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Creatively Transporting Students To Argentina

Eighth grade students were met with a *tour de force* of Argentinean culture upon entering their Spanish classroom at Independent Day School-Corbett Campus. Standing before them were two guest speakers, both native to Argentina, and a table crowded with authentic Argentinean articles whose array ranged from a cow's horn and hoof to tea, from postcards to cookies. The students were in for a treat.

IDS parent, Nilda Piazza and her cousin, Silvana Piazza, had come to bring to light the wonders of a foreign culture. Argentinean sights, sounds, tastes and customs came alive, in a blend of tradition and modernity, and transformed their classroom into a vibrant and virtual tour of this diverse nation.



Middle school Spanish teacher Señora Charmaine Jennings, who masterfully differentiates her instruction for her multi-leveled Spanish classes, has designed her courses with her students' futures in mind. "Many of my students are preparing to take exams for high school credits and have their sights set on colleges. Their understanding of the Spanish-speaking world needs to be comprehensive, meaningful, and memorable."

Over the course of a year, students in Sra. Jennings's classes "visit" many Spanish-speaking countries in this fashion, comparing and contrasting aspects of the culture, government, economy, architecture, and natural surroundings with those of their own. The students become investigators as they look for similarities and differences amidst the spectrum of Spanish-speaking nations world-wide.

Immersed in the language of their studies, the students are encouraged to ask questions and have an open mind. With this kind of classroom climate, Sra. Jennings states her intentions to ensure that her students will "have a world view, as they venture out into high school and beyond."

In this single class period students experienced first-hand the Spanish dialect unique to Argentina, while learning other details of that country. They tasted its dishes and desserts, sipped the

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country's beverage of choice—*mate*, and heard about its enthusiastic soccer fans and the famous 223 ft. modern monument, *El Obelisco*, in the heart of Buenos Aires.

While comparing cultural icons such as *los gauchos* to the more familiar American cowboy, they passed around a *boleadora*, the Argentinean version of a lasso.

“I think it’s pretty cool having guest speakers here actually from Argentina instead of just hearing about it...it’s really neat to see all these artifacts and be able to examine and hold them,” student Nicholas LaVoy said of the experience.



Students took notes, asked questions and listened intently as Buenos Aires was described as “The Paris of the Americas.” Through a video played on the SMART Board, students were able to see and hear the sights and sounds of modern day Argentina.

“I think it’s so much better than just reading about it in a textbook. Instead of reading about the ingredients, you get to taste them!” added classmate, Pedro Lima.

Students gained insights by being able to repeatedly make connections between what is already familiar to them, and its foreign equivalent. In this way, seeing The Pink House, Argentina’s equivalent to The White House, sparked immediate intrigue. Tasting *dulce de leche* called its counterpart, peanut butter, to mind. Listening to tango tunes, and even regulations about school uniforms, brought smiles and piqued the interest of the 8th graders who could identify with dress codes and dances.

When asked what he thought about the content of the day’s class, student Ryan McCullers said, “It’s easier to remember, more enjoyable and interesting this way.”

As the class came to an end, students reluctantly gathered their things, hesitant to part with such an interactive experience. Some lingered behind to ask their guests questions, while others, animated by new knowledge, exchanged reactions as they moved on to their next class. Having received an impression of Argentina through so many of their senses, these *estudiantes* have the benefit of moving forward and adding a well-rounded view of yet another country to their repertoire of Spanish-speaking nations.

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