

PeaceBuilders gets results

■Disciplinary actions are down at the elementary level with implementation of peace program.

By Mark R. Madler, The Leader

DOWNTOWN BURBANK — The Burbank Unified School District saw a decrease in fights and the need for disciplining students in kindergarten through fifth grades, a drop credited to the PeaceBuilders program, which teaches the children better ways to settle conflicts.

A survey of principals, teachers and campus supervisors at the 11 elementary schools showed that the average number of disciplinary actions by principals was between three and five for the 2003-04 school year, compared with nine to 11 actions taken in the 2000-01 school year, said Hank Jannace, director of pupil services, in presenting the survey results to Burbank school board members at their Thursday meeting.

While recognizing progress has been made, Jannace said the program certainly wasn't a cure for bad behavior.

"We are doing everything to minimize the bullying factor, the put-down factor and the lack of trust of going to adults," Jannace said.

PeaceBuilders began in the district in January 2000 and is funded by the city.

Methods used by the students to reduce conflicts included signing a pledge that they will work together, listening to the opinions of others, and praising other students rather than putting them down; and the use of role playing in classrooms of how a situation can be handled without a fight.

"Children do receive praise notes from teachers and others," said Caroline Brumm, a consultant for the district. "They get praised by other students."

Other results from the survey showed that the average number of playground fights per week dropped to between three and five for the 2003-04 year, compared to between nine and 11 for 2000-01.

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The average number of weekly disciplinary actions by playground assistants was between three and five for the 2003-04 year, down from five to six for 2000-01.

In explaining the survey, Jannace said that the results were the subjective view of the principals and staff on how secure and safe students felt.

Board Vice President Paul Krekorian asked that objective data be compiled to show the effectiveness of the program, and to identify disciplinary areas in which the district is succeeding and areas where work is still needed.

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