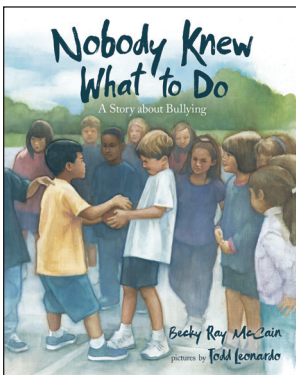


Discussing Tough Topics:

Resources for Classrooms Based on *Nobody Knew What to Do* (Bullying), *The Alphabet War* (Learning Differences), and *Not in Room 204* (Abuse)

Bullying, learning differences, and abuse are all incredibly difficult subjects to discuss with your students and should be handled thoughtfully. Reading books about these subjects helps to contextualize these nuanced and sensitive topics. It is important to pre-read these books all the way through and thoroughly prep and anticipate questions that may come up. Additionally, always let your students know that they are in a safe space and can come to you with any concerns or questions they may have.



Nobody Knew What to Do

A Story about Bullying

By Becky Ray McCain

Pictures by Todd Leonardo

Ages 4-8 // Grades P-3

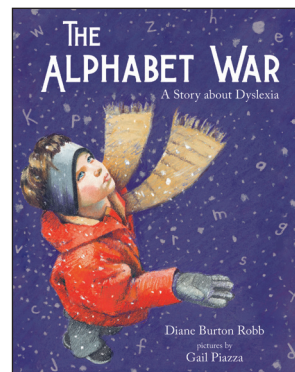
978-0-8075-5713-6

How to Talk About the Book

When talking and reading about bullying, it's important to remember that kids may not know what to do if they see others being bullied or if they're being bullied themselves. *Nobody Knew What to Do* by Becky Ray McCain and Todd Leonardo helps students understand that standing up for classmates is an important part of bully prevention. Talking about bullying at the beginning of the year and establishing open channels of communication and expectations of kindness is important to building a harmonious community for the school year. Students should be reminded that kindness is necessary in your community and that it is important to stand up for friends who are being mistreated. Remind students that they should tell a trusted adult who can help them resolve the conflict. Conflict resolution is difficult at any age, but giving students the tools to attempt it is important as well. For example, build in the language of requests into your community practice. If a student dislikes something that another student is doing they can use a request such as "When you do x, it makes me feel x. Do you agree to stop doing x?" This empowers the students to try to resolve small conflicts together. If things escalate, students should feel comfortable enough to tell a trusted adult who can help mediate as well. Building in expectations of kindness and reading books that address the topic can help give students the tools they need to stop bullying.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you notice is happening in the cover illustration? (cover)
2. What would you do if you saw someone being bullied or picked on? (cover)
3. Do you think that ignoring the behaviors toward Ray helped? Why or why not? (p. 3)
4. How do you think all of the kids felt when they saw Ray being picked on? Do you think this contributed to how they responded? (p. 8)
5. Do you think telling the teacher was a good idea? Why or why not? (p. 13)
6. If you see someone being picked on, what are some things you can do? (p. 20)



The Alphabet War

A Story about Dyslexia

By Diane Burton Robb

Pictures by Gail Piazza

Ages 4-8 // Grades P-3

978-0-8075-0304-1

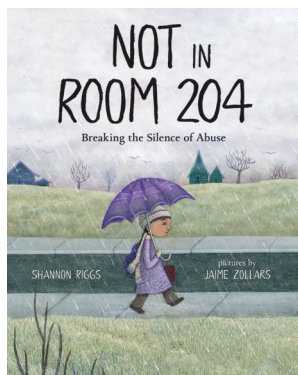
How to Talk About the Book

The Alphabet War by Diane Burton Robb and Gail Piazza uses metaphors and beautiful illustrations to describe what it feels like to be dyslexic. The important message to stress when reading this book is that different does not mean worse or bad. As educators, it is our job to celebrate divergent thinkers and students with learning differences.

This book helps to demystify what it feels like to be dyslexic in a traditional classroom setting. As with all learning differences, be careful not to identify children with learning differences, but celebrate their strengths without singling them out. Make celebrating different approaches to problem solving a regular part of your classroom learning and sharing.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think the author means by “Alphabet War?” Why does Adam feel like he is in a war? (p. 5)
2. Why do you think Adam needed to shut out the “Alphabet War?” How do you think he was feeling when he started to day dream? (p. 7)
3. How do you think Adam was feeling when he realized that his friends were so far ahead of him in reading? (p. 15)
4. Do you think that people learn differently? Why or why not? Use your personal experiences in class and the text to support your idea. (p. 17)
5. How did Mr. Chase help Adam feel successful? Share a time that you felt successful in class. What made you feel that way? (p. 25)



Not in Room 204

Breaking the Silence of Abuse

By Shannon Riggs

Pictures by Jaime Zollars

Ages 4-8 // Grades P-3

978-0-8075-5766-2

How to Talk About the Book

Discussing sexual abuse with children can be incredibly difficult; therefore it's important to be thoughtful in how you choose to approach the topic and use developmentally appropriate language during discussions. Keep in mind that children may be confused and ask questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. Using phrases such as “private areas,” “bathing suit areas,” “uh-oh feeling,” or “good touch-bad touch,” make it easier for young children to understand what you mean specifically. In addition to discussing what to do if a child has been abused, it is also important to teach children

about consent in everyday non-threatening environments. Building these lessons into your daily practice will make discussing this topic more meaningful and give children the chance to practice advocating for themselves. This book should be used in the middle of the school year so you can build trust with your students and if they need to confide in you, they will feel comfortable doing so. Sadly, sexual abuse happens, but it is important to empower young children with the knowledge that they have control over their bodies and they have people in their lives who can help them if they need it.

Discussion Questions

1. Think about all the rules that Mrs. Salvador has in Room 204. Why do you think there are so many rules in Room 204? How would they make you feel if you were a student in Room 204? (p. 5-12)
2. At the parent teacher conference, Mrs. Salvador asks Regina's mom to let Regina answer the question about her quietness. Why is it important to Mrs. Salvador that Regina gets to answer her question about why she is so quiet? (p. 13)
3. Why do you think Regina isn't eager to start her vacation? (p. 17)
4. Do you think Regina trusts Mrs. Salvador? Why or why not? (p. 30)
5. How do you think Regina felt after she told Mrs. Salvador about her secret? What makes you say that? (p. 33)

For additional educational books that address a variety of issues and topics, visit **Albert Whitman & Company** online at www.albertwhitman.com.

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