

Conference to take aim at problem of school violence

CHILDREN: The event will feature several experts in child behavior studies

By Sean Rossol
Higher Education Reporter

In an effort to make schools safer, educators and parents will receive tips from featured speakers during the 19th annual Oregon Conference on Feb. 1 and 2.

The two-day conference is sponsored by the University and focuses on issues that concern education.

"We hope the Oregon Conference will help to find solutions to the problems [of violence in our schools]," said Abe Deffenbaugh, director of the University Behavioral Research and Teaching Program.

Deffenbaugh is quick to point out, however, that a lot of the issues are not strictly about violence.

"Many of these kids are acting out violent-style behavior because they are not getting enough attention at home or in the system," he said.

"A case can be made for kids with attention-deficit disorders, who, because of a hormone imbalance, are more prone to mood swings," he said. "It may be just a simple case of pestering other children."

Or it could be as serious as kids carrying guns.

Often, these kids are seeking attention, Deffenbaugh said.

"It can be chemical and social, or it could be just chemical, or just social, or more chemical than social, or vice versa," he said.

Naomi Zigmond, keynote speaker and chair of the Department of Instruction and Learning at the University of Pittsburgh, will discuss the benefits and disadvantages of placing children with learning disabilities in regular classrooms.

"Our biggest challenge is increasing the schools' capacity to [react] in a responsible way," said George Sugai, director of the University Behavior Disorders Program.

"The incidence of harassment is a daily occurrence," Sugai said. "The media tend to sensa-

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Behavior Disorders Program Director

tionalize and report on those things that are flashy. They don't give the students many opportunities to describe what life is like in schools."

This is because adults are concerned with other things, he said.

"Events that happen in our streets are high-visibility occurrences," Sugai said. "But episodes of anger exchange and other conflicts are a constant thing."

"Also, if you see violence, you tend to mimic it," he said. "Often it is an effective way to communicate with the world."

Sugai said children who are poor get more media attention, often because they are involved in gangs.

"Gang kids get more air time," Sugai said. "Generally, their lives are more tough."

"It might stem from their learning history, or from the context in which they grow up," he said. "In a way, they are stereotyped, and this perpetuates itself."

The conference will take place Thursday and Friday at 8 a.m. at the Eugene Community Conference Center, adjacent to the Eugene Hilton. It will run until 5:15 p.m., with an hour for lunch.

The program is available for college credit and is open to the public. The cost is \$135 for the general public, \$49 for students taking it for credit, or \$25 for students not taking it for credit.

People may register the day of the event.

For more information, call 346-5682.

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