



**OUTSIDE THE GRADE SCHOOL,** Jackie Anderson (above), a teacher aide, painted fourth-grader Kyleana Blau's hand while Gavin Cody waited his turn. Principal Duane Dorshorst (below) helped third-grader Heather Treese put her hand print on the wall.

## Colored hand prints decorate school wall

The boy lifted his right hand, spread his fingers and gently pushed the dripping blue hand onto the freshly painted white wall.

While this isn't suggested at home, putting red, blue and yellow hand prints on the wall outside Oberlin Elementary School is a tradition at the beginning of the school year.

The colorful handprints and black marker signatures represent the students' signatures on a contract, said Principal Duane Dorshorst, who started the custom almost 10 years ago. By putting their handprints on the wall, the students in kindergarten through sixth grade promise they are going to do their best to follow the school's code of conduct.

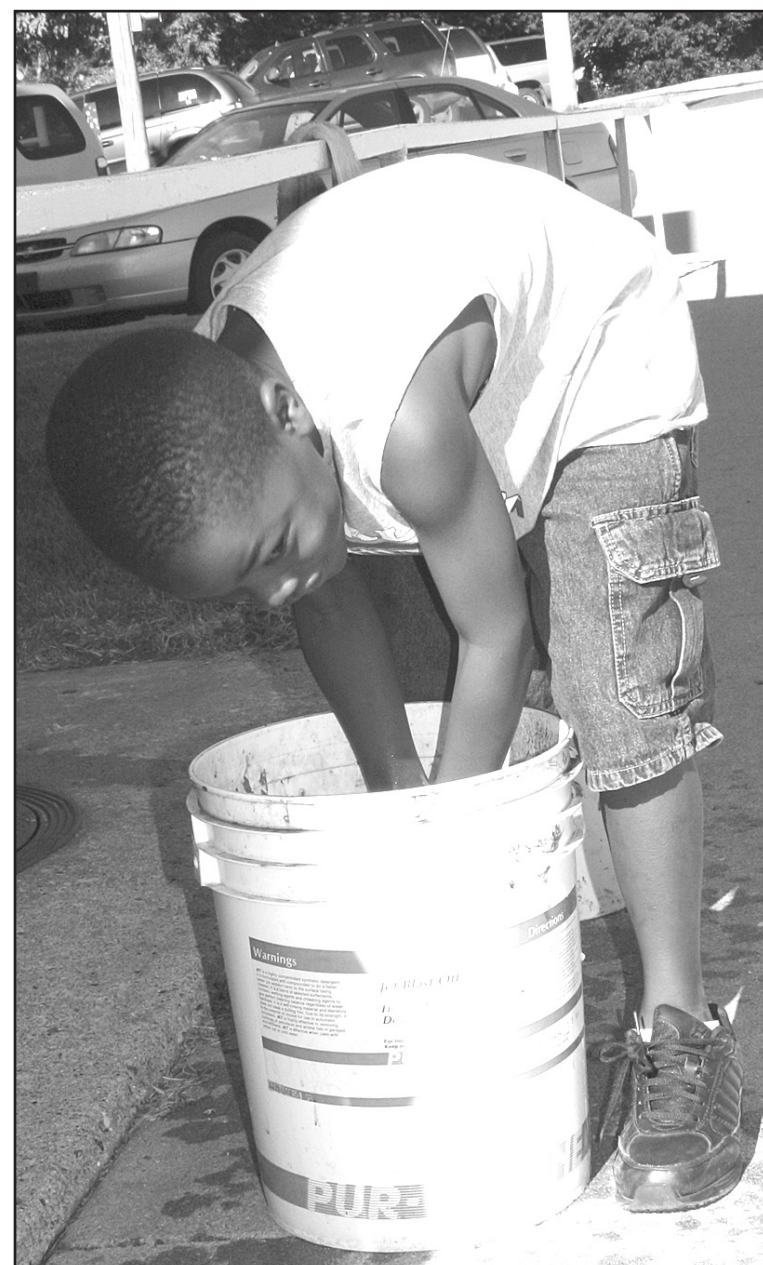
Since the custom began, he said, each class files out of the school and sits on the curb near at the bus drop-off zone.

Mr. Dorshorst talks to each class before the kids get a chance to sign the wall. He said he talks to them about the code of conduct, which the kids recite in the classroom each day. He spends time on the important words in that code, asking the students questions about what each means.

Those key words include excellence, being responsible for their words, actions and choices, pride and respect for themselves and others, and becoming a lifelong learner.

Mr. Dorshorst asks the students if they agree to do their best to do those things. With all of the students agreeing they get to pick from red, blue and yellow paint to have their hands painted.

Teachers and staff members also sign the wall along with the students. Mr. Dorshorst put his also put his hand print on the wall.



**AT THE WASH BUCKET,** third-grader Isiaha Tucker (above) got the paint off his hand before he signed his name near his print. Teacher Carol Wasson (below), one of the students and teacher Judy Elwood signed their names near the Excellence part of the wall.



— Story and photos by Kimberly Davis