投稿類別：英語寫作類

篇名：

Stop School Bullying by Reading Picture Books

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I. Introduction

Due to the increasing number of school bullying cases, the Ministry of Education started a campaign to build a friendly campus. Based on the document by the Ministry of Education, schools should hold a series of activities “to build a safe, warm and suitable surroundings, and to construct a healthy, harmonious and friendly atmosphere.” (the Ministry of Education, 2011)

As to our New Taipei City Bureau of Education, our mayor regarded the first week of last semester as “Friendly Campus Week”. With 293 schools, 41,000 students and parental representatives, he showed his determination to stop school bullying at exactly 8:00 a.m. on February 16, 2011. (New Taipei City Education Monthly, 2011) In addition, each class had to hold a class meeting to discuss how to stop school bullying. At first, we thought it was another boring promotion. However, instead of reading one rule after another in the official document by the school, our homeroom teacher showed PPT of two picture books on school bullying, which appealed to us a lot and triggered our motivation to study the topic. Thus, this research aims to investigate our classmates’ viewpoints toward our teacher’s another way of a class meeting on school bullying. Through our classmates’ worksheets, we intend to explore how it worked to make us more acquainted with school bullying.

II. Thesis

A. Review of Literature

Our teacher provided us with two picture books on school bullying: Stop Picking on Me (Pat Thomas, 2000) and Not My Fault (Leif Kristiansson & Dick Stenberg, 2006).

1. Stop Picking on Me (Pat Thomas, 2000)

(1) Summary

This book explores the subject of school bullying and suggests ways to get rid of this upsetting experience.

(2) Something about the bullies
(a) How do they bully others?

a-1. Hurting your bodies

“Bullies enjoy hurting other people.” (P.8) As is shown on the right, the bullies hurt the girl by pulling her hair. Even worse, they hit the girl.

a-2. Hurting your feelings

“For example, they will tease you “because of the clothes you are wearing.” (P13) Sometimes a bully will “leave you out of games and groups.” (P.10) As is illustrated on the left, a boy was counted out of a ball game. In this way, they make the boy feel lonely and unloved.

(b) Why do they become bullies?

b-1. Feeling more powerful

“Doing this makes them feel more powerful.” (P.17) As is shown on the right, the boy smiles while thinking of bulling another guy. He obtains pleasure and power by harming others.

b-2. Suffering from being bullied before

“Kids who act like bullies have probably been bullied themselves.” (P.14) According to Pat Thomas, they may be bullied by other kids, their parents or other adults, which leads to a vicious circle.

(3) Something about the bullied

(a) How are they bullied?
“Bullies don’t always hurt your bodies—they can hurt your feelings as well.” (P.9) In other words, the bullied ones are treated cruelly both in bodies and in feelings. Anyway, what the bullies do is “make you feel like it’s your fault.” (P.9) In fact, it isn’t your fault. By doing so, they make you feel inferior.

(b) How do the bullied feel?

“It can make you feel scared or angry, miserable or hurt.” (P.18). As a result, they can not fall asleep. Even they do sleep, they still have nightmares. What’s far worse, “you may not feel like eating or going to school anymore.” (P.19) Thus, victims feel too frightened to attend school.

(4) Ways to stop bullying

In this book, the author provides us with two ways. One way is that we can “talk to someone about it.” (P.22) If you keep it to yourself, the bullies will keep on hurting you. The other way is that “feeling good about yourself and liking yourself is the best way.” (P.25) The aim of the bullies is to hurt either your body or your feeling. When the bullies find they can’t hurt you, they will stop bullying.


(1) Summary

After a boy is bullied in the schoolyard, his classmates provide excuses for the reasons why they acted that way.

(2) Bullies’ excuses

(a) Blaming other bullies

The bully doesn’t think it is his or her fault because he or she is not the only one or the first one to hit the boy. They offer excuses such as “I didn’t hit him first.” (P.7) or “I hit him too….Everyone was hitting him, so you can’t blame me.” (P.15) Anyway, they try to convince the teacher that they are not the ones to be responsible for.
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(b) Blaming the bullied

The bully tries to make his or her behavior sound reasonable, so he or she will say, “I always thought he was weird, anyway.” (P.8) or “If he gets picked on, maybe he should blame himself.” (P.9)

(3) Bystanders’ excuses

(a) Feeling of fear

Some witnesses are so frightened that they choose to keep silent. They give such excuses as “I was really scared, and there wasn’t any way to help, so I just stood on the side and watched…”(P.4) or “I know I should’ve gone and told a teacher, but I was afraid.” (P.12) In other words, they are afraid of being bullied, too.

(b) Feeling of indifference

Other witnesses suppose it has nothing to do with them, so they choose to be onlookers. They provide excuses like “Even though I saw it and know what happened, it wasn’t my fault!” (P.3) or “He didn’t say anything, so we just stood on the side watching.” (P.14)

B. Anti-bullying activities in our class

1. Two picture books about bullying

In class, our teacher showed us two picture books on school bullying: Stop Picking on Me (Pat Thomas, 2000) and Not My Fault (Leif Kristiansson & Dick Stenberg, 2006).

