

lum that begins in kindergarten and continues through high school.

Called "Here's Looking at You, 2000," the course focuses on known risk factors such as having friends that use drugs or living in a family with members who use drugs.

The program focuses on dangers of drugs that increase the risks of using other drugs (nicotine, alcohol and marijuana, for example) and offers clear messages to students to "say no" to drugs.

Teaching students how to lead healthy lives in a society which is not drug-free — and identifying and providing support to students who have drug- and alcohol-abuse problems — are goals of the Portland School District's education and prevention programs.

Raising student awareness of the dangers of drugs and alcohol and training staff members to recognize and help students who are addicted is not enough, however.

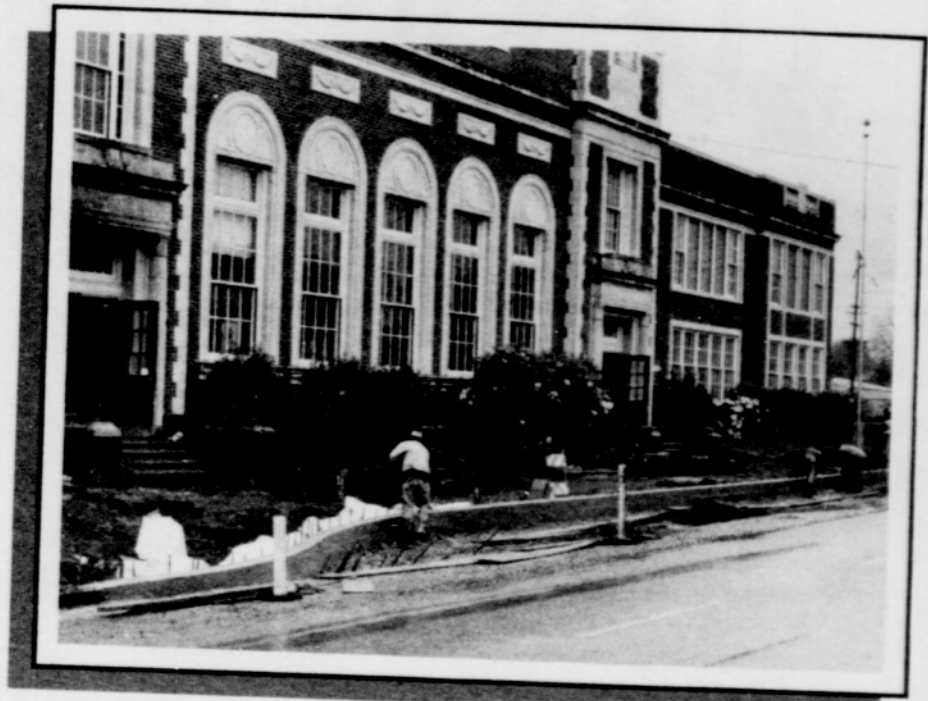
More needs exist for drug-and-alcohol prevention than the school district and community are now addressing. The objective now is to find new — and better — means of meeting those needs.

BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS

Portland's aging physical plant embraces an investment of close to \$1 billion, representing more than 100 school buildings spread over 152 square miles.

No new school buildings are contemplated, even though Portland's student enrollment of 53,000 is expected to increase slightly in the next few years.

And, thanks to efficiencies and financial planning, a long-range program of restoration, renovation and major maintenance is expected to accommodate the school district's needs for the next five years.



FACING NEW CHALLENGES

AIDS

America's public school systems and their AIDS victims — students and staff members — have been traumatized because of public hysteria about the complex disease.

Children, innocent recipients of contaminated blood transfusions, have been ostracized and denied access to classrooms. Their family homes have been torched to match mass ignorance surrounding past "plagues."

The Portland School District is determined to avoid those disruptions and agonies by stressing confidentiality and protecting the health and safety of all students and staff members.

The superintendent, school board chairperson, county and state health officials in September acknowledged the existence of AIDS cases in Portland Public Schools — and the certainty of more cases in the future.

Since that time, the school district has been holding AIDS workshops for all employees, involving staff and community health specialists and stressing facts, safety methods and valid information sources.

The school district also has developed special kits, including sterile gloves, for distribution to all school employees for use in first-aid or clean-up circumstances involving blood and other body fluids.

Oregon's new AIDS curriculum is being introduced through teacher

workshops and physicians and other health specialists will be used as information sources for students, staff members and parents.

CHILD ABUSE

Reports of child abuse, rising alarmingly during the past few years, are high priorities to Portland Public Schools' own law-enforcement agency.

Last year 712 suspected cases were reported, an increase of nearly 200 cases from the previous year. School police officers attribute some of that startling increase to improved awareness in students and staff members about child abuse.

Approximately 90-95 percent of all suspected child-abuse cases are confirmed, according to Portland School Police statistics. The tragedy in those statistics prompted development of strict regulations concerning the reporting of suspected abuse cases.

Portland School District policies require any school employee discovering possible abuse or apparent neglect involving a student to report those circumstances to the school police.

During school hours, a school police officer responds in person to such calls from school personnel, concerned friends, neighbors or anonymous callers.

The officer then interviews the student to determine if charges are

valid. Following the interview, the officer decides if the abused student should be taken into protective custody.

School police officers call the Oregon Children's Services Division/Child Protective Services (CSD/CPS) to report abuse cases and arrange for protective care.

If emergency medical care is needed, school police officers transport the abused students to hospitals or clinics before delivering them to the shelter-care homes.

Portland School Police officers receive ongoing training in handling child-abuse and sexual-abuse cases.

Officers recently joined other state and local police officers and CSD personnel from three states in a conference sponsored by the federal government concerning the sexual exploitation and abuse of children.

GANGS

The impact of youth-gang violence is staggering.

Police estimate nearly 20 monthly incidents of gang-related crimes and violence on Portland streets.

Though those figures do not represent an "epidemic" of gang activity, they do call for immediate preventative actions by the Portland School District and other community agencies.

Portland Public Schools has joined efforts to counter gang activities in and around schools. Constant monitoring of suspected gang members

and gang activities by school law-enforcement officers combines with new curriculum aimed at taking the "glamour" out of youth gangs in districtwide efforts to prevent outbreaks of violence.

School police gather and share information on youth gangs with school principals and staff members as well as other law-enforcement agencies on the West Coast. Attendance at regional and international conferences on gang activities keeps school police officers up to date on gang movements and prevention methods.

Students at all grade levels — with particular emphasis in elementary schools — in regular counseling-and-guidance programs learn the impacts of illegal activities on themselves and their families.

Students in Grades 4, 5 and 7 are learning to choose positive alternatives to gang membership in newly developed coursework that ties to existing activities emphasizing confidence-building, personal awareness, problem-solving and peer pressure.

Portland Public Schools staff members are studying gangs and maintaining ongoing cooperation with the Northeast Community Task Force on Youth Gangs.

The school district also is developing prevention activities to help stop the recruitment of youths into gangs and provides information and training to principals and counselors in high schools and middle schools.