



The International School's TIS News is published three times per year to update our community on school programs and activities. To subscribe, please contact Marketing Director Linda Bonder, L.Bonder@intschool.org, 503-226-2496 x104. We do not share our mailing lists.

THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL'S TIS NEWS

Take, make, seek, solve: the IB at TIS

In December 2009, the International Baccalaureate Organization will visit TIS to determine whether we are ready to become an authorized IB World School. TIS teachers have been working hard over the past year to learn and embrace the IB's rich, inquiry-based methodology. Since his arrival in July, Head of School Dr. Alfonso Orsini has spent countless hours working with teachers, using his

years of experience to help bring the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP) to life for our students. Dr. Orsini offers many insights on why the PYP is important:

"Teachers are ingrained with the notion that they are responsible for student learning. But with the PYP, students have a lot of responsibility for their own learning. So a PYP teacher's planning is completely

different than what a traditional teacher might do. Rather than 'we'll cover Native Americans on pages 52 and 53', a PYP teacher plans what the students are going to do, make, seek, solve, figure out, and collaborate on. PYP teachers don't 'cover' subjects, 'deliver' curriculum or 'give' a lesson. Students take the lesson, do it, make it, experience it. They ask questions, then find the answers to those questions.

continued inside

FALL 2009

The International School provides a multicultural environment where children are fully immersed in Spanish, Japanese or Chinese language and culture. Children become fluent in another language, at home in other cultures, and engaged in math, science, social studies and arts. The International School was founded in 1990 and today educates nearly 400 students.



TIS grad thrives in service learning abroad

"I lived with a host family in San Carlos, a rural town of 600 people," explains TIS graduate Riley Stevenson about her summer volunteering in Costa Rica for Amigos de las Americas. "My family had 16 children, and there were other families of similar size. We went to different houses each day for lunch and dinner, so I really got to know the community. I liked being in a rural area; I really like the style of life they have there.

"I was very nervous before I went - to fly down by myself and not know anyone there. But as soon as I met my host family, I was happy. I was in the town with two other Amigos partners, people I didn't know before. No one

there spoke English. My Spanish was a lot better than my partners', so I was the one who led everything. My partners and I would plan our lessons each day - we were teaching children about environmental health issues like recycling, deforestation and protecting the environment. We taught for two hours each day in a classroom with about 30 kids.

"We also organized a community-based initiative. The project had to be something the community wanted - Amigos didn't want us going in and saying, 'you need this'. So our project was to paint the local school which hadn't been painted in about 30 years. We had to do everything: apply for a grant, figure out where we could get the paint

continued on the back page

An IB Primer

IB: International Baccalaureate, an inquiry-based program of learning offered by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO). There are over 752,000 IB students at 2,729 schools in 138 countries.

PYP: Primary Years Programme, the IBO's program for students aged 3 to 12. The PYP is designed to foster the development of the whole child.

The IB-PYP uses six **transdisciplinary themes** as a framework for exploration and study:

- ▶ Who we are
- ▶ Where we are in place & time
- ▶ How we express ourselves
- ▶ How the world works
- ▶ How we organize ourselves
- ▶ Sharing the planet.

Within those themes, teachers create age-appropriate **central ideas** that each expresses an enduring understanding. The central idea must be substantial enough to generate in-depth inquiries, promote the ability to think critically, and extend students' prior knowledge.

Teachers use the central idea to generate discussion and questions from the students. The teacher then uses various kinds of engaging activities to guide the students in finding answers to their questions. Through this process, students and teachers strive to model the PYP

learner profile:

- ▶ Inquirers
- ▶ Knowledgeable
- ▶ Thinkers
- ▶ Communicators
- ▶ Principled
- ▶ Open-minded
- ▶ Caring
- ▶ Risk-takers
- ▶ Balanced
- ▶ Reflective

For more information, please visit www.intlschool.org/ib and www.ibo.org



Take, make, seek, solve (cont'd)

They see things connected in a real way, not fragmented into school 'subjects'. As a result, they can truly understand the lesson and see how it applies to other situations.

"I love watching our three-year-old prek students. When encountering a new idea, you can see them thinking about it, making the connections. A group of prek students visited my office as part of their unit on communities. The unit's central idea was '*A school is a place where many people have different jobs.*' They looked around my office and asked questions about how everything works. Then I asked them about their jobs in school. Some of them hadn't thought about that before. They told me that their jobs were to color, help clean up, eat snack, and 'to learn'. They clearly understood that they are an important part of our community.

"As part of the kindergarten unit on communities, one class is using the IB "who we are" theme to understand our senses. The unit's central idea is '*Our senses connect us to the world, and without them we must adapt.*' So the children are asking and exploring: what happens when someone can't see? What do they do? How can we help them? How do you distinguish things when you can't see them? To find the answers, they tried some specific activities without using their sight. They will soon have a visitor who is blind to help

answer their questions about what it is like. That is something they will never forget.

"Because the PYP relies on students asking, exploring and discussing, it relies a great deal on language. Our students are in a great place for that because their language skills are developing so quickly.

Our three- and four-year-olds often pose their questions in English, but it's amazing to see how quickly they start slipping in Spanish, Japanese or Chinese words. By second grade, most of the student interchange is in the target language, and beyond that English is scarce. I don't think I'll ever get tired of watching and hearing the students use their new language. People who have been in this school for awhile sometimes forget how incredible that is."

