



**Special  
Olympics**  
South Carolina



Special Olympics  
**Unified Champion  
Schools**

# Unified Young Readers Club Guide

Exploring Social Emotional Learning  
Through Books and Inclusive Activities

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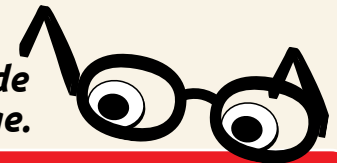
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**Look for the correlation code at the top of each book page.**



### Booklist correlation with CASEL language Key

- 1 Relationship Skills
- 2 Self-Awareness
- 3 Social Awareness
- 4 Self-Management
- 5 Responsible Decision Making

## Acknowledgments

This resource began as the brainchild of Barbara Oswald and Kara Harmon, Special Olympics South Carolina. They saw good children's literature as a way to reach into classrooms to create more socially inclusive environments for students with Intellectual Disabilities.

Building on what Barb and Kara started, Peg Hippen, Special Olympics South Carolina, was able to expand the resource to include classroom activities and even more books.

Jed Dearybury, educator and author, graciously agreed to add books and activities from his Playful Classroom point of view.

**Types of Play chart** developed by :  
Ackerman, D. (2000). *Deep Play*. New York, NY: Vintage Publishing

Hughes, B. (2002). *A Playworker's Taxonomy of Play Types*. 2nd ed. London: PlayLink

**Types of Play graphic** created by: Dr. Julia P. Jones

## Mission

*The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympic athletes, and the community.*

## Purpose

Unified Champion Schools go beyond Unified Sports to promote social inclusion and positive school climate through whole school engagement activities, and integrate personal and interpersonal leadership development for students with and without Intellectual Disabilities. This Unified Young Readers Club resource provides safe, structured ways students can explore differences and similarities, and work to become more understanding, inclusive, and caring friends.

## Social-Emotional Learning and the Unified Young Readers Club resource

Children love to listen to a good book. That is a fact. What cannot be overlooked is that books can be a powerful tool to use as we work to develop Social-Emotional Learning in our students. Books build bridges with language to connect young readers to the characters in stories, to themselves, and to others. Carefully constructed dialogue



allows children to gain insight into other's thoughts, feelings, and actions, as well as their own. The Unified Young Readers Club resource is a tool for teachers to use as they address Social-Emotional Learning topics such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making to audiences of both students with and without Intellectual Disabilities. **The objective for using this resource is quite simple: to help children and the adults who work with them authentically address tough issues that kids face in their everyday social world.**

The importance of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) cannot be overstated. These are the "soft skills" needed to navigate the social aspect of our schools, and the more children develop these skills, the more successful and connected they will be with their school environment. The Social-Emotional Learning skills most addressed in this resource are the ability to make friends, show empathy and acceptance of that which makes others unique, and recognizing bullying.

Research shows that Social-Emotional Learning is crucial in navigating the many challenges (social or otherwise) that occur during the school day, and that can inhibit our ability to learn.

**Relationship skills**, such as making friends, are usually viewed as a natural, simple process that takes place organically at home, at school and in the community. Children with disabilities do not always make friends as easily as their non-disabled peers. By utilizing books as an educational tool, students can learn how to make friends - how to socialize, how to converse and play together. Students with and without Intellectual Disabilities can be taught valuable skills and the language that will allow them to make and maintain friendships. They can practice within the safety of the classroom ways in which to communicate more effectively, recognize and translate social cues, and improve social relationships. This Unified Young Readers Club resource includes sample discussion questions and group activities that can be used to anchor lessons about making and keeping friends.

Through the imaginative process that reading involves, children have the opportunity to do what they often cannot do in real life – become thoroughly involved in the inner lives of others, better understand them, and eventually become more aware of themselves.

**Social awareness** is another “soft skill” that is being increasingly viewed as essential to Social-Emotional Learning. The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with those from different backgrounds allows us to relate to other people and their experiences, lets us understand them and makes us compassionate human beings. Studies show that the development of empathy can be enhanced in the classroom through shared books, as well as through direct instruction. Studies have also shown that children with higher degrees of empathy are more apt to stand up to a bully on behalf of someone outside their group of friends. This show of courage in children can be especially important to a child who is feeling isolated at school, or being bullied, but unable to stand up for themselves. This is a position in which children with Intellectual Disabilities often find themselves. This resource includes books that help children develop empathy and become beings with stronger personal connections and more meaningful, supportive relationships with others.

“When we open a book, and share our voice and imagination with a child, that child learns to see the world through someone else’s eyes.” Anne Dewdney



**Self-awareness** translates to acceptance and inclusion as topics in children’s literature and allow classrooms to explore individual differences in a secure, safe and structured setting. Literature is a major force in the lives of children, impacting and informing their view of the world. Young children start noticing and developing ideas about individual differences early in their school years. Children with Intellectual Disabilities are often the subject of those developing ideas, thereby making it imperative that teachers thoughtfully and carefully use books to teach specific lessons and send specific messages about the acceptance and inclusion of others. We need to make sure that all children are able to see themselves or a reflection of their personal reality in the books that are shared in the classroom. The Unified Young Readers Club resource has multiple examples of acceptance and inclusion, as well as activities geared toward building accepting, inclusive classroom communities.

“All children deserve to see mirrors of themselves, as well as windows of others in the books they read.” Marie A. Leahy, Bridget C. Foley

**Self-management and responsible decision-making** build on self-awareness, culminating in the ability to regulate one’s thoughts and emotions, and to make constructive positive choices about personal behavior and social interaction. These are the skills needed to recognize and address bullying behaviors. Bullying occurs when one individual causes another person to feel inferior, weak, or unimportant. Unfortunately, students with Intellectual Disabilities experience bullying at more than twice the rate of their non-disabled peers. We have the responsibility to create and maintain safe, healthy environments for all our students by building a sense of community within the classroom and the school at large. Using children’s literature to address bullying benefits students of all ages by presenting ways with which to cope with problems, help with the development of personal and social understanding, and increase empathy and respect for others. Books are a safe way for children to see how others respond in similar situations, to relate to characters on both sides of the issue, and to begin to see how one’s behavior affects others. Bullying leads to exclusion and is too often directed at persons with Intellectual Disabilities. Using books about bullying allows students to learn to recognize it, to practice ways to handle being bullied, and not fall into the role of passive bystander. This resource includes books that take on bullying at different levels, along with activities to use in the classroom.

Teaching SEL skills to students through literature is most effective with adult-guided activities that get kids to think, understand, and engage not only with the story, but with each other in constructive, prosocial ways.

