Clear Minds, Full Hearts A Student-Centered Mindfulness Curriculum for Primary Elementary Students

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Clear Minds, Full Hearts

A Student-Centered Mindfulness Curriculum for Primary Elementary Students

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Abstract

This paper explores the potential of developing a secular mindfulness curriculum in public school systems, as well as some of the difficulties posed in developing such a program. Based on current, relevant literature and scientific studies pertaining to student stress and its effects on academic success, as well as the correlation between already existing social-emotional learning initiatives, this paper situates a mindfulness curriculum in the classroom through academic research and personal experience. Discussed in the rationale are the positive findings in the field, the research and refinement that still needs to be conducted, and a curriculum outline that teachers practicing mindfulness themselves and with students can modify and adapt to fit the needs of their classroom.
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Clear Minds, Full Hearts

Recent and emerging educational initiatives in the US are emphasizing a dramatic shift in what we teach children in public schools in response to the ever-rising reports of stress, anxiety, and behavioral issues in students. Students today face more stress than ever before, and schools are becoming compelled to address the issue (Harpin, Rossi, Kim & Swanson, 2016; Napoli, Krech, & Holley, 2005). Rempel posits that children today are facing higher rates of stress due to higher exposure to stimulation (images and sounds) and information overload through technology, family and relationship breakdowns, violence in the media, poverty, educational stressors (such as high stakes testing), divorce and drug use amongst parents, untimely deaths of loved ones, and even suicide (2012). It has become apparent that individualized interventions outside of the classroom are not enough to address the fact that today, all students are facing stress, not just the handful with diagnosed mental or emotional disorders. Stressful life events affect all of us and pose negative impacts to our wellbeing, and the important responsibility of finding effective strategies to manage life stressors that are appropriate for children has become an added obligation of educators across the nation.

When I began my career as an educator just six years ago, one of the first things that shocked me was the number of students in my classroom that needed intervention because of stress and anxiety at just eight years old. The students receiving intervention services were only those with a diagnosable disorder, or those showing their stress and anxiety in ways harmful to themselves or others. Just as shocking was how the intervention was implemented throughout the school. These students were taken outside of their classrooms to work with a school counselor, and sometimes a small group of peers, three or more times a week in sessions that could last
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upwards of forty minutes. Now these highly stressed students are missing valuable content information, and the rest of the student population, all undoubtedly battling their own stress and anxiety to a certain degree, are left to their own devices to cope while simultaneously being held accountable for learning new, challenging content. Since that first week of my formal education career, I have felt that there had to be a better way to address stress and anxiety on a broad-scale.

In the past three decades there have been different school-based programs created, implemented, studied, revised, and modified to fit the needs of an increasingly overly-stressed population of children. Programs such as Responsive Classroom with a high focus on Social-Emotional Learning have taken root in classrooms across the country. With this growing focus on nurturing the social and emotional needs of all our students to combat stress and mental health issues while increasing academic success, some schools are taking the first steps towards implementing a secular practice of mindfulness to proactively treat stress, anxiety, emotional and behavioral problems in youth. From globalized programs such as Mindful Schools, to small-scale community-based programs like Calmer Choice in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, there has been successful experimentation with using specific mindfulness techniques and practices to nurture the social and emotional needs of all students.

To follow is a review of current, relevant literature and science that supports the development of a mindfulness curriculum to be implemented in a public school setting for children in primary grades, kindergarten through grade two. This paper explains the secular practice of mindfulness, its ability to ease stress and behavioral issues in an increasingly stressed population of students, how Social Emotional Learning programs are transforming the public education system, and successful implementation of mindfulness-based interventions in schools. Along with the rationale is a feasible, effective curriculum outline designed for early elementary
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students. The curriculum, Clear Minds, Full Hearts, is rooted in evidence, personal mindfulness practice, and my own experience in sharing the stories, activities, and lessons which make up the curriculum with whole-class groups ranging from kindergarten through second grade.

Mindfulness

Though there are dozens of definitions of the term, Jon Kabat-Zinn, the pioneer of mindfulness practice in the Western world, defines mindfulness as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally” (1994, p. 4). Through the many differing definitions, the foundational aspects of being present and attending to what is happening separate from our judgements remains consistent. Mindfulness is a way of being that allows us to recognize our moment-to-moment experience as it is, and to use that awareness to respond to situations with clarity and compassion.

There are many misunderstandings and misinterpretations of mindfulness practice, most commonly deeming the practice as exclusively Buddhist. Though mindfulness is deeply rooted in Buddhist tradition, the practice at its core is secular, and can be practiced by anyone, regardless of religious views. Mindfulness is about cultivating an inner-awareness to the present moment and being able to use this purposeful attention to respond to situations in a less reactive way. It gives the practicing individuals space to make choices that are more constructive and conducive to the situation rather than based on impulse and emotional charge. Mindfulness allows us to choose a response, rather than be controlled by reactivity.

Many people also believe that mindfulness looks a certain way – maybe sitting cross-legged, eyes closed with incense burning and monks chanting “om” in the background. This is another misconception. Mindfulness practice can take place anytime, anywhere, and can look
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like any ordinary daily habit or routine. Running, eating, yoga, and doing dishes or household chores are just a few examples of how the practice can look from person to person, day to day. Any activity that brings awareness to the here and now can become a mindful practice. In my own life, after having my daughter, I had to become flexible in how I chose to practice. My twenty-minute morning sits evolved into twenty mindful moments nursing my daughter, or mindful midnight diaper changes. The truth about mindfulness is that it can be done whenever intention is present.

Over the past several years, many Mindfulness-based Interventions (MBIs) have been developed to fit into differing institutional settings in order to cultivate mindfulness in adults. The catalyst to this movement was Jon Kabat-Zinn’s work with mainstream mindfulness in the Western culture beginning in the 1970s. He developed Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR), which continues today to offer relief of physical, mental, and emotional pain to patients suffering from a variety of ailments. The basis of this program is to teach mindfulness techniques and habits with common practices such as focused breathing, body scans, mindful eating, walking meditations, and yoga. The goal of the program is for individuals to internalize these practices with support during weekly sessions, and bring them home to work with on a daily basis (Zenner, 2014). School systems are following suit and adopting programs rooted in MBSR, but that have been adapted to be accessible and nurturing for children just beginning their educational careers through adolescence and young adulthood.

Bringing mindfulness to public school settings requires administrators, teachers, parents, and entire communities to have an open mind about the idea of what mindfulness is, and how practicing mindfulness helps our youth in multiple facets of life. In terms of bringing mindfulness to school systems, the goal would be to bring teachers’ and students’ awareness to
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academic content, social interactions and emotional states – important foundational skills which can lead to a more successful, more responsible, and happier life. Explicit mindfulness instruction could give teachers and students invaluable tools to aid in responding to academic, social, and professional situations with wisdom and compassion.

Mindfulness isn’t just a belief system; the benefits of the practice are currently backed up by neuroscientific evidence that shows how our brain changes when we practice mindfulness in a variety of ways (Napoli, Krech, & Holley, 2005; Lazar, 2011). Overall, the practice of mindfulness is commonly misconstrued as exclusively a religious practice, but in reality, it is training our brains to come to the present moment and let go of the judgments surrounding our experiences and situations. It is a way of experiencing life, just as it is. For a school system, this could mean more academic success without taking away the developmentally essential activities children need to thrive such as recess, hands-on learning, creative exploration of art and music, social interactions, and collaboration with peers and adults. These developmentally critical activities not only create engaging, real-life problem-solving situations for students, but allows for some of the stress of academic content learning to be recognized, worked through, and addressed appropriately in order to be effectively lifted from our students.

Stress and Behavior in Students

It is becoming increasingly evident that school is a significant source of stress for students of all ages, and that students are also undergoing a much greater deal of stress at home than ever before (Malow, & Austin, 2016; Napoli, Krech, & Holley, 2005). The daily stressors encountered by students – ranging from overstimulation to unsafe, unstable living situations – can significantly impair attention, cognitive functioning, learning and the ability to think deeply, and leads to the inability to regulate behavior, emotions, and even actions (Harpin, Rossi, Kim &
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Swanson, 2016; Malow & Austin, 2016; Napoli, Krech & Holley, 2005; Semple, Lee, Rosa & Miller, 2010). With this noted increase of reported stress and anxiety in children as young as the age of seven (Malow & Austin, 2016), there is a clear correlation between anxiety, attention regulation, and level of academic success (Semple, Lee, Rosa, & Miller, 2010). Since this spike in anxiety is leading to higher emotional distress, behavioral issues and decreased academic success, it is likely that much of the learning that is happening in classrooms is merely surface-deep, and far from what is truly intended by skilled teachers.

As many of the repercussions of high stress levels also take place in school and affect the academic achievement of so many students, there are more and more demands being placed on teachers in terms of their knowledge, skills and training. Approximately 10 percent of school-aged children experience emotional and behavioral problems that are serious enough to require intervention (Solar, 2013). Experienced educators who are committed to understanding the neuroscience behind stress and behavior, such as Lori Desautels, are claiming that “Anxiety is the new learning disability in our country right now” (Terrell, 2017, p. 42). Over the past five years, there has been a growing concern about the mental health and wellbeing of adults and children, particularly as it pertains to anxiety and depression (Weare, 2013), and educators are forging the path to implement techniques and activities that work for their students. With new programs and initiatives emerging and evolving, school systems are changing how they think about behavior, stress and learning, and how they can aid in the understanding and nurturing of expected behaviors, emotional regulation, and a life-long learning attitude.

**Transformation of Public Education**

Since beginning my formal studies on mindfulness three years ago, I have taken time to speak with colleagues, volunteers, and administrators specifically about using mindfulness to
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foster social emotional learning (SEL) in educational settings. Reactions to this idea range from teachers concerned about added work-load; administrators liking the idea, but worrying about the cost and the risks to content-based test scores; to enthusiastic individuals, groups, and even entire school systems that have already done what they can to adopt practices that support SEL through mindfulness. However, regardless of enthusiasm, there is no doubt that SEL and mindfulness are the new buzz-words in education. The following sections illustrate how, ever so slightly, the public education system is changing through organizations geared towards creating SEL programs in response to scientific evidence validating society’s desperate call and need for social and emotional resiliency as we face a world becoming more and more difficult to navigate.

Social Emotional Learning and Wellbeing

In response to the constant underlying stress amongst our youth creating more violent and defiant behavior, toxic stress, mismanaged relationships, and poor academic performance (Rempel, 2012), new initiatives in the educational field have placed high emphasis on incorporating social and emotional learning into the mainstream curriculum in the United States. Though SEL goes by many definitions, for the purposes of this paper and curriculum, social and emotional learning will refer to strengthening social and emotional competencies in their most basic form. This includes, but may not be limited to, cognitive skills, beliefs, and attitudes that contribute to one’s sense of self and approach to learning; competencies that manage one’s own emotions and recognizes emotions in others; and interpersonal skills that enable one to work cooperatively with and understand others (Jones & Kahn, 2018).

Under the Supporting Social and Emotional Learning Act of 2015, government officials are continuing to push for public institutions across the country to be required to integrate scientifically supported methods of developing and strengthening the social and emotional needs
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of students in grades K-12 (H.R. 850, 2015). Under this bill, administration will be expected to provide professional development as well as technical support to their educators in the field of social and emotional well-being. This implies that teachers would become not only educators of content area subjects (math, reading, science, et cetera), but would be expected to also place high value on self-awareness, decision making, relationship building and humanitarianism in their daily classroom routines.

The Collaboration for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) specializes in setting federal and state standards for SEL and reviews existing and emerging SEL programs. The goal of SEL is to increase self-awareness, emotional regulation, calmness, resiliency, empathy and compassion, and to create activities and environments that explicitly build upon social and emotional skills (Weare, 2013). CASEL’s goals and guiding principles are becoming more and more accepted as we face the reality that social and emotional skills need to be cultivated in our youth for a more successful, compassionate, and peaceful future.

Linda Dusenbury, a major consultant to CASEL, explains that the goal of these programs is to develop social and emotional competence (SEC) through a series of explicit tasks across grade spans. The programs include specific lessons which are designed around teaching children the five core competency clusters: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Teaching points may include labeling feelings, coping with anxiety and stress, setting and achieving goals, developing empathy and compassion, communicating effectively, resolving conflict, being assertive and making responsible decisions (Dusenbury, Calin, Domitro维奇, & Weissberg, 2015). As research and support for the development for SEC grows, teachers are gaining easier and easier access to these
kinds of lessons and activities through profession development opportunities, apps, and online resources ranging from short lessons to games and even full online programs for educators.

**Teaching the Whole Child: What Science Tells Us**

The fostering of SEL in education is also known as “teaching to the whole child” (CASEL, 2013; Dusenbury, Calin, Domitrovich, &  Weissberg, 2015). This term that is used to refer to the knowledge, skills and attitudes children must learn to develop outside of content knowledge; not only making sure that our students can pass a test and learn new content, but ensuring that fundamental human factors related to life-long happiness are being cultivated and strengthened throughout children’s educational careers. Current science (Harpi, Rossi, Kim, & Swanson, 2016; Lazar, 2011; Napoli, Krech, & Holley, 2005; Seigel, & Bryson, 2011; Solar, 2013; Terrell, 2017) points to the idea that those who provide us with meaningful, repeated experiences (such as educators), have powerful opportunities to reshape our brains in ways that lead to better functioning between networks of the brain related to executive functioning, stress management, and even overall happiness.

Science tells us that experience molds our brains (Seigel & Bryson, 2011), and through regular classroom routines and interactions, teachers have the unique opportunity to provide experiences that cater to the whole child. The brain is a complex human organ, and Dan Seigel and Tina Payne Bryson do an excellent job of breaking down the science behind how the brain and its parts function in *The Whole Brain Child*. Written for parents, educators, clinicians and anyone who works with children on a regular basis, Seigel and Bryson pose that “the brain cannot perform its best if different parts don’t work together” (2011, p. 6). In order for children to learn, academic knowledge or otherwise, they must be able to focus their attention on the
information being presented (Napoli, Krech, & Holley, 2005), and mindfulness is a strong practice which supports the regulation of attention.

Mindfulness has been found to be directly linked to the areas of the brain which direct our attention. The three attentional networks found in the brain are the alerting network, in charge of achieving and maintaining a mental state which is ready to process information; the orienting network, responsible for directing attention towards experiences processed by our senses; and the executive network, which enables us to exert conscious control over our behavior as well as resolve conflict (Greenland, 2013, p. 90). With all of the social and emotional disorders arising in children at younger and younger ages – along with cognitive differences that have always been present in education – there have been many interventions to address these issues that involve removing children from the classroom to receive supports. However, there is a growing consensus that taking children from the classroom to provide supports is ineffective, yet schools are having an extremely difficult time finding feasible and effective programs that can be implemented on a broad scale (Solar, 2013; Terrell, 2017). By meeting the needs of many areas of brain development, mindfulness practices beginning at the primary school age could lead to more supportive whole-child brain development, while also keeping more students in the classroom for greater portions of the day. If mindfulness can be delivered and practiced during whole-class instructional times, students could be given valuable supports they need to aid in executive functioning, stress-management, depression, anxiety, or behavioral outbursts more autonomously.

This assumption is not just all theoretical ideals. Sara Lazar, a neuroscientist and professor at Harvard Medical School, found that the brain physically changes through mindfulness and meditation practice. Lazar’s own personal experience with mindful movement
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(yoga) following an injury prompted her to conduct a scientific test using fMRI scans and discovered that mindfulness meditation has effects in many areas of the brain that can positively impact the physical make-up of the adult brain in areas relative to stress, depression, executive functioning and overall happiness (Lazar, 2011). Mindfulness in adults has been shown here and elsewhere to impact brain development and neuroplasticity, which leads to many questions around the idea of implementing mindfulness in the daily routines of children, whose brains are much faster developing. If a mature adult brain has the capacity to rewire itself and change habits of the mind through mindfulness practice, what are possible outcomes of introducing these practices while the brain is still developing at a young age? Would introducing such practices early on in life increase attention, compassion, and happiness at a younger age? What are the implications of this in response to a generation (or even generations) of youth who are less and less happy?

Through the implementation of novice mindfulness programs addressing SEL across the country, there have been promising findings. One noteworthy example is a recent (2016) study conducted by Harpin, Rossi, Kim and Swanson in an urban elementary school setting. In this study, it was found that after a short 10-week mindfulness-based intervention, students and teachers reported increases in positive classroom behaviors, emotional regulation, and academic achievement. Along with this, the study showed not only positive changes among children in the classroom climate, but reports of positive changes outside the classroom were also noticed (2016). Through explicit mindfulness practice and discussion around thoughts, feelings, and impulses in the classroom, students learn not only to direct their attention in order to learn more while in school, but potentially express more compassion, kindness and understanding into the larger environment. This shows promise that students can foster a positive learning climate.
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amongst one another, but also within themselves and carry it with them outside of the classroom – an invaluable skill for life-long learning and success.

Situating SEL and Mindfulness in Schools

Many goals of CASEL’s development and implementation of SEL programs align with the scientific outcomes of regular mindfulness practices, and the overlaps between the two notably justifies the situating of a school-wide mindfulness curriculum across all grade levels. In particular, Massachusetts is one state that has a concrete, cohesive state guideline for implementing SEL in schools. The Massachusetts Department of Education (Mass DOE, or The Department) lays out “Guidelines on Implementing Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Curricula” and specifically defines the processes by which children acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to “recognize and manage their emotions; demonstrate caring and concern for others; establish positive relationships; make responsible decisions; and constructively handle challenging social situations” (2010, p. 1).

Though Mass DOE makes no explicit call for the implementation of mindfulness in classrooms, many of their targeted attitudes and skills can be directly correlated to the attitudes and skills cultivated by mindfulness. Studies have shown that mindfulness fosters self-regulation of emotions, instills positive decision making, increases happiness and positive relationship building, and more social competence (Harpin, Rossi, Kim, & Swanson, 2016; Napoli, Krech, & Holley, 2005; Lazar, 2011). Additionally, interventions that emphasize specific aspects or domains of social, emotional and academic competence – those focused on executive functioning, mindfulness, and cognitive skills – have also been shown through rigorous evaluations to be successful (Jones & Kahn, 2017). As it appears, both federal and state SEL curriculum standards aim to plant and nourish the same values instilled by practicing
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mindfulness, and which could be addressed by MBIs in schools via a cohesive curriculum outlines and teacher training programs. Along with this, many well-known and widely utilized SEL programs currently being adopted have routines built into them that naturally support where and when mindfulness can be practiced in school without cutting into time spent on content-learning.

It has become clear to many educators that simply teaching cognitive skills is not enough to ensure meaningful learning or success in the classroom. Additionally, increasing evidence supports that success in school and beyond is inextricably linked to social and emotional development (Jones & Kahn, 2017; Seigel & Bryson, 2011). Children spend upwards of 40 hours per week in school, which is a substantial amount of time. Given the fact that children spend a great deal of their time in school, it is unsurprising that school has an important and powerful influence on child development in all areas (Jones & Kahn, 2017; McKown, 2017). With this knowledge, it seems almost foolish not to use school time to explicitly teach social and emotional competence alongside academic knowledge (McKown, 2017). Furthermore, there is a powerful body of evidence – which still needs to be built upon – that establishes social, emotional, and cognitive competencies as essential to academic learning (Jones & Kahn, 2017; Seigel & Bryson, 2011), implying that true, meaningful learning cannot happen to its fullest potential without the foundation of SEC. With the growing prevalence of toxic stress in both adults and young people, it seems obvious that the earlier and more consistently we intervene and provide tools and strategies to recognize, manage, and express our emotions and thoughts, the better off our student population will be.

In a 2017 review by Daniel Browne of the role nonacademic skills (i.e., social-emotional learning, mindfulness, et cetera) play in academic achievement at a charter school in Boston,
Browne points out that “learning is already underway” (p. 40) as he observes students practicing mindful breathing before the lesson begins. This is a critical component of mindfulness, the development of SEC, and academic learning: through mindfulness and other activities rooted in SEL, students are learning to build concentration and regulate their emotions – skills that are vital to success in school and life (Browne, 2017). Not only is developing socially and emotionally adept students important in social contexts, but it sets the foundation for learning-ready behaviors in the classroom and, in students’ futures, the workplace.

It is also understood that social, emotional, and cognitive skills are malleable (Browne, 2017; Jones & Kahn, 2018; 2017; McKown, 2017; Seigel & Bryson, 2011), meaning that through explicit, rigorous practice and relative experiences, skills necessary to manage one’s emotions can be established without sacrificing academic learning. Though research on this topic needs to be further developed, some skills are necessary to master before moving onto other skills. Stephanie Jones and Jennifer Kahn give many examples of this in their 2017 consensus on how learning happens. For example, “regulating and managing one’s emotions is fundamental to resolving complex social conflicts, and identifying basic emotions in oneself is essential to being able to regulate them effectively” (p. 19). The sequential and intertwined nature of social, emotional and academic learning further supports the idea that these skills should be taught alongside one another at school, where each lesson builds upon the last to cohesively cultivate knowledge and understanding that can be translated to real-life situations.

**Feasibility of Mindfulness-based SEL Programs in Schools**

Through this growing societal awareness of the benefits of mindfulness as a means of social and emotional support for our students, many programs have been developed, revised and implemented across the country that foster SECs. It is also noted that supporting social,
emotional, and academic development is a wise use of public resources, because there can be long-term social and economic benefits to society when schools implement and embed evidence-based programs, such as mindfulness, that promote social and emotional as well as cognitive development (Jones & Kahn, 2017). Though government agencies and politics typically play a large role in funding and mandates for such programs, teachers and administrators find a bit of freedom when choosing to implement strategies such as mindfulness which require almost no funding, and since it is a way of being in the classroom, is difficult to place mandates on.

Though there are dozens that have proven to be efficient, one which has stood out to not only be highly ranked by CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2013), but have also withstood the test of time is the Responsive Classroom approach. According to CASEL, this program has been widely accepted, proven to be effective, and is efficient in both time and cost (2013). This program is an example of the possibility of creating and implementing programs that do not drain school budgets or take time away from content learning, give administrators and teachers freedom from political pollution of important educational and developmental decisions for students, and have positive outcomes in the way of behavior, emotional regulation, academic success, and overall happiness amongst teachers and students.

**Responsive Classroom**

Responsive Classroom is probably one of the best-known SEL programs across the country, and one in which I have rigorous training in and hands-on experience. This program is easy to implement, and the *Responsive Classroom Resource Book* (2007) cohesively lays out the foundation, guiding principles, and important aspects of the Responsive Classroom approach. Responsive Classroom is unique to other programs insomuch that it does not have specific units or lesson plans. More so, Responsive Classroom is a way of being in the classroom – which closely
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aligns with mindfulness practice – and is an approach to teaching and learning that fosters safe, challenging and joyful elementary classrooms (2007). Rather than set-in-stone lesson plans and scripts, Responsive Classroom is a set of strategies in which teachers have the freedom to employ with flexibility dependent on the developmental, cultural, and individual needs of each student. Responsive Classroom is widely accepted and highly effective, and is well-known amongst educators, which is why I have chosen to base my Clear Minds, Full Hearts curriculum outline on some of the core aspects of the Responsive Classroom approach. Clear Minds, Full Hearts is recommended to be delivered during a common classroom meeting time (most likely, morning meeting) over the first six weeks of school while children and teachers are getting to know one another as learners and people, creating a common understanding of expectations and responsibilities, and, in effect, laying the foundation for a successful school year in a supportive, challenging, and safe classroom environment. The curriculum involves familiar, repeated mindfulness practices that establish routine and build stamina, as well as whole class activities which focus on building mental and emotional resilience, compassion, and developing an open-minded and open-hearted view of learning, other people, and the world we live in.

Aspects of Responsive Classroom. Rooted in the idea that social and academic learning go hand-in-hand (Northeast Foundation for Children, 2007), Responsive Classroom employs strategies and routines that teachers can adapt to meet their own teaching style, the unique dynamic of the classroom as a whole, and the individual needs of each student in the classroom. These practices include morning meeting, interactive modeling, logical consequences, academic choice, working with families, creating rules, teacher language, guided discovery, classroom organization, and collaborative problem-solving (2007). Through the help of the children in the classroom, these routines and teaching styles are modeled, created and practiced over the
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beginning of the school year where students are learning to get to know one another, their
teacher, their new classrooms, and new responsibilities, known as “The First Six Weeks of
School.” Due to the popularity of the Responsive Classroom model and many of the aspects of
Responsive Classroom teaching as they stand on their own, there is ample opportunity to situate
a mindfulness-based curriculum into routines that already exist in classrooms which support
SEL.

The first six weeks of school. A component of Responsive Classroom, the first six weeks
of school proves to be the optimum time to create a climate and set a tone of warmth and safety,
so that students feel empowered to learn. Paula Denton and Roxann Kriete explore the
importance of setting students up for success by explicitly devoting the first chunk of the school
year to community building in their 2000 guide book, The First Six Weeks of School. A
foundational component to achieving this is to make clear that students are expected to be at least
somewhat autonomous in the classroom, and fully aware of what is happening in the classroom
as well as within themselves. By incorporating explicit mindfulness practice teacher can further
develop students’ ability to independently navigate their own education. Denton and Kriete
explain that for children, independence is more than just knowing where supplies are and being
able to make decisions on their own, “[a]utonomy in a school setting means governing oneself
with an awareness of the needs of the community” (2000, p. 3), and in doing so, fostering an
environment that is flexible and supportive or varying needs of each individual in the classroom.
In this widely used model, teachers are encouraged to create, model, and practice expected skills
and behaviors (2000), and it seems evident that this can be taught explicitly with mindfulness
practice.
Morning Meeting. One of the major ways Denton and Kriete suggest creating a positive classroom environment is through Morning Meeting routines, and every classroom I have been in, first through fifth grade, implements this practice to some degree. Morning Meeting is recommended to be a 20 to 30 minute daily routine to begin the school day (2000), and my experience has shown that anywhere from five to 45 minutes may be what an individual classroom needs. The creators of The First Six Weeks place a high importance on this ritual for many reasons. It helps students transition from home to school, and helps them get their minds and bodies ready for the school day – both important for strengthening executive functioning skills. This routine sets the tone for the day, and gives every child a chance to feel recognized and welcomed through well-established morning meeting routines. During this important time of the day, teachers have the opportunity to create trust in the classroom, increase student investment in learning and confidence, improve communication skills, and encourage cooperation and inclusion of every child (2000). Again, these desired outcomes can be aligned with the outcomes of regular mindfulness practices implemented meaningfully throughout the school year.

Four components to morning meeting include a greeting, a sharing opportunity, some sort of group activity, and a morning message (Denton & Kriete, 2000, p. 15). Cofounder and Executive Director of the Inner Kids Foundation, Susan Kaiser Greenland, states in her book The Mindful Child, that when in a supportive environment, “most children are well-able to practice mindful awareness with clear instruction” (2013, p. 9). With morning meeting established as a regular, safe aspect of every day, teachers can easily implement short mindfulness activities while also setting the tone for a busy school day and cultivating flexibility for the unknown yet inevitable. The Clear Minds, Full Hearts curriculum incorporates many of these aspects.
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including a group guided practice as well as a chance to share experiences and link them to daily happenings inside the school and in the larger community.

Successful MBIs in Schools

Through continuing societal and political change pertaining to education, there is little room for argument that SEL is important, and that school systems have the best opportunity to nurture social and emotional competencies in students. Beyond rising national and state standards or successful school-wide SEL programming, the success of MBIs specifically in schools has been proven to be accepted and effective on a broad-scale. Ranging from large programs reaching different corners of the globe such as Mindful Schools located in California, to smaller, community-based programs like Calmer Choice working with schools on Cape Cod, mindfulness in education has been introduced, and continues to prove its worth.

Mindful Schools

California has been a pioneer in implementing MBIs in public school settings from kindergarten through high school. Though many programs have been on the rise for the past few years in both underserved communities and more socioeconomically stable areas, the largest and most well-known organization across the nation is Mindful Schools. Megan Cowan, founder, has declared their Mission to “help lead the integration of mindfulness into education,” (Mindful Schools, 2015, p. 1) and the program has been immensely successful. Founded just over a decade ago out of Oakland, California, Mindful Schools has trained over 25,000 educators, parents and youth mental health professionals across 100 different countries. According to Mindful Schools’ website, the result of the program’s success over the last eleven years has been 1.5 million children learning mindfulness techniques worldwide (2018).
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There had been overwhelming success with the program, and Mindful Schools continues to be a non-profit training organization offering courses to educators available both in-person and online, designed to instill the practice of mindfulness in administrators and educators while giving them the support needed to implement these practices in their own school systems, classrooms, and personal lives. The success of Mindful Schools has been so prominent that it has gained the unwavering support of Jon Kabat-Zinn and the teaching of the program have been adopted by major corporations such as Google and Apple (Kabat-Zinn, 2012).

The philosophy of Mindful Schools relies highly on internalizing the practice of mindfulness in educators. The organization holds the strong belief that MBIs will not be successful without the authentic, personal practice amongst educators; their trainings begin with just that – the development of a personal practice. Mindful Schools offers trained teachers and professionals short, simple, and adaptable approaches that can be easily integrated into the school day, giving educators feasible opportunities to teach their students mindfulness techniques (Mindful Schools, 2018). The fact that instructors of mindfulness should most definitely be practitioners themselves remains to be a hurdle in the implementation of mindfulness in education systems, but with rising popularity of mindfulness and its specific positive impacts on students and teachers, more and more interest is stirring amongst educators and administrators are encouraging teachers to develop personal mindfulness practices for their own well-being.

Calmer Choice Program

Run locally out of Cape Cod, the Calmer Choice Program has seen great results in the implementation of MBIs in fourteen different schools across Cape Cod. Calmer Choice states that it is working with both public and charter schools, in all grade levels, the program has shown positive results in participating school systems (A. Kennedy, personal communication,
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November 2015. Envisioning a world in which young people lead lives of kindness and compassion towards themselves and others, the Calmer Choice Program Mission states that “Calmer Choice is a universal prevention program committed to teaching young people how to effectively and safely manage stress and resolve conflict so that they live happy, healthy, and successful lives. Our goal is to provide skills that will diminish the risk of violence, substance abuse, and other self-destructive behaviors” (Calmer Choice, 2018). The practice they use at their schools is simple and encourages students to think about sounds, emotions, and thoughts that are present at the given moment.

In 2015, during my own studies on MBIs in school systems, I had a wonderful opportunity to visit one of the schools involved with Calmer Choice, Cape Cod Lighthouse Charter School (CCLCS) in Harwich, Massachusetts. During the visit I met with the Calmer Choice Program’s director, Adrianna Kennedy, CCLCS’s Executive Director, Paul Niles, and the school’s health teacher and a dear classmate of mine, Allison Graham. I gained great insight to what the Calmer Choice Program had done for CCLCS and the positive responses from teachers, students, parents, and the community. Since its rise in 2009, Calmer Choice has reached more than 5,500 Cape Cod students in 18 different schools across seven school districts (Calmer Choice, 2018).

Kennedy is an active participant in the implementation of the Calmer Choice Program in several schools across Cape Cod. Founder, Fiona Jensen, created the program as an initiative in attempt to heal the suffering youth across the Cape. The number of teen deaths in Cape Cod due to suicide, accidents, and substance abuse had sky-rocketed, and hit close to home for Fiona and her high-school daughter. After participating in MBSR herself, Jenson was convinced that the
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process and results could help the suffering youth in her own community (A. Kennedy, personal communication, November 2015).

Together, Kennedy and Jenson were able to adapt MBSR into an MBI that was suitable for children and created a cohesive program to incorporate into schools. The first year the program ran, they used the Mindful Schools curriculum while simultaneously developing their own curriculum specific to children’s grade level. The result of this effort was the creation of their own differentiated curriculum broken down into pre-kindergarten – 2nd grade, 3rd – 5th grade, 6th – 8th grade, and 9th – 12th grade. The original goal of this program was to increase and sustain learning during difficult times in the community, and has since evolved into a long-standing curriculum which cultivates necessary skills that help children regulate from the inside out early on in life. (Calmer Choice, 2018; A. Kennedy, personal communication, November 2015).

