

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

Program addresses violence issue

Allows students to settle disputes

By John Wolcott
Catholic News Service

SEATTLE — Can today's increasing classroom violence be controlled?

Can the social clock be turned back to the days when teachers were in control and students exercised self-control?

Several Catholic elementary schools in western Washington are launching a new program that addresses the escalating tensions in schools nationwide.

Though parish schools haven't been rocked by the insubordination and violence experienced by many public schools, principals believe the new "Second Step" program will not only lessen chances of fights and conflicts, but also will help prepare students for an increasingly tense world outside the classroom.

"The Second Step program fits very well into our religion program because we're talking about teaching kids to be peacemakers, to work for justice, to be

inclusive and respectful of other people," said Michael Foy, principal of Seattle's Assumption School. "This program gives kids concrete ways to do all those things."

The students "have to be taught how to be Catholic," Foy added in an interview with *The Progress*, newspaper of the Seattle archdiocese. "We're trying to make them Catholics in action, teaching them how to live out what we learn in church. We have to give them practical ways to do that. They know about gratitude, but how do you show gratitude?"

Created in Seattle by the Committee For Children, a nonprofit organization, the Second Step program is being taught to more than 1 million students in kindergarten through eighth grade in every U.S. state and every Canadian province, with new schools being added each year.

Now the program is being offered to Catholic schools as well, said Joan Cole Duffell, director of marketing for Committee For Children and a member of Seattle's Our Lady of the Lake Parish.

"The program uses extensive role-playing to teach kids about empathy, anger management, polite assertiveness and ap-

propriate social behavior," Duffell said.

"This isn't something just for kids in inner cities; it's for kids everywhere," she added. "It helps them develop skills that will change their lives, and will even help them change the world after they leave school."

At Assumption, where Second Step is in its second year, schoolwide use of the program gives both faculty and students a common language for discussing issues of anger and conflict, Foy said. In addition, the program develops skills and traits that help students not only avoid being victimized and also becoming victimizers as they grow older.

"One thing we've noticed is that kids are growing in their ability to solve their conflicts, even when a teacher isn't managing the process," Foy said. "They're learning to articulate a problem and their feelings, to discuss the other person's perspective and then develop a plan to resolve it."

In Karen Hardy's fifth-grade classroom at Assumption, for example, students Nicolas Alexander and Monica Reed enacted a scene in which Nicolas tripped and spilled a container of papers. Through the Second Step program, Monica learned to respond by helping pick up the papers rather than by laughing at Nicolas.

"I've learned that you have to respect how other people feel," said Monica.

Some fifth-graders said Second Step helps them deal with siblings at home, as well as with classmates.

"I think about something first before I say it to somebody," said Caroline Sager, who has a twin brother and a 13-year-old sister.

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Contributing to this story was Nimia Carpio in Seattle.

'Worship of God and a relationship with truth are revealed in Jesus Christ as the deepest foundation of freedom.'

—Pope John Paul II, "The Splendor of Truth"

Reunion committee is seeking class membris

ELMIRA — The class of 1944 at St. Patrick School has scheduled its 50th reunion for June 11, 1994.

Organizers are still attempting to locate three missing class members: Jack Reimer, William Schiefen and William Cristiano. Those who can provide information should write to Betty Collins Bonsignore, 122 Grandview Ave., Elmira, N.Y. 14905; or Rita Dailey Wayne, 200 Guinnip Ave., Elmira, 14905.

Mardi Gras celebration set for Owego Feb. 12

OWEGO — A Mardi Gras celebration to benefit St. Patrick's School, 309 Front St., is scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 12.

The event will take place at the Owego Treadway Inn. Festivities will include dinner, dancing and a chance to win a trip to New Orleans.

Tickets are \$25 each and can be purchased by calling 607/687-1770.

Elmira school to host social ministry event

ELMIRA — A winter refresher course for parish social ministers will take place on Saturday, Feb. 5, from 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. at Holy Family Junior High School, 1010 Davis St.

The workshop and speakers for this event will focus on priorities established at the recent diocesan Synod. The course is being sponsored by the Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry.

Registration is required. Call 607/734-9784 to register.

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