



V.I. Montessori School & International Academy

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Dear Josh and EPI,

On behalf of the Virgin Islands Montessori School & International Academy, the Endangered Species Class of 2009 would like to say **THANK YOU FOR AN AWESOME TRIP!** Your company created a rigorous, challenging and nurturing experience for our students that cannot be matched. Our travels through Mexico, studying marine mammals and learning about the culture, are a time that we will not soon forget. Our young student scientists were touched beyond belief and learned great skills that they can now bring home to our own islands and natural habitat.

Thank you for your professionalism and continuous support. Every aspect of this course was handled in a well-organized and positive manner. The level of ecological responsibility that was bestowed upon my students is both commended and appreciated. We very much look forward to working with you for future trips and studies.

Enclosed is a short movie that one of the students, Simi Pearl-Edwards, made in dedication to the course and the trip. Please enjoy watching how these students made the most of a once in a lifetime experience and made our community proud. The second half of the movie focuses solely on our experience with EPI and we thought that you may want to share it with other groups. Please send a copy to the instructors in Mexico. Muchas Gracias EPI!

Thank you to everyone on your staff that made this such a great experience for us!

Thanks again and looking forward to working with you in the future.

Kind Regards,

Gloria Zakers
Dean of Students
Science Educator

Positive Attitudes are not endangered....

By Mrs. Zakers

"My hands were wet, my feet were cold, but once we saw that first humpback whale, it was all worth it." Kelsey Morrison, 8th grade student, International Academy

My students don't have much to say. They are too busy gasping with excitement after we witnessed the "jump of the year" by a humpback whale within about 50 feet of our small research vessel in the Sea of Cortez. The jump, exposing the entire body of a seasonal resident humpback that will be identified by the pattern on its tail fluke, was deemed the *best of the year* by one of the leading marine mammal biologists in La Paz, Mexico. And just to assure you that their speechless gasps were justified, imagine yourself being on a small 45 foot boat with a creature large enough to fit 13 elephants inside of it, launching out of the water just a small distance away. Its grace and power are so intertwined that one is left with only awe and humility.

The success, productivity and good fortune of the Endangered Species InterSession course of 2009 cannot be easily summed up. From our local adventures of swimming with sea turtles, hiking through ancient endemic forests and searching for the almost extinct Virgin Islands Tree Boa, to the majestic mountains and indigo waters of the Baja Peninsula, I was as much a student in this class as I was the teacher. Myself and eleven IA students, ranging from seventh to eleventh grade, were incredibly fortunate to learn from the expertise of several local biologists, as well as the team of marine mammal biologists whose 30 years of studies are directly responsible for the recovery of the humpback whale population in the Sea of Cortez. We created educational brochures, helped with population counts and collected crucial data for many different endangered species. As an educator for many years, I have never been a part of a class that has been more dedicated and involved in the topics at hand. I am thankful for a great group of students who are truly interested in the future of imperiled species on this planet.

Gathering around a sign that struck a loud chord at the Herpetarium in La Paz, Mexico, the students and myself felt a sense of satisfaction and importance as we read together the words....

"Extinction is forever, but endangered means there's still time."