Through Mindful Schools and Calmer Choice and countless other MBIs, communities across the nation are learning that our children can be explicitly taught how to manage stress, difficult emotions, and the challenges of life through mindfulness practice. MBIs in schools is one highly effective and feasible way for the world to prepare the next generation to make the necessary changes needed to improve the world we live in.

Gaps and Limitations

Though the foundation of implementing mindfulness to some degree in public schools is promising, there are many gaps and limitations in evidence that should be considered. One of the major culprits is the infancy of the entire scientific field of mindfulness. Though the practice has been around for thousands of years, it is relatively new to the Western world. Jon Kabat-Zinn
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first introduced mindfulness to the west in 1979 with his development of Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction. Since that time, research has still not been extensive with adults (Weare, 2013), and there less research involving children. Many studies are defined as “pilot studies” (Burke, 2010; Harpin, Rossi, Kim & Swanson, 2016; Malow & Austin, 2016; Mendelson, 2013; Semple, Lee, Rosa & Miller, 2010; Solar, 2013), meaning that they are one of the first of their kind, and further follow-up studies are recommended.

A recurring limitation within the aforementioned studies is the need for larger sample sizes (Burke, 2010; Weare, 2013; Harpin, Rossi, Kim & Swanson, 2016). Other methodological issues that arise in studies with children include little use of control groups or randomization, the non-existence of standardized measures, and the heavy reliance on self-reporting which introduces bias (Browne, 2017; Jones & Kahn 2018; McKown 2017; Weare, 2013). In terms of implementing mindfulness into a public school setting with young children, we run into even more gaps and limitations around bias. Collecting data on children has its own ethical challenges, and even when those are overcome, it is nearly impossible to retrieve data from non-blind third parties (Burke, 2010); data collection methods almost always come from self-report or reports from parents and teachers who know the participants on a personal level and may implement bias. Though the practice is highly unique and experiential, until more studies are recreated with more ideal conditions surrounding sample sizes, control groups, and randomizations, and until standardized measures are even loosely accepted, it will be difficult for the field of mindfulness to gain any empirical weight in the scientific world.

Another common issue is the level of support samples are receiving. There are studies which have administrative support (Harpin, Rossi, Kim & Swanson, 2016; Malow & Austin, 2016; Mendelson, 2013; Semple, Lee, Rosa & Miller, 2010; Solar, 2013), meaning that the
implementation of mindfulness within the school setting has support (financial or otherwise) coming from central administration, parent organizations, and/or the principal. However, this kind of support is not always a reality for teachers interested in implementing a mindfulness-based intervention in their own classroom, and could change the outcomes of implementation. Mendelson attests that there are critical elements which go into a successful mindfulness intervention, including administrative support, teacher involvement and student engagement (2013). Each of these aspects are variables that could change not only study to study, but even day by day in the classroom. This is also a very difficult thing to measure – how invested each individual is in a new idea and way of being in our classrooms. Overall, without some level of support from district and school leaders, educators may not be able to effectively implement a mindfulness curriculum.

In terms of teacher involvement, from my experience many teachers are open to the idea of mindfulness – if someone else is doing it. A critical aspect of teaching mindfulness to children and adults is that the teachers must be practicing what they are teaching (Greeland, 2013; Malow & Austin 2016; Weare, 2013). I cannot stress this point enough. This type of curriculum is not one that can be printed and handed to teachers to start the next day; it has to be embodied by the teachers in order to be successful. The other important aspect of this is that “mindfulness is not magic” (Greeland, 2013, p. 30). It will take time before results are truly seen, and that requires patience from instructors and setting aside a goal-oriented frame of mind. In a society that runs on instant-gratification and fast results, there seems to be little patience around getting what we want or hope for. This is increasingly difficult because just about anyone who starts practicing, myself included, has a goal in mind. It is only through practice that we are able to drop this ideal of getting to an end result. If teachers are not practitioners, they will not have the insight and
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patience to separate their expectations from the practice, and may be left disappointed with outcomes that do not fit their ideals.

It is also suggested that teachers of mindfulness to any age group only teach what they have directly experienced (Greeland, 2013). If teachers are brand new practitioners, it is likely that something will come up for students that the teacher is not prepared to handle. This is not inherently bad, and is a reality of the nature of mindfulness, but if there is no foundation to work with, students and teachers may have a hard time relating one another’s experiences, and could be left with a huge disconnect and possible negative outcomes. Mindfulness is also not something that can or should be forced onto an individual, which would make it difficult to implement a school-wide curriculum (Greeland, 2013, p. 52). Administrators should not force mindfulness on their teachers, and only teachers who practice should implement a curriculum. In turn, teachers can not force mindfulness on their students, and the behavior and level of engagement of one or two students in the classroom could affect outcomes of the curriculum (Semple, Lee, Rosa, & Miller, 2010). And though it is not completely necessary to implement mindfulness on a school-wide basis (Malow & Austin, 2016), whole-school participation offers a more even playing field for all students, and provides the most opportunity throughout children’s educational careers to cultivate trivial SECs.

One of the largest hindrances to implementing a school-wide mindfulness program is the issue of assessment, which we are already seeing in SEL programs which do not explicitly use mindfulness. Though several federal and state initiatives are already placing high importance on existing SEL programs and funding programs to support the development of SECs at every grade level, assessment of these skills has lagged considerably (McKown, 2017). At the root of this issue – not unlike mindfulness – is the failure to put a concrete definition on the term “social
emotional learning” (Browne, 2017; Jones & Kahn, 2018; McKown, 2017). Though definitions of SEL almost always include broad skills such as thinking, behavior, and self-control (McKown, 2017), the field is still flooded with SEL-related terms from “grit” to “growth mindset” (Browne, 2017) that are not all synonymous. Like mindfulness, even though there is an underlying understanding of the basic principles behind the practice, there seems to be no agreement on a solid definition of the terms “social emotional learning” or “social emotional competence.” Jones and Kahn (2018) break down the skills related to SEC in its broadest terms as:

“(1) cognitive skills, including executive functions such as working memory, attention control and flexibility, inhibition, and planning, as well as beliefs and attitudes that guide one’s sense of self and approaches to learning and growth; (2) emotional competencies that enable one to cope with frustration, recognize and manage emotions, and understand others’ emotions and perspectives; and (3) social and interpersonal skills that enable one to read social cues, navigate social situations, resolve interpersonal conflicts, cooperate with others and work effectively in a team, and demonstrate compassion and empathy towards others.” (p. 17)

It is evident why such broad competencies and skills make it difficult to pin down one definition of the term. For the field of education, the lack of ability to provide valid and reliable assessments poses a huge issue. We live in a society where teachers are held accountable for everything that happens within the classroom. Though our SEL skills are often labeled as “soft” or “noncognitive,” they are highly consequential to learning (McKown, 2017), and important to our education system. What poses an issue to policy
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makers and practitioners is the lack of ability to truly determine if students are meeting SEL standards. Even more frightening is that even though there is a decade’s worth of evidence linking better developed SECs to better academic and life skills (Browne, 2017; Jones & Kahn, 2018; McKown, 2017), without viable assessment data we are likely to see the decisions affecting children around SEL taken over by politics and fads (McKown, 2017). In an attempt to manipulate and use mindfulness for an outcome – like higher standardized test scores – the political presence in our school systems threatens to take over even curriculum standards that cannot (and should not) be measured through test outcomes. In my opinion, the importance of using mindfulness to develop SECs is not to gain leverage in the competition amongst public school systems, but to gently guide young individuals towards more accepting and compassionate habits of mind, which have potential to create an overall more accepting and compassionate world. Our society is already seeing mindfulness as a “fad” that fixes a multitude of life problems, and without meaningful assessment of the skills we truly hope to foster, we risk a huge setback in implementation of SEL in school systems and potentially create yet another high-stakes situation for teachers and students.

Additionally, if we are not careful in how we develop and measure social emotional skills in the classroom, we risk this aspect of learning becoming another area that is standardized. Completely contradictory to SEL and mindfulness at the heart, we may be put on the path towards creating more high-stakes accountability situations for our teachers and students (McKown, 2017) further adding to the stress and emotional dysregulation these programs aim to improve (Jones & Kahn, 2018; McKown, 2017). As with all of the other high-stakes testing that already exists and causes unnecessary stress amongst school systems, there is a strong possibility
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that any data that is collected could be misused, misrepresented, and misevaluated (Browne, 2017; McKown, 2017). Overall, if careful attention is not given, we could be on a dangerous path towards undoing what the practice of mindfulness intends by placing more stress on teachers, and inevitably, on students. If teachers are held to qualitative standards around mindfulness implementation, it becomes another means to an end, rather than a cognitive shift that has power to lead to more genuine happiness.

Even further, social and emotional learning in the classroom is only a start to significant change. Lasting impacts of the practice are best nurtured and fostered outside of the classroom as well (Harpin, Rossi, Kim, & Swanson, 2016). A school-based mindfulness program fostering SEL is a great start to significant societal changes, but reinforcement across contexts is vital, and this involves parents and community involvement in the effort (Jones & Kahn, 2018). The most successful SEL programs, some which include mindfulness, include community engagement, which can present a huge challenge, especially when it comes to parents and caregivers (Browne, 2017) worried about the aforementioned religious misunderstanding of mindfulness practice. However, the inclusion of families and out-of-school-time organizations (i.e. teams, after school care, other schools in the district) is the only way to effectively build and support social emotional skills (Browne, 2017; Jones & Kahn, 2018; McKown, 2017) that will yield broad results across society as a whole.

Though there are many gaps and limitations to SEL curriculum development at this time, especially those including mindfulness practice, there is still much hope for the future of mindfulness in public school systems. As programs and curricula continue to emerge in the field of education, we get even closer to finding programs that work for different school communities. With continued revision and research on the topic, programs become more and more fine-tuned
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and can become even more effective than they have already proved to be. These programs are in existence and have been practiced and studied for decades, and if we continue to put in the effort, social and emotional learning through secular mindfulness practices can flourish within school systems and communities, in order to create a better world.

Discussion of the Curriculum

My experience in different schools, grades, and classrooms as a teacher, instructional aide, and mindfulness “expert” coupled with my knowledge and understanding of current literature has led to the development of the Clear Minds, Full Hearts curriculum. The curriculum is designed to be easy to implement, fit into current best-practices, and require little more than the intention of a practicing educator. Though I believe this curriculum would be best implemented by a classroom teacher that has a well-established mindfulness practice, it would not be outlandish the for the Clear Minds, Full Hearts curriculum to be implemented by an outside source experienced in mindfulness practice and familiar with education and the science behind mindfulness with children. However, it is highly advised that a mindfulness curriculum be one that does not end at the end of each lesson or the final unit, but one that is woven throughout the days of the entire school year.

The reasoning behind implementing a mindfulness program such as Clear Minds, Full Hearts into primary grades (kindergarten through second grade) is based on my own experience with younger children and the belief that the earlier you learn self-regulation, compassion, and resilience, the better. There is little science behind determining the best age cognitively or developmentally to teach these through mindfulness, but leaders in the field of mindfulness for children, such as Susan Kaiser Greeland and Eline Snel, believe that children are intrinsically mindful and that mindfulness is suitable for all children as young as five years old. My own
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experience tells me that the more opportunities we give students to work with and explore content and skills we aim to teach, the more easily they are internalized. The same applies to mindfulness and cultivating social-emotional wellness – the more opportunities we provide and support explicit practice students are given, the more able they will be able to use their tools in real-world situations.

Built to fit into the first six weeks of school in the classroom, the curriculum includes three units that are further broken down into six lessons and activities that are meant to be used three times a week at morning meeting or another common meeting time in the school day. Though I personally support Responsive Classroom’s approach and idea that classroom meeting is the most effective in the morning, mindfulness is not something that must be done first thing in the morning. I also encourage educators to utilize morning meeting for mindfulness and SEL to take place because it is one of the only times of the day where students are not being pulled for other interventions, and where the classroom teacher(s) is/are likely the only adult(s) in the room. This leads to exposure and regular practice for all students in a safe and comfortable learning environment.

The curriculum is designed to build upon some of the foundational practices of mindfulness, and most lessons include a book pairing which engages students and can remain a helpful classroom tool for children throughout the school year. Students will learn important underlying aspects of mindfulness such as learning how to sit mindfully, using the breath to become present, whole-body listening, and tapping into all five of our senses. Next, we move on to more difficult concepts – big emotions. Learning what emotions are, how they make us feel in our hearts and bodies, how the parts of the brain work together, and how even in the midst of emotional chaos we can foster compassion for ourselves and others and feel gratitude. In the
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final unit, we tie all of this together with practices that can be used as tools applicable to practical use for children. This includes body scans, mindful communication skills, naming our thoughts, and taking time to mindfully learn from mistakes that we will inevitably make throughout our lives within school walls and outside of them.

Throughout the curriculum, teachers will also be provided with shorter activities that will build upon the intentions of each unit. These activities will be shorter, and recommended to be used at least once daily in the classroom. There will also be more specific activities and projects that can be done in recognition of certain holidays and what they truly mean, for different times of year, or that can be implemented under specific circumstances, or as ongoing projects used for assessment.

I have used each activity chosen for this curriculum design with whole classrooms or small groups of students in primary grades. The activities were carefully selected based on experiences that were not always easy for students or myself, but have always proven to be positive learning moments in the classroom. I also used feedback from teachers whose classrooms I worked in and the students who participated, as well as some informal assessments I made along the way. The hope is that each of these lessons are manageable in terms of time, materials, content and adaptability to meet the everchanging needs of individual classrooms and students.

**Conclusion**

Though research on mindfulness on both adults and children is in its infancy, there are many promising outcomes of mindfulness practice as it relates to academic, social and emotional learning. In conclusion, SEL curricula and programs and particularly, MBIs, have been found
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hopeful, are well-received by students and teachers, and have never been reported to cause harm (Greeland, 2012; Seigel & Bryson, 2011; Weare, 2013). Not only are mindfulness practices easily implemented, but they also seem to have a perfect time and place to fit into the primary grades’ regular school day through SEL initiatives and common classroom rituals, such as morning meeting. Mindfulness-based practices are relatively inexpensive and have fairly rapid and sustained benefits in areas of visual-spatial memory, working memory, sustained attention, executive functioning, and overall happiness (Greeland, 2013; Lazar, 2011; Weare, 2013). Even though often labeled “soft” or “noncognitive” skills, SECs are highly consequential to student success in and out of the classroom (McKown, 2017).

More research must be done in order to increase validity and reliability of a mindfulness curriculum, but promising reports exist. Larger samples, better controls, and limiting biases are all challenges researchers of the field must overcome. Through more research, the development of standardized measures is possible, which may create more reliable outcomes and create more comprehensive studies for science to fall back on. The success of our educational system at large depends on the success of our youth, and integrating social and emotional development with academic instruction through mindfulness practice is foundational to setting up our students – and the future of our society – for success.
References


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Clear Minds, Full Hearts

A Mindfulness-based Curriculum for Early Childhood Education

Kindergarten – Grade 2

Curriculum Design by Amy Phinney

May 2018
Curriculum Overview

This curriculum is designed to support the many educators who have found that young learners need support in more than just content-based learning. Clear Minds, Full Hearts is a curriculum for early childhood educators who have seen the benefits and come to learn the value of regular mindfulness practice in their own lives, and wish to adapt such practices to fit the needs of their students in a secular manor. Clear Minds, Full Hearts aims to provide educators with easily integrated activities that require little time, few materials, and provide regular opportunities for mindful practice that are not disruptive to the school day. Created as a Thesis Project for Lesley University’s Mindfulness Studies Master’s program, the curriculum was developed through personal teaching opportunities in many classrooms, and observations of student well-being throughout ongoing exposure to mindfulness in classroom settings. As a facilitator of these activities, I have five years of mindfulness and meditation experience, and I highly recommend that you, as the instructor, gain an understanding of and personal experience with mindfulness prior to teaching the Clear Minds, Full Hearts Curriculum to others. I hope that this curriculum provides the necessary support to educators who aim to nurture an intelligent, compassionate, accepting and peaceful society.

Throughout the curriculum I will provide explanations of activities, overviews of concepts, and general instruction for practices. For some lessons, you will find scripts for the instructor to draw from that include guided questioning and important topics to highlight. Ellipses will represent long pauses for students to think and absorb what is being said, and give space for the experience itself, uninterrupted; and parenthesis will provide alternate language for different groups of students and styles of learning. However, what you say in each lesson should be drawn from your own experience with the practice and your knowledge of you students. These scripts will not work exactly the same or sound exactly the same in any given situation. It is just as important, if not more, to teach mindfully as it is to teach mindfulness to our youth.

The practices and ideas presented in these lessons are much better taught and internalized when the instructor speaks from his or her own heart and experience. The lesson plans to follow are intended more to guide educators, rather than teach for them.
This is one of the reasons a diligent, intentional, consistent practice is strongly encouraged for anyone using the following curriculum guide.

It is also important for facilitators to know that the Clear Minds, Full Hearts Curriculum is designed as a guide. As educators, it is inevitable that times will come up where we need to be flexible with our time-frame, student engagement, materials, and feedback. The lessons to follow (aside from lesson one) are designed to fit into a 20 – 30 minutes time frame, but are not guaranteed to run seamlessly or exactly as outlined. Therefore, each activity is also designed to be appropriate as a stand-alone activity or discussion. Thus, instructors will have the freedom to break lessons up if necessary. Along with this, the curriculum was designed with the expectation that the teacher implements some sort of mindfulness activity every day, or even multiple times a day. Ideas for these activities can be taken from the outlined lesson plans, and more short activities and lessons have been provided at the end of the entire curriculum.
**What Mindfulness Is (and Isn’t)** [45 minutes]

Materials & Supplies:

❖ *What Does it Mean to be Present*? (Rana DiOrio)
❖ glitter jar (directions attached)
❖ three different colors of glitter

**Intentions**

The intentions of this first lesson is to introduce students to the idea of mindfulness, and express to them that mindfulness is something we will be consistently working on together throughout the school year. This lesson helps the facilitator get an idea of what the group may already know about mindfulness, and if the practice has been a part of any student’s education, enrichment, or home lives. Using an engaging book, children can easily relate to the moments illustrated, and can see how mindfulness plays a part in their entire life, not just in school. The glitter jar is intended to give students a visual representation of the often confusing patterns of our minds. Young students benefit from visually seeing what could make them think, act, and behave certain ways, which opens the door to gaining an understanding that our thoughts, feelings, and urges are what make us human. Though we cannot always control them, with practice we can gently guide them towards attention, kindness, and even happiness.

**Outline: Readings, Practices, Exercises, Discussions**

❖ Introduction to Mindfulness
❖ Being Present: Read Aloud & Discussion
❖ Glitter Jar Activity
❖ Clear Mind Practice

**Introduction to Mindfulness**

When introducing mindfulness to a group of children for the first time, it is important to consider what they may already know. This is crucial for two reasons: some students may have a little or even a lot of experience with mindfulness through school,
enrichment programs, or home; others will have none. It is important to see where each student stands as an individual on the practice, so you can appropriately pace and break down components of the practice. The second reason is to identify any misconceptions students have about what mindfulness is. *Many people – adults and children – think that mindfulness is synonymous with meditation.* This is an important aspect of mindfulness that deserves careful discernment and attention. Mindfulness is not meditation. Meditation is a tool that many people use to develop mindfulness, but they are not the same thing. Mindfulness can be practiced in any way, shape, or form that has intention behind it. This is something important to clear up at the beginning so students have an open mind to different activity, and can see how they foster mindfulness, but it is also important to make this differentiation for the sake of remaining secular. If you are working with children in public schools, you are much more likely to run into issues with administration, family, and even co-workers if the differentiation between mindfulness and meditation is not made explicit to students, teachers, and families.

When introducing the topic, I have had success with letting students tell and show me and their peers what they think mindfulness is. Some students will have never have heard it before, others will playfully sit cross-legged with their thumbs and middle fingers touching and chant “*oooom,*” and others, still, may surprise you with the insight they have on the topic. Some instructors (especially those working with older students) will benefit from having students write their thoughts on sticky notes and putting them up on a chart or on the board. However you choose to involve your students, it is important to accept all answers. Though some answers may need complete redirection, mindfulness is something that fosters acceptance and open-mindedness, and embodying those qualities is the best way to teach them.

Once all students who are willing to share have had their turn, provide them with a simple definition that will be easy for them to understand and apply to many different situations. “Paying attention” is an easy definition, but I believe it misses some of the critical components of mindfulness. I have told students in the past that practicing mindfulness helps us choose to pay attention to what is happening in the present moment, on the inside and outside. I further elaborate by explaining that when we are mindful we pay attention on purpose, and with kindness to ourselves and others. With
mindfulness we learn how to tell what is happening around us and within us right now, and we can become calmer, kinder, and happier. You may also choose to have mindfulness be a “working definition” for your class, and your base definition could simply be something along the lines of “paying attention to the present.” This would require revisiting the term throughout the curriculum, but it is also a fun way to get the class involved in deciding what mindfulness means to them, and also seeing how they have experienced it. I also like to note that mindfulness is not something that can just be defined, it is something that we experience to really understand, and that is why we will be practicing it regularly and in many different ways.

More often than not, school is viewed as an aspect of life that can be stressful. I like to tell my students that mindfulness is not something super-serious, nothing for them to ever get worked up over, and something that I hope is enjoyable for them with some practice. It is also up to the instructor to set up guidelines for students who have no interest, don’t want to participate, or are simply defiant. It is important to note that mindfulness is not something that can be forced upon anyone. I like to tell students this up front. What we are doing with mindfulness is giving them tools to help themselves. If they do not wish to participate, that is perfectly acceptable. What is not acceptable is taking away this time from other students who do wish to participate. Children are welcome to just sit and watch, without participating, but children are not welcome to be disruptive or disrespectful during any of our mindfulness lessons. I shy away from sending students away from the group for as long as possible, because more often than not, students who say they don’t want to try it give a little once they see the rest of the class engaged. However, if a student is being disruptive to the group, it is sometimes necessary to ask them to leave the group and do something quiet independently (i.e., read silently).

Overall, how mindfulness is introduced to a group of students is dependent on many factors: the instructor’s teaching style, the individuals in the classroom, the make-up of the classroom, and the classroom management techniques employed by the instructor or, in some cases, the whole school. My suggestions here are just that, suggestions. I believe that as long as all students are given opportunities to share their ideas, mindfulness is clarified as something separate from meditation, and there are
clear expectations for what mindfulness lessons will look like, then mindfulness can be accessible to any group of students.

**Being Present: Read Aloud & Discussion**

*What Does is Mean to be Present?* is a colorful, engaging picture book for children of all ages. Rana DiOrio uses humor and real-life moments for children to describe how being present can make our lives more enjoyable, even when there are some imperfections. After this reading, instructors can easily draw the connection between mindfulness and being present, and further explain that when we are mindful we are given a choice to experience what is happening right now. I like to stress the idea to students that though mindfulness can bring us more joy, it is not something that is always easy for us. You can say something along the lines of: *Mindfulness is a lot of hard work, even for adults, and that is why we will be practicing it often throughout the school year.*

After the reading, I like to engage students by asking them why they think mindfulness is something that is important for us to be learning together as a class. Usually, students think you want to hear answers like “So we listen when the teacher is talking” or “So we aren’t chatty when we aren’t supposed to be.” Though these outcomes would make teaching a much easier job, they do not encompass the entire idea of mindfulness as a way of being in the world. In the classroom, on the playground, at home, and in the community. Encourage students to reflect on some of the ideas from the story and how being present can help us enjoy life more no matter where we are or what we are doing.

**Glitter Jar Activity**

*Attached to this lesson you will find instructions on how to create the glitter jar at home before bringing it into the classroom.*

The glitter jar is a great representation for any age group. Using color and glitter, the glitter jar engages our visual field while giving a concrete symbol of our minds and what exactly goes on in there. Some students may have seen or used glitter jars before, so, again, it is helpful to ask if anyone knows what a glitter jar is. Some students may
have used it in the past for mindfulness, others may have as a sort of toy, and, still, some may have never have seen one. Getting an idea of this will let the instructor know what needs to be explained or clarified for the group. It is highly recommended that the glitter jar only be used for mindfulness with students; not a transition timer, indoor recess toy, or a privilege gained for good behavior. It should develop into an autonomous tool that children can decide when they need to use at any point throughout the school year.

Begin this activity by displaying the jar and the three colors of glitter on a steady surface that is easy for all students to see. An empty desk/table or chair at the front of the room will usually do the trick. Allow students to move to get a better view if necessary. The following “script” is close to what I use when introducing the glitter jar.

Does anyone have an idea of what this is?[Accept answers] This is a glitter jar. Has anyone seen or used a glitter jar before? In our class, we are going to use this glitter jar to help us practice and understand mindfulness a little bit more. What do we think this jar could represent?

This jar is like our mind, and each of these colors of glitter represent different things that go on in our minds every day. Let’s add [color one] to represent our thoughts (add a few shakes of glitter). Thoughts can be anything really – wondering what is for lunch today, remembering something funny you watched on TV, or worrying about something difficult you are learning. [Color two] will represent our feelings (add glitter) – like when we are really angry at someone, or when we are super excited about something, or when we feel frustrated with something or someone. And [color three] is going to represent our urges and impulses (add glitter). Urges and impulses are sort of grown-up words. Urges and impulses are the things we want to do with our bodies – actions and behaviors. But, urges and impulses live in our minds, before we actually do anything with our bodies. These are tricky things, because often we act upon urges and impulses so quickly that we don’t even what is happening until after – like if we argue with a sibling and hit them, or if someone isn’t playing fair and we yell something mean at them, or we come sprinting into the classroom to share some really exciting news. Usually, if we act on our urges and impulses, we end up in trouble or regretting what we said or did.
Now, we are going to seal up our jar, and start our day. (Pick up the jar and put the lid on). Maybe we wake up and realize we are running late (swirl the jar). Then, we go downstairs for breakfast and there is no more Lucky Charms, so you have to eat plain toast (shake the jar). You’re in the car on the way to school, and maybe something a little scary or sad comes on the news (swirl). When you finally get to school, you find out that you got 100% on a project you worked really hard on (shake). (Place jar down). Now, what do we notice about the jar – our minds?... What is happening to all the glitter in there?...

Yes! All of our thoughts, feelings, urges and impulses are swirling around. Is the jar clear? No, our minds have become clouded by the all that glitter that got stirred up before our school day even started. There is one thing we can do to get all of that glitter to settle. Do you know what it is? Be still. If we move the jar at all, the glitter stirs up. If I try to put my hand in there and push the glitter down, it just goes through my fingers, and gets stirred up more. Let’s see what happen to the glitter when we leave it still for a moment...

(Wait for glitter to settle to the bottom of the jar)

Can we see through the jar clearly now? Yes! Our mind has cleared, because we simply let it be still for just a few moments. When our mind is clear, we are able to make wise decisions. Making wise decisions means that no matter what we are thinking, feeling, or wanting to say and do, we can see what is happening, and know the next best thing to do.

Did anyone notice where the glitter went?

It didn’t just disappear, right? It settled on the bottom of the jar. While we work on practicing mindfulness, remember that we do not need to get rid of any of our thoughts, feelings or urges. They are important, and we need them – even the difficult ones. With mindfulness we simply learn how to let the glitter settle, and not let it cloud our vision and get in the way of making wise decisions.

**Clear Mind Practice**
The Clear Mind Practice is the first explicit mindfulness practice used with students in the Clear Minds, Full Hearts Curriculum. In the first few lessons of the curriculum, this practice is used alongside the glitter jar for a more supportive and engaging practice. However, it is intended to eventually evolve into a more independent breath-based practice for students with their eyes either closed or softly gazing at an object (per instructor discernment). The idea here is to familiarize students with the glitter jar and its function as solely a mindfulness tool in the classroom, so that eventually it can become a tool they use independently if they are feeling overwhelmed, wound up, or just need a moment to clear their minds at any point throughout the school day. It is also a great tool to have for shorter whole-class mindfulness practices if and when the teacher sees a need for it (i.e., right after recess, before/after walking in the hallway to an assembly, coming back from specials).

For this first practice, I try not to take too much time to explain or model expectations. It is okay for this first practice to be imperfect. The idea here is to just give them a taste of what we will be doing. The next time you chose to do this practice with the group between lessons, you will want to take a few extra moments at the beginning to give examples of how we sit mindfully, and even some non-examples (children love non-examples). Or, you may want to cover this while you are developing the rules and expectations for mindfulness lessons. I do not stress this during the first practice because of all of the information children are already getting, and it gives me a chance to see how they do on their own before giving them guidelines. It is helpful, interesting, and, honestly, fun, to see what their take on what a practice looks like is. A few directions are encouraged, like sitting up, empty hands, and quiet bodies. Other than that, I let this first practice be a little more free.

We are going to take just a few moments to practice letting our minds settle, like the glitter jar. I am going to shake it up again, and when I put it down, just try to pay attention to the glitter slowly falling. When we are practicing mindfulness, we usually are sitting up straight with our legs crossed, with empty hands, and we do our best to keep our mouths and bodies quiet. It is okay if it takes us a little bit of time to feel comfortable sitting mindfully. (Give students a few seconds to find their mindful seat, making sure everyone can see the glitter jar). Take a moment to see how your mind
feels right now. Is there a lot of glitter swirling around? A little? None at all? (shake jar, and place it down where students can easily see it).

The glitter should settle in about 60 seconds. This will likely feel like a very, very long time. If students start to get wiggly or silly, try not to make a big deal about it. Just notice. Being mindful of your students and how they handle different practices and activities is an important part of the curriculum. Once all the glitter is settled, you can comment on what you noticed. Wow, I noticed that Lucy was able to watch all of the glitter settle. Or sitting still and quiet is really difficult, don’t you think? It is important not to deem either behavior as better than the other. Young children will need a lot of practice before they are able to sit still and quiet – even for just a few minutes – without support. This is why I encourage the instructor to practice this for just a little bit every day. Practice makes practice, and when it comes to mindfulness, perfection does not exist. However, the stamina to sit still and attend to the moment will gradually build. And then it will deteriorate the day before a long weekend or vacation, and it will take an entire week to build it back up, but that is all fine.
The Breath as Our Anchor [30 minutes]

Materials & Supplies:

- The Breath as Our Anchor chart (example attached)
- Charlotte and the Quiet Place (Deborah Sosin)
- Glitter jar

Intentions

This lesson shifts students’ attention inwards. Using a tool that is always accessible to them, the breath, students will learn how to calm their minds and recognize that they are able to do this at any point in time. Another fun, relatable book, clearly illustrates for students how the seemingly normal world we live in can be overwhelming, distracting, and noisy. Gently guiding students to pay attention to the everyday noise in order to recognize when they need a break, this lesson opens up a discussion and has students start understanding that when they look within, they can always find a quiet place even amidst the surging waves of thoughts, feelings and impulses. It also provides a classroom tool and visual reminder to students on how to look within to settle themselves whenever they need to.

Outline: Readings, Practices, Exercises, Discussions

- Glitter Jaw Review & Clear Mind Practice
- Charlotte and the Quiet Place: Read Aloud & Discussion
- The Breath as Our Anchor
- Clear Mind Practice

Glitter Jar Review & Clear Mind Practice

Just like any academic content based lesson, teachers understand that recalling and reviewing information in a variety of ways is important to reach different learners and reinforce ideas and concepts. Teaching mindfulness is no different. Especially when teaching an abstract topic to young children, instructors should be regularly checking for understanding. At the beginning of lesson two, the instructor uses the glitter jar – a tactile tool illustrating our minds – to explain and reinforce ideas that are intangible.
We begin this lesson by asking students to recall important aspects of the glitter jar – students should recall that the jar represents our minds, that the glitter illustrates three different habits of mind (thoughts, feelings and urges/impulses), and how easily and quickly our habits of mind can cloud our vision and impair wise decision-making.

