

# Grant provides more enrichment activities at West Side schools

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Staff Writer

When the last bell of the day rings at Humboldt Junior and Senior High, instead of rushing out the door, many students are sticking around and enjoying some of the newly organized after-school activities.

For example, in Ma Xiong's Hmong Literacy class, students are able to receive homework help each weekday from students from St. Catherine's College. On Tuesdays and Thursdays they practice traditional dance, and they are designing costumes and choreography for a dance performance in May. A social worker from Lao Family talks about teen issues on Wednesdays. Xiong said there are about 70 Hmong students at Humboldt.

"This is where they meet

each other," she said. "They learn about their culture and build self-esteem. It gives kids a sense of belonging."

Other teachers are involved as well, providing academic and after-school enrichment activities for students in grades 7-12. The new programs are funded through a \$600,000 3-year federal grant obtained last year by the Center of Democracy and Citizenship (CDC) at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs.

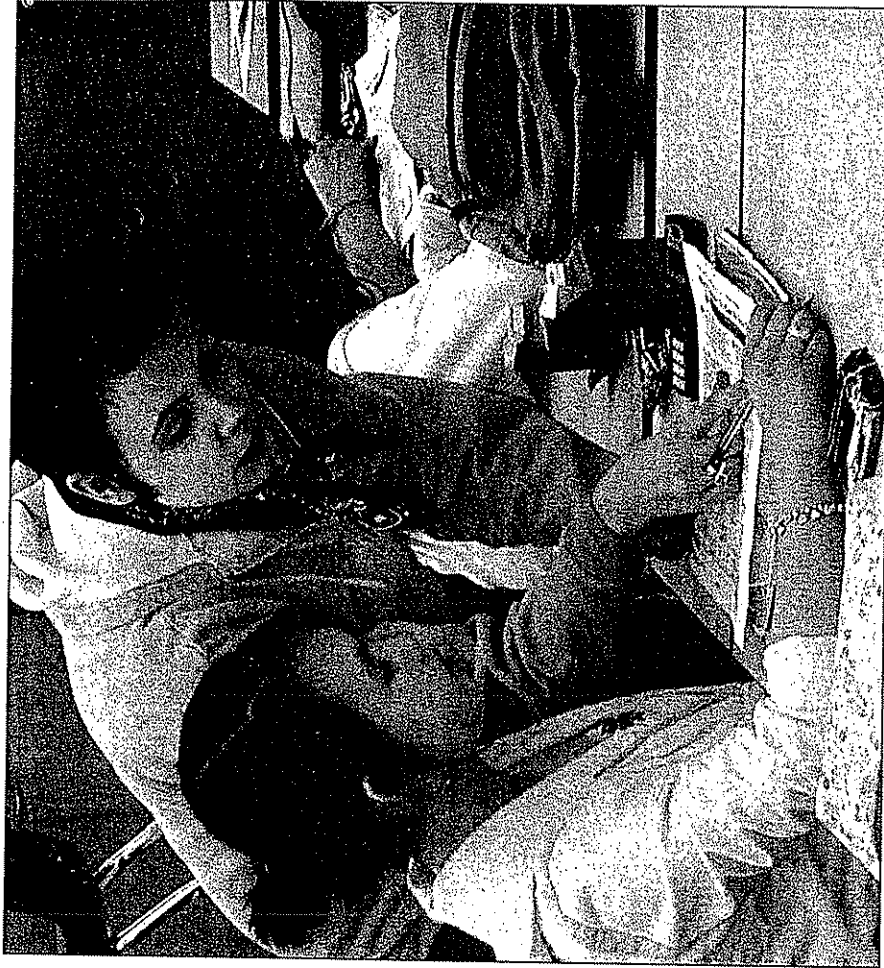
Students can take part in a variety of activities at different West Side locations, including theater productions, music classes, technology projects, gardening, robot-building, and other projects that encourage hands-on year-round learning opportunities. A youth apprenticeship program is planned for this summer so high school

students can gain employment experience.

"The goal is for students to build meaningful relationships with adults and to develop a vision of a successful future," said Erick Skold, program coordinator. "We want students to feel empowered and be able to learn in a different context and in locations outside the four walls of the school."

Over 350 kids have participated in the program. Most are West Siders, although many of the students at Humboldt are from the East Side.

To enable those students to participate and still get home at night, transportation has become a key component in determining the success of the programs. Currently, students may bus directly home, use an expanded West Side Circulator route which has drop-off points in Frogtown and on the East Side, or get



Students from St. Catherine's College offer weekly tutoring services at Humboldt.

a bus token for MTC.

"We're trying to provide the students with access to other sites and take care of the needs of both sets of students," said Skold.

The program is supported by a collaboration of partners that include the CDC, city of St. Paul, St. Paul Community Education, Science Museum of Minnesota, Neighborhood

House, Youth Farm and Market Project, Torre de San Miguel homes, the University of Minnesota's College of Education and Human Development, as well as St. Matthew's, Humboldt Junior and Senior High and the Guadalupe Alternative Program. The goal of the collaboration is to create programs that increase

academic success, foster connections between schools and the community, engage youth in community-based work, and prepare youth to become productive adults.

Skold said there is a chance the grant may be extended two more years. For more information, contact Skold at 651-209-3519 or eskold@umn.edu.

