



The International School

SPANISH • CHINESE • JAPANESE
INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE

An excerpt from
TIS News
Biannual Newsmagazine

How kindergarten connects with the real world



"The kindergarteners planned a field trip for our unit on transportation," Hideko-sensei explained. "I told them that the trip should be downtown, and that it had to be somewhere we could use money because we were learning about money in our math unit. So the students looked at the transit map and discovered that the Portland Streetcar goes from school directly to a toy store! They looked at the schedule and decided when we should leave. Of course they brought money and bought toys," she laughed. "It was so much fun!"

"Fun" is one of Hideko-sensei's watch words. She has a broad, infectious smile and her eyes sparkle

when she talks about teaching. "I'm the teacher, but actually the kids are teaching me every day. Being with the students, sharing with them - it's so much fun, so joyful."

Hideko has been teaching at TIS since 1998, and truly enjoys using the school's International Baccalaureate (IB) program. "My favorite part is the students' questions. Before the IB, the students would ask some questions, and I would usually tell them the answers. But now, they do the research and we all learn together. Often they ask questions that I had never thought of before. It's so exciting to discover along with my students. And learning is more

exciting for them because *I* am so excited about it."

With the IB, it is most important for students to learn skills and concepts. "So even though I will teach the same units again next year, I don't have to teach the same animals and the same painters. The lessons are always fresh."

In the IB unit about living things, "The students were interested in chimpanzees, so that is what we studied. We used mainly books, pictures and videos because the visuals are so important at this age. The students can read, but it can be hard for them to understand all the facts. So we use the library, and I find web sites for us to look at together. That way they get the information and learn research skills too."

As an IB teacher, Hideko also uses field trips to connect classroom learning with real life. "At the art museum they get to see real art, not just what I print out from the internet. They see how big the paintings are, how small they are, how they really look. After that trip, the students started drawing with more detail. And when they draw something now, they have a reason. "It's because I like Cezanne's style," one student told me!"

"A couple of times each month

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International
Baccalaureate
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International Spanish Academy



Confucius
Classroom



I give students research to do at home with parents. It may only take ten minutes, but it really helps students learn that what you do in the classroom is connected to real life. And when parents hear their child say, 'I want to do this research because I'm learning about it in school,' the parents understand more what's going on in the classroom, more than they can know from my weekly e-mails."

Hideko left TIS in 2008 to continue her own education, and she took a part time job in an import/export company. Her smile disappears momentarily as she explains, "Teaching was the only thing I had done, so I thought I needed to try a more 'grown-up' job. In that job I was on the phone and on e-mail with customers and companies. Some parts



of it were fun, but overall – bo-ring." She laughs. "Working in an office, doing the same thing every day - it works for some people, but not for me. I missed the teaching so much.

"At TIS, every day I'm laughing or being surprised - it's so much fun. Teaching is my favorite thing, it's my lifetime job. Now I know for sure."

A parent perspective: does the IB make a difference?

by Yukako Owen, a former TIS teacher whose daughter is in Hideko-sensei's kindergarten class.

Last December, Hideko's class was learning about different artists and painting styles. We went to Japan, and my kindergarten daughter pointed at the paintings in the hotel lobby. She started saying, "Who is the artist?" and, "It looks like Picasso's painting," and, "Dad, the picture on your t-shirt, it looks like Andy Warhol's style." I was very impressed that a six year old showed interest in art and could recognize the style of an artist! When we returned from our trip and visited Hideko's class, I saw a wall full of little artists' paintings that looked like Jackson Pollock, Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Klee and others.

I see the difference that the IB and the units of inquiry make for my daughter. Just as an example, one day I got to see Hideko reading a story book to the kids. It looked like a typical story time, except that the kids started raising their hands, full of questions and opinions after each page!

"Those animals were not nice to the earth."

"It's ok, because that's how they built the house."

"Oh, look! They were doing a good thing for the earth."

It was clear that they had been learning about the earth and the environment. From the story book, they saw the pictures and made connections with what they had been learning, asked questions and shared opinions. And of course they were all talking in Japanese!

My daughter is six years old. She does not talk much about what she learns in class, but we can always tell how each IB unit impacts her real life and gives her great motivation to learn. My daughter never checked our house recycle bin, but she started checking it and talking about how she can re-use things. She wants to bring things to school to use for the art show project. It was so obvious what she had been learning.

I think both Hideko's teaching and the IB units have turned my daughter into a very inquisitive, intellectual thinker who is not shy about sharing her knowledge on a subject. She is always asking questions about what things are and the reasons for them. They are not the usual "Why? Why? Why?" questions. Her questions are deeper and more complex than that. I believe that Hideko, the IB program, and TIS have taught her to be that type of thinker.



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