

## Friendship, Apple Pie, and...a Tarantula!

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Third graders at Independent Day School-Corbett Campus (IDS-CC) started the school year by focusing on the theme of friendship. They discussed the numerous ways friendship can be expressed and even baked and shared friendship apple pies.

So how does an upbeat subject such as friendship segue to large, hairy spiders with venomous fangs, one of which now resides in a corner of the third grade classroom?

According to third grade teacher Ann Cashen, the link between the two seemingly disparate topics was E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*: the classic children's story of the endearing friendship between Wilbur, a pig, and Charlotte, (you guessed it) a spider.

"We used the theme of friendship to explore the different ways we express ourselves, including how we show caring," said Cashen. "*Charlotte's Web* is a favorite story with children that enabled us to then connect to a variety of learning experiences."

For example, students assumed the role of Wilbur and wrote letters to Fern, the young girl who saves Wilbur's life, thanking her for caring for him. They used the incident in the story where Wilbur gets lost in the farmyard to refresh map reading skills. And after they read how Charlotte tried to teach Wilbur how to spin a web, they practiced writing their own directions for a variety of tasks focusing on the use of transitional words and phrases. Sunil Shaw, for example, wrote directions on how to be nice when you meet someone, including remembering to smile, shake hands, and give a warm goodbye.

When the children reached the part in the story where Charlotte is introduced, the teachers introduced the tarantula to help them in identifying with the character. When the new addition to the classroom began spinning a web, however, the door opened on a whole host of science and biology issues related to the carnivorous arachnid. Students were fascinated by how the eight-legged creature carefully entrapped its daily diet of crickets with silken threads before eating it in the aggressive manner of a cold-blooded predator.

"He can eat five crickets in a day!" said Jordan Payne, who brought the tarantula home for a visit. "And he sucks the blood out of a cricket to eat it!" said Eva Willard-Bauer.

Something, students would surely agree, a true friend would never do.

*Founded in 1968, Independent Day School-Corbett Campus is a fully accredited, independent school located on Orange Grove Drive in northwest Hillsborough County. The school serves 550 students in PreK3 through 8th grade and offers the International Baccalaureate program of study for all middle school students. 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 3,500 visitors observing and learning from and with IDS-CC teachers about the school's M.O.R.E. Approach to education. For more information about IDS visit [www.idsy.com](http://www.idsy.com).*