

Salem school says student uniforms bring positive results

■ **EDUCATION:** Most parents, teachers agree that uniforms improve student performance

SALEM (AP) — Teachers, parents and even students at tiny Lake Labish Elementary School on the northern outskirts of Salem consider their five-month experiment with school uniforms a success.

Lake Labish, with 85 students, four teachers and one hallway about the length of a bowling alley, became the first public school in Oregon to adopt uniforms: crisp white shirts and navy skirts, slacks or jumpers.

"Children seem to be really proud of how they look when they come to school," said Linda L. Geissler, who teaches second- and third-graders. "A lot of the discipline problems have calmed down."

Office manager Malia G. West said it is the most peaceful year she has seen in her 15 years at Lake Labish.

Last year, the school suspended seven students after numerous discipline referrals. This year, not even a single student has been referred formally for discipline, West said.

Parents and teachers at Lake Labish first began considering uniforms in November 1994. Parents thought uniforms might help repel the growing influence of gangs in the area and improve order and attendance.

In a survey, 38 of 46 families said they supported the plan. The school won permission from the school board last spring to require uniforms.

Most parents opposed to the plan worried about cost: 76 percent of Lake Labish children come from low-income families. In response, the school raised \$1,400 to help needy families buy uniforms.

A store in Salem sells two uniforms for \$45 to \$55. Parents say they like the price and ease of dressing their children.

"There is never a question in the morning about what they are going to wear,"

said Pam Lunsford, who heads the parent uniform committee.

Teacher Jim Griffin said he initially worried that his fourth- and fifth-graders would lose some measure of freedom and individuality, looking like rows of crops in the nearby fields.

But after five months, he's changed. Griffin said his students behave better and seem to take school more seriously. Attendance has improved.

Students have written, "Now I have something decent to wear," or "Kids don't make fun of me now."

"The uniforms are better for the kids and better for the classroom," he said. "They aren't concerned about their clothing. They are able to focus on what they are learning."

Grace Richert, 9, a fourth-grader, said she misses going shopping with her mother for back-to-school clothes in the fall. Classmate Darnell Hall, 9, would prefer more of a choice in what he wears to

school.

But many children say they like their uniforms.

"My grandma says I look real nice," says 10-year-old Courtney Shuffield. "I used to have clothes that didn't match. I like this better."

Long Beach Unified School District in California last year became the first public school in the nation to require uniforms district-wide for its 60,000 elementary and middle-school children.

Long Beach school officials believe uniforms accounted for a striking drop in crime and suspensions last year. The number of fights was cut in half, suspensions fell by 32 percent and school crime dropped 36 percent.

Even President Clinton plugged uniforms in his recent State of the Union address, saying that public schools should be able to require them "if it means that teen-agers will stop killing each other over designer jackets."

Funding forces salmon from hatchery

■ **FISH:** Columbia River hatcheries, no longer financially able to care for the fish, have to release them prematurely

PORTLAND (AP) — Because of federal budget cuts, 8 million baby salmon were released prematurely Monday into the icy Columbia River, almost certainly swimming toward a swift death.

Millions more of the tiny fish are scheduled for early release, and some simply may be killed and buried, because Congress cut \$3.5 million in funds for the fish hatchery programs in Oregon and Washington.

The loss of the tiny salmon comes as other branches of the federal government spend hundreds of millions of dollars to restore depleted salmon runs in the Columbia Basin.

"These fish are reared primarily to sustain fisheries. At a time when we're trying to protect other runs and maintain fisheries, this is a blow to those efforts," said Rich Berry, director of Oregon's hatchery program.

State fishery officials say the federal cutbacks amount to a broken promise because the money, allocated under the Mitchell Act of 1948, was intended to help make up for the damage done by dams built on the Columbia.

Berry said several attempts have been made to cut the Mitchell Act money entirely in recent years, but Sen. Mark Hatfield, R-Ore., used his influence as chairman of the Appropriations Committee to keep the funds coming.

This year, with Congress in a budget-cutting frame of mind, there was no way to stop the reduction of Mitchell Act money from \$18.5 million to \$15 million, a figure that federal officials indicate will remain unchanged in future years.

