

Catholic students sign pledge to be 'bully-free'

EAMONN MAHER
Staff Writer

Students at a couple of Georgetown South Catholic elementary schools took part in recent workshops to become "bully-free" and all signed pledges to follow through with their promises.

As part of National Anti-Bullying Week, St. Catherine of Alexandria and St. Brigid pupils were introduced to interactive projects, activities and games by child and youth counselor Heidi Nelson, using people skills such as respect, self-control and friendship as learning objectives. The goal was to create awareness about bullying and to educate the students about ways to prevent it from happening, culminating with a Friendship Festival.

"One of the most important messages that I tried to get across was that it's not a rule that you have to be friends with

everyone in your class, but it's a rule that you must show respect to everyone," said Nelson, who splits her time between St. Brigid and St. Catherine of Alexandria in Georgetown South.

"I wouldn't say that bullying isn't an issue at this school, but it should be an issue to try to prevent it from happening at every school and we've just taken some proactive measures through hands-on workshops— nothing's written— and the kids have been very receptive to it."

Nelson said the idea for the workshops came from a suggestion at a parent council meeting and wasn't initiated due to any specific incident. The Halton District Catholic School Board has also implemented an anti-bullying awareness program into its curriculum called Working Together.

Nelson's workshops included creating friendship chains and trains in which stu-



As part of a workshop created to try to stomp out bullying in schools, St. Brigid students (from left) Boze Perkovic, Caitlin Tavares, Andrew Ralston and Nicki Rubie made some craft puppets to illustrate their intentions.

Submitted photos




Students and staff at St. Brigid Catholic Elementary School in Georgetown South took part in interactive activities during National Anti-Bullying Week across Canada. From left, Anthony DiPietrantonio, Curtis Jobin, Mr. Brown and Thomas Smith took turns writing down good qualities to look for when making friends.

dents would write down suggestions to practise friendly relationships, and each class came up with 33 different ways to use them in everyday life. Another assertiveness activity involved a blindfolded student wandering amongst classmates, receiving a gentle push whenever he or she got too close to another person's "personal space." Students also learned to look for positive qualities in a friend and how witnesses and bystanders can be the greatest deterrent for bullies.

"Every student signed a pledge listing classroom rules to follow for the rest of the year and it was kind of interesting because some of the kids said, 'Why not for the rest of our lives,'" added Nelson. "Getting the community involved is important too to create an openness so that parents can follow through with the same messages at home."

(Eamonn Maher can be reached at emaher@independentfreepress.com)


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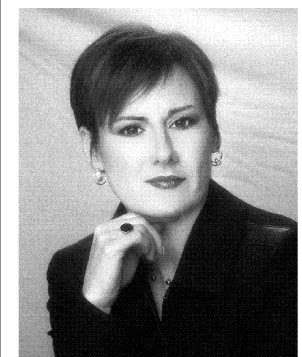


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