

[00:00:00] Speaker A: What's really nice about a wordless picture book is that there's so much meaning and inference that students are bringing into the conversation. And so if there's beginning to be some tension or we might refer to it as drama in our day rather than trying to talk about that moment. Right. Because then what we're getting is we're getting everybody's perspective or. No, that's not true. That's not what I did. You know, like, it's. It can really feel a little convoluted. I think we're bringing this wordless picture book, so now we're making sense of it together.

It's becoming a community read.

Sometimes it is difficult for students to know how to get along with one another.

They can exclude each other or be unkind.

Sometimes a student makes a mistake and it's difficult to know how to forgive them and still be friends with them.

We share two wordless picture books that will help navigate how to respond to these situations.

This is Sticky Hope.

[00:01:19] Speaker B: Ruth. I was thinking about books that I pull out at this time of year or like, after school has started. And like, you've read all the back to school books, you've started reading books that align with your curriculum. But you're also starting to see, like, those behaviors start to start to pick up. You're seeing the nitpickiness of things happen. And two books came to mind that I use pretty frequently in all kinds of grades from kindergarten all the way up. I've used them with sixth graders.

And I can envision them being used with even older kids.

One is called I Walk with Vanessa, and the next one is I Forgive Alex. And they're written by this really awesome French couple, and they have a pen name together called Cara Scott.

I had to practice saying that so that I didn't mess that up for them.

But it's this really beautiful partner partnership of books, I guess.

And it's. They're wordless books, right? So they're. I have a huge passion for wordless books. I think you can do all kinds of amazing things with them. But what I use these books for is really looking at social situations, real life problems that happen to kids of all ages, and giving kids the opportunity to narrate what they're noticing because that gives me insight into what they've experienced and what they see as important to acknowledge and to then problem solve, like to make predictions and do all of the important things that you're doing as a reader and problem solve the social situation. So the first book I Walk With Vanessa is about this little girl who's walking to school, and this older boy starts picking on her. She feels really, like, sad at school. She kind of looks withdrawn in the images. And, um. And the other kids are noticing, and they choose to walk to school with Vanessa. So, like, at the start of the book, she's walking alone. By the end of the book, there's, like, 40 kids walking with her, and you still notice that other kid who had been picking on her. Like, he's in all of the pictures, and you're talking about, like, what's happening to him and what's happening to Vanessa and what's happening to the other kids because of the choices that they're making.

And at first, it's really easy for kids to, like, narrate it and say, like, oh, that kid shouldn't be doing

that. He shouldn't be acting that way. And then you start to have them think through why he might be acting that way and what might be leading to those situations. And how could Vanessa and the other children be responding in a way that welcomes him in and allows him to, like, kind of learn where he belongs and how to engage in community in a way that eventually even the kindergartners are able to take on the different roles of the. Of the story and think about, like, hey, like, I've actually seen this happening on the playground, or I've seen someone be left out or someone being mean to someone else, and maybe they're even saying, like, oh, I've done something like that, or I've had that happen to me.

[00:04:31] Speaker A: And.

[00:04:31] Speaker B: And they're able to have these conversations. And it brings, like, it starts as this abstract concept of this Vanessa girl and all these other characters that have no names in this wordless picture book to. It brings it right back to themselves. And you're able to have those conversations, which at this time of year is. Is just really important to be continuing these conversations and kind of lifting the level of those conversations.

[00:04:58] Speaker A: What's really nice about a wordless picture book is that there's so much meaning and inference that students are bringing into the conversation. And so if there's beginning to be some tension or we might refer to it as drama in our day, rather than trying to talk about that moment, right? Because then what we're getting is we're getting everybody's perspective or. No, that's not true. That's not what I did. You know, like, it's. It can really feel a little convoluted. I think we're bringing this Wordless picture book. So now we're making sense of it together.

It's becoming a community read. We can approach it from a lot of different angles. So it doesn't become so much about the situation on the playground or in the lunchroom or the hallway or during math, whatever it is. But it becomes about, well, how, how should we respond as a community or even developing some empathy about how do those actions affect others. And so that I'm really glad that you wanted to share these books because they're, they're really appropriate for the moment that we're in. We're past setting the classroom vision and imagining what we're going to be like as a community, where we're getting past kind of the sweet spot or what we might refer to as the honeymoon period. And now, hey, let's bring this book out. What about the other one, Becca?

[00:06:34] Speaker B: So I forgive Alex is, is a, is the newer one and it's one that I've used with younger grades but haven't had a chance to bring to the older grades. And I can't this year I get to work with some older grades and I can't wait to bring it to, to kids with, with just like, you know, the more experienced perspectives. And it's watching a child, Alex, make a mistake, choose to do something that has a pretty big impact on the community and, and the person that it's done to. I don't want to say too much, but it's important.

Gets to choose whether they are going to stand next to Alex and be like, ooh, you're acknowledging the mistake that you made and I forgive you. Like, let's move on or, or, or walk away and exclude, continue to exclude Alex. And the characters align to I walk with Vanessa. So it's like a nice carry on of character and you can kind of use some of the understanding that you've built with the characters. And I walk with Vanessa into like, how would that character respond in this newer situation? And it's a more complex situation that I would say that like, older kids experience. More.