AUCTION B-L-T TO FEED YOUNG INQUIRERS

At the November 14 TIS auction, the Special Appeal will raise money for Books, Learning resources and Technology. Funds raised will help all our students take ownership for their learning, make models, seek answers and solve problems.

Please visit www.intlschool.org/auction or contact auction@intlschool.org for more details.

Learning to Reflect

So often in life we are driven to constantly move forward without taking much time to pause and reflect on our experiences. With the Primary Years Programme (PYP), however, reflection is a vital part of the learning process and a valuable life tool.

Students in the PYP begin learning how to reflect at an early age. Each morning in the three-year-olds' prek Japanese classroom, teacher Chisa Terano-Chilgren shows the children photographs from the previous day's activities. Chisa uses the photos to invite conversation on what they have learned during the week. She notes that during the first several weeks of classes, the

students mainly comment on the people they see in the pictures. But over time their conversations evolve as they learn to speak more thoughtfully about their experiences.

In an upper grade classroom, the process of reflection may look quite different. At the end of a PYP inquiry unit, Maria Lira asks her fourth grade Spanish students not only to write about what they have learned, but to also consider what characteristics of the Learner Profile they applied while working on the unit. Ann Zhu's third grade Chinese class students join their peers in the Spanish and Japanese tracks to share presentations on material they

Continued on back page



What do a NASA scientist, an Olympic medalist & Jane Goodall have in common?



They have all presented to TIS students this fall! TIS 2nd through 5th graders boarded a bus on a sunny September morning for a guest presentation with renowned research scientist and activist Jane Goodall. "It was so cool," recalled Chinese fifth grader Jin Mei with the ultimate elementary school compliment. "She talked about all the animals' personalities. She talked about how they were more than just animals."

In the days surrounding the presentation, students took time to learn more about the famous scientist and her lifelong research. Pilar Arias's second grade Spanish students wrote about Ms. Goodall in their journals and drew pictures of her experiences. Their interest was evident as they showed off what they had learned.

Jane Goodall was just the first in a recent line up of guest presenters speaking to TIS students. The school recently welcomed Ambassador Wu Jianmin who chatted with students in Chinese, laughing heartily at the children's jokes and riddles. The same

week, fourth and fifth graders gathered for an interactive talk with a NASA Engineer from Puerto Rico who presented in both Spanish and English.

In mid-October, four-time Olympic athlete Sheila Taormina passed around her gold medal at a special TIS assembly. She captivated students with her animated talk of what it took to compete in fencing, shooting, riding, swimming and running.

These visitors share their knowledge and culture providing another spark for our students and connecting their learning to the outside world. Principal Maria Abad feels that the opportunity for students to learn from guest speakers is a central part of the Primary Years Programme at TIS. "PYP relies so much on the expertise and contribution of everyone," she says. "Bringing presenters to the school allows the children to learn from and connect with people in the community. They enrich our knowledge and provide a good role model for all of us."

THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL'S TIS NEWS

Learning to reflect (cont'd)

have studied. The presentations allow for reflection as well as the opportunity for students to communicate their new knowledge with others.

Chisa-sensei believes that when young children reflect on what they have learned, it helps them make more connections to the new knowledge. Maestra Maria adds that through reflection her students are able to see that their work has paid off, and to develop new questions for future research. Additionally, it helps them realize what strengths and limitations they demonstrated during the inquiry unit. Maria points out that through reflection, "the students recognize that they are responsible for their own learning process."



TIS Grad (cont'd)

and how to get it transported to our village, and we had to organize volunteers.

"I liked teaching and the project, but the trip was really more of a cultural experience. I learned how people live there, I learned leadership skills and gained confidence meeting new people. I also made great friends - my host Dad cried when I left. I will go back in December to visit."

Costa Rica was Riley's second experience volunteering in Latin America. After tenth grade, Riley volunteered for a week in Tijuana, Mexico with Los Embajadores. "That trip really piqued my interest in global affairs. I read newspapers and really care what is happening in different countries.

"For example, there is a lot about immigration issues in the news. In Tijuana I went to an immigrant center, I saw people cross the border, I listened to their stories. I understand what issues they have at home, why they need jobs, why they want to come here."

Riley feels that if she hadn't known Spanish, she wouldn't have had these experiences. "At TIS not only did I learn Spanish, which really gave me an advantage, but it also prepared me to be more culturally sensitive. I learned about different cultures because my teachers were from so many different countries. That was an issue for some volunteers in Costa Rica - they didn't know what to think or how to respond when they saw things that were different. But it felt comfortable to me. I even recognized some of the children's songs because I had sung them myself at TIS."



Riley Stevenson graduated from TIS in June 2003. She attended The Madeleine School for grades 6-8 and is currently a senior at Central Catholic High School. Riley is applying to colleges for programs in international relations and journalism.

Amigos de las Americas facilitates transformational community service involving more than 20,000 youth volunteers and thousands of communities in Latin America.

Los Embajadores runs service trips to sites in Northern Mexico fostering relationships with host communities, organizing work projects, and coordinating cultural programs.