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TEACHER'S GUIDE

Mary Beth Bowen

Bullying Prevention Readers Theatre Workshop

OBJECTIVES OF WORKSHOP:

Students will:

- Gain a deeper understanding of how to prevent bullying
- Learn and retain key information about bullying prevention
- Practice reading fluency and speaking skills
- Learn acting skills (voice, body, imagination)
- Strengthen ability to concentrate and work as a team

SUMMARY OF THE PROGRAM:

Bullying is a crucial topic for schools. In this 55-minute workshop, students gain a deeper understanding of how to prevent bullying by acting out a Readers Theatre script about the topic. Guided by Ms. Bowen, they discuss their thoughts and feelings about bullying. Next, they brainstorm strategies for coping with bullies and reflect on what often inhibits bystanders from intervening on behalf of victims. Then, what was a passive topic transforms into an active learning experience as students get up from their desks, scripts in hand, to read and rehearse a Readers Theatre script about the facts they've just discussed. They use expressive voice, body and face to make their script come alive. The workshop culminates with the students performing the script for the classroom teacher. They can also perform the script at a later date. This workshop helps students learn and retain key information about bullying prevention.

I. PRE-WORKSHOP:

A. Students should know:

- 1) Bullying incidents tend to involve three different groups: bullies, victims and bystanders.
- 2) The victim is the person being bullied.
- 3) The bystander is the person who stands by and watches the bullying and does nothing

B. VOCABULARY:

Ms. Bowen will teach these vocabulary words.

acting	Pretending to be someone else
imagination	The part of your brain you use when you pretend
concentration	When you are so focused that nothing can distract you
cooperation	When you follow directions and work well with other people
cue	A signal for the actor to do something
to gesture	To use your hands and arms to communicate silently
a focal point	A point (usually on the wall) that you can focus on to help you concentrate
peer pressure	The pressure you feel to do what everyone else is doing, in order to be accepted by the group.

II. WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS:

Students will:

- Warm up their bodies by creating gestures and sound effects
- Discuss their thoughts and feelings about bullying
- Brainstorm strategies for dealing with bullies
- Reflect on why bystanders are sometimes reluctant to stand up for the victim
- Read aloud a Readers Theatre script about Bullying Prevention
- Create gestures & sound effects for the script
- Rehearse the script
- Perform the script for their classroom teacher

III. WORKSHOP FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

A. How can your product or skill be applied to the curriculum?

Combining spoken word with gesture is a powerful learning tool. It can increase reading comprehension and help students retain curriculum content information. It can be used in any curriculum, from character education to social studies.

Describe extension activities that will extend this workshop experience in the classroom.

Extension Activity #1: (most of these activities were inspired by the work of educator Dr. Rosalind M. Flynn)

Students read the Jerry Spinelli novel Crash, which is about the transformation of a seventh grader “Crash” Coogan from bully to empathetic young man. Ever since first grade, Crash has tormented a “nerd” named Penn Webb. Before students discuss or write about the novel, the teacher reads text to the students and asks them to create gestures and sound effects to bring the story to life. Acting out the story helps students to better understand and connect with the characters.

Example:

Teacher: I will read you descriptions of some key moments from the novel Crash. Your job is to use gesture and sound effects to show how the characters are feeling.

Teacher: It’s the day of the school race to decide who will get to run on the Penn Relays team. There’s only one spot available. Both Crash and Penn want it. Make a gesture and sound effect for Penn, who is determined to win the race. *(Students make a gesture and sound effect)*

Teacher: The race begins! Crash and Penn are running next to each other. They both run as fast as they can. Make a gesture and sound effect for the two boys as they sprint down the track. *(Students make a gesture and sound effect)*

Teacher: Penn and Crash are approaching the finish line. Crash is about to win. But then Crash whispers two words to Penn. Show the look on Crash’s face as you say Crash’s words, “LEAN IN!” *(Students say “lean in” with facial expression)*

Teacher: Penn does what Crash says; Penn leans in and he wins the race. Create a gesture and sound effect for the astonishment Penn feels when he realizes that he has won! *(Students make a gesture and sound effect)*

Teacher: The spectators go wild. Make a gesture and sound effect for the crowd cheering for Penn. *(Students make a gesture and sound effect)*

Teacher: This is the first time in Crash’s life that he has ever lost a race. Make a gesture and sound effect for Crash as he thinks to himself that there are more important things in life than winning. *(Students make a gesture and sound effect)*

Teacher: Penn realizes that Crash let him win; that Crash gave up his dreams of victory so Penn could run in the Penn Relays. Make a gesture and sound effect for Penn reevaluating how he feels about Crash. (*Students make a gesture and sound effect*)

Teacher: Make a gesture and sound effect for both Crash and Penn, who over the next few months, become the best of friends. (*Students make a gesture and sound effect*)

Teacher asks class to discuss or write about Crash's gradual evolution from bully to good friend.

Extension Activity #2: (from the work of educator Lenore Blank Kelner)

When studying vocabulary words, students can use gesture to increase comprehension.

The teacher writes definitions of vocabulary words on the board and ask the class to create a gesture - or a sequence of gestures – for the underlined words.

Example: “An avalanche is made up of stones or snow rolling down a mountain.”

Guided by the teacher, students brainstorm gestures for the underlined words. The teacher helps the students decide which gesture is most effective. The students read aloud the entire sentence and practice each gesture. When the students are ready, the teacher prompts them to stand at their desks. The students perform the sentence, speaking and gesturing in unison.

