Bilingual Program In 3rd Year In St. Martin

ST. MARTINVILLE — A program designed to teach the French language to English-speaking students, improve the use of both languages by French-speaking students and instill an appreciation of South Louisiana’s Creole-Cajun heritage has entered its third year of operation in St. Martin Parish schools.

The Bilingual Education Program, funded by the federal government’s Elementary and Secondary Education Act, involves the first three primary grades and kindergarten in two parish schools, Breaux Bridge Primary and Parks Primary.

Basic Tools

The two basic tools of the program are strong language instruction in both French and English. An added feature, however, is instruction given in French, on subjects such as mathematics, physical education, music, art and the social sciences. According to John Dupuis, member of the St. Martin Parish School Board of Education, he is “responsible for all areas of management, evaluation, auditing, staff development, instruction, material acquisition and dissemination of the project.”

There is also an evaluator and consultant for all English areas of the program.

The Parent Advisory Committee insures strong parental support and participation in the bilingual program. Parents participate as evaluators and levels.

Dupuis said 60 per cent of a day’s instruction is given in English and the remaining 40 per cent is given in French.

The bilingual Education Program is taught in St. Martin Parish with the help of six teachers from France, four specialists and two assistants. Teachers of bilingual classes are also assisted by bilingual teacher aides. A curriculum specialist adapts English materials into French and develops the bilingual curriculum. The program is presided over by a single director, who, according to Dupuis, is “responsible for all areas of management, evaluation, auditing, staff development, instruction, material acquisition and dissemination of the project.”

“Students will have learned to listen, to understand, to speak simple sentences in French, to use them to communicate in French orally and to become prepared to read and write French,” he said.

Students will thus be able to think and to communicate in two languages. In addition, they will develop appreciation and pride in their cultural heritage.”

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