

Dual language boost

English, Spanish instruction program to expand in South Country district

BY JOIE TYRRELL
joie.tyrrell@newsday.com

Elementary students in the South Country school district's dual language program have a new magnet school to call home when classes start Wednesday.

District officials on Tuesday officially celebrated the opening of the Dual Language Magnet Program at Brookhaven Elementary School, which ultimately will give students in kindergarten through third grade across the system the opportunity to learn course material in English and Spanish.

"It opens it up to all of our students districtwide," South Country Superintendent Joseph Giani said. "We felt this was the best way to offer the program to the entire district."

While the system has offered dual language instruction for the

past four years, it was open only to the 500-plus kindergartners through third-graders who lived in the zone of Brookhaven Elementary, which is in Brookhaven hamlet. Children who attended the district's two other elementary schools — more than 700, combined, in kindergarten through third grade — were not able to attend.

The cross-pollination enables Spanish-speaking students to learn English at the same time that English-speaking students learn Spanish. The new magnet program also will offer side-by-side instruction with two teachers, instead of one as had been done in the past at Brookhaven Elementary, school officials said.

Anastasia Blanco, 7, who is starting second grade, already is enrolled in the dual language program. She said she is looking forward to the new school year be-



Students look at a program sign at Brookhaven Elementary Tuesday.

cause she "likes to make friends."

Dual language programs' goal is teaching students to be bilingual and biliterate. Across the state and in New York City, a growing number of schools offer such programs as one way to educate English language learners.

Regina Hunt, vice president of the South Country Board of Education, said the district's changing demographics prompted creation of the magnet school. According to the Education Depart-

ment, the South Country district had 35 percent Latino enrollment in the 2016-17 school year, the most recent data available.

"For us to offer this is because of the way the demographics are changing, and we have to be able to serve the entire community," Hunt said.

Rebecca Raymond, Brookhaven Elementary's principal, is a former dual language teacher and is in her first year as principal. She said the change has allowed a doubling of capacity for

kindergartners, from 21 students to 40, in two classes.

This year, the dual language magnet program's districtwide accessibility starts with the kindergartners. It will expand by one grade level with each year.

Parents opt in to the program, which continues through fifth grade and beyond.

The Herricks district, in Nassau County, launched a Spanish language immersion program in the 2010-11 school year for kindergartners and first-graders. It now has 390 students enrolled in the immersion program in kindergarten through ninth grade and will expand each year to eventually offer the program for all students, through the 12th grade.

The district didn't create the program to meet a changing demographic with an increasing number of Spanish speakers, but to make their students truly multilingual, Superintendent Fino Celano said. Many students speak Chinese, Hindi and other southeastern Asian languages at home, school officials said.

A lot of fun, in balance

Maeve Moran, 9, carries her friend Maeve Emery, 6, both of Point Lookout, on a hot Tuesday afternoon at the beach in Point Lookout. Hot weather is expected to continue Wednesday, with a high of 82, and on Thursday, with a high of 87. Temperatures are expected to drop over the weekend.



DANIELLE SILVERMAN

Cops: Gunman takes laptop from students

Two Hofstra University students were held up in their off-campus apartment by a gunman who took a laptop and ran off, authorities said Tuesday.

The man and woman were in their bedroom in their Hempstead home on Fairview Boulevard when the suspect came in about 11:35 p.m. and pointed a gun at them as he demanded money and jewelry, Nassau police said in a news release. The gunman grabbed a laptop and left through a side door, police said.

The woman told News 12 Long Island that the home invader asked for the password to the laptop and made sure it worked before taking off. The two were not injured, officials said.

Police said the gunman appeared to be in his 30s and wore a black hoodie, black sweatpants and an American Flag bandanna that covered part of his face.

Third Precinct detectives ask anyone with information to call Crime Stoppers at 800-244-TIPS.

— ELLEN YAN