As you move through the curriculum and integrate regular practice, it will be left to the instructor’s discretion as to when and how the glitter jar is phased out of the lesson sequence. Some classes, especially those with older kids, may be ready to close their eyes and use the breath after lesson two, and quickly learn how to use the glitter jar as a mindfulness tool autonomously. Other classrooms, however, may benefit from the use of a visual anchor for several weeks. Either outcome is perfectly okay. Especially when working in high-trauma communities, it may be more appropriate for the instructor to use the glitter jar throughout the curriculum and the school year. With trauma often comes fear, and it is important for students to feel safe while practicing, and closing the eyes may not benefit them, or even cause pain. So, it is not imperative to drop this tool, but it is encouraged for groups of students who are ready and comfortable. The glitter jar can be used while also encouraging breath-awareness – it is not a one-or-the-other situation. Even if the glitter jar remains a whole-group mindfulness practice tool, it is possible for it to also be used autonomously, which can serve to be a helpful self-management technique, and is the intended purpose for introducing the glitter jar.

**Note:** You may want to consider adding more glue to your glitter jar to allow for a longer practice time if you choose to use this visual aid throughout most or all of the curriculum. This is something you would have to play with, but adding glue will slow down the settling of glitter and allow for longer practices. Even adding a little bit more glue a week will allow for students to slowly build their stamina. You may also consider having two classroom glitter jars: one that stays about a 60 second practice for independent use as needed, and one for whole-class use that you can add more glue to in order to lengthen practice time each session/week. It is not recommended that students practice mindfulness for more minutes than their age (i.e. six-year-olds should not be expected to practice for longer than six minutes independently).
A Quiet Place: Read Aloud & Discussion

*Charlotte and the Quiet Place* is a story about a girl who lives in a noisy city. She realized that almost everywhere she spends her day is awfully noisy, and even in places that are supposed to be quiet, there is often a lot of chaos. This story shows students how Charlotte finds her quiet place within herself, and realized that even if she is in a noisy place, there is always somewhere quiet within – between her breaths. As you read this story, you may ask students to quietly raise hands if they have noticed how noisy these places in their own lives can be (the lunch room, their bedrooms, et cetera), and if they have a truly quiet place they can go to if they need to.

After reading and finding out where Charlotte’s quiet place is, ask students to reflect on the story. Do they think Charlotte can find a quiet place wherever she is now? What is interesting about her quiet place?

The Breath as Our Anchor

Using familiar representations of abstract concepts is imperative for young children. We are not often taught explicitly how to pick apart different aspects of the mind, so the more ways it can be represented to students, the more accessible it becomes. This activity shows students how they can picture their minds as a boat, sometimes being tossed around by tough waves of thoughts, feelings, and urges/impulses. A ship always has an anchor on board, and so do our minds. We can use the breath as our anchor in rough waters. Attached is a sample classroom chart that illustrates the similarities between our minds and a ship at sea.

You can create the chart in different ways, depending on your teaching style and the classroom composition. For some educators, it makes the most sense to create the whole chart before-hand, and explain it as a whole to the class. However, I typically leave some of the labeling to be done with the students, asking them guiding questions to lead them towards understanding each part of the chart and think abstractly about the way the mind works. I have had success in many grade levels by drawing the picture ahead of time – complete with a ship, big waves, and an anchor – and ask the students to help me label the ship (our mind), different types of waves (thoughts, feelings,
urges/impulses), and finally the anchor (our breath). It is helpful to have students think back on the story to guide them towards viewing the anchor as our breath.

I recommend leaving this chart displayed throughout the school year where it is easy to see. If you have a specific area in the classroom where children can go to use mindfulness, I would have it there as a reminder and tool. It is helpful to have this easily displayed for future reference and reminders as needed.

**Clear Mind Practice**

After illustrating for students how we can use our breath more deliberately in times of chaos – “rough waters” – you can close the lesson with the Clear Mind Practice, which should now be relatively familiar to students (remember, it is encouraged to do this practice daily with students). If necessary, go over how students sit for mindfulness practice. This time (whether you choose to continue the use of the glitter jar or not), the intention is to explicitly direct student attention towards the breath. You may use the script above, either omitting or keeping references to the glitter jar, but being sure in this session to place emphasis on the breath so students start to recognize that this mind-settling technique is available to them whenever they recognize they need it. Introduce the practice as very similar to what we have been doing with the glitter jar, but this time students may want to try closing their eyes, seeing if it is easier for them to settle their minds without visual stimulation. Before the practice begins, be sure to show students how to breathe for this practice (if not explained and modeled during an earlier practice). I encourage students to take belly breaths, and demonstrate this with a hand on the stomach, really filling up my belly as I breathe in through my nose, and deliberately emptying my belly all the way with a quiet exhale through my nose. Just like we model how to sit for practice, we need to model how we should be trying to breathe for practice. What it looks like, sounds like, and feels like. Throughout the practice, you can use cues like *Where is your mind now? Do you still feel your breath? If your mind has wandered, that is okay, now just try to see what your breath is like.* Again, this first breath-based practice may be short – 2 or 3 minutes. **Note:** If you are still using the glitter jar, be sure to have added glue to increase settling time if your students are ready.
Mindful Listening [30 minutes]

Materials & Supplies

❖ Silence (Lemniscates)
❖ Singing bowl*
❖ Glitter jar (optional)

Intentions

Mindful listening is an engaging activity for students of all ages. This lesson serves to introduce another easily implemented mindfulness practice that can become a part of regular daily classroom routines and ritual. Mindful listening is a short practice in itself, but can be expanded upon and used across the curriculum and is especially useful in learning descriptive writing techniques (see supplemental activities). Introducing a singing bowl* will now give students a clear beginning and ending to whole-class mindfulness practice, and will become a regular part of the Clear Mind Practice. Silence is a book that shows students all that they can find in the silence if they really listen. It challenges students to reflect upon the irony that they can hear so much more in silence. It points to all of the things they can attend to while in silence – the little things they may miss, or the nuances they may not even know exist.

Outline: Readings, Practices, Exercises, Discussions

❖ Clear Mind Practice
❖ Silence: Read Aloud & Discussion
❖ Singing Bowl Introduction
❖ Mindful Listening Practice & Discussion

Clear Mind Practice

Continue with Clear Mind Practice, with or without the glitter jar.

Silence: Read Aloud & Discussion

Students often hear from their teachers, principals, and parents that there are times when they are expected to be silent. This can be for many reasons: so other
students (and themselves) can concentrate, to monitor independent work periods, to listen to instructions, or because maybe an adult in their life just has a headache. However, we hardly ever really define what silence is to them, or how it benefits them specifically. Introducing mindful listening and silence go hand in hand. This lesson can show students that silence does not mean there isn’t any noise at all – inside themselves or in the environment. This ironic read aloud and discussion open students minds to the idea that inner silence allows for space in the mind – space where creativity, intelligence, and calmness stem from. Before reading, I like to ask students explicitly to be thinking about what is sort of funny (ironic) about this book called *Silence*. While reading, long pauses in silence are helpful and allow time for students to really reflect on what they are hearing – both as you read, and within the pauses. By the end of the book, and with a little guidance, students hopefully see all that they can hear and feel when we allow space for silence within ourselves.

**Singing Bowl Introduction**

Like the glitter jar, the singing bowl (or other instrument*) is meant to be used as a tool to help direct attention inward and settle the mind. Many classroom teachers have some sort of chime or tone bar for classroom management techniques, *the singing bowl should be used completely separately and explicitly for mindfulness*. It is important for students to know the difference between tools used for classroom management and tools used for mindfulness. Regular mindful practice may help students manage their own attention and behavior more effectively in the long run, but it is *not* a classroom management technique. I stress that instructors make clear distinctions between anything they use in the classroom for mindfulness practice.

**Note:** A singing bowl may not be an appropriate tool for your classroom, especially if you are working with a population that is skeptical of the secular nature of the practice. It may be more appropriate for you to use a tone bar or other chime, and that is left to the discretion of the instructor and their knowledge of the population. You can find a variety of very unique chime tools online, so there is absolutely no need for a singing bowl specifically. You may also find chimes and times through apps or other technologies, though this is an option, I find it is best to steer clear of too much
technology around mindfulness. After all, students are usually very emerged in technology in the classroom and at home, and I believe that mindfulness practice should serve as a break from technology if possible.

For this lesson, the singing bowl will be used for a special practice that you may choose to use throughout the school year on a regular basis, and going forward it will become a part of the Clear Mind Practice. You may choose to allow students to earn the privilege of taking turns sounding the singing bowl and, eventually, “leading” mindfulness practices, but that is dependent on the teaching style of the instructor and the level of maturity in the classroom. If this becomes an option, which I think is a great way to instill ownership of the practice, it is important for the instructor to make sure every student has an opportunity to lead and set clear expectations for how to use the singing bowl.

**Mindful Listening Practice**

Before beginning the practice, sound the singing bowl once, so students know what to expect during practice. This practice will be different, so explaining what is going to happen step-by-step is important. This practice requires students to find their mindful seats. The instructor should continue to model this for their students as necessary, reminding them to sit up straight, have empty hands, and do their best to keep their bodies still. Prompt students by telling them that throughout this practice, you will be asking a series of questions. Their job is not to raise their hand or call out an answer, it is to just listen to the question, and think about them. Maybe they will have an answer, maybe they will not. Either is fine, the important part is to be listening as carefully and allowing for as much silence as they are able to. The practice may sound something like this:

*For this practice, we will also be finding our mindful seats. Remembering to sit up tall, have empty hands, and do our best to be still. The first time, we are going to keep our eyes open. To start the practice, I am going to ring the singing bowl once. I will be asking you questions throughout the practice, but you are not expected to answer out loud, or even at all. Just think about the questions I ask and where your*
attention is when I ask them. I am going to ring the singing bowl, see how long you can hear the sound for.

(Ring bowl and wait until the sound completely fades)

What did you hear?... How did you feel?... Did you notice anything?...

We are going to do the same thing again, but this time, I am going to invite you to close your eyes, or gently stare at one spot on the rug in front of you. If your eyes are open, you should be making sure that you are not distracting other students by looking around, making faces, or trying to get someone else’s attention. Just fix your gaze on one spot, and do your best listening. Okay, let’s make sure we are in our mindful seat, and close our eyes.

(Ring bowl and wait until the sound completely fades)

How did it feel this time?... What were you thinking about?... Did you notice a difference between what you heard this time and the first time you heard the bell?...

I am going to ring the bowl again, this time, when you can no longer hear the sound, gently and quietly open your eyes.

(Ring bowl and wait until all students eyes are open)

Following this activity, you can allow students to share what they noticed. Most children will notice it was easier to listen to the bell (and maybe focus on their breathing) with their eyes closed. Depending on time and ability of students, you may opt to do this practice one last time. This time, you may ask students to raise their hands, when they can no longer hear the bell. Instead of asking questions, you may allow them to rest in silence and notice everything they can hear for about 30 seconds. Allow students to share what they heard. You can close the lesson by asking students again why mindful listening is an important skill for learning.

Note: This activity is a great way to start the day or refresh students’ attention. This is an activity I recommend for regular practice, and can be easily expanded upon to cover different content areas. It can be done as a precursor to a descriptive writing activity, having students focus on describing sounds and incorporating them into their
writing. You can lead them to a freewriting lesson by asking students to think of
different adjectives to describe different things they heard. Or, it could be used to begin
a science or social studies lesson. Teachers can play different sound clips or bits from
different environments (the rainforest, desert, ocean, etc.) or even famous speeches in
history and ask students to do a mindful listening activity to determine the environment
or animals they may have heard, or the intention of the speaker. Mindful listening is a
truly versatile activity and can be used to reinforce content knowledge in a variety of
ways across the curriculum.
Mindful Walking [30 minutes]

Materials & Supplies:

❖ Singing bowl
❖ Listening Walk (Paul Showers)
❖ Access to some sort of open space; ideally outdoors, but a gymnasium, auditorium, or large classroom would also work

Intentions

Mindful movement provides students the opportunity to take their practice into action. It provides young children, who are asked to sit for far longer than developmentally appropriate, a different approach to quieting the mind. Mindfulness is not static, it is not always the same. It is a way of being that can be practiced whether we are sitting still or on the move. We always have an opportunity to work on cultivating awareness, compassion and happiness. And for students who are especially squirmy, or simply learn better kinesthetically, this provides a comforting way for them to access the practice. This lesson also gives students an opportunity to share honest feedback about how the practice is going for them. Have they been using it? Do they enjoy it? Has it been helpful in any way? Listening Walk, shares the story of a young girl who walks with her father and dog every day, and the special way they walk that bring her peace.

Outline: Readings, Practices, Exercises, Discussions

❖ Mindfulness Review
❖ Mindful Listening Practice
❖ The Listening Walk: Read Aloud & Discussion
❖ Mindful Walking Practice
❖ Mindful Walking Reflection

Mindfulness Review

This is a good time in the curriculum to make sure everyone is on track with the practice. After (around) one full week of explicit, regular practice, students should be beginning to adapt to the practice, and understand expectations. I find this a good time
to take a pause and check-in, with students, and yourself. Checking to be sure everyone has a clear understanding of what mindfulness is, and why we are practicing it, it is early enough to get feedback and be able to adapt, but far enough in where students should be connecting the dots. You may realize that students aren’t really understanding the point of mindful listening, or are unsure of what exactly we are trying to do with our thoughts, feelings and urges/impulses. It is good to make sure everyone is on the right track before getting to far into the practice.

**Clear Minds Practice**

Whether still utilizing the glitter jar or not, incorporate the singing bowl into the Clear Minds Practice. The final layer to the practice, have students find their mindful seats, and tell them that now the singing bowl will mark the beginning and end of their Clear Mind Practice. Once they can no longer hear the first chime of the bowl, they can keep their eyes closed at direct their attention to their breath. For this practice, the instructor should remind students a few times throughout to be focusing on their breath, and redirecting them back to the breath in case distractions have crept in. This will be how the Clear Mind Practice will be laid out for the remainder of the curriculum, as per instructor’s discretion. The instructor should be mindful each session to the specific needs of the class or individuals’ moment to moment. Some days may need more guidance, maybe a shorter practice, or more support via visual cues like the glitter jar. At this point, the instructor can be tailoring beginning mindfulness practices to the needs of the students.

**Listening Walk: Read Aloud & Discussion**

Before reading, tell students that today we will be practicing mindfulness differently than we have been so far. Telling them that we will be moving instead of sitting still and quiet will generally pique the interest of young students. Ask students throughout the read aloud to be paying attention to what happens on the listening walk.

**Mindful Walking Practice**
After reading *The Listening Walk*, students should have an idea of what a mindful walking practice looks like. However, it is important to go over expectations with them. It is ideal to do this practice outside, and in order to safely do so, students must have a clear expectation of what they are allowed to do, where they are allowed to go, and what they should be trying to practice. Whether outside or inside, specific parameters should be set for the walk. Where explicitly are they allowed to walk? What should their walk look like? (Preferably slow and deliberate, but some children will feel more natural walking at a regular pace). It should be clear that this is an independent activity, and students shouldn’t be walking together, talking, or attempting to distract one another. The instructor will also need to decide how to inform students that the practice has begun and ended. A singing bowl may work in closer quarters, but facilitators may need to come to a different solution if children will be walking far. It is also a good idea to brainstorm a list of things to be paying attention to with the help of students. Maybe you want to set goals, like three sounds, five colors, one interesting object, and a description of the weather. This, like mindful listening, could also be used in the future as a senses activity to help with creative writing. I advise doing the practice with no assignment at least the first time, but you could direct students attention towards different things if you have a future assignment in mind. The listening walk could be anywhere from two to five minutes (or even longer), depending on flexibility on time and student ability/engagement.

**Mindful Walk Reflection Activity (optional)**

If time, this reflection activity gives students a chance to creatively explore what they noticed on their walk. Students can be asked to draw a picture of what they noticed on their walk, and older students can accompany this drawing with a few sentences, a poem, or even a short story.
Mindful Eating [30 minutes]

Materials & Supplies:

- Singing bowl
- Mindful snack – something easy, healthy, and small for students to eat (i.e. an orange slice, raisins, grapes, et cetera) Note: Steer away from candy or any unhealthy options, and allergies need to be taken into consideration by the instructor.
- Paper and coloring supplies (optional)

Intentions

Continuing to explore mindfulness through our sense doors, the mindful eating exercise provides tangible experiences for young learners to link to mindfulness. Using an ordinary part of our day that can so often be mindless, students will experience another way they can slow down their minds and become present, and add another mindfulness technique to their tool kit. With very specific and direct instruction, students are guided into eating in a way they likely do not experience often, and they are encouraged to share what they notice – what they enjoyed and what they were averse to. Continuing to support students in looking within themselves to practice mindfulness in multiple facets of life, students will observe the joys and frustrations of slowing down.

Outline: Readings, Practices, Exercises, Discussions

- Clear Mind Practice
- Introduction to Mindful Eating
- Mindful Eating Practice
- Mindful Eating Discussion

Clear Mind Practice

As usual, begin with the Clear Mind Practice using whatever tools the instructor sees fit.

Introduction to Mindful Eating
Mindful eating can be a fun and challenging activity for children. The mindful eating practice could be introduced in a variety of ways. You could have children share their favorite snacks (taking it a step further and across the curriculum, teachers could use this data in math for graphing), or share where they ate breakfast this morning or dinner last night. It is quite likely that you will have students who ate in the car on their way to or from an activity or school, children who ate in front of the TV, maybe a few ate at a restaurant, and even some students who can’t remember where they ate – which is always a great point to draw upon. Sometimes we are so mindless while we eat, we can’t even remember where we were or what we had! **Note:** This is a great activity to incorporate into a unit about apples or Johnny Appleseed, having students practice mindful eating with different types of apples.

**Mindful Eating Practice**

This practice is slow from the moment you introduce the topic, all the way to the end when children swallow their food. It is important to deliberately slow down the entire process of eating for the practice: telling students what they will be having, passing it out, giving instructions, and leaving plenty of space for contemplation. Another important aspect of the activity is for the instructor to carry out the steps along with the class – even if it means talking with your mouth full for a moment. It is not only important for modeling expectations and showing that you are part of the practice group, it also allows for a bit of light heartedness, and with food you also never know what could come up. Just like establishing your own mindfulness practice prior to teaching so you can share and relate to experiences, the same goes for this activity. Maybe you bought a particularly bitter bunch of tangerines, or the raisins you got were extra tough. Whatever comes up, as the instructor, you want to be in the moment with the rest of the group. The practice requires patience from the instructor and, in turn, will cultivate a little more patience in the students. Your script could go something like this:

> **Today, we are going to be practicing mindful eating. I brought a snack for us all to have together. Silently think for a moment of what it might be. How does it feel to wait for something you aren’t sure of? Nervous? Excited? Restless?... (Slowly take out the snack you brought) I am hearing a lot of thoughts and reactions about oranges...**
some of you really like them! For others, maybe it isn’t your favorite snack at all.
Please do not do anything with your orange slice until you hear directions, just notice
how you feel on the inside while I am handing them out…

Now, before we put these in our mouths, let’s take a moment or two to see how
they feel in our hand. Is it light? Heavy? Maybe it feels cool or warm? Is it bumpy or
smooth?… Maybe it feels different in one hand than the other…

Notice how it looks… What do you see? Is it one color? Or, maybe it has many
colors. Does it have a certain shape? What would you call it?…

For this activity, we are really going to slow down as we eat these orange slices.
Try to listen to directions carefully and notice if any thoughts (I am so hungry!),
feelings (maybe you are angry we have oranges), or urges and impulses (to put it in
your mouth right away, chew and swallow). Bring the orange slice to your nose…
Does it have a smell? Is the smell really strong, or do you have to pay close attention in
order to smell it? Is there anything happening in your mouth as you smell it?…

Before we finally put the orange in our mouths, let’s close our eyes. Instead of
popping the slice right into your mouth and chewing it, gently place it on your tongue
and close your mouth. How does it feel to have a bite of food just resting on your
tongue?… Now, slowly as you can, take just one single chew. What happens to the
food?… Does it change at all? Taste? Shape? Texture? Do your best to keep paying
attention to any thoughts, feelings or urges that arise…

Continue to take just one, slow chew at a time. What does your tongue do as you
chew? Is it easy to chew slowly? Difficult?… Are you noticing anything in your mind?
Or are you enjoying your mindful snack… Continue to chew and taste very slowly…
Right before you are ready to swallow, see if you can pause for a moment… Is there
any urge or impulse to swallow before you actually do?… Any thoughts or feelings
arise as you wait to swallow?… When you finally do, try to feel the food leave your
tongue, feel your throat do the work to swallow, and maybe you can feel your food
move down towards your belly… Be curious. Do your best to be patient. Before
opening your eyes, give yourself a moment to let your orange settle down towards
your belly.
This activity may easily take two or even three minutes. Depending on the snack, allow students to take another bite or have another piece and try the exercise independently. For the independent practice, the instructor should still offer gentle guidance, but not nearly as much. Don’t forget, you should be practicing, too!

**Mindful Eating Discussion**

Once complete, remind the class that what we just did was mindfulness. Consistently reinforcing the idea that mindfulness is a way of being that can be done anywhere, give students a moment to reflect on the practice. Was it fun? Did anyone really dislike it? Was there any aversion to the food? This is a great discussion point about wants and expectations. Sometimes, we don’t get what we want, or things are not how we expect them to be. You can build a discussion around this by asking questions like: How can we deal with these situations in our lives? What are some examples of times we did not get what we wanted or our expectations weren’t met? How did we deal with them? Was there a better way to deal with the situation? What was the outcome? This serves as a time in the curriculum to remind students that as we learn more about mindfulness, we can learn more about how to deal with difficult situations, upsetting moments, or unpleasant events. Sometimes these hard situations are little, like having a snack you don’t like; bigger, like misplacing your homework; and even bigger, like fighting with a friend or family member. All of these things are difficult, and we teach our youth mindfulness to help them respond to stressful moments.
Body Awareness [30 minutes]

Materials & Supplies:

❖ Singing bowl
❖ Crystals, rocks, or small stuffed animals
❖ Checking in With My Body Worksheet
❖ Checking in With My Body Coloring Sheet (optional)

Intentions

Cultivating body awareness is a useful tool in directing our attention to what happens in the body when we have certain thoughts, feel certain emotions, and it helps us begin to notice when we might be experiencing an urge or an impulse. The body awareness exercise is intended to begin to bring students’ awareness to specific points in the body and resting their attention there to notice different ways they can experience physical feelings. While laying down practicing breath awareness, students use small objects on their stomachs to physically ground students in their breath so they have more mental space to explore different areas of the body while staying present with the breath. Following the practice is a reflection worksheet for students to complete to support the connections they are beginning to make between breath, body, and mind.

Outline: Readings, Practices, Exercises, Discussions

❖ Clear Mind Practice
❖ Body Awareness Introduction
❖ Checking in With My Body Practice
❖ Checking in With My Body Discussion & Worksheet (optional coloring page)

Clear Mind Practice

As always, begin with the Clear Mind Practice. At this point, you may be beginning to notice that students can sit for longer periods of time. Or not. Either is fine. There is no expectation for how long children can or should practice for. The intention is to gently increase their stamina as they are ready. Some children may be ahead of others, or some days may be different, and this is also normal. At this point in the
curriculum, the instructor may also begin to think about placing some responsibility on children by allowing different kids to lead the practice by ringing the singing bowl.

**Body Awareness Introduction**

In introducing body awareness, instructors can draw from what students are already able to notice in their own bodies when they are experiencing different thoughts or feelings. Maybe students recognize that when they are angry, their face gets hot. Or when they are nervous, they shake their leg. Urge students to think about why recognizing how we feel in our bodies can help us to be more mindful. If we learn to pay attention to our bodies, we can learn to notice what they are trying to tell us, and when. With this skill, we can notice our reactions arising before they have a chance to take over. For example, maybe a disagreement arises between two people, and as the back-and-forth continues, maybe escalating, our shoulders start to get very stiff and rise up towards our ears. This is our bodies reaction to a perceived “threat.” If we can learn to notice this shift in the physical body, we may create a little bit more mind space and choose in that moment to pause and take a deep breath (or maybe even leave the situation) before our emotions take over or we act upon an urge or an impulse.

**Checking in With My Body Practice**

This practice requires a small object, with a fair amount of weight to it. The object will serve as a grounding tool for the breath, so whatever you choose should be small enough to rest on the belly of a young student, and have enough mass to be felt through their shirts. This object could be a stuffed animal or toy, or I like to use objects from nature – like a rock or crystal. An option here is to have students collect their rock during a listening walk outside, or have a collection of crystals for students to choose from. If the instructor wishes, they can share the intention of crystals (i.e., amethyst for calming, rose quartz for compassion, or turquoise for easing worries).

Before giving instructions to students, the instructor should take a few moments to model the expectation of this exercise, as this is the first body awareness exercise of the curriculum. Using a small object of your own, model for students where and how they should lay on the floor (for smaller spaces, laying on the back with knees bent and
feet flat on floor saves space), where they should place the object (either on or just below the belly button), and what their bodies should be doing (laying as still as possible, taking deep, quiet breaths). They should be able to easily feel the object rising and falling with their stomachs, and should not be breathing so intensely that the object is bouncing around or falling off. It is wise to remind students again that throughout the practice the instructor will be talking, and maybe posing questions. The questions are simply for students to notice and reflect upon, not to be answered out loud – or even at all.

Begin by either letting students choose their object or handing out objects for students to use for the practice. Next, students need to find a space on the floor, away from distractions, where they can still easily hear the instructor. Typically, depending on class size, young students should all be able to fit on a classroom rug for this exercise. Once comfortable, the students can place their object on their belly and close their eyes (or look at one spot on the ceiling).

Before beginning the body scan, allow children to settle into the present by giving them a few moments to just feel the object on their belly as they breathe. As you guide students, the following outline is a helpful starting point:

Before we start exploring our bodies, let's take a moment to just settle in. Check in with your body – how does it feel right now?... Now, take three slow, big breaths in through the nose... out through the mouth... Checking in again, has your body changed? Do you feel more relaxed? Maybe wiggly? Or the same?... Are you noticing the weight of your crystal on your belly?... Can you feel it rising and falling as you breathe?... While we are laying here breathing, see if you can notice three different parts to the breath: the inhale... a short pause... the exhale... another short pause...

Now, let the breath be natural... in through the nose, out through the nose... Try not to change your breath, just let it be. It doesn’t need us... Can you feel the crystal still?... Does your body feel different from when we first started?... Are there sensations, or urges and impulses present?... Maybe it is different with each breath...

Next, we are going to see what it feels like when our breath is short and shallow. With control, take short,
quick inhales and exhales, being sure not to be so aggressive the crystal flies off your belly... Still moving in and out through the nose, can you still notice the inhale... pause... exhale... pause?... Has the feeling in your body changed?... Has the feeling in your mind changed?... Do you still notice your crystal on your belly?...

Now, we are going to make our breaths very long and deep. Still moving through the nose, see if you can take a full, long inhale, filling your belly up... and as you exhale, see if you can do it slowly and with control... let all of the air out... Does your body feel different?... How is the crystal on your belly moving now?... We are going to rest in this deep, full breathing for a few moments... Notice how the breath feels... cool? Warm?... Can you notice the pauses between the inhales and the exhales?...

Let the feeling of your breath help you slow down and relax. Shifting attention away from the breath and towards the body as a whole... is there a difference in how your mind and body feel now from when we started?... Are there parts of the body that are easy for you to notice right now?... Your back? Feet? Shoulders?... Are there parts of the body you don’t notice at all?... Your right pinky toe? Wrists? Knees?... How do your arms feel?... Your legs?... Your stomach?... Your forehead?... Shoulders?... Allow your breath to relax your body and mind... Breathe in and let go of any tightness... Breathe out and let your muscles rest.... Breathe in, relax... Breathe out, rest...

Gently, we are going to invite some movement back into our bodies. Wiggling fingers, rolling wrists... moving the toes, shifting your head side to side... and when you are ready, slowly open your eyes and have a seat.

**Checking in With My Body Discussion & Worksheet**

Following the practice, it is sometimes helpful to invite a quick stretch for anyone who may have become tired during the practice. A short mindful movement practice, Seaweed Practice, can be found at the end of the curriculum. While sharing experiences, know that it is normal for students to feel a little tired or sluggish after this activity, while others feel like they have gained energy and focus. Urge students to think about sensations they noticed as well as things they couldn’t notice. Maybe no matter how much they tried, they couldn’t feel anything in their feet. It is important to recognize this
as something that is normal and acceptable. Allow students to complete the Checking in With My Body reflection sheet, and optional coloring sheet, attached at the end of the lesson.
**When and Why We Use Mindfulness** [20 minutes]

Materials & Supplies:

- Singing bowl
- *Peaceful Piggy Meditation* (Kerry MacLean)*
- When and Why Worksheet (attached)

**Intentions**

Illustrating when and why we use mindfulness in school, with our friends, and at home, *Peaceful Piggy Meditation* engages students by relating to the daily lives of children. Using real-life situations that show some of life’s many confusing, frustrating situations, this book shows students that mindfulness can be applies in all sorts of situations in all sorts of ways. Children are then given an opportunity to express when and why mindfulness has been or might be important in their own lives at school, at home, on the playground and in whatever other setting they may spend a lot of time.

**Note:** If there are parents in your classroom or administrators who express reservations about meditation, I would omit this book. It is important when introducing the story to clearly compare and contrast mindfulness and meditation.

**Outline: Readings, Practices, Exercises, Discussions**

- Clear Minds Practice
- *Peaceful Piggy Meditation* Read Aloud & Discussion
- ABCs Discussion
- When & Why worksheet

**Clear Mind Practice**

As usual, begin the lesson with the Clear Mind Practice.

**Peaceful Piggy Meditation Read Aloud & Discussion**

Before reading, make sure to clarify for students the difference between mindfulness and meditation. Meditation is one tool we can use to cultivate and practice mindfulness, and mindfulness is a way of being more attentive, compassionate, and
happier in the present moment. After reading, students should have ideas about where and when in their own lives they may need mindfulness.

**ABCs Discussion**

Sometimes, even when we try our best to be mindful, it can be really hard. Even for adults. Tell students that you are going to be teaching them the ABCs. They will likely think this is ironic and funny, because most of them are already familiar with the alphabet. It may be helpful to create some sort of anchor chart for this and display as a constant reminder for students. A stands for attention. Sometimes it is helpful if we just pause and pay attention to what is happening. It is easy to do this if we tune into B – our breath. Our breath is always there, so we can always find and use it when we need it. If we stop and pay attention to our breath, it is easier to C – choose. We can choose to make a wise decision, show kindness to others and ourselves, or sometimes we may choose not to do something.

**When and Why worksheet**

Using the attached worksheet, give students time to illustrate situations in which they may use mindfulness at school, on the playground, at home, and in a fourth setting of their choice (i.e. soccer practice, walking to school, at aftercare).
Flipping Our Lids [30 minutes]

Materials & Supplies:

❖ Singing bowl
❖ Hand Brain guide (teacher)
❖ Brain House supplies

Intentions

The Hand Brain lesson is intended to give students a simplified, yet accurate, visual of what happen in our brain to help illustrate just how mindfulness works. While still introducing technical terminology, it provides young children with supportive language to teach students how parts of the brain work together when it comes to thoughts, feelings and urges and impulses – and why we sometimes say things we don’t mean and do things we later regret. This model is designed to be fun for students, and provide them with a tool they always have handy (ha-ha) for times when it may be hard to understand their emotions and reactions.

Outline: Readings, Practices, Exercises, Discussions

❖ Clear Mind Practice
❖ Hand Brain Model & Discussion
❖ Brain House Activity

Clear Mind Practice

As usual, begin the lesson with the Clear Mind Practice.

