

Chalk Talk

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This week my son was introduced to a book called, “Strictly No Elephants”, written by Lisa Mantchev. This is a story about a boy that has a tiny elephant for a pet. While the idea of having a tiny elephant for a pet is sure to excite any child (and this adult), the boy in the story warns us that, “the trouble with having a tiny elephant for a pet is that you never quite fit in.”

The boy shares with the reader some of the activities he and the elephant do throughout the day. He tells us that the tiny elephant doesn’t like the cracks in the sidewalk, so he goes back to help the elephant over because “that’s what friends do: lift each other over the cracks.”

One day, the boy decides to walk his tiny elephant to a pet club. Unfortunately, he finds a sign posted on the club door that reads “STRICTLY NO ELEPHANTS”. The boy left disappointed, but found that there were others that were rejected by the club too. A girl with a pet skunk, another with a giraffe, a boy with a penguin, and many others were all in need of friends and a place to play. The children manage to find a place to play, but they change the restrictive message on the door and painted three little words, “ALL ARE WELCOME”.

When I consider the messages conveyed to my child with this book, I am so happy he was introduced to it, and we had an opportunity to discuss the topics. At one point or another all of us have struggled with fitting in? Whether it is the first day in a new class, new youth group, or new job, feeling accepted in that environment reduces our stress and helps make a more positive experience.

I love that the book reminds the reader that friends “lift each other over the cracks.” School age children make friends that are rooted in fun experiences filled with laughter and learning in school. Such is life, as we get older we are met with challenges in life that can stop us in our tracks. Those are the cracks in the sidewalk. The mark of a true friend is being there to help our friends over the cracks in the sidewalk.

The final message of the book gets to the heart of what we do here at Montrose Community Schools. ALL ARE WELCOME. This is not a message of inclusion through conformity, but instead the acceptance, or at least tolerance, of each other’s differences and recognizing that others have the right to be their own unique persons. Tolerance and acceptance of another person does not mean you have to change who you are as a person, as that would defeat the purpose. We want everyone in our district to remain confident and comfortable as the unique and talented person they are.

Our community consists of more diversity than ever. We have families made up of all colors, cultures, religions, genders, and sexual orientations. All of these families want what is best for their children, and we do too. We will continue to strive to create an environment where all of our students will feel safe, loved, and accepted for who they are. That is why we will “paint on our sign” ALL ARE WELCOME.

“My tiny elephant will give you directions if you need them. Because that’s what friends do.” ~ Lisa Mantchev

Go Rams!

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