



St. Catherine Labouré School

"Faith Formation and Academic Excellence since 1955"

Contact: Mrs. Peggy Visconti
St. Catherine Labouré School
Phone: 314/843-2819
Fax: 314/843-7687
Email: pvisconti@sclschool.org
Website: www.sclschool.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ST. CATHERINE LABOURE' SCHOOL TO "TAKE ACTION"
School Launches Olweus Bullying Prevention Program

St. Louis, Missouri (September 8, 2011) – St. Catherine Labouré School in South St. Louis County officially launched the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program with a student kickoff event on Friday, September 2, 2011. St. Catherine Labouré is the nineteenth elementary school in the Archdiocese of St. Louis to adopt the Olweus program, which is focused on driving peaceful behaviors among school children to prevent bullying.

At the SCL student kickoff event, Principal Peggy Visconti introduced the "Take Action" program in what appeared to be a typically formal principal's speech. Shortly into her discussion, the event was "interrupted" by "superheroes in capes." It turns out that the superheroes were faculty and staff members who helped Mrs. Visconti drive home the positive message of Olweus, including the four Olweus rules:

1. We will not bully or harm others.
2. We will help students who are bullied or harmed.
3. We will include students who are left out.
4. If we know that somebody is being bullied or harmed, we will tell an adult at school and at home.

SCL LAUNCHES OLWEUS PROGRAM (CONT.)

"When we 'Take Action' with the Olweus program we are working together -- parents, students, and teachers -- to show a greater care and concern for one another," stated Principal, Peggy Visconti. "It complements our current school theme of 'Open the Eyes of My Heart Lord' and reinforces one of our most important core values -- 'community.'"

St. Catherine Labouré parish pastor, Father Jim Cormack, added, "The Olweus program fits very well with the Vincentian tradition of service to others -- a tradition upon which our parish church and school were founded. Making a commitment to positive and helpful behaviors shows our students exactly what it means when we say we are 'called to live out the charism of St. Vincent de Paul.'"

The Olweus implementation began in April with a student survey in which students could voice their beliefs about where, when, and how bullying occurs. This was followed by formal training in May 2011 for the Olweus Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee, which is composed of fourteen members, including parents, faculty, and staff. The committee met throughout the summer to plan for the program launch and ongoing operation. Additionally, playground supervisors were trained by Lynne Lang, the Director of School Climate at the Catholic Education Office. The Olweus Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee at SCL will continue to meet on a regular basis to evaluate the progress being made and to advise the school administration on any improvements or tweaks that are needed.

"The results of the student survey identified some school hot spots," said Assistant Principal Laurie Jost. "We listened! Now, all SCL staff have a heightened awareness of the areas where bullying occurs and are making extra efforts to monitor more closely. This is a good beginning."

The evening before the student launch, the "Take Action" program was announced to parents during the school's annual Curriculum Night. Lynne Lang presented the Olweus concept and related it to specific SCL-student feedback provided in a survey conducted last spring. SCL parent and Olweus committee member Lore Hormberg stated, "Our TAKE ACTION

SCL LAUNCHES OLWEUS PROGRAM (CONT.)

theme works hand in hand with this year's school theme. I was moved when our pastor, principal, assistant principal, teachers, staff, and all of our parents stood up when asked to show their commitment to taking action to support the Olweus program. We are grateful for the support of our school families, staff, and parish and look forward to a year of positive results."

SCL students entered their kickoff event in the school gymnasium while "Heal the World," by Michael Jackson, was playing in the background. After enjoying a highly engaging presentation by Mrs. Visconti and the superheroes, the event concluded to the sounds of "I Refuse" by Josh Wilson. The students returned to their classrooms in upbeat fashion and were surprised once again when they saw ice-cream treats waiting!

About Olweus: Developed by Dr. Dan Olweus of Norway, the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program has been implemented worldwide for over 35 years within public and private schools. Olweus program research shows an average of 20 to 70 percent reduction in student reports of being bullied and bullying others.

About St. Catherine Labouré: St. Catherine Labouré Church and School were founded in 1955 by the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians) and are located in the Sunset Hills area of St. Louis County, Missouri. The school has an enrollment of 510 students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

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If you would like more information about this topic, please contact Peggy Visconti at 314/843-2819 or at pvisconti@sclschool.org.