# Using the Unified Young Readers Club Resource

The Unified Young Readers Club resource was developed so that teachers could have a tool that would support their creativity as they address important Social-Emotional Learning issues with their students. The discussion questions and activities are presented as examples, knowing that each classes' composition and disposition will determine what type of questions are asked and where the discussions will lead. The resource is appropriate for all types of instruction – from self-contained classrooms to inclusive groups of students both large and small, or as whole-school activities. The resource would also be appropriate for use at home or in the community. Public libraries have access to most of the books, and all are available for purchase through such vendors as Amazon, Scholastic or individual publishing companies.

## Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools and Social Emotional Learning

The **five social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies** identified by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) are<sup>1</sup>:

**1**

**Self-awareness**  
the ability to recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior

**2**

**Self-management**  
the ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively

**3**

**Social awareness**  
the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from different backgrounds

**4**

**Relationship skills**  
the ability to establish and maintain healthy relationships with diverse individuals

5

**Responsible decision-making**  
the ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions


<sup>1</sup> www.casel.org


<sup>2</sup> Center for Social Development and Education, Year 10 Evaluation Report 2017-2018

Ten years of evidence and evaluations<sup>2</sup> show that the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools® program promotes SEL outcomes through inclusive activities and interactions that offer opportunities for students with and without intellectual disabilities (ID) to work together in collaborative, goal-oriented environments.

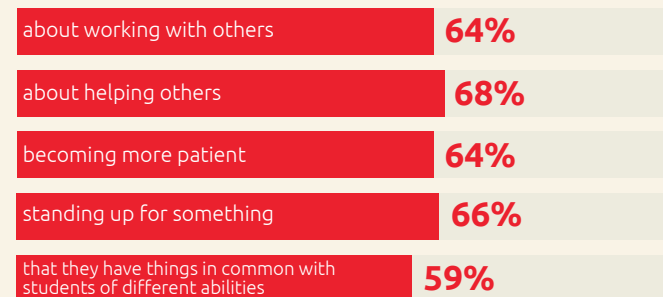
**Special Olympics Unified Sports® coaches report that students similarly practiced these in Special Olympics Unified Sports® activities:**



 Students who participate in the UCS program feel more supported by their teachers and peers, have higher levels of grit, receive better grades, and are more empathetic and compassionate

 Unified Club advisors report that students in the club have the **chance to practice relationship skills (89%) and social awareness (86%)**

**Participants in the UCS program report that they learned:**



Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools is generously supported by the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs at the U.S. Department of Education.



# South Carolina State Academic Standards

Each book listed in the Unified Young Readers Club resource relates to multiple state academic standards, and aligns with the precepts of positive school climate initiatives like PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies) and Leader in Me. Guidance counselors can use these resources as students work on ways to make and keep friends and identify feelings. Whether the books are used with self-contained classes or with inclusive groups, the resulting “Ah Ha!” moments will be just as satisfying.



A few examples of the many SC State Academic standards addressed:

## English Language Arts: Literary Text

K-2 band: 5.1 Ask and answers who, what, when, where, why and how questions to demonstrate understanding of a text; use key details to make inferences and draw conclusions in texts heard or read.

K-2 band: 13.3 Read and respond according to task and purpose to become self-directed, critical readers and thinkers.

3-5 band: 8.1 Use text evidence to: a) explain how conflicts cause the characters to change or revise plans while moving toward resolution, and b) explain the influence of cultural, historical, and social context on characters, setting, and plot development.

3-5 band: 11.2 Compare and contrast the reader’s point of view to that of the narrator or a character.

3-5 band: 13.3 Read and respond according to task and purpose to become self-directed, critical readers and thinkers.

6.1.1 Develop questions to broaden thinking on a specific idea that frames inquiry for new learning and deeper understanding.

7.2.1 Formulate logical questions based on evidence, generate explanations, propose and present original conclusions, and consider multiple perspectives.

8.1.1 Develop a range of questions to frame inquiry for new learning and deeper understanding.

6,7,8. 5.1 Acknowledge and value individual and collective thinking; use feedback from peers and adults to guide the inquiry process.

## Health Standards – (under key concept of Mental Health)

M-K.1.1 Define different feelings.

M-K.5.1 Demonstrate ability to cooperate with others.

M.1.1.2 Describe characteristics that are positive about yourself.

M-1.1.3 Identify ways that individuals are unique.

M-1.7.2 Discuss ways to become a good friend.

I-2.1.3 Define bullying and what it means to be a bystander.

M-2.1.2 Discuss ways to be a good friend.

M-2.1.3 Describe good character traits (e.g., respect for self, respect for others, etc.)

## Guidance Standards: SC Comprehensive Developmental Guidance and Counseling Program Model

Students will understand and appreciate self.

Students will recognize and identify their feelings.

Students will understand and respect others.

Students will identify the feelings of others.

Students will identify ways to make and keep friends.



25

## ***I Don't Want To Be A Frog,***

by Dev Petty

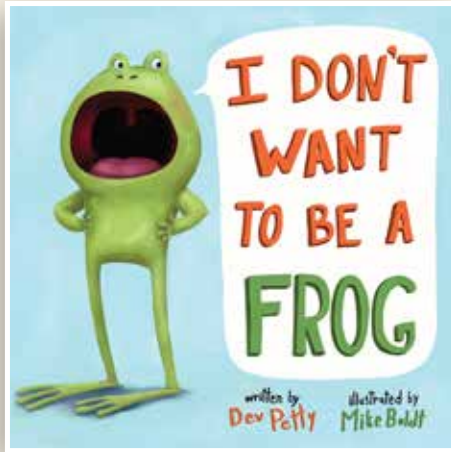
This is the story of a young frog with an identity crisis – he wants to be anything but a frog! It takes a meeting with a hungry wolf for the frog to decide that being himself isn't such a bad thing after all.

### **Discussion questions:**

1. Why didn't Frog want to be a frog?
2. What did Frog want to be? Why?
3. Why did Frog change his mind about being a frog?
4. How did Frog feel about himself at the end of the book?

### **Activities:**

1. Show the book trailer by going to Youtube and entering "I Don't Want to be a Frog book trailer".
2. Sing "The Little Green Frog" song – again on Youtube.
3. Pair children to draw pictures of each other. Write things you like about each other or about yourselves on your picture.
4. Make paper plate frog puppets. You can paint white paper plates, or make it simple by buying green ones. Fold the paper plate, add googly eyes and a red tongue, etc. Google directions for many versions of this idea.



