Dara Academy

"Soaring with Wisdom"

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Dara Academy began with four minds thriving to let their imagination soar. We chose 'Dara' because it represents wisdom, in Hebrew. Dara Academy's purpose is to inspire future generations to focus more on the whole student, to have the wisdom to live in today's society and create innovative solutions to tackle challenges of present and future. Students are trained to be: balanced in mind, tolerant of diverse cultures, and conscious of giving back to the community. At Dara, the experiences are real, and the learning is lifelong.

Planning process:

Our first step is surveying the community to understand needs for a school in the future. We talked to business founders, farmers, and teachers. The student's responses surprised us the most! They feel their opinions are ignored in education. To address this need, we have created the FEP or **F**eelings, **E**motions, and **P**erspective model. Students take a survey at the beginning of each trimester about their feelings on school. Students with negative findings in the FEP test, work with students with positive FEP findings. At the end of the trimester we measure changes in the FEP results. As student's are innovative and want to change something in the school, we have created the student idea process. Students are able to present their ideas through an app. The idea will pass onto the student society for a presentation and vote. If the idea is approved, the student who creates the idea will help with fundraising to implement the idea, if needed. Students know every single child at Dara is valued and loved.

Curriculum and Grading System:

One important part of building a school is curriculum. More than 50% of students do not know what career to study in college. This is why we create a career-based curriculum for high schoolers. We focus on skill-based learning for middle schoolers. Students choose the method for learning each subject, through learning modalities. Since students choose how they learn,

each subject is interesting, and students are enthusiastic about education. Dara's grading system is designed to help each student to be "his/her best self".

We believe student knowledge cannot be measured by test scores alone. Therefore, instead of letter grades, we have designed a learning timeline. Each student has a starting point to begin their journey in learning. The timeline is continuous with no ending, with the student continuing learning for life. How does the idea incorporate into our whole child learning? It is because a student feels unaccomplished when they are failing and does not want to continue to fail. Now with the timeline philosophy, the student understands there is time for improvement, and it is ok to have ups and downs. The student now has a clear mind and is not pushed down with thoughts of failure. The feeling of success helps the student to feel whole: intelligently, fitness, psychologically, and socially.

Dormitories:

Racism is an immense problem we face today, worldwide. In schools, many students often feel like their culture is "weird" or is unaccepted, a problem commonly gone unnoticed by schools. To fix the problem we have decided to make Dara an optional boarding school. We want students to be in an environment where they can express their culture. By including dormitories, students will better understand each other's culture. Students will develop a value system which they will carry for a lifetime.

Green Features:

In our school, we focus on green features such as: a grey water plumbing system, solar panels and tubes, daylighting, recycling materials, rainwater harvesting, and windmills. Water is warmed on the rooftops in solar panels. In the parking lot, we put solar-powered roofs over the cars, to charge them and gather energy to power our school. Behind our school, we have

windmills which provide with more energy. Now students' study in an environmentally green school.

Special Features:

Everyday tons of food is wasted. To fix this problem, we created the Smart Tray. The Smart Tray makes sure students eat healthy and avoid wasting food. It records the average amount of food a student eats and designs a personal healthy diet, for each student. Another innovative feature is the Holographic Intelligence Dome with a 3D projection theme. As a student learns about a place, a projection of the place surrounds them. When studying about a particular thing or object the projection table holds the hologram. People may hologram into the dome to personally interact with the students. The holographic experts act the part of historical persons for a realistic experience. The tool helps students learn better because they are part of the experience and research.

Connection with Community:

The community and school work as partners. We want students to make lifelong connections with the community. One example is our community garden. Students work with local farmers to build a garden for the school. Local culinary experts teach students how to prepare the food from the garden for school meals. Students work with community service organizations to help those in need, including volunteering at local hospitals and working in senior citizen homes and child care centers. With community service, students learn how to interact with all people. Now the child is finally whole because they improve their self-worth through helping others.

Conclusion

Now you know… Dara Academy is not an ordinary school, it is the future of education, inspiration for children of tomorrow, step to achieve dreams, and a place to develop leaders of the next generation. We hope you have enjoyed Dara, where we soar with wisdom.

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