

РУССКАЯ ШКОЛА



WHITE ROCK ELEMENTARY
SATURDAY RUSSIAN SCHOOL

2003-2004

*Rancho Cordova
California*





Welcome to our Heritage School of Russian Language. In this book we would like to tell you about our school, how it works, who our students and teachers are, briefly touch bases on the curriculum and few words about Russia.

This is our fifth year of teaching Russian Saturday School at the FCUSD. We are very fortunate to teach at White Rock Elementary School, where the teachers and Principle Mrs. Kerekes are gracious, allowing us to use their classrooms and in their support of our school.

As the years went on, the staff couldn't help notice the student's excitement, eventhough they came in on their "days off." One would have to agree it is easier to start your day when you are greeted by a group of smily faces. As teachers, we found our pleasure came upon us by osmosis.

Beyond the normal reading and writing, our daily schedule includes many fun exercises such as reading favorite stories, participating in riddles and tough twisters for laungage development, vocabulary games, and so on. Many classes enjoy watching educational movies related to their studies.

The parents of our students are very supportive people as well. Most of them are volunteers for the recess every Saturday. A little chat with them before and after school creates a bond between parents and teachers, and between teachers and students. Since communication is quite honest and open, it make for a good assessment as to how things are going.

For example, if students get too much or too little homework, if some books are helpful or not, how can certain events be planned and made easier, etc.. The feedback and involvement is essential. We look forward to having open communication lines in the upcoming years.



At this time we have 125 “fall” applicants from students, who attended last year. Also, at the beginning of the school year we had a group of about 25 students, who were 6-7 years of age. So, we opened an additional class for them. Meanwhile, we let the older kids benefit from the program. Due to the fact that there are limited funds available for our school and we could not open more classes. As the matter in fact, if we send applications to all other families in the community, we will easily end up with more classes of students. Unfortunately, we are very limited in space, therefore a number of willing students is on hold. We believe the Russian school in Rancho Cordova is a viable asset and resource to the community.

To Begin with...

On the first day of school we hold a mandatory meeting (orientation like) for the parents and students where we go over main issues. Our agenda looks like this:

- Introduction of our staff
- Our schools' rules, policies and expectations of students, teachers and parents.
- Yard duty (Parental involvement)
- Our program (brief overview of curriculum)
- Books
- Grades/Levels
- Parents/Teacher conferences
- The end of the year celebration/graduation
- Placement of students (what level and room number)



This meeting takes place in the cafeteria for about an hour. After that students with their teachers go to their classrooms. The rest of the day is spent on going over the school/classroom rules, safety during recess, safety on the way home, classroom procedures, testing of each and

every individual and placing students in a more appropriate level, if necessary.

Rules and Policies

Each and every student and parent have to go over the rules and expectations before they start attending the school. Each family receives a booklet with Rules and Policies and signs the appropriate portion at the end of the booklet, saying that they agree to follow the rules.

Our booklet contains all rules and expectation of parents, students and teachers. The booklet is available upon request and it is written in Russian language. Parents let us know if they like to have a copy in English. Rules and Policies are very closely related to the basic rules of a regular school: **student's behavior** (same as regular public school, except students have to speak Russian while on the campus) - what's appropriate, what's not and consequences for breaking the rules; **importance of attendance**; **parents visiting** our school (signing in the office prior to visiting class); **safety rules** before and after school; **dress code** is the same as a regular school code; **bell schedule** –three periods and two breaks; appropriate time to bring students to school (8:50, 10 min before school starts) and when to pick them up (12:45); **brief outlines of our program**; and other vital information.



Assessment

It is a very realistic thought that our students focus their energy on learning English and succeeding at their own grade level, but there is no way that they can learn the Russian language on their own. Therefore, we created a test that would determine their **level**.

At the first year we had only four levels. We replace the word “grade level” for just “level”. If we are to compare our “levels” to the “grade level” in a public school of Russia then we are just one grade below. For instance, students of third “level”, use Russian textbooks for

second grade. That's why instead of using a word "grade" we use a word "level".

Students take the same test at the beginning and at the end of the year. The test contains two pages of vocabulary (correct spelling of the 40 pictures will play a major role in determining the level); 20 questions on grammars, and a picture that students have to describe the best to their abilities. A copy of it is attached at the end of this booklet.

We also assess students in their ability of speaking in Russian. About 75% of our students have been to school in US for at least a few years. So, it tell us, as quick learners as they are, they tend to forget Russian language. The more they speak in English, fewer opportunities they have to practice Russian. That's where a Rule "Speak only Russian" at home and at Saturday Russian School is an important issue in order to succeed.

School Calendar

The school year starts in the middle of September and ends in June. There are 32 weeks in the school year. The way how 32 weeks fall in to the calendar, it leaves ether big gaps or too many weeks of school Saturdays in a row. The year is divided evenly into 8 periods. After 4 periods comes time for a midterm. That's where we find this time a good time for report cards. The other word that we don't use is the word "month." Instead of using word "month", we use "period", which has 4 weeks in it. Within each period each class has one quiz and one major test.