1245

## ***Since We're Friends,***

by Celeste Shally

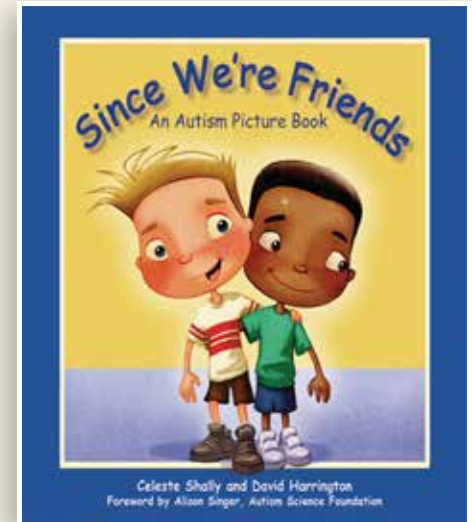
Since We're Friends is the story of two boys – one of whom is a student with autism. Their relationship and the authentic ways they make their friendship work will help children better understand differences in the way we react to situations.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What are some things the boys do to have fun together? Are those things you like to do?
2. How does Matt's friend help him when he gets upset?
3. How could you help a classmate who becomes upset about something at school?

### **Activity:**

1. Draw a picture of one way you could help Matt that is not mentioned in the book.
2. Make a list of other things you could do at recess.



2 4

## **The Dot,** by Peter H. Reynolds

**Lesson Focus:** Students will be able to work collaboratively to create a piece of artwork that symbolizes the power of community and working together. How one action leads to another that leads to another.

Link to Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKCsqbiCx8>



### **Playful/Artful Learning Experience**

1. After reading the book, ask students to work together to create a piece of collaborative art by starting with an individual dot.
2. Instruct them to "make a mark and see where it takes them." Using a marker, students will design their own dot, sign it, then pass it to a friend.
3. As students receive their friend's dots, ask them to add something to the dot. Anything at all. A squiggle, an extra line, whatever they want!
4. Repeat this process for at least 6-7 times to fill the page with additions.
5. As the dots are passed around art emerges, and stories are born.
6. After the final pass, have students return the art to the original dot creator.
7. Work in partners or groups to create playful stories about the work.
8. Trace the path of the dot as it left each student. Create an art museum of the magical dot creations.

**Key Message:** Don't be afraid to try. Make your mark. Together we create beauty.

### **Types of Play in this Experience**

Creative  
Locomotor  
Social

1 2 4

## **All My Stripes,** by Shaina Rudolph and Danielle Royer

In *All My Stripes*, Zane worries that his "autistic stripe" is all that anyone sees. His mother points out that he is much more than that in a way that young children will understand.

### **Discussion Questions:**

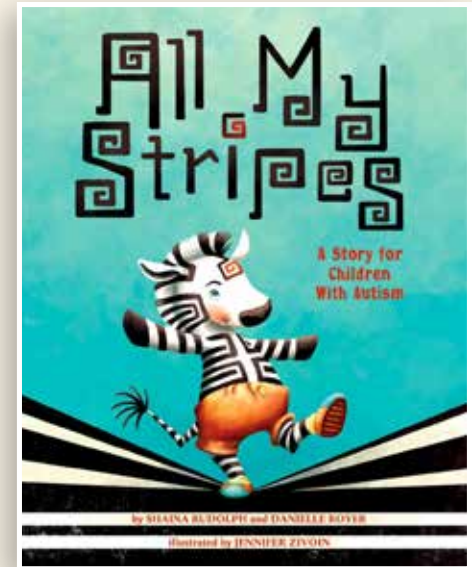
1. What are some of Zane's struggles in school?
2. What did Zane's mother mean when she said "I see many different stripes"? What were some of Zane's stripes?
3. What are some of your stripes? Do we all have the same stripes? Look at a friend and name one stripe they have.

### **Group Activity:**

Work in small groups to create a different, more positive school day for Zane.

### **Individual activity:**

Draw a picture of one of your stripes.





1 2 4 5

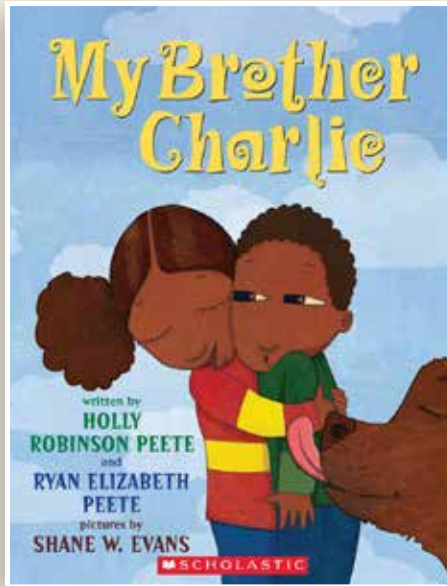
***My Brother Charlie,***  
by Holly Robinson  
Peete and Ryan  
Elizabeth Peete

My Brother Charlie is a book about a boy with autism, as told through the eyes of his twin sister. This book helps us recognize that we are all unique, with our own strengths and weaknesses.

1. In the story, how do you know that Charlie is different?
2. Can you name three things Charlie does well?
3. What does the author mean when she talks about "Charlie's Blessings"?
4. When the author says "Charlie has autism, but autism doesn't have Charlie", what does she mean?

**Activity:**

Draw a picture of a friend or family member and write or tell at least one "blessing" about that person.



2 4

***The Perfect Square,***  
by Michael Hall

**Lesson Focus:** Students will be able to understand that circumstances do not define their future.

Link to Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yegEA0ZnET8>

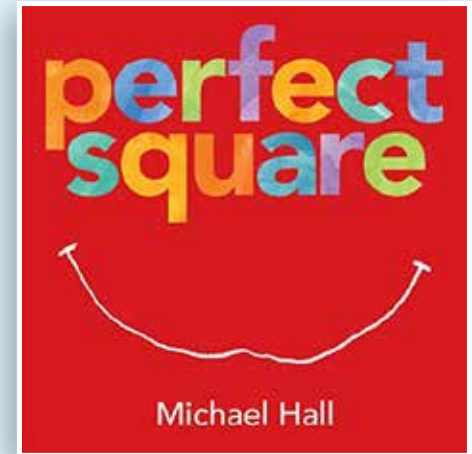
**Playful/Artful Learning Experience**

1. Provide students with a perfect square of paper. Cardstock or construction paper works best.
2. As you read, encourage students to destroy their paper in the same manner that the square in the book experiences.
3. Ask them to use their pieces to create something new and beautiful from the destruction. Work alone or in pairs.
4. With each turn of the page, create new art.
5. Take pics of each creation and make your own "Perfect Square" book.

**Key Message:** Beauty can come from difficult times.

**Types of Play in this Experience**

Creative  
Locomotor  
Social  
Exploratory  
Communication



235

**The Paper Bag Princess,**  
by Robert Munsch

The Paper Bag Princess is a book about an unusual princess named Elizabeth who is supposed to marry the prince, but first has to save him from a dragon.

