

## **Article from The Baltimore Sun**

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### **Bridges' goal is to help children develop skills**

*81 pupils from Baltimore attend full-time in summer program at St. Paul's Schools in Brooklandville*

Standing in front of nine classmates and a teacher, Idaeris Adair read aloud his typewritten essay about the advantages of single-sex education in the United States.

Without using the phrase, the 10-year-old, who will be a sixth-grader this fall at Chinquapin Middle School, spelled out his reasons for advocating separate classrooms for boys and girls.

Then came the critique from his classmates. They agreed his essay was well thought out, had followed a central theme, and included sufficient detail to support his point of view.

But Idaeris, who lives in the Idlewood section of Baltimore, wasn't satisfied. "I need to polish my skills," he said. "I need help with my writing and also math."

He'll get that help from Bridges, a program at St. Paul's Schools in Brooklandville that allows youngsters from Baltimore to develop their reading, writing and arithmetic skills. Theater arts projects, physical activities and field trips are also scheduled to break up the eight-hour days, Monday through Friday.

Idaeris and his sister, Ciera, 9, who will be a fifth-grader at Leith Walk Elementary, are among the 81 pupils from nine city schools who are attending Bridges. The program was started in the summer of 1993 by St. Paul's upper school dean Judd Anderson with one teacher, 16 pupils from Coldstream Park Elementary School and a \$5,000 budget.

"The program is flowering right now," said Anderson, who spends his time raising money to fund it. "We are convinced that there is an incalculable value for the students to spend time with quality teachers and volunteers. Our goal is to make them successful in their own environment."

The program enrolls pupils in third through sixth grades. The third- and fourth-graders spend four weeks at the 60-acre Falls Road campus while the fifth- and sixth-graders attend for five weeks. Nigel Sequeira, director of diversity planning at St. Paul's and co-director of Bridges, hopes to add seventh-grade and eighth-grade classes over the next two years.

"There is an overwhelming need for a program like this," Sequeira said. "We believe it provides students with an opportunity to raise their academic skills by focusing on reading, writing, math and the arts. But we also want to keep the program fun for kids."

Sequeira estimated the per-pupil cost at \$1,500.

The money comes from nonprofit foundations, corporations, private donors and from St. Paul's, which provided about \$40,000 of this year's \$100,000-plus budget.

There are 16 faculty members this summer and more than 100 student volunteers who come from St. Paul's School and St. Paul's School for Girls. The teachers are from city and private schools.

Maria Hampton, the middle school dean of students at Roland Park Country School, is teaching math, writing and computer skills to pupils going into the seventh grade this fall.

"This program is a good idea because with only 10 students per class the teaching is more effective," Hampton said. "We can really focus on the students as individuals and on their work habits."

This is the second year in the program for Jamila White, 12, of Waverly. Jamila, who will be a seventh-grader at Mount Zion Baptist Christian School, said the classes help her to understand her reading assignments. But she also enjoys the activities, which included a trip to Six Flags America amusement park in Largo.

Pupils are recommended for the program by their teachers and principals. They also must have good grades.

"We are looking for students who want to work hard, have good attendance and are not discipline problems," Sequeira said.

Buses pick up pupils at two locations each morning. The only cost to parents is a \$40 nonrefundable transportation fee.

Parents are required to sign a contract, assuring they will get the pupils to the bus stop on time, attend a mandatory orientation meeting and the closing ceremonies, and support teachers who give homework.

Sequeira believes that parental involvement is important.

"Parents need to know how to make the kids successful," he said.

The summer session ends tomorrow, but the program won't be over for the fifth- and sixth-graders. They will attend class one Saturday each month during the school year to reinforce the lessons learned during the summer and to help them with standardized test and assessment-based skills.

Elaine Adair said her two children, Idaeris and Ciera, are happy about being in the Bridges program.

"I wanted something constructive for them to do during this summer and I heard about the program from a teacher at Leith Walk," she said. "They enjoy being there and are handling it very well."

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