

April 4, 2011

Golden Gates Productions

To Whom It May Concern,

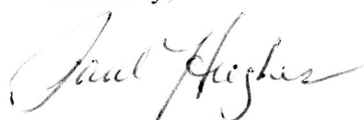
Please allow me the opportunity to take this time to comment upon the visit of ***Golden Gates – Moscow Nights*** to our school in the winter of 2011. The group arrived for a weeklong residency at our school as part of our cultural diversity week. The group of fifteen consisted of singers, dancers, and musicians ranging in ages from twelve to adult. As the week went on, the troupe presented workshops and informal discussions in the classroom as well as performances for the entire student body and public. The performers stayed with host families and participated in local activities and events. The entire project was an extraordinary success in developing multi-cultural understanding, friendship, and an awareness of the fundamental differences and similarities between the United States and Russia.

Using the arts curriculum as a springboard, each and every student enrolled in an arts course in our program was given the opportunity to workshop with the students from Russia. They were allowed to ask questions about home life, school, traditions, and pop culture. In addition, they were able to learn about Russian folk history, musical instruments, costuming, traditional song, and tremendous diversity as a nation. Through the performances they were able to see and hear the subjects of the workshop in action. The educational value, cultural awareness gained, and sheer understanding of the value of cultural diversity met by this interaction is inestimable. The students are still talking about it!

The multi-cultural awareness did not cease with the leaving of the troupe of players. Many of us seized the opportunity to carry the lessons gained into our curriculum. The middle school drama students' final project was to find a folk tale from another country and develop it into a formal presentation. Many of them chose Russian stories. Some of them choose other stories and placed them in Russia with characters such as the three little pigs named Vladimir, Sergi, and Peter and their mother Marina enjoying a bowl of borscht. The dance program was able to incorporate choreography learned during the workshops into some of the final performance pieces by the students. Our orchestra program capitalized on awareness of the great contribution of Russian composers in the history of symphonic music. And, we are all still finding ways to incorporate ideas into the classroom as the list goes on and on. Not to mention the close ties made between the students and the host families.

This program was a tremendous success in creating multi-cultural awareness and bridging the gap between two nations that have not always understood each other. It is incredible how the arts transcend perceived differences that we purport to have. The children saw through each other right away. They discovered quickly that the cultures might be different, but underneath it all, we are all the same. I would recommend this program to any institution that wished to build cultural diversity, multi-cultural awareness, a common understanding of others, and a true awareness of the arts. If you have any questions please feel free to call me at 001-863-293-5980.

Sincerely,



Paul Hughes
Performing Arts Department Chair