

Making the Grade

were nominated for the training program with the Anti-Defamation League were selected before entering the middle school in sixth grade. An assembly on the first day of school encourages all students to "Step Up" against bullying.

Tamara O'Day-Stevens of the League told the paper about the mission of the League's workshops.

"We're re-teaching social skills; 80 percent of students are bystanders and they don't know what to do. So the idea is to help bystanders find their voice and go from being a bystander to an ally."

And according to students who have participated in the training workshops, it's working.

"Most of us before were probably bystanders and we're more comfortable standing up to bullying now," said Zachary McGough, a sixth-grader who has undergone the training.

Laudadio added that there are other ways to measure the effectiveness of the League's training sessions. Scores on the Connecticut Mastery Test have improved as cases of bullying and disciplinary referrals have declined.

Source: Courant.com, 3/13/14

GRADES 2-8

Students Waltz Their Way to Respect, Manners and Improved Performance

Students in Northeast Ohio have put on their dancing shoes and are twirling through a 10-week program that promotes kindness and communication among peers.

The Dancing Classrooms program, presented by a non-profit organization by the same name, uses the skills and technique of ballroom dance to teach students "manners, social skills, respect and communication," according to news-herald.com.

"Dancing Classrooms is not about the dance," the organization's founding executive director Jo Jo Carcioppolo said. Even though the students "danced very nicely" at the March 13 event at which she spoke, "it's really about the changing of the partners and the respectful interactions," she said.

"Dancing Classrooms is a social development program and ballroom dancing is the tool we use," she added.

How Dancing Enhances the School Community

The sheer act of dancing brings students together with peers they may or may not know well, whom they may know little to nothing about. Pairing up for a waltz brings children together "in a respectful and meaningful way," explained Carcioppolo, and saddles them with a common objective — a well-executed dance — that they must work together to achieve.

The program teaches self-respect as well as how to show respect to another person and how to work as one.

"Throughout life there will be people who you get along with and people who it is a challenge to work with, so this is a stepping stone for them," Carcioppolo added.

Academics are tossed into the mix, as discussions of language, history and geography are injected into the instruction of dance, which takes place during the school day. Students journal their experiences as well, which enables them to improve writing and analytical skills.

Add the obvious factor of a fun, new (to most students) and original physical activity that ballroom dance provides, and you have a dynamic tool that touches on virtually all areas of student development that schools endeavor to enhance.

Learn more about the program and how ballroom dance is making a difference in Ohio schools by visiting dancingclassroomsneo.org.

Source: news-herald.com, 3/14/14

