

St. Anne drawing praise for K-12 format and strong courses

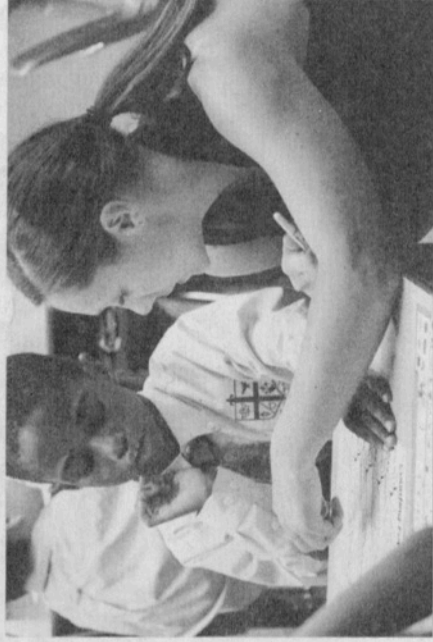
BY CHRISTINA LEE KNAUSS
THE CATHOLIC MISCELLANY

ROCK HILL—St. Anne School is in the middle of a serious growth spurt, and school leaders couldn't be happier.

Principal Shaileen Riginos said the school averaged about 270 students when she started there six years ago. Today, 355 children are enrolled.

"We've had about a 22 percent growth rate over the past six years," Riginos said. "The growth is noticeable. Our kindergarten classes started waiting lists last year, and we've been picking up a lot of students who are starting with us at sixth grade. It's a good thing to see."

St. Anne is the only K-12 Catholic school in the state, a format approved by Bishop Robert E. Guglielmo in 2014. The concept was necessary because St. Anne is the only Catholic school in the Rock Hill area, and there were not enough feeder schools to justify a separate new high school.



PROVIDED

Teacher Annah Aguilar works with first-grade student Cruz Cain on writing complete sentences at St. Anne School in Rock Hill recently.

The K-12 format is a draw for many families who like the fact that all of their children will be in the same place, said Melanie Rainier, dean of the high school.

"Starting young and being able to stay in one place through high school has made a big difference," Rainier said. "Our high school has

very personalized education in a small class setting and we're able to offer personalized learning for each student."

The average class size in the high school is 12 to 15 students per course.

St. Anne draws students from a large area around Rock Hill, Riginos said. They come from five parishes in York County, plus Chester and a few from Charlotte.

The strong curriculum is another draw.

The John Paul the Great Program for the Arts is especially popular, and Riginos said they are working on expanding STEM (Science, Technology, English, and Math) offerings, including the recent completion of a new science lab.

Spiritual life is also a big part of the St. Anne experience. Rainier

said the high school students took part in a retreat led by the Diocesan Missionary Team earlier this year, and now they are trying to set up retreats for the other grades.

Students said growth has not affected the atmosphere.

"I've been here at this school for 11 years, and the community is so closely knit I can walk in any room [at any grade level] and pinpoint four or five people I know," said tenth-grader Will Suaso, 16. "Everything we do, we do together. Everybody knows about the events and we all take part."

Suaso and ninth-grader Zoey Kennedy, 14, both enjoy the variety of academics and activities that have developed at St. Anne over the years. They particularly like the arts program — Suaso takes part in theater and music and Zoey enjoys visual arts.

"The environment here at school is so welcoming and heart-warming," Zoey said. "There is nothing bad you can say about it. Everybody here at St. Anne is nice to you."