianda on April 25th to perform and record both dances on the beach.

Throughout the project, students were encouraged to ask questions and communicate in English, learning key vocabulary such as "bend your knees" and "spin." Through learning hula together, students practiced English while gaining insight into a unique part of America.

(First appeared in the April 2026 Edition)



American Movie Club Premiere SMK Negeri 3 Palangkaraya

November marked an exciting milestone with the debut of the American Movie Club at **SMK Negeri 3 Palangkaraya**, led by **Fulbright ETA Nia Duféal**. For its first session, Nia introduced students to the film "Finding Nemo," creating an engaging and welcoming atmosphere for learners of all English levels.

After the screening, she facilitated an interactive discussion in English, encouraging students to share their interpretations of the story, their favorite moments, and how the movie made them feel. Some students opened up about relating to themes of courage and family, while others enjoyed identifying and sharing new vocabulary. The relatability of the film left viewers laughing, smiling, and sniffing alongside the characters, helping to foster a shared sense of community.

Throughout the event, Nia ensured that the space remained supportive and student-centered, helping participants connect emotionally with the film while strengthening their language skills. The successful launch of the American Movie Club has provided attendees with a creative learning environment that they are already eager to revisit in the months to come.

(First appeared in the **November 2025 Edition**)



Kendari on the Runway!

MAN Insan Cendekia Kota Kendari

ETAs **Emiko Wu** and **Jasmine Coley** hosted a local fashion show in Kendari, celebrating the rich cultural heritage of the surrounding region. This event highlighted the traditional fashion of four prominent local tribes: the Tolaki, Muna, Buton, and Bombana. In collaboration with Muhammadiyah University Kendari, the show brought together students from each community to share and represent their cultural backgrounds.

Dressed in traditional formal attire, the students walked down the runway to the sound of local music and enthusiastic cheers from the audience, which included other university students and senior high students from Emiko and Jasmine's respective schools.

Each outfit showcased distinctive fabrics, patterns, and motifs. Following the fashion show, participants from each tribe delivered short presentations in English, explaining the significance behind their clothing and answering questions from the audience.

Emiko and Jasmine, alongside international students studying abroad in Kendari, also joined in the celebration by walking down the runway in custom-made outfits designed by a local Kendari fashion designer! The event concluded with a selection of local snacks and a lively photo session.

Kendari Couture was a memorable day of cross-cultural exchange that deepened Emiko's appreciation for Southeast Sulawesi's rich cultural diversity.

(First appeared in the **March 2026 Edition**)



On Your Marks, Get Set, GO!: Field Day at SMA NU Al Ma'ruf Kudus
SMA NU Al Ma'ruf Kudus



ETA Iyasha Belgrave hosted her first Field Day at **SMA NU Al Ma'ruf Kudus**. Field Day was modeled after the school-wide competition-based events that take place in many schools across America. In the weeks leading up to the event, a student committee came together to build their leadership skills, helping to organize teams, prepare game materials, and generate excitement for the competition.

On the morning of December 17, students came together to compete in six different games: Egg-Spoon Race, Three-Legged Race, Word Matching, Sentence Scramble, and Sponge Bucket Race. Eighty-five participating students were split into four teams, named after major US cities: New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Philadelphia. Teams were also assigned colors to represent them and created posters and chants to cheer on their teammates. Additionally, students had the opportunity to participate in a scavenger hunt, where they solved English riddles to earn additional points for their school.

After a day of intense competition and friendly rivalry, students cooled off with a water balloon fight. Finally, the winners were announced: Team Los Angeles won first place with over 40 points! Next semester, a second Field Day will be held, where students will compete again to determine who the new champions will be.



(First appeared in the **December 2025 Edition**)

Kulon Progo SMK English Teachers Community Event SMKN 1 Kokap



On February 11, English teachers from vocational high schools (SMK) across Kulon Progo gathered at **SMKN 1 Kokap** for the Kulon Progo SMK English Teachers' Cultural Exchange Day, a Community Engagement Project led by **ETA Jackson Harris** in collaboration with SMKN 1 Kokap English faculty. The event brought together approximately 40 English teachers for a full day of professional learning, English practice, and cross-cultural exchange.

The program featured interactive sessions led jointly by Jackson and SMKN 1 Kokap English teachers, including an overview of the Fulbright ETA program, communicative English activities for the SMK classroom, and practical teaching tools adaptable to vocational contexts. Teachers participated in pair and group activities modeled in English, practicing classroom language, instructions, and low-preparation speaking activities. A cultural exchange and Q&A session allowed participants to learn about American school culture while sharing their own classroom experiences and challenges.



