




GOOSE CREEK

CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



The De Zavala choir, under the direction of Amber Whitten, held its first concert for families and students on May 12 in the cafeteria.

De Zavala Elementary choir makes debut

With the budget crunches being felt at school districts across the state, some people may think cutting music or other fine art classes are the way to save, but music educators say that would be a mistake for many reasons, including the effect it would have on students' core learning.

Over the last 10 years or more, countless studies have confirmed that participation in music has definite benefits for the brain and for a child's overall education.

De Zavala music teacher Amber Whitten doesn't need to read reports or studies about the benefits of music. She sees it every day in her classroom.

Thus, in an effort to expand music education at her school, Miss Whitten applied for and received an \$880 Goose Creek CISD Education Foundation innovative teaching grant in the fall of 2010 to start a choir at De Zavala Elementary. Most of the money went toward sheet music.

Starting a choir program, Miss Whitten said, would help her students gain a sense of discipline, self-esteem and pride of accomplishment. "They will learn to succeed in teamwork, problem-solving, leadership, and creative thinking," she said.

The De Zavala choir held its first concert for families and students on May 12 in the cafeteria.

"De Zavala students hit the right note with their first choir performance. Under the direction of Miss Amber Whitten, the students did an outstanding job," said Precious Reimonenq, De Zavala principal. "We are so grateful that the Goose Creek CISD Education Foundation awarded Miss Whitten with our very first campus grant. We can't wait to see what great things are coming our way."

Miss Whitten said that on the night of the concert, she proudly watched as 23 of her choir members stood in front of the audience and bowed, proud of a job well done.

"I am so thankful to the Goose Creek Education Foundation for rewarding us the grant and will continue to challenge the De Zavala choir with the music that was purchased," Miss Whitten said.

Fourth grade and fifth grade students had to try out to gain membership to the choir, and then practice once a week after school to maintain membership.

"The De Zavala Elementary choir is building on its learning each week. Faculty members have been very encouraging, parents have been complimentary, and students are excited," Miss Whitten said.

The hardest obstacle to overcome was teaching the children to sing in parts harmoniously. This was a challenge, Miss Whitten said, but the students did well.

The first song the new choir ever rehearsed was "A Distant Shore."

"It was tough at first, but as I directed them each week I felt a sense of pride in what we were accomplishing. I think the best part of developing the choir was to really challenge my students with music of quality and difficulty," Miss Whitten said.

Dedication is now the byword of the De Zavala choir. It clearly starts at the top with Miss Whitten and filters down to every member of the choir.

Charter members of the De Zavala choir are Victoria Alvarez, Tryston Anderson, Sabrina Baca, Sarah Baker, Brizza Booker, Payton Borell, Tiffany Cardiel, Erica Edmund, Ryan Epperson, Bret Garner, Dylan Gill, Brooke Hallman, Luke Hebert, Lauren Holton, Justice Hudson, Jackson May, Shirmahlyn Mooree, Kiana Morris, Kyleigh Motely, Shyanne Rouse, Mahogany Smith, Haley Tadlock, and Donnie Williams.

Piano accompanist Jim Kent also assists the choir.

Home of the Dolphins, De Zavala Elementary is one of nine state-rated "Exemplary" campuses in Goose Creek CISD.

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Physical Address:
Goose Creek Consolidated
Independent School District
4544 Interstate 10 East
Baytown, Texas 77521
281.420.4800

Mailing Address:
Goose Creek Consolidated
Independent School District
P.O. Box 30
Baytown, Texas 77522
281.420.4800

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