Hand Brain Model & Discussion

After the Clear Mind Practice, tell students that we will be learning how the brain works. Introducing something as complex as the brain may seem developmentally inappropriate, but with my experience I have found that children typically become very engaged by the idea. For this lesson you will need to refer to the Hand Brain Guide (attached) in order to explain the parts of the brain to children. In this model, fingers represent the prefrontal cortex, the thumb illustrates the amygdala, and the wrist is
where the brain stem is located. Once you understand the parts of the hand brain, you can illustrate to students where our thoughts, feelings, and urges and impulses come from:

Making a fist with one hand, we use the fingers (wrapped over the thumb) to represent the prefrontal cortex, or the “upstairs brain.” The prefrontal cortex, or PFC, is located right behind your forehead. This area of the brain is responsible for thinking and making wise choices – even if things around us aren’t going great. The PFC can be thought of as the wise leader of our minds and bodies. Even in the midst of chaos or challenges, the upstairs brain has the job of deciding what to do next. When our minds are calm and clear (remember the glitter jar?) the upstairs brain has an easier time making the next wise choice.

When you lift your fingers, you’ll see your thumb, that’s the downstairs brain. The downstairs brain is where all of your big emotions come from – fear, excitement, love, anger. This part of the brain is called the amygdala, and it has a lot to do with those urges and impulses we talk about. This part of the brain is supposed to help us determine how to react to a situation if it may be dangerous. But, the downstairs brain has a hard time telling what is really dangerous, and what is maybe just a little annoying or uncomfortable, or just a small problem. It just reacts.

There is no problem with our downstairs brain, even though it can be impulsive. It is actually very important for us in order to experience just about everything in our lives – even when the experience seems unfavorable. Feeling upset is normal. Feeling excited is normal. And feeling happy is normal. Let’s make a fist again so we can see how the upstairs brain and downstairs brain work together. As you can see, your upstairs brain sort of keeps the downstairs brain in check – it keeps us reasonable. It’s like a lid over our big emotions and impulses, using good decision making to keep everything contained.

But, sometimes, when we are having really big emotions – good or bad – the downstairs brain starts acting up. That amygdala is firing away (moving thumb), and it pushes and pokes against our PFC. If our emotions are big enough, or if we are having them over and over again in a short period of time, we “flip our lid” (flick
When this happens, our wise leader has lost control. It can no longer keep the downstairs brain in check. The amygdala with all of those big emotions and impulses takes over. That is when we usually act upon our urges and impulses without thinking. When someone flips their lid, they might yell, say something mean, hurt somebody, or sort of shut down and refuse to talk to anybody or do anything.

So, mindfulness helps us strengthen our upstairs brain. It doesn’t get rid of the downstairs brain, because we need it – even if it can be a little pesky. When our PFC is strong, it can stay wrapped tight over that amygdala, and make sure everything is contained. It makes sure that even when we are experiencing big emotions, we are making wise choices. And the more we practice, the less our lids flip.

**Brain House Activity**

This activity uses characters to show what happens in both the upstairs and downstairs brain. For this activity, the instructor has choices. Using a chart of the “Brain House” (or just a picture drawn on a white board) and either Leggos attached to tape/Velcro/magnets or simply printed pictures or drawings, this activity has students think about each character, and either as a class, in small groups, or with partners, decide who would live upstairs and who would live downstairs.

The characters I have used in the past are (upstairs) Calming Carl, Problem-Solving Pete, Flexible Felicia, Creative Carol and (downstairs) Bossy Betty, Frightened Fred, Excited Elizabeth, Sad Steven. You can come up with your own, or older students may be able to contribute to this process. You could also use familiar characters from movies, TV shows, or books. It doesn’t really matter what is used, as long as it is clear that certain traits would belong upstairs, and others downstairs. Attached you will see a sample picture of the Brain House to display, and however the characters are represented will vary by instructor.
Big Emotions [30 minutes]

Materials & Supplies:

❖ Singing bowl
❖ Visiting Feelings (Lauren Rubenstein)
❖ Checking in With My Body coloring sheet (optional)

Intention

The intention of teaching children about strong emotions is to encourage students not to ignore or be ashamed of any of their feelings, but to become mindful of them. Introducing feelings as visitors of the mind and body that come and go with a beautiful story, students begin to understand that no feelings are fixed. There is an ebb and flow to our emotions, and that none of them are bad to have or carry any shame. It invites children to recognize emotions, allow them to be there, and with a kind curiosity, decide what they need. Followed by a practice focused on bringing attention to feelings as they arise, students have support and experience to later creatively express their feeling through poems and drawings.

Outline: Readings, Practices, Exercises, Discussions

❖ Clear Mind Practice
❖ Visiting Feelings Real Aloud
❖ Mindfulness of Feelings Practice
❖ Weather Report
❖ Creative Activity on Feelings

Clear Mind Practice

As usual, begin with the Clear Mind Practice.

Read Aloud

Read Visiting Feelings to the class. Be sure to read slow and pause at each page. You may choose to discuss different feelings at the end of the book.
Weather Report

This discussion is a great way for students to begin understanding the different layers of feelings, how we can feel many things at once, and that sometimes our feelings are difficult to put into words. Emotions are experiential, and even as adults and using specific language, it can be hard to pinpoint and make sense of how we may feel at any different time. This discussion leads children into thinking about how they may feel in terms of weather. Happy doesn’t always feel the same way, just like all nice days are different. Some nice days are really warm and sunny, others are more mild and breezy – but they are both nice weather. I usually begin with the feeling of happy to get students thinking about how to describe happy’s weather. Maybe sunny, clear skies, warm. Encourage students to think about what they may see and smell on a “happy” day, too. Flowers, calm water, fresh grass, or even barbeque. Let students brainstorm whatever they think would fit. Do this brainstorming activity with other common emotions either chosen ahead of time by the instructor or during the discussion by students (sad, angry, frustrated, excited, et cetera).

Mindfulness of Feelings Practice

Introduce today’s new practice as a way of being mindful of whatever we are feeling at the time, it is going to help us tune into what we are feeling and start to discover why. This activity can be done sitting up or lying down. I have done it differently in different classrooms – laying down for more high energy groups, and sitting up for those who tend to get tired laying down. To begin the exercise, ring the singing bowl and direct students’ attention to their breath, similar to how the Clear Mind Practice begins.

After a few moments with breath, guide students to shift their attention towards their feelings. Now, this may take them a moment to even discover what they are feeling right now. Maybe it is nothing strong or overpowering, and that is okay. Maybe it is a feeling of being content, or they are feeling something they are so used to feeling that it is hard to recognize (restless, anxious, bored, annoyed, tired). Give students time to discover what feelings (big or little) and layers of feelings may be going on. It is helpful
to prompt and remind students that many feelings have ordinary names – happy, sad, scared – but many do not. Some emotions have colors, textures, sounds or weather (red, bumpy, quiet, stormy). Urge students to see where they may be feeling their emotion in the body – if anywhere. Children do not have to pinpoint a specific name for their feeling, but to begin to recognize how they are in the mind or body. Some can be small and shy, others big and powerful. So let students have plenty of time (3 minutes maybe) to just be.

As with most practices, remind students that it is okay if they have become distracted, just gently redirect their attention back to the breath first, and then to the words of the instructor. It is more important for students to feel as though they were truly present than listened to every word that was said. To close practice, give students a moment to ask their emotion what it may need from them – time, space, attention – and let them know it is okay to give the emotion what it needs as long as no one is getting hurt.

**Creative Activity**

This activity could look many different ways depending on age, ability, and teaching style. I ask students to either draw a picture of the weather of their feeling, or use the Checking in With My Body coloring sheet to let students draw different emotions they are feeling in their bodies. Most children should be able to do this. I like to supplement this activity with a writing opportunity, as well. Young children may either skip this part, or write a few words or a sentence. Older children, however, should write a description of their picture, or maybe even label different elements for clarity. Poems are a great way for students to mindfully express themselves, and easily fit into the curriculum as well as this lesson.
**Unkind Mind** [30 minutes]

Materials & Supplies:

- Singing bowl
- Emotion cards/pictures
- *Anh’s Anger* (Gail Silver)

**Intentions**

This lesson is designed to continue to support students’ recognition of different emotions and reinforce the understanding that all feelings are valid, and with practice we can learn to manage them effectively. With a fun charade-like game, students see and act out a variety of emotions and notice how others may look on the outside when they have certain feelings on the inside. This game is adaptable and can be played throughout the year. This lesson also uses a story that shows students what is likely a familiar situation, and how some of our visiting feelings need time before they will leave. Students will also be introduced to the habit of the mind to be negative towards ourselves, and with practice we will begin learning how to cultivate a little more compassion for ourselves.

**Outline: Readings, Practices, Exercises, Discussions**

- Clear Mind Practice
- Emotional Improv
- *Anh’s Anger* Read Aloud & Discussion
- Unkind Mind Discussion
- Naming Thoughts Practice

**Clear Mind Practice**

As usual, begin with the Clear Mind Practice.

**Emotional Improv**

This game is typically engaging for students, and teaches them about how different emotions can look on different people. Students take turns, either as a whole
class or in small groups, drawing from the emotion card deck (attached, taken from childhood101.com) and acting out different emotions. There are pictures on the cards for support, but students are encouraged to come up with different ways of showing the same emotion.

**Anh’s Anger Read Aloud & Discussion**

Read the story to the class, asking them to think about a time when they have felt similar to Anh. After reading, allow students to offer some of the times they have been angry, and encourage them to describe what it felt like. Remind students not to use any names if it is something that happened at school or with a school community member to ensure everyone feels safe and comfortable sharing. This discussion should flow into the introduction of the unkind mind.

**Unkind Mind**

Segway from talking specifically about anger to other difficult emotions – maybe fear, frustration, anxiety, annoyance, sadness. It is important to remind children that we are not our thoughts, and thoughts come and go just like feelings. When we are having certain feelings, it is not uncommon for the mind to start clouding our minds with thoughts about our feelings. When we are dealing with difficult emotions, the talk in our heads is often negative towards ourselves or others. When we judge ourselves, others, or certain situations, we often get caught in a storm of bad thoughts, and this is called the unkind mind. We can learn to be mindful of when we are having these thoughts, and mindfulness will help us notice the unkind mind, acknowledge the thoughts, and remember that they are not us, and we have a choice to let them go.

**Naming Our Thoughts Practice**

The Naming Our Thoughts Practice is a practice to help children (and adults) pay a little more attention to the details of their distractions. It is likely, if not guaranteed, that children are still getting distracted by thoughts while they practice. That is fine – and students should be reminded of that. Again, the idea is not to get rid of thoughts, but become more mindful of them. The Naming Our Thoughts Practice helps students
notice they are thinking, take a look at what the thought is, and let it go to come back to the breath. This practice helps students notice habits of mind – maybe they notice they always have negative thoughts when they practice, or that they think about what is next, or they worry about something. For this practice, we want students to recognize all of these, but we are specifically working on noticing the unkind mind, so we can learn to let it go quickly.

Begin the practice as you would the Clear Mind Practice. Allow a moment to settle in, then begin to explain the practice.

This practice is very similar to Clear Mind. We are still trying to cultivate presence, so do your best to stay with your breath. However, this time, when you do notice a thought – and I think everyone will at least once – try to name it. Instead of immediately returning to the breath whenever you notice, pause for a moment, and decide what kind of a thought (or train of thoughts) it was. Was it the unkind mind? Was it something else – worrying, planning, remembering? Whatever it is, just notice, and then come back to breathing.

Allow for a few moments in silence for this practice.
**Compassion** [30 minutes]

Materials & Supplies:
- Singing bowl
- *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?* (Carol McCloud)
- Kind Wishes Exploration worksheet

*Intentions*

The lesson on compassion is intended to help students foster patience, kindness, and understanding towards others as well as themselves. Using a popular book that illustrates how everyone can help one another feel good, students see how kindness and compassion can improve everyone’s lives. The practice learned in this lesson teaches students how to show compassion towards others – people we love, and even people who may annoy us – as well as themselves, even when we make mistakes or disagree.

**Outline: Readings, Practices, Exercises, Discussions**

- Clear Mind Practice
- Unkind Mind Review & Introduction to Compassion
- *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?* Read Aloud & Discussion
- Friendly Wishes Practice
- Friendly Wishes Exploration worksheet

**Clear Mind Practice**

As usual, begin with the Clear Mind Practice.

**Unkind Mind Review & Compassion Introduction**

This review serves to lead students into thinking about how they can take care of themselves and others in response to the unkind mind. Asking students to review what the unkind mind is, tell them that with mindfulness, we learn a special skill that helps us and others when the mind is unkind. It is called compassion. Compassion can be sort of tricky to explain to students, but I usually find it effective to explain it as recognizing when other people are struggling – on the outside or inside – and wanting to do
something to help. Sometimes, there is nothing we can do to help. But, when there is something we can do, mindful people try to make it better for the person struggling. When we feel badly for people and are compelled to help, it means we have the ability to be aware of other people’s needs, even if they do not match our own. And, sometimes, the person who in need is ourselves. When we are compassionate towards ourselves it means that we have an awareness of the fact that we all make mistakes, have strengths and weaknesses, and have bad days. Recognizing what we need in any given moment is having compassion for ourselves, and allows us to have more compassion for others.

**Have You Filled a Bucket? Read Aloud & Discussion**

*Have You Filled a Bucket Today?* Is a popular children’s book for elementary students in order to help create a more positive learning environment. This story shows students that we don’t always seen what is going on for other people – in the story, sometimes people have a full bucket, sometimes theirs is running low or empty. I like using this book for compassion because it makes the important point of taking care of your own bucket, by filling others. It also shows that an act of kindness does not have to be a mighty gesture, even just a smile shows you recognize someone and their feelings, and want to help. After reading, have students give examples of how filling a bucket and compassion relate to each other.

**Friendly Wishes Practice**

This practice is one of my favorites, and one that I believe should be practiced regularly. It aims to cultivate positive thoughts and feelings for people in our lives that we care about, those who can be difficult, and ourselves. It can also be extended to include people we do not really know (acquaintances) and all beings. For this practice, we stick to three individuals: someone we love, someone who annoys us, and ourselves.

To start, lead into the practice with the Clear Mind Practice, allowing students to settle in and find their breath for a moment. This practice should be done slowly, leaving plenty of room for silence for students to imagine different people, send wishes, and notice different thoughts and feelings. The rest of the practice can sound something like this:
Imagine you are sitting in a room by yourself... Notice what it feels like to sit with yourself... Now, we are going to imagine that someone we love very much has just walked in the room, and sat right in front of you. Notice how it feels to be with this person... We are going to send them some friendly wishes. I am going to say them out loud, and then you will repeat them as best you can to yourselves. May you be happy... May you be healthy... May you be loved... It is okay if you forget or mix them up... just do your best to send this person three friendly wishes: happy... healthy... loved... How does it feel to send this person a friendly wish?... Is it easy?... Difficult?... Do you feel a smile?... Proud?... Sad?...

Now, we will say goodbye to this person, and they will leave the room... But imagine someone else is coming in now... Imagine someone in your life who sometimes gives you a hard time... It could be a sibling that you sometimes argue with... A friend you had an argument... Or even a teacher or parent... How does it feel to sit with this person?... Is it the same as the first person? Or different?... We are going to send them the same three friendly wishes... May you be happy... May you be healthy... May you be loved... happy... healthy... loved... How did it feel to send this person kindness?... Do you feel frustrated?... Happy?... Proud?...

Finally, imagine you are alone in the room again. There is a mirror in front of you. You are sitting with yourself... How does it feel to sit with yourself?... Now, send those same three friendly wishes to yourself... May I be happy... May I be healthy... May I be loved... happy... healthy... loved... How did it feel to send friendly wishes to yourself? Was it easy? Difficult? Neutral? How do you feel now?...

Before ending the practice, allow students to sit in silence for a moment, just finding their deep breaths.

**Kind Wishes Exploration**

Attached is a worksheet for students to reflect on the practice. Depending on the group of students, you could allow a brief discussion to share feelings. This is an intimate, personal practice, so students may not be comfortable sharing the first time.
Allow for plenty of quiet classroom time for students to reflect and complete the worksheet.

**Note:** Another reason I love this practice is because it can easily be incorporated into the daily routine of the classroom. An option for this is during morning attendance. Take a moment to recognize who is not here, and send them a friendly wish. This works great in creating a caring classroom climate because students know that if they are not in school, they are still being considered.
Gratitude [30 minutes]

Materials & Supplies:

❖ Singing bowl
❖ An Awesome Book of Thanks (Dallas Clayton)
❖ Gratitude Pinwheel worksheet

Intentions

Teaching children gratitude goes beyond being thankful for things we have. Gratitude comes from a deeper place, and with practice can be cultivated at any moment, even in difficult situations. An Awesome Book of Thanks shows children that they can be thankful for things that are more obvious – like toys – but also for things a little less expected. Students are given a chance to reflect on things in their life they can feel gratitude for, and learn the difference between being thankful and having gratitude.

Outline: Readings, Practices, Exercises, Discussions

❖ Clear Mind Practice
❖ Gratitude Introduction
❖ An Awesome Book of Thanks Read Aloud & Discussion
❖ Gratitude Practice
❖ Gratitude Pinwheel worksheet

Clear Mind Practice

As usual, begin with the Clear Mind Practice.

Gratitude Introduction

Gratitude is often used interchangeably with being thankful. However, I believe there is a profound different between the two. Being thankful is feeling happy and please with a specific situation or outcome. Gratitude, however, is something that comes from within, and is outwardly expressed. Gratitude acknowledges a feeling of joy that does not necessarily arise from a specific situation, but it is always quietly glowing. For example, we may be thankful for a gift we receive on our birthday, but we are grateful
for celebrating with loved ones. And gratitude is where there is outward action, like a thank-you note, or being there for someone because you feel reciprocal compassion for that person, and you are grateful to have them. This difference is hard to explain to young children, but the distinction is important. I often explain gratitude as being thankful and having a desire and readiness to show appreciation for people, things and experiences. When we use mindfulness to practice gratitude with children, we are cultivating an awareness of all the things, people, and experiences – big and small – that make our lives enjoyable. This teaches kids that there is always something to be grateful for, even on a rotten day.

**An Awesome Book of Thanks Read Aloud**

Before reading the story, tell students to be paying attention to all of the examples in the book of things we can be grateful for. Are any of them unusual or something they wouldn’t have thought of? Ask students to be mindful of what they are feeling as you read the story.

**Gratitude Practice**

This practice begins similarly to the Clear Mind Practice, allowing for students to find their breath and become present for a moment or two. Then, the practice asks students to call to mind things they are grateful for. The instructor prompts the class by beginning with a person they are grateful for, providing examples from a parent or family members, to a teacher, friend, or classmate. Here, note that the person they pick could be someone who is no longer alive. After a moment of silence, have students notice what happens when they are thinking of someone they are grateful for... Maybe they notice a smile on their face, a thought in their mind, or another sensation in the mind or body...

The instructor will rotate through a person, something they have (encourage students to think beyond toys and electronics, think more of simple things like a favorite pillow or comfortable sweatshirt), and finally, an experience they are grateful for (spending time with a busy parent, getting to play outside last time the weather was
nice, reading your favorite book). After rotating through each, let students spend a moment recognizing and feeling gratitude.

**Gratitude Pinwheel**

Using the attached blank “I am grateful for...” worksheet and example, show students the activity they will be doing. Encourage students to think of people, places, things (again, steer away from electronics/toys), and experiences.
**Peace** [30 minutes]

Materials & Supplies:

- Singing bowl
- *I am Peace* (Susan Verde)
- *A Hand Full of Quiet* (Thich Nhat Hanh)
- Four pebbles, rocks, or crystals per student

**Intentions**

This lesson uses an engaging story to show students what peace can mean. It ensures them that peace does not have to be a grand gesture or accomplishment, it can come from within, and they are able to cultivate it themselves. Followed by Thich Nhat Hanh’s Peace Pebble activity to show students how mindfulness can be reflected in nature, it gives students yet another way to see and understand the qualities we are trying to cultivate through mindfulness. This lesson is intended to show students that they are capable of making positive changes by looking within themselves, and that nature is a helpful reminder of mindfulness. Using a drawing meditation to close, students see, again, that mindfulness practice can happen in many different ways.

**Outline: Readings, Practices, Exercises, Discussions**

- Clear Mind Practice
- *I am Peace* Read Aloud & Discussion
- Peace Pebble Activity

**Clear Mind Practice**

As usual, begin with the Clear Mind Practice.

**I am Peace Read Aloud & Discussion**

This book illustrates for students what peace within means. When we can cultivate inner peace, and learn to be steady in times of turbulence, we can then become a living example of peace for those around us. The more able we are to find peace within, the more organically peace in the outer world arises. Before reading, ask students to
think about what peace means to them. They can reflect on this silently for a few moments, or you can have students share some examples with the group. You may see from examples students offer (or at least by the end of the read aloud) that peace can look may different ways. It can be something larger like no more fighting amongst different nations, or really small and personal, like having patience with a younger sibling. While reading, you will notice some recurring themes from the curriculum, such as the breath as our anchor, and those are good moments pause and encourage students to make connections between common language being used to describe mind states and mindfulness. After reading, invite children to offer examples of peace they can share with others.

**Peace Pebbles Activity**

The Peace Pebbles Activity is taken from Thich Nhat Hanh’s *A Hand Full of Quiet*. In order to implement this activity, the instructor will need to have four pebbles, stones, or crystals for each student. Though specific instructions are provided in the book, I will give a general outline here for instructors to adapt or build from. *A Hand Full of Quiet* provides worksheets and activities for students to do following the practice that I believe are worthwhile, and are also great tools for children to have in the classroom when they may need a mindful moment.

For this practice, students use four small pebbles (rocks, crystals, etc.) to represent earth elements that reflect as aspect of mindfulness. One to represent a flower: fresh and beautiful, and a part of the garden of humanity. The second pebble represents a mountain: solid and strong, no matter what is happening around it. Third, a stone will represent is still water, like a lake: calm and clear, reflecting exactly what is without distorting it. Finally, the fourth pebble represents the sky: endless and free from worry, stress, and angst.

After the practice, TNH offers a drawing meditation activity that is suitable for all ages, but is particularly appropriate for young students. Directions and worksheets for the activity can be found in *A Hand Full of Quiet*. 
**Urges and Impulses** [30 minutes]

Materials & Supplies:

- Singing bowl
- *Sideways Stories from Wayside School – Chapter 10, “Paul”* (Louis Sachar)

**Intentions**

This lesson is intended to be fun and engaging for students. With a funny short story about a boy named Paul, it shows students an example of urges and impulses taking over our decision-making. After reading, a discussion offers an opportunity to explain to students that our urges and impulses are not bad, even if what we want to do is unkind. Everyone has them, and a lot of times people act on them. We can use mindfulness to take control of those moments, and turn them from potentially harmful situations with negative outcomes, into almost moments, where we decide to make a wise choice. The ending practice in this lesson is always fun for students, and gives them a clear example of how our urges and impulses can take over very quickly.

**Outline: Readings, Practices, Exercises, Discussions**

- Clear Mind Practice
- *Sideways Stories* Read Aloud & Discussion
- Almost Moments Discussion
- Itch Practice

**Clear Mind Practice**

As usual, begin with the Clear Mind Practice.

**Sideways Stories Read Aloud & Discussion**

This short chapter from *Sideways Stories of Wayside School* perfectly illustrates urges and impulses to children. And, it is pretty funny. Before reading the chapter, ask students if they can think of a time when they did something without really thinking about it. The instructor can offer examples of something small and unnoticeable, like shaking your leg when you are nervous, and something more noticeable like grabbing
something they want out of a friends’ hand before thinking about it. Students should have a decent idea of what urges and impulses are at this point, so there should be at least a few examples for them to offer. After reading the chapter, ask the class what Paul’s urges and impulses were, and have them reflect on what happened when he let his urges and impulses make choices for him.

**Almost Moments Discussion**

The discussion about Paul’s situation should easily lead into discussing almost moments. Ask students to think about how Paul could have used mindfulness (ABCs, breathing, taking a mindful moment, etc.) to avoid getting into trouble that day. This is where the instructor can introduce almost moments. Almost moments are the times when we have a thought, feeling, or urge/impulse and we *almost* do something. Give students examples of when this might happen. Maybe something really frustrating happens, like your sister breaks your favorite toy. You are feeling frustration, and your impulse is to yell at her. In that moment, if you use mindfulness, instead of actually yelling at her, you *almost* yell at her. The thought, feeling and urge was there, but you use mindfulness to make a wiser choice, like ask a parent to help fix it. These almost moments are very important, especially for young kids. It teaches them to understand that everyone has thoughts, feelings and urges to do things that are unkind or not wise. And that is okay, because with mindfulness we can create the space to pause, and turn a reaction into an almost moment. At this point, students may be ready to share some examples of almost moments in their own lives, and the instructor can also give examples.

**Itch Practice**

This practice is really fun for students, and it gives them the experience of urges and impulses in a low-stress setting. When students notice these things when they are feeling calm and content, they are better able to recognize them when they are feeling big emotions. Again, this practice begins with the Clear Mind Practice, and after a few moments, you can guide students through the practice:
In a moment, I am going to say a word... Notice what happens in your mind and body when you hear it. Do your best to just notice, and try not to react in any way or make any movements... Ready?... The word is: itch...

What did you notice?...

With your eyes still closed, silently raise your hand if you suddenly felt an itch in your body that you didn’t notice before... Keep your hand raised if you were able to notice the itch without scratching... Whether you did or didn’t scratch the itch, were you able to notice the thoughts you had before you scratched it?... What were they?... Maybe for a moment you thought “I HAVE to scratch,” or “she won’t even notice...” or even “I don’t really care if I’m not supposed to scratch.”

Take a moment to reflect on what you noticed, how you felt, and maybe what you did... It is not about feeling good or bad or making the right or wrong decision... It is simply about noticing our thoughts, feelings, and urges and impulses... and choosing our actions... Isn’t it interesting that just hearing a word can create sensations in the body? And then, our minds create thoughts and feelings about the word, and it produces urges and impulses that arise... It is very easy and likely for those urges and impulses to turn into actions...

If time allows, the instructor can continue the activity with other words like “music,” or “homework.” If appropriate, you can invite students to share their thoughts, urges and impulses, and maybe even reactions to the words.
Mindful Communication [30 minutes]

Materials & Supplies:

- Singing bowl
- The Three Gates chart
- Mindful Communication Exploration worksheet

Intentions

Mindful communication is a skill that students will carry with them throughout different facets and stages of their lives. This lesson is intended to give students support in the moments where they are unsure of the next wise decision to make. Without taking away their confidence in their judgement, the Three Gates gives students a tool to help them discern what is the next best thing to say. This lesson also further cultivates listening skills that typically are not explicitly taught. Using a partner practice for this lesson, students also begin to learn that mindfulness practice can be interpersonal.

Outline: Readings, Practices, Exercises, Discussions

- Clear Mind Practice
- The Three Gates Discussion
- Mindful Communication Practice
- Mindful Communication Exploration

Clear Mind Practice

As usual, begin with the Clear Mind Practice.

The Three Gates Discussion

When teaching students how to communicate mindfully, it is important to strike balance. The idea behind this is that we do not want to censor children’s speech, or encourage them to limit what they would otherwise be willing to share. This is why having a comfortable learning environment is a very important aspect to this discussion. We want children to be able to say what is on their mind – as this is essential to their development – but we want to encourage them to be in tune enough with their own
minds and what is happening around them to be able to recognize when and why they may need to pause and think before they speak. We can teach children good judgement on this through our own actions and being mindful. Unless there is reason to believe otherwise, we should have confidence that we have good judgement, and trust ourselves to know and learn how to tell when we need to think about what we are saying. The Three Gates helps cultivate this life skill that helps us navigate complex situations.

The Three Gates is a Sufi teaching that provides three questions for us to ask ourselves before we speak: Is it true? Is it necessary? Is it kind? Ask students to recall some of the ideas from our Urges and Impulses lesson, and think about how those ideas could relate to mindful communication (we may have an urge to say something unkind, an urge to interrupt, etc.). When talking about mindful communication with young children, we are mostly talking about speaking and listening. It is important for students to practice listening (which is an aspect of the Clear Mind Practice), and speaking mindfully. We use the Three Gates when we are in a situation and are unsure of what our reaction will be. It is important to emphasize that the Three Gates are a tool for us to use when we are in an almost moment, and are not positive on what the next wise choice is.

**Mindful Communication Practice**

This mindfulness practice is unique in the fact that it is done with a partner. That is, in part, why the mindful communication lesson comes later in the unit. Students need to develop a clear understanding of the expectations of mindfulness practice, and feel comfortable enough with one another to practice together. It is also important for the instructor to strike balance between giving students the freedom to choose who they are comfortable practicing with and making sure partnerships are not disruptive. This practice in itself can be uncomfortable, even for adults. There is often a lot of silence, which we tend to want to fill mindlessly. The objective of this practice is for students to only say what is true, necessary, and kind when given a discussion question. The questions should be mindful, meaningful, and encourage reflection on mindfulness practices. Examples include:

- What are some things that make you feel happy or are meaningful in your life?
❖ How do you manage when you are feeling upset or overwhelmed?
❖ What is something you are proud of?

For older students, you may give them a choice about which question they want to answer, where younger students may need to be given just one to practice with (the others can be saved for a different day or a writing reflection, et cetera). Tell students that you will be setting a timer (2 – 5 minutes is usually good depending on age and ability) and they will be taking turns being a speaker and listener. They need to decide who will speak first and who will listen first.

Remind students that when they are the listener, they should be actively listening and paying attention as best they can to the speaker. Students can nod, smile, say things like “uh-huh” and “I hear you” but they can not ask questions, make comments or interrupt what is being said. The listener should also be paying attention to what is happening in their own minds. Is listening in this way challenging? Are there feelings of discomfort? Are the questions arising? Are you thinking about your turn?

As the speaker, students should be using the Three Gates to decide what they say. It is okay if there is silence, in fact, silence is good for this practice and most partnerships will encounter it. When silence arises, do not try to fill it mindlessly. If there is silence, wait for the speaker to speak again, or until the timer runs out. The speaker should be paying attention to how it feels to be listened to in this way.

**Mindful Communication Exploration**

Allow students 10 or more minutes to complete the worksheet mindfully. For younger students, the instructor can read one question at a time and give students a few moments to reflect either as a group, with partners, or to themselves.
Mistakes [30 minutes]

Materials & Supplies:

❖ Singing bowl
❖ The Most Magnificent Thing (Ashley Spires)
❖ Next Time I’ll Do Better Reflection

Intentions

In order to cultivate more self-confidence and awareness, this lesson shows students that it is okay to make mistakes, and we have a great opportunity to learn from mistakes if we are mindful. The story of a little girl trying to perfect her invention shows students all of the good things that can come out of mistakes, and also encourages them to never give up. The reflection offered in this lesson helps students think about mistakes they have made (or a made-up scenario), and gives them an opportunity to reflect on them and use mindfulness to decide what could have been done differently.

Outline: Readings, Practices, Exercises, Discussions

❖ Clear Mind Practice
❖ Mistakes Discussion
❖ The Most Magnificent Thing Read Aloud
❖ Next Time, I’ll Do Better Reflection

Clear Mind Practice

As usual, begin with the Clear Mind Practice.

Mistakes Discussion

Students are bound to make mistakes throughout their educational careers and life. As an educator, you have a huge impact on how students feel about themselves and different situations, and students look up to you. This discussion should be honest and open. I begin by asking students to raise their hands if they have ever made a mistake – and quickly and enthusiastically, even with a big smile, raise my hand. A good way to start the discussion is by sharing a mistake you have made. Big or small, it doesn’t really
matter. I start with the situation, my thoughts and feelings, and any urges and impulses that may have applied. And then tell them what happened. Most likely, everything turned out fine, and that is the most important part of the story. You learned something and know what to do next time. Invite students to share mistakes they have made in the same fashion you modeled, reflecting on thoughts, feelings and urges/impulses.

