

Toothpaste squeeze lesson teaches students about anti-bullying

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
November 9 2015 1:10 PM



A tube of toothpaste was helpful recently in teaching an important lesson on bullying to **Katie Linnemeyer's** fifth-grade class at **Cassens Elementary in Edwardsville.**

Linnemeyer's fifth-grade students worked in groups on what was, at first, a mystery lesson. Each group was directed to squeeze a tube of toothpaste onto a plate. Students

were then directed to use toothpicks to put the toothpaste back into the tube. After giving it a good try, the students knew it would be next to impossible to return the toothpaste to the tube.

Linnemeyer told the groups that the toothpaste had a purpose. It represented the words you say. She then asked the students if putting the toothpaste back in the tube was easy or even possible, and she encouraged the students to make the connection to taking back mean or hurtful words to attempting to put toothpaste back in the tube.

At the end of the lesson, she encouraged the students to “AIM” to be kind and supportive of each other.

“It’s essential for teachers to include anti-bullying lessons in their lesson plans,” Cassens Principal Martha Richey said. “The messages are echoed throughout the school during morning meetings and through assemblies and presentations by the school social worker and school psychologist. Anti-bullying messages are posted on bulletin boards and the school marquee. This is how we build a positive, safe, and respectful school community.”

Linnemeyer said lessons like the one she did last week with her classroom are absolutely necessary for children to learn what to do if they recognize the signs of bullying.

“We work with the students on the steps to first try and if those things didn’t work, they should talk with a responsible, trustworthy adult,” she said.

“Toothpaste put out on plate represents words come out of a mouth,” Linnemeyer said. “You can’t put the toothpaste back in the tube once it is gone. Saying I am sorry is like using a toothpick to put toothpaste back in a tube.”

Linnemeyer said teaching has its challenges every day, but it is something she always looks forward to doing.

“I have wanted to be a teacher since I was a little girl,” she said. “I would take my poor dolls and make them students and I always used my brother as a student. I was always interested in it.”

Linnemeyer said she values the administration in the Edwardsville School District to the principal, and the administrators at Hadley House and Dr. Lynda Andre.”

“I also think the teachers in District 7 and the Board of Education do a fantastic job,” she said.

Richey said the toothpaste lesson not only applies to words spoken in person but applies to those messages sent through social media.

“Cyber bullying education is important, beginning at the intermediate level as it seems more and more students at this level have access to and actively use social media,” Richey said.

Last week, Cassens conducted an all-school assembly with a presentation by an Internet Safety Specialist with the High Tech Crime Bureau Office of the Illinois Attorney General Christine Feller. She cautioned students about pushing the send key with negative messages as there truly is no taking back the message once it is sent. Anti-bullying messages are taken seriously at all Edwardsville School District 7 classrooms.



