

Immersing

Herricks district program aims to help kids become 'global citizens'

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Second-grade students in Veronica Carbajal's classroom at Denton Avenue School in New Hyde Park appeared to be like any other group, only they were learning addition and subtraction problems in a foreign language: Spanish. When one student on a recent Tuesday morning needed a pencil, she asked the teacher for one in Spanish, too.

The children are enrolled in Herricks Public Schools' Spanish immersion program, one of the most unique dual-language K-12 offerings in the state. The program, which is open to students in all attendance zones, serves mostly children who don't speak Spanish at home. For half the school day, students and their teachers do not speak English.

"They really have to think about how they are learning," Carbajal said, referring to the elementary class of 22 made up of students from different ethnic backgrounds. "They can pick up the language a lot easier, especially when they are immersed in it."

The district, which long has placed an emphasis on foreign-language instruction, launched the voluntary program in September 2010, and the inaugural class will graduate in June with around 22 students. More than 520 students are enrolled districtwide, with a mission to "prepare our students to become global citizens," Superintendent Fino Celano said.

"We want our kids to be able to compete in the global economy, and therefore we think that language recognition is very important," Celano said.

Herricks program unique

Of the more than 450 dual-language immersion and/or bilingual programs in the state, Herricks is the only one under this model, said Francesco L. Fratto, director of World Lan-



Veronica Carbajal teaches second-graders math at Denton Avenue

guages, Language Immersion & English as a New Language for the district.

A survey of parents before the program's launch showed "Spanish would be a great asset for their children for the future," said Fratto, who also serves as president of the New York State Association of World Language Administrators.

Candace Black, state supervisor for World Languages, New York State Education Department said a state panel exploring expansion of programs across New York State is look-

ing at Herricks as a model for other districts. Fratto is a member of that panel.

"What is unique about the Herricks program is that it is the only New York State K-12 dual-language immersion program that offers world languages at every single level of instruction," Fratto said. "They start in kindergarten, and every successive year builds upon the last, producing students with advanced-level proficiency . . . in the target language, by graduation."

The program, offered only at the district's Denton Avenue



Villagers and rescuers inspect an area covered with volcanic ash in Lumajang, Sunday, after the Semeru volcano's eruption.

APP VIA GETTY IMAGES / JUNI KRISWANTO

INDONESIA VOLCANO ERUPTS, KILLING ONE AND INJURING DOZENS

The Associated Press

LUMAJANG, Indonesia — The highest volcano on Indonesia's most densely populated island of Java spewed thick columns of ash, searing gas and lava down its slopes in a sudden eruption triggered by heavy rains on Saturday. At least one villager died from burns and dozens were hospitalized.

Mount Semeru's eruption in Lumajang district in East Java province left several villages blanketed with falling ash.

A thunderstorm and days of rain, which had eroded and finally collapsed the lava dome atop the 12,060-foot Semeru, triggered an eruption, said Eko Budi Lelono, who heads the geological survey center.

He said flows of searing gas and lava traveled up to 2,624 feet to a nearby river at least twice on Saturday. People were advised to stay at least 3.1 miles from the crater's mouth, the agency said.

"Thick columns of ash have turned several villages to darkness," said Lumajang district head Thoriqul Haq. Several hundred people were moved to temporary shelters or left for other safe areas, he said, adding that power blackouts hampered the evacuation.

The debris and lava mixed with the rainfall formed thick

mud that destroyed the main bridge connecting Lumajang and the neighboring district of Malang, as well as a smaller bridge, Haq said.

Despite an increase in activity since Wednesday, Semeru's alert status has remained at the third-highest of four levels since it began erupting last year, and Indonesia's Volcanology Center for Geological Hazard Mitigation did not raise it this week, Lelono said.

One man died from severe burns, and 41 others were hospitalized with burn injuries, said Indah Masdar, the deputy district head. She said two villagers were reported missing and several sand miners were trapped in isolated areas along the village river.

Entire houses in Curah Kobokan village were damaged by volcanic debris, Masdar said.

Television reports showed people screaming and running under a huge ash cloud, their faces wet from rain mixed with volcanic dust. The last time Semeru erupted in January, there were no casualties.

Indonesia, an archipelago of more than 270 million people, is prone to earthquakes and volcanic activity because it sits along the Pacific "Ring of Fire," a horseshoe-shaped series of fault lines.

students in Spanish



School in New Hyde Park to non-native Spanish speakers in the K through 12 dual-language program.

building, is limited to 48 students per year, and parents are made aware they are making a long-term commitment when they sign their kids up starting in kindergarten. Some do leave the program over the years.

The program doesn't cost the district any additional funding. There are 12 specialized elementary-level teachers, with one English and one Spanish per K-5 grade level. Staffing in the upper grades is covered by existing staff.

"The majority of the students don't come from Spanish-speaking homes," Fratto

said. The program differs from one in Huntington.

The Huntington district started its program "to address the needs of English Language Learners who primarily come from Spanish-speaking homes, but nonnative Spanish speakers are included in [this] program," Fratto said. "The majority of our students speak Chinese."

The Herricks district, which enrolls about 4,000 students, is nearly 70% Asian and about 5% Hispanic or Latino, according to the state Education Department.

50-50 model of operation

Herricks' program operates under what it calls a 50-50 model. At the elementary level, students spend half the day learning in Spanish and the other half in English. Core subjects are divided: Students in grades K-5 learn math and science, and some social studies in Spanish, while they learn English and most social studies in English.

Carbajal's classroom has walls plastered with phrases in Spanish that she calls "sentence starters." She breaks the lessons down into concepts so



Juel Park, 7, learns math, science and some social studies in Spanish.

WHAT TO KNOW

- **The Herricks school district's Spanish immersion program**, one of the most unique dual-language K-12 offerings in the state, is an initiative open to all students but serves mostly students who don't speak Spanish at home.
- **For half the school day, the students and their teacher do not speak English.**
- **The district, which long has placed an emphasis on** foreign-language instruction, launched the voluntary program in September 2010, and the inaugural class graduates in June.
- **More than 520 students are enrolled** districtwide.

the students can take steps one at a time in another language as they learn math skills.

"They pick up visual cues," she said. "And since they are not using their first language, they feel the need to use the second language to communicate their needs."

When the students go to middle school, they take two classes in Spanish. The social studies curriculum for grades 6, 7 and 8 is taught in Spanish, and they enroll in a specialized course based on the themes of Advanced Placement Spanish.

At the high school, they enroll in one course for each of their four years, taking the Advanced Placement Spanish exam in the 10th grade. They also can take another foreign language, in addition to Spanish.

Students will be considered bilingual upon completion of the program.

Senior Duhan Lee, 17, is among the students who will graduate from the program in June.

"I definitely learned about

the language and the culture," he said. Lee added that he visited other countries "for mission programs — Costa Rica and Nicaragua — and I remember they were really impressed" with his language skills.

He said he plans to become an educator and that being bilingual would help his career.

Fratto said the students score on par with their peers on national and state assessments. One student, Carolyn Lau, achieved a rare level 5 perfect score on the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam this past spring. She was one of only 77 students of more than 146,600 test-takers from around the world to earn every point possible on the college-level examination, district officials said.

The immersion program is rigorous, said Jamie Chan, 17, who also is a senior.

"The teachers did a really good job of breaking down different subjects and allowing us to learn," she said.