**Discussion Questions:**

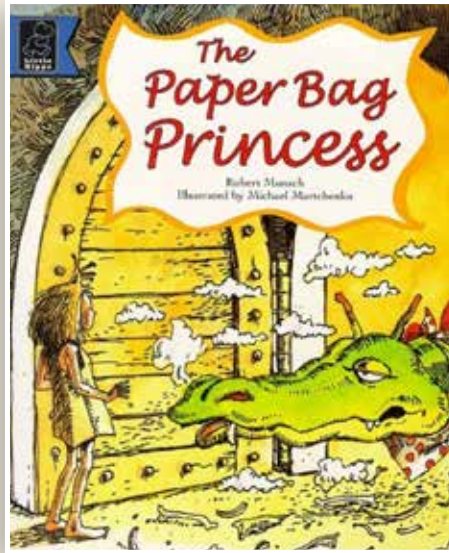
1. What are some other stories about princes and princesses? How do we expect them to look? How do you expect them to act?
2. How does Elizabeth look and act differently from other princesses? Why is this unusual?
3. How did she defeat the dragon? Was she still a princess when she was outsmarting him?
4. Elizabeth was a good friend to Prince Ronald. What makes a good friend?

**Activity:**

Bragging contest. The dragon in the story bragged about his fiery breath and how fast he could fly. Have the class work in pairs to complete any of the following phrases:

- I'm so strong, I could...
- I'm so tall, I...
- I'm so fast, I...
- I'm so smart, I...

If students finish quickly, they could draw a picture illustrating their bragging sentence.



235

**The Most Magnificent Thing,**  
by Ashley Spires

The book The Most Magnificent Thing is a story about a little girl who demonstrates perseverance and imagination as she tries over and over to make something magnificent.

**Discussion Questions:**

Key vocabulary:  
perseverance, imagination

1. The girl in the story knew just what she wanted to make and knew just how it would look. What happened when the thing didn't turn out the way she imagined it would? What did she do?
2. Have you ever made something and had it turn out all wrong? What did you do?

**Activity (two days)**

Day 1: If you could make a magnificent thing for yourself that is not a toy, but could help you in some way, what would it be? After a brief discussion, let students pair up and draw/write about their ideas. Get the group back together to share "magnificent" concepts with the class. Brainstorm what types of materials you may need to construct your thing. Encourage students to bring some of the materials listed from home to use the next day.

Day 2: Look at the materials gathered and let groups begin to make their "magnificent thing", using their drawings/writing from the first day as a guide. Allow time to share/present the objects to the class.

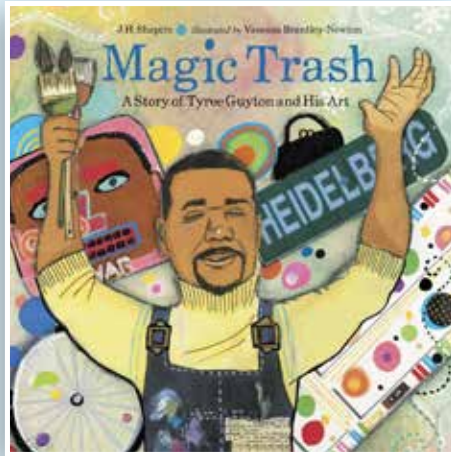


3 5

## **Magic Trash,** by J.H. Shapiro

**Lesson Focus:** Students will be able to use their imagination to create art from objects that would otherwise be considered trash.

Link to Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSrxwTArkOM&t=2s>



### **Playful/Artful Learning Experience**

1. After reading the story, go on a scavenger hunt throughout your learning space to look for items that are no longer usable such as recyclable materials, old/broken items, pencil stubs, etc. Refer to the book for similar items.
2. Create art from what is found. The sky-is-the-limit here!



**Key Message:** Everything old can be made new again. Even the things we think are useless can still have great purpose. Give back to your community through service.

### **Types of Play in this Experience**

Imaginative  
Creative  
Exploratory  
Symbolic  
Social  
Object

1 2 3 5

## **Going Places,** by Peter and Paul Reynolds

A go-cart contest inspires imagination, team-work and thinking outside the box.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. How did Rafael know how to build his go-cart? How did he feel about it when it was done?
2. Did Maya follow the directions? What did she build?
3. It was OK for Maya to make something different. Can you think of a time when you used your imagination and created something different from everyone else?

### **Activity:**

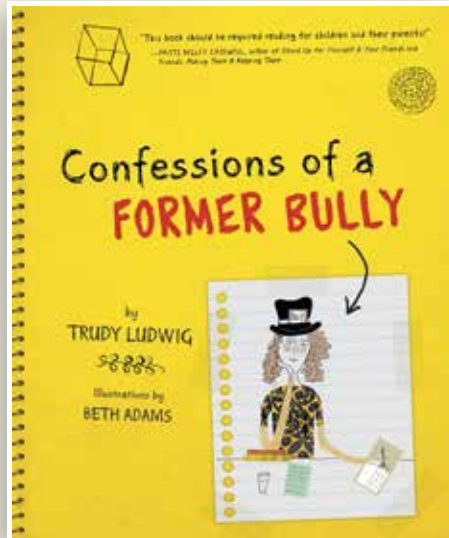
1. If you got a Going Places kit, what would you build? Draw your invention and share it with the class.



1 2 3 4 5

## Confessions of a Former Bully, by Trudy Ludwig

Confessions of a Former Bully is a book that may work best with upper elementary and middle school students. The book is written from the perspective of an 11 year old girl, as a consequence for her acts of bullying. Throughout the book, actual research on bullying is referenced, and cited at the back of the book.



Prior to reading the book aloud, have a discussion with your students about bullying, and brainstorm a list of what they see or have experienced as bullying behavior. This can be used later to compare and contrast with Katie's list.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever been bullied? Have you ever been the bully?
2. What does Katie mean when she talks about "bystanders"?
3. Explain the difference between tattling and reporting.

### Activity:

In small groups or pairs, pick one of the "Think about it" quotes from the book that is meaningful to you. Talk about your reactions to this quote, and what you think it means. Write the quote onto card stock, and illustrate it. Share your quote, your reactions and your illustration with the group.



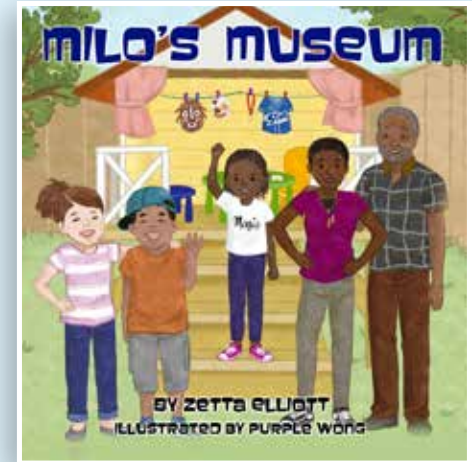
1 3

## Milo's Museum, by Zetta Elliott

**Lesson Focus:** Students will be able to explore their own histories and create a museum all about their own lives.

SEL Core Competencies  
Addressed  
Social Awareness  
Relationship skills

Link to Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5uQl8tchRSk>



### Playful/Artful Learning Experience

1. After finishing this book, encourage students to create a list of personal items that would be in their own museum.
2. Working in pairs, students would plan, design, create, and host their own museum. This could also be done as a class project and a museum could be created on a general topic that all students worked collaboratively to complete and present to the community.

