

*"Reading, Talking and Thinking About Mental Well-Being"*

*"Well Aware in the classroom: Art Works"*

*Linda Millar, Teacher's Resource Author, Well Aware Series:* Today we're exploring the text entitled, "Artworks," by Kevin Sylvester and Laura Carlin, with some Grade 6 students.

*Image of Art Works text:* "Artworks" is slightly different from the other Grade 6 texts in that it is a series of interviews with Canadian artists, each of whom have overcome challenges to be successful in their own way. The focus is on inspiration and positive role models and instilling confidence and perseverance through creative expression. The literary focus is on interviewing and research techniques.

*Image of Invitation to Learning document:* In the session you're about to view, the students have read the text so they're ready to engage in one of the activities. We thought it would be interesting to highlight activity number four, "Picture This," under the section on Confidence and Perseverance.

*Linda Millar interacting with students:* This time we're going to talk about a second text. And remember yesterday we had the opportunity to take a look at this text called "Artworks" by Kevin Sylvester and Laura Carlin. And this is an interesting text. Does anybody want to tell us basically what the text is about, what happens in this text? Yes.

*Student:* I think it's about a bunch of different artists that they show all the artists all the different artists' work and they express how the artists are feeling and stuff.

*Linda Millar:* Very good, a good summary of it, that's great. And one of the things that I asked you to do yesterday was I broke you into groups and asked you to each take one of the artists that was profiled and interviewed and to give us a little summary of what it was all about and maybe tell us a bit about any challenges that they may have had as they're becoming the artists that they are. So who looked at Marty Chan, which group was that? Alright, can I have what you learned about Marty Chan?

*Student:* In the interview, they asked did he always want to be a writer and as a kid, he didn't really want to write but he loved telling stories and had a huge imagination for things like that so when he got older he started writing different stories to tell his friends and family. One of the challenges that he faced in school was actually he was one of the only Chinese families in his town so when he went to school all those kids would pick on him and make jokes about him and laugh. So Marty thought to himself, if he can change those kids saying mean things to laughing at the person that's making fun of him, he could start making jokes for people to focus on what he says more than what he looks like, so that's how he faced bullying in his school.

*Linda Millar:* What are the qualities that you think all of these people needed in order to be successful. What's something they would need?

*Student:* They all had a dream.

*Linda Millar:* They all had a dream, very good. What else?

*Student:* They all needed self-confidence.

*Linda Millar:* Self-confidence, thank you. That's what you were going to say?

*Student:* I was going to say courage.

*Linda:* Good.

*Student:* They were all passionate about what they want to do.

*Linda Millar:* Very good, okay, thank you so much. And speaking of self-confidence, we're actually going to do an activity now so we need we're going to be giving you some chart paper and some markers and here's the challenge for you. The alien has come back and now the alien says, "Okay, I understand what mental health is but I really don't understand this whole term called self-confidence." So what I would like you to do is, in your groups, I would like you to show the alien what, some of you are going to do what a self-confident person would look like, feel like, act like and be like. And some of you are going to do what a person who lacks in self-confidence might look like, feel like, act like and be like. It's not an art contest so you can actually draw a person if you want to. You can draw an alien, you can draw whatever you want but in the background you can also use things that are going to help the alien and the rest of us understand what a self-confident person would possess and what a person who doesn't have the self-confidence might look like and feel like and act like and be like.

*Student in group:* I'm writing an explanation, like, why, why did they say that, though?

*Student in group:* Depressed, sadness, disappointed, nervous.

*Student in group:* If you have confidence, then you're not really afraid to take on a challenge, right? Like, let's say that there's, like, a sport or something like a team that you want to make, if you have confidence, then you're going to try and you're going to give your one hundred percent effort into it.

*Linda Millar:* So tell us about it. What have you written?

*Student:* You don't care what other people think about you. You're very excited for the day, joyful. You're amused at what you do and you're very expressive and you're very curious on learning other, like, for dance, like, if you're at in dance you're very curious to learn new moves. And at the end of the day, you're proud of what you did.

*Student:* Some, like, characteristics that you could see when you know that someone is confident is they're kind of, like, not slouching over. They're, like, really, like, they have good posture. They have a very expressive voice. They have, like, wide eyes. They're not looking like they're half asleep. They have a really nice, like, smiling. You can understand how they feel. And that's how you know when someone's confident.

*Linda Millar:* One of the things that I really liked about what you were saying was you made a connection to body language, which is something that I hadn't really thought of. You know, you said a self-confident person stands straight, doesn't slouch, gives eye contact, looks more relaxed. And those are all really important things for us to remember. When you looked at the people in the "Artworks" text do you feel that they always had self-confidence?

*Student:* No, because, like, when we did Famous People Players, they talked about how there's a lot of difficulties with other people when they work so, no, they're, like, they're always, like, thinking, "Well, something that could go wrong."

*Linda Millar:* So-Exactly, yes, sometimes we can't really see self-confidence on the outside, can we? I mean you talked about body language but do you think that you can always look at somebody and tell if they have self-confidence?

*Students:* No.

*Linda Millar:* No, so sometimes it's a matter of talking to them, finding out a little bit more about them, learning how to use those emotion words, opening up the discussions to talk about stresses, and things that might be bothering them, and then setting those goals and trying and trying again.

*Linda Millar:* There are so many more discussions we could have around this activity. We could talk about stereotypes that may have been reflected in their drawings, we could talk about not trying something simply because we don't think we can do it, we could have explored the humour that author Marty Chan uses to deal with challenges. And once again, you know your students best and you will have your own ideas and your own unique way to extend this learning experience.

One of the greatest barriers to changing attitudes towards mental health is the stigma that's been attached to people affected with mental illness. By talking about it and sharing success stories like those in "Artworks," students learn to break down those stereotypes and change the way they approach the whole issue of positive mental health. And that's what Well Aware is all about.

*Lindsey Bowen, Teacher, W.I. Dick Middle School:* I think the biggest thing was that they walked away feeling like, "Oh, I understood that. It was something I could relate to and now I can apply it to future situations where it was okay to share my feelings, it's okay to feel the

way I was feeling and now I know how somebody else might have felt in that situation so I can use, it's okay to feel that way."

*Text on screen: Well Aware can be used in many different ways. The teacher in this video chose to use one title for all students, who worked in small groups. You may wish to use different approaches based on the needs of your class.*

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