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Sarasota County

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## WOMEN'S REPORT

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# Nancy Enters War Against Drugs

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N.Y. Times News Service

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Toby, one of the third- to fifth-grade students at the Pinellas Park Elementary School here, was explaining the relaxing exercises.

"First you have to get good posture," he said.

Nancy Reagan straightened up.

"Then you have to point your toes to the ceiling, point your legs, pull in your stomach and tighten your arms and face," he continued. "When I count to five you can let go."

Mrs. Reagan, sitting in the center of a semicircle of 18 other youngsters, their parents and school counselors and teachers, followed instructions.

The breathing exercises came next, she was told.

"Don't make them too hard for me," she said, smiling.

The exercises were for relaxation, the children said, when they were angry or frustrated before and after fights and after homework.

The first lady, accompanied by almost a dozen Secret Service men, 20 members of the news corps and three staff aides, was on the first lap of a two-day trip to Florida and Texas. It is her first major trip in support of drug prevention, education and rehabilitation programs. It has been stressed that her visits are not endorsements of any particular programs but support for parental involvement in prevention and treatment of drug-related problems.

It is also her second major trip since her husband became president, the first being to the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer in England.

"She's looking and listening and learning, just like everybody else," said Sheila Tate, her press secretary, at an earlier briefing. "She hopes to

increase the dialogue and the discussion and the understanding and the concern for the problem in the hopes that the experts help find solutions."

"We had more than 17,000 requests for information after Mrs. Reagan appeared on television discussing drug programs," said Dr. Carleton Turner, senior adviser for drug policy, who is also accompanying Mrs. Reagan.

In addition to visiting the elementary school, she was scheduled to go to an open meeting with parents and children enrolled in **Straight Inc.**, a drug treatment facility primarily for adolescents.

That program does not use any government money and accepts only children who have backing from their families. In the first phase, usually 30 to 40 days, the children live in foster homes and are not permitted to see their parents except at these weekly meetings.

In St. Petersburg she observed the Pinellas Operation PAR (Parents' Awareness and Responsibility) Alpha program. One of six partly financed by the state of Florida (there are four others in Florida with no state support), it is a school-based prevention program serving children in the third to fifth grades, from 9 to 12 years old, who show early signs of future personal, social and academic problems.



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Mrs. Reagan was greeted by a small group of onlookers in front of the school (their numbers had swelled to about 300 by the time she left), a school chorus of "Hello Nancy" sung to the tune of "Hello Dolly" and the enthusiastic waves of little hands covered with colored cardboard cutouts of big hands. She waved and smiled as she made her way to the Alpha classroom. But it was only when she was directly involved with the children that she looked completely at ease. She patted the knee of the little boy sitting next to her as his father explained his involvement in the program, smiled for the Instamatic cameras that clicked constantly throughout the meeting and agreed to sign autographs before she left.

She stressed in her few remarks to the youngsters and parents the importance of self-worth, awareness and resisting peer pressure.

"Your own self-worth — If you don't have that you're liable to have difficulty or troubles in finding your way in life," she told the children.

"This is not only true at your age, but as you go on in life," she said. "If you can learn now you're way ahead of the game for later on."

"I have often thought that being a parent is the most important thing we are given to do," she said. "And it's one we have no training for at all. We want to do what's best, but sometimes we don't know what's best. I'm a big believer in family. We've gotten away from it."