

## **Students Feast On Lessons Of Intercultural Awareness And Respect At Multicultural Cafe**

*For immediate release: March 1, 2007*

*Tampa, Fla.*

Every year, seventh graders at Independent Day School-Corbett Campus (IDS-CC) culminate their study of the historical, religious and cultural significance of the Latin tradition of piñatas by crafting their own colorful creations. Naturally, the lesson's highlight occurs when students break their piñatas open in the customary fashion and all the treats tucked inside spill out.

In a similar fashion, on a school-wide scale all sixth, seventh and eighth grade students and their teachers prepared for several weeks to create a colorful "living" piñata called the Multicultural Café. The celebration of diversity was festooned with student presentations, dance, food, and music as festive and bright as the tissue paper of a Mexican piñata. Meanwhile, tucked inside the multicultural experience was an abundance of treasures and essential life lessons which the middle schoolers showered on the PreK-3 through fifth grade students who were their guests at the café.

These lessons included the importance of being open minded. Respect for the views, values and traditions of other cultures. Global awareness. Intercultural sensitivity; as well as understanding and acceptance. All of these treasures spilled out throughout the day as the older students acted as hosts, instructors, presenters, and entertainers for their younger intermediate and primary division schoolmates. They connected lessons and research from every subject area to the multicultural experience.

Once the younger students were seated at their café tables, middle schoolers had the opportunity to act as a table host. In this role, they focused on engaging the younger students in the many presentations while modeling courtesy and respect. In addition, students in each grade level made varying contributions to the multicultural experience.

### **Encouraging Open-Mindedness Towards Diversity**

Eighth grade students who had researched their family roots shared their heritage as well as a related artifact. "It's important for children to understand that we all have roots somewhere other than America," said social studies teacher Barbara Soule. "Hopefully, this will help all of the students develop an open mind toward immigrants and people from other countries—keeping in mind that our ancestors were in that position at one time."

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continued

### **Developing Empathy and Cooperation on a Global Scale**

Working jointly with their English and math teachers, seventh grade students made grade level appropriate presentations about foreign rates of exchange. They also prepared a mock United Nations debate. “They learned first-hand that being from a certain country can shape your point of view on a particular issue,” said social studies teacher Chris Thomas. “They also learned how difficult diplomacy is, and how in order to agree we must compromise.”

### **Learning Appreciation for the Rich Traditions of Other Cultures**

Sixth graders served samples of international foods while sharing their research on the food’s cultural significance in its country of origin. They also created poster “pillars” that were used as table centerpieces. These “Meet the Scientist” pillars displayed information the students had compiled about an important world scientist including that scientist’s accomplishment and its global significance. In addition, sixth graders created a museum inside the middle school’s common spaces, which displayed three-dimensional models of ancient world wonders they had made following an in-depth study of ancient cultures.

Stage performances throughout the day were another exciting way students exchanged information. Middle schoolers modeled traditional as well as current fashions from a number of countries during an international fashion show, as well as demonstrated ethnic dances and shared music of different cultures.

### **Making Connections as Citizens of the World**

Teachers whose classes were guests the multicultural café agreed that the experience increased their students’ understanding and appreciation for the similarities and differences among people throughout the world. The mark the experience made on the middle school students who created the day was equally significant. The event enabled them to make connections – connections between the various disciplines, as well as personal connections that increased their intercultural awareness.

“I learned a lot of new things during the Multicultural Café,” said sixth grader Sean Flynn. “I learned that there are a lot of similarities, for example, among foods from different countries. And then it clicked: America is a mixture of everywhere and we should embrace fully all our similarities as well as our differences.”

*Founded in 1968, Independent Day School-Corbett Campus is a fully accredited, independent school located in northwest Hillsborough County with 550 students from Pre-K3 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 2,000 visitors observing and learning from and with IDS-CC teachers. For more information about IDS visit [www.idsyves.com](http://www.idsyves.com).*

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