

Palmer Elementary wins \$46,000 award

*Winners from state-wide award on
at-risk student plans; to be presented April 13*

Less than a week after Palmer Elementary received an award for an outstanding drug prevention program, the Lake Olympia School once again received recognition for its intervention program.

At the close of Texas Public Schools Week, Friday, March 8, the Governor's Educational Excellence Committee recognized the elementary school for A Comprehensive Plan for Ensuring Success for Students At-Risk.

On April 13, a cash award of \$46,000 will be presented to Pat Conway and Sandy Strohm, principal and assistant principal in Austin.

"I was excited, I couldn't believe it," Strohm said when she heard the news. Strohm said she actually heard Palmer won the award when Channel 39 called for an interview.

"It was satisfying," Conway added. "I'm glad they noticed us. It was a dream, now it's a reality."

"The whole purpose was to provide incentives for good educational programs," said Conway. "We had the opportunity to receive recognition, we chose intervention. It's part of our goal-setting process."

As part of the program, Conway said when children meet with the various obstacles, they are taught how to overcome them.

"At any day, a child can have an emotional upset," she said. "We look at the whole child. Our mission is to help the child and compensate where the child is not being helped at home."

Strohm, the principal writer of the proposal, said the staff tried to focus on improving their self-esteem.

"We get them involved in activities on a daily basis," Strohm said. "We

have special things like honor rolls and shining stars."

Conway said the staff uses an H2O formula.

"That means Help Hurdle the Obstacles," Conway said. "Whether the student is upset because he forgot his lunch money or forgot to do a composition, we are trained to help put back his self-esteem. We want to see every child on his way up, not out."

"This is positive prevention," Conway said. "It helps them feel good about school. If they are tempted later in life, then maybe they will remember the good experience they had at Palmer."

Conway said there are some obstacles the staff meets.

"These kids are from many parts of the country, from different neighborhoods, and many have a transitory lifestyle," Conway said.

"There are many single parents and working mothers," she said. "Because of that, many moms and dads can't always help. Our teachers do a very good job. They are like a parent during the day. It's a need for the kids."

The idea of implementing the At-Risk program is to prevent the students from dropping out, Conway said.

"Our lang-range goal is for them to get a full education," she said.

"But, this award is a real shot in the arm," Conway added. "Things like this really help us. It helps us get to work the next day."

"We've made gains," she said. "The kids are involved and engaged in learning. This school is a fun place. We are trying to make it a school every kid would like to go to."

"They'd rather be here than be sitting at home," Strohm said.

The \$46,251 will be used to supplement supplies and equipment at Palmer, Conway said.

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Palmer Elementary cited for drug education program

Palmer Elementary School, located in Lake Olympia and part of the acclaimed Fort Bend Independent School District, has been recognized for its outstanding drug education program.

The comprehensive program at Palmer was nominated by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Commission on Drug and Alcohol Abuse and Texans' War on Drugs to the U.S. Department of Education for consider-

ation in the National Drug-Free School Recognition Program.

Palmer was one of only 15 schools in the state to receive this honor. The schools will be honored during the TEA's Drug Use Prevention Conference on March 10 in Austin.

Pat Conway, Palmer principal, Sandra Strohm, assistant principal, and Penny Ingram, elementary drug counselor, helped prepare a proposal about the program.