Throughout the event, teachers collaborated across schools, building a district-wide network for sharing resources and teaching strategies. A shared communication group was established to support continued collaboration beyond the workshop. This project supported the Fulbright ETA program's goals of strengthening English education, promoting professional exchange, and fostering sustainable community partnerships across Kulon Progo.

(First appeared in the **February 2026 Edition**)



INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

FROM KALIAN TO THE
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 1
SMAN 1 KALIAN



07

International Education Week: How ETAs Celebrated It Across Indonesia

International Education Week (IEW) is an initiative of the United States Department of State to expand horizons, foster connections, and promote mutual understanding between the United States and other countries. IEW carries out this mission through a week-long celebration that encourages American students to explore opportunities for studying abroad and international students to explore options to study in the United States through exchange programs. International Education Week 2025 took place from November 17 to 21.

Fulbright ETAs in Indonesia are in an ideal position to celebrate IEW, as they are current participants in an exchange program and can attest to opportunities for exchange in the United States.

The celebration of IEW aligns with the six goals of the Fulbright ETA program in Indonesia. This cohort of ETAs had the opportunity to propose IEW initiatives and receive additional funding to supplement their efforts.

In this special edition, we hope to highlight the ways ETAs celebrated IEW in their communities. While ETAs had the option to celebrate IEW in anyway they pleased, this year's celebrations fell into five main categories: Opportunities Abroad Information Session, American Corner Partnerships, International Talent Show, Application Assistance, and International Food Celebrations.

Opportunities Abroad Information Session



ETAs **Victoria Djou**, **Andre Edmond**, **Charlie Cushman**, and **Emiko Wu** each hosted an information session in their communities about opportunities abroad. Each of the ETAs' information sessions had different formats and audiences, but in all cases, ETAs shared resources and programs to assist Indonesians in studying abroad—especially in the US.

Andre said that at his school's session, "[he] was able to introduce information to students that they were not aware of. Many of them want to study overseas but do not know the requirements or how to get started." Victoria reflected, "I think it's important and a cool opportunity. I wish I had something like this in my high school." Emiko fortified her session by pairing it with an essay competition.

American Corner Partnerships

ETAs **Navara Syed**, **Jackson Harris**, **Jason Yan**, **Aurelia Tan**, **Sydney Grafals**, **Ruby Mead**, and **Brianna Adu-Kyei** each worked with their local American Corner (AMCOR) to host IEW events. Combined, these ETAs worked with four AMCORs—the most for any ETA IEW celebration ever.

Ruby said that because of her visit, "[she] feels they all walked away with a better understanding of why international exchange is a worthwhile endeavor and something that they themselves might strive toward."

Jason shared, "The students were very enthusiastic about the field trip and [he] thinks the school is already interested in potentially taking students for other events at the American Corner in the future."



International Talent Show

ETA Aurelia Tan also hosted a talent show at her school to highlight international expression through art and culture. Highlights included a line dance to “Cotton Eyed Joe” while wearing denim jeans and cowboy hats, as well as the “Cha Cha Slide.”



Application Assistance

ETA Alice Rodi promoted IEW by hosting a seminar for faculty at her site about writing effective letters of recommendation for students' applications. Alice said, “I feel that the material was (and will be) actually quite useful, and the faculty said as much. They were grateful for the presentation and templates provided, which felt quite nice.”