**Key Message:** Representation matters. All cultures are valuable. Love your neighbor.

### Types of Play in this Experience

Exploratory  
Recapitulative  
Symbolic  
Deep  
Creative



2 3

## **Sky Color,**

by Peter H. Reynolds

Sky Color is a book about looking at things from a different point of view. After observing the world carefully, Marisol is inspired to expand her thinking about the color of the sky.

Prior to reading the book, give the class a quick-write assignment – draw and color an apple. Sign the pictures and collect them for later. Now, read the book.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What part of the mural did Marisol decide to paint? What color was she looking for?
2. Marisol watched the sky at different times of the day. How did her observations change the way she thought about the color of the sky?

### **Activity:**

Ask the class to think about what color apples are. Pass several different types of apples around the class, asking children to look carefully at each one. Ask again – what color is an apple? This time wait quietly for more expansive responses. Pass out the first set of apple drawings, and ask the class to turn the paper over and draw another apple, using the real apples for inspiration.



1 2 4 5

## **Oliver**

by Birgitta Sif

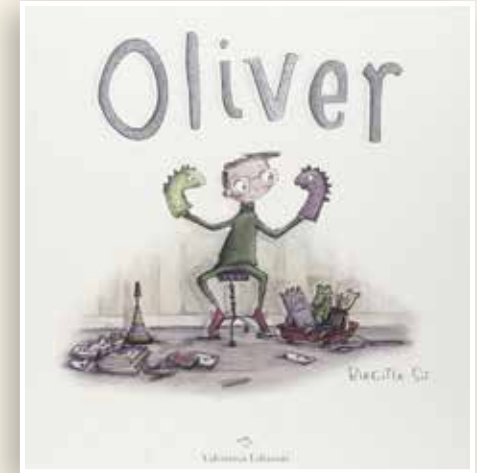
Oliver is a story about a little boy who is different. He uses his imagination for companionship, with his toys as his companions, until one day he meets a new friend.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Have you ever felt different? How does that make you feel? How did Oliver feel about being different?
2. What made Oliver decide he may have to change, to become different than how he has been? How did that make him feel?

### **Activity:**

Think about ways you are different. Write or draw things that make you different and special. Compile into a class Being Different book.



1 5

### ***The Smallest Girl in the Smallest Grade***, by Justin Roberts

**Lesson Focus:** Students will be able to develop and strengthen their public speaking abilities through drama and reader's theater.

Link to Story: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjWE-S\\_78vU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjWE-S_78vU)

#### **Playful/Artful Learning Experience: The entire book makes a great Reader's Theatre or play**

1. Assign parts to all students in your learning space and recreate this book's powerful message through dramatic play.
2. Invite other classes or learning groups to watch, then have students facilitate discussions about treating others with kindness.

**Key Message:** Small people can have big voices. Stand up for what's right. Don't let bullies have power. You matter.

#### **Types of Play in this Experience**

Creative  
 Socio-Dramatic  
 Dramatic  
 Social  
 Role  
 Deep  
 Fantasy



1 2 3 4 5

### ***The Invisible Boy*** by Trudy Ludwig

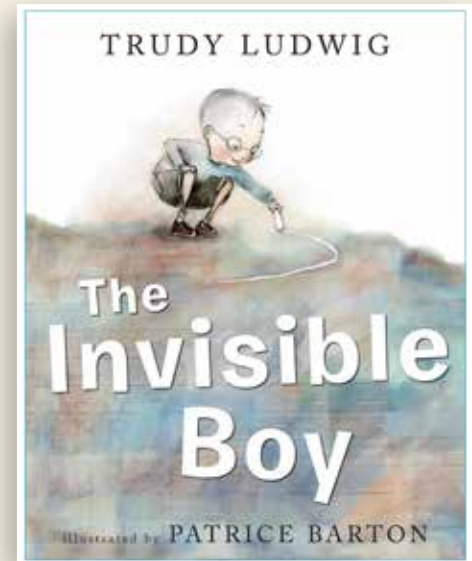
The Invisible Boy is about a boy named Brian. Nobody ever seemed to notice him or think to include him in their group, game, or birthday party...until, that is, a new kid comes to class. When Justin, the new boy, arrives, Brian is the first to make him feel welcome. And when Brian and Justin team up to work on a class project together, Brian finds a way to shine.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Have you ever tried to join a group, game or activity and the other kids wouldn't let you? If yes, how did that make you feel?
2. At lunchtime, all the kids were talking about the party that Brian wasn't invited to. Have you ever found yourself in a similar situation as Brian, with kids talking about the fun things they've done with each other in front of you and you weren't included or invited? If yes, how did that make you feel?
3. What do you think is worse, being laughed at or feeling invisible? Why?

#### **Activity:**

On chart paper, brainstorm things you can do to make others feel valued and appreciated. Keep the chart visible, so you can refer to it as needed.



25

## The Day the Crayons Quit

by Drew Daywalt

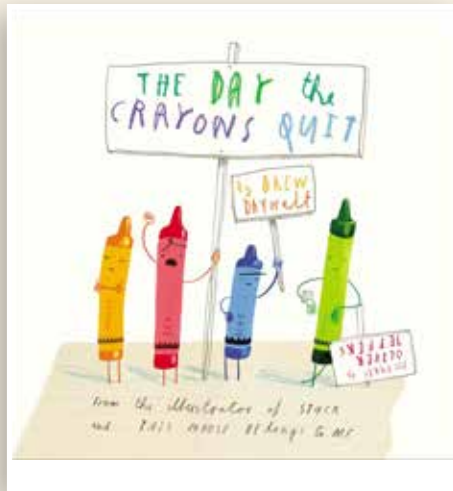
The Day the Crayons Quit is about poor Duncan, who just wants to color. But when he opens his box of crayons, he finds only letters, all saying the same thing: His crayons have had enough! They quit! Beige Crayon is tired of playing second fiddle to Brown Crayon. Black wants to be used for more than just outlining. Blue needs a break from coloring all those bodies of water. And Orange and Yellow are no longer speaking—each believes he is the true color of the sun. What can Duncan possibly do to appease all of the crayons and get them back to doing what they do best?

### Discussion Questions:

1. Out of all the crayons, which one gave the best reason for quitting and why?
2. What is so special about the picture at the end of the book? Did Duncan listen to each and every crayon's point of view? Did he take all their points into consideration?