Oregon plans to release another 13.2 million baby salmon prematurely in about two weeks. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is deciding whether to give early release to another 4.2 million young salmon from federal hatcheries or to simply drain the rearing ponds and bury the fish.

Oregon stands to lose \$1.1 million in hatchery funds. In addition to dumping the smolts, the state will close two hatcheries.

Rainier teachers, custodian charged with drug possession

■ **SCHOOL:** Students appear calm about the charges; parents upset

RAINIER (AP) — They trusted their schools and teachers. Now some parents wonder if their trust was misplaced.

Two teachers and a custodian in the Rainier schools are facing narcotics charges. School officials won't say if the individuals brought drugs to school, but say they suspect their "drug-free workplace" rules were violated.

"It makes you wonder if any other teachers are doing this," said Luwana Nicholson, a waitress and mother of a 6-year-old son. "You think these teachers are good people, but hearing this raises some questions."

Rainier School District Superintendent Gene Carlson pointed out that prosecutors have said there was no indication the suspects were selling or giving drugs to the children.

But parents such as Linda Lopossa are disappointed. She works at a beauty parlor and sent two children to the Rainier schools.

"When kids hear from adults they're not supposed to use drugs and then another adult — a teacher — is found to be using them, it undermines everything we teach these kids," Lopossa said.

Richard E. Lance III, 46, an ele-

mentary music teacher, pleaded innocent Monday to drug manufacturing and possession charges.

Linda Lee Webster, 45, a special education teacher, pleaded innocent to a drug possession charge. Both were released pending pre-trial hearings.

Nancy Pellham, 39, a custodian the past 11 years, also appeared in court Monday. She asked to be allowed to go into a treatment program on a marijuana possession charge and pleaded innocent to a second drug possession charge.

The three are suspended with pay pending the outcome of the investigation. The teachers could lose their licenses if they are convicted.

Carlson alerted police after hearing the allegations and realizing "this problem was bigger than the district."

"I try like heck not to get mad at people," Carlson said. "But I'm disappointed when people apparently make wrong choices and especially not to the benefit of our children."

Rainier High School junior Katie Scott said few students were surprised by the accusations.

"There'd been some rumors and besides, we know that it doesn't matter if it's a teacher or anyone else," she said. "There are a lot of people who use drugs."

Same-sex marriages bill proposed

■ **GENDER:** The initiative would counter similar legislation aimed at banning same-sex marriages

OLYMPIA (AP) — The state would legally recognize same-sex marriages under a proposed ballot initiative filed Monday, only days after conservative lawmakers began working on a bill to ban such unions.

Zakmichael Tazmon of Seattle outlined his proposal in documents filed with the state. He must gather the signatures of 181,667 registered voters by July 5 to get his proposal on the November ballot.

The initiative reads: "A marriage shall be recognized as a legal marriage when the parties are persons of a different or of the same gender. Any marriage that is valid in another jurisdiction shall be recognized as a valid marriage in this state."

Rep. Bill Thompson, R-Everett, filed a bill to ban same-sex marriages in Washington out of concern that Hawaii courts may legalize them as early as this summer.

If that happens, Thompson said last week, gay couples in Washington could get married in Hawaii and return home expecting the same privileges given to heterosexual married couples, such as health benefits and inheritance rights.

The Republican-led House is expected to pass the bill, following its approval last week by the Law and Justice Committee. Senate approval is unlikely.



PEACE CORPS IS ON CAMPUS THIS WEEK!

Tuesday, February 6th
Information Table - EMU Student Center
10:00 am to 3:00 pm
Peace Corps Video & Information
EMU Student Center - Ben Linder Room
7:00pm to 8:00 pm

Wednesday, February 7th
Information Table - EMU Student Center
10:00 am to 3:00 pm

Interviews will be held Wednesday & Thursday February 21st & 22nd



For More Information or to
Schedule an Interview
Contact Campus Representative
Laura Taylor - 244 Hendricks Hall
tel. #346-6026