

UWO alumnus writes children's book

P.E. teacher hopes to be role model for kids

By Cassidy Kennedy
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Former UW Oshkosh Ben Lancour has written an illustrated children's book containing an important message to individuals everywhere.

Lancour graduated from UWO in 2011 with a bachelor's degree in physical education, minoring in adaptive physical education and now works in the Green Bay Area School District teaching elementary physical education.

His work in special education prior to his current position was a big inspiration for the creation of his book, "Henry and The Gym Monster."

Lancour said that being a physical educator definitely played a role in writing his book, which is predicted to be published sometime this summer.

"I wanted to combine my passion for working with dysregulated children and the gym setting," Lancour said. "For some of those dysregulated children, physical education may be the only class they enjoy, which was the case for me growing up. This book is for them."

Lancour said he was also inspired by his own passion for P.E.

as a child.

"Growing up, physical education felt like another recess," Lancour said. "I enjoyed the competitiveness of the activities we were playing and always looked forward to it."

However, Lancour said that his P.E. teachers growing up often yelled in order to get the attention of the "little ones."

"I want to be a role model that kids will respect, not fear," Lancour said.

"Henry and the Gym Monster," written by Lancour and illustrated by Emily Bennett, is about a boy named Henry who wants to play games with his friends in gym class, but Manny the "P.E. monster" tricks him into playing games his way.

Eventually, Henry needs to figure out how to defeat his monster before Manny gets out of control and grows too big to handle.

Manny the monster is a crucial part of the story because he represents something we all struggle with: self-control, Lancour said.

The lesson that Lancour wants children and educators to understand is the importance of taking responsibility.

"The more you push it off, the more you blame others and do not



Author Ben Lancour reading a book with his daughter, Harper.

hold yourself accountable... the more your 'Manny' grows," Lancour said.

Lancour said it's OK to make mistakes, but blaming others for things that you did will only hurt you more in the long run.

"The only way around it is to be honest with yourself and the people you care about," Lancour said. "This is the only way to get

rid of Manny."

Lancour said parents and children will enjoy this book because it's a unique story that focuses on important values within many young kids' favorite class, physical education.

Christina Stefenhagen, an intellectual disabilities teacher and a parent, said that she loves the story.

"As a parent and a special education teacher, I love the way this book addresses responsibility in a way that is relatable to children of all types," Christina said. "It's a fun and effective way to help children with a topic so vital to their growth and development."

Gary Wondrash, a former special education teacher of seventeen years and former elementary physical education teacher of eighteen years, said that Lancour's book hits the nail on the head.

"I have seen the exact behaviors described in this book manifest in my class," Wondrash said. "Ben's functional behavioral assessment of Henry's actions is a real behavioral response I have seen as a teacher."

Wondrash said he has no doubt that there are students who will identify with Henry, which will benefit their growth as a result.

"The Gym Monster is a book I would recommend for any elementary aged child," Wondrash said. "It would especially benefit special needs students and students who are impulsive."

The book will be available this summer in hardcover, paperback and e-book formats.

Check out Lancour's website, www.benlancourbooks.com, for more information and subscribe to his email list for updates. You can also follow him on Instagram @ben_lancour_books, Facebook @BenLancourBooks, and Twitter



Ben Lancour, author of "Henry and the Gym Monster", with his wife Stephanie and his daughter Harper. Lancour's book will be published sometime this summer and will be available in hardcover, paperback, and e-book formats. The message Lancour wants children and educators to understand is the importance of responsibility.

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