My 13 year old uses this book as reference a lot. Like she imagines that Alex has lied and hidden things and stolen some things that belong to other people and the other people have to make the choice of like, as, as a person in this community, am I going to continue to see Alex as,

as a good person, as someone I want to engage with, or am I going to be excluding of Alex because of these not great choices that Alex made?

And it has started some really big conversations in my house and some really important conversations in my house. But even my kindergartners, even first and second graders that I've read this with, like, really empathize with Alex, because everyone makes mistakes sometimes, right? Everyone makes choices that don't align with the things they've agreed to be a part of, right? Like you've made your classroom vision, you have your charter, and you know how you're supposed to act. And then you, like, do something, like lie or take something you want that you shouldn't have taken or hurt someone on purpose. And you're facing the fact that you just acted in a way that goes against what you agreed to do. And now what?

And it just starts these bigger conversations of, like, how would our community respond? How would our class family respond when this is happening? And, and how do we want to respond, right? Like, who do we want to be in those situations?

It's.

[00:09:20] Speaker A: It's excellent. I'm so happy to hear you talking about these books. It's just a goal we've had for the podcast is, you know, there's kind of every few episodes, we want to share some books or resources that are allowing us to have conversations about tricky things that are happening. But we're having those convers during regulated times. And this is just such an important point, right? Like it used to be, I think sometimes the behavior was catching us off guard. So before. And then we were trying to fix it in the. Fix it probably not the best choice of words. We're trying to work through that in the moment. And what we're really learning and what research is showing us is that if we want students to have the skill, skills to have healthy regulation in moments, tricky moments, then we need to practice that when everybody is regulated. And these books give us an opportunity to tackle some pretty tough behavior in these moments where everybody's feeling like they belong in the community and are relaxed. It could be during a read aloud time, but where we're, we're processing it outside of when it's actually happening within our community.

Becca, I was just thinking, you know, we have some new listeners, which is super exciting. And so I wondered if you just wanted to take a minute to share a little bit about your background and like, you're talking about my kids at home or my kids at school, and you just want to share a little bit about. About that for maybe some listeners who don't, who don't know that about you for sure.

[00:11:02] Speaker B: So at home, I have currently four kids who soon, hopefully in this season of Sticky Hope will be adopted. And my husband Ryan and I started.

We became foster parents almost three years ago now and suddenly had a pretty large sick s sibling group move in. We've had up to seven kids at a time. Right now we have four. These four are siblings and we get to adopt them. And it is a humbling honor to get to be their parents. That I think they're four of the most incredible children in the world. That's probably how parents feel.

But they lived some really extreme trauma and we have had to learn hard and fast how to support them and how to navigate school with them because school isn't really designed to traditional school isn't really designed to respond to kids with trauma in trauma informed ways. Their school has been incredible in learning about how to be trauma informed and respond to these kids.

So much so that this year as a teacher, I'm going to their school.

I am entering my 11th year in education and teaching. I taught third grade for three years, I taught kindergarten for seven years. And this year I'm an early childhood special ed teacher working with kids with pretty significant needs. A lot of those needs being some pretty intensive behaviors.

And it happens to be in the school that my children attend. And I'm super excited and a little bit nervous about that.

That will pose some interesting and also some wonderful situations.

It has given me. Being a foster mom and a soon to be adoptive mom has given me perspective that I never would have had. Right. Like I live in the trenches of tricky behavior several times a day at home.

And the tricky behaviors that we're seeing now are not what we saw at the very beginning. Because I think an important thing to remember is while trauma changes brains and my kids brains have been significantly changed by trauma, healing changes brains too. And I'm watching the beauty of that on a daily basis. I'm watching what healing is doing to my kids brains every day and the different kinds of responses that they're having and their ability to stay regulated for longer periods of time and engage in. In teams and sports and activities and camps. And they do all kinds of things now that two summers ago we never imagined was possible. And it's because healing changes brains too.

And so as teachers, as educators, like we get to be some of the people who, who heal brains, who work alongside these kids and heal brains and like, luckily they have a whole bunch of teachers at this point who have stood in that with us and really helped heal their brains.

That was a really long winded way to say all of that, but those are both really important parts of what I do.

Yeah.

[00:14:25] Speaker A: I think we both have this passion for helping teachers understand just that they have so much influence over healing brains and helping brains change back. And my kids from foster care as well and adopted and older so we're a little farther along of that that growing up journey. Though looking back, I know it's because of teachers that they, their, their brains have been able to change into somewhat well, nourished brains. But they're, they're young adults and they are living independently, doing some good things in the world.

And I don't want to miss the fact that it's because they had teachers who were able to navigate some really, really tricky behavior. And I think that's a lot of the motivation by we are figuring out how to squeeze in this podcast, how we figured out how to squeeze in some writing time because we just want teachers to know that, yeah, this tricky behavior, it can be exhausting and sometimes make us question whether we want to show up at school again and whether, like, I don't deserve to be treated this way. And, and yet the power of a teacher and their ability to change the course of a life is, I think, bigger and stronger and more important today than it has been in any other era in history.

Having conversations about tricky situations during calm times is an important part of creating a community who can navigate tricky behaviors. Using books to open the doors of these conversations is one of our favorite ways to prepare students to weather challenging times.

In our Sticky Hope Notes, we've included these book covers and some questions to help open a discussion about situations your students are learning to navigate.

Download the Sticky Hope Notes at our website, www.stickyhope.com.