Extension Activity #3: Using gestures to act out curriculum text

Students are learning facts about Ancient Egypt. The teacher gives small groups of students slips of paper containing sentences about Ancient Egypt, with some of the words underlined. Each group has a few minutes to create a gesture for each of the underlined words. Then each group practices performing the gestures while speaking the sentences in unison. When the groups are ready, the teacher directs them to sit as an audience. The teacher calls each group to the front of the classroom. Each group performs its “gesture sentences” for the class.

Examples:

Group #1:

Hmmn, Let's think! In ancient times, how did people choose where they wanted to live?

No! We don't want to live in the hot desert!

Group #2:

Something that influenced people's choice of where to live was topography. Huh?

Topography refers to the shape and elevation of the land.

Group #3:

Topography includes features like steep mountains, flat valleys, flat plains, and hot, dry deserts. By the way, deserts are terrible for farming – they're too hot!

Group #4:

Farmers in Ancient Egypt preferred to settle in flat and open areas such as plains and valleys. You'd be crazy to try to grow crops on a mountain, because a mountain has cold temperatures and rocky soil.

Group #5:

Farmers were happy if they settled in the large and flat spaces of the coastal plains and river valleys. Why? Because the flat plains and river valleys gave the farmers lots of room to plant crops!

Group #6:

And here's another reason why farmers loved the flat and open areas of river valleys. The rich soil of the river valleys was irrigated by a river and nourished with silt. That made the soil perfect for growing crops.

Extension Activity #4:

When students get up in front of the class to tell a story, read a story or present a book report, the teacher asks them to use gestures and sound effects to describe the characters and actions of the story.

Examples:

* Teacher: Can you show us a gesture and sound effect for Laura when she realized that Pa was lost in the blizzard?

* Teacher: Can you show us a gesture and sound effect for the blizzard wind whipping the snow against the log cabin?

* Teacher: Can you show us a gesture and sound effect for how Laura reacted when Pa walked through the door?

Extension Activity #5:

Students are studying a period of history (e.g. Jamestown's "Starving Time"). The teacher reads social studies text to students; then asks them to create gestures and sound effects to bring the story to life. Acting out the story helps students to better understand the text.

Example: Excerpt from "The Starving Time" copyright © 2012 Mary Beth Bowen

Teacher: I will read you a story about the Jamestown colony. Your job is to use gesture and sound effects to bring the story to life.

H) The Jamestown settlers do not do well at farming. One of the problems is that many of the colonists are rich aristocrats who don't want to do the hard work of clearing, planting and plowing fields. Make a gesture and sound effect for a rich gentleman colonist who refuses to do any farm work. *(Students make a gesture and sound effect)*

I) To increase Jamestown's food supply, Captain John Smith imposes strict rules requiring every single colonist to work in the fields. Captain Smith threatens everyone with these words, "if you do not work, you will not eat!" To make sure the colonists understand him, he says it again. Make a gesture for Captain Smith as you forcefully say his words. *(Students say Captain Smith's words and make a gesture)*

J) Even with everyone in the colony working, the Jamestown settlers are not able to grow enough food to feed themselves. Eventually, almost all their food is provided through trade with the local Native American Indians. The person who is the most skilled at trading with the Indians is Captain Smith. Make a gesture and sound effect for Captain Smith, who is offering copper and glass beads to the Indians, in exchange for corn, beans and squash. *(Students make a gesture and sound effect)*

K) Captain Smith's strong leadership holds the colony of Jamestown together. But then Captain Smith suffers a terrible injury. It happens while he is sleeping with a small bag of gunpowder tied to his waist. Nearby, a friend of Captain Smith is smoking a pipe. A spark from the pipe ignites the bag of gunpowder and sets it ablaze. Make a gesture for Captain Smith waking up to discover that his shirt is on fire. *(Students make a gesture and sound effect)*

L) Captain Smith is so badly burned that he leaves Jamestown and sails home to England for medical treatment. Many of the colonists are worried that without Captain Smith, the colony of Jamestown will fall apart. Make a gesture for the Jamestown colonists, anxiously waving goodbye to Captain Smith. *(Students make a gesture and sound effect)*

M) After Captain Smith leaves Virginia to go back to England, the leader of the Indians, Chief Powhatan, decides he wants *all* the English settlers to leave. Chief Powhatan stops all trade with the Jamestown colony, which cuts off the colonists' food supply. Make a gesture and sound effect for Chief Powhatan telling the Jamestown colonists to leave or starve to death. *(Students make a gesture and sound effect)*

N) It's been about a month since Chief Powhatan cut off the food supplies, but already the situation in Jamestown is desperate. The English colonists – all 500 of them – have no food to eat. A few people are beginning to starve to death. Make a gesture and sound effect for a colonist who is so hungry that he or she is about to eat a piece of shoe leather. *(Students make a gesture and sound effect)*

IV. What student resources or books would you recommend to extend your performance?

Any storybook, chapter book or social studies text can be dramatized with gesture, if the story contains characters who experience problems or conflict.

V. What teacher resources or books would you recommend to extend your performance?

Flynn, Rosalind M. Dramatizing the Content with Curriculum-Based Readers Theatre, Grades 6-12. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2007. This book is currently out-of-print, but can be ordered at <https://wwwcreatespace.com/3721357>

Kelner, Lenore Blank. The Creative Classroom: A Guide for Using Creative Drama in the Classroom, PreK-6. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1993

Kelner, Lenore Blank. 1990. Creative Drama in the Elementary Classroom. Video Cassette. Silver Spring, Md. Interact Story Theatre.