Also encourage students to think of feelings they have when they make mistakes. Maybe they are frustrated with themselves, or worry about upsetting someone if they make a mistake. Tell students that mindfulness can help us learn to pause and realize that mistakes are part of life. They challenge us to be better people, make smarter choices, and teach us something new. We can learn to be a little nicer to ourselves after making a mistake with compassion and mindfulness. Mindfulness can also help us take a break and honestly reflect on what is going on. We like to blame other people or things sometimes when we make a mistake, and with practice we can learn to clearly see the situation and take ownership in order to make a better choice or try something different next time. We can make mistakes in school or in a game, but we can also make mistakes with our friends and family – like when we are unkind, or when we are not responsible at home.

**The Most Magnificent Thing Read Aloud**

After reading the story, ask students if they have ever felt the way the girl in the story was feeling. Maybe no matter how hard they try, they can’t understand a new math concept. Or maybe they aren’t the best speller, and always have to fix the same word. Maybe there is a recurring argument with a friend or sibling. It is easy to get frustrated and down on yourself when you work hard and things don’t go right. But, it is important to remember that we can always take a mindful moment when we are feeling overwhelmed, and come back to whatever we are trying. We can also reflect on situations or problems to see exactly what went wrong, and what parts about it went right.

**Next Time, I’ll Do Better**
The purpose of this reflection is not to stir up difficult emotions in students. It is to serve them as a tool in recognizing mistakes and how we can learn from them. For this lesson, if students are uncomfortable sharing something that actually happened, they can make something up, or they can use an example from a book or movie. The important thing here is that students are paying attention to what they should be looking for when reflecting upon a mistake. This reflection is a powerful classroom tool that can be employed throughout the school year, and serve as a problem-solving tool and classroom management technique.
**Affirmations** [30 minutes]

Materials & Supplies:

- Singing bowl
- *I Think, I Am: Teaching Kids the Power of Affirmations* (Louis L. Hay and Kristina Tracy)
- Create Your Own Affirmations worksheet

*Intentions*

This lesson is intended to show students the power of their thoughts. Though an engaging and uplifting book, children see how they can change the way they think in order to change the way they act. Students will also practice creating and using affirmations that they can refer back to throughout the year, and hopefully carry this sort of thinking with them throughout their lives.

**Outline: Readings, Practices, Exercises, Discussions**

- Clear Mind Practice
- *I Think, I Am* Read Aloud & Discussion
- Create Your Own Affirmations worksheet
- Affirmation Practice

**Clear Mind Practice**

As usual, begin with the Clear Mind Practice.

**I Think, I Am Read Aloud & Discussion**

To begin this read aloud, ask students if they have ever heard of an affirmation. Tell students that affirmations are how we think about ourselves, our abilities, our personality, or challenging situations. They are how we talk to ourselves when we make mistakes, try something new, or are struggling with something. More often than not, the unkind mind creeps in during these situations, and our affirmations are negative. After reading, have student brainstorm affirmations on the board or a chart together. Provide examples as needed such as “I am happy,” “I work hard,” “I am a good friend.” Encourage
students to be thinking about character traits, not physical traits. Things that come from the inside, and things that we can make stronger through mindfulness. Younger students will be drawing from this list to create their own affirmations, so be sure to provide many examples. Older students will have more time to brainstorm on their own.

**Note:** This activity fits great into any school or classroom that adopts a Growth Mindset, which is closely related to Social Emotional Learning and mindfulness.

### Create Your Own Affirmation worksheet

When handing out this worksheet, be sure that students know we will be using what they come up with for a new mindfulness practice, so think about things that are truly meaningful to them. Maybe they are working really hard on something, and want to create an affirmation about that, or maybe they are having some difficult emotions today, and want to create an affirmation around those feelings. Allow students 5 – 10 quiet minutes to complete this sheet.

### Affirmations Practice

Invite students to find their mindful seat. Allow a few moments of silence to become present, and then ask students to call to mind one of their affirmations. You can guide them through this practice by saying something like:

*It is okay if you don’t exactly remember your affirmation, or if the words get a bit mixed up. Just do your best to be present, and focus your attention on your affirmation...*

*How are your body and mind feeling right now?... Notice how your affirmation appears in your mind’s eye... Is it a picture?... Maybe you see the words... Or, sometimes, we don’t see anything at all... If you forget, mess up, or become distracted from your affirmation, no worries... Simply bring your attention back to your breath for a few moments, and then return to your affirmation... How does it feel to repeat this affirmation to yourself?...*
Allow a lot of silence for this practice, so students do not get distracted. Guidance should serve as a gentle reminder for students to come back if they have gotten distracted and have not yet noticed.

*Do you feel differently now?... In a moment, I will ring the singing bowl. When you can no longer hear it, gently open your eyes.*

Invite students to share their experience.
Yoga for the Body and Mind [30 minutes]

Materials & Supplies:

❖ Singing bowl
❖ Peaceful Piggy Yoga (Kerry MacLean)

Intentions

This lesson teaches students to stretch the limits of their minds and bodies. Students will get a chance to put their mindfulness practice in motion and use purposeful attention to find their edge and explore it with kindness and curiosity. Peaceful Piggy Yoga shows students how they can use yoga to help themselves, and provides easy, fun practices to do as a class. This lesson is also intended to give students plenty of practice time, from the Clear Mind Practice to yoga and body awareness.

Outline: Readings, Practices, Exercises, Discussions

❖ Clear Mind Practice
❖ Finger Yoga
❖ Peaceful Piggy Yoga Read Aloud
❖ Yoga Practice
❖ Flashlight Attention Practice

Clear Mind Practice

As usual, begin with the Clear Mind Practice.

Finger Yoga

Introducing yoga to the classroom is typically fun. Most students are at least a little familiar with yoga, as it has made its way into many wellness curriculums across kindergarten and elementary schools. Finger yoga is easy, and it is a fun introduction to stretching our limits and recognizing when we need to stop. It is also a great way to stretch out fingers that work hard all day!
You do not need anything for the practice, and it can be done at seats or at the rug. Instruct students to put their left hand either on their desk or leg if they are on the rug. Using their right hand, they will gently pull back their fourth finger on their left hand. Model this if necessary. Encourage students to notice their limit and what it feels like. We can usually tell we are at our limit when it feels tight, but when it is painful, we have gone too far and need to ease up. Students usually notice their limit as how far they can pull their finger back before it hurts or they injure themselves. It is okay, however, if it is a little uncomfortable.

Our minds can do yoga, too. We gently stretch and strengthen our minds when we learn something new and practice mindfulness. When we learn new things, we stretch our knowledge a little. When we practice mindfulness, we stretch our ability to make wise choices. When we try new things, we stretch our confidence. We all have limits, and when we practice mindfulness we can make a little more space in our minds to expand our limits.

Kids have probably done yoga as an exercise, so explain to them that today we will be doing it as a mindfulness practice. They are in charge of being mindful of their limits – just like their fingers, the rest of their bodies have a certain capacity to stretch before feeling pain or injury. They are also going to be mindful of their breath while we practice, and where our mind is during each pose.

**Peaceful Piggy Yoga Read Aloud**

Before we do our yoga practice, this story helps us learn why yoga can be important for mindfulness. Before beginning, inform students that there are poses on each page, and we will practice them, but after we read the entire story. You may need to remind them of this throughout the book as well.

**Yoga Practice**

Using *Peaceful Piggy Yoga*, go through the series of poses, reminding students to be mindful of their limits, their breath, and their minds. Do each pose for 3 full breaths. Ending in corpse pose, you can easily transition into the next practice.
Flashlight Attention Practice

Remaining in corpse pose, take a few moments to really settle into your breath and the present moment. For this practice, I will be asking you to think of your attention as a flashlight, and I will be asking you to shine your light of attention on certain parts of your body. If you become distracted, that is okay, just try to notice my voice and your breath, and refocus your flashlight.

Moving through different parts of the body (feet, calves, shins, belly, chest, arm, wrists, hands, shoulders, neck, forehead, et cetera), give students a few moments to direct their attention purposefully onto each body part. You can do as few or as many as you like, going in order or jumping around. It is helpful, however, to start at places in the body that come into contact with the ground like the back of the head, shoulders, heels. While students’ attention are on each body part, ask them to notice any feeling that they are aware of – tingling, temperature, pressure, or no sensation at all. You can prompt them to notice discomfort, urges to move, et cetera.

Close the practice with a few moments of stillness and silence with the breath. Then invite students to bring gentle movements to their bodies: making fists, rolling wrists, wiggling toes, moving head side to side.

After the practice, remind students that we are in control of our flashlight of attention, and it can be helpful to remember that it is always there for us. We can make our beam of light really skinny and specific, or broaden it to include many things. Mindfulness will help us learn to control this flashlight of attention more and more.
**Pass the Cup** [30 minutes]

Materials & Supplies:

- Singing bowl
- Cup full of water

**Intentions**

The final lesson in this curriculum is a team-building exercise that also builds trust in ourselves and others. Students actively engage in a fun challenge that requires them to pay careful attention to their own minds and bodies, as well as what is happening around them.

**Outline: Readings, Practices, Exercises, Discussions**

- Clear Mind Practice
- Pass the Cup Activity
- Mindful Walking & Reflection

**Clear Mind Practice**

As usual, begin with the Clear Mind Practice.

**Pass the Cup**

Have students sit in a circle. Place a cup of water about two-thirds full in the middle of the circle. Explain to students that they have a challenge. Their job is to pass the cup around in a circle without saying anything or making any gestures. They should try to notice what sounds and physical sensations arise that let them know it is their turn to receive the cup. Remind students that it is not a race – it doesn’t matter how fast they go. Allow the cup to go all the way around the circle, and then have them repeat the exercise in the opposite direction.

The game is then repeated, but with eyes closed. Depending on age and ability, possible for future rounds of this game, you can play with multiple cups of water going around at once. After the cup goes around in both directions, ask students what was
different about playing with our eyes open and closed. Encouraged students to offer how they knew the cup was coming when their eyes were closed. Maybe they heard someone’s clothes rustling, or someone giggle.

**Mindful Walking & Reflection**

A great closing exercise is to revisit the mindful walking exercise. For this lesson, you will need to go outside. Allow students to go for a mindful walk, and ask them to be thinking about things in nature that represent mindfulness to them. Ask each student to collect one thing from outside that represents mindfulness. You will likely get duplicate items (rocks, stick, grass, a flower, etc.), so for the sharing activity, keep this in mind and organize accordingly. When students come back inside, have everyone share their object. If they couldn’t find one, ask them to brainstorm something that represents mindfulness to them instead. If you are unable to go outside for a mindful walk, having students do a visualization practice to think of objects that represent mindfulness will also work. The class can then make a poster with each child drawing what they think represents mindfulness.

To close, tell students that we will continue practicing mindfulness every day. Remind them of different tools they have in the classroom and within themselves to help with challenging situations, and that they can always take a mindful moment if they need it. The idea here is not to make this the end of the mindfulness curriculum, but the beginning of adopting mindfulness as a classroom ritual.
Supplemental Activities

The following activities are short mindfulness practices that can be implemented between lessons in this unit and throughout the school year. They are organized into three categories: Breath Awareness, Mindful Movement, and Feelings.

Breath Awareness:

Slow Down, Look Around

This activity is a great way to reinforce mindfulness and calm, quick transitions. When ready to change activities, have students stand up silently, and pause for three mindful breaths. They can either close their eyes, or look down at their feet. Allow for a minute or so of silence... *Feel your feet on the floor... Feel your breath, your anchor... Now lift/open your eyes, and scan the room slowly, without speaking... Now we are ready to move.*

5 Finger Breathing

This activity gives students a bit of support while refocusing their attention to the breath, and only takes a moment or two. Students can do this all together as a class, or use it as an autonomous mindfulness tool for self-regulation. Have students hold up their non-dominant hand and spread their fingers wide, like showing the number five. With their dominant hand, have them place their pointer finer on the outside base of the thumb. As they slowly breath in, instruct (and model) them to trace their thumb. At the top of their inhale, they should be at the tip of their thumb. As they exhale, they trace down the inner side of the thumb. Continue through all 5 fingers, and have students repeat the practice going the opposite way (pinky to thumb).

Sphere Breathing

Sphere breathing is a fun activity for the whole class. It will require a Hoberman sphere, or similar tool. Sitting in a circle, tell students that we are going to practice breathing using the Hoberman sphere together. Tell students to take a long, deep inhale as you expand the sphere (slowly). Encourage students to really breathe with the sphere, expanding their bellies and chest just like the sphere expands. As you contract the
sphere, students exhale. After a bit of practice, you can play around with how long or short the breaths are, making inhales and exhales mismatch in length, pausing in between and having students hold the breath, and letting students run the exercise.

**Got Your Back**

This breathing activity will require partnerships. Have students sit back to back, touching, and practice taking deep, mindful breaths. They should be able to feel their partner’s inhales and exhales as their rib cages expand. After a few moments, partners may notice that their breaths have become in sync with one another.

**Mindful Movement**

**Pendulum**

This activity can be done sitting in a circle on the rug, or in chairs at desks. While students are sitting up straight with eyes closed, invite them to sway just a little bit back and forth. Remind students that this is a slow, controlled movement, like the way a pendulum on a clock swings. See if they can move slow enough to feel different parts of their body moving (hips, waist, ribs, shoulders, head). You may choose to play slow, calming music to set the tone for the practice, or even display a pendulum swinging video on the board as a visual aid. Direct students attention to their seats, can they feel their weight shifting? Can they feel their bodies moving in space without looking at them? Close the practice with a few mindful breaths in stillness and silence.

**Seaweed Practice**

Similar to the Pendulum Practice, but the Seaweed Practice is done standing and invites a little more body movement. Have students stand in a place where they have plenty of room and will not touch anyone else if their arms are extended. While students are standing, invite them to close their eyes. Direct their attention to their feet on the floor... Slowly, instruct them to invite just a little swaying to their bodies. Encourage them to loosen up, try not to be rigid. It doesn’t matter what they look like, just sway in a way that feels good... Next, invite movement to the arms, as well. They can sway with the body, extend out in front and sway in a different direction, whatever feels good. Again,
ask students to notice their feet still firm on the ground. No one should be falling or flopping around. It is a controlled, slow movement.

**Feelings**

**Gratitude Reflection**

This activity is a written reflection and can be done at the end of the day or week. Students can make a list of 3 – 5 things they are grateful for from the day or week. For older students, this could become a writing activity. Have students brainstorm something(s) they are grateful for each day, and on Friday, allow a writing block where students expand on one of the topics they chose. Younger students may simply write a sentence or draw a picture. This is a great activity to incorporate to your classroom routine.

**Heartbeat Activity**

As we learned throughout the unit, the body is a great indicator of our emotions and rising emotions. This activity has students direct their attention to their heartbeat in order to notice connections between different feelings and bodily reactions. Invite students to place their fingers or hands where they can most easily feel their pulse (hand on heart, first two fingers on wrist or neck). With their eyes close, tell students to notice how slowly or quickly their heart may be beating. This can be practiced at several different times of the day throughout the week to help students see differences in their pulse (in the morning, after PE or recess, before lunch, et cetera). Encourage students to think about their current emotion, and if their pulse matches that feeling. Let students feel their heartbeats for a minute or two.

**Kindness Wall**

This activity produces a chart or bulletin board of ways that we can show kindness to one another. Ask students to brainstorm ways that people have shown them kindness, or they have shown kindness to someone. Allow them to write and decorate these ideas on a chart or poster, or give them each a template (like colorful hearts or other shapes) where they can write their example of kindness, and display it in the room.
Soaking in the Good

This is a cross between cultivating positive feelings and a body-awareness activity. Invite students to lay down and close their eyes. Allow for a few moments of silence as students find their breath. Instruct students to recall something kind they have done for someone else... after a moment or two, ask students what it feels like to recall this action... can they feel it in their bodies (stomach, heart, throat)? Has anything changed (i.e. a smile came to their face, heartbeat changed, tingling)? Allow a moment for students to soak in this good feeling, and before closing, invite them to carry this feeling with them for the rest of the day.
Glitter Jar Instructions

Supplies:

- Glitter glue (about 10 oz)
- Liquid dish soap
- 1 qt mason jar (or other container with lid)
- Warm water
- Glitter

Instructions:

1. Empty entire tube of glitter glue color of your choice into the mason jar.
2. Add very warm water to the mason jar, leaving about an inch at the top.
3. Add 2 – 3 drops of liquid dish soap to the jar.
4. Add a few pinches of glitter
5. Put on lid, shake well.
6. Adjust how fast or slow glitter falls by adding more glue (to slow it down), or dumping a little of the mixture out and adding more warm water (to speed it up). If the glitter stays floating on the top, add more dish soap, one drop at a time, to break the water tension.
The BREATH as Our ANCHOR.
CHECKING IN WITH MY BODY
### Checking In With My Body

How is your body doing today? What can you feel?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Feet</th>
<th>Your Legs</th>
<th>Your Hips</th>
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<td>Your Belly</td>
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<td>Your Shoulders</td>
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WHEN & WHY WE CAN USE
MINDFULNESS

school  home

playground

(your choice)
"Flipping One’s Lid"

Prefrontal cortex
P.F.C.
"THE WISE LEADER"

"Flipped Your Lid"

The big emotions, anger, fear, anxiety etc...
The AMYGDALA - The alarm center
Acts on instinct
fight, flight or freeze

Credit: Daniel Siegel, M.D. is the creator of this "metaphor" and expression "Flipped Lid". Copyright © 2014 www.sharonselby.com

Sharon Selby © 2015 www.SharonSelby.com
The Brain House

**downstairs brain**
(amygdala)

- bossy Betty
- frightened Fred
- excited Elizabeth
- sad Steven

**upstairs brain**
(prefrontal cortex)

- calming Carl
- problem-solving Pete
- flexible Felicia
- creative Carol

*You want your poster large enough to easily sort characters. You could also create worksheets.*
Kind Wishes
Exploration

Who are the people in your life that it's easiest to be kind to?

Is it ever hard for you to be kind to other people? When?

Is it ever hard to be kind toward yourself? When?
I AM GRATEFUL FOR
Mindful Communication Exploration

How did you feel when you were the listener? __________________________

Your Body: _______________________________________________________

Your Mind: _______________________________________________________

Your Feelings: ____________________________________________________

How did you feel when you were the speaker? _________________________

Your Body: _______________________________________________________

Your Mind: _______________________________________________________

Your Feelings: ____________________________________________________

Did you notice anything else? _______________________________________

_________________________________________________________________
Anything can happen in a school that was all mixed up the day it was built.

LOUIS SACHAR

SIDeways Stories FROM WAYSIDE SCHOOL

Illustrated by Julie Brinckloe
LOUIS SACHAR

Sideways Stories from Wayside School

Illustrated by Peter Allen

BLOOMSBURY
LONDON BERLIN NEW YORK SYDNEY
In memory of Robert J. Sachar
and to my mother,
Andy, and Jeff
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Introduction

This book contains thirty stories about the children and teachers at Wayside School. But before we get to them, there is something you ought to know so that you don’t get confused. Wayside School was accidentally built sideways.

It was supposed to be only one story high, with thirty classrooms all in a row. Instead it is thirty stories high, with one classroom on each story. The builder said he was very sorry.

The children at Wayside like having a sideways school. They have an extra-large playground.

The children and teachers described in this book all go to class on the top floor. So there are thirty stories from the thirtieth story of Wayside School.

It has been said that these stories are strange and silly. That is probably true. However, when I told stories about you to the children at Wayside, they thought you were strange and silly. That is probably also true.
Mrs. Gorf had a long tongue and pointed ears. She was the meanest teacher in Wayside School. She taught the class on the thirtieth story.

“If you children are bad,” she warned, “or if you answer a problem wrong, I’ll wiggle my ears, stick out my tongue, and turn you into apples!” Mrs. Gorf didn’t like children, but she loved apples.

Joe couldn’t add. He couldn’t even count. But he knew that if he answered a problem wrong, he would be turned into an apple. So he copied from John. He didn’t like to cheat, but Mrs. Gorf had never taught him how to add.

One day Mrs Gorf caught Joe copying John’s paper. She wiggled her ears—first her right one, then her left—stuck out her tongue, and turned Joe into an apple. Then she turned John into an apple for letting Joe cheat.

“Hey, that isn’t fair,” said Todd. “John was only trying to help a friend.”

Mrs. Gorf wiggled her ears—first her right one, then her left—stuck out her tongue, and turned Todd into an apple. “Does anybody else have an opinion?” she asked.

Nobody said a word.

Mrs. Gorf laughed and placed the three apples on her desk.

Stephen started to cry. He couldn’t help it. He was scared.

“I do not allow crying in the classroom,” said Mrs. Gorf. She wiggled her ears—first her right one, then her left—stuck out her tongue, and turned Stephen into an apple.

For the rest of the day, the children were absolutely quiet. And when they went home, they were too scared even to talk to their parents.

But Joe, John, Todd, and Stephen couldn’t go home. Mrs. Gorf just left them on her desk.
They were able to talk to each other, but they didn’t have much to say. Their parents were very worried. They didn’t know where their children were. Nobody seemed to know.

The next day Kathy was late for school. As soon as she walked in, Mrs. Gorf turned her into an apple.

Paul sneezed during class. He was turned into an apple.

Nancy said, “God bless you!” when Paul sneezed. Mrs. Gorf wiggled her ears—first her right one, then her left—stuck out her tongue, and turned Nancy into an apple.

Terrence fell out of his chair. He was turned into an apple.

Maurecia tried to run away. She was halfway to the door as Mrs. Gorf’s right ear began to wiggle. When she reached the door, Mrs. Gorf’s left ear wiggled. Maurecia opened the door and had one foot outside when Mrs. Gorf stuck out her tongue. Maurecia became an apple.

Mrs. Gorf picked up the apple from the floor and put it on her desk with the others. Then a funny thing happened. Mrs. Gorf turned around and fell over a piece of chalk.

The three Erics laughed. They were turned into apples.

Mrs. Gorf had a dozen apples on her desk: Joe, John, Todd, Stephen, Kathy, Paul, Nancy, Terrence, Maurecia, and the three Erics—Eric Fry, Eric Bacon, and Eric Ovens.

Louis, the yard teacher, walked into the classroom. He had missed the children at recess. He had heard that Mrs. Gorf was a mean teacher. So he came up to investigate. He saw the twelve apples on Mrs. Gorf’s desk. “I must be wrong,” he thought. “She must be a good teacher if so many children bring her apples.” He walked back down to the playground.

The next day a dozen more children were turned into apples. Louis, the yard teacher, came back into the room. He saw twenty-four apples on Mrs. Gorf’s desk. There were only three children left in the class. “She must be the best teacher in the world,” he thought.

By the end of the week all of the children were apples. Mrs. Gorf was very happy. “Now I can go home,” she said. “I don’t have to teach anymore. I won’t have to walk up thirty flights of stairs ever again.”

“You’re not going anywhere,” shouted Todd. He jumped off the desk and bopped Mrs. Gorf on the nose. The rest of the apples followed. Mrs. Gorf fell on the floor. The apples jumped all over her.

“Stop,” she shouted, “or I’ll turn you into applesauce!”

But the apples didn’t stop, and Mrs. Gorf could do nothing about it. “Turn us back into children,” Todd demanded.

Mrs. Gorf had no choice. She stuck out her tongue, wiggled her ears—this time her left one
first, then her right—and turned the apples back into children.

“All right,” said Maurecia, “let’s go get Louis. He’ll know what to do.”

“No!” screamed Mrs. Gorf. “I’ll turn you back into apples.” She wiggled her ears—first her right one, then her left—and stuck out her tongue. But Jenny held up a mirror, and Mrs. Gorf turned herself into an apple.

The children didn’t know what to do. They didn’t have a teacher. Even though Mrs. Gorf was mean, they didn’t think it was right to leave her as an apple. But none of them knew how to wiggle their ears.

Louis, the yard teacher, walked in. “Where’s Mrs. Gorf?” he asked.

Nobody said a word.

“Boy, am I hungry,” said Louis. “I don’t think Mrs. Gorf would mind if I ate this apple. After all, she always has so many.”

He picked up the apple, which was really Mrs. Gorf, shined it up on his shirt, and ate it.
Mrs. Jewls had a terribly nice face. She stood at the bottom of Wayside School and looked up. She was supposed to teach the class on the thirtieth story.

The children on the thirtieth story were scared. They had never told anybody what had happened to Mrs. Gorf. They hadn’t had a teacher for three days. They were afraid of what their new teacher would be like. They had heard she’d be a terribly nice teacher. They had never had a nice teacher. They were terribly afraid of nice teachers.

Mrs. Jewls walked up the winding, creaking staircase to the thirtieth story. She was also afraid. She was afraid of the children. She had heard that they would be horribly cute children. She had never taught cute children. She was horribly afraid of cute children.

She opened the door to the classroom. She was terribly nice. The children could tell just by looking at her.

Mrs. Jewls looked at the children. They were horribly cute. In fact, they were much too cute to be children.

“I don’t believe it,” said Mrs. Jewls. “It’s a room full of monkeys!”

The children looked at each other. They didn’t see any monkeys.

“This is ridiculous,” said Mrs. Jewls, “just ridiculous. I walked all the way up thirty flights of stairs for nothing but a class of monkeys. What do they think I am? I’m a teacher, not a zookeeper!”

The children looked at her. They didn’t know what to say. Todd scratched his head.

“Oh, I’m sorry,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Please don’t get me wrong. I have nothing against monkeys. It is just that I was expecting children. I like monkeys. I really do. Why, I’m sure we can play all kinds of monkey games.”

“What are you talking about?” asked Todd.

Mrs. Jewls nearly fell off her chair. “Well, what do you know, a talking monkey. Tomorrow I’ll bring you a banana.”

“My name is Todd,” said Todd.

The children were flabbergasted. They all raised their hands.

“I’m sorry,” said Mrs. Jewls, “but I don’t have enough bananas for all of you. I didn’t expect this. Next week I’ll bring in a whole bushel.”
“I don’t want a banana,” said Calvin. “I’m not a monkey.”

“Would you like a peanut?” asked Mrs. Jewls. “I think I might have a bag of peanuts in my purse. Wait a second. Yes, here it is.”

“Thanks,” said Calvin. Calvin liked peanuts.

Allison stood up. “I’m not a monkey,” she said. “I’m a girl. My name is Allison. And so is everybody else.”

Mrs. Jewls was shocked. “Do you mean to tell me that every monkey in here is named Allison?”

“No,” said Jenny. “She means we are all children. My name is Jenny.”

“No,” said Mrs. Jewls. “You’re much too cute to be children.”

Jason raised his hand.

“Yes,” said Mrs. Jewls, “the chimpanzee in the red shirt.”

“My name is Jason,” said Jason, “and I’m not a chimpanzee.”

“You’re too small to be a gorilla,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“I’m a boy,” said Jason.

“You’re not a monkey?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“No,” said Jason.

“And the rest of the class, they’re not monkeys, either?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“No,” said Allison. “That is what we’ve been trying to tell you.”

“Are you sure?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“We’d know if we were monkeys, wouldn’t we?” asked Calvin.

“I don’t know,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Do monkeys know that they are monkeys?”

“I don’t know,” said Allison. “I’m not a monkey.”

“No, I suppose you’re not,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Okay, in that case, we have a lot of work to do—reading, writing, subtraction, addition, spelling. Everybody take out a piece of paper. We will have a test now.”

Jason tapped Todd on the shoulder. He said, “Do you want to know something? I liked it better when she thought we were monkeys.”

“I know,” said Todd. “I guess now it means she won’t bring me a banana.”

“There will be no talking in class,” said Mrs. Jewls. She wrote Todd’s name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.
Chapter 3

Joe

Joe had curly hair. But he didn’t know how much hair he had. He couldn’t count that high. In fact, he couldn’t count at all.

When all of the other children went to recess, Mrs. Jewls told Joe to wait inside. “Joe,” she said. “How much hair do you have?”

Joe shrugged his shoulders. “A lot,” he answered.

“But how much, Joe?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“Enough to cover my head,” Joe answered.

“Joe, you are going to have to learn how to count,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“But, Mrs. Jewls, I already know how to count,” said Joe. “Let me go to recess.”

“First count to ten,” said Mrs. Jewls.

Joe counted to ten: “six, eight, twelve, one, five, two, seven, eleven, three, ten.”

“No, Joe, that is wrong,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“No, it isn’t,” said Joe. “I counted until I got to ten.”

“But you were wrong,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I’ll prove it to you.” She put five pencils on his desk. “How many pencils do we have here, Joe?”

Joe counted the pencils. “Four, six, one, nine, five. There are five pencils, Mrs. Jewls.”

“That’s wrong,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“How many pencils are there?” Joe asked.

“Five,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“That’s what I said,” said Joe. “May I go to recess now?”

“No,” said Mrs. Jewls. “You got the right answer, but you counted the wrong way. You were just lucky.” She set eight potatoes on his desk. “How many potatoes, Joe?”

Joe counted the potatoes. “Seven, five, three, one, two, four, six, eight. There are eight potatoes, Mrs. Jewls.”
“No, there are eight,” said Mrs. Jewls.
“But that’s what I said,” said Joe. “May I go to recess now?”
“No, you got the right answer, but you counted the wrong way again.” She put three books on his desk. “Count the books, Joe.”

Joe counted the books. “A thousand, a million, three. Three, Mrs. Jewls.”
“Correct,” said Mrs. Jewls.
“May I go to recess now?” Joe asked.
“No” said Mrs. Jewls.
“May I have a potato?” asked Joe.

“No. Listen to me. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Now you say it.”
“One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten,” said Joe.
“Very good!” said Mrs. Jewls. She put six erasers on his desk. “Now count the erasers, Joe, just the way I showed you.”

Joe counted the erasers. “One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. There are ten, Mrs. Jewls.”
“No,” said Mrs. Jewls.
“Didn’t I count right?” asked Joe.
“Yes, you counted right, but you got the wrong answer,” said Mrs. Jewls.
“This doesn’t make any sense,” said Joe. “When I count the wrong way I get the right answer, and when I count right I get the wrong answer.”

Mrs. Jewls hit her head against the wall five times. “How many times did I hit my head against the wall?” she asked.
“One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. You hit your head against the wall ten times,” said Joe.
“No,” said Mrs. Jewls.
“Four, six, one, nine, five. You hit your head five times,” said Joe.
Mrs. Jewls shook her head no and said, “Yes, that is right.”

The bell rang, and all the other children came back from recess. The fresh air had made them very excited, and they were laughing and shouting.
“Oh, darn.” said Joe. “Now I missed recess.”
“Hey, Joe, where were you?” asked John. “You missed a great game of kickball.”
“I kicked a home run,” said Todd.
“What was wrong with you, Joe?” asked Joy.
“Nothing,” said Joe. “Mrs. Jewls was just trying to teach me how to count.”
Joy laughed. “You mean you don’t know how to count!”
“Counting is easy,” said Maurecia.
“Now, now,” said Mrs. Jewls. “What’s easy for you may not be easy for Joe, and what’s easy for Joe may not be easy for you.”
“Nothing’s easy for Joe,” said Maurecia. “He’s stupid.”
“I can beat you up,” said Joe.
“Try it,” said Maurecia.
“That will be enough of that,” said Mrs. Jewls. She wrote Maurecia’s name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.
Joe put his head on his desk between the eight potatoes and the six erasers.
“Don’t feel bad, Joe,” said Mrs. Jewls.
“I just don’t get it,” said Joe. “I’ll never learn how to count.”
“Sure you will, Joe,” said Mrs. Jewls. “One day it will just come to you. You’ll wake up one morning and suddenly be able to count.”
Joe asked, “If all I have to do is wake up, what am I going to school for?”
“School just speeds things up,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Without school it might take another seventy years before you wake up and are able to count.”
“By that time I may have no hair left on top of my head to count,” said Joe.
“Exactly,” said Mrs. Jewls. “That is why you go to school.”
When Joe woke up the next day, he knew how to count. He had fifty-five thousand and six hairs on his head. They were all curly.
Sharie had long eyelashes. She weighed only forty-nine pounds. She always wore a big red and blue overcoat with a hood. The overcoat weighed thirty-five pounds. The red part weighed fifteen pounds, the blue part weighed fifteen pounds, and the hood weighed five pounds. Her eye-lashes weighed a pound and a half.

