



## Naples Students Add **PeaceBuilders** Pledge

*By Shereen Oca*

*Staff Writer*

*Published: Wednesday, October 7, 2009 3:16 PM PDT*

[http://www.gazettes.com/articles/2009/10/07/community\\_news/doc4accf93c2b6ad178491977.txt](http://www.gazettes.com/articles/2009/10/07/community_news/doc4accf93c2b6ad178491977.txt)

Things began a little bit differently this week for students at Naples Bayside Academy.

In addition to reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and singing the school song at Monday's morning assembly, students for the first time voiced the **PeaceBuilders** Pledge, which emphasizes the importance of helping others, righting wrongs and giving up put-downs, among other positive goals.

Naples Bayside received a grant through **PeaceBuilders** to launch the program as part of a school-wide positive behavior plan, according to Principal Diane Prince. **PeaceBuilders** is a violence prevention and character education program for students in kindergarten through the 12th grade.

"The big thing for us is it gives students and staff a common language," Prince said. "It's about praising people. It's powerful for kids to be able to mediate their own situations, whatever it may be."

**PeaceBuilders** aims to build resiliency in children and teens by increasing and improving their "pro-social" skills, said Donna Burcher, senior director of communications, training and support for **PeacePartners, Inc.**

"Those are the kind of skills that will enable them to be successful not only at school, but as they transfer into relationships, professional careers and college life," Burcher said. "These are necessary human relationship skills."

All school staff members, from administrators and teachers to bus drivers and cafeteria works, are trained by professionals to help implement the program. In turn, staff members work with students to create and reinforce a common language, conducting team-building and role-playing activities and more.

According to a recent study conducted by **PeacePartners**, 42.9% of those surveyed said violent episodes decreased by more than 75% since launching **PeaceBuilders** on campus. (Approximately 80% of survey respondents represented elementary school and K-8 sites, according to Burcher.) In addition, 61.5% reported an increase in test scores, and 84.6% reported an increase in overall grades.

"The staff was absolutely energized to implement the program," Prince said. "...It's that age-old thing, using kind words to and being able to communicate what your needs are."

Prince added that although this is the first year of **PeaceBuilders** at Naples Bayside, she plans for its continued implementation.

Current Long Beach schools that also use **PeaceBuilders** include Our Lady of Refuge, St. Lucy School and Grace Christian School.

To find out more about **PeaceBuilders**, go to [www.peacebuilders.com](http://www.peacebuilders.com).