

## IDS Students Experience Government in Action

*Participating in mock legislative sessions in the Florida House of Representatives and a simulated trial at the Supreme Court brings learning to life for IDS-CC students.*



JOE PEARL PHOTOGRAPHY

*Third and fourth grade students from Independent Day School-Corbett Campus participate in a mock session of Congress during their study trip to Tallahassee.*

**April 26, 2011 (TAMPA, Fla.)** – Earlier this spring, sitting in the tall leather chairs usually reserved for the state’s elected officials in the actual chamber where Florida history is made, third and fourth graders from Independent Day School-Corbett Campus conducted their own “special session” of the Florida Legislature.

To culminate their study of how a bill becomes law and an International Baccalaureate (IB) unit called, “How We Organize Ourselves,” IDS students traveled to Tallahassee to experience for themselves the inner workings of state government and to engage in hands-on applications of their social studies curriculum.

Gov. Rick Scott greeted students, teachers and parent chaperones upon their arrival at the state Capitol. Next, accompanied by State Representative District 60 Shawn Harrison, they visited the House chamber. Sitting at dark wooden desks of House representatives, they listened as classmate Derek Sokol introduced a bill to the floor regarding homework. They discussed the bill and then voted, pushing buttons to activate red or green lights on the chamber wall.

To an outsider, it was a mock session of Congress. For the students, it was a real example of learning in action – a lesson that transformed the legislative process into an experience they could feel and touch.

Students began the second day of the three-day trip by visiting the Governor’s Mansion and meeting First Lady Ann Scott. They toured the Senate chamber in the new Capitol, and conducted a second Congressional simulation at the old Capitol concerning a school voucher bill.

“Students were amazed at being in the halls of law-making bodies and seeing history and present day happenings that affect their lives and their futures,” said fourth grade teacher Kim Rostick.

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In addition to government in action, the trip incorporated early Florida history and native Florida wildlife with visits to the Mission San Luis, the Goodwood Museum and Gardens, the Museum of Florida History, Wakulla Springs State Park, and the Tallahassee Museum of History and Natural Science.

“The highlight of the trip for us was visiting the Florida Supreme Court,” said Ann Cashen, who team teaches the third/fourth grade multi-age class with Bettyann Pitti and Judy Sobel. With students filling the roles – and chairs – of the seven justices and attorneys on each side, they argued a real court case involving mandatory school uniforms.

“Going to the Supreme Court was a blast,” said third grader Christian Bulnes, who filled the role of a justice. Maya Harrell, who played a lawyer, agrees. “I had to write everything down that I wanted to say. Now, I know for sure I want to be a lawyer when I grow up.”

“As we taught this unit, we used a variety of interactive and technology-based, instructional strategies to bring the lessons to life,” said third grade teacher Tracey Price, citing videos, note-taking guides, role playing, and Internet research activities on classroom laptops as examples.

Fourth grade students in Rostick and Allison Lester’s class viewed videos of the opening of the 2011 Legislative session, as well as a news conference with the House speaker, Senate president and governor. Students in the third/fourth grade multi-age class created state reports in the forms of books, posters, and PowerPoint presentations. And all classes engaged in classroom simulations to model how a bill becomes law.

“When you get to see and experience things for yourself, it brings learning to a totally new level,” said third grade teacher Kelly Garrison. “Students walk in and they see this room with huge desks and chairs. They see that real people sit here and do this every day and realize, ‘This could be *me*. I could do this one day.’ That’s a powerful connection.”

*Founded in 1968, Independent Day School-Corbett Campus is a fully accredited, nonsectarian private school located on Orange Grove Drive in northwest Hillsborough County with over 500 students from PreK3 through 8th grade. At IDS, all children experience the International Baccalaureate Programme in a highly academic and nurturing environment focused on excellence and excitement in learning. IDS-CC has become recognized as an exemplary school with over 6,500 visitors observing and learning from IDS-CC teachers. For more information, visit [www.idsys.com](http://www.idsys.com) or contact the Admissions Office at 813-961-3087 for a personal tour.*

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