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From nobody to somebody

Mark Kerr

Education - Wednesday, February 21, 2007 Updated @ 9:31:59 AM

Students at Linklater Public School will soon be transforming a 'nobody' into a 'somebody.'

No, the students are not participating in a makeover show. Rather, they will be taking part in Who is Nobody?, a program designed to build self-esteem and promote social responsibility.

Kelly Clark, the founder of the program, introduced Nobody to four teachers on Feb. 12 at Sweet's Corners Elementary School. The Rotary Club of Gananoque purchased and donated a kit to Linklater Public School, while the teachers from Sweet's Corners and Rideau Centennial Public School in Portland won the kits at a conference.

The five-step program is designed to allow easy integration into the classroom. A box arrives one day at the classroom. Inside, there is a blank, blue denim doll called Nobody.

The doll lacks character, and it is up to the students over the course of the year to transform Nobody into Somebody.

The first step has students select a living thing. They then must come up with ways of helping out their choice of living thing using their ability and knowledge.

Students have one week during the school year to take home Nobody and complete their task. Once they have completed their good deed, the students create a three dimensional object that is attached to Nobody. Slowly, Nobody becomes Somebody, a doll representing the good deeds of the students.

"The program teaches students that everyone in the class has strengths and value," Ms. Clark said. "Everybody can help Nobody become Somebody."

Students must also draw a picture or write a story detailing their kind act to be included in a class scrapbook. They also present their accomplishments to their classmates.

Ms. Clark said her program demonstrates to students how individual efforts can create a greater whole.

After five years of testing out Who is Nobody?, Ms. Clark has received the support of various Rotary Clubs.

"It is basically a mini-Rotarian project," Ms. Clark said. She added that the Rotarian ideal—service above self—matches what she wanted to accomplish with Who is Nobody?

In addition to helping other living things, students themselves benefit from the program, according to Ms. Clark. Young students feel empowered by being able to explore and discover themselves. "It helps students redirect energy in a positive way," she said.

Linklater teacher Diane Norris learned about the program two weeks ago. She was impressed by Who is Nobody?

"It goes with character education, which the board has a big push on," she said. "This really ties in well."

Danielle Bell of Rideau Centennial Public School said the program was straight forward. "It is laid out well," she said.

The Nobody doll also arrives with teacher and student manuals, homework sheets, the scrapbook, a take-home bag for the doll and several other items.

Fourteen different school boards have used the Who is Nobody? program, while 25 different Rotary Club has supported the program by donating kits to schools.



Linklater Public School teachers Jessica Tamblin and Diane Norris hold up Nobody and Somebody. The dolls are part of the Who is Nobody? program that sees students complete good deeds and then decorate the Nobody doll with representations of their work.

Photo: Mark Kerr

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