2. Finish the worksheet

After reading the two books, our teacher asked us to finish the worksheet. There are only two questions: one is to choose the meanest kid among the fourteen pupils on the book Not My Fault (Leif Kristiansson & Dick Stenberg, 2006); the other is to share our viewpoints as to how to stop school bullying.

3. Share our viewpoints
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After gathering the sheets, we analyze the data and print it on our *Class Weekly*. In this way, we can share each others’ opinions.

C. Data analysis

There are 42 students in our class, so our homeroom teacher sent out 42 worksheets and received all valid ones.

1. Who is the worst one among the fourteen pupils in *Not My Fault?* Why?

(1) Top three ones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Excuse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Speaker 1]</td>
<td>“I didn’t hit him first. Someone else hit him first, so it wasn’t my fault.” (P.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Speaker 2]</td>
<td>“A lot of people hit him. Actually, everyone hit him. I hit him, too, but only a few times ……” (P.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Speaker 3]</td>
<td>“This whole thing wasn’t strange at all. If he gets picked on, maybe he should blame himself.” (P.10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 1 Top Three Bullies](image)

According to Figure 1, the girl who says, “I didn’t hit him first. Someone else hit him first, so it wasn’t my fault,” gets 15 votes. Over one-third of our classmates look on her as the meanest kid. The following are their viewpoints:

- Who hit first is not the point. Anyway, hitting others is wrong.
- She hit somebody, but she didn’t think she was wrong.
- Why could she think it was nothing as long as she didn’t hit first? It is wrong to hit others.
- When someone does something wrong, it doesn’t mean I may well do something wrong. She is to blamed.
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As to another two pupils, each gets 7 votes, so they rank the second. The following are the opinions about the girl who says, “This whole thing wasn’t strange at all. If he gets picked on, maybe he should blame himself.”

- We can’t bully someone because of his odd behavior.
- You don’t have to like someone, but you can’t bully him because you don’t like him.
- She should stand in the shoes of the bullied. Are you to be blamed if bullied?

As to the boy who says, “A lot of people hit him. Actually, everyone hit him. I hit him, too, but only a few times …,” our classmates’ opinions are as follows:

- What counts lies in hitting itself instead of the number of hitting.
- Hitting others means making errors. He can’t make any excuses.

(2) Those who get no vote

On the basis of Figure 1, the top three bullies cover 29 out of 42. Interestingly, there are four pupils who get no vote. We find they have one thing in common—they are bystanders. Basically, they feel sympathy for the bullied boy, but they are too scared to tell teachers or to give him a hand. Actually, “bystanders reinforce the behaviors of bullying indirectly.” (Chen, 2011) A great number of the bullies feel that they perform justice when bullying others. Therefore, when nobody stops them, the bullies take it for granted that everyone backs them up. Furthermore, “the bully knows he or she has no sufficient reasons to bully others, so he or she will ask a group of people to do with him or her.” (Chen, 2011) Therefore, when bystanders don’t give the bullied a hand or inform teachers, the bullies will assume that everyone supports them. In this way, the condition of bullying will become more and more serious. To sum up, it is everyone’s responsibility to stop school bullying.

2. What can I do when finding someone bullied?

Our homeroom teacher suggested that we find ways in the book “Stop Picking on Me” (Pat Thomas, 2000) or propose our own ideas. The following are our classmates’ ideas:

- Call for the police.
- Stand up against bullying.
- Ask teachers or parents for help.
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- Call for everyone to stop bullying.
- Inform teachers as soon as possible.
- Ask the bullied to talk to the adults.
- Give the bullied more confidence.
- Record what the bully does and show it to the teacher.
- Encourage the bullied to interact more with others.

From what is mentioned above, everyone knows how to deal with the bullying cases. Among these answers, what appeals to us most is to record the behaviors of the bully, which isn’t found in the picture book. Actually, we all agree that it is the best way to let the film tell the truth.

III. Conclusion

What a special class meeting and an unusual way to know school bullying. It helps us learn a serious topic in an easy and an interesting way. It works because of the following two reasons:

1. Power of pictures

As a proverb goes, “Good medicine tastes bitter.” That’s why bitter medicine is often coated with sugar, which makes it easier to be swallowed. As a matter of fact, the medicine of stopping school bullying tastes much bitterer. In order to make us take the bitter medicine of stopping school bullying, our homeroom teacher coats it with picture books. A picture book is easy to read because it consists of big pictures with a few words. To read pictures is much easier than to read words. Sometimes, pictures reveal more than words. Take for example, the picture on the right. Though the page doesn’t “show” what the bullies say, it seems that we can clearly hear what they are talking about. That’s the power of pictures.

2. Power of sharing

After reading the two picture books, we wrote down our viewpoints and reflections. After that, the teacher published our ideas to everyone. As far as teenagers are concerned, we prefer sharing our companions’ points of view to sharing the teachers’ or the adults’. By sharing each other’s ideas, we achieve a consensus about stopping school bullying.
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What an interesting and impressive class! By reading picture books, we learn how to stop school bullying.

IV. Reference

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