Students Benefit From New Bilingual Program

By CHRISTINE LINDLOF
Advertiser Staff Reporter

BREAUX BRIDGE - The bilingual program in St. Martin Parish, which helps both French-speaking and English-speaking children develop a better self-concept, reinforces what they learn and prepares them for future learning experiences.

The French language program is designed for children in the first year of the parish. It is in effect in the kindergarten and first grades at Park and Breaux Bridge Elementary.

In addition to their regular classroom teachers, the children receive lessons in French from a French specialist. The teachers in the program are Gayla Calais and Jane Comeaux.

"Our program, however, is unique because we encourage children to speak in their native dialect andbecause we are teaching French not only as a second language, but as a first language," Mrs. Delahousse says.

"Our goals are to make the children bilingual, ready to learn, and to make them proud of their heritage," Mrs. Delahousse says.

"We believe that by letting a child speak his native tongue, will develop a better self-concept," she said.

She said that in the past French-speaking children were sometimes looked down upon because they spoke French and were encouraged to use English. "Now they are the ones who are being looked up to," she said.

In addition it was pointed out at the meeting that English-speaking children learning French have a sense of accomplishment about learning a second language and thus improve their self-concept.

A classroom teacher of English, Miss Claudette Paul, said in addition, a child's learning is reinforced because right after he has been taught something in English, the French specialist will come in to teach the same thing in French.

Other teachers pointed out that through the program they were able to reach children in the classrooms who speak only French.

Previously, such students would not have been introduced to new learning.

Special guests at the meeting were Mrs. Delahousse and Mrs. Francois, teachers from France who are assisting French teachers in the junior and senior high school of the parish.

"We are anxious to learn French and we are excited about the bilingual program," Mrs. Francois said.

County said he used the French lesson to point out the many cultural differences between the way of life in France and America, such as shopping, family living, and so on.

OFFICERS ELECTED

Newly elected officers of the PAC are Mrs. Elise Castille, president; Mr. John Bau, vice president; and Mrs. James Poiter, secretary-treasurer. Serving as community representatives are Mrs. Castille, Breaux Bridge, and Mrs. Mary Constant, Poitier, Parks.

Joes Perrin represents the welfare department on the committee.