### Activity:

A letter is a great way to share your opinion. Think of something important that is happening at your school, in your class/club or think of something you would like to see change. Think about how you feel about that thing. Write a short letter like the ones in the book. State the issue, give your opinion and explain (give reasons and examples) why you're right. Deliver them to your Principal.



24

## Your Spark

by Lisa Leonard

**Lesson Focus:** Students will be able to identify individual strengths and communicate those to others.

Link to Story: [NA](#)

### Playful/Artful Learning Experience:

Unleash your inner "sparkle" with magic paper towel art

1. Fold a paper towel in half like a card.
2. On the front cover of a card, use a black water-based marker such as a washable Crayola to write the words "My Spark."
3. Make sure to write heavily enough so that the black ink bleeds onto the inside of the card.
4. Next, open the folded paper towel to the inside of the card and draw a beautiful, colored representation of what makes "your spark."
5. When finished with the inside illustration, close the card with the front on top.
6. Place the folded card in a pan of water and watch the magic of your spark shine through!
7. Less water in the pan is better, but at least enough to submerge the paper towel.

**Key Message:** Each human has their own "you"nique spark. Celebrate diversity.

### Types of Play in this Experience

Creative  
Locomotor  
Fantasy

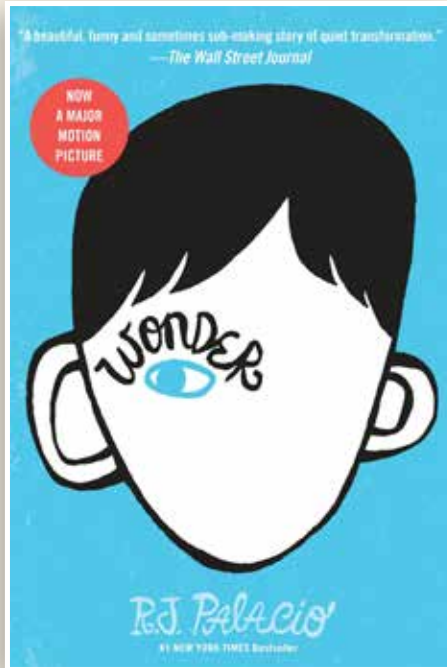


1 2 3 4 5

## **Wonder,** by RJ Palacio

Wonder is a book about a boy born with a facial difference that has kept him from attending public school. He is about to enter 5th grade after years of homeschooling. The thing is that Auggie is an ordinary kid, with an extraordinary face. His challenge is convincing his new classmates that he is just like them, despite appearances.

Note: Wonder is now a movie! The questions and activities could be used after either reading the book or seeing the movie.



### **Activities:**

1. Readers Theatre. Use the script from the following link and present a Reader's Theatre to other groups. Link: [texasbluebonnetaward2014.wordpress.com](http://texasbluebonnetaward2014.wordpress.com)
2. Kindness journal. Ask students to record acts of kindness they performed or observed for a period of 10 days. At the end of the time, ask students to share how acting kindly toward others impacts each of us.
3. Prepare cards with the words " \_\_\_\_\_ (name) is a Wonder because \_\_\_\_\_". Each student puts their name on the card and others move around the room to add ways in which each student is special. Students can talk about how they feel reading what others think of them, and how it felt to thoughtfully think of something wonderful about each other.
4. Precepts were an important part of this book. Write precepts on cards and scatter them around the room. Students move around the room to find the precept that speaks to them and form a quick discussion group.
5. Brainstorm a class list of precepts – from the book or other precepts important to the students. From the list, let each choose a precept to write on cardstock in a decorative banner. Other materials can be used to decorate card – glitter, buttons, ribbon, etc. Students could take these home or place around the room for future reference.

### **Discussion questions:**

1. Throughout the book, Auggie describes ways in which others react to seeing him for the first time: by looking away, moving away, looking down, etc. Have you ever been in a situation where you responded like this to seeing someone different? Has reading Wonder changed how you feel about your reaction?
2. How did Auggie change from the beginning of the book to the end? What experiences do you think affected him the most?
3. Star Wars is one of Auggie's passions. Why do you think this is? Do you see any reason for Auggie to identify with these characters or want to be like them?
4. What was the most important thing you learned from reading this book?
5. This book was written from different points of view. Which did you enjoy the most? Which character did you relate to the most?



1 2 3 4 5

## **Layla's Happiness,** by Mariahadessa Ekere Tallie

**Lesson Focus:** Students will be able to identify what makes them happy.

SEL Core Competencies Addressed  
Self-awareness  
Self-management  
Social awareness

Link to Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loaLRKmRcCA>

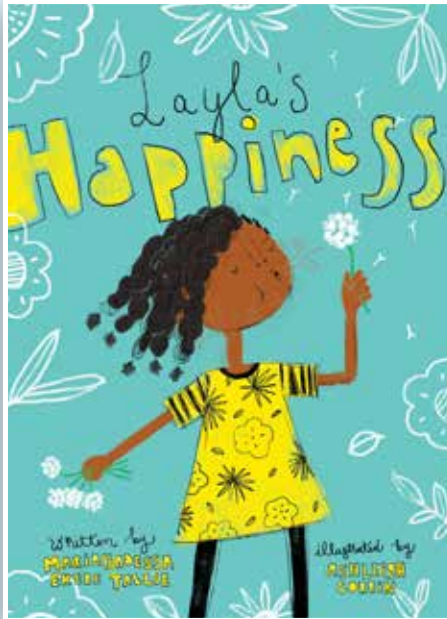
### **Playful/Artful Learning Experience**

1. Create your own book of happiness.
2. Use a digital tool like the Book Creator App or make one old-school out of folded paper.
3. Encourage students to fill their books with all the things that make them happy.
4. Pages can be illustrated or collaged with cut out pictures from old magazines.
5. When finished, share the happiness books with peers.

**Key Message:** Gratefulness

### **Types of Play in this Experience**

Creative  
Symbolic  
Social  
Locomotor



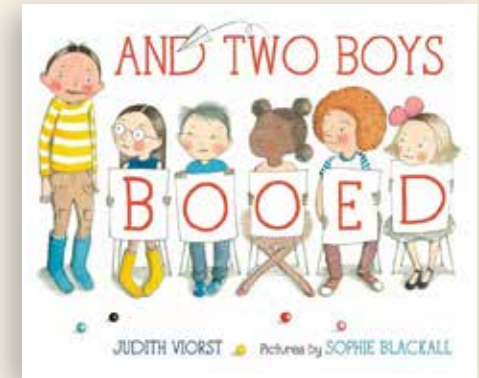
2 3 4 5

## **And Two Boys Boomed** by Judith Viorst

In *And Two Boys Boomed*, a boy is ready to sing his song in the school talent show. He isn't one bit scared because he had practiced a billion times, plus he was wearing his lucky blue boots and his pants with all ten pockets. But as all of the other kids performed before him, he got more and more nervous. See what happens as he overcomes his fear.