Attendance and space availability

As we already said we have four classes, and there are 20 seats in each class. When the number of students drops down to 17, 18 or 19 due to the moving away or just a drop out, we fill in the class with students from waiting list. Sometimes we do go up to 22-25



students per class, it depends on circumstances. For instance, if one child is placed in a class, and he or she has a sibling on a waiting list, then we try to place both of them in a class, because in 99% cases, parents want to bring their children to school on Saturday together or wait until there is place for both of them. We balance out the total number of students by keeping some classes even or less than 20. The placement of a new student in the middle of the year may depend on how far the class has gone into the program, if previous Russian schooling matches current lessons. Our monthly attendance is about 92% to 96%.

Through the year we maintain about 150 students attendance.

Program, Textbooks and Levels (Brief outlines of the program)

Prior to the school year a lot of research was done by each and every teacher in order for us to present the most useful teaching material to our students. None of our teachers are new to teaching, nor to the source of teaching material. This year we developed curriculum: lesson plans and textbooks for two levels – six and seven.

The focus of our program is to develop good skills in writing and reading; gain sufficient amount of knowledge about Russian culture, inheritance; to get to know world wide known famous Russian masterpieces. We don't teach math, science, etc..., because we have only 3 and 4 teaching hours a day. The subjects are language arts, language development - writing, grammar reading, oral language, history and geography of Russia. Students get to take home a lot of homework.

What about using English in our school? Of course, we do, and we do it a lot. It's not that we only use English in one way or the other, we relate concepts in Russian to how it can be used in English. It's just like a room or closet with hooks to hang cloth or anything else on. Same with our brain, if there is a hook – concept, then we “hook” assignments in any language. For instance, in Language Arts and/or Language Development we learn about parts of the speech, punctuation, sentence structure, introduction to essays, writing essays,



The Earth is brightened by a sun,
and a person – by knowledge.
Russian proverb

book reports. Aren't these concepts used in both languages? Yes!

Each and every class has assignments that have involvement of the English language. For example, students of the fourth level have assignments that require translation of a story or text from language to another. In class 1-A and B (level one and two), as we introduce each and every letter we use pictures. These pictures are named in both languages. Third level does a lot of writing. Vocabulary in both languages is built in every class, trying to match a regular school level.

Our program is not created as a parallel to English education, but it is a benefit to students, teachers of regular public schools and parents. Since many students have missed a lot of basic grammar instructions due to the transition from one country to another, Russian school is very handy for children, as well as for parents, who can't really teach their children concepts that are taught in a local public school in English language. It is good to notice that the teachers from the regular school recommend our Saturday school for their students to improve students' skills in reading, writing and vocabulary.

The binders with curriculum for each and every level are located at the office of Russian Saturday School, which is in the White Rock Elementary facility.

Fortunately, we have access to local ABC book store where they sell Russian scholastic textbooks. Our core curriculum is based on a regular school program that is used in Russia. We use regular schoolbooks from Russia for Language Development and Arts, Literature, and are planning to add more subjects.

It is also a good thing to notice, that our students are eager to read books in Russian. But, unfortunately, we have a small amount of the reading books in our library. So, the students have to be put on the waiting list to get a book from the library.

Before giving a brief outline for each level, we would like to give a description of what is the same in each and every level. Language Development and the oral language development program contain a lot of reading to students and by students; for 1st and 2nd levels – teachers read to them at the beginning of the year, in the second half of the year students read on their own skills appropriate stories; retelling them, comprehending the concept, building vocabulary, book reports. Stories

that are read in a class are Russian folklore stories, Russian fairy tales, and stories written by famous Russian writers.

Part of the oral language development is the memorizing and reciting of poems. Each class has a different number of poems per year.



1 (A) Beginning Level- that's a class where students have no skills or knowledge in Russian language. We start at a very beginning: studying alphabet, sounds, difference between letters and sounds, introduction to how syllables are made and what sentences are made out of, when the sentence is complete, etc..

Major part of oral language development is the memorizing and reciting of poems. Students get to take home a new poem every other or every third week.

The last few months the program gets a little more intense. Students read stories on their own and have to complete projects that require comprehension, writing ability and vocabulary. The speed writing (putting any thoughts on a paper without lifting your pencil) for 5 minutes a day is a favorite part of the day for our students. They get to see for themselves how good they are doing when comparing results from previous days. Most students do well; some are just taking time to tell a story. Students are introduced to the basic grammars, but not in depth.



1B Advanced Level- is where students start their year with knowing some letter, can read simple syllables and short words, very limited in writing. Throughout the year they learn an alphabet, sounds, difference between letters and sounds at the faster pace. Students use a textbook called "The Alphabet". They are taught some basic grammars, but not in depth. Writing assignments would

contain basic expression of their thoughts or opinions about read stories. More and more practice of writing.

Reading lessons have a lot more of independent reading and assignments related to stories. Poems are a major part of oral language here, too.



Second Level - students start their year knowing how to read on a first grade level or close and can write few sentences. The program of this level is laid out in a regular school textbook for a student of a first grade in Russia. Students are taught basic grammars in depth now, parts of the speech, parts of the word, proper sentence structure.

