

C.G. Woodson students work on multi-cultural showcase

BY CHANEL DAVIS
THE CHRONICLE

Students at Carter G. Woodson are learning new moves that they'll be ready to show off at the end of the week in a multi-cultural showcase.

The Hispanic Arts Initiative and the school have teamed up to create a program that will allow students to participate in a cross-cultural program between Latino and African-American communities, the school's largest demographics.

The Initiative, a nonprofit, is dedicated to ensuring that Latino culture and artists are authentically represented and integrated into the Triad communities.

"The shifts aren't really being addressed in the school system so the idea of this three-week residency is to explore the shared cultural heritage between Latinos and African-Americans because Latino is very diverse and it has many elements in it," said Executive Director Maria H. Sanchez-Boudy. "We certainly have a lot of indigenous and African influence. In fact in Cuba, our music is called Afro-Cuban music since it has so much influence."

The program is funded by the The Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County through a Wells Fargo Arts-In-Education Grant and allows for artists to come into the school and work with students for three weeks. Each week a different cultural influence is addressed.

"We get a grant every year to work in the schools and I already had an earlier relationship with Carter G., so for this year I dedicated to address social topics and work it through the arts," Sanchez-Boudy said.

"I know that there have been tremendous population shifts in this country over the past 10 to 15 years."

The artists work with third-, fourth-



Iara Calheira Kendrick teaches the children dance moves.

and fifth-graders using interactive dialogue, music and dance to focus on the positive aspects of the school's diversity.

The school, which started out as an African-American charter school, has seen an influx of Latino students within the last few years, according to Sanchez-Boudy, due to the school's location.

"Waughtown and Vargrave is really the heart of the Latino community. There's been a shift in their (Carter G. Woodson's) student body, which has gone from 100 percent African-American to a 50-50 percent very fast," Sanchez-Boudy said. "With that comes challenges with cultural integration."

Sanchez-Boudy said that the best way to help with the integration is to use the arts, especially dancing.

"The arts, in my opinion, become a very good platform to explore what we have in common and bridge the cultural gap. The arts are neutral," she said.

"When you're watching someone dance salsa, what's going through her mind is not 'gosh they're Latino' or this or that. You just move to the music, your body dances and you enjoy the moment."

The school has also appreciated the

program bringing the opportunity to the area.

"The opportunity for children, in any school environment, particularly ours, to become educated on the global behavior of a shared culture is important historically," said Ruth Hopkins, executive director at Carter G. Woodson school. "It is important that this initiative has been set up to ensure the correct dissemination of information about cultures. They've been able to set up a classroom setting, in our library, every Tuesday this month where they've brought in enriching artists that showed the style of art, dance and musical song that twines the two cultures together."

The session culminates with a final performance on Friday, March 20, called "Our Shared Cultural Heritage" which will be held in the school's gym, 437 Goldfloss St., from 6 to 7 p.m. The concert, which is free and open to the public, reflects all of the different cultures that were studied.

"The concert is open to the public because I wanted to make sure we had as much community impact as



Daniel Diaz played drums to teach the children about Latino music and dance.

we possibly could for this grant," Sanchez-Boudy said.

Hopkins also invites parents and the community out, too, so that students can share the information they've learned and hopes that attendees come prepared to learn something new about each other.

"There has been a great response and participation from students. The best thing we could do to share this information with the community is to try and get them to come together on Friday to see these different costumes, instruments and do a serious teach-in with the information and enjoyment around the cultures. We are more alike than we are different in this world," she said.

For more information, go to <http://hispanicartsinitiative.org>.

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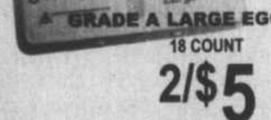
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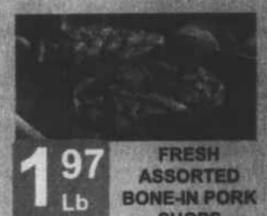


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