

Engaging Learners With A Feast Fit For A King And Queen

Knights in shining armor, kings and castles captivate PreK4 and kindergarteners' imaginations, accelerate learning, and bring joy to the classroom at Independent Day School-Corbett Campus.



PreK4 and kindergarten students at Independent Day School-Corbett Campus culminated their study of medieval times with a royal feast attended by middle schoolers Daniela Torres and Jonah Kornberg, who acted as king and queen for the event. Primary students greeted them with a red carpet and provided entertainment throughout the feast.

April 6, 2011 (TAMPA, Fla.) – It began with a royal proclamation from the king’s page. Dressed in medieval costume, he entered the early primary gathering area at Independent Day School-Corbett Campus, unrolled his parchment, and announced that the king and queen would be arriving in a few weeks for a grand feast. The king would expect food, drink, and entertainment, that would be... well, fit for a king and queen.

Curious and excited, the students in PreK4 and kindergarten started researching. There was a lot they wanted to learn to prepare for the royal visit.

“This unit on medieval times is guided by student inquiry,” said PreK4 teacher Holly Ralph. “We encourage the students to ask as many questions as they can regarding the topics and we facilitate learning using those questions. When students are the ones directing the path of the lesson, it keeps them focused and interested.”

The medieval thematic unit is an early primary tradition at IDS that incorporates numerous state benchmarks. It also integrates the International Baccalaureate focus on how modern society has evolved from ancient civilization.

“It’s important for children to understand where we came from and how much we have evolved as a society,” said kindergarten teacher Jessica Moore. “Our goal was to make the curriculum relevant to them.”



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Making that journey joyful was key. So, the learning process began with creation of a stone castle façade at the entrance to the classrooms complete with moat, drawbridge and torches and extended through dozens of imaginative, child-centered lessons.

Students painted tapestries and draped them across the ceilings of their classrooms. They each created a coat of arms. They explored castle life through a variety of print and online multimedia. They sharpened math skills by graphing jewels and adding and subtracting knights on horses. And they investigated how society was organized into the feudal system.

“The children loved learning about the medieval hierarchy and the roles of kings, knights and serfs,” said kindergarten teacher Marla Vildostegui. “They were fascinated by the role of children and were able to make meaningful connections between their lives and life long ago.”

Those connections were strengthened as students wrote in their journals every day about what they were learning.

“Writing was a big part of the unit,” said kindergarten teacher Ande Felder. “It was time for the students to reflect on everything we had been discussing and record details they wanted to remember.”



Primary students dressed as knights, princesses, and entertainers for the royal feast, dining on drumsticks and finger foods served on medieval trenchers they had made themselves and drinking juice from goblets they had embellished with plastic gems.

The unit culminated with the unrolling of a red carpet, a trumpet blast, and the entrance of the royal couple, played by middle schoolers Jonah Kornberg and Daniela Torres, to the regal feast.

Students contributed to the entertainment performing as knights, dancers, jesters, animal trainers, musicians, or master of ceremonies. They dined on drumsticks served on medieval trenchers they had made themselves and drank juice from goblets they had embellished with plastic gems. And they ate at tables decorated with their own handiwork, including black birds baked in pies and stuffed rabbits.

“We wanted the feast simulation to be as authentic as possible,” said Moore. “Doing so, brought medieval times to life and made learning exciting and fun.”