### **Discussion Questions:**

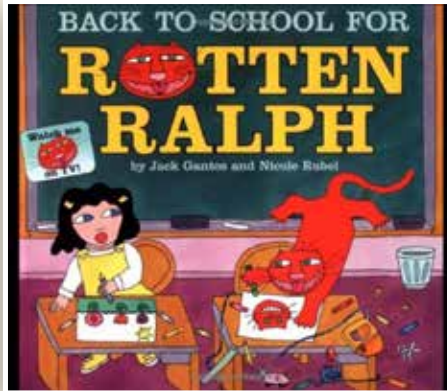
1. Do you ever get nervous about anything? If yes, what do you get nervous about?
2. Have you ever thought that you were really ready to do something and then realized you weren't?
3. What do you think about those two boys that boomed? Was that nice? What should they have done differently?
4. The rest of the class cheered when the boy finished. How do you think that boy felt, even with the two mean boys?
5. What is something you can do when someone seems nervous? How can you help them out and help them to succeed?



1 3 4

## Back to School for Rotten Ralph,

by Jack Gantos and Nicole Rubel



Summer is over, and Sarah is excited for school to start so that she can make new friends. However, her cat, Rotten Ralph, wants to be her only friend. He disguises himself and gets on the school bus to follow her to class. Although Ralph plans to sabotage Sarah's attempts to make friends, it all backfires when his identity is revealed and everyone wants to be friends with him and Sarah.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think Rotten Ralph didn't want Sarah to make new friends?
2. Rather than pulling all of the mischievous pranks and tricks, what should Ralph have done?
3. Have you ever had a friend that you wanted all to yourself? What did you do? How did you feel?

### Activities:

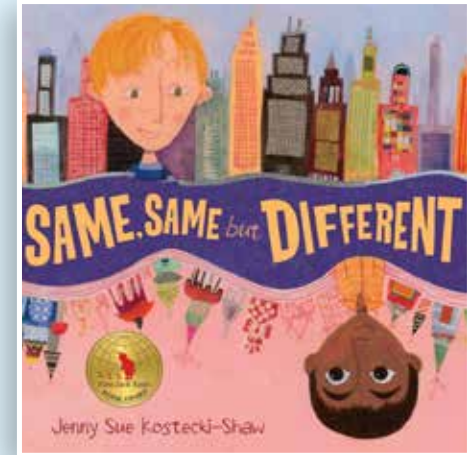
1. With a partner, talk about Ralph's disguise. Together, draw a picture of how you think Ralph looked when he got on the bus. Share the picture with your class.
2. Whole group activity: Imagine you are Rotten Ralph. Brainstorm things you could do while waiting for Sarah to return from school.



1 3

## Same, Same but Different

By Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw



**Lesson Focus:** Students will be able to identify similarities and differences in their communities and homes.

Link to Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MjK1J0jUxD4&t=48s>

### Playful/Artful Learning Experience

1. Using the themes from this book (housing, transportation, food, families, etc.) play a game of charades to show how each person in the learning space is alike and different using words such as house, apartment, car, bus, hamburger, wontons, dad, stepmom.
2. Students could also role play other differences or create art to highlight their uniqueness.



**Key Message:** While we are all different and unique, we have a lot in common, too. Celebrate diversity as well as commonalities.

### Types of Play in this Experience

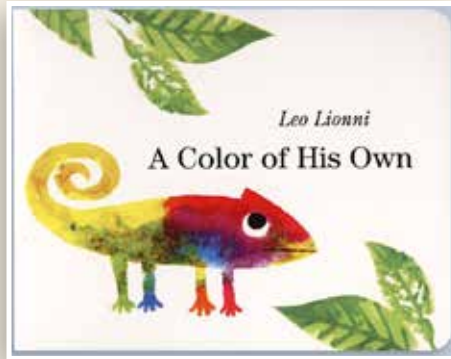
Creative  
Exploratory  
Socio-dramatic  
Symbolic  
Deep  
Social  
Role

1 2 5

## **Color of His Own,** by Leo Lionni

Every animal had its own color – except chameleon. Pigs were pink, elephants were gray, but chameleons change their color based on their surroundings. This was very confusing, so Chameleon decided to spend his entire life in the same spot – on a green

leaf. However, when fall came the leaf changed colors and so did the chameleon. Once spring came, he was able to meet another chameleon who taught him that having a friend makes it easier to accept yourself for who you are.



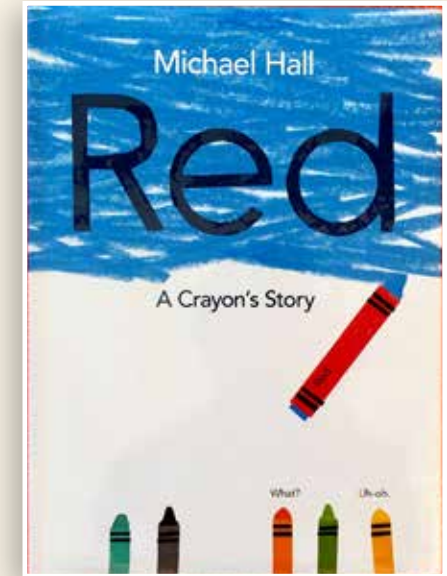
### **Discussion Questions and Activities:**

1. Work with a partner and find something that you have in common with each other.
2. Now, work with your partner or group to find something that makes each of you special and unique. Using the board or chart paper, make a class list of things that make us similar and things that make us unique.
3. After reading the book, ask children to draw a self-portrait to emphasize what makes him/her unique. Allow time for all to share with the group.
4. Given a choice of different colored chameleons, have each student pick one and complete the following sentence about their choice: I would be a \_\_\_\_\_ (ex: green chameleon) sitting on a \_\_\_\_\_ (ex: leaf).

2 3 5

## **Red, A Crayon's Story,** by Michael Hall

Red is really a blue crayon covered with red paper. Because of his red paper, everyone assumes he is red, and they expect red things from him. Red fails over, and over again trying to be what he is not, and all the other crayons give their opinion of why Red just can't seem to be red. Then one day he is asked to try drawing something unexpected, and Red finally realizes that he isn't red, he is Blue!



### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Have you ever tried to do something or to be a certain way and were unsuccessful? Why did you try? How did it make you feel?
2. Why do you think Berry asked him to make a blue ocean? What could Berry see that none of the other crayons and art supplies see?
3. What challenges do you think some children with special needs (and their families) may face simply because the children may act, learn or look a little different?

