



Run Like A Girl: Don't Judge Me

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Recently, I asked my 5-year-old son “what does it mean to act like a girl?” He told me that girls play “nice things,” and boys play “bad things, like rough games.” I brought these issues to my class. Students observed and interviewed their peers from kindergarten through high school to study the social norms and common stereotypes that exist within our school community. Through reading and reflection, students explored their own identity and the stereotypes that define (or don't define) them. Each student kept a blog and wrote a memoir about a time she felt mistreated. A mixed media artwork was created and students wrote several six word memoirs that conveyed a message or a final reflection. As a culmination, students were challenged to teach their community the lessons that they learned. The class decided on four final products: producing and presenting a play, raising money to fashion their own t-shirt design and silk screen printing them, inventing Friendship Fridays and creating a short film about the process, and building a website to streamline our products (www.htencsocialstereotypes.com).

Teacher Reflection

I am proud of my students' ability to ask difficult questions: How should girls act? How should boys act? Are boys and girls really that different? What is gender, and why do we separate girls and boys? Yet surprisingly, this work did not bring us closer initially. We bickered more. For example, one day, a game of tag turned into a fierce game of girls versus boys that ended with several injuries and lots of crying and calls home. It seems as though our thoughts changed and became better articulated, but our behaviors remained unchanged for the time being. The process was indeed messy, but our questions were answered and our work continues to change the negative stereotypes that exist in our community.

Student Reflection

What I learned during this project is that we shouldn't judge other genders. We're all humans.
—Matteo

I learned that it is hard to make a website by yourself, but easier with friends.
—Matias

To learn more about this project and others, visit <http://mrjeremy-manger.weebly.com/project-descriptions.html>