

Features

School's outreach program helps Hispanic students make the grade

By Richard A. Kiley

Students at Our Lady of Perpetual Help School have been getting quite an education this year — in both English and Spanish.

Through an Hispanic outreach program the parish school implemented last September, Spanish-speaking students in kindergarten through grade six have been gaining proficiency in English while their English-speaking classmates have been picking up various aspects of Hispanic culture.

The outreach program became necessary when school administrators noticed a sizeable increase in the enrollment of Spanish-speaking children at the Joseph Avenue school.

"We're definitely getting more of an influx of Spanish-speaking children in the area," said the principal, Sister Clare Francis Mogenhan, SSJ.

She attributed the influx of Hispanic children in the school to the fact that OLPH is the only school in the area just east of the Genesee River.

The program was formed to develop English proficiency among the growing number of Spanish-speaking students. It became a reality after a diocesan task force, which had already been looking into ways to integrate the needs of Hispanic children into the curriculum of certain diocesan schools, came through with a \$10,000 grant for Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

The task force, which was headed by Father John Mulligan, did not specifically identify Our Lady of Perpetual Help as the school to begin an Hispanic outreach program, said Father Laurence Tracy, of the diocesan Spanish Apostolate.

"We identified them because the school and parish seemed very interested in doing something," Father Tracy said. "A high number of Spanish-speaking children is probably recognizable in five to eight Catholic schools."

The diocesan grant enabled the school to hire Maria Molino for the 1987-88 school year. Molino's aunt, Danitza Bull, had served as a

consultant for starting up the program while she was a member of the school board at OLPH, and had asked if her niece could teach the Hispanic students.

Both of Molino's parents are from Colombia, giving her a common bond with many of her Spanish-speaking students. "We speak Spanish at home, too," said Molino, who recently received her degree in microbiology from the University of Rochester. "But because I can speak English, not hearing it at home doesn't hurt me like it does them."

By teaching at the school three days a week, Molino is hoping to fill that void in the lives of her students by reinforcing English in school so the 25 students in the Hispanic outreach program have a chance to catch up to their English-speaking classmates.

"(The Spanish-speaking) children are behind in certain subjects like reading, spelling and math, so I'm taking them one by one and giving them individualized attention to help them keep up," Molino said.

Molino said that the added attention may be the difference between an Hispanic student thriving on his or her education or not giving education a second thought.

"This program is very necessary because, in some respects, these (Hispanic) students are at the same level in a subject like math, but their reading is a grade below," Molino observed. "It's frustrating for him because all he needs is a little extra attention."

One of the program's goals is to end that frustration felt by Hispanic children, who have the highest dropout rate among any students in the city, noted Sister Virginia Steinwachs, SSJ.

"Early intervention is important for the Spanish students; they fall down chiefly at the high school level," said Sister Steinwachs, the diocese's assistant superintendent for urban education.

This past summer, Sisters Steinwachs and Mogenhan attended a state program in Alba-

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Bonnie Trafelet/Courier-Journal

It's been a long morning

Thirteen-year-old Kristin Bleck of Chili thinks long and hard before answering a question on the Catholic high school placement examination, administered at Nazareth Academy on Saturday, Jan. 9. Meanwhile, at the other five Rochester-area Catholic high schools and De Sales in Geneva, eighth graders also labored to complete the four-hour test. Students took the exam at the school of his or her first choice.

Holy Ghost School opening to visitors next week

Holy Ghost School, 230 Coldwater Road, is hosting a community-wide open house on Sunday, Jan. 31, beginning at 10:30 a.m. Anyone interested in visiting the school is welcome to attend. All classrooms will be open, and many parents and faculty members will be on hand to answer questions. Refreshments will also be served in the school hall. The school will also be open to visitors on Wednesday, Feb. 3, from 10 a.m. to noon and 1-3 p.m.

Holy Ghost has been providing students with quality educations for more than a century. Small class sizes, personalized instruction

and a family atmosphere are just a few of the benefits Holy Ghost has to offer. Among the extras are computer instruction in grades pre-k to eight, remedial reading and math, and a newly constructed creative playground.

The school also offers an all-day kindergarten program, which includes both the standard curriculum and an enrichment program. Students may also enroll for a three-day pre-kindergarten program for four year olds.

For information, call the school at (716) 247-4156.

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