

470 of 997 DOCUMENTS

The New York Times

February 16, 1982, Tuesday, Late City Final Edition

**MRS. REAGAN, IN FLORIDA, SEES EFFORTS TO FIGHT DRUG ABUSE****BYLINE:** By ENID NEMY, Special to the New York Times**SECTION:** Section B; Page 10, Column 2; Style Desk**LENGTH:** 1189 words**DATELINE:** ST. PETERSBURG, Fla., Feb. 15

Toby, one of the third- to fifthgrade 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 First Lady, accompanied by almost a dozen Secret Service men, 20 members of the news corps and three 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 are to show support for parental involvement in prevention and treatment of **drug**-related problems.

#### Second Major Trip

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.

"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, White House senior adviser for **drug** policy, who is accompanying Mrs. Reagan.

In addition to visiting the elementary school, she attended a twoand-a-half hour open meeting with 650 parents and 350 young people enrolled in **Straight** Inc., a **drug** treatment program primarily for 12-to 20-year-olds.

The program does not use any government money and accepts only children who have the backing of their families. The program's cost is estimated at \$1,000 to \$2,500 per participant. In the first phase, usually 30 to 40 days, the young people live in foster homes and are not permitted to see their parents except at these weekly meetings. So far, 600

young people have completed the program, and counselors say that 57.8 percent of them are **drug**-free after five years.

**Straight** Inc. is somewhat controversial, and there have been allegations of physical and mental coercion. The American Civil Liberties Union filed suit in Marietta, Ga., against the program. A committee is now working on an out-of-court settlement.

At the Monday meeting, the young people were asked if they had ever "got their younger brothers or sisters high?" A vast majority raised their hands. Many also indicated that they had also given **drugs** to pets and to children for whom they baby-sat.

Most of the young people admitted as well to having been arrested, carrying knives and overdosing. A smaller number raised their hands when asked if they had ever attempted suicide.

Mrs. Reagan, given the opportunity to ask questions, asked if all the young people "had started first on pot." An overwhelming majority of hands were raised, and many also mentioned alcohol.

Did they think that marijuana should be legalized? she asked. The response was overwhelmingly negative. "Do you think pot, or the whole **drug** scene, is glamorized a bit in movies or television?" was her next question. A further raising of hands showed agreement.

In response to a question from Mrs. Reagan about whether their families knew that they were using **drugs**, most of the young people indicated that they had been taking **drugs** for at least six months to a year without their parents' knowledge, and that they were often high at the dinner table without their parents' being aware.

Mrs. Reagan's final question during this part of the meeting was what she could do to help. "Build a whole bunch of **Straights** all over the country," said one participant, to wild applause.

A member of **Straight's** board interjected, "Help the country correctly perceive the problem." "That's what I'm trying to do," said Mrs. Reagan. At the end of the meeting, Mrs. Reagan, her voice choked with emotion and with tears in her eyes, told both the young people and parents, "I'm so proud of you, I really am - and I love you, too."

At that, one of the counselors said, "It's special to know that you sat through our meeting, but your tears are more special." At the St. Petersburg elementary school Mrs. Reagan observed the Pinellas Operation PAR (Parents' Awareness and Responsibility) Alpha program. One of six programs 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 who show signs of future personal, social and academic problems.

Each semester, 20 youngsters who are disruptive in class, are withdrawn or have problems relating to peers are chosen to attend an Alpha Center in the school three days a week for training and group and individual counseling. They return to their classrooms on remaining days. A focal point of the program is the involvement of parents and teachers. The cost is estimated at \$2,000 a student.

Despite a warm reception when she arrived at the school, it was only when Mrs. Reagan was directly involved with the students 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.

#### Importance of Self-Worth

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

MRS. REAGAN, IN FLORIDA, SEES EFFORTS TO FIGHT DRUG ABUSE The New York Times February 16,  
1982, Tuesday, Late City Final Edition

"This is not only true at your age, but as you go on in life," she said. "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."

Mrs. Reagan will visit Dallas on Tuesday. Her schedule there includes a lunch with the Texans' War on **Drugs** Committee and individuals active in the program and a meeting of Richardson Families in Action Group, a parents' unit organized to deal with **drug** problems.

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Illustrations: photo of Nancy Reagan with Florida school children (page A1)

Copyright 1982 The New York Times Company