She sat next to the window in Mrs. Jewls’s class. She spent a lot of time just staring out the window. Mrs. Jewls didn’t mind. Mrs. Jewls said that a lot of people learn best when they stare out a window.

Sharie often fell asleep in class. Mrs. Jewls didn’t mind that, either. She said that a lot of people do their best learning when they are asleep.

Sharie spent all of her time either looking out the window or sleeping. Mrs. Jewls thought she was the best student in the class.

One afternoon it was very hot. All of the windows were open, yet Sharie still wore her red and blue overcoat. The heat made her very tired. Mrs. Jewls was teaching arithmetic. Sharie pulled the hood up over her face, buried herself in the coat, and went to sleep.

“Mrs. Jewls,” said Kathy, “Sharie is asleep.”

“That’s good,” said Mrs. Jewls. “She must be learning something.”

Mrs. Jewls continued with the lesson.

Sharie began to snore.

“Mrs. Jewls, Sharie is snoring,” said Kathy.

“Yes, I can hear her,” said Mrs. Jewls. “She must be learning an awful lot today. I wish the rest of you could be like her.”

Sharie began to toss and turn. She flopped over on top of her desk, and then rolled over on top of Kathy’s desk. Then she rolled back the other way. Kathy screamed. Sharie rolled out the window. She was still sound asleep.

As you know, Mrs. Jewls’s class was on the thirtieth story of Wayside School. So Sharie had a long way to go.

After she had fallen ten stories, Sharie woke up. She looked around. She was confused. She wasn’t in Mrs. Jewls’s class, and she wasn’t at home in bed. She couldn’t figure out where she was. She yawned, pulled the hood back over her eyes, and went back to sleep.
that time she had fallen another ten stories.

Wayside School had an exceptionally large playground. Louis, the yard teacher, was way over on the other side of it when he happened to see Sharie fall out the window. He ducked under the volleyball net, hurtled past the kickball field, hopped over the hopscotch court, climbed through the monkey bars, sped across the grass, and caught Sharie just before she hit the ground.

The people in Mrs. Jewls’s class cheered.
Sharie woke up in Louis’s arms.
“Darn it, Louis,” she said. “What did you go and wake me up for?”
“I’m sorry, Sharie,” said Louis.
“I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” Sharie repeated. “Is that all you can say? I was having a wonderful dream until you woke me up. You’re always bothering me, Louis. I can’t stand it.” She laughed and hugged him around the neck.
Louis carried her back up thirty flights of stairs to Mrs. Jewls’s room.
That evening, when Sharie went to bed, she was unable to fall asleep. She just wasn’t tired.
Chapter 5

Todd

All of the children in Mrs. Jewls’s class, except Todd, were talking and carrying on. Todd was thinking. Todd always thought before he spoke. When he got an idea, his eyes lit up.

Todd finished thinking and began to speak. But before he said two words, Mrs. Jewls called him.

“Todd,” she said, “you know better than to talk in class. You must learn to work quietly, like the other children.” She wrote his name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.

Todd looked around in amazement. All of the other children, who had been talking and screaming and fighting only seconds earlier, were quietly working in their workbooks. Todd scratched his head.

A child was given three chances in Mrs. Jewls’s class. The first time he did something wrong, Mrs. Jewls wrote his name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE. The second time he did something wrong, she put a check next to his name. And the third time he did something wrong, she circled his name.

Todd reached into his desk and pulled out his workbook. He had only just started on it when he felt someone tap him on the shoulder. It was Joy.

“What page are you on?” Joy asked.

“Page four,” Todd whispered.

“I’m on page eleven,” said Joy.

Todd didn’t say anything. He didn’t want to get into trouble. He just went back to work.

Five minutes later, Joy tapped him again. Todd ignored her. So Joy poked him in the back with her pencil. Todd pretended he didn’t notice. Joy got up from her seat and sharpened her pencil. She came back and poked it in Todd’s back. “What page are you on?” she asked.

“Page five,” Todd answered.

“Boy, are you dumb,” said Joy, “I’m on page twenty-nine.”

“It isn’t a race,” Todd whispered.
Five minutes later Joy pulled Todd’s hair and didn’t let go until he turned around. “What page are you on?” she demanded.

“Page six,” Todd answered as quietly as he could.

“I’M ON PAGE TWO HUNDRED!” Joy shouted.

Todd was very angry. “Will you please let me do my work and stop bothering me!”

Mrs. Jewls heard him. “Todd, what did I say about talking in class?”

Todd scratched his head.

Mrs. Jewls put a check next to Todd’s name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.

Todd really tried to be good. He knew that if he talked one more time, Mrs. Jewls would circle his name. Then he’d have to go home early, at twelve o’clock, on the kindergarten bus, just as he had the day before and the day before that. In fact, there hadn’t been a day since Mrs. Jewls took over the class that she didn’t send Todd home early. She said she did it for his own good. The other children went home at two o’clock.

Todd wasn’t really bad. He just always got caught. He really wanted to stay past twelve o’clock. He wanted to find out what the class did from twelve to two. But it didn’t look as though this was going to be his day. It was only ten-thirty, and he already had two strikes against him. He sealed his lips and went back to work.

There was a knock on the door. Mrs. Jewls opened it. Two men stepped in wearing masks and holding guns. “Give us all your money!” they demanded.

“All I have is a nickel,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“I have a dime,” said Maurecia.

“I have thirteen cents,” said Leslie.

“I have four cents,” said Dameon.

“What kind of bank is this?” asked one of the robbers.

“It’s not a bank, it’s a school,” said Todd. “Can’t you read?”

“No,” said the robbers.

“Neither can I,” said Todd.

“Do you mean we walked all the way up thirty flights of stairs for nothing?” asked the robber. “Don’t you have anything valuable?”

Todd’s eyes lit up. “We sure do,” he said. “We have knowledge.” He grabbed Joy’s workbook and gave it to the robbers. “Knowledge is much more valuable than money.”
“Thanks, kid,” said one of the robbers.
“Maybe I’ll give up being a criminal and become a scientist,” said the other.
They left the room without hurting anybody.
“Now I don’t have a workbook,” complained Joy.
Mrs. Jewls gave her a new one. Joy had to start all the way back at the beginning.
“Hey, Joy, what page are you on?” asked Todd.
“Page one,” Joy sighed.
“I’m on page eight,” laughed Todd triumphantly.
Mrs. Jewls heard him. She circled his name. Todd had three strikes against him. At twelve o’clock he left the room to go home early on the kindergarten bus.
But this time when he left, he was like a star baseball player leaving the field. All the children stood up, clapped their hands, and whistled.
Todd scratched his head.
Chapter 6

Bebe

Bebe was a girl with short brown hair, a little beebee nose, totally tiny toes, and big brown eyes. Her full name was Bebe Gunn. She was the fastest draw in Mrs. Jewls’s class.

She could draw a cat in less than forty-five seconds, a dog in less than thirty, and a flower in less than eight seconds.

But, of course, Bebe never drew just one dog, or one cat, or one flower. Art was from twelve-thirty to one-thirty. Why, in that time, she could draw fifty cats, a hundred flowers, twenty dogs, and several eggs or watermelons. It took her the same amount of time to draw a watermelon as an egg.

Calvin sat next to Bebe. He didn’t think he was very good at art. Why, it took him the whole period just to draw one airplane. So instead, he just helped Bebe. He was Bebe’s assistant. As soon as Bebe would finish one masterpiece, Calvin would take it from her and set down a clean sheet of paper. Whenever her crayon ran low, Calvin was ready with a new crayon. That way Bebe didn’t have to waste any time. And in return, Bebe would draw five or six airplanes for Calvin.

It was twelve-thirty, time for art. Bebe was ready. On her desk was a sheet of yellow construction paper. In her hand was a green crayon.

Calvin was ready. He held a stack of paper and a box of crayons.

“Ready, Bebe,” said Calvin.

“Ready, Calvin,” said Bebe.

“Okay,” said Mrs. Jewls, “time for art.”

She had hardly finished her sentence when Bebe had already drawn a picture of a leaf. Calvin took it from her and put another piece of paper down.

“Red,” called Bebe.

Calvin handed Bebe a red crayon.
“Blue,” called Bebe.
He gave her a blue crayon.
They were quite a pair. Their teamwork was remarkable. Bebe drew pictures as fast as Calvin could pick up the old paper and set down the new – a fish, an apple, three cherries, bing, bing, bing.

At one-thirty Mrs. Jewls announced, “Okay, class, art is over.”
Bebe dropped her crayon and fell over on her desk. Calvin sighed and leaned back in his chair. He could hardly move. They had broken their old record. Bebe had drawn three hundred and seventy-eight pictures. They lay in a pile on Calvin’s desk.
Mrs. Jewls walked by. “Calvin, did you draw all these pictures?”
Calvin laughed. “No, I can’t draw. Bebe drew them all.”
“Well, then, what did you draw?” asked Mrs. Jewls.
“I didn’t draw anything,” said Calvin.
“Why not? Don’t you like art?” asked Mrs. Jewls.
“I love art,” said Calvin. “That’s why I didn’t draw anything.”
Mrs. Jewls did not understand.
“It would have taken me the whole period just to draw one picture,” said Calvin. “And Bebe would only have been able to draw a hundred pictures. But with the two of us working together, she was able to draw three hundred and seventy-eight pictures! That’s a lot more art.”

Bebe and Calvin shook hands.
“No,” said Mrs. Jewls. “That isn’t how you measure art. It isn’t how many pictures you have, but how good the pictures are. Why, a person could spend his whole life just drawing one picture of a cat. In that time I’m sure Bebe could draw a million cats.”
“Two million,” said Bebe.
Mrs. Jewls continued. “But if that one picture is better than each of Bebe’s two million, then that person has produced more art than Bebe.”

Bebe looked as if she was going to cry. She picked up all the pictures from Calvin’s desk and threw them in the garbage. Then she ran from the room.
“I thought her pictures were good,” said Calvin. He reached into the garbage pail and took out a crumpled-up picture of an airplane.

Bebe walked outside into the playground.
Louis, the yard teacher, spotted her. “Where are you going?” he asked.
“I’m going home to draw a picture of a cat,” said Bebe.
“Will you bring it to school and show it to me tomorrow?” Louis asked.
“Tomorrow!” laughed Bebe. “By tomorrow I doubt if I’ll even be finished with one whisker.”
Calvin had a big, round face.
“Calvin,” said Mrs. Jewls, “I want you to take this note to Miss Zarves for me.”
“Miss Zarves?” asked Calvin.
“Yes, Miss Zarves,” said Mrs. Jewls. “You know where she is, don’t you?”
“Yes,” said Calvin. “She’s on the nineteenth story.”
“That’s right, Calvin,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Take it to her.”
Calvin didn’t move.
“Well, what are you waiting for?” asked Mrs. Jewls.
“She’s on the nineteenth story,” said Calvin.
“Yes, we have already established that fact,” said Mrs. Jewls.
“Yes, Calvin, the nineteenth story,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Now take it to her before I lose my patience.”
“But, Mrs. Jewls,” said Calvin.
“Now, Calvin!” said Mrs. Jewls. “Unless you would rather go home on the kindergarten bus.”
“Yes, ma’am,” said Calvin. Slowly he walked out the door.
“Ha, ha, ha,” laughed Terrence, “take it to the nineteenth story.”
“Give it to Miss Zarves,” hooted Myron.
“Have fun on the nineteenth story,” called Jason.
Calvin stood outside the door to the classroom. He didn’t know where to go.
As you know, when the builder built Wayside School, he accidentally built it sideways. But he also forgot to build the nineteenth story. He built the eighteenth and the twentieth, but no nineteenth. He said he was very sorry.
There was also no Miss Zarves. Miss Zarves taught the class on the nineteenth story. Since there was no nineteenth story, there was no Miss Zarves.
And besides that, as if Calvin didn’t have enough problems, there was no note. Mrs. Jewls had never given Calvin the note.
“Boy, this is just great,” thought Calvin. “Just great! I’m supposed to take a note that I don’t have to a teacher who doesn’t exist, and who teaches on a story that was never built.”

He didn’t know what to do. He walked down to the eighteenth story, then back up to the twentieth, then back down to the eighteenth, and back up again to the twentieth. There was no nineteenth story. There never was a nineteenth story. And there never will be a nineteenth story.

Calvin walked down to the administration office. He decided to put the note in Miss Zarves’s mailbox. But there wasn’t one of those, either. That didn’t bother Calvin too much, however, since he didn’t have a note.

He looked out the window and saw Louis, the yard teacher, shooting baskets. “Louis will know what to do,” he thought. Calvin went outside.

“Hey, Louis,” Calvin called.

“Hi, Calvin,” said Louis. He tossed him the basketball. Calvin dribbled up and took a shot. He missed. Louis tipped it in.

“Do you want to play a game?” Louis asked.

“I don’t have time,” said Calvin. “I have to deliver a note to Miss Zarves up on the nineteenth story.”

“Then what are you doing all the way down here?” Louis asked.

“There is no nineteenth story,” said Calvin.

“Then where is Miss Zarves?” asked Louis.

“There is no Miss Zarves,” said Calvin.

“What are you going to do with the note?” asked Louis.

“There is no note,” said Calvin.

“I understand,” said Louis.

“That’s good,” said Calvin, “because I sure don’t.”

“It’s very simple,” said Louis. “You are not supposed to take no notes to no teachers. You already haven’t done it.”

Calvin still didn’t understand. “I’ll just have to tell Mrs. Jewls that I couldn’t deliver the note,” he said.


Calvin walked back up the thirty flights of stairs to Mrs. Jewls’s class.

“Thank you very much, Calvin,” said Mrs. Jewls.

Calvin said, “But I—”

Mrs. Jewls interrupted him. “That was a very important note, and I’m glad I was able to count on you.”

“Yes, but you see—” said Calvin.

“You delivered the note to Miss Zarves on the nineteenth story?” asked Jason. “How did you do it?”

“What do you mean, how did he do it?” asked Mrs. Jewls. “He gave Miss Zarves the note. Some people, Jason, are responsible.”

“But you see, Mrs. Jewls—” said Calvin.

“The note was very important,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I told Miss Zarves not to meet me for
lunch.”
“Don’t worry,” said Calvin. “She won’t.”
“Good,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I have a coffee can full of Tootsie Roll pops on my desk. You may help yourself to one, for being such a good messenger.”
“Thanks,” said Calvin, “but really, it was nothing.”
Chapter 8

Myron

Myron had big ears. He was elected class president. The children in Mrs. Jewls’s class expected him to be a good president. Other presidents were good speakers. Myron was even better. He was a good listener.

But he had a problem. He didn’t know what a class president was supposed to do. So he asked.

“What am I supposed to do?”

“It’s a difficult job,” said Mrs. Jewls. “But you can do it. You must turn the lights on every morning and turn them off at the end of the day.”

“What?” asked Myron.

“As a class president you must learn to listen,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I’ll repeat myself only one more time. You must turn the lights on every morning—”

“I heard you the first time,” said Myron. “It just doesn’t sound like much of a job.”

“It certainly is!” said Mrs. Jewls. “Without light I can’t teach, and the children can’t learn. Only you can give us that light. I think it is a very important job.”

“I guess so,” said Myron. He wasn’t convinced.

“Here, let me show you how to work a light switch,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“I already know how,” said Myron. “I’ve been turning lights on and off all my life.”

“Very good!” said Mrs. Jewls. “You’ll make a fine president.”

Myron wanted to be the best president ever. But it was such an easy job, he thought, that anybody could do it. When school let out that day, Myron stayed behind. He turned out the lights by flicking the switch down.

“Excellent!” said Mrs. Jewls.

On his way home, Myron heard a horrible noise. First there was a loud screeching, then a sharp squeal, a roaring engine, and then the very faint sound of a girl crying.

Myron ran to see what had happened.

Dana was bent over in the middle of the road.

“What’s the matter?” asked Myron.

“My dog, Pugsy, was hit by a car,” Dana cried.
“Who did it?” asked Myron.
“I don’t know!” Dana sobbed. “They sped away.”
“Well, that’s not important,” said Myron. “We’ve got to try to save Pugsy.”
Pugsy lay unconscious in the street. Myron carefully picked her up. He carried her two miles to the vet. Dana cried at his side.
“Don’t worry, Dana,” said Myron. “She’ll be all right.” But he wasn’t really so sure.
He gave Pugsy to the vet, walked Dana home, then walked home himself.
Dana was so upset that she forgot to thank him. Myron didn’t mind. He thought that was what being class president was all about.
The next morning, before he went to school, Myron went to Dana’s house. Pugsy was there. She seemed all right.
Dana petted her. Pugsy licked her face.

“See, Myron, she’s all right,” said Dana. “The vet said that you brought her in just in time.”
“Hi, Pugsy,” said Myron. He petted her.
Pugsy bit his hand.
“I guess she doesn’t know you,” said Dana. “She was unconscious yesterday when you saved her life.”
Dana’s mother put some medicine and a Band-Aid on Myron’s hand. Then she drove the children to school.
They were late. They ran up the stairs to Mrs. Jewls’s class. The room was completely dark.
“It’s about time you got here, Myron,” said Mrs. Jewls. “We have no lights.”
“Why didn’t somebody else just turn them on?” asked Myron.
“Because you’re class president,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Show Stephen how to work the lights. From now on he will be class president.”
Myron showed Stephen how to turn on the lights. He flicked the switch up.
At the end of the day, Myron showed Stephen how to turn the lights off. He flicked the switch down.
After a week, Stephen finally caught on. He made a good president. The lights were on every morning.
Myron, who was president for only a day, was the best president in the history of Wayside School. It was just that nobody knew it.
Maurecia liked ice cream. She was sweet and pretty and could beat up any boy in Mrs. Jewls’s class. Everybody liked Maurecia—except Kathy, but then she didn’t like anybody. Maurecia only liked ice cream.

Every day Maurecia brought an ice cream cone to school and kept it in her desk until lunch time. At first she brought chocolate ice cream every day. But she soon tired of chocolate ice cream. So she started bringing vanilla. But she got tired of vanilla, too. Then she got tired of strawberry, fudge ripple, butter pecan, pistachio, and burgundy cherry, in that order. And then a terrible thing happened. Maurecia got tired of ice cream. By that time her desk was a mess, and everything in it was sticky.

Everybody liked Maurecia. But Maurecia didn’t like anything.

Mrs. Jewls hated to see Maurecia unhappy.

“I don’t understand it, Mrs. Jewls,” cried Maurecia. “There just aren’t any good flavors anymore.”

So Mrs. Jewls worked all night. The next day she brought in a new flavor of ice cream for Maurecia. It was Maurecia-flavored ice cream. “Everybody will like it,” thought Mrs. Jewls, “because everybody likes Maurecia.”

“Here you are, Maurecia,” said Mrs. Jewls, “Maurecia-flavored ice cream.” Everybody gathered around as Maurecia tasted it. They hoped she’d like it.

Maurecia took a lick.

“Well?” said Mrs. Jewls.

Maurecia took another lick.

“Well?” asked the class.

“This ice cream has no taste,” said Maurecia. “It doesn’t taste bad, but it doesn’t taste
good. It doesn’t taste like anything at all!”

Mrs. Jewls was heartbroken.

“Here, let me try it,” said Todd. He tasted it. “You’re crazy, Maurecia!” he said. “This is the best-tasting ice cream I’ve ever eaten! Try some, Deedee.”

“Ummmmmmmmmm, it’s delicious,” said Deedee. “It’s so sweet and creamy.” She passed it around the room.

“Oh, it is so good,” said Leslie.

“I think it tastes terrible,” said Kathy.

“I don’t understand it,” said Maurecia. “I don’t taste a thing.”

Mrs. Jewls slapped herself in the face. “Oh, I’ve made a big mistake, Maurecia. Of course you can’t taste anything. It’s Maurecia-flavored ice cream. It’s the same taste you always taste when you’re not tasting anything at all.”

So the next day Mrs. Jewls brought in Joe-flavored ice cream. Maurecia liked it. So did everybody else. Joe thought it had no taste.

Everybody liked Maurecia. Maurecia only liked Joe.

The following day Mrs. Jewls brought in Ron-flavored ice cream. Ron thought it had no taste, but everybody else loved it.

Everybody liked Maurecia. Maurecia only liked Joe and Ron.

By the end of the month, Mrs. Jewls had brought in twenty-seven new flavors of ice cream, one for each member of the class.

Everybody liked Maurecia, and Maurecia liked everybody. They all tasted so good. All except Kathy, that is. Kathy-flavored ice cream tasted a little bit like old bologna.

Everyone still agreed that Maurecia-flavored ice cream was the best, except Maurecia. She liked Todd ice cream the best.

This turned out to be a problem. Every once in a while Maurecia would try to take a bite out of Todd’s arm in order to get that very special flavor.
Paul had the best seat in Mrs. Jewls’s class. He sat in the back of the room. It was the seat that was the farthest away from Mrs. Jewls.

Mrs. Jewls was teaching the class about fractions. She drew a picture of a pie on the blackboard. She cut the pie into eight pieces. She explained that each piece was one-eighth of the pie.

Paul never paid attention. He didn’t see the picture of the pie. He didn’t see anything. Well, he did see one thing.

Actually, he saw two things.

He saw Leslie’s two pigtails.

Leslie sat in front of Paul. She had two long, brown pigtails that reached all the way down to her waist.

Paul saw those pigtails, and a terrible urge came over him. He wanted to pull a pigtail. He wanted to wrap his fist around it, feel the hair between his fingers, and just yank.

He thought it would also be fun to tie the pigtails together, or better yet, tie them to her chair. But most of all, he just wanted to pull one.

Slowly he reached for the one on the right. “No! What am I doing?” he thought. “I’ll only get into trouble.”

Paul had it made. He sat in the back of the room. He paid no attention to anyone, and nobody paid any attention to him. But if he pulled a pigtail, it would be all over. Leslie would tell on him, and he’d become the center of attention.

He sighed and slowly withdrew his arm.

But Paul couldn’t ignore those pigtails. There they were, dangling right in front of him, just begging to be pulled. He could close his eyes, but he couldn’t make the pigtails disappear. He could still smell them. And hear them. He could almost taste them.

“Maybe just a little tug,” he thought. “No, none.”

There they hung, easily within his reach.

“Well let them just hang there!” thought Paul.

It would be foolish to pull one, no matter how tempting they were. None of the other
children in the class pulled pigtails; why should he? Of course, none of the other children sat behind Leslie, either.

It was just a simple matter of being able to think clearly. That was all. Paul thought it over and decided not to pull one. It was as simple as that.

Suddenly his arm shot forward. He grabbed Leslie’s right pigtail and yanked.

“Yaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhh!” screamed Leslie.
Everybody looked at her.
“Paul pulled my pigtail,” she said.
They all looked at Paul.
“I … I couldn’t help it,” said Paul.
“You’d better learn to help it,” said Mrs. Jewls. She wrote Paul’s name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE. “Tell Leslie you’re sorry.”
“I’m sorry, Leslie,” said Paul.
“Hmmmph,” said Leslie.

Paul felt horrible. Never again would he pull another pigtail! Except, there was one problem. He still wasn’t satisfied. He had pulled the right one, but that wasn’t enough. He wanted to pull the left one, too. It was as if he heard a little voice coming from the pigtail saying, “Pull me, Paul. Pull me.”

“I can’t,” Paul answered. “My name’s already on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.”

“Big deal,” said the pigtail. “Pull me.”
“No way,” said Paul. “Never again.”
“Aw, come on, Paul, just a little tug,” urged the pigtail. “What harm could it do?”

“Lots of harm,” said Paul. “Leslie will scream, and I’ll get in trouble again.”

“Boy, that’s not fair,” whined the pigtail. “You pulled the right one. Now it’s my turn.”
“I know, but I can’t,” said Paul.
“Sure you can,” said the pigtail. “Just grab me and yank.”
“No,” said Paul. “It’s not right.”
“Sure it is, Paul,” said the pigtail. “Pigtails are meant to be pulled. That’s what we’re here for.”
“Tell that to Leslie,” said Paul.

“Leslie won’t mind,” said the pigtail. “I promise.”
“I bet,” said Paul. “Just like she didn’t mind the last time.”
“You just didn’t pull hard enough,” said the pigtail. “Leslie likes us pulled real hard.”
“Really?” asked Paul.
“Cross my heart,” said the pigtail, “the harder, the better.”
“Okay,” said Paul. “but if you’re lying …”
“I promise,” said the pigtail.

Paul grabbed the left pigtail. It felt good in his hand. He pulled as hard as he could.
“Yaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!” screamed Leslie.
Mrs. Jewls asked, “Paul, did you pull Leslie’s pigtail again?”
“No,” said Paul. “I pulled the other one.”
All the children laughed.
“Are you trying to be funny?” asked Mrs. Jewls.
“No,” said Paul. “I was trying to be fair. I couldn’t pull one and not the other.”
The children laughed again.
“Pigtails are meant to be pulled,” Paul concluded.
Mrs. Jewls put a check next to Paul’s name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.
But at last Paul was satisfied. True, his name was on the blackboard with a check next to
it, but that really didn’t matter. All he had to do was stay out of trouble the rest of the day, and his name would be erased. It’s easy to stay out of trouble when you have the best seat in the class.

In fact, Paul could do this every day. He could pull Leslie’s pigtails twice, and then stay out of trouble the rest of the day. There was nothing Leslie could do about it.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, Leslie screamed, “Yaaaahhhhhhhhh!”

Mrs. Jewls circled Paul’s name and sent him home early on the kindergarten bus. Nobody would believe that he hadn’t pulled Leslie’s pigtail again.
Dana had four beautiful eyes. She wore glasses. But her eyes were so beautiful that the glasses only made her prettier. With two eyes she was pretty. With four eyes she was beautiful. With six eyes she would have been even more beautiful. And if she had a hundred eyes, all over her face and her arms and her feet, why, she would have been the most beautiful creature in the world.

But poor Dana wasn’t covered from head to foot with beautiful eyes. She was covered with mosquito bites.

Mrs. Jewls picked up her yardstick and said, “Now it’s time for arithmetic.”

“Oh, no, Mrs. Jewls,” said Dana. “I can’t do arithmetic. I itch all over. I can’t concentrate.”

“But we have all kinds of arithmetic,” said Mrs. Jewls, “addition without carrying, addition with carrying, and carrying without addition.”

“I don’t care,” cried Dana.

“We have that, too,” said Mrs. Jewls, “addition without caring. Now, stop carrying on.”

Dana whined, “I can’t, Mrs. Jewls. I itch too much.”

“And I’m too thirsty,” said D.J.

“I’m too tired,” said Ron.

“I’m too hungry,” said Terrence.

“I’m too stupid,” said Todd.

Mrs. Jewls hit her desk with her yardstick. Everyone stopped talking.

Mrs. Jewls said, “We are going to have arithmetic now, and I don’t want to hear another thing about it.”

“But, Mrs. Jewls, I really do itch. I can’t do arithmetic,” Dana whined.

“No,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Arithmetic is the best known cure for an itch. How many mosquito bites do you have?”

“I don’t know,” said Dana, “over a hundred. First I try scratching one, but then another one
starts to itch. So I scratch that one, and that one stops, and another one starts. So I scratch that one, and the itch moves down to another one. Then it goes back to the first one. The itch just never stays in the same place. I just can’t scratch them all.”

“What you need is a good, strong dose of arithmetic,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“I’d rather have calamine lotion,” said Dana.

“Remember, Dana,” said Mrs. Jewls, “mosquito bites itch, not numbers.”

“So what?” said Dana.

Mrs. Jewls continued. “We’ll just have to turn your mosquito bites into numbers.”

“I’m a mess,” Dana moaned.

Mrs. Jewls began to turn the mosquito bites into numbers. “How much is three mosquito bites plus three mosquito bites?” she asked.

Rondi raised her hand. “Six mosquito bites,” she answered.

“How much is six mosquito bites minus two mosquito bites?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“Four mosquito bites,” said D.J.

“How much is five mosquito bites times two?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“Ten mosquito bites,” said Bebe.

“Very good,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“I still itch,” Dana complained.

“I’ve got one more question,” said Mrs. Jewls. “How much is forty-nine mosquito bites plus seventy-five mosquito bites?”

Nobody raised a hand.

“Think, class,” said Mrs. Jewls. “This is for Dana.”

Nobody knew the answer. Dana’s itch began to get worse and worse.

At last, Dana began counting her own mosquito bites. She counted seventy-five on one side and forty-nine on the other. Then she added them together for a total of one hundred and twenty-four mosquito bites.

“One hundred and twenty-four mosquito bites,” Dana called.

“Very good,” said Mrs. Jewls.

Dana had one hundred and twenty-four mosquito bites. And none of them itched anymore.

“I’m still thirsty,” said D.J. “Can arithmetic do anything for that?”

“I’m still tired,” said Ron.

“I’m still hungry,” said Terrence.

“I’m still stupid,” said Todd.

“I’m glad we turned my mosquito bites into numbers instead of letters,” said Dana. “I could never spell mosquito.”
Jason had a small face and a big mouth. He had the second biggest mouth in Mrs. Jewls’s class. And there were an awful lot of big mouths in that class.

“Mrs. Jewls,” Jason called without raising his hand. “Joy is chewing gum in class!”

Joy had the biggest mouth in Mrs. Jewls’s class. And it was filled with gum. There was hardly even room for her tongue.

“Joy, I’m ashamed of you,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I’m afraid I’ll have to put your name up on the board.”

“That’s okay, Mrs. Jewls,” Jason called. “I’ll do it.” Jason hopped out of his seat and wrote Joy’s name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.

While he was up, Joy took the glob of gum out of her mouth and placed it on Jason’s chair. Rondi and Allison giggled.

Jason walked back from the blackboard to his desk and sat down. “Mrs. Jewls,” he called, “I’m STUCK!”

Rondi and Allison giggled again.

Mrs. Jewls got angry. “Joy, you’re going home on the kindergarten bus today.”

“Oh, good,” said Todd. “I’ll have some company.” Todd went home on the kindergarten bus every day. He could never seem to make it to twelve o’clock without getting into trouble three times. His name wasn’t even up on the blackboard yet. But he knew that by twelve o’clock it would be up, checked, and circled.

“Mrs. Jewls, what am I going to do? I’m stuck! I’m going to have to stay here the rest of my life!” said Jason.

“Joy, tell Jason you’re sorry,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“I’m sorry, Jason,” said Joy.

“Oh, that’s okay, Joy,” said Jason. “I don’t mind.”

“Try to get up, Jason,” said Mrs. Jewls.

Jason tried. “I can’t, Mrs. Jewls. I’m stuck.”

