Pennypack’s Body Image Project Celebrates Differences and the Importance of Each Student

HORSHAM – Heather Brzezinski, a fourth grade teacher at Pennypack Elementary School, was inspired by Wendy Ewald’s book “The Best Part of Me.” Teacher and photographer, Ewald, partnered with a teacher from North Carolina to ask students in second through fifth grade what they considered their best body parts and why. Ewald captured beautiful black and white photographs of the children while the classroom teacher guided them through writing paragraphs celebrating what is unique and special about each child’s favorite body part.

“I just knew this was the perfect project to start off our fourth grade year,” said Brzezinski, and created the “Best Part of Me” project as part of her Language Arts curriculum.

After reading the book aloud to her class, Brzezinski’s students selected the best part of their bodies with answers including hair, face, eyes, ears, feet, hands, spine and heart. Brzezinski used her long lens camera to take photos of each child.

“The students were the creative directors of the projects,” said Brzezinski. “Although many students chose their hands as their favorite feature, they selected different poses and props.”

Some students held objects like pencils and balls while others went outside to use the grass as a backdrop.

“All of us have strengths and weaknesses, but we are all a fourth grade family,” said Brzezinski. “This project celebrates differences and teaches students that they matter.”

For the Language Arts component, students learned how to write a paragraph and expressed four reasons why they loved a specific body part.

One student’s paragraph said that her hands were her favorite part of her body. “With my hands, I can help out. For example, I help take out the groceries from the trunk of my mom’s car, and I can wash the dishes and bottles, so my sisters can eat and drink.”

Another student that chose hands wrote, “If I didn’t have hands, I wouldn’t be able to flip and hold the pages of my favorite book.”

Many students mentioned hobbies, school activities and family as the reasons for their favorite body parts.

“I like my arms because they can wrap around my friends and family, and I can show love by hugging them,” a student wrote.

Usually Brzezinski’s students type their writing assignments, but she felt that their unique handwriting would make the project more personal. With each child’s handwriting and photographs on display, it made a beautiful visual for Back to School Night. Families loved reading their children’s paragraphs and seeing the pictures, and the students were over the moon to see the final results as well.

“The black and white pictures looked awesome and old-fashioned,” said a fourth grade student.
“My writing improved and she should do this project next year with the students,” another student said.

Editor’s Note: If you wish to arrange an interview with Heather Brzezinski, contact Kellie Dietrich at 215-884-6499.

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