

A WRC Story

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I have not encountered one child this year that does not have some absolutely precious gift to give to the world. So far, my groups have been chock full of great kiddos. I have several little ones who are a kick in the pants, and I also have some who are just a dream to teach- calm, eager to learn, positive, and very hard workers. Of course, there are the ones who were stubborn, resentful and rude at the beginning, but strangely enough, they have been the ones who have been the greatest to work with.

I think perhaps the best example of a "ham" is one young man I have in my only second-grade group, Antonio. He is a deceptively small guy but his imagination is about eight feet taller than him! Antonio has more energy than a freight train, but he hated school because he struggled with it. His classmates were moving up in levels in the books they read, while Antonio stayed in the same place. He had trouble with even simple words, and he was quite a Grumpy Gus when I first met him. His test scores qualified him for the Washington Reading Corps. Antonio was not happy. He did NOT want to read with me, and he told me so many times after that. I incorporate a lot of learning games and activities in with the books we read in order to improve comprehension as well as word count. Before he knew it, Antonio was having fun. After about a month of tri-weekly reading groups, Antonio's teacher told me that his test scores had risen significantly. I was ecstatic, to say the least! And when he finally asked me one day if he could read first, I couldn't get the smile off my face or nearly twenty minutes.

And then, something happened. On Tuesday, Antonio was fine, eager to start and participating fully. And then, on Thursday, I was suddenly faced with the Antonio I had met at the beginning of the year- quiet, stubborn and surly. I didn't know what had happened, but something had driven him back behind the wall that he'd been hiding behind. It had taken me four months to coax him into being part of the group, and now we were back at square one. It was devastating to see this bright boy regress. I found out later that a classmate had teased him at recess about having to go to a reading group.

Fortunately, Antonio had a reading buddy, Nick, in one of the fifth grade classes who was able to encourage him in a way I really couldn't. I may be young, but Antonio still sees me as a "grown-up". I think it was neat to hear him talk about his Big Kid friend who gave him some great advice. I asked him what that advice was and he grinned.

"Ms. V, Nick said that kid was just jealous because I get to go and read cool books and play games with you when everyone else has to read all by themselves. He said that kid was a bully and just to ignore him."

Ahh, from the mouths of babes, right? I was astounded at the wisdom that came from this 10 year old. And then, Antonio continued, and my delusion was sort of squashed...

"And Nick also said I should throw the four-square ball at his head if he calls me any more names."

