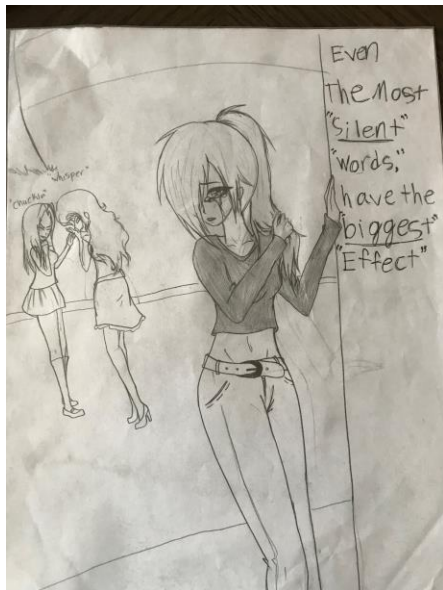


It was a sunny October morning in California when I stood at the open-air entrance to the classroom where I would spend the day working with six class periods of 9<sup>th</sup> grade girls' PE to discuss bullying in school and on-line. It is challenging to be a stranger in a school and have one period to connect with kids, get them engaged, share content and manage the environment. These are processes that can take weeks to cultivate in a regular classroom and I had 45 minutes. I wanted the girls to be comfortable with me so they would participate in discussion. I greeted each girl as she entered the room. Sure, it was a little uncomfortable at first, but it got easier with each new greeting.

As the last girls entered the room before the bell, one young lady shuffled by and didn't seem too interested in being greeted. She kept her head down so as not to make eye contact. I noticed she was carrying a notebook with a very detailed anime drawing on the cover. I complimented her on the drawing and asked if it was hers.

She timidly looked up and said, "Yeah, it's mine. You know anime?"

"Sure," I said, "I think anime is pretty cool. Your drawing is really good, you're talented."



She gave me slight smile and found a seat.

During the discussion on bullying, I asked the girls to draw a picture of what a typical bully looks like. They came up with all kinds of creative depictions of bullying that lead to great discussion. Sometimes I ask to keep a few of the drawings to share with other students or teachers. This same young lady drew an incredible anime picture representing bullying. At the end of the activity I asked her if I could keep her drawing and she said that one of the other girls in her group had already asked for it. I admit, I was disappointed-her drawing was really good!

Oftentimes, as we discuss the drawings and what they represent some of the girls will share personal stories of their experiences with bullying. The anime artist raised her hand and shared her experience with bullying in middle school. She told her story of growing up with diabetes and getting shots during school and her classmates making fun of her. In order to avoid the ridicule she decided to quit taking the shots and ended up in the hospital for many days.

She said, "A lot of times kids don't know the pain they cause."

It was obvious that sharing the story was painful for her and it visibly touched many of the girls in the class.

The bell rang and the class was gone in an instant. Anime Girl amongst them.

For the next three periods I greeted new groups of girls at the door, lead activities and discussions about bullying and listened to a variety of personal stories and bullying experiences.

As I ushered the fourth class of girls out, a familiar face appeared, Anime Girl.

"Hey, I wanted you to have this." She handed me a replica of the picture she drew in first period and ran off.

I hollered, "Thank you," to her back as she disappeared in the sea of students.

I went back into the classroom where the two PE teachers were waiting.

"Do you know that girls' name?" I asked. "I would really like to write her a thank you note."

They both looked at me with blank stares and said, "No, we don't know her name. She never talks in class. We don't really know her."

As educators we sometimes lose sight of what motivated and called us to the profession of teaching—the students. We must take back what has been lost in the environment of high stakes testing and insure that there are no more "Girls with No Name" in any of our classes. For two years I have been looking at the framed picture on my wall that was given to me by Anime Girl. She would be a junior in high school this year and I hope that somebody knows her name.