



Vista Newsletter – Vol. 2, Issue 6
January/February 2008

My Vista Experience – Students in Their Own Words

The other day, I went through some of the initial planning documents for Vista Academy. At the time, the middle school division of Open Window was nameless, and we were still several years away from recruiting students and developing a specific curriculum. That said, the philosophical underpinnings were in place, and the mission and identity of the school were strong.

Fast forward to 2008. Vista Academy's inaugural class has immersed themselves in a vibrant, innovative middle school experience, punctuated by experiential learning, off campus opportunities, a variety of guest speakers, and an unwavering commitment to meeting the needs of the gifted adolescent learner.

As we pass the halfway point in the school-year, Vista students were asked to reflect on their experiences over the first five months of their new middle school.

Here's a sampling of student responses -

1. Sixth grade is halfway over. In 5 words or less, what is your initial reaction to that statement?

- Many accomplishments in little time
- Wow!
- Hard to believe!
- It can't be true! Noooo!
- Already? Where did time go?

2. *What are some things you like about Vista?*

- Vista teachers always make sure I learn and understand something thoroughly before moving on
- We can sit down at class meetings and talk about problems instead of teachers solving them for us
- I like how no two school days are the same
- It is never boring
- You are allowed to go to higher levels
- Lots of individual attention
- All of the exciting partnerships
- I can have fun and learn at the same time
- Our teachers have a good sense of humor
- I like the teachers' hands-on approach to teaching
- I love how every day is a new and exciting experience

3. *A highlight of the year so far was when...*

- I got to play the trombone at the Seattle Symphony
- We went to Mount Saint Helens...I was able to bond with my friends on the trip there, and learn how the earth can adapt and how we can too
- We learned we would be doing our own play
- We participated in the "flying squirrel" at Challenges Northwest
- Getting our volcanoes to explode

4. *I enjoy coming to school because...*

- School is interesting
- There is always something new and exciting to learn everyday
- I have a lot of friends here
- I look forward to seeing teachers and classmates, and doing whatever awesome activity is planned
- We have loads of fun and creative learning
- My friend outside of school always says how lucky I am to go to a school like this

5. *Since I've been at Vista, I'm most proud of...*

- How organized I'm becoming
- How I have improved writing papers
- My advanced learning level
- How much better I can speak Spanish
- How I've become a better classmate and student
- The way I am able to get all of my homework done
- The fact that I got an A on my first lab report

These responses filled Vista teachers with great pride. It is such a pleasure to work with these amazing students, and to provide a program that not only meets their needs, but instills in them a love of learning and commitment to personal growth.

We've enjoyed a strong admissions season, and look forward to building our middle school with another exceptional class of sixth graders for 2008-2009.

For more information on Vista Academy, please visit our website at www.vistaacademy.org. I also invite you to check out our blog for unique insights into our week to week activities. The blog may be accessed at www.vistaacademy.blogspot.com. The login is vista@ows.org and the password is vistablog.

Here's to a terrific second half of the year.

Tim Costello
Middle School Head