

## Welcoming Hispanic Students to Saint Martha School

By Dr. Ann Southworth, Principal



Last spring as I was focusing on enrollment for the 2017-18 school year, I was concerned that we at Saint Martha School did not have Hispanic students enrolled in our wonderful school. I knew there were many Hispanic children in the Thompsonville area of Enfield – yet we had very few Hispanic students. I was aware that many Hispanic families attended mass at St. Patrick Church, so I reached out to Ms. Noe Charles, who worked at St. Patrick overseeing the programs for St. Patrick’s Hispanic parishioners. I asked her if she would be willing to meet with me so I could learn more about the Hispanic families at St. Patrick Church. Ms. Charles and I met several times to discuss strategies for meeting the Hispanic families with children so that we could introduce them to Saint Martha School and encourage their interest in attending.

Ultimately, Noe Charles invited ten families to join us at a meeting at Saint Martha School during which we talked about our school and its benefits for their children and expressed how much we would love to welcome them to Saint Martha School. The parents were very excited about this opportunity for their children and, thanks to the generosity of a wonderful donor, I was able to offer tuition assistance to each student, making their attendance more possible. We then organized a follow-up meeting at St. Patrick Rectory with those parents interested in having their children attend Saint Martha School. Everyone sat together at a large table and we filled out all the registration forms together.

Three more families joined Saint Martha School later in the summer, even though we were not able to offer these families as much assistance as the first group.



The parents and the students were very enthusiastic and happy to be joining a Catholic school community. (Many of them thought their children would never be able to attend a Catholic school.) The students were so excited to become Saint Martha School students and to begin a new academic adventure. They are still happy to be at their wonderful Catholic school and are doing very, very well.

This has been a wonderful experience for all of us. We have learned from each other, we have helped each other, we have prayed together and we have become friends. It is so beautiful to see all our students together at mass every Monday morning. God

has blessed us all.