



Students attend anti-bullying assembly

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2012-01-31 23:00:21



Our Saviour School students work on a team-building activity during an anti-bullying assembly Tuesday in Jacksonville. The assembly was a kick-off for **Peacebuilders**, a program that aims to teach students how to deal with difficult situations effectively when they arise. [More photos](#)

“I am a **peacebuilder**.

“I pledge to praise people, to give up put-downs, to seek wise people, to notice and speak up about hurts I have caused, to right wrongs and to help others.

“I will build peace at home, at school and in my community each day.”

Our Saviour Grade School students read this pledge at an anti-bullying assembly Tuesday afternoon before the assembly was interrupted by a teacher flash mob.

The assembly was a kick-off for **Peacebuilders**, a program that aims to teach students how to deal with difficult situations effectively when they arise.

It is a preemptive measure to serious situations that have come to light recently — not in the school or the community, but that could just as easily happen in either, Principal Rita Carney said.

“Does it occur?” she said. “Yeah. We haven’t seen an increase, but we want to give them the tools that help them stand up for one another and give them the confidence to stand up for themselves.”

The Rev. Tom Meyer came out dressed in construction gear, equipped with a balancer, a hammer and a hard hat, and Carney politely reminded him that those kinds of tools were not needed for this project.

“It seemed appropriate to remind students that we’re about building something very important,” Meyer said. “We’re building peace within the environment of our school.”

Staff members enacted a series of skits or posed riddles to the children pertaining to what bullying is and how to choose wise people.

Students then broke off into “families” in which they introduced one another and participated in a team-building activity.

Our Saviour will implement a peace council with students from sixth, seventh, and eighth grade to meet

monthly and pitch ideas for opportunities, Carney said.

The families and council are designed to give junior high students an opportunity to develop leadership skills to be role models for the younger students, Carney said.

Meyer wants to promote peace because the school's role as a Catholic Christian school is to make every student feel safe, loved and respected and to see themselves as children of God and children of tremendous value.

The pro-active approach means the anti-bullying rhetoric will continue to be a part of classroom education.

"Bullying is because children don't think through their actions," Carney said. "Maybe they think it's a joke or it's to make themselves feel better. We want to give them an understanding that when you say things, you need to put yourself in their place."

The teachers aimed for a high-energy show in hopes to bring the school community closer together. In the process, they grew closer as well.

"You can imagine the laughing done as we put the dance together," Carney said. "Many of us took risks and went out of our comfort zone. But we told each other, 'You can do this. Just smile and have fun.' Even as adults, there's a lot we learned."

The assembly was the teachers' idea, but Meyer "thoroughly enjoyed it," he said. "It was great for the students to see us have fun with it. They responded beautifully."

"Any time the teachers and I are having fun, it's memorable for the kids," he added. "I enjoy being a part of it and I think it's a great kick-off."

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