

TVOKIDS – “It Matters”

TVOKIDS – “It Matters” (TVO, Toronto, Canada) is a 4-minute, flash-animated, interstitial series for six-year-old children. The program was inspired by real life stories of bullying that were submitted on the tvokids.com website. The program stars a cast of fruits that are placed into everyday bullying situations such as children face in school (cf. illustration 1). After the flash animation was developed, children who submitted the stories also voiced the main characters. In this episode, avocado Jones types his story into the computer. Jones says a mean older kid (a tomato), scared the other children at school and tried to punch Jones (cf. illustration 2). Jones remembered that his coach said to stand up for yourself, tell the bully to stop and to back away (cf. illustration 3). Later Jones tried it on the playground and it worked. Jones said, “That’s my story and it matters.” Raspberry Nava also wrote her story on a laptop. She appeared on the playground limping and told her friends it was because she fell and twisted her ankle. One of the kids pushed her to the ground and called her a liar. Nava’s teacher talked to both of them. The other kid apologized and Nava was glad because then she could play again (cf. illustration 4). Nava said, “Telling my teacher what happened was the right thing to do” (cf. illustration 5). Apple Finnian rode the bus alone to school each day. Other kids kicked the back of his seat and made jokes about him. Finnian told his mom and she gave him a letter for the teacher. The next day the teacher gave him a bus buddy and the bullies stopped (cf. illustration 6). Lemon Melody also told her story on the website (cf. illustration 7). Melody was on the swings at the park with her friend (a lime). Two boys (apples) started calling them names and kicking sand. Other friends (grapes and cherries) told the bullies to stop and they did. Melody said she will help other children the way her friends did when she needed them. At the conclusion, a woman tells children that they can use a kid’s help line to call if they need to talk at any time. The phone number appears on screen (cf. illustration 8).

TVOKIDS – “It Matters” was a finalist in the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2014 award in the up to 6 fiction category.

INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS’ OPINION

International experts shared their opinions about TVOKIDS – “It Matters” during the discussion sessions at the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2014. Many experts pointed out that the subject matter seemed to fit the non-fiction category and wondered if the program would work better for the 7 to 11 age group. A few experts brought up the amount of on screen text and thought it was too much for young children. Others thought the program, as an awareness campaign, is relevant regardless of category placement. Some wanted adults such as parents and teachers to learn more about the issue of bullying, so that when children talk to them, they can provide good advice.

“I like the concept of this program. The bullying is happening for this target. I used to think it was for the higher age group, but this is happening with younger children. I like the title because for adults it doesn’t matter.” (female expert, Colombia)

“I loved the title. It matters. You are important.” (female expert, Norway)

“Hearing them fight was extremely honest.” (male expert, Canada)

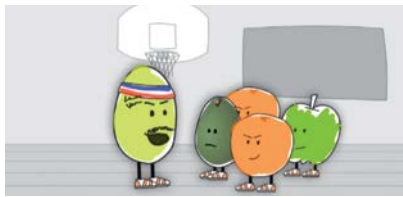


Ill. 1: “It Matters” characters are portrayed by flash-animated fruits



Ill. 2: Avocado Jones faces a tomato bully on the playground

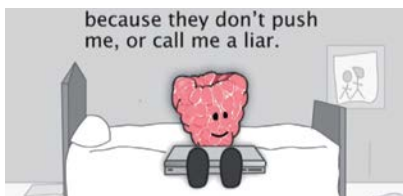
Screenshots from TVOKIDS – “It Matters” © TVO



III. 3: Jones remembers his coach said to stand up for yourself



III. 4: Raspberry Nava plays with her friends at school



III. 5: Nava shared her story on the TVOKIDS website

"I liked how it showed kids being mean to each other. In real life kids are the worst enemy." (female expert, Norway)

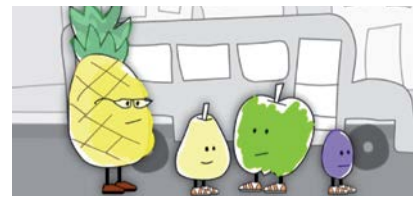
"Clever use of the fruit." (female expert, United States)

"It was all a bit linear. It didn't develop in any way." (male expert, United Kingdom)

"I must say I liked that this program was direct." (female expert, Germany)

"It got the point across right away. It was brilliantly put together." (female expert, United States)

Elizabeth Spezia, PhD student, Southern Illinois University, USA



III. 6: Apple Finnian has a bus buddy to ride to school with him



III. 7: Lemon Melody shares her story about bullies too



III. 8: Children are invited to contact a telephone help line

Screenshots from TVOKIDS - "It Matters" © TVO

Target Audience 6.34	Idea 6.39	Script 6.11	Realization 5.89
Average Score per Category by experts' voters at PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2014			