

Premise

A major theme throughout the NAEYC accreditation standards is celebrating diversity and establishing a culturally inclusive environment.

At ECDC, we look for many ways to demonstrate respect for our families and help children learn about the world by learning about each other.

Context

- We are fortunate to draw our population from a campus and local community that is becoming increasingly diverse.
- In 2008-2009, languages represented included English, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Japanese, French, Russian, Bulgarian, and ASL.
- In the Sunflower class, some of the three year old children were already seasoned international travelers and had relatives living in distant lands.

Context



ECDC teachers regularly use information from families to include environmental elements and activities that affirm the diversity represented among the children.

Precipitants

Maps of all kinds and globes are some of the more popular and well-used materials at our center



Precipitants



We also already knew from a project the previous year that with a developmentally appropriate concrete approach, our three year olds could conceptualize basic mapping concepts.

They had also worked collaboratively to make maps of the classroom and the playground that amazed us with the amount of detail, proportion, and accurate representation of relative distances.

Precipitants

Previously, Ellyse's mom had spent many "French Friday" mornings with these children when they were in the 2's class. Beatrice taught them many finger plays and songs in French and it was one of the children's favorite activities.

Rebecca's mom had come in earlier in the year and made fruit-filled Russian *blin* (blintzes) with them, explaining they were made during holidays. The children loved helping Sophia and eating a special treat that was entirely new to them.

We had also asked parents (in another class) to record favorite stories in their first language that the children could share in the listening center, which were very popular and prompted many questions.

Project Theme

We invited our parents to help us conduct a long-term study of family cultural traditions.

Concurrently, we would revisit and expand exploration of maps to include globes and activities that would support development of spatial concepts.

We would also be able to incorporate rich literacy experiences of many kinds.

Beginning

We began the study with Lilly's mom, Emily – she shared many seashells and stories about growing up and beachcombing in Florida.



She also helped each of the children start a personal book about their own family traditions and special culture, which they would continue to work on for many weeks.

Mapping

Adam brought a photo album from his trip to visit his grandparents in Japan last summer – they went to a children's museum and Disneyland!

This was a good opportunity to begin using the world map to flag places represented by our children's families.



As time went on, we used the flags to compare distances and discuss how travel to each place might be accomplished.

Parents are teachers



Many parents volunteered, offering ideas for activities and sharing their time and experiences with the children.

It is important to note that many of the foods and shared or guided activities were specifically chosen because of their special significance to the Sunflower children and their families.

Italy (Sicily)

The children already knew Luke's mom, as Tara had helped them sew a quilt earlier in the year. For this project, Luke's dad came in and told them about Italy.



Children helped Dave prepare ingredients and assemble a really big lasagna, and Luke's parents served it for their lunch.

Bluegrass Music (Kentucky)

Stella's dad, Stan, brought a friend and they showed the children how to build a banjo.



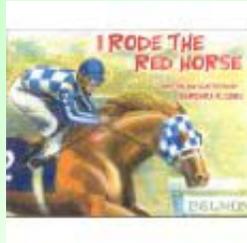
They enjoyed many songs: "You Are My Sunshine" by Governor Jimmie Davis; "Uncle Pen" by Bill Monroe; "Irish Medley" by Jean Carnigan

More bluegrass

We also danced (a LOT!)



The Kentucky Derby



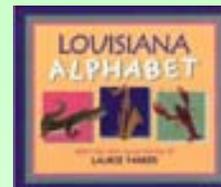
We learned more about Kentucky when Sarah's mom came in and read a story about a special horse and the Kentucky Derby.

Children picked numbers for *racing silks*. Julie brought lots of pictures for them to color.



Louisiana!

Kai's mom and dad are from the bayou country in Louisiana.



Carmen shared a special alphabet book with a Louisiana theme, Cajun red beans & rice, and ZYDECO which the children loved as much as bluegrass!

St. Patrick's Day



We celebrated St. Patrick's Day with our Grad Assistant, Becca's mom who is from Ireland. The children made shamrocks, cookies, Irish flags, and found where she lived in Ireland on the map. Everything was very green!!!!

Japanese Arts

When Adam's mother visited, she brought books and an alphabet writing game.



Asako helped the children make origami boxes and birds.

Japanese food



Then, Asako guided the making of rice balls, one of Adam's favorites: placing a 'treasure' of finely chopped vegetables inside of a ball of seasoned rice. Yum!

Bulgaria

Mila's mom brought books written in her home language, reading and translating them for the children, AND Irena brought homemade *medenki* (honey) cookies to share.



She also helped the children make martenitsa – little dolls made of yarn to celebrate the beginning of spring. People in Bulgaria hang them in their trees till they see the first signs of spring.

Greece

Since Ms. Phyllis's family is from Greece, she shared several things that are favorites with her children.

She also helped the children make *komboloi* – “worry” beads that are a popular item in Greece and her home!

She showed photos from her trip to Greece and made cookies called *koulourakia* – butter cookies.



Greece

• Αδამ	Adam
• Εωυ	Evy
• Ξθλια	Julia
• Λιλλυ	Lilly
• Στελλα	Stella
• Εμμεττ	Emmett
• Μικαελα	Mikaela
• Ρεβεψα	Rebecca
• Και	Kai
• Σαραη Ξ.	Sarah J.
• Μιλα	Mila
• Λθκε	Luke
• Ελλυσε	Ellyse
• Λινδου	Lindy
• Σοπηια	Sophia
• Σαραη Σ.	Sarah S.

Something the children liked a lot was when Ms. Phyllis let them type out the letters in their names on her laptop, and they printed out their names with Greek letters on cards to take home.

Reflecting

This project ended as the children finished their books, bound them, and took them home. We had learned many new words and many things about each other.

We learned to use a world map and globe to locate specific places. We compared distances and made observations and inferences in several ways; for example – places we marked in the United States are closer to one another than to places in other countries; Japan is farthest from Charleston of all the places they learned about.

The children dictated and illustrated thank you notes to all our visitors, sharing their favorite things about the visits, learning about the conventions of good manners, and how to treat guests respectfully.