

Spanish Immersion premieres with class of 2003

By Amanda Earp and Angie Jeffreys
Co-Features Editors

Eyes open—six freshman girls in a typical Grimsley Spanish class. Eyes closed—beautifully spoken Spanish flows from six fluent tongues as the girls discuss their weekend with their teacher, Mrs. White.

These girls are pioneers. They are the first class of Grimsley students in the Spanish Immersion program. After ten years of intensive study, this new class has reached Spanish VI.

At five years old, students are surrounded by Spanish in every class. At Jones Elementary School, Spanish Immersion students learn each subject in Spanish, from reading to math. "These students are living proof of the importance of beginning language study at an early age. The later students begin to learn another language, the harder it is for them to produce the proper sounds of the language and internalize vocabulary and speech patterns," says Mrs. White.

Katie Pelkey, a freshman and Spanish Immersion student says, "There was a big difference between what we did and what the rest of the children did in elementary school. Because of this, we spent all of our time with each other [the other Spanish Immersion students.]" While these girls may have felt isolated in elementary school, once they reached Kiser Middle School, this feeling changed into admiration from their peers. This admiration resulted from the girls' increased interaction with the other students at Kiser as they only had two Spanish Immersion classes. Pelkey reports that Grimsley students extended the same welcome.

Only taught first period, Spanish Immersion has evolved into more of a guided study at Grimsley. Throughout the week, Mrs. White assists the class with a variety of their core subjects, or in some cases they assist her. "On Tuesdays, the students teach me math," says Mrs. White.

Spanish Immersion provides benefits for participants, including fluency in Spanish and near-native pronunciation, according to Mrs. White. In addition, the girls' knowledge of the language could also potentially enhance

their career opportunities. Mrs. White says, "I hope that they will combine their linguistic skills with their future careers—some want to work in health-related fields and could certainly use their skills to work with our burgeoning Hispanic population."

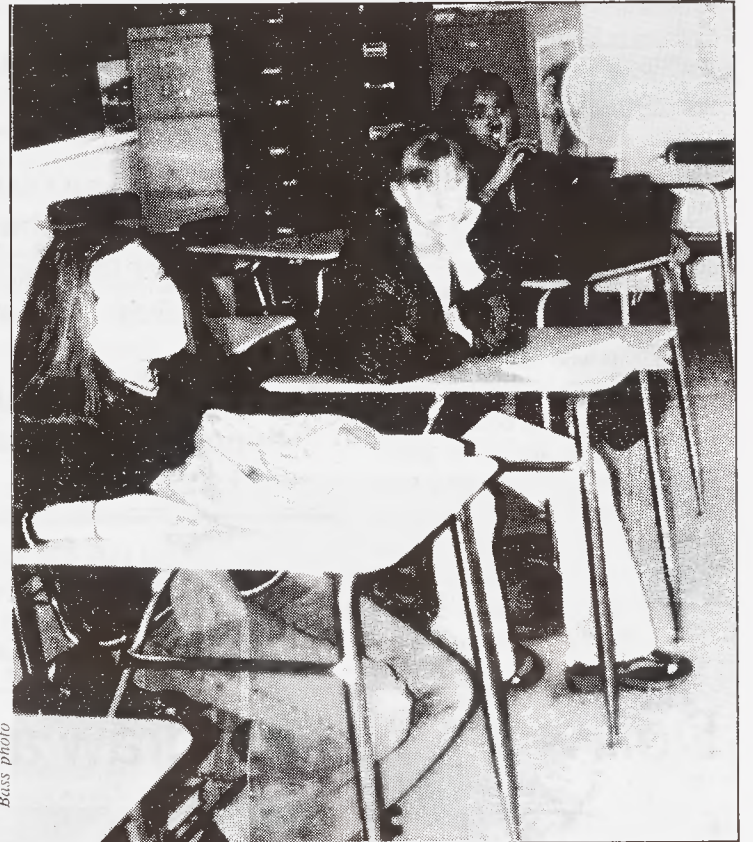
However the benefits of the program are not only long-term. These girls have access to the Spanish-speaking world that includes everything from soap operas to pop songs. "One of the best examples of how [this class] differs from other classes is that I can play a song that they have never heard before and, midway through it, they begin singing along with the refrain," says Mrs. White.

Like the pioneers in any new program, Spanish Immersion's first class of high school students has experienced minor difficulties. "Almost every year we have had a different teacher for Spanish which is a problem because of all the different styles of Spanish speaking. For example, last year was our first year with a teacher from Spain, and we had some miscommunications since we weren't used to the differences in the language," says Pelkey.

