家长会上，我念了三分钟

学期末的家长会，我把五本观察记录本摊在讲台上，对家长说，今天不讲分数，只念几行字。这缸蚂蚁的来历我先交代了一遍：三月科学课缺器材，我从花坛边挖了一小窝带进教室，玻璃缸、湿土、吸管、面包屑，蓝布蒙着放在窗台上，全班轮流分组观察，每组一个放大镜一本记录本，规则是不许碰，只许看、画、记时间。

我念了小宇的日记，就是蚂蚁绕开橡皮那条线；念了第三组争过的话：它是不是认识路？教室里安静得能听见窗外的风。我还念了别的孩子的记录：蚂蚁的触角碰得越来越快；搬不动面包屑，就回去叫伙伴。念到第三分钟，后排有家长笑了，说他儿子回家提过蚂蚁，蹲在楼道口看了半个钟头，裤脚全是土。还有个家长半开玩笑地问，这算不算作业。我说不算，爱看就看，看了也不检查。那位家长笑出了声，说家里那位要是听说不用检查，怕是天天都要蹲下去。

念完，我请家长回家路上也蹲下去看十分钟，不要求写长，拍张照片或者记几行都行。有位母亲皱眉说楼道口脏，我笑着说，蚂蚁不看干净不干净，孩子看的时候也没想过这个。散场时，好几位家长围着讲台，问那几本记录本能不能借他们抄一页。我在走廊里站了一会儿，想明白一件事：家长们要的不是步骤单，他们想看见自己孩子眼睛亮起来的样子。

这缸蚂蚁在教室里住了两个月，期末前放回了花坛。孩子们排着队看它被倒进草丛，没人说话。我常想起那三分钟的安静。观察日记写进去的是蚂蚁，照出来的是孩子怎么开始说话，我怎么闭嘴。家长会上那三分钟没有提一个分数，可那天晚上，大概有不少家庭会蹲下来，看一小片花坛。

At the Parents Meeting, I Read for Three Minutes

At the end-of-term parents meeting, I spread five observation notebooks on the podium and told the parents: no scores tonight, just a few lines read aloud. I first explained where the jar came from. In March, short of lab equipment, I dug up a small colony from the flower bed and brought it into the classroom: a glass jar, wet soil, a straw, crumbs, covered with blue cloth on the windowsill. The class took turns observing in groups, one magnifying glass and one notebook per group, with the rule of no touching, only looking, drawing and noting the time.

I read the diary from Xiaoyu, the line about the ant going around the eraser, and the sentence Group Three argued over: does it know the road? The room was quiet enough to hear the wind outside. I read other entries too: the ants touched antennae faster and faster; when a crumb was too heavy, an ant went back to call for help. In the third minute a father in the back row laughed and said his son had mentioned the ants at home, squatting at the stairwell entrance for half an hour with muddy trouser cuffs. Another parent half jokingly asked whether this counted as homework. I said no, watch if you like, and there would be no checking. That parent laughed out loud and said if the youngster at home heard there was nothing to check, he would squat down every single day.

When I finished, I asked the parents to squat down and watch for ten minutes on the way home, no long record required, a photo or a few lines would do. One mother frowned and said the stairwell was dirty. I smiled and said ants do not care about clean or dirty, and neither did their children while watching. As the meeting broke up, several parents gathered around the podium asking to copy a page from the notebooks. I stood in the corridor for a while and understood one thing: parents were not asking for a checklist. They wanted to see the eyes of their own children light up.

The jar lived in the classroom for two months and went back to the flower bed before finals. The children lined up to watch it poured into the grass, and nobody spoke. I often think of those three minutes of silence. An observation diary writes down ants, but what it reflects is how a child begins to speak and how I learn to keep quiet. Those three minutes named no score, yet that evening quite a few families probably squatted down to look at a small patch of the flower bed.