### **Activities:**

1. Make cards with sayings such as "Be Yourself, everyone else is already taken", "If you think someone could use a friend, Be one!", and "Friends are relatives you make for yourself". Place the cards around the room and let students go to the card that speaks to them to form a small group. Ask each group to talk about how their quote relates to the book, and then decide how best to illustrate their saying. When finished, allow each group to present their saying to the entire class.
2. All the crayons are asked to draw self-portraits. Ask students to draw their own self-portraits using ONLY the one color that best represents them. Allow time for each to share and explain their color choice for the self-portrait.

2 4 5

## ***I Like Myself,*** by Karen Beaumont

**Lesson Focus:** Students will be able to identify characteristics about themselves that they are proud of.

Link to Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wTlyUKznXzk>

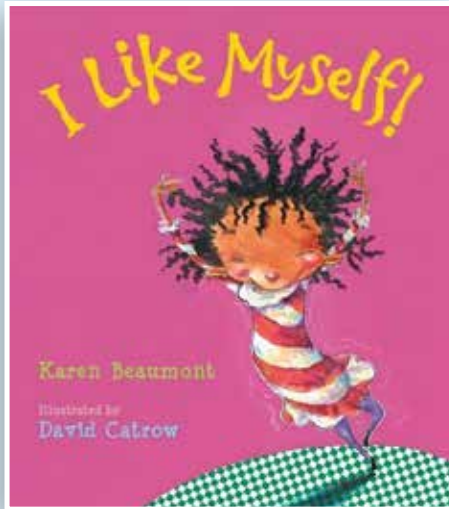
### **Playful/Artful Learning Experience**

1. Have you ever written a parody? A song parody is the easiest to write. Pick a song everyone knows like Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star and change the words to be all about you!
2. Keep the tune but sing lyrics that are about your awesomeness... Here is an example to the tune of Twinkle, Twinkle... "I am special, yes indeed. I like pickles and sweet tea. I have green eyes and a beard. Glasses make me cool, not weird. I am special, yes indeed. Be my friend and let's succeed!"
3. This would be great to do with a partner because two heads are better than one.
4. A mini lesson on syllables can be helpful when making words fit to music too.

**Key Message:** Love who you are, every little piece.

### **Types of Play in this Experience**

Creative  
Communication  
Mastery



1 2 3 4 5

## ***Gaston,*** by Kelly DiPucchio

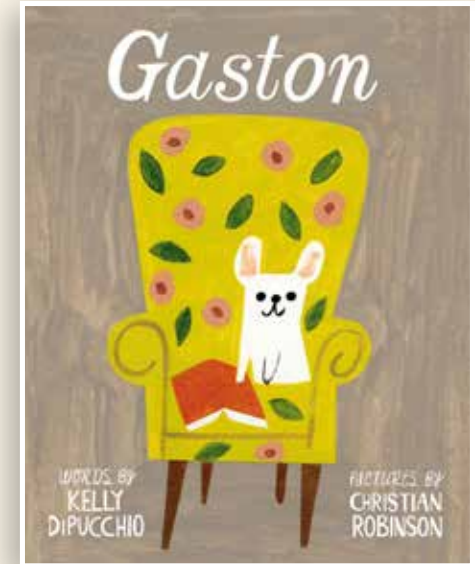
Have you ever felt like you didn't belong, or like you had to try harder at things that other people find easy? Gaston feels that way until one day he discovers that maybe he really DOES belong in another family. Will he finally feel at home with his new family, or is he one of the perfect poodles at heart?

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What made Gaston different, or unique in his family? If you were Gaston, would you switch families or stay with Mrs. Poodle?
2. What did they realize when they went home with the wrong family? Wasn't looking the same enough?
3. When they got back with their original families, how did Gaston and Antoinette bring the two families together? What are some things they did?
4. Have you ever tried to change who you are to fit in to another group of friends? Did it make you happy?

### **Activities:**

1. Role playing: Pretend you are a member of Mrs. Poodles family. How would you walk? How would you talk? What does it mean to be dignified and proper? Now – pretend you are a member of Mrs. Bulldog's family. How would you sound? How would you move? How would you play? What does it mean to be brutish and brawny?
2. View the Youtube video Gaston by Kelly DiPucchio, the Susan Cook version.



1 2 4 5

## ***It's Okay to be Different,*** by Todd Parr

This book delivers a feel good, positive message about acceptance and understanding. The brightly colored simple pictures and repetitive text work together to call attention to superficial differences and encourage readers to focus on acceptance and individuality. The child-friendly format features Todd Parr's trademark bold, bright colors and silly illustrations. This book is a great way to start the conversation about diversity with young students.



### **Discussion questions**

1. Before reading the book with the class, introduce the idea of differences/similarities by asking the group to respond to several of the following statements: Stand up if you have freckles/red hair/have lost a tooth/are wearing sneakers, etc. Then ask the children to think of other ways we are different from each other.
2. Read the book, stopping to ask if anyone knows someone who is like a given character. Which, if any, characters are like you?

### **Activity**

1. Make a T chart - What makes us Different/ What makes us the Same. Brainstorm until there are several examples on each side of the chart. Save this for the next activity.
2. Review the book and the chart. Write the sentence model "It's okay to \_\_\_" on the board. Tell the class that each student will use that model to create at least 1 page of a class It's Okay book. Encourage students to illustrate their pages, using the bright, bold colors of the book. Allow all to share their work, then compile the pages into a class book.

1 4

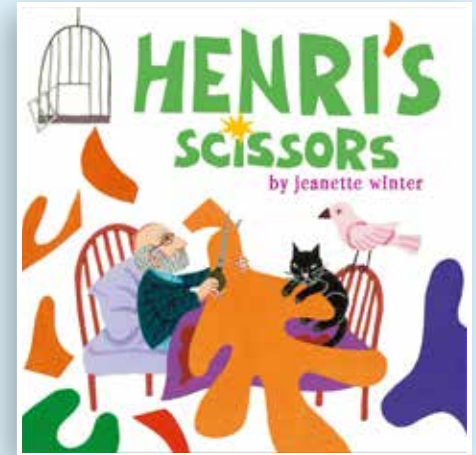
## ***Henri's Scissors,*** by Jeanette Winter

**Lesson Focus:** Students will be able to create art inspired by an internationally known artist while showcasing their own talents.

Link to Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvgOlhFDbq0>

### **Playful/Artful Learning Experience**

1. Using a heavy paper such as cardstock or construction paper, paint several pieces in lots of various shades and patterns.
2. Let it dry, then grab scissors and create.
3. Cut out whatever shapes and images you want.
4. There is no wrong way to make art like Henri Matisse!



**Key Message:** Never let ability, or lack thereof define you or keep you from doing what you love. Follow your dreams.

### **Types of Play in this Experience**

Creative  
Mastery  
Locomotor  
Deep  
Object  
Fantasy  
Imaginative