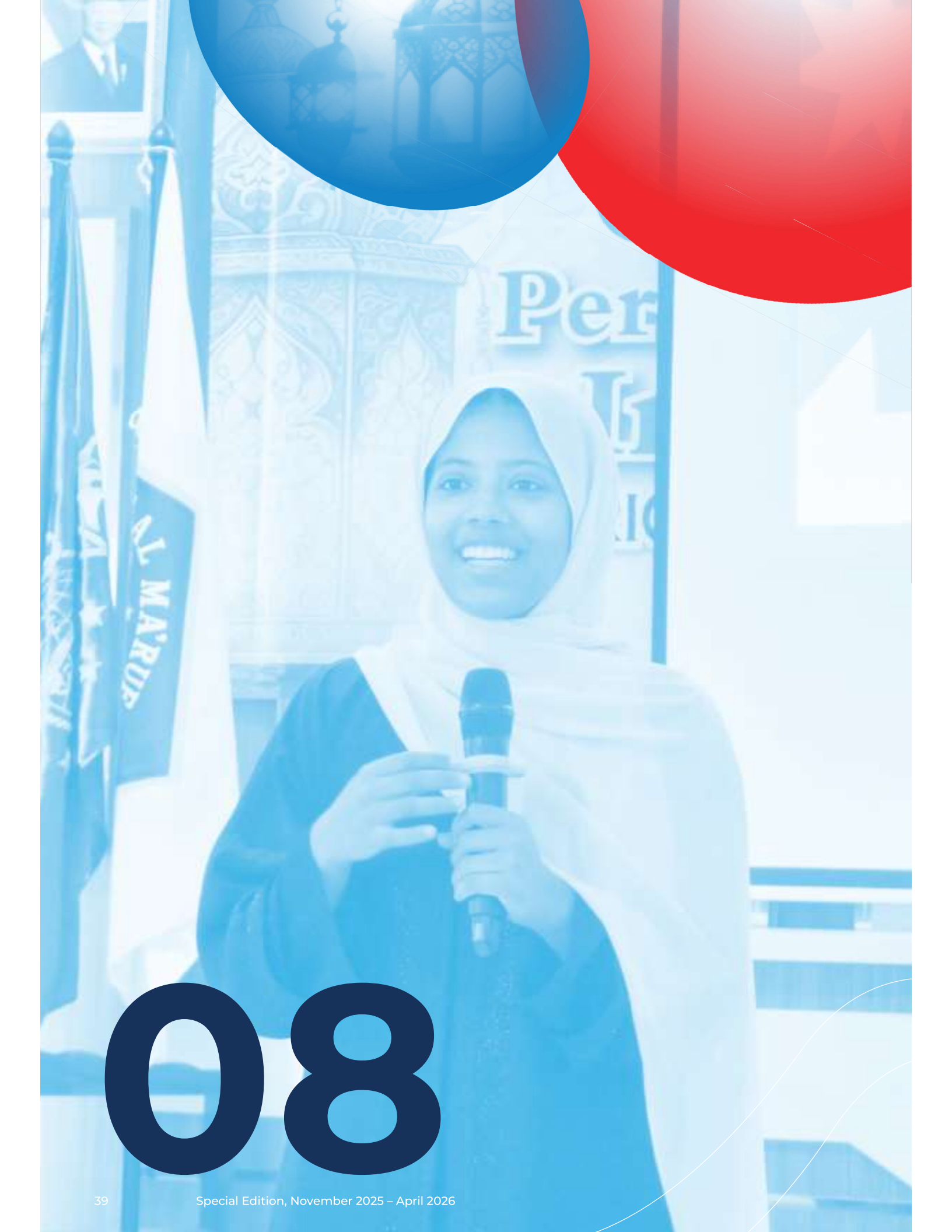
International Food Celebrations

Finally, **ETAs Jasmine Coley and Sydney Grafals** highlighted international cultures through food. Jasmine worked with students at her vocational school to show the importance of learning international cuisines to diversify their skill set and make their dishes more marketable to locals and tourists. Sydney highlighted the US celebration of Thanksgiving for her school.

AMINEF is proud of the work of each of this cohort's ETAs. This year's IEW celebration in Indonesia was a resounding success!



(First appeared in the **December 2025 Edition**)



08

Ramadan Bliss 2026

The Ramadan holiday season in Indonesia offers the Fulbright ETAs a variety of unique and exciting opportunities to engage with their communities.

In 2025, AMINEF introduced a new initiative, “Ramadan Bliss.” This program provided ETAs with opportunities to leverage the holiday season to increase their impact in the community—the program was a resounding success!

Building on last year’s achievements, AMINEF repeated the initiative in 2026, encouraging ETAs to celebrate in their communities.

Ramadan Bliss 2026

At SMAN 1 Kalianda, **ETA Charlie Cushman** hosted a community-centered iftar celebration, bringing together students and teachers to cook Indonesian dishes and break their fast together. Cushman also shared a presentation on how Ramadan is observed in the United States, while participants reflected on their own traditions. The event created a welcoming space for cultural exchange, language practice, and mutual understanding.



Meanwhile, at SMA NU Al-Ma'ruf Kudus, **ETA Iysha Belgrave** organized a cross-cultural iftar connecting Indonesian students with Muslim students from Duke University. Participants prepared "day-in-the-life" videos and exchanged questions about Ramadan in their respective countries. The program encouraged meaningful dialogue and offered students the opportunity to practice English in an engaging, real-world context.



