

IDS-CC Takes Steps to Prepare Its Students For Life In A Global Society

Visiting Student Teachers From Nanjing University Help Foster Unique International Connections

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Enthusiasm beams from their faces and gives a jaunty spring to their steps as they crisscross the campus at Independent Day School-Corbett Campus (IDS-CC). They greet each person they see with a joy and excitement that comes from doing what they love: teaching, learning, and being with children.

Jun Liang, Rain You Guo, Vanessa Xuan Yang and Jie Yan are student teachers from Nanjing University in China. Last October, they left their families, friends and all that was familiar to them to travel halfway around the globe to Tampa, a city and a culture vastly different from their own. Their goal was to learn from professionals who implement the best practices in education at a school that is widely recognized for its innovative teaching techniques. In return, they have been sharing their culture, their uniquely Chinese perspective, and the gift of themselves with the students and teachers at this independent school on Orange Grove Drive.

From a global perspective, it's a significant and precedent-setting learning experience for both the Chinese student teachers and for IDS-CC students.

"The fact that we live in a global society and the world is shrinking daily is a reality that has been with us for years – and the pace at which we are proceeding continues to accelerate," said IDS-CC Headmaster Dr. Joyce Burick Swartzman. "So the question has been how do we prepare our children to be global citizens: to live, work and contribute to a world that's going to be even more vastly different than the one we know today?"

That's the issue an organization called the International School Connection aims to address. With its roots reaching back to 1994, the organization provides a support system with professional development programs, school connection services, and a virtual community home for school leaders and other educators who want their schools to participate in life on a global stage.

The International School Connection's mission and vision is a natural fit for IDS-CC, which has always integrated a global perspective into its almost 40-year history. It's one of the reasons why IDS-CC was the featured school at a 2006 gathering in China of educators from four countries and 500 Chinese educators, who met to discuss, plan and implement best practices in education so students everywhere can benefit.

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During that conference Swarzman met many Chinese university students who showed a passionate interest in finding out about effective educational programs in schools in the United States. With the ISC summit scheduled for fall 2006 in Tampa, arrangements were made for four of these students to arrive prior to it as guests of IDS-CC to experience the school's successful *M.O.R.E.* Approach to education.

With an insatiable appetite for learning, Liang, Yu Guo, Xuan Yang and Yan have been assigned on a daily basis to different primary and middle school classrooms making invaluable connections with all IDS-CC students and teachers and becoming an integral part of classroom activities. For example, as middle schoolers discuss Asian culture in their humanities class, they are there to share first-hand perspectives, or as primary students work on a unit in economics, they can compare American principals to those in China. In addition, they have been teaching classes on Chinese writing and language to both students and parents.

Over the past months, the Chinese students have become warm and welcome members of the school community, impressed by the successful educational models they have experienced – and so much more.

Creating an atmosphere in the classroom where students are confident to take risks and ask questions is something Yan finds inspiring. “I am not their peer, yet even the youngest students are comfortable with me.” “There is so much joy and happiness in the students here,” said Yu Guo. “They love learning and they love to ask questions.”

Liang, who is working on her master's degree in education, finds the ability IDS-CC teachers have to bring out the best in each learner remarkable, and so does Xuan Yang. “I am so excited about going back home and sharing about the many different ways students can learn, in addition to the traditional approaches used in China.”

According to Swarzman, IDS-CC has a similar program with educators throughout Spain. “It's vital that we provide students with these incredible opportunities so they can develop a healthy international perspective for the 21st century, be excited to learn about other countries, and embrace the joy of meeting new people from other countries.”

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 3,000 visitors observing and learning from and with IDS-CC teachers. For more information about IDS visit www.idsyas.com.

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