



Missouri Catholic Conference

The Messenger

The Bishops of Missouri, speaking together on matters of public policy, form the Missouri Catholic Conference.

January 2017

THE ENGLISH TUTORING PROJECT

Breaking Language Barriers, Building Success



CHILDREN ARE THE FUTURE. Those who realize this truth do everything in their power to make sure today's children are prepared to face the world and all its challenges. Parents wake up first to get kids ready, eat last so their kids' bellies are full, and go without to make sure they have everything. But what happens when there's something children desperately need that parents can't provide? Nothing extravagant and nothing material, but an essential life skill. What happens when this thing is language?

This is the case for many new immigrants and refugees who arrive with children in the United States. These families are starting fresh,

hoping for a fruitful life more promising for their children and themselves than the homeland they left. But there's a language barrier to overcome, and it's possibly the most challenging obstacle ahead. Language barriers act as a wall the brain can't easily break down. The barrier keeps out knowledge, wisdom, education, jobs and many other things necessary to live life to its fullest. The English Tutoring Project (ETP), an initiative of the St. Louis Area Women Religious Collaborative Ministries, works to break down that language barrier in arguably the most important place: the classroom.

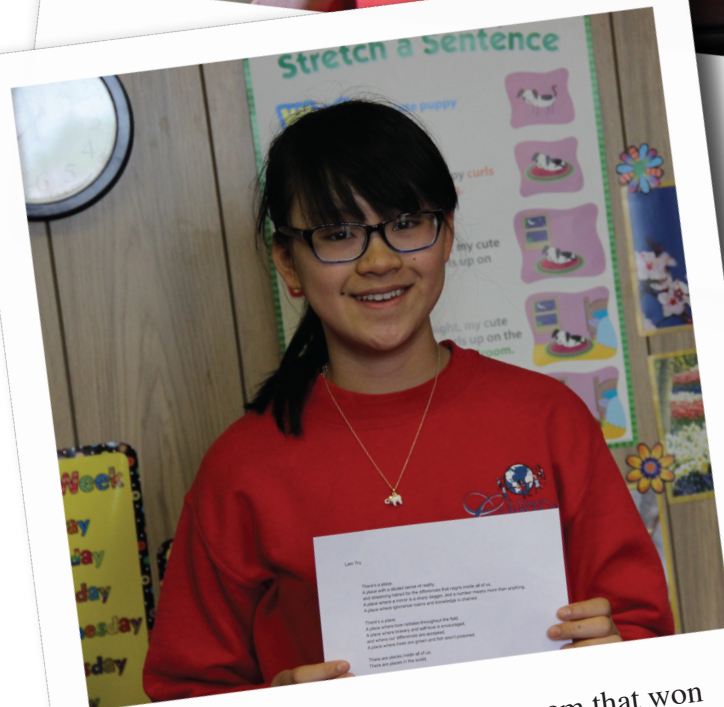
Since 1998, women religious have partnered with Catholic schools around the St. Louis area to help incoming refugee and immigrant children excel in the classroom. The Leadership Conference of Women Religious of St. Louis, led by Sister Carleen Reck, SSND, Sister Susan Borgel, CPPS, and Sister Peggy Moore, OSU, created the English Tutoring Project to fill a need for English tutoring services created by an influx of immigrants/refugees arriving in St. Louis South City Catholic schools. Sister Marilyn Wittenauer, RSM, administrator and tutor, and Sister Jean Greenwald, SSND, tutor, began the program working out of a mobile RV that was driven from school to school, as well as classrooms in three locations. As the number of refugee and immigrant students continued to swell, the program expanded in 2001 to add another RV and services in two additional Catholic schools. Today ETP no longer uses the RV and instead serves students in seven Catholic elementary and middle school classrooms in Missouri: Holy Trinity, St. Ann; Marian Middle School, St. Cecilia Catholic school and academy, St. Frances Cabrini Academy, St. Joan of Arc, St. Stephen Protomartyr, all in St. Louis City; and St. Charles Borromeo, St. Charles. The program is offered at **no cost** to the family or the schools.

Students who qualify to participate in ETP are enrolled in a 30 minute tutoring session up to five times a week during which they learn English vocabulary vital to success in education. These sessions are fun, colorful and engaging. As soon as the students arrive in the classroom, their eyes and smiles brighten. A sense of confidence radiates from within them, and manifests into clearly spoken and written work in the classroom. Some days students draw pictures to match words, other days they read a book out loud along with the tutor, or practice mathematical equations. The instructors smile as they watch their students learn and grow each day. In this setting, it's apparent that both the tutors and the students take pride in this program.

Sister Jane Gegg, ASC, tutor at St. Francis Cabrini, tutors these children daily, and has seen an ever growing need for these kinds of programs. For these students she says, much of English is learned through peers, friends or family outside of the school; slang terms and non-scholastic language are picked up first. But without a working knowledge of English grammar, it's incredibly difficult for students to excel in their education. Test scores are low, some students are held back a year—some drop out. But with the help of ETP, immigrant and refugee children are not only keeping up with their English-speaking classmates, they are joining them at the top of the class in grades and in confidence, Sister Jane says. And it's not just the smiles that are telling of the success incurred through ETP. The statistics from the 2015-2016 school year make it very apparent that the program is indeed working. According to an assessment by ETP, 80 percent of classroom teachers and principals who worked with students in a regular classroom indicated improvement in classwork. This included improved understanding, speaking in complete sentences, volunteering to answer, speaking with peers, increased test scores, and vocabulary development.