Other setbacks occurred due to the method of learning itself. As the girls learned Spanish like natives, certain grammatical and lexical errors have become ingrained in their minds. Due to these weaknesses, Mrs. White hopes for more formalized instruction in grammar and spelling to come in high school. "We have the same grammar problems in Spanish as we do in English, so we have to learn what is right, just the same as in our English classes," says Janelle Perry, a freshman.

Despite the drawbacks of their program, these six girls found more than just fluency through their years together—they found friendship. In fact, the girls do not only spend time together during their class each day. Upon each girl's birthday, Mrs. White takes the class out for a Saturday lunch to celebrate. Mrs. White says, "[One of] the biggest problems has been adjusting to the energy level of the class. These girls have been together since kindergarten and are totally bonded; sometimes, it's hard to get them to focus on the subject at hand because all they want to do is talk."

In Spanish, of course.



Students converse with one another and Mrs. White fluently in Spanish as they begin their Immersion class. These six girls have become close friends as they have been together in this program since kindergarten.

Weaver Center provides education alternatives

By Emma Burgin
Reporter

Junior Sean Cain wakes up every morning around 6:45 a.m., eats breakfast, hops into his car and drives to his TV Production

"Weaver is at the mercy of all the other schools' pep rallies, school assemblies, and other school activities."

-Mrs. Sneed,
Weaver teacher

class at Weaver Center five minutes late, still ahead of his other classmates.

Cain drives back to Grimsley for three classes and makes another drive back to Weaver for English II and Computer Graphics. His after-school activities consist of countless minutes at Weaver helping to clean up the TV Production area or working on his computer graphic designs.

Stella Maher, a senior, spends her mornings in Weaver's Commercial Photography class, and during 5th and 6th periods she is busy rehearsing with Weaver's advanced theater company, ETC. Maher also often stays after school at Weaver to work on her photographs and extra rehearsals and performances.

These are just two of the many Grimsley students who spend a part of their school day at Weaver. Weaver is an educational center available to Guilford County Schools' students. It offers frequently requested but

otherwise unavailable classes such as dance, computer programming, auto-mechanics, culinary arts, and electronic music. Maher says, "Students who do not have access to classes such as Calculus can take these courses at Weaver. Plus, they are able to offer many specialized classes that public and home

but also more focused."

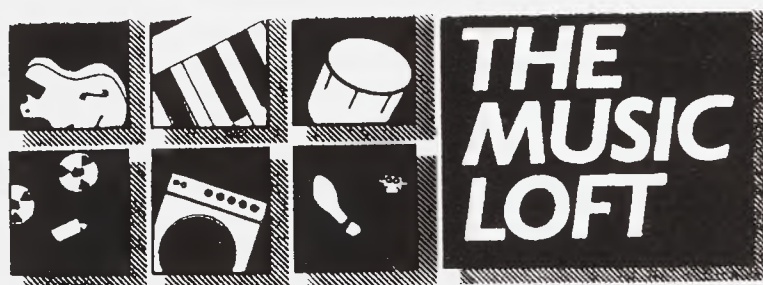
Students who travel to Weaver also run into scheduling conflicts with Grimsley's in-school assemblies, pep rallies, and tests. Cain says, "I miss the morning announcements every day, sometimes I receive tardies from my Grimsley teachers for being late from a Weaver class, and if something is going on here then I miss my classes at Weaver." Maher had a difficult time working out her class schedule at the beginning of the year. "I was unable to take Commercial Photography for the full two hours this year if I wished to take AP European History. The counselors were wonderful about working to create a one hour photography course for me," she says.

Mrs. Sneed, a math teacher at Dudley High School who teaches a zero period Computer programming class at Weaver says, "Weaver is at the mercy of all the other schools' pep rallies, school assemblies, and other school activities. Scheduling for Weaver classes is very confusing because Weaver wants students to take two classes instead of one so that you don't have to come and go so quickly."

schools cannot. It is a wonderful place to explore specific interests and talents in classes that are oriented towards a career."

According to Cain, the atmosphere at Weaver is very relaxed compared to that of Grimsley. There are no administrators roaming the halls in search of acts of wrongdoing. The teachers and students create a professional and comforting atmosphere because, as Maher says, "The students take classes of their choice. That makes for a better learning environment because everyone wants to work. The atmosphere is more relaxed

creative use. Some think that Weaver is for super-smart students, but the students who attend, such as Cain and Maher, disagree. Weaver simply offers the courses students want to take. Weaver is a place to explore the world of options and experience creative learning. Hands-on courses and interactive curriculum provide Weaver students with a relaxed, yet highly effective learning atmosphere.



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