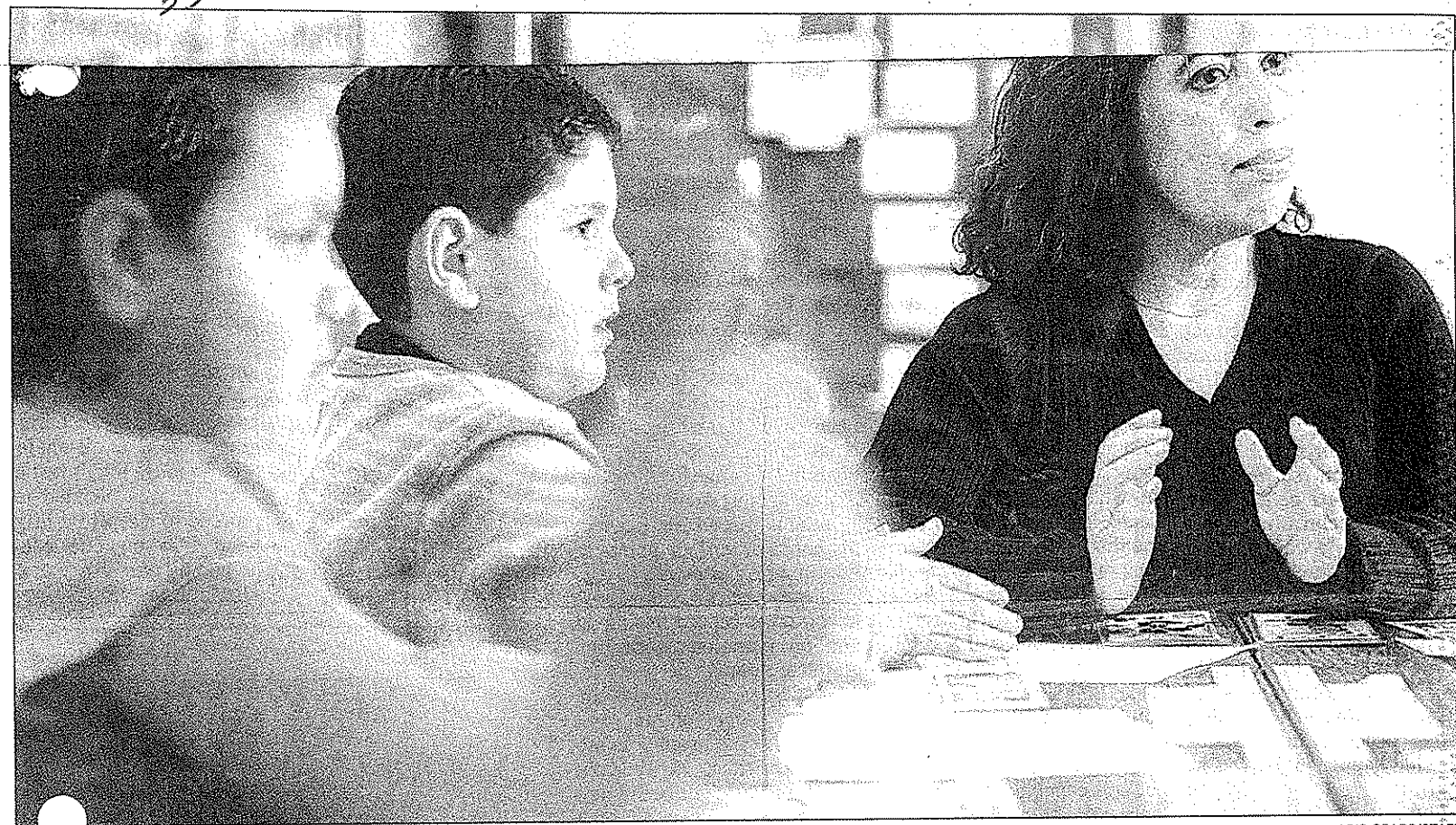


SPEAKING THEIR LANGUAGE

350



ARIC CRABB/STAFF

CLASSROOM AIDE ROXANNA GHASSEMI works with students Maria Briseno, left, and Cesar Diaz in their second-grade bilingual class at Washington Elementary School in San Leandro on Monday.

Teacher's aide honored for dedication to bilingual students

By Karen Holzmeister
STAFF WRITER

SAN LEANDRO — For Roxanna Ghassemi of Washington Elementary School, helping students and their immigrant families bridge English language and culture barriers isn't limited just to the classroom.

That's why Ghassemi, the school's teacher's aide for the past decade, on Saturday received an Alameda County Office of Education award for her bilingual work in the San Leandro Unified School District's English learners' program.

Ghassemi, a native of El Sal-

vador whose first language was Spanish, said she was "surprised, humbled and proud" to receive the award.

The 15-year North San Leandro resident, whose three children also attended Washington School, has the same emotions when students see her out and about in the community.

"When the kids see me at the library or supermarket, they are so cute," Ghassemi, 50, recalled during an interview on Monday. "They say to their grandmother or older sister, 'That's my teacher.' Sometimes, they just point and keep smiling. It gives me a good

feeling."

A paraeducator, such as Ghassemi, works under a teacher's supervision and tutors, helps in classrooms, involves parents in school programs and acts as a translator, among other jobs.

In school, Ghassemi tests Spanish-speaking students in their primary language. She assists students in the classroom and translates important written documents sent home to Spanish-speaking families. She also provides live Spanish translation during various school meetings and parent-teacher conferences, to ensure Spanish-speaking par-

ents understand and have a voice in their children's education.

Ghassemi tutors struggling students in English after school. A Washington School volunteer for five years before being hired as a paraeducator, she assists teachers in communicating with families whose primary language is Spanish, and makes suggestions to parents who seek non-academic help with bringing up their children.

Ghassemi also is ever-present at events such as Washington School's Fall Festival, Family Lit-

See HONOR, Page 4

lengths to make personal connections with students, regardless of background or language barriers. Above all, Roxanna is warm and nurturing with children."

Ghassemi, who came to the U.S. at age 14 and spent her high school years in Alameda, has been married to her husband Hooshi Ghassemi for 24 years. She has two sons in college, and a daughter in the ninth grade at San Leandro High School.

eracy Night, Family Math Night and English-language advisory committee meetings. Second-grade teacher Katy McCarthy nominated Ghassemi for the county award. She described Ghassemi as a person "extremely committed to the academic progress of our school's English language learners. She goes to great

Honor

FROM PAGE 3

Hayward, CA
 (Alameda Co.)
 Daily Review
 (Cir. D. 48,575)

FEB - 3 2009

Allen's P.C.B. Est. 1888