ETA Jason Yan hosted a collaborative iftar event at **SMK 2 Krian Sidoarjo** where students and teachers from diverse backgrounds gathered to discuss the significance of Ramadan. Muslim participants shared their experiences with fasting and daily practices, while Yan introduced perspectives from the United States. The event combined cultural exchange with interactive English-language activities, fostering both understanding and communication skills.



At **SMKN 6 Padang**, **ETA Navara Syed** organized an iftar featuring a virtual exchange with a mosque community in the United States. Students participated in a live Q&A and virtual tour, gaining insight into how Ramadan is observed in another cultural context. The event encouraged students to explore the diversity of the global Muslim experience, especially in the U.S., before breaking their fast together.





Finally, at **SMAN 5 Bandar Lampung** and **MAN Insan Cendekia Kota Kendari**, **ETAs Victoria Djou** and **Emiko Wu** each partnered with students at their schools to organize service-oriented visits to local orphanages. Students met with orphans, led English-language games and activities, and donated essential supplies to support the community. These projects highlighted the values of generosity, service, and cultural exchange during Ramadan.

(First appeared in the **March 2026 Edition**)

...K NEGERI ...
ood Better Best

Mohon Tidak Mer



09



The 250th Anniversary of the Signing of the U.S. Declaration of Independence Across Indonesia

On July 4, 2026, the United States will commemorate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. For 80 of those 250 years, the Fulbright Program has worked to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and those of other countries. The Fulbright ETA program in Indonesia continues to be a strong example of this mission in action.

To mark this milestone, AMINEF encouraged the current cohort of ETAs to celebrate it with their local Indonesian communities. In the next page, please find a selection of those celebrations.

The 250th Anniversary of the Signing of the U.S. Declaration of Independence Across Indonesia

At SMKN 8 Makassar, **ETA Sydney Grafals** brought Louisiana energy to campus with a Mardi Gras celebration. In commemorating the U.S. anniversary, the school highlighted one state and a cultural tradition uniquely rooted in American life: Louisiana's Mardi Gras. Grafals integrated Mardi Gras into English classes and hosted a special lunch session on its history and celebrations in the U.S. Students learned about parades, beads, krewes, king cake, and more—connecting Makassar to Louisiana through language, culture, and fun.

A full recount can be found in Purple, Green, Gold, and Grammar: Mardi Gras Comes to Makassar, under the “Community Engagement” section of this newsletter, or in the February 2026 Edition of the Fulbright ETA Monthly Highlights on the AMINEF website: bit.ly/ETA-Mardi-Gras



Meanwhile, at **SMKN 1 Kokap**, **ETA Jackson Harris** collaborated with the school's English Club to visit classes at SMPN 1 Kokap and SMPN 2 Kokap, expanding English learning beyond the vocational setting. In recognition of the U.S. 250th anniversary, Harris introduced students to American classroom culture and interactive learning styles, highlighting how games and participation support language development in the U.S. The initiative promoted English proficiency, cultural exchange, and community-based learning across Kokap.

A full recount can be found in SMP Classroom Visits in Kokap in the April 2026 Edition of the Fulbright ETA Monthly Highlights on the AMINEF website: bit.ly/ETA-SMP-Classroom





Finally, at **SMK Negeri 9 Padang**, **ETA Aurelia Tan** worked with students to lead culinary workshops in English, preparing classic American comfort foods. Students taught their peers the history and recipes for grilled cheese sandwiches and tomato soup, leading three-hour sessions that included introductions, icebreakers, presentations on food history, and vocabulary review activities—impressive work. The workshops were a hit, giving everyone a chance to learn something new while trying American comfort food.

A full recount can be found in Bringing American Comfort Food to SMKN 9 Padang through Cooking Workshops in the April 2026 Edition of the Fulbright ETA Monthly Highlights on the AMINEF website:

bit.ly/ETA-Cooking-Workshop

Many other ETAs also celebrated the U.S. 250th anniversary at their sites. Explore the articles below to see how. The Fulbright ETA Monthly Highlights can be accessed on the AMINEF website:

bit.ly/read-FulbrightETA-MH

Victoria – Hula in Bandar Lampung

(under “Community Engagement” section of this newsletter and April 2026 Edition of the Fulbright ETA Monthly Highlights)

Ruby – Sprinkles, Stars, & Stripes, Oh My!

