KINDERNEWS

Russia

Our unit study of Russia was BIG! Russia is the largest country in the world and filled with many unique and interesting treasures. Russia’s landscape and animal life offered us a diverse study of the landforms and mammals. The land is steeped in rich traditions and culture. We were fortunate to have so many parents share a taste of Russia with the class!

From listening to Russian fairytales or the Peter and the Wolf symphony, to playing with the Martyoshka nesting dolls, to learning the art of Pysanky, to baking and tasting Russian sweet bread, to blasting off the moon, the children enjoyed learning about this rich culture and its people.

Important Notes

- The eggs have arrived! Hatching date is April 30th (ish!).
- Parent Teacher conferences will be held: April 19th and 26th (No School)
- Our classroom has been hot; dress your child in cool clothing.
- Graduation is May 17, 2013!
LANDFORMS (AND COOPERATION)

During the first week of our unit study on Russia, we concentrated on the physical attributes of the country. Russia contains almost every major landform! Using shaving cream, the children attempted to form mountains, volcanoes, plains, etc. in the foam. Once we explored a variety of forms, we worked with a partner to cooperatively build one particular form out of clay. We “taught” the landform to the class using our models. In order to share our knowledge with the younger children, we reconstructed the forms out of paper onto the hallway bulletin boards and labeled the parts using inventive spelling.

WORD FAMILIES

This month we introduced the children to four new families: the IN family, the UG family, the AR family, and the EN family. We used a variety of ways to practice these families with the children. We used the Smartboard to introduce the family to the children. Once the children understood the pattern, we practiced the families in lots of hands on ways: we made Maryuska dolls to practice the IN family, Czar sashes for the AR family. The children played games like Zap or Word Family Bingo to reinforce their learning. The children read and illustrated a word family sentence.
MAMMALS OF RUSSIA REPORTS

Russia’s diverse landscape creates a home for a wide variety of animals, many which are on the endangered animal list. Each child chose a mammal to research, write a report and then to share with the class. The children began their reports by drawing the animal from a photo using colored pencils. They paid particular attention to the animal’s physical characteristics. The children then worked with a teacher to find interesting facts about their specific animal. Choosing several of the most interesting ones, the children rewrote these using inventive spelling, identifying the sounds that they heard in each word. The completed reports and drawings were then presented to the entire group.

UKRAINIAN EGG ART OF PYSANKY

Andrea, Zen’s mom, was gracious enough to share her Ukrainian tradition of Pysanky with the class. Pysanky refers to an egg created by the wax resist batik method and utilizing traditional folk motifs and designs. The designs were chosen as a wish of good will for the recipient.

Andrea began by explaining the tradition and symbolism of the designs. The children were then given an egg, a block of bees wax, a stylus called a kistka and a candle. The children were shown how to heat the kistka, melt the wax and draw a simple design in wax onto the egg. The eggs were put into the dye of their choice. Once dyed, the process was repeated. After the second wash of dye was completed the wax was removed from the egg to reveal the designs that the children drew.
GROWING UP IN RUSSIA

Peter Kogan, Benjamin’s father, grew up in the former Soviet Union. He came to talk to the children about his childhood experiences. He talked with us about his kindergarten memories, his trips to the beach, and apartment living in a big city. The children loved looking at his photos and asked great questions to further the discussions.

SHARING THE CULTURE

During the 17th century, Peter the Great began to evolve the arts to help modernize the country. Thus ballet schools were born! Jim Caton, Maya’s father, teaches ballet here at CMU. Jim came to our class and gave short demonstration on the basics of ballet. The children first had a chance to practice their ballet positions and then we all danced like cats! MEOW!

Our own resident ballerina, Mrs. Armbruster (who studied dance at Point Park University) put on a ballet demonstration for the class. Sharing her performance costumes, tutus, leotards and toe shoes, she discussed with the children all the different tools that a dancer needs in order to participate in a production. She then performed several dances, changing costumes to fit the music and dance routine. The children were amazed when she danced in her toe shoes!

Mrs. Armbruster dancing for the class.
A TASTE OF RUSSIA
As with all of our units of study, we like to introduce new food for the children to taste. Preserving fruits and vegetables is a tradition not only in Russia but in many cultures. The children made easy freezer pickles, slicing cucumbers and onions and then adding vinegar and salt.

Draniki are Russian potato pancakes that the children helped prepare. We grated the potatoes, mixed in flour, egg and a little milk, then fried them in oil. The children ate them with a dollop of sour cream!

Ms. McMichael and the six cooks were a little more adventurous and made Blini, a Russian crepe. They filled the Blini with strawberries and served them with whipped cream. Delicious!

Sasha’s mom and grandmother visited our class to share a traditional Russian sweet bread recipe with us. The children mixed the dough and set the dough to rise. While we were waiting, Anna read to us the Russian folktale, “The Giant Turnip”. The children were then given the opportunity to act out the story.

Anna and her mom helping Lili mix the dough for the sweet bread.

Ali tasting our pickles.

Megumi eating a Draniki.

Kiana chopping strawberries.

Will and Giovanni making Blini.

Anna reading The Giant Turnip to the class.

The turnip (Benjamin), the farmer (Giovanni), the grandmother (Sasha), the cat (Anna) and the dog (Jacob) performing The Giant Turnip.
RUSSIAN INSPIRED ARTWORK

Inspired by Wassily Kandinsky’s Circles, the children cut various sized colored circles. Giant trees were painted in black and the colored circles were added to the branches. The finishing touch was to add colored dots with colored bingo dabbers.

The class showed a big interest in the Faberge Eggs. We read the story of how Czar Alexander III commissioned Peter Carl Faberge to create a beautiful Easter egg for the Czarina. The Czarina was so pleased with the resulting egg that a tradition was born! Each year Peter created a new egg for the Royal family. Only 61 of these eggs are in existence today, the most valuable sold for 17 million dollars! We created our own priceless jeweled eggs for you!

Onion Domes, the unique architecture feature on the Kremlin and other Russian cathedrals caught the eye of the kindergarten class. Using their own painted patterned paper, the children cut several onion dome shapes, arranged them in a collage like fashion and used marker to fill in the towers and detail.