

Buddy program eases transitions

Jennifer Burke/Catholic Courier

Being the lowest in the pecking order is always hard, especially for a kindergartner at a new school full of bigger kids. St. Mary's School in Canandaigua has tried to make that transition a little easier for its students by implementing a "Buddies Program."

Through the program, St. Mary's pairs students in the lower grades with older students for the entire school year. The older students serve as mentors and role models for their younger peers.

"I mix them all up so that every year they have a new buddy," said Wendy Cowan, a health and physical education teacher at St. Mary's who coordinates the program.

She said that older buddies do everything from going into their younger buddies' classrooms for arts and crafts time to sitting with their buddies during Mass.

"(The older children) kind of rise to the occasion and behave so that the little kids can follow their example. It's really neat to watch," said

Education

Linda Smith, the school's office manager. Smith has also seen the Buddies Program through a parent's eyes, as her two daughters graduated from the school and her son is currently a student there.

Janna Mugnola said the Buddies Program made the transition to kindergarten much smoother last year for her son, Robert.

"It just made him feel really comfortable and happy that someone was looking out for him. It was also great for the older buddies because they felt important and old enough to have responsibilities," Mugnola said.

Cowan says she learns the personalities of the kindergartners during the first few weeks of school, and by the end of September usually knows which of her older students should be paired with each child.

"I've had (the older students) from year to year, so I kind of know their personalities. I know what kind of



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

Reward for reading

Sam Zalacca, principal of Our Mother of Sorrows School in Greece, promised to dress in a chicken costume and dance for students if they exceeded their reading goal during the Parents as Reading Partners program. The students surpassed their 50,500-minute goal, so Zalacca performed his dance at the church hall March 4. Seventh-graders Meredith Bringley (left) and Keelin Kenny hug Zalacca after his performance.

kids they'll be good with," Cowan said. "The kids can't wait to see who they're with. They look forward to it."

Although the program only requires buddies to interact during the school day, many pairs form a more lasting relationship.

"It's a real connection. It's an ongoing relationship they always have," Mugnola said, describing her daughter's relationship to her older buddy. Maddie Mugnola, who's going into fourth grade, even attended the eighth-grade graduation of her buddy.

Mugnola believes the Buddies Program helps older students focus less on themselves and realize the worth of younger students. Other parents agree.

Deborah Denome, who has two children who attend St. Mary's, says she was out recently and saw a 12-year-old who didn't want anything to do with the 8-year-old he was with. Thanks to the Buddies Program, Denome says her children are not exposed to that kind of attitude.

"The program shows them that kids can help kids and play with kids no matter what their age. They grow to appreciate kids of other ages and what they bring to the world," Denome said.

Her son, fifth-grader Jory Denome, says he enjoys spending time with his younger buddy.

"It's really fun to help little kids with their reading and stuff. I help him read books and we go to church together," Jory said.

Tips on packing lunches

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — What should you put in your child's lunchbox? Is a lunchbox even the best way to store food? As the new school year approaches, experts at Johnson & Wales University's Culinary Nutrition department have the following food-safety tips for packing lunches.

What to bring:

- Use luncheon meat within four days
- Stable food ideas include dried fruit, and pasta salad with a vinaigrette dressing.
- Peanut butter and jelly, the old standby, keeps well.
- Don't pack regular dairy prod-

ucts such as milk or pudding because of spoilage concerns. Consider using UHT (ultra high-temperature treatment) versions of these items.

How to bring it:

- Paper bags are the worst choice; go for lunchboxes or insulated bags. Make sure to wash them on a regular basis with hot, soapy water.
- If your child brings home a moldy container, throw it out! Don't bother trying to wash it.
- Freeze juiceboxes; they'll thaw during the day and keep food cool. You can also use ice packs to keep food cool if your child doesn't bring a drink from home.

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