Mrs. Jewls asked the three Erics to help. Eric Fry and Eric Ovens pulled Jason. Eric Bacon held the chair.
“Stop,” cried Jason. “You’ll rip my pants.”
Rondi and Allison giggled.
“All right,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Let’s try ice water. That should freeze the gum and make it less sticky. I’ll go get some from Miss Mush.”
Miss Mush was the lunch teacher at Wayside School. She had the remarkable ability to undercook a dish and overcook it at the same time. Her specialty was a nice, hot bowl of mud. She called it porridge.
Jason looked at Rondi and Allison. “No, Mrs. Jewls,” he said. “Don’t leave me. Besides, Miss Mush’s ice water is probably warm.”
“Don’t be silly, Jason,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I’m sure it will be at least as cold as her soups.”
Rondi and Allison leered at Jason.
“No, Mrs. Jewls, don’t go!” begged Jason.
“I’ll be right back, Jason,” said Mrs. Jewls. She went to Miss Mush for some ice water.
As soon as Mrs. Jewls stepped out the door, Rondi and Allison jumped up from their seats and started to tickle Jason. He laughed until his hair turned purple. The girls got back to their seats just as Mrs. Jewls returned.
Mrs. Jewls carried a big bucket of ice cold water.
“Oh, no, please don’t, no!” Jason pleaded.
“We have no choice,” said Mrs. Jewls. She threw the water all over him.
“Well,” said Mrs. Jewls, “try to get up.”
Jason was drenched. “I’m wet and I’m cold and I’m still stuck!”
“Oh, well, it didn’t work,” said Mrs. Jewls. “At least we tried. Now I guess we’ll have to cut your pants off.”
Rondi and Allison giggled.
“No, Mrs. Jewls, no!” Jason screamed. “I don’t mind being stuck here. I’m really very comfortable.”
“Don’t be silly, Jason,” said Mrs. Jewls.
“Don’t cut off my pants,” said Jason.
“The three Erics can carry you to the bathroom,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I’ll ask Louis to call your mother. She can bring you a new pair of pants.”
The three Erics took hold of Jason’s chair and turned him upside down.
“No, Mrs. Jewls,” said Jason. “Now I’ll always have a place to sit down. I won’t have to worry about finding a seat on the bus.”
The three Erics began to take him away.
“Wait,” said Joy. “Mrs. Jewls, if I can get Jason unstuck, do I still have to go home on the kindergarten bus?”
“All right,” said Mrs. Jewls. “If you can somehow get Jason free, you don’t have to go home early.”
“Don’t trust her, Mrs. Jewls,” said Jason. He was still hanging upside down.
“I’ll just kiss him,” said Joy.
“No!” Jason screamed. “Don’t let her kiss me, Mrs. Jewls. Throw water on me. Tickle me. Cut off my pants. Hang me upside down from the ceiling. But don’t let her kiss me!”
“I’ll just kiss him on the nose,” said Joy.
“We’ve got nothing to lose, Jason,” said Mrs. Jewls.
“Oooooh, who would want to kiss Jason!” said Allison.
Jason hung helplessly upside down.
Joy stepped up and kissed him on the nose.
Jason fell out of the chair and hit his head on the floor.
Rondi and Allison giggled.
“Darn,” said Todd. “Now I’ll have to go home alone again.”
Joy erased her name from the blackboard.
Chapter 13

Rondi

Rondi had twenty-two beautiful teeth. Everyone else had twenty-four. Rondi was missing her two front teeth. And those were the most beautiful teeth of all.

“Your front teeth are so cute,” said Mrs. Jewls. “They make you look just adorable.”

“But, Mrs. Jewls,” said Rondi. “I don’t have any front teeth.”

“I know,” said Mrs. Jewls. “That’s what makes them so cute.”

Rondi didn’t understand.

“Oooh, Rondi, I just love your two front teeth,” said Maurecia. “I wish I had some like that.”

“But I don’t have them,” said Rondi.

“That’s why I love them so much,” said Maurecia.

“Oh, this is silly,” said Rondi. “Everybody thinks the teeth I don’t have are cute. I’m not wearing a coat. Don’t you all just love my coat? And what about my third arm? I don’t have one. Isn’t it lovely?”

“Love your hat, Rondi,” said Joy.

“I’m not wearing a hat!” Rondi screamed.

“That’s what makes it so interesting,” said Joy. “Don’t you think so, Leslie?”

“Oh, yes,” said Leslie. “It’s a very nice hat. Nice boots, too.”

“I’m not wearing boots!” Rondi insisted.

“Yes,” said Joy, “very nice boots. They go so well with your hat.”

“What hat?” asked Rondi.

“Yes,” Leslie agreed. “Rondi showed excellent taste by not wearing the hat or the boots. They go so well together.”

Rondi had had enough. She covered her head so nobody could see her hat. She put her feet under her desk so nobody could see her boots. Then she closed her mouth tightly so nobody could see her two front teeth.

Suddenly, everybody who was sitting near her began to laugh.

“What’s so funny?” asked Todd.

“The joke Rondi didn’t tell,” said Jason.
“Ask Rondi not to tell it again, Todd,” said Calvin.

“Rondi,” said Todd, “don’t tell it again.”

Rondi was horrified. She didn’t know what to do. She kept her mouth shut and just stared at Todd. To her amazement, Todd laughed.

“Hey, everybody,” called Todd. “Listen to Rondi’s joke.”

Rondi didn’t say a word, but the rest of the class began to laugh.

Mrs. Jewls got very angry. She wrote Rondi’s name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.

“The classroom is not the place for jokes,” she said.

“But, Mrs. Jewls,” said Rondi. “I didn’t tell a joke.”

“Yes, I know,” said Mrs. Jewls, “but the funniest jokes are the ones that remain untold.”

“Okay, okay,” said Rondi. “If that’s what you want, then that’s what you’ll get. I’ll really tell a joke. That way I won’t disturb the class. And tomorrow I’ll wear boots and a hat. Of course, you won’t like them as much as the ones I didn’t wear today. But I better hurry up and tell my joke before you all start to laugh.

“There was a monkey sitting in a banana tree. He was very hungry. He knew that somewhere in the tree there was a magic banana, and that once he ate that banana, he wouldn’t be hungry anymore. He ate one banana. That wasn’t it. He was still hungry. He ate another banana. That one wasn’t it, either. He was still hungry. Finally, after he ate his tenth banana, he wasn’t hungry anymore. ‘I knew I’d find it,’ he said. ‘It’s too bad I didn’t eat that one first. I wouldn’t have had to waste all those other bananas.’”

Nobody laughed. Nobody had even listened to Rondi. Mrs. Jewls was busy teaching arithmetic, and everybody else was paying strict attention.

Rondi slapped herself in the face to make sure she was really there. She was.

The bell rang for recess. Rondi ran outside. She was very upset.

Louis, the yard teacher, saw her. “Why the frown, Rondi?” he asked. “Come on, smile. Let me see your cute front teeth.”

Rondi screamed. She socked Louis in the stomach, then bit his arm with her missing teeth. And that kind of bite hurts the worst.
Chapter 14

Sammy

It was a horrible, stinky, rainy day. Some rainy days are fun and exciting, but not this one. This one stunk. All the children were wet and wore smelly raincoats. The whole room smelled awful.

“Ooooh, it stinks in here,” said Maurecia.

Everybody laughed. But she was right.

There was one good thing, however. There was a new boy in class. New kids are always fun. Except no one could even tell what the new boy looked like. He was completely covered by his raincoat.

“Class,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I’d like you all to meet Sammy. Let us show him what a nice class we can be.”

Leslie walked up and smiled at Sammy. But her smile quickly turned into a frown. “You smell terrible,” she said.

“Leslie!” exclaimed Mrs. Jewls. “That’s no way to greet a new member of our class.” Mrs. Jewls wrote Leslie’s name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.

“But he does, Mrs. Jewls,” said Leslie. “He smells awful.”

“You’re ugly,” Sammy replied.

“Now, Sammy, that’s no way to talk,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Leslie’s a very pretty girl.”

“She’s ugly,” said Sammy.

Allison spoke up. “Well, you smell terrible and are probably even uglier. But nobody can see you because you are hiding under that smelly old raincoat.”

“That will be enough of that,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Now, Sammy, why don’t you take off your coat and hang it in the closet? Let us all see how nice you look.”

“I don’t want to, you old windbag,” said Sammy.

“That’s because he’s so ugly,” said Leslie.

“I’m sure he’s quite handsome,” said Mrs. Jewls. “He’s just shy. Here, let me help you.” Mrs. Jewls took off Sammy’s coat for him. But underneath it was still another raincoat, even dirtier and smellier than the first one.

They still couldn’t see his face.
“Ooooh, now he smells even worse,” said Maurecia.
“You don’t exactly smell like a rose, either,” Sammy replied.
Mrs. Jewls took off his second raincoat, but there was still another one under that. And the smell became so bad that Mrs. Jewls had to run and stick her head out the window to get some fresh air.
“You’re all a bunch of pigs!” Sammy screeched. “Dirty, rotten pigs!”
The smell was overpowering. Sammy just stood there, hidden under his raincoats.
Mrs. Jewls wrote Sammy’s name under the word DISCIPLINE.
“Send him home on the kindergarten bus,” said Joy.
“Not with me,” said Todd.
Mrs. Jewls held her nose, walked up to Sammy, and removed his raincoat. She threw it out the window. But he had on still another one.

![Image]

Sammy hissed. “Hey, old windbag, watch where you throw my good clothes!”
Mrs. Jewls put a check next to Sammy’s name on the blackboard. Then she took off another raincoat and threw it out the window. The smell got worse, for he had on still another one.
Sammy began to laugh. His horrible laugh was even worse than his horrible voice.
When Sammy first came into the room, he was four feet tall. But after Mrs. Jewls removed six of his raincoats, he was only three feet tall. And there were still more raincoats to go.

![Image]

Mrs. Jewls circled his name and removed another coat. She threw it out the window. Then she put a triangle around the circle and threw another one of his coats outside. She kept doing this until Sammy was only one-and-a-half feet high. With every coat she took off, Sammy’s laugh got louder and the smell got worse.

![Image]

Some of the children held their ears. Others could hold only one ear because they were holding their nose with the other hand. It was hard to say which was worse, the laugh or the smell.
Sammy stopped laughing and said, “Hey, old windbag, if you take off one more of my coats and throw it out the window, I’ll bite your head off.”
“They smell too bad for me to allow them in my classroom,” said Mrs. Jewls. “You can pick them up when you leave.”

“They smell better than you do, Pighead!” Sammy shouted.

Mrs. Jewls didn’t stop. She took off another one of his coats, then another, and another. Sammy was only four inches tall, three inches tall, two inches tall. At last she removed the final coat.

All that was there was a dead rat.

“Well, I don’t allow dead rats in my classroom,” said Mrs. Jewls. She picked it up by the tail, put it in a plastic bag, and threw it away.

Mrs. Jewls didn’t allow dead rats in her class. Todd once brought in a dead rat for show-and-tell, and Mrs. Jewls made him throw that one away, too.

“I’m glad Sammy isn’t allowed in our classroom,” said Rondi. “I didn’t like him very much.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Jewls, “we caught another one.”

Dead rats were always trying to sneak into Mrs. Jewls’s class. That was the third one she’d caught since September.
Chapter 15

Deedee

This story contains a problem and a solution.

Deedee was a mousey looking kid. Unlike most children at Wayside School, she liked recess better than spelling. As soon as the recess bell rang, she would jump up from her seat and run out the door.

There were big signs in Wayside School on every floor, “NO JUMPING DOWN THE STAIRS.”

Deedee never seemed to notice the signs. She jumped down the stairs. Some children took the stairs two at a time. Deedee took them ten at a time. That was on the way down. It was funny. She never seemed to be in quite the same hurry on the way back up.

There was another sign at Wayside School. “NO CUTTING ACROSS THE GRASS.” Deedee must not ever have seen that one, either. She cut across the grass and ran up to Louis, the yard teacher.

“I want a green ball,” Deedee said. The green balls were the best.

“I’m all out of green balls,” said Louis.

“Okay, then I want a red ball,” said Deedee. The red balls were just about as good as the green balls. They didn’t bounce as high, but actually, sometimes you don’t want a ball to bounce too high.

“I’m all out of red balls, too,” said Louis.

“Do you have anything left?” asked Deedee.

Deedee meant anything besides the yellow ball. There was one yellow ball at Wayside School and Louis was always trying to get rid of it. It didn’t bounce, and it never went the way it was kicked.

“Anything at all?” asked Deedee.

“Today is your lucky day,” said Louis. “I have one ball left, just for you; the one and only yellow ball!”
“No, thanks,” said Deedee.
“Aw, come on, take it,” said Louis.
“Why don’t you ever have any green or red balls?” asked Deedee.
“I do,” said Louis. “But the other children ask first. By the time you get out here, they’re all gone.”

“But that’s because I have to come all the way from the thirtieth story. How do you expect me to compete with the kids from the first or second?” she asked.
“That’s why I saved you the yellow ball,” said Louis. “Everybody wanted it, but I saved it just for you.”

“I bet,” said Deedee.
She took the yellow ball and bounced it on the ground. It stopped dead with a thud. She stepped back, ran up, and kicked it. It went backwards over her head. She didn’t bother chasing it.
Instead she played hopscotch with Jennie and Leslie. She thought it was disgusting.
The next day, Deedee asked Mrs. Jewls if she could go to recess early.
“Why?” asked Mrs. Jewls.
“So I can get a green ball before Louis gives them all away,” said Deedee.
“I’m glad you have a good reason,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Yes, you may go. But first, spell Mississippi for me.”
Spelling was not Deedee’s best subject. By the time she finally got it right, she was five minutes late for recess.

She jumped down the stairs, cut across the grass, and ran up to Louis. There were no green balls left. There were no red balls left, either. However, there was still the yellow ball.
Deedee played jump rope with Joy and Maurecia. It was no better than hopscotch.
So Deedee’s problem was to figure out a way to get a green ball, or at least a red ball.
You already know that this story also contains a solution. Deedee figured it out. See if you can, too. Remember everything you know about Deedee, Wayside School, and Mrs. Jewls.
Hint: The next day, Deedee brought a cream cheese and jelly sandwich, some nuts, and shredded cheese in her lunchbox.
Here’s what happened.
Just before recess, Deedee smeared the cream cheese and jelly all over her face. Then she stuffed her mouth with nuts and hung the shredded cheese from her nose. When she closed her eyes, she looked just like a dead rat.

Todd was in on the plan. “Mrs. Jewls,” he called. “There’s a dead rat in the classroom.” Mrs. Jewls was very put out. “I want that dead rat outside immediately!”

When Mrs. Jewls said immediately, she meant it. Deedee instantly found herself outside on the playground.

“I want a green ball,” she said.

Louis pretended that he hadn’t heard her.

“May I please have a green ball?” asked Deedee.

Louis gave her a green ball. “I don’t know how you did it, Deedee, but you’re first today,” he said.

When Mrs. Jewls found out that Deedee and Todd had tricked her, she sent Todd home early on the kindergarten bus.

Deedee threw the green ball on the ground. It bounced fifty feet straight up in the air, and then she caught it.

“You don’t like me, do you?” she asked Louis.

“Sure I do,” said Louis.

“No, you don’t,” said Deedee.

“Yes, I like you,” said Louis.

“No, you don’t,” Deedee insisted.

“Yes, I like you. I really do,” said Louis.

“Are you sure?” asked Deedee.

“Yes,” said Louis. “Don’t you believe me?”

“I guess so,” said Deedee.

“Do you like me?” asked Louis.

“You bet,” said Deedee. “You’re my best friend!”

“Terrific,” said Louis. “I always wanted to be best friends with a dead rat.”
Chapter 16

D.J.

D.J. skipped up the thirty flights of stairs to Mrs. Jewls’s room. He was grinning from ear to ear, from nose to chin, from here to there, and back again.

“Hey, D.J.,” Todd shouted, “glad to see you.” Todd was a pushover for smiling faces.

Mrs. Jewls heard him. She began to write Todd’s name on the board under DISCIPLINE, but when she saw D.J.’s smile, she put down the chalk. “Good morning, D.J.,” she said. “What are you so happy about?”

D.J. grinned and shrugged his shoulders.

Mrs. Jewls smiled.

Dameon looked at the smile on Mrs. Jewls’s face, then at Todd’s, and finally at D.J.’s. Then Dameon smiled, too. His smile was almost as big as D.J.’s. They were best friends.

Once they saw the two of them smiling, the rest of the class couldn’t help but smile. Rondi had a very cute one, due to her two missing front teeth. Nobody had an ugly smile.

Jason came to school late. He was very upset. But the first thing he saw was Dameon’s smile, and he felt a little bit better. Then he saw Rondi’s toothless grin, and he even began to smile a little himself. But when he saw the piano on D.J.’s face, he fell, laughing, onto the floor.

Everybody started to laugh, even Kathy, and she hardly ever laughed except when someone hurt himself.

The whole room seemed to be laughing, not just the people in it. The blackboard chuckled. The ceiling snickered. The desks were jumping up and down, and the chairs were slapping one another on the back. The floor was very ticklish. It laughed until the walls turned purple. The wastepaper basket started to sing, and all the pencils stood up and danced.

Finally things began to settle down. Mrs. Jewls wiped her eyes and said, “D.J., why don’t
But D.J. just kept on smiling.

“Aw, come on, D.J.,” said Deedee. “Tell us.”

D.J. didn’t say a word. He couldn’t. His mouth was stretched out of shape.

“Let us guess,” said Ron. “If we guess right, will you tell us?”

D.J. nodded his head. His smile began to hurt his ears.

Everyone took one guess.

“Have you been swimming?”

“Is it your birthday?”

“Are you in love?”

“Did you get a green ball?”

Nobody guessed right.

At recess D.J. was still smiling.

Louis, the yard teacher, called, “Hey, D.J. Come here.”

They walked to the far corner of the playground, where they were alone.

“What’s up, D.J.?” Louis asked.

D.J. just smiled.

“Come on, D.J. You can tell me. Why are you so happy?”

D.J. looked up at him. He said, “You need a reason to be sad. You don’t need a reason to be happy.”
Chapter 17

John

John had light brown hair and a round head. He was Joe’s best friend. John was one of the smartest boys in Mrs. Jewls’s class. But he had one problem. He could only read words written upside down.

Nobody ever wrote anything upside down.

But it was only a little problem. John was still in the high reading group. He just turned his book upside down.

It was easier for John to turn his book upside down than to learn to read correctly. But the easiest way isn’t always the best way.

Mrs. Jewls said, “John, you can’t go on reading like this. You can’t spend the rest of your life turning your books upside down.”

“Why not?” asked John.

“Because I said so,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Besides, what happens when I write something on the blackboard? You can’t turn the blackboard upside down.”

“No, I guess you’re right,” said John.

“I know I’m right,” said Mrs. Jewls. “You are going to have to learn to stand on your head.”

John couldn’t stand on his head. He had given up trying. You would have, too, if you had fallen over as many times as he had.

Joe was John’s best friend. He could stand on John’s head. Every time John fell over, Joe stood on his head. After all, what are best friends for?

“My head is too round, Mrs. Jewls. I can’t stand on it,” said John.

“Of course you can, John,” said Mrs. Jewls. “If Joe can stand on your head, so can you.”

“It’s easy, John,” said Joe.

“I can’t,” John repeated. “I always fall over.”

“Nonsense,” said Mrs. Jewls. “All you have to do is find your center of balance. Now, up you go.”

John put his round head on the floor and swung his legs up. He fell right over. Then Joe
stood on John’s head.

“See, John, it’s easy. Nothing to it,” Joe said.

“We’ll help you, John,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Joe, get off John’s head and get me the pillow from under my desk. Nancy, Calvin, come here and give us a hand.”

Mrs. Jewls took the pillow from Joe and set it on the floor. “All right, John, we’ll surround you,” she said. “We won’t let you fall.”

John put his head on the pillow and swung his legs up. He started to fall one way, but Nancy pushed him back up. Then he started to fall another way, but Calvin straightened him out. John kept falling a little bit this way and that way until at last he found his center of balance.

“Hey, look at me. Look at me,” said John. “I’m up. I’m really up. I’m standing on my head. I found my center of balance. It’s beautiful. I can read the blackboard! Hey, Calvin, bring me a book, and you don’t have to turn it upside down. Ha Ha. Hey, who, aaaaaahhhhh….”

BAMM!! While Calvin went to get the book, John fell flat on his face.

“You better stay off my head, Joe,” he warned.

“Are you all right, John?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“Yes, I think so. I feel a little funny. Hey! I can still read the blackboard, and I’m not upside down. I can read right side up now. When I fell, I must have flipped my brain or something.”

“That is wonderful, John,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Here, put the pillow back under my desk. As a reward you may have a Tootsie Roll pop. They are in the coffee can on top of my desk.”

John placed the pillow on top of her desk. Then he looked under the desk, but he couldn’t find the Tootsie Roll pops anywhere.
Leslie had five fingers on each hand and five toes on each foot. For each hand she had an arm, and for each foot she had a leg. She was a very lucky girl. And she had two lovely, long brown pigtails that reached all the way down to her waist.

When Mrs. Jewls asked a question, Leslie could raise one of her hands. When Leslie was adding, she could count on her fingers. When Paul pulled one of her pigtails, she could kick him with one foot while standing on the other.

But Leslie had one problem. She didn’t know what to do with her toes. She had ten adorable little toes and nothing to do with them. As far as she could tell, they served no useful purpose.

“So suck your toes. That’s what I do,” said Sharie.

But Leslie’s foot wouldn’t reach her mouth.

“Well, that’s all toes are good for,” said Sharie. She put her foot in her mouth and went to sleep.

“No,” thought Leslie. “They must be good for something. They just have to be.”

During recess, she asked Dana. “Dana, what do you do with your toes?”

“I scratch the back of my legs,” said Dana. “First I scratch my left leg with my right foot. Then I scratch my right leg with my left foot.”

“But my legs don’t itch,” said Leslie.

“That’s good,” said Dana. “In that case you can scratch my legs. With your help I can scratch both legs at the same time.”

“No, never mind,” said Leslie. She walked up behind Louis, the yard teacher, and hopped on his shoulders.

“Louis,” said Leslie. “I don’t know what to do with my toes.”

Louis tugged her foot. “Yes, that is a serious problem,” he said, “but I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll take them off your hands for you, or rather, your feet. Just cut them off and give them to me.”

“What?” asked Leslie.

“You don’t want them, so I’ll take them,” said Louis. “You won’t have to worry about
them ever again.”

“No,” said Leslie.

“I’ll give them to Miss Mush,” said Louis. “She can make little hot dogs out of them.”

Miss Mush was the lunch teacher.

“No, I’m not going to give my toes away,” said Leslie.

“All right,” said Louis. “I’ll give you a nickel apiece for them.”

“No, you can’t have them,” said Leslie.

“Why not?” Louis asked. “They’re no good to you, anyhow. And think of all you can buy for fifty cents.”

The bell rang.

“I’ll think it over,” said Leslie. She ran back to class.

“Mrs. Jewls,” said Leslie, “I don’t see any reason for keeping my toes.”

“Oh, Leslie, I’m sure there are lots of good reasons,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“Well, I can’t think of any. My legs don’t itch, and I can’t get my foot in my mouth. Louis offered me a nickel apiece for them, and it seems to me like a good deal. But I wanted to check with you first.”

“I think Louis was pulling your leg,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“No,” said Leslie, “he was pulling my toes.”

“What would he want with your toes?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“I don’t know,” said Leslie, “but if he’s willing to give me five cents apiece for them, then I’m going to take him up on it. That’s fifty cents.”

At lunch, Leslie walked up to Louis. “Okay, Louis,” she said, “you can have my toes for a nickel apiece. That will be fifty cents.”

“Not so fast,” said Louis, “let me look at them first.”

Leslie took off her shoes.

“Yes, yes,” said Louis, “the big ones are good, and the ones next to them, but the most I’ll give you for the rest of your toes is three cents each.”

Leslie was furious. “Three cents each! You told me five at recess.”

“I’ll give you five cents for the big ones. But just look at that scrawny little runt of a toe on the end, there. You’re lucky to be getting even three cents for it. I think you’re getting a darn good deal.”

“I happen to like that toe,” said Leslie.

“Fine, then,” said Louis, “keep it. I’ll just take the two big toes, and we’ll call it square.”

He reached in his pocket and pulled out a dime.

“Nothing doing,” said Leslie. “These toes are sold as a set. It’s either all ten for fifty cents or no deal. What am I going to do with just eight toes?”

“Then forget it,” said Louis. “I’m not going to give you a nickel for those scrawny little end toes.”

“Fine,” said Leslie, “no deal. My toes will still be here if you change your mind.” She turned and walked toward the hopscotch area.

“Wait a second,” Louis called. “I’ll give you a dollar each for your pigtails.”

Leslie turned around and looked at him with fiery eyes. “Cut my hair!” she exclaimed. “Are you crazy?”
Chapter 19

Miss Zarves

There is no Miss Zarves. There is no nineteenth story. Sorry.
Kathy doesn’t like you. She doesn’t know you, but she still doesn’t like you. She thinks you are stupid! In fact, she thinks you are the stupidest person she doesn’t know. What do you think of that?

She also thinks you’re ugly! As a matter of fact, she thinks you are the ugliest person she doesn’t know. And she doesn’t know a lot of people.

She doesn’t like the people she knows, either. She hates everybody in Mrs. Jewls’s class. She did like one member of the class. She liked Sammy. She thought he was funny. Sammy was a dead rat.

But Kathy has good reasons for not liking any of the children she knows. She doesn’t like D.J. because he smiles too much, and she doesn’t like John because he can’t stand on his head.

Kathy once had a cat named Skunks. She liked Skunks. But she was afraid that Skunks would run away.

“You have nothing to worry about, Kathy,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Skunks won’t run away. Just be nice to him and feed him and pet him, and he won’t run away. He may go out and play, but he’ll always come back.”

“No, you’re wrong, Mrs. Jewls,” said Kathy. “What do you know! He’ll run away.”

So Kathy kept Skunks locked up in her closet at home. She never let him out and sometimes even forgot to feed him.

One day, while Kathy was looking for her other shoe, Skunks ran out of the closet and never came back.

“You said he would come back, Mrs. Jewls,” said Kathy. “He never came back. You were wrong. I was right.”

That was why Kathy didn’t like Mrs. Jewls.

“The next time I get a cat, I’ll kill him. Then he’ll never run away,” said Kathy.

Then there was the time that Dameon tried to teach Kathy how to play catch. Dameon said, “When I throw you the ball, Kathy, try to catch it.”

“I can’t catch it,” said Kathy. “I’ll just get hurt.”
“You won’t get hurt,” Dameon insisted. “Just watch the ball.”
He tossed it to her.
But Kathy knew she’d get hurt. So she closed her eyes. The ball hit her on the cheek. It hurt.

Kathy began to cry. “You were wrong,” she sobbed. “I was right!”
That was why Kathy didn’t like Dameon.
Allison believed that if you are nice to someone, then they’ll be nice to you. So one day she brought Kathy a cookie.
“I don’t want your ugly cookie,” said Kathy. “It probably tastes terrible!”
Allison said, “No, it is very good. I made it myself.”
Kathy said, “If you made it, then it must stink! You can’t cook. You’re too stupid!” She just put the cookie in her desk along with her pencils, crayons, and books.
Three weeks later, Kathy was hungry. “All right, Allison,” she said. “I’ll try your stupid cookie.” She took it out of her desk. It was covered with dust. She bit it. It was hard and tasted terrible.
“See,” said Kathy. “I was right!”
That was why Kathy didn’t like Allison.
Yes, Kathy had very good reasons for not liking anybody she knew.
But she also has a good reason for not liking you. And she doesn’t even know you. Her reason is this. She knows that if you ever met her, you wouldn’t like her. You don’t like Kathy, do you?
See, she was right!
It’s funny how a person can be right all the time and still be wrong.
Chapter 21

Ron

Ron had curly hair and little feet. “I want to play kickball,” he said.
“You can’t play,” said Terrence.
“Get out of here,” said Deedee.
“Scram,” said Jason.
“I want to play kickball,” said Ron.
“Well, you’re not playing,” said Terrence. “Beat it!”

Ron stomped across the playground to the hopscotch area. Jenny was playing hopscotch with Louis. Jenny was on nine. Louis was still on four, but it was his turn.
“I want to play kickball,” Ron said.
“So, go play kickball,” said Louis.
“Terrence won’t let me play,” said Ron.
Louis walked with Ron to the kickball field.
“Hey, what about our hopscotch game?” Jenny asked.
“You won,” said Louis.
“I just beat Louis in hopscotch!” Jenny announced. Leslie, Rondi, and Allison flocked around her.
“Hey, Louis,” Dameon shouted. “Do you want to play kickball?”
“All right,” said Louis. “Ron and I will both play.”
“No,” said Terrence. “Ron isn’t playing.”
“Anyone who wants to play can play,” said Louis.
“No, he can’t,” said Terrence. “It’s my ball.”
“It isn’t your ball,” said Louis.
“You gave it to me,” said Terrence.
“I gave it to you to share,” said Louis. “If you can’t share it, you can’t have it.”
“Oh, all right,” said Terrence. “But I get to pitch.”
“Ron and I will stand everybody!” Louis announced.
“All right!” said Jason. “We’ll kill them!”
“We’ll murder them!” said Deedee.
“We’ll smash them!” said Myron.
“We’ll see,” said Louis.
Ron pitched, and Louis played the other eight positions. Twenty minutes later, they finally got three outs. The score was twenty-one to nothing.
Ron was up first.
“Infield in!” shouted Dameon. Everybody stood within ten feet of home plate.
“All right, Ron,” Louis shouted, “kick it over their heads!”
Ron kicked the ball only three-and-a-half feet. Todd picked it up and threw him out.
Louis was up. Everybody ran back to the edge of the outfield. Still, Louis kicked the ball over their heads for a home run.
Everybody ran all the way back in again for Ron’s up. He kicked the ball only two feet. Deedee tagged him out.
Louis kicked another home run.
Ron then kicked the ball a foot and tripped over it on his way to first base. Three outs.
Ron and Louis held the other team to only five runs the next inning. That was because the bell rang. Lunch was finally over.
Louis and Ron lost twenty-six to two. Ron had had a wonderful time.
The next day Ron said, “I want to play kickball.”
“You can’t play,” said Terrence.
“Get out of here,” said Jason.
“Scram,” said Deedee.
“I want to play kickball,” Ron told Louis.
Louis walked with him to the kickball field. “Ron and I will stand all of you.”
Everybody liked the teams.
Ron pitched while Louis played the other eight positions. They lost fifty-seven to two.
After the game Louis took Ron aside. “Listen. Ron,” he said, “why do you always want to play kickball? You can’t kick. You can’t field. You can’t even run to first base. You just get smashed every game.”
“Hey, now wait a second,” said Ron. “Don’t go blaming it all on me. You’re half the team, too, you know.” And with that, he punched Louis in the stomach.
And he punched a heck of a lot harder than he kicked.
Chapter 22

The Three Erics

In Mrs. Jewls’s class there were three children named Eric: Eric Fry, Eric Bacon, and Eric Ovens. They were known throughout the school for being fat. Eric Fry sat at this end of the room. Eric Bacon sat in the middle of the room. And Eric Ovens sat at that end of the room. There was a joke around Wayside School that if all three Erics were ever at the same end of the room at the same time, the whole school would tip over.

Eric Bacon hated jokes like that. That’s not surprising. After all, he wasn’t even fat. In fact, he was the skinniest kid in Mrs. Jewls’s class. But nobody seemed to notice. The other two Erics were fat, and so everyone just thought that all Erics were fat.

“But I’m not fat!” Eric Bacon insisted.

“What’s your name?” asked Jason.

“Eric,” said Eric Bacon.

“Then you’re fat,” Jason concluded.

And pretty soon, skinny little Eric Bacon, the skinniest kid in Mrs. Jewls’s class, had the nickname “Fatso.”

Eric Fry really was fat. He was also the best athlete in Mrs. Jewls’s class. His body was solid muscle. However, nobody ever noticed.

The other two Erics weren’t very good at sports. Eric Ovens was clumsy. Eric (“Fatso”) Bacon was a good athlete for his size, but because he was so skinny he didn’t have much power.

So, naturally, everybody just assumed that Eric Fry was also clumsy and weak. After all, his name was Eric.

Whenever the other kids chose up teams, Eric Fry was the last one picked. They never noticed his home runs or the fabulous catches he made. Like all great athletes, he made the impossible look easy. Of course, the other kids did notice the one time that he dropped the ball.

Eric Fry was playing right field. Terrence belted a deep fly to left. Eric Fry raced all the way across the field after the ball and at the last second dived at it. He caught it in midair on
his fingertips, but as he hit the ground the ball squirted loose.

“Well, what do you expect from ‘Butterfingers,’” said Stephen.
And since that time Eric Fry has had the nickname “Butterfingers.”

