

Last Thursday and Friday afternoons were busy in our cafeteria. The counseling staff took over the place for another in a series of character education assemblies. Each month we have a character word that is the focus of our morning announcements and *Caught Being Good* initiative. Earlier in the year I attended one of the assemblies on self-control, that word of the month. How it means to have control over your body and voice in school. How to keep your cool on the playground and in class. This month the word is kindness. Our assemblies were on what it means to be kind.

We had three different assemblies dividing the students by grade levels. Being kind means something very different to a PK/K student than it does to a 5<sup>th</sup> grader. The language used and the skills demonstrated can be tailored to the needs of the students. And the issues. So we had skits and songs and a PowerPoint presentation that dealt with including everyone, making friends, helping each other in words and actions that were understandable to the specific audience.

Ms. Mosby, Ms. Diesner and Ms. Ryden have been the leaders in developing these programs. They use the morning announcements so the message can be heard across the school. They have a monthly celebration of students who are caught showing self-control or responsibility. The focus of the Peace classes for the month relates to our word. Peace class participants created one of the skits that they then performed for their classmates. A knock-off of a recent movie, they showed how kindness can be passed along throughout the day.

There was also a little review of bullying and what it is and isn't. A few years ago the phrase of the day was "he's being mean to me." The emphasis on bullying had not become the center of media attention it is today. Instead we hear a lot about being bullied. But the reality is he's being mean to me really does describe the situation very accurately. There is very little bullying at Lafayette. Not in the sense that power is involved or the action is repeated. But there is some mean kid behavior. There has always been some kind of mean kid behavior. From name calling to my pop's better than your pop to physical challenges, this is something that kids just do. We hope that assemblies like those last week help to make it less acceptable, but it is something kids see and do on a daily basis. Will we make it disappear completely? No, I don't think so. But we are trying to make it less acceptable and are giving students tools to learn to deal with it.

We have other character words to explore this year. Honesty, determination and respect are still on the calendar. There will be other celebrations and assemblies. Students will explore the meaning of these words and will learn how to incorporate the values in their daily actions. I look forward to these events. We have some very talented teachers who took to the stage last week. Our student actors and playwrights were wonderful. And we always enjoy a chance to sing as a school with Ms. Ryden as the leader. Character education is hot right now. Pre-canned programs are popping up all the time. But at Lafayette we are creating our own program with our own focus. We are making what we do match the needs of our students. And we think it is working. Learning to be kind and have self-control. Important skills for the future.