

LEGACY FOR OUR MISSION:

For Our Children and the Future

HISPANIC EDUCATION REACHES OUT TO LOCAL COMMUNITY

MAXIMINO “CHIMY” MAY HAVE BEEN BORN IN INDIANAPOLIS, BUT BEFORE KINDERGARTEN, THE 8-YEAR-OLD ONLY KNEW SPANISH FROM HIS MEXICAN-BORN PARENTS. Two years later, and now in the first grade, Chimy translates for his Spanish-speaking mother when they’re shopping. His favorite thing to do is to read—and sometimes he’ll read two books at once. He already reads at a second-grade level.

Those are common outcomes for Chimy and a growing number of children in Indianapolis. The archdiocesan Hispanic Services program offered at St. Anthony and St. Philip Neri schools serves students like Chimy from kindergarten to eighth grade.

“We become the link between the Hispanic community and the school, so that (the families) are connected,” said Margarita Solis-Deal, director of the program. “They understand what is going on in the school.”



“I wish for us to have high expectations for students and that we believe they can reach those expectations.”



Whether students have just moved from a Spanish-speaking country, or whether they have Spanish-speaking parents, Solis-Deal helps them gain fluency in two languages. And the children make incredible strides.

“I wish for us to have high expectations for students and that we believe they can reach those expectations,” Solis-Deal



A growing number of children who attend Indianapolis center-city Catholic schools such as St. Anthony and St. Philip Neri schools benefit from an emerging Hispanic Services program that offers language and cultural assistance.

said. “And I don’t care if they’re from Mexico or Meridian Street, as long as we keep those high expectations and they follow through with them.”

These are the standards that propel students like Chimy to excel so quickly. But the success of the program is also evident in the numbers. The Hispanic student populations at both St. Philip Neri and St. Anthony in the past year have grown by about 25 percent, which is due in part to the family component that Solis-Deal established as the foundation of the Hispanic Services program.

“A real big component is that we’re the link for the families,” she said. “Most of our students do speak enough English to get by, but we become the link for the mother and the fathers who don’t know English.”

If a family has a child served by Hispanic Services but needs help with a sibling who may be older, Solis-Deal steps in to help. “If you don’t work with the whole family, it makes it a struggle. They don’t come separately; they all come together,” she said. “And I think that’s how all families are, but with Hispanic families, it’s a little bit of a tighter niche. We become the advocate for the student so the family’s in good shape, and the student is going to succeed because they’ll have family support.”

When students come into the program, sometimes they are looking for a little more than English language help. “Some of it’s language and some of it isn’t. Some of it, they just need more support,” Solis-Deal said. “We help in that way, too.” By working with the families, Solis-Deal creates a supportive atmosphere for students both inside and outside of the school.

And with more and more students like Chimy served by the program, more positive results appear to be in store for the future, including growth of the program as local Hispanic populations expand.

“We know that we are making a difference,” Solis-Deal said. “I really do believe that we are creating a presence in this school, and because of that presence, families are not intimidated when they walk into the building.”

Legacy for Our Mission, the archdiocese’s upcoming capital campaign, is guided by the principles of Christian stewardship and addresses the needs of archdiocesan ministries such as Catholic education. By contributing to Legacy for Our Mission through your local parish, a portion of your gift will be allocated to home mission parishes and schools.