



Community News

October 21, 2009

Calendar

**Monday Oct 26 –
Friday, Oct 30**

Spirit Week:

Monday – PJ

Tuesday – Hobby or
Profession

Wednesday – Twins

Thursday – Colors

Friday, Oct 30

Character dress-up
day for Elementary
School

Monday, Nov 9

Holiday – Día de la
Constitución

Traditional Day

On Tuesday the secondary students experienced what it was like to go to a traditional school. The experience was very enlightening and parents probably heard lots of comments from their children about the event.

We decided to have “traditional day” because last year we did a survey for the New England Association accreditation asking students various questions about the school. While analyzing the survey we noticed that only 77% of students felt that their classes were interesting. This was a very low response given that the students learn through hands-on projects using higher level thinking skills. Since many of our students have been in the school since first grade or have been attending the school for many years we believe that it is hard for them to appreciate the lessons that they receive because they have nothing to compare them with. So we decided to let them experience classes in a more traditional school beginning with flag raising.

On Tuesday morning we told students that due to parent complaints we were going to be a little more strict with uniforms and with speaking in class. Because classes were too noisy we were going to stop group work and there would be some changes in the way we ran classes. We asked students to tuck in their shirts and line up very straight and we walked back to the classes

Continued on next page.....

CHARACTER DRESS-UP DAY

The big day is almost here! Character Dress-Up Day is Friday, October 30 from 11:00 am to 12:00 pm. Students and teachers in grades Pre-K through 6th will get into “character” and share their costume and book with one another.

Visit our web site at <http://www.tcflearning.edu.do> to see costumes from last year’s character dress-up day.

The costumes should be homemade (not store bought).

Be creative! Have fun!

“Happiness depends upon ourselves.”

Aristotle

Traditional Day Continued

Throughout the entire day teachers gave very traditional classes. They had students sit facing the board and they lectured for the entire class period, asking students to take notes and copy off the board. They asked students questions, but did not allow whole class discussions.

The students were upset with the changes and we overheard many of them saying that if this was the way the school was going to be run they weren't coming back. Some students went to Carla's office to formally complain about the changes, saying that the school couldn't change its philosophy just because some parents didn't agree with it. We were impressed with the democratic way that they expressed their concerns and the maturity which they showed throughout the day. At 2:00 we asked students to reflect on the changes and to tell us what they noticed, what they liked and what they didn't like. The comments were more profound than we expected. Here are some examples:

"In order for students to learn they need to feel a secure connection with their teachers."

"Classes were boring, and I didn't learn anything at all."

"If the school stays like this, I don't want to stay because I'm not learning at all."

"Classes were terrible. Nobody learned anything because we just copied off the board. What the heck happened?"

"I would really like the school to go back to normal because I really didn't understand a word teachers "taught" us today."

"School was better and more interesting before because we interacted."

"I didn't like copying because I didn't learn anything."

"I loved this school, but today it was a nightmare (I hope I wake up soon)."

".... because before our school was perfect."

"This won't work. We won't learn as much as before. We enjoyed classes, we are unique."

"We did not have to think or participate much, merely copy and memorize."

"It is impossible to learn if the teacher does not explain, you can't give your point of view and subjects taught are useless in life. I don't mind the uniforms, but I totally disagree with the teaching method."

"Classes today were just like the ones that I had in my previous school. They are useless and boring. The teacher simply writes on the board, the student copies and then memorizes it."

"This school is famous for its math program. Keep it the way it was."

"It was boring. I fell asleep in math class."

"The school has lost its beauty and its charm. What made it unique was its recognition that uniforms have not part in learning and we could feel like a family with our teachers, ask them anything, and just have a good time learning."

"I think we should go back to the good old days, Carla."

"I learned from this. This takes us back to the quote 'you don't know what you have until you lose it'; but we're lucky just to have been tested. You got us!"

"Please don't change. We love school. I love having my freedom of expression."

When we told the students that this was just a simulation and that the school would not be changing they broke out in cheers. Students were hugging each other, teachers and directors, thanking everyone for having such an incredible school. The students learned to appreciate their school, but at the same time we learned that they have truly internalized our lessons on democratic behavior and they are able to express concerns in a mature and thoughtful way. We are extremely proud of all of them.