

Reading with Ms. Jill

We have been reading I Am Enough by Grace Byers.

The book was a great tool for enabling the friends to observe the differences among the friends.

So... we looked at our clothing, shoes, skin color, eye color, we looked at each other's hair color and texture and we spoke to each other and named what we saw.

The book modeled friends of all different colors and we discussed how even though our skin color is different, we are not any different on the inside.

There is an image of a girl in a wheelchair.

I asked them if they understood why someone might need to be in a wheelchair. We talked about the children's experiences with older neighbors and family members who use wheelchairs. For such a young person they thought the reason they would be in a wheelchair included:

"they got hurt." "They were in the hospital." "They are different"

I asked them if they would be friends with someone in a wheelchair and they all said that they would and not only that, but that they would help them.

There is also a moment in the book where someone falls down during a race and we spoke about how we deal with our friends when they get hurt.

They said, "be kind." "help them" "let the teacher know" "hug them."

They were very compassionate and engaged.

We have also been reading Suki's Kimono with the slightly older students. Suki was gifted a kimono from her grandmother and when she wore it (or thought about wearing it) she felt her grandmother's confidence infused into her own feelings, and that it didn't matter if her friends didn't value her kimono or thought it was strange.

The themes included

- Heritage
- Grandmother's love
- Teasing
- Confidence
- Resilience
- Standing on your own

We have learned a few Japanese words (which we are practicing through repetition).

This story touches on confidence, which I think is most important for life.

We defined confidence as BELIEVING IN YOURSELF.

I did an exercise with them where I asked them to SIT with Confidence and then STAND with Confidence. (The younger friends interpreted Confidence as YELLING- so more work to be done there.)

We did an exercise where we were thinking about something incredibly important to them and then consider if they infused it with the love of their family. I had them imagine it and feel it and see it in their mind's eye and it was spectacular to see how their faces changed and how much reverence they all held for the things that have meaning for them given from their loved ones. Just like Suki's kimono.

I explained to them that this is where Suki's confidence came from. The love infused from the gift given to her from her grandmother was so deeply felt that it didn't matter to her if others thought she looked strange. It helped give great context to the story.

It's also a wonderful story about what it means to take risks and to feel deep pride in who you are. Everyone has felt alone. But we all know what Love feels like and how far it carries us and how deeply it carries us back to ourselves. We also spoke about BRAVERY and how having courage and believing in yourself are connected.

Friends identified brave people in their lives, and people who were confident like Suki. One friend already shared that she was going to the doctor for a flu shot and she was going to be very brave.