

IDS-CC Multiage Scientific Equation Equals Success

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After developing a multiage approach to the study of science a number of years ago, teachers at Independent Day School-Corbett Campus (IDS-CC) have been applying their formula to the curriculum in the intermediate division with scientific proof of success: ***Scientific Discovery × (Third + Fourth + Fifth Grade Students) = Success***

What this equation entails is the grouping together of students from third, fourth and fifth grade in the same science classroom – a multiage approach that challenges students to reach their full potential, while enabling them to mutually benefit from each other’s skills and building a sense of community and belonging.

“We believe the multiage approach to science allows students the beneficial experience of learning together as a community,” said Director of Studies Linda Wenzel. “Students have much to gain from each other both socially and academically. Older students have the opportunity to act as leaders, building their confidence and enriching their knowledge by acting as role models and coaches. Younger students gain assurance as well, being coached and encouraged so that they may be the leaders the following school year.”

The program is based on a three-year cycle whereby students rotate through four different topic areas each year. Using a project/experiment-based discovery-learning model, the program focuses on the application of the scientific method and science processing skills. Each year, physical, earth, life and discovery topics are covered. This year, for example, students are studying chemistry-matter, geology, human body systems, and light and sound. In the other cycles, students will study: force and motion; solar system and the universe; ecosystems and biomes; scientific variables; energy-magnetism and electricity; models and designs; structures of life; and water.

“In each of these topic areas, students are involved in experiences that are designed to engage their interests, stimulate their curiosity, and develop higher level thinking skills,” said Michelle Hill, intermediate division leader and fifth grade teacher.

For example, during their study of bodily systems including the circulatory system, students slipped on plastic gloves to dissect a cow’s heart, identifying the different types of blood vessels. In chemistry, students observed first-hand the changes matter can undergo when they chewed on bread, mixing starch from bread with saliva from their own mouths to create sugar. Experimenting with xylophones and tuning forks enabled students in the light and sound class to experience the energy that is made from vibrating objects. And in geology, students applied some of the same procedures used by professional geologists, performing calcite tests by dropping rocks in vinegar.

“It’s a much more interesting and effective way to study the earth when you can hold it, and manipulate it,” said fourth grade teacher Vickii Ausburn.

Snipping away at the capillaries on their teams’ cow hearts, fourth graders Daniela Nassar and Issac Shur would agree.

“I’ve never done anything like this before,” said Daniela. “This is just so cool!”

“Science is most definitely my favorite subject,” said Issac.

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.idsyves.com.

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