

Medieval Festivities Culminate Primary Students' Study Of Their Place In Time

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As four and five-year old students at Independent Day School-Corbett Campus (IDS-CC) began their study of life during medieval times, they had some important questions.

“Why did they build castles?”

“Did knights fight dragons?”

“Why were there jesters?”

“How did they play guitar (lute) if it was not plugged in?”

PreK-4 and kindergarten teachers explored the answers to these and many other student-generated inquiries with their classes throughout a medieval thematic unit designed to help students understand where they are in time and place. Using a wide variety of resources, the teachers designed lessons that involved comparing and contrasting to reinforce what life was like during a different place and time with life today.

Based on the Florida benchmark for history that focuses on understanding the contributions of different societies, the PreK-4 and kindergarten teachers integrated lessons in every subject area, highlighting each of the brain-based multiple intelligences to teach to every type of learner. While several units are studied during the year, the teachers say the medieval unit is exciting because it covers every learning style and appeals to both genders.

“Our goal was to make the curriculum relevant to children of this young age by providing them with the opportunity to ‘live’ the experience,” said kindergarten teacher Jessica Moore. “By looking at things such as transportation, games, food and dress back then and comparing them to today, they can begin to understand what history is and that society changes over time.”

Both PreK-4 and kindergarten classes culminated their medieval studies in grand style. After studying the traditions and roles associated with a medieval feast, PreK-4 students held a traditional feast in honor of a royal visit from the king and queen portrayed by middle school students Ben Peacock and Sara Dobish.

Using a variety of cognitive and conceptual skills, PreK-4 created a stone castle façade outside their classroom and inside transformed the room into a grand hall from medieval days. They painted tapestries and draped them across the ceiling, constructed paper

torches, made cardboard lutes and royal crests, and turned windows into stained glass with colored tissue paper. Students made replicas of the food served during a feast including peacock, black birds in a pie, fish and stuffed rabbit.

After looking at the clothing of the time, they created a variety of outfits to choose from for their costumes for the feast, which included performances by many of the students that simulated the type of entertainment traditionally provided during a medieval feast.

“As they worked, they noticed how people, places and things have changed over time and how they have remained the same,” said PreK-4 teacher Michelle Robson. “Every day they learned something new as they researched, planned and prepared for the feast simulation.”

To culminate their medieval studies, kindergarten students dressed in costume as well and staged a medieval festival, which included a jousting tournament, royal games of chess and checkers, minstrel music, a royal theater, tapestry weaving and a royal feast. They decorated the entrance to their classroom, as well, complete with a construction paper moat.

“As they compared life then to life now,” said kindergarten teacher Roberta Lipschutz, “students developed an understanding of life during medieval times as well as an appreciation for all of our modern conveniences.”

That appreciation would probably include gratitude for electricity, plugs and outlets for our modern day lutes.

Founded in 1968, Independent Day School-Corbett Campus is a fully accredited, independent school located on Orange Grove Drive in northwest Hillsborough County with 550 students from PreK3 through 8th grade. At IDS, all children experience learning in a nurturing and highly academic environment focused on excellence and developing a positive self-concept. IDS-CC has become recognized as an exemplary school with over 3,500 visitors observing and learning from and with IDS-CC teachers. For more information about IDS visit www.idsy.es.com.

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