

Rockin' the Rainforest

After studying the rainforest, PreK3 students at Independent Day School-Corbett Campus get their feet wet as public speakers, building confidence in their performance skills.



*"We're going on a jungle adventure
to see what we can see.
There's a lion and a tiger and a great big monkey, swingin' on the branch of a tree.
It looks like a chimpanzee."
-- IDS-CC PreK3 students*

April 20, 2011 (TAMPA, Fla.) – They sang together as only three and four-year olds can sing – joyfully and carefree.

Then, one by one, sporting elaborate, multicolored visors representing creatures from the rainforest, PreK3 students at Independent Day School-Corbett Campus came to the front of the Grand Room, an adoring audience of parents, grandparents and friends before them.

Some of the pint-sized performers ran eagerly to the center, while others stepped forward a bit more gingerly to share a fact or two about the jungle inhabitant they were pretending to be.

"I am a tarantula," said Andy Kozlowski, brown legs, slender and fuzzy, dangling like dreadlocks from his visor. "I am a hairy hunter. I can be as big as your fist!"

"I am a toucan. I hop from tree to tree. I have a long, colorful beak," said Avery Rothstein, an impressive-sized bill bobbing up and down on top of her head.

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Throughout the month of March, the students in Lauren Bronson and Leah Gucciardi's PreK3 classes studied the rainforest, and the Rainforest Café performance was their culminating activity. It was an opportunity to practice public speaking, while sharing knowledge gained in the classroom.

"Everything we have been teaching for the last few weeks has lead up to this day," said Bronson. "This performance was all about building self-confidence in speaking in front of people and creating pride in their hard work."

Through a wide variety of multimedia lessons integrating digital resources and age-appropriate literature, the students learned about the animals found in the rainforest, food and medicine that originate in the rainforest, and why these habitats should be protected. Through music and songs, which they then performed as part of the Rainforest Café, the students learned about the four layers of the rainforest and characteristics of each one.



The support and encouragement teachers provided during the performance enabled each student to be successful and enjoy his or her time in the spotlight.

"From the very beginning of this unit, each student knew which animal they would be representing during the performance," said Gucciardi. "That engaged them in the learning process because they felt a personal connection whenever their animal came up in classroom discussion, or in a video or book being shared."

Following the performance, students enjoyed a reception featuring variety of dishes made from foods found in the rainforest: mango, pineapple and papaya fruit salad, chocolate brownies, macadamia nuts, and piña colada juice.

Then, as a surprise treat, PreK3 students joined PreK4 and upper primary students for a special "Zoo Comes to You" presentation of rainforest animals by Lowry Park Zoo. They marveled at the fragile rose-hair tarantula and three-banded armadillo and admired the spotted python and South American porcupine.

For the teachers and parents, however, the true highlight of the day was the Rainforest Cafe performance, and the students' success speaking in front of an audience at such a young age.

Alice Rosenthal, who came to see her grandson, Noah Sams, attributes the students' success to their teachers' compassionate and nurturing support during the presentation.

"I really appreciated the encouragement the teachers gave the students," she said. "They enabled each child to be successful and were able to bring out the best in each one."

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.idsvyes.com or contact the Admissions Office at 813-961-3087 for a personal tour.

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