In this turbulent political age, it is particularly important for programs like ETP to be considered so that all children, American born or not, are equipped with all of the tools essential to their educational success. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) there are 21.3 million refugees worldwide. Though less than one percent are eventually resettled in a third country, the United States welcomes almost two-thirds of that one percent, according to the U.S. Department of State. America has a long and proud history of welcoming displaced persons, many of which include school age children. Catholic Charities and other organizations do a tremendous job meeting the many needs of these refugees in their everyday lives, but as with anything, there are those who fall through the cracks. It is the goal of ETP to strengthen refugee and immigrant children in the academic world so that there's less of a chance they'll fall through the cracks in other areas.

In their years of work, ETP tutors have achieved the goal of cultivating success stories time and time again. Lam T., a seventh grade student of Vietnamese heritage, was a part of the program from kindergarten through second grade. When she first started in ETP, she knew very little English, but quickly excelled scholastically, especially in the subjects of reading and writing. Last year, she entered a poem in a poetry contest for 7th grade students in schools throughout MO and won first place within her school. Without her participation in ETP, Lam says she might not have had the confidence or skills to enter her poem in the contest. This sort of confidence demonstrates what ETP is all about—leveling the playing field so that all students have an opportunity to succeed, regardless of their heritage, ethnicity



Lam T. poses with a copy of her poem that won first place in a poetry contest for seventh grade students. The piece was published in a poetry anthology.



ETP instructors pose with the ETP mobile classroom. The RV served as an ETP classroom until 2009, when the program switched to all in-classroom locations.

or social status. This is done with the cooperation and efforts from a countless number of persons: ETP instructors, general classroom teachers, principals, staff, parents, students and others. As of now, ETP is implemented only in the St. Louis area, but programs such as this could have the same positive impact on many other areas of the state, both urban and rural. Refugees are resettled in several cities in Missouri, and often times make their permanent home in the state. Success begins in the classroom, and with the help of programs like ETP, more success stories are begun each day. If you think ETP could be right for your school, please contact Sister Kathleen Koenen, SSND, at kathleenkoenen@sbcglobal.net to learn more.



BY THE NUMBERS

ETP service and success

- 156 students enrolled in 7 different Catholic elementary and middle schools
- Students represented 20 different countries of origin
- Cultural Makeup of Students is Asian 37 (24%), African 12 (8%), Hispanic 105 (67%), Other 2 (1%) Parents listed 22 different languages as a language spoken in the home
- 75% are in the first 4 grades in school (kindergarten – 3rd grade)
- 25% are in the 4th through 8th grade
- 94% or 137 students progressed within a level or progressed a level or more in the Linguas Language Assessment Scales (LAS) by spring.
- 98% of parents responded that their child improved in **speaking and understanding English** and 97% indicated that they showed **improvement in classwork**
- 96% of parents indicated their child showed more self-confidence
- 80% of classroom teachers and principals who work with students in a regular classroom indicated observed improvement in classwork

Get social with ETP!

Website: www.englishtutoringproject.com

Twitter: @ETP4Kids

Facebook: ETP4Kids



Sr. Jane Gegg, ASC, tutors students at St. Francis Cabrini School. Sr. Jane is one of eight ETP tutors.

CELEBRATE WITH US

50th ANNIVERSARY

OF THE MISSOURI CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

The Missouri Catholic Conference, the public policy agency for the Catholic Church in Missouri, is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2017. The MCC invites you to celebrate with us at the 2017 Annual Assembly at St. Joseph Cathedral in Jefferson City on Saturday, Oct. 7 with our Keynote Speaker, Papal Apostolic Nuncio to the United States Archbishop Christophe Pierre. Since 1967, the MCC has been the voice of Missouri's Catholic Bishops and Catholic citizens in the halls of the State Capitol. 2017 will focus on celebrating the past achievements of the MCC and working toward future achievements together with Bishops, legislators and the citizens of Missouri. We invite you to get to know the MCC by joining MOCAN, the Missouri Catholic Advocacy Network. Read more about the MCC and MOCAN below, and visit mocatholic.org to learn more about the Missouri Catholic Conference.

“The MCC is the conscience of the legislature.”

—Former Speaker of the Missouri House, Ken Rothman

Join the Missouri Catholic Advocacy Network (MOCAN)



As a MOCAN member, you will have the option to receive the MCC Weekly Update (email), Action Alerts, Good News, Messenger and Messenger Online. Through our Action Alerts, you can communicate directly with your representatives in the state legislature and let your voice be heard in the State Capitol. Visit mocatholic.org or call us at 573.635.7239 to join!

Missouri Catholic Conference Mission Statement

The primary purposes of this Conference are:

- A. To promote the material and spiritual well being of all the people of the State of Missouri in the fields of health, education and social welfare.
- B. To provide moral leadership and vision to Catholics and others throughout the State, particularly in the area of public policy. The Conference shall serve as one of the many resources in the State which promotes among people the vision that both material and spiritual well being are needed for full human growth.
- C. To participate in the democratic processes of government, its legislative, executive and judicial branches.

The secondary purposes of this Conference are:

- A. To serve as a forum for the dioceses in developing positions on state-wide issues, coordinating diocesan programs and organizing state-wide projects.
- B. To provide a channel of communication through which Catholics will communicate with one another and other groups, both secular and religious, in order to establish a network of information and action to address issues affecting the common good.

Visit mocatholic.org to learn more about the Missouri Catholic Conference and the 50th Anniversary celebration at the 2017 Annual Assembly!