(under “Cultural Exchange” section of this newsletter and April 2026 Edition of the Fulbright ETA Monthly Highlights)

Emiko – A Classroom Celebration of Jazz

(April 2026 Edition)

Andre – Education Abroad Fair

(November 2025 Edition)

Christina – America 250 Jeopardy Game

(under “School Activities/ In The Classroom” section of this newsletter and January 2026 Edition)

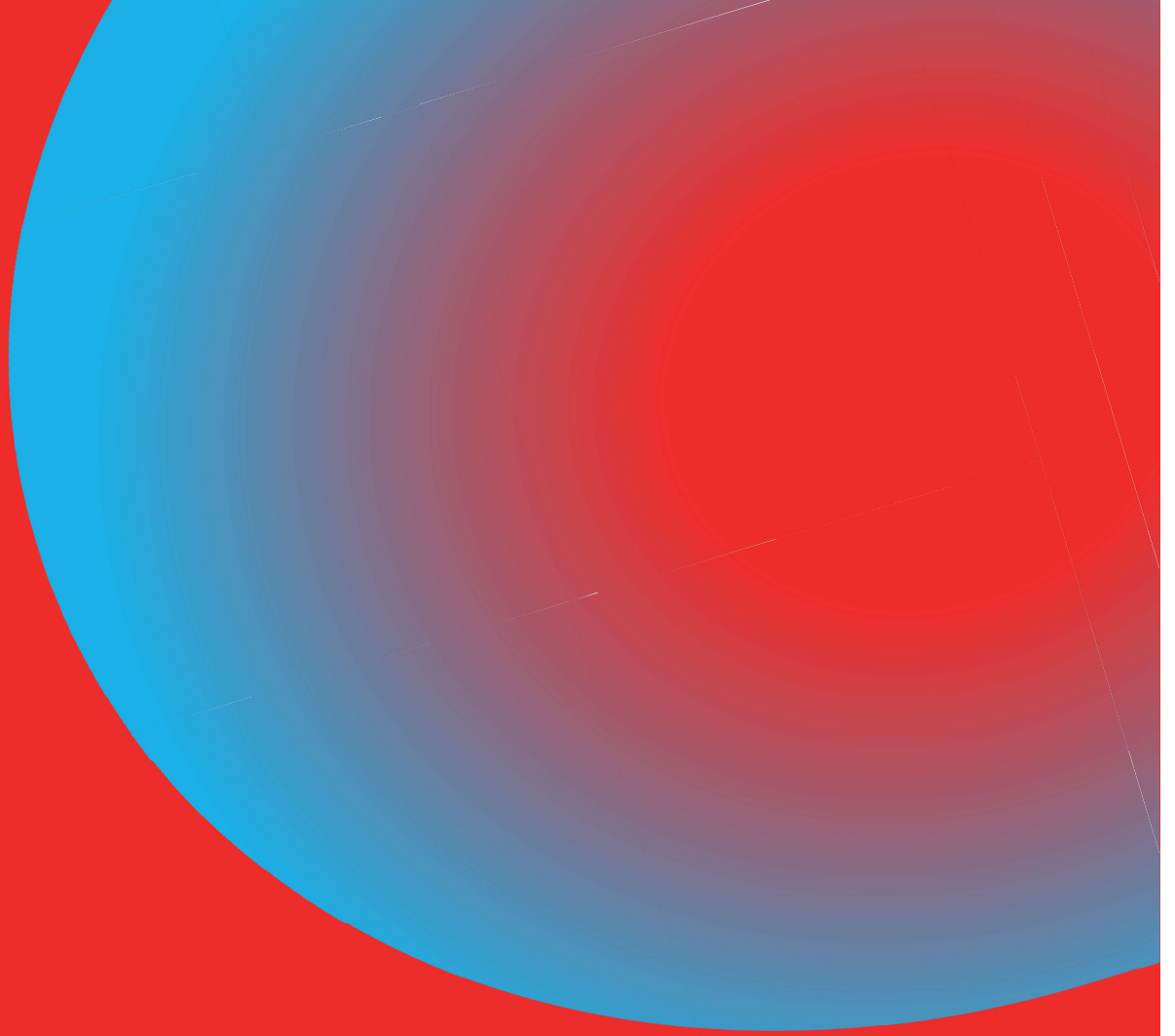
Payton – Operation: English, Acquired

(March 2026 Edition)

Jason – America250 Trivia

(April 2026 Edition)





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