

Picasso to Pollack Inspire PreK Creativity

Applying principles founded in gifted education, prekindergarten teachers at Independent Day School-Corbett Campus develop an academic unit in artistic expression that enables all students' creativity to soar.



As part of a unit in artistic expression, PreK3 students pretend to be Claude Monet and create their own paintings in an impressionistic style.

March 8, 2011 (TAMPA, Fla.) – They laid on their backs under tables to paint like Michelangelo creating the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

They sat on the grass by the pond where they could observe water lilies, and added them to their Monet-inspired canvases.

They studied ballerina models and replicated the style of Degas.

While imitating the diverse styles of these and other master artists, they learned how their lives influenced their work. They compared and contrasted techniques. And they connected it all to their own creativity and self-expression.

Teens in a high school or college art history class?

One day they will be. But for now, they're three and four-year olds in Lauren Bronson, Leah Gucciardi and Jill Pomet's PreK3 classes at [Independent Day School-Corbett Campus](#) who, for three weeks, were immersed in the study of artistic expression.

According to the teachers, inspiration for the unit came from one of the graduate-level courses in which the school's faculty and administration recently participated to earn endorsement in gifted education.

"The courses gave us an appreciation for the many different types of giftedness," said Gucciardi. "One course about creativity discussed how education is traditionally geared toward left-brain thinking. So we started generating a list of ideas to strengthen even more right-brain thinking and raise our bar higher to support creative giftedness."

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After studying the life and work of Edgar Degas, PreK3 students create their own paintings with ballerinas as the subject, as upper primary students serve as models.

PreK4 teacher, Lori Hohmann, who also serves as the art teacher for prekindergarten, joined them in their brainstorming. Excited about setting the bar for learning high, the team decided during their planning at the beginning of the school year to launch the new unit in February.

“Making it happen has been a dream collaboration with teachers throughout early primary and the art department contributing support,” said Bronson.

With each artist they studied, students were introduced to biographical information and geography to understand where in the world the artist lived. Teachers incorporated a variety of multimedia to share examples from the artist’s body of work. “And then, pretending they were that artist, students used a wide range of tools and mediums – oil pastels, paint, markers, and clay – to create a painting or sculpture in a similar style,” said Hohmann.

In addition to painting like Michelangelo, Monet and Degas, students created sunflowers like Van Gogh. They produced a Pollack splatter painting, a collage like Matisse and abstract, cubism art like Picasso. They experimented with texture in sculpture like Michelangelo. And they developed their own interpretations of da Vinci’s *Last Supper* and *Mona Lisa*.

“It was amazing how much information the students understood about the different artists and how much care they put into their work,” said Hohmann. “For example, on the day the ballerinas from upper primary came into the classroom, it was inspiring to see how totally focused and engaged they were.”

“Their attention spans grew exponentially every day,” said Bronson, “They really understand what it means to be dedicated to doing your personal best.”

The unit culminated with a museum-style art exhibition. Enthralled parents, administrators and guests meandered among displays sipping apple juice and nibbling on cheese and crackers, while students escorted them through the exhibit and beamed with pride.

“The attention to detail in the children’s work is outstanding,” said Benjamin Blunt’s mother, Cristina. “Their art is so well executed and their interpretations so consistent when compared to the original work.”

“It’s amazing what they can do at such a young age given the opportunity,” said Bronson.

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