
An excerpt from the Fall 2011 issue of **THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL'S TIS NEWS**

Sixteen years later, still loving 4-year-olds

"People come to my classroom and it might seem that we are just playing all day," says sixteen-year veteran TIS preschool teacher Jossie Torres-Jurado. "And we are," she laughs, "because that is how they learn at this age, through play."

Jossie taught third grade before coming to TIS in 1994, but after a year with four-year-olds, she was smitten. "I love this age," she says, still clearly filled with wonder. "I love discovering who my children are inside - their likes, their dislikes, this crazy one, this funny one, this shy one. Preschool is a real time of transformation for them. The children learn to share, to negotiate, to behave in a way that is acceptable to everyone. I get to see the huge changes during the year.

"I love watching their hands," she says. "At the beginning of the year, they might grab the pencil wrong, or hold the scissors backwards. Then they turn it, exploring, until they find the way that will work best for them. Everything is such a process of discovery."

"Jossie makes every child and every parent feel special," says parent Lee Rahr, who has had two children in Jossie's care. "You walk in, and you feel her love and dedication to your child. Jossie's gift is creating that confidence and happiness and love for learning."

For Jossie, the gift goes both ways. "I get so much from the children every day. There are so many special times. But when they start to use the Spanish, when they start grabbing the language and giving it back to me - it is a feeling beyond explanation!"

Then there was the time when a student made Jossie touch her first worm. "This student came over with a worm, so proud, looking at me with those big eyes. 'Isn't she pretty, Maestra? Don't you want to pet her?' Oh, I didn't want to touch that worm. But I couldn't disappoint her! So I reached



out my hand, slowly, trying to smile. And I touched it. And it wasn't that bad! It really was ok!" Jossie laughs, "That girl came back to visit at the 20th Anniversary; she didn't even remember the worm. But I will always remember - she changed my life!"

For Jossie's students today, it is hard to imagine their Maestra shrinking from a worm. They know that any bug in the classroom brings an impromptu science lesson, good for a trip outside to return the bug to its habitat. Jossie's class is filled with such inquiry-based and experiential learning, cornerstones of the school's International Baccalaureate (IB) program.

"With the IB, I love how the children are so involved in their education. Their curiosity is so fresh - the IB is just taking advantage of that. I use inquiry with the children all day long. Even when two people are fighting, I go to the inquiry. I get them to tell me what is going on, what lessons we have learned that we can bring to this situation. I always used a lot of inquiry in my teaching, but now (with the IB) I do it even more, even better. It gives children the opportunity to take ownership for their learning."

At the 20th Anniversary Celebration, Jossie saw the fruits of her labor: former students who are now teenagers. "It was such a *joyful* experience. I got some hugs that were so tight, so long - they really remembered me. I can't even express what that was like. Their plans, going to college or whatever - I was a little part of that. I had them in my hands for a year, and maybe some part of that stays with them. I told them to take care of themselves, to keep growing and keep going. I still keep them in my heart, these are still my children."

