



DIOCESE OF DES MOINES



PRESSRELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: Feb. 1, 2010

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St. Anthony School launches groundbreaking language program

St. Anthony School is beginning a Spanish immersion program, San Antonio de Padua. English-speaking students will be bilingual by 5th grade through the Spanish immersion experience.

St. Anthony School in Des Moines is introducing a groundbreaking education program. Beginning in fall 2010, St. Anthony will be only the second elementary school in the state of Iowa to offer an innovative Spanish immersion program, which will be called San Antonio de Padua.

The Spanish immersion program teaches English-speaking students to be fluent in Spanish by immersing them in the language. They will be taught the same curriculum and faith formation as a traditional English classroom, except it will be in Spanish. The program will expand incrementally, so that this year's kindergarteners will continue the program as first graders next year while the program opens up to a new set of kindergarteners in the fall of 2011.

An informational meeting will be offered for interested parents on February 11 at 7:00 pm at the St. Anthony Parish Hall, 15 Indianola Ave, Des Moines.

Sara Eide, a parent of five year-old twins, hopes to enroll her children in the program at

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St. Anthony School, near downtown. “Bringing this cutting-edge program to central Iowa is a wonderful blessing for our community and our children. I’m thrilled that St. Anthony School is leading the way.”

The idea for a Spanish immersion program evolved from the work of the diocesan Centennial Steering Committee, which is planning events to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the diocese beginning this fall. Eide chairs an education subcommittee and approached St. Anthony Principal Dr. Joe Cordaro with the Spanish immersion idea. He took the idea to his school’s Board of Education and St. Anthony parish. Within a few months, St. Anthony leadership conducted extensive research, talked with teachers and administrators at existing Spanish immersion programs and toured a program in Dubuque before agreeing to proceed.

One section of St. Anthony School will retain its traditional English education for grades K-8. The second section will begin phasing in Spanish immersion starting with the 2010 kindergarten class. Each year after 2010, the Spanish immersion section will grow by one grade, until it reaches full capacity for grades K-5.

“With St. Anthony’s close proximity to downtown Des Moines, its newly renovated building and the introduction of the Spanish immersion program, St. Anthony will be a leader in faith-based education for decades to come,” said Vincent Scavo, chair of the St. Anthony School Board of Education.

Currently, the only other elementary school Spanish immersion program in the state of Iowa is Our Lady of Guadalupe in Dubuque. The program began in 2002 with just 14 kindergarteners. After seven years and two moves, the program is housed in its own building and has grown from one section of kindergarten to two sections of grades pre-kindergarten through fifth.

“I thank the St. Anthony community for stepping forward and becoming a leader in this approach to education,” said Vice Chancellor Jason Kurth and member of the diocesan Centennial Steering Committee. “As we prepare to celebrate the last 100 years of dedication to

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providing a faith-based education in our diocese, we are also looking toward the future.”

Research shows that foreign language immersion is the best method of teaching a new language and it is most effective when it is introduced to individuals during early childhood. In addition, research shows that students enrolled in immersion programs have increased cognitive skills, higher achievement in other academic areas and higher standardized test scores. Research links are available at www.stanthonydsm.org.

“What makes me most excited about the program is being able to tell our parents who participate in our Spanish immersion program that when their child graduates from St. Anthony School, they will be bilingual (fluent in two languages) and well prepared for contributing to the global society in which they will live,” said Cordaro.

To learn more about the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic schools, visit <http://www.dmdiocese.org> and click on the Catholic Schools tab.

*The Diocese of Des Moines Catholic schools serve more than 6,300 students through its 17 schools.
For more information, go to www.dmdiocese.org and click on “Schools”.*