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# THIS PLAY'S NO TURKEY

O'Hara Catholic School, with a cast of 50, re-enacts first Thanksgiving

By ANNE WILLIAMS  
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Once an elementary school mainstay but now something of a novelty, the Thanksgiving play — complete with Pilgrims and Indians and a cardboard cutout Mayflower — made a comeback Tuesday at O'Hara Catholic School.

The cast of confident, grinning first-graders, clad in butcher-paper bonnets, Pilgrim hats, fringed shawls and headbands, turned in a nearly flawless performance — although they didn't have many lines to memorize.

"Mine was, 'We welcome you, strangers,'" said 6-year-old Trevor Schutte, who proudly called the play "the biggest play we've ever done at school."

Indeed, judging by the turnout of parents — all carrying cameras and/or video recorders — the Thanksgiving play was a big deal.

First-grade teachers Teri Vreim and Terri Fuerte began preparing the 50 children about three weeks ago, teaching them the traditional — and romanticized — story of the first Thanksgiving.

The teachers helped the students learn their lines and oversaw the design and painting of

the Mayflower and a backdrop with scenes of England, Holland, the Atlantic Ocean and the New World.

Half of the children appeared in the play, while the others performed a half-dozen songs, a couple of them religious but most having to do with catching, cooking and/or eating turkeys.

Tyler Brothers, 6, made a fine turkey, strolling back and forth in front of the stage wearing a blue feather boa and an orange construction-paper beak that resembled a carrot.

"It was one of those 8-o'clock-last-night kinds

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**"They did such a good job. I'm so proud of them."**

— **TERI VREIM**, O'HARA CATHOLIC SCHOOL TEACHER

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of things," his mother, Carmie Brothers, said of the costume.

Tyler said he didn't volunteer for the role, but was happy to take it on.

Principal Dianne Bert said that, while the school hasn't done a full-fledged Thanksgiving play in many years, students

are used to performing.

"We do a lot of public speaking, a lot of plays, from a young age," she said.

Vreim, who provided narration during the play, said it's probably easier to stage an old-fashioned Thanksgiving play at a parochial school, where religion may be discussed freely.

That — along with potential controversy over historical accuracy — may be why the performance of Thanksgiving

plays is increasingly rare in schools.

After the students' performance, parents and siblings helped themselves to muffins and other snacks set out on decorated tables — all of it the work of the first-graders.

"They did such a good job," Vreim said. "I'm so proud of them."

O'Hara, near the Lane Events Center, serves 515 students in preschool through grade eight.