

Word & Hope

Teaching Language with Technology



Cathy (r) and her student Monica Salazar (l) working on pronunciation with ELLIS.

Quiet laughter comes from one of the tutoring rooms on the second level. Inside Cathy Huffman is instructing a tutor and student on the ELLIS computer program. The student is giggling because it is the first time she has heard the sound of her recorded voice –and it's coming from a computer.

ELLIS (English Language Learning and Instruction Systems) is a software program that helps teach the English language to students from beginning to advanced levels. It has been tool used at the Center since 2002.

According to Sr. Kathleen Ryan, when the Center started looking for an English language learning

program, the staff found that “ELLIS was the most complete program available. It offered the opportunity for our students to improve English through recording their voices and learning how to self-correct their pronunciation.”

Cathy has been training tutors and students on the program for the past 4 years. “It is fun to see how different personalities take to the

computer.” Some students are familiar with the computer and some have never used one before. Cathy instructs the true beginners on how to use the mouse and record their voice. They are excited to use the computer and are proud to share their new computer skills with their families.

In Cathy's opinion, “Learning to use the computer and the ELLIS program is such a beneficial experience for our students. Computers are so prevalent in our society. In addition to building English skills, this is another skill they learn at the Center that helps them fit in with our American culture.” Tutors and students are unanimous in their approval of the ELLIS program.

The plan for the future is to train everyone at the Center with the Master Pronunciation module of the ELLIS program. This module

explains to the student in their native language exactly how to make English sounds - where to put their lips, tongue and teeth for proper pronunciation. In the module there are 37 native languages. The Center has used Polish, Russian, Chinese, Korean, Urdu, and Farsi, as well as Spanish. As one student says, “I never knew how to put my mouth around the English sounds – and now I know!”

A computer loaded with ELLIS is in every tutoring room. The program is available to students and tutors throughout the week. All of this is made possible by grants from the Alfred Bersted Foundation, the Dunham Fund, and the Dominican Sisters of Springfield Endowment Fund. Funds have also been provided through the 2006 Garden Walk, the Sponsor-a-Student campaign and individual donors.

Each of the nineteen computers is equipped with the Microsoft Office Suite. Excel, Power Point and Word are available in the event that a student wishes to write a resume or work on other types of documents.

The Dominican Literacy Center is proud of the technology that it has incorporated into its educational process, and is confident that its programs will change and grow, according to the needs of the students.

“The number one benefit of information technology is that it empowers people to do what they want to do...It lets people learn things they didn't think they could learn before, and so in a sense it is all about potential.”

--Steve Ballmer, CEO of Microsoft Corp -February 17, 2005

In their words

Students at the Dominican Literacy Center do a fair amount of writing as part of their curriculum.

"I really don't have memories about "El Dia de los Muertos" because I was 22 years old when my Grandfather died. He was the first relative really close to me who died. But this is something my husband told me about his customs.

"On November 1st we remember the little ones, the kids or babies who passed away, and November 2nd is for the adults who died.

"In my husband's little town, the people go a few days before the celebration to the cemetery. They go to paint the tombs and arrange flowers and put portraits of the person who is in the tomb. They also make a path with flowers from the cemetery to the house.

"In the house, someone sets the table for a very special dinner for our beloved who died, with all their favorite dishes and desserts. We decorate the table with skulls of sugar, cut out paper, and many other things. Today, my family and I pray for those who are dead, and on those two days we go to Church.

"I really enjoyed talking with my husband about what he did in the past. I think he was very happy telling me all this!"

~ Silvia Montiel

Aurora + Melrose Park = Committed Learners

According to Sister Ancilla Caulfield, OP, students with a passion to learn English are much the same, whether they are attending the Dominican Literacy Center in Melrose Park or the Dominican Literacy Center in Aurora. She should know - Sr. Ancilla has taught at both facilities.

Seventeen years ago, the Aurora center opened its doors to provide the opportunity for women to receive individual tutoring in English. Modeling its success, another center was established five years later in Chicago. Beginning at Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church, the Chicago center served the neighborhood's Hispanic women. Three years ago, the thriving program moved to a former convent building at Sacred Heart parish in Melrose Park.

Sr. Ancilla taught at the Chicago center for nine years. Although this is her first year at the Aurora center, one of Sr. Ancilla's six students, Josefina, was also a student of hers in Melrose Park. Last year, because the Aurora center was full, Josefina traveled every week to Melrose Park to learn English.

The facilities and staff in Aurora are larger, but the students are similar in both centers. Sister is amazed at their strength and courage. The women are extremely determined and committed to learning a new language. Fortunately they have two excellent locations to learn English.



Sr. Ancilla prepares for a tutoring session.

EL DIA DE LOS MUERTOS



The Mexican holiday of El Dia de los Muertos, the Day of the Dead, is celebrated each November 1st and 2nd in Mexico, as well as here in the United States. It is a celebration of the circle of life, with death perceived not as something to be feared, but as a natural part of life.

In preparation for the holiday, families erect ofrendas, or altars, in homes or cemeteries. Decorated with pictures of loved ones, flowers, candles, and favorite foods and drink, they welcome and honor the souls of deceased family members and friends. An important symbol of the celebration is the calavera, or skull. This symbol is often found as part of the foods, candies and art of El Dia de los Muertos. The traditions of the Day of the Dead grew out of the ancient religious rites of native Mexicans combined and blended with the religious teachings of Catholic missionaries. Today these wonderful traditions enrich the bonds that hold families and cultures together.

Student Contributions

Students at the Dominican Literacy Center usually juggle many balls - family life, work, and the daily struggle of negotiating a new language. The women's dedication to the Center is clear in the various ways that they contribute to its operation.

