

Marilyn Kido - 3rd Grade



Marilyn Kido is happy to be back teaching third grade at Topeka Collegiate after two years' absence, even though it means a daily commute from Osage County. "I love all the special traditions and projects and third grade is full of them," she says. During her time away, Ms. Kido had an epiphany when a public school second grader told her, "School is so boring. There's nothing fun." It was then, she explains, "I realized how much I missed the assemblies, the rainforest and all the projects at Topeka Collegiate that get the kids excited."

Talk about excited! The rainforest is such a memorable experience that many high school and college alumni still remember what they learned about rainforest animals as third graders. Each student researches a different animal and creates it out of clay, papier-mâché or fabric scraps. The animals populate a rain forest assembled from live plants, cloth foliage and Marilyn Kido's creative imagination. After weeks of research comes what may be the best part. The children, now experts, personally guide visitors through their rainforest, using flashlights to point out the Howler Monkey, the Three-toed Sloth and all the other creatures. "Every child is so excited to share," says Ms. Kido. "That's the neatest thing. Even the quietest children want to share what they've learned."

That eagerness to share doesn't stop with the rainforest. Ms. Kido has asked third graders to write letters to her about what they're reading. "They're very excited about communicating through writing," she's discovered, "and they can't wait to turn in their letters. Especially the boys." She can't wait to read the letters. "No two are alike. For the first time they're not just summarizing what they've read. They write about how the book relates to their lives or to another book. They predict that might happen. They're thinking the whole time they're reading, and they write to me about what they're thinking. I love the sharing."

The children love using the interactive SMART Board in their classroom. "They love writing math problems," smiles Ms. Kido. "They enjoy editing sentences and correcting spelling words, too. They don't get to come up unless they find a new error, so they're engaged. They want to share." They even get a kick out of recording their lunch choices on the SMART Board.

Ms. Kido did not begin her professional life as a teacher, but nine years in, she can't imagine doing anything else. "I grew up babysitting, then taught dance and choreographed gymnastics routines." Her love for reading and writing led her to a degree in journalism, but it wasn't long before Marilyn Kido returned to school for an education degree. "I realized I just loved working with kids."

Ironically, this third grade teacher's role model was her own third grade teacher. "She was just so kind," Ms. Kido remembers. "She took the time to teach each one of us." When that inspirational teacher retired and published a book of poetry, her former student wrote to her to let her know "I'm a teacher now!"