Eric Ovens was the nicest person in Mrs. Jewls’s class. He treated everyone equally and always had a kind word to say. But because his name was Eric, everyone thought he was mean.

“Fatso” was mean because everyone called him “Fat-so.”
“Butterfingers” was mean because he always had to play right field.
So, naturally, everyone just assumed that Eric Ovens was also mean. They called him “Crabapple.”
“Good morning, Allison,” said Eric Ovens. “How are you?”
“Lay off, ‘Crabapple’! Will ya?” answered Allison. “If you don’t have something nice to say, don’t say anything at all.”

All three of the Erics had nicknames. It was better that way. Otherwise when someone said, “Hey, Eric,” no one knew to whom he was talking. One time all the Erics would answer, and the next time none of them would answer. But when someone said, “Hey, ‘Crabapple,’ ” then Eric Ovens knew they were talking to him. And if someone said, “Hey, ‘Butterfingers,’ ” Eric Fry knew they meant him. And when someone said, “Hey, ‘Fat-so,’ ” Eric Bacon knew that he was being called.
Chapter 23

Allison

Allison had pretty blonde hair and always wore a sky-blue windbreaker. Her windbreaker was the same color as her eyes. She was best friends with Rondi. Rondi had blonde hair, too, but she was missing her two front teeth. Allison had all of her teeth.

Allison used to say that she knocked Rondi’s teeth out. Allison was very pretty, so all the boys in Mrs. Jewls’s class teased her, especially Jason. But Allison said, “Leave me alone or I’ll knock your teeth out—like I did Rondi’s.” The boys didn’t bother her after that.

One day Allison brought a tangerine for lunch. She took the peel off in one piece.

Miss Mush, the lunch teacher, walked up to her. “Allison, may I have your tangerine?” she asked.

Miss Mush always gave food to the children. So Allison was happy to give her tangerine to Miss Mush.

Miss Mush shoved it in her mouth and swallowed it in less than four seconds.

Allison left the lunchroom and walked down to the library. The lunchroom was on the fifteenth story. The library was on the seventh. Allison already had her book. She just went to the library because it was nice and quiet there.

The librarian walked up to Allison. “What are you reading?” she asked.

Allison told her the name of the book.

“That sounds like a good book,” said the librarian. “I never read that one. May I borrow it?”

The librarian always lent books to the children. Allison was glad to be able to return the favor. She gave the librarian the book, then walked down the stairs, outside to the playground.

All of Allison’s friends were playing freeze tag. Allison didn’t feel like playing. She reached into the pocket of her sky-blue windbreaker and took out a tennis ball. She bounced it a couple of times on the ground.

Louis came up to her. “Hi, Allison,” he said. “May I play with your tennis ball?”

Louis always gave balls to the children. Allison happily gave her ball to Louis.

Louis threw the ball all the way to the other side of the playground. Then he went chasing
after it.
Allison didn’t feel like doing anything. Jason ran up and tagged her.
“You’re frozen,” he said.
“Get out of here before I knock your teeth out,” said Allison.
Jason shrugged his shoulders and left.
Allison went back inside and up the thirty flights of stairs to Mrs. Jewls’s room. The lunch period wasn’t over yet, but Allison didn’t feel like doing anything else. She had given her food to the lunch teacher, her book to the librarian, and her ball to the yard teacher. She went inside her classroom.
Mrs. Jewls was there. “Oh, Allison, I’m glad you’re here,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I’m having trouble with an arithmetic problem. Maybe you can help.”
“Sure,” said Allison. Mrs. Jewls always helped the children with their problems. Allison was happy to help.
“How do you spell chair?” asked Mrs. Jewls.
“Yes, that’s right,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I knew it wasn’t C-H-A-R-E, but I couldn’t remember what it was.”
“That’s not an arithmetic problem,” said Allison. “That’s spelling.”
“Yes, you are right again,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I always get the two mixed up.”
The bell rang. The lunch period was over. Allison could hear the other children running up the stairs.
“Allison,” said Mrs. Jewls. “You learned a very important secret today, and I don’t want you to tell any of the other children, not even Rondi.”
“What was that?” asked Allison. She didn’t even know she had learned a secret. She loved secrets.
“You learned that children are really smarter than their teachers,” said Mrs. Jewls.
“Oh, that’s no secret,” said Allison. “Everybody knows that.”
Chapter 24

Dameon

Dameon had hazel eyes with a little black dot in the middle of each of them. The dots were called pupils. So was Dameon. He was a pupil in Mrs. Jewls’s class.

Mrs. Jewls was about to show the class a movie. She turned out the lights. When it was dark, Dameon’s pupils got bigger.

“Dameon,” said Mrs. Jewls, “run downstairs and ask Louis if he’d like to see the movie with us.”

Dameon ran down the thirty flights of stairs to the playground. He stepped outside as Louis was hooking up a tetherball.

“Hey, Louis,” Dameon called. “Do you want to see a movie in Mrs. Jewls’s class?”

Louis rubbed his chin. “What movie?” he asked.

Dameon shrugged his shoulders. “I don’t know,” he said. “I’ll be right back.”

Dameon ran all the way back up the stairs to the thirtieth story.

“Louis wants to know, what movie?” said Dameon.

“Does he want to know the name of the movie or what the movie is about?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“I don’t know, said Dameon. “I’ll ask him.”

Dameon raced back down the stairs and out to the playground.

“Louis, do you want to know the name of the movie or what the movie is about?” he asked.

“The name,” said Louis.

“Okay,” said Dameon.

Dameon hurried back up the thirty flights of stairs. He took the steps two at a time.

“He wants to know the name,” said Dameon.

“Turtles,” said Mrs. Jewls.

Dameon turned around, took a deep breath, then ran back down the stairs.


“Hey, that might be good,” said Louis. “What’s it about?”

“I’m not sure,” said Dameon. “I’ll find out.”

Dameon raced back up the stairs. But first he stopped to take a drink of water.
“What’s it about, Mrs. Jewls?” asked Dameon.
“Turtles,” said Mrs. Jewls.
Dameon rushed back down the stairs to tell Louis.
“Turtles,” said Dameon.
“No, thanks,” said Louis. “I don’t like turtles. They are too slow.”
Dameon lowered his head and slowly walked up the thirty flights of stairs. His legs were sore, he could hardly breathe, and his side ached.
By the time he got to Mrs. Jewls’s class, the movie was over.
“All right, class,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I want everybody to take out a piece of paper and a pencil and write something about turtles.”
Dameon had missed the movie, but he still could have written something about turtles: “Turtles are too slow.” But now he couldn’t find his pencil. It just wasn’t his day.
“What’s the matter, Dameon?” asked Mrs. Jewls.
“I can’t find my pencil,” said Dameon.

“Class, Dameon’s pencil is missing,” Mrs. Jewls announced. “What did it look like, Dameon?” she asked.
“It was long and yellow,” said Dameon. “It had a black point at one end and a red eraser at the other.”
“I found it,” said Todd, “here, by the blackboard.”
“Yes, that’s it,” said Dameon.
“No, there it is, in the corner by the waste basket,” said “Crabapple.”
“Hmmmm, maybe that’s it,” said Dameon.
“Here it is,” said John. “It’s been in my desk the whole time.”
“No, here it is in my hand,” said Joe.
“I found it,” said Rondi.

“Here it is,” said Allison.
“I have it,” laughed D.J.
“I found it,” said Myron.
“Which one is yours, Dameon?” asked Mrs. Jewls.
Dameon studied each pencil. “They all look like mine,” he said. Fortunately, at that moment, Louis walked into the classroom. He handed Dameon a pencil. “You dropped this when you were telling me about the movie,” said Louis. “Thanks,” said Dameon. “Okay, class,” said Mrs. Jewls. “So that we have no more mix-ups, I want everybody to write his name on his pencil.”

Dameon spent the rest of the day trying to write his name on his pencil. Dameon’s pencil couldn’t write on itself. It was just like his beautiful hazel eyes with the black dots in the middle. They could see everything except themselves.
Jenny came to school on the back of her father’s motorcycle. She was late. Wayside School began at nine o’clock. It was almost nine-thirty. She kissed her father good-bye and raced up the thirty flights of stairs to Mrs. Jewls’s room.

“I’m sorry I’m late, Mrs. Jewls, but my father’s motorcycle lost a…” There was nobody there. The room was empty.

“Hello, hello,” she cried. “Mrs. Jewls, Dana, Todd, anyone?”
There was no one in the room.

“Maybe I’m early,” Jenny thought. She looked up at the clock. It was exactly nine-thirty.

“Oh, I hope they didn’t go on a field trip without me.” She looked out the window. Nobody was there, not even Louis.

Jenny didn’t know what to do. She sat down at her desk. She watched the second hand go around on the clock. “I might as well catch up on my spelling,” she thought. She opened her desk and took out her speller.

M-U-D spells mud.

“Where is everybody?”
B-L-O-O-D spells blood.

“I hope nothing happened to them.”
B-L-A-C-K spells black.

Jenny heard footsteps coming down the hall. She began to work very fast.


He was a man Jenny had never seen before. He had a black mustache and a matching attaché case.

Jenny jumped out of her seat.

“Get back in your seat,” the man said.

Jenny slowly sat down.

The man walked over and sat down in Dana’s seat, facing Jenny. He opened his attaché case and removed some papers.
“What is your name?” he asked her.
“Jenny,” Jenny whispered.
“Jenny?” the man repeated as if he didn’t believe her.
“Well, it is actually Jennifer, Jenny for short,” said Jenny.
“I see,” said the man. He took the speller from Jenny’s desk. Jenny’s name was written across the top. He put the speller in his attaché case.
“What are you doing here, Jennifer?” he asked.
“This is my classroom,” said Jenny.
“Are you sure?” the man asked.
“Yes, I think so. I mean—”
“Where is the rest of your class?” the man asked.
“I don’t know,” said Jenny, “maybe they went on a field trip.”
“No,” said the man. “They didn’t go on a field trip.”
“Well, I don’t know where they are!” Jenny cried. “I was half an hour late today, and when I got here everybody was gone. Really! Did something happen to them?”
The man didn’t answer her. He wrote something on a piece of paper. “Tell me something, Jennifer. When you came to school today and saw that nobody was here, weren’t you somewhat puzzled?”
“Yes. Yes,” said Jenny. “What happened to them?”
“If you are really so concerned and so puzzled,” said the man, “why did you work on spelling?”
“I don’t know,” said Jenny.
“It would seem to me,” the man said, “that if a child came to school and nobody was there, she might play games, or walk around, or go home, but certainly not work on spelling.”
Jenny started to cry. “I didn’t know what to do. I was late and had to ride on a motorcycle and nobody was here and now you are asking me all kinds of questions and I’m afraid of what has happened to Dana and Mrs. Jewls and Rondi and Allison.”
The man didn’t understand a word she said.
Jenny heard more footsteps. The man got up and opened the door. Two more men came in. One had a black mustache like the first man. The other man was bald.
Jenny was frightened by them.
“Does she know?” asked the newcomer with the mustache.
“She claims she knows nothing,” the first man answered. “She says she was late today, and when she got here everybody was gone.”
“Do you believe her?” asked the man with the bald head.
“I’m not sure. She was working on her speller when I walked in.” He reached into his attaché case and took out Jenny’s speller. He handed it to the man with the bald head.
The bald man read Jenny’s name across the top of it. “Tell me, Jenny,” he said, “why are you the only one here?”
“I don’t know,” said Jenny.
“Has this ever happened before?” he asked.
“No, never,” said Jenny.
He gave Jenny her speller. “Put this inside your desk.”
Jenny put it away.
“I’m satisfied,” said the man with the bald head.
“Okay, Jennifer,” said the first man, “you may go now.”
Jenny got out of her seat.
“Jenny,” the bald man called.
Jenny turned slowly around. “Yes?” she whispered.
“Next time, don’t come to school on a Saturday.”
Chapter 26

Terrence

Terrence was a good athlete but a bad sport.

Rondi and Allison were playing two-square with a red ball.
“Can I play?” asked Terrence.
“No,” Allison replied.
“You have to let me play,” Terrence said. “Louis says we have to share the balls.”
“Well, we’re not sharing with you,” said Allison.
“Oh, let him play,” said Rondi.
“All right,” said Allison. “We’ll play three-square. You better play right.”
“I will,” said Terrence.

Allison bounced the ball to Rondi. Rondi bounced it over to Terrence. Terrence caught it and kicked it over the fence.
“You have to go get it,” said Allison.
“Shut up, Dixie cup,” Terrence answered.

Rondi ran and told Louis.

D.J. and Dameon were playing basketball. “Uh-oh, here comes Terrence,” said Dameon.
“Hey, let me play,” said Terrence.
“Get lost, Terrence,” said Dameon.
“You have to share the balls. Louis says so,” said Terrence.
“Okay, but just throw it in the basket. Don’t kick it,” said Dameon.
“I won’t,” said Terrence.
First Dameon took a shot. It bounced off the backboard and through the hoop.
Next D.J. took a shot. He threw it underhand, way up in the air. It came down through the hoop without touching the rim.
Then Terrence took a shot. He kicked it over the fence.
“You idiot,” said Dameon.
“Take a train, peanut brain,” Terrence answered.
D.J. went and told Louis.

Stephen, Calvin, Joe, John, and Leslie were playing spud. Stephen was IT. Everyone else
had a number. Stephen had to throw the ball up in the air and call out a number. The person who had that number had to try to catch it.

“Can I play?” asked Terrence.
“No,” said Calvin. “You’ll just kick the ball over the fence.”
“No,” said Joe.
“No way,” said John.
“No,” said Leslie.
“Sure,” said Stephen. “Newcomers are IT.” He gave the ball to Terrence. “Just throw the ball up in the air and call out a number between one and five.”

“Okay,” said Terrence.
The children formed a circle around Terrence.
“A million,” yelled Terrence as he kicked the ball over the fence.
“What did you do that for?” asked Stephen.
“Eat a frog, warthog,” said Terrence.

Stephen ran and told Louis.
Terrence looked around. There was nothing to do. There were no balls left.
Louis walked up to him. He was followed by Allison, Rondi, Dameon, D.J., Stephen, Calvin, Joe, John, and Leslie.

“What’s the matter, Terrence?” asked Louis.
“There are no balls,” said Terrence. “Do you have a green ball?”
“No,” said Louis. “All of my balls have mysteriously disappeared.”
“Darn it,” said Terrence. “There is nothing left to kick.”
“Nothing left to kick?” asked Louis. “Oh, I don’t know about that. What do you think, Rondi? Is there anything left to kick?”

Rondi thought a minute. Then she smiled. She was missing her two front teeth. “Yes, there is something left to kick,” she said.
“Well where is it?” asked Terrence.
“Let me check with Allison,” said Louis. “Allison, is there anything left to kick?” He winked at her.
“There sure is,” said Allison.
“What, what?” asked Terrence.
“How about you, Dameon?” asked Louis. “Can you think of anything?”
Dameon nodded his head yes.
“Well, what is it?” asked Terrence. He couldn’t wait.
“D.J., we got anything around here to kick?” asked Louis.
D.J. smiled. “Yes, we do,” he said.
“Give it to me. Give it to me,” Terrence demanded.
“I don’t know if I should,” said Louis. “What do you think, Calvin? Should I give it to him?”
“I think you should,” said Calvin.
“You heard Calvin,” said Terrence. “Give it to me.”
“Not so fast,” said Louis. “Leslie, should I give it to him?”
“Oh, yes, I think he deserves it,” said Leslie.
“Give it to me. Give it to me,” Terrence repeated.
“Do you also think he deserves it, Joe?” asked Louis.
“Yes, I think so,” said Joe.
“What about you, John?” asked Louis.
“Definitely give it to him,” John answered.
“Come on. Come on,” said Terrence. “Recess is almost over.”
“We’ll leave it up to Stephen,” said Louis. “Whatever he says goes.”
“Let him have it,” said Stephen.
“You heard him, Louis,” said Terrence. “Let me have it.”
“Okay,” said Louis.
He picked Terrence up and kicked him over the fence.
Joy had forgotten her lunch at home. It was lunchtime. She was hungry.

She didn’t have a meal ticket. If she had had a meal ticket, she could have had a lunch from Miss Mush, the lunch teacher. She’d have to be terribly hungry to eat a lunch made by Miss Mush. Even an empty brown paper sack would taste better. But that’s how hungry Joy was.

Dameon hadn’t forgotten his lunch. He had brought a lovely turkey sandwich, a big piece of chocolate cake, and a crisp, red apple. All he needed was a glass of milk. He could get that from Miss Mush. Miss Mush didn’t know how to ruin milk.

Dameon left his lunch on his desk and went to the end of the milk line.

Joy didn’t waste any time. She reached into Dameon’s sack and took out the apple. But then she spotted the turkey sandwich. She put back the apple, took the sandwich, and noticed the chocolate cake. She put back the sandwich and took out the cake.

But then Joy had second thoughts. She put back the cake. Then she grabbed Dameon’s whole lunch.

First she ate the sandwich. It was in a Baggie. When she finished the sandwich, she placed the Baggie on Jason’s desk.

Next she ate the chocolate cake. It was wrapped in wax paper. She put the wax paper on Allison’s desk.

She ate the apple last. She placed the apple core on Deedee’s desk.

Then she put the empty sack on Calvin’s desk.

Dameon returned with his glass of milk. “Mrs. Jewls, my lunch is gone!” he called.

“I wonder where it could be,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“Calvin took it,” said Joy. “There’s the empty sack on his desk.”

“Good work, Joy,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Calvin, I’m ashamed of you.” She wrote Calvin’s name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.

“Look, the Baggie from Dameon’s turkey sandwich is on Jason’s desk!” Joy called.

“Very good, Joy,” said Mrs. Jewls. “But how did you know that Dameon had a turkey sandwich?”

“I’m just smart,” said Joy.
Mrs. Jewls wrote Jason’s name on the blackboard under Calvin’s.

“And there’s the wax paper from the delicious chocolate cake on Allison’s desk,” Joy announced. Joy had chocolate all around her lips.

Allison stood firm. She looked into Mrs. Jewls’s eyes. “I didn’t eat his cake,” she said. “The evidence is there on your desk,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Joy spotted it.” She wrote Allison’s name under Jason’s.

“Dameon’s apple core is on Deedee’s desk,” said Joy.

“Very good, Joy,” said Mrs. Jewls. She wrote Deedee’s name under Allison’s.

“Dameon, I think you ought to thank Joy,” said Mrs. Jewls. “She solved the mystery.”

“Thank you, Joy,” said Dameon.

Just then, Louis, the yard teacher, walked in. “I have your lunch, Joy,” he said. “Your mother brought it. You left it at home.”

“You mean you didn’t have a lunch?” asked Mrs. Jewls. “You must be very hungry.”

“No,” said Joy, “not really. Since Dameon didn’t get to eat, he can have it.”

“Thanks a lot!” said Dameon. “You are the greatest!”

He ate Joy’s lunch, an old bologna sandwich and a dried-up carrot.

“Joy, for being such a good detective, and for being so generous with your lunch, you may help yourself to a Tootsie Roll pop,” said Mrs. Jewls. “They are in the coffee can on top of my desk.”

Joy took one. Then, when Mrs. Jewls wasn’t looking, she took another.

Calvin, Jason, Allison, and Deedee had their names on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE. But they were good the rest of the day, so at two o’clock Mrs. Jewls erased them.

They forgot all about the whole thing.

Dameon had a lousy lunch instead of a great lunch. But five minutes later it didn’t make any difference. He couldn’t taste it anymore, and he was full. He went outside to play basketball and forgot about the whole thing.

Joy had a great lunch and two Tootsie Roll pops. But five minutes later it didn’t make any difference. She couldn’t taste it anymore, and she was full. And at dinnertime she was hungry, just the same.

But a horrible thing happened. Joy couldn’t forget about filching Dameon’s lunch. And for the rest of the year, every turkey sandwich, piece of chocolate cake, apple, and Tootsie Roll pop tasted like Miss Mush’s porridge.
Nancy had big hands and big feet. He didn’t like his name. He thought it was a girl’s name.

None of the other children in Mrs. Jewls’s class thought that Nancy’s name was odd. They didn’t think of it as a girl’s name or as a boy’s name. Nancy was just the name of the quiet kid with the big hands and feet who sat over there in the corner next to John.

Nancy was very quiet and shy. He was ashamed of his name. He had only one friend, a girl who went to class on the twenty-third story of Wayside School.

They were friends for a good reason. He didn’t know her name, and she didn’t know his. They just called each other “Hey, you,” or just plain “You.”

Nancy was afraid to ask his friend what her name was because then he might have to tell her his name. He never could figure out why she never asked. But he was happy just to leave well enough alone.

One morning, Nancy and his friend were late. When they got to the twenty-third story, his friend’s teacher was waiting outside.

“Hurry up. You’re late, Mac,” said the teacher.

Nancy’s friend turned red. She didn’t move.

“Come on, Mac, shake a leg. Get the lead out,” said the teacher.

“Your name is Mac!” said Nancy.

Mac was very pretty. She had red hair and freckles. She covered her face and ran into the room.

“My name is Nancy!” Nancy called after her.

Mac stepped back outside. “I was ashamed to tell you my name,” she said.

“Me, too,” said Nancy. “Nancy’s a girl’s name.”

“Oh, I think it’s cute,” said Mac.

“I like the name Mac,” said Nancy.

“Mac is a boy’s name,” said Mac.

“My mother has a rich aunt named Nancy,” said Nancy. “That’s why she gave me the name.”

“My mother once had a dog named Mac,” said Mac.
“Hey, do you want to trade?” Nancy asked.
“Can we?” asked Mac.
“I don’t see why not,” said Nancy.
“Okay,” said Mac.
They both spun around one hundred times in opposite directions until they were so dizzy that they fell over. When they stood up, Mac was Nancy and Nancy was Mac.
They said good-bye. Then Mac raced up to Mrs. Jewls’s room. He was no longer shy.
“Hi, everybody. My name’s Mac,” he announced. “I traded names.” He held out his big hand.

Todd jumped up and shook it. “Hi, Mac,” he said. “Glad to meet you.”
“How you doin’, Mac,” said Ron.
“Howdy, Mac,” said Terrence.
“Nice to see you, Mac,” said Bebe.
“You traded names?” asked Jason. Jason didn’t like his name, either.
“That’s right, Jason, old boy,” said Mac.
“Is that allowed?” asked Jason.
“Why not!” said Mac.
“Hey, anybody want to trade?” Jason called.
“I’ll trade with you,” said Terrence. He didn’t like his name, either.
“Wait. I’ll trade with you, Terrence,” said Maurecia. Maurecia didn’t like her name.
“No. He’s trading with me,” said Jason.
“I’ll trade with you, Maurecia,” said Dameon.
“No, thanks,” said Maurecia.
“I’ll trade with you, Dameon,” said Mrs. Jewls.
“No, I want to be Mrs. Jewls,” said Stephen.
It turned out that nobody in Mrs. Jewls’s class liked his name. The children all spun around in different directions until they got so dizzy that they fell over. And when they stood up again, nobody knew who anybody was.
“What are we going to do, Mrs. Jewls?” asked Leslie, who was really Eric Bacon.
“My name is not Mrs. Jewls. It’s Maurecia,” answered Terrence, who was really Jason.
“It is not. I’m Maurecia,” said Deedee, who was really Joe.
“You’re both wrong,” said Maurecia. “I’m Mrs. Jewls.”
This went on for an hour. At last they figured out who the real Rondi was. She was missing
her two front teeth. After they figured out Rondi, they were able to get Allison pretty easily. And then from there they got D.J., Dameon, and Mrs. Jewls. She was the oldest one.

Eventually they figured out who everybody really was. They had some difficulty deciding which Eric was which, and actually they are still not absolutely sure.

Everybody just decided to keep his own name. The children didn’t like them, but it made things much easier.

Mac and Nancy kept their new names. But when they were together they still called each other “Hey, you,” or just plain “You.”
Stephen had green hair. He had purple ears and a blue face. He wore his sister’s pink dancing shoes and green leotards. The leotards matched his hair. He was all dressed up as a goblin for Mrs. Jewls’s Halloween party.

But unfortunately it wasn’t Halloween.

“Ha, ha, ha, you sure look stupid,” said Jason. Jason was Stephen’s best friend.

“So do you,” said Stephen.

“Boy, are you dumb,” said Jenny. “Halloween is on Sunday. Today is only Friday.”

“You’re the one who’s dumb,” said Stephen. “Ha, ha, you’d probably come to school on Sunday. Mrs. Jewls said we’d have the party today.”

But none of the other children wore costumes, only Stephen.

“All right, class,” said Mrs. Jewls. “It is time for our Halloween party.”

“See,” said Stephen.

Mrs. Jewls gave each child a cookie that looked like an orange witch with a black hat. She laughed when she saw Stephen and forgot to give him one. Stephen didn’t ask for it. He was afraid that she’d laugh again.

The children finished their cookies in less than thirty seconds.

“All right, class,” said Mrs. Jewls. “The party is over. We have a lot of work to do.”

Stephen felt like a fool. The party lasted less than a minute. And he had to spend the rest of the day wearing his stupid goblin suit.

“Look, Stephen’s wearing his sister’s leotards,” laughed Dana.

“They’re green, just like his hair,” said “Fatso.”

Everybody laughed.

Mrs. Jewls began the arithmetic lesson. She wrote on the blackboard. “Two plus two equals five.”

“That’s wrong!” Joy shouted.

Mrs. Jewls tried again. “Two plus two equals three.”

That wasn’t right, either. She added two and two again and got forty-three. It was useless. No matter how hard she tried, she could not get two plus two to equal four.
“I don’t understand it,” she said. “They’ve always equaled four before.”

Suddenly she screamed. The chalk turned into a squiggling worm! She dropped it on her foot.

Then all the lights went out, and the blackboard lit up like a movie screen.

A woman appeared on the screen. She had a long tongue and pointed ears. She stepped off the screen and into the classroom.

It was the ghost of Mrs. Gorf.

Mrs. Gorf ran her fingernails across the blackboard. “Trick or treat, you rotten kids,” she said. “Now I’ll get even with every last one of you. Where’s Todd?”

“Who is that?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“Mrs. Gorf,” said Dameon.

“Who’s Mrs. Gorf?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“She was the meanest teacher we ever had,” said Rondi.

“What happened to her?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“Louis ate her,” said Jason.

“Well, I’m not going to allow this,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Get out of my classroom!” she demanded.

“It’s Halloween, sweet teacher,” said Mrs. Gorf. “Ghosts can go anywhere they like. I’ve come for a little class reunion.”

“But it isn’t Halloween,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Halloween is still two days away.”

“I know,” said Mrs. Gorf, “but Halloween falls on a Sunday this year, so we are celebrating it on the Friday before.”

Stephen leaped up from his seat. “See, I was right,” he said. “Today is the day we celebrate it, the Friday before! Mrs. Gorf proved it.”

He ran up to Mrs. Gorf. “They all laughed at me and made me feel stupid because I was the only one who got dressed up. But they were the ones who were wrong. You and I are right.”

He put his arms around Mrs. Gorf and hugged her.

Mrs. Gorf gasped and disappeared.

The lights came back on.

Mrs. Jewls picked up the piece of chalk from the floor. She wrote on the blackboard, “Two plus two equals four.”

“That’s good,” she said. “When two plus two doesn’t equal four, anything can happen.”

All the children who had laughed at Stephen now called him a hero. But they told him to change out of his stupid costume.

So at lunch, Stephen went home, washed up, and changed. He came back wearing blue jeans and a polo shirt. Of course, his hair was still green. It always was.
Louis had a red face and a mustache of many colors. He was the yard teacher at Wayside School. It was his job to see that the children didn’t have too much fun during lunch and recess.

And if you haven’t already guessed, he is the one who wrote this book.

On June tenth there was a blizzard. Louis was afraid that the children would have too much fun, so nobody was allowed outside.

“Class,” said Mrs. Jewls, “After you finish your lunch today, come back up to the classroom. You are not allowed outside.”

The children all went to the lunchroom. Miss Mush had made Tuna Surprise. They looked at it, then hurried back up the stairs.

There was nothing to do.

“No, class,” said Mrs. Jewls, “I know that you are all bored, but I have a special surprise for you.”

“I hope it’s better than the Tuna Surprise,” said Maurecia.

Mrs. Jewls continued, “Louis is going to come up and entertain us. He will tell us a story. Now I want you all to be on your best behavior.”

When Louis walked in, all the children booed.

“Are you going to tell us a story?” asked Bebe.

“Yes,” said Louis.

“Well, it better be good,” Bebe warned.

“It better be better than the Tuna Surprise,” said “Butterfingers.”

“I thought the Tuna Surprise was good,” said Louis.

“You’d eat dirt if they put enough ketchup on it,” said Mac.

“Hey, everybody, be quiet,” said Todd. “Let him tell the story.”

“Not too loud, Louis,” said Sharie. “I’m trying to get some sleep.”

Louis sat in the middle of the room, and all the children gathered around.

Louis began his story. “This is a story about a school very much like this one. But before we get started, there is something you ought to know so that you don’t get confused. In this
school every classroom is on the same story.”

“Which one, the eighteenth?” asked Jenny.

“No, said Louis. “They are all on the ground. The school is only one story high.”

“Not much of a school,” laughed Dameon.

Louis continued. “Now you might think the children there are strange and silly. That is probably true. However, when I told them stories about you, they thought that you were strange and silly.”

“US?” the children answered. “How are we strange?”

“I’m normal,” said Stephen. “Aren’t I?”

“As normal as I am,” Joe assured him.

“The children at that school must be crazy,” said Leslie.

“Real lulus,” Maureicia agreed.

“Tell us about them, Louis,” Bebe demanded.

“For one thing,” Louis said, “none of these children has ever been turned into an apple.”

“That’s silly,” said Deedee. “Everybody’s been turned into an apple. It’s part of growing up.”

Louis continued. “Dead rats don’t walk into classrooms wearing raincoats.”

“What do they wear, tuxedos?” asked Todd.

“And girls never try to sell their toes,” Louis added.

“Well, no wonder,” said Leslie, “at today’s prices.”

Louis continued. “They don’t trade names or read upside down. They can’t turn mosquito bites into numbers. They don’t count the hairs on their heads. The walls don’t laugh, and two plus two always equals four.”

“How horrible,” said Dameon.

“That’s not the worst of it,” said Louis. “They have never tasted Maurecia-flavored ice cream.”

A hush fell over the classroom.

“Mrs. Jewls, I’m scared,” said Allison. “Is there really a school like that?”

“Of course not,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Louis was just telling a story.”

“It was a good story,” said Leslie.

“I thought it was stupid,” said Kathy.

“I liked it,” said Rondi. “It was funny.”

Mrs. Jewls said, “Louis, it was a very entertaining story. But we don’t really go in for fairy tales here. I’m trying to teach my class the truth.”

“That’s all right,” said Louis. “I have to go down to room twenty-nine now and tell them a story.” He started out the door.

“Class,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Let’s all thank Louis for his wonderful story.”

Everybody booed.
When Louis Sachar was going to school, his teachers always pronounced his name wrong. Now that he has become a popular author of children's books, teachers all over the country are pronouncing his name wrong. It should be pronounced “Sacker,” like someone who tackles quarterbacks or stuffs potatoes into sacks.

Mr. Sachar, who is a lawyer, now writes for children full time. He lives in Austin, Texas, with his wife and their daughter.
Next Time, I’ll Do Better

Take a few moments to clear your mind by maybe closing your eyes and taking several deep breaths. When you are ready, think about the following questions and answer them as honestly as possible.

1. Something I regret saying or doing:

2. Why I regret it:

3. What led up to this incident?

4. What I learned:

5. What I can do differently next time?
Create Your Own Affirmation

What are the things you really need to hear today? Imagine that you’re your own best friend, and create some power statements to help you feel like your best self. Try using them with the hand movements you learned in the “I AM SO STRONG” activity.

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