The Center is successful because it is a collaborative effort of many hardworking women. The tutors donate their time by training and preparing lessons. The students make essential contributions of their money and time.

When each student starts at the Center, she agrees to pay a yearly tuition of \$25.00. Each woman is also asked to contribute to the welcoming environment of the Center by bringing in tea, juice, coffee, cookies or paper goods. At the end of the school year, the students give their school a good cleaning from top to bottom.

In 2009, the Center started a bi-annual craft show to raise money. Many of the handmade items are donated by students and their families. The next craft show will be in the spring of 2011.

Sister Kathleen Ryan maintains, "All of these things help the women at the Center to feel that this is their school. They are making a financial donation, as well as donating their time and effort to support the school."

Welcome!

The Advisory Board welcomed three new members in September 2010. Coming from varied backgrounds, Mary Kennedy, Michelle Voris and Eric Burgos bring their time, enthusiasm and special talents to the Dominican Literacy Center.

With her children grown, Mary Kennedy completed her bachelor's degree at North Central College while working as Administrative Assistant to the Vice-President of Academic Affairs. Recently retired, this busy grandmother is thankful to be recruited for the DLC because, "it seemed that God had answered my prayers and here was my opportunity—to give back of my time and talent to an organization whose mission I believe in."

Since moving to Aurora in 2001, Michelle Voris has offered her talent for event planning to support fundraising

efforts at Rush-Copley Hospital, Paramount Theatre, Family Counseling Center, and her daughters' schools. Board member, Jacquie May "introduced me to the Dominican Literacy Center and the wonderful work they are doing in our community," Michelle said. "I look forward working with DLC and the women and families the Center serves."

Eric Burgos, assistant chief of staff to State Representative Linda Chapa LaVia, is dedicated to community organizing and education. Eric became a United States citizen five years ago after taking Sr. Kathleen Ryan's citizenship class. Now he volunteers at the Immigrant Hope Center in Aurora as a citizenship instructor. "I received help in this process," he explains simply, "I want to give back whatever I learned."

Friends Learning Together



Kathleen (l) and Rosa review a lesson.

Speaking with Rosa Torres and Kathleen Gallagher, one can sense that they are not just student and tutor, they are good friends. They have been working together since they started at the Center in 2007.

In praise of her student, Kathleen says, "Rosa works very hard to learn English. Despite all of her other responsibilities, she always comes to the Center prepared, with her homework complete and correct."

Rosa and her husband, who encouraged her to enroll at the Center, are raising three boys. "We left everything we knew behind. We

wanted a better life for our children." Rosa's boys help her with English. "The boys are very encouraging for me."

Guided by Rosa's example, all three boys are excellent students. Rosa has attended every parent-teacher conference, and keeps close track of the boys' schoolwork. Early on, Rosa didn't understand much at the conferences, but now she can converse with confidence.

Speaking of the Center, Rosa says, "The Sisters are very good people. They give you encouragement to study hard. When I come here, I feel like it's family!"

"As a tutor, I feel that I've learned and gained so much more than I've given. I'm learning so much about myself through tutoring. And I'm very proud of Rosa, her hard work, and her parenting," Kathleen said.

Someday Rosa hopes to become a nurse. But for now she is working hard every day to learn English.

Advisory Board

The Advisory Board provides guidance and support for the many initiatives of the Dominican Literacy Center.

Jim Rudnicki,
President

Virginia Arnold

Jane Ann Beckman, OP

Eric Burgos

Ann Clennon, OP

Jim Godo

Denise Hatcher

Jim Hopp

Mary Kennedy

Amy Manion

Kathleen Ryan, OP

Michelle Voris

Marilyn Weisner

Patricia Garrity,
Past President

Beth O'Connor,
Past President

Staff

Jane Ann Beckman, OP

Ann Clennon, OP

Kathleen Ryan, OP

Elisa Barocio

Maria Domínguez

Judi Paulson

Amy Miller

Contributors for this issue are Jane Farraye, Mary Kay Furiasse, Mary Ellen Heidgen, Flo Hoving, Flo Kress, Barbara Mambu, Maria Olivo and Toni VanDerMoere.

Save the date

New tutor training will be on Saturday, January 15, 2011 from 9am – 3pm. To register or for more information, contact Sr. Ann at 630-898-4636 or annclennon@sbcglobal.net.

The Dominican Literacy Center provides ...

≡≡≡
H
≡≡≡ WORD ≡≡≡
P
E
≡≡≡

The mission of the Dominican Literacy Center is to provide opportunities for women to receive individual tutoring in reading, writing and speaking English. We provide these opportunities through individual tutoring by trained volunteers within the neighborhood setting. The Dominican Literacy Center believes in empowerment through education, and in the dignity of each individual person.



- free 90-minute weekly individual tutoring sessions for women in reading, writing and speaking English as a second language.
- customized curriculum of English-only instruction appropriate to each student's level.
- sessions that run from September through May, with day and evening formats.
- the opportunity for a student to remain in the program for three years, usually working with the same tutor during the entire time.
- conversation classes open to current students and "graduates".
- citizenship classes for both men and women.

***The Center is located in east Aurora at 260 Vermont Ave., on the #521 Pace bus route.
For more information, call 630-898-4636, M-F, 9 am – 4 pm.***

Return Service Requested

Dominican Literacy Center
260 Vermont Ave.
Aurora, IL, 60505-3100

≡≡≡
H
≡≡≡ WORD ≡≡≡
P
E
≡≡≡

First Class
U.S. Postage
PAID
Minuteman Press
Naperville, IL