The focus here is to master good skills of breaking the words into syllables. It is as important is being able to spell out the words in English. This is the last level where students spend much time on syllables.

Major part of the Language development is the written book report and writing of the story of the day in your own words, which leads into introduction to writing essays.



Third level starts their year as usual, reviewing last year program for a month. The program of this level is more intense. Parts of the speech, parts of the word, proper sentence structure, vocabulary and definitions are the major part of the Language development. A variety of written assignments are used in this level. For example, translation of a story from one language to another, written book report, essays (a lot of them), exercises from a textbook, etc.

For reading students use another textbooks, or literature of stories, that level appropriate for that level.



Who are our students?

All of our students are Russian-speaking children. But we cannot say anymore, that all of them came from Russia. As the time went by, the newcomers' families had grown after coming to United States and now they have children who are instant US citizens, but speak Russian language.

Of course, we have a good number of children, who attend Russian Saturday School, are the newcomers from the former Soviet Union. Putting all the recent political facts aside, on our hands we have a huge group of people, who are from Russia and strongly desire to keep their inheritance of language, culture and customs for as long as possible.



Russia is a vast country. It is obvious that the whole country Russia speaks Russian language, although in Russia alone there are about fifty different languages spoken at home such as Kabardins, Chuvashes, Karelians and many, many more. As a result of that we run into ethnical groups that consider themselves Russian, but don't speak only Russian language. Yet, we have families that mixed a number of languages in their communication at home.

Part of our population are students from other countries - former Republics of former Soviet Union, such as Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine and few others.

So, here are the groups of students who learn Russian language at our school: **only Russian speaking** – born in a Russian family, in an early childhood started speaking in Russian and want to learn Russian; **born in Russian, but**



home language would be their parents' language, other than Russian, such as Belarus, Hungarian, Ukrainian, Moldavian, etc.; learned Russian language in a community/school/daycare, comprehend at least two languages; **born outside of Russia**, moved to Russia, use a mixture of languages, don't know what language is what. Some students are **born here, in US**, their home language is still Russian or close to that, and can be a mixture. Lately, we notice that English language become a

dominant language among younger children, and that's where parents are trying hard to keep their language. The number of American citizens with Russian ancestry is growing, so is the demand for Russian education.

Who are our teachers?



We have a small, but very dedicated staff. Each class is a deferent level.

All of our teachers, and a lead teacher, are very hard working people. They are very skilled and very well educated people. Svetlana Zayarchenko has been working here, in the

United States as a teacher Aide for 12 years. She has her AA degree in Engineering and Electronic from Polytechnical college of Moscow, Russia. Also, teaching Russian classes at the summer school for a few years, we left very good impressions on our students and parents. It led them to request an opening of Russian School in Rancho Cordova Area. Within those years we picked up some methods that are used by the teachers of American school. Irina Petrashishina has a Master degree in Ukrainian and Russian language and literature from State University, Chernovtsi, Ukraine. Anna Zhovinskiy has a Master degree in Math from State University of Odessa, Ukraine. Luba Blair (she use to work in Russian school for two years) had been through a lot of trainings through the FCUS District, besides her previous experience in a past in organizing a Russian school through the church. She graduated from Career College as a Pediatric Medical Assistant in 1993, and afterward-continued going to American River College, taking English, music (voice), and art. Lyudmila Danilyuk completed her Bachelors of Art and Science at State University of Belarus. Irina Mordovina has AA degree of Music and Art from Belarus. Our head teacher, Tatyana Artyukh, has

Master degree in Russian language and literature from State University of Kiev, Ukraine. This year she developed reading and writing curriculum and lesson plans for new - six and seven levels - for our Russian school. Almost all of them work for the Schools Districts in Sacramento Area.

Just like teachers at the regular school, we have mounds of work to correct, to enter in record book, keep track of all the events that are planned for our school, and not to forget, always meeting with parents, who are so concerned about their child's progress. And it happens every Saturday afternoon for at least 15 minutes before and after school.

The tests that are taken at the beginning of the school year and at the end, show clearly, how much our students have learned from our teachers within a short period of time, only 32 school days, including an orientation day, assessment day, and the last day of school. The results of those tests are remarkably impressive.



Dress rehearsal for the End of the Year Program

Report Card

Report Cards are given out twice a year: first one - after 4 “periods” or first semester, which falls in the end of January or beginning of February, and second one – in the end of the school year. To indicate a progress, we use Russian equivalents, such as 5, 4, 3, and N/A to A, B, C, D. This system is well known by parents. When they see a grade they know where the student is.

The End of the Year Program

It was the major presentation



that was done by the whole school. About 90% of students participated in performance one way or the other, besides the singing of the whole school.

Each and every students very recognized for their effort of coming to school on Saturdays, instead of choosing being home and enjoying his weekend. Besides the report card students received a certificate of completion of the first year at our school.



On a behalf of all the staff, we would like to say THANK YOU to Judy Lewis, Director of Federal and State Programs in FCUSD, for making it possible in order for our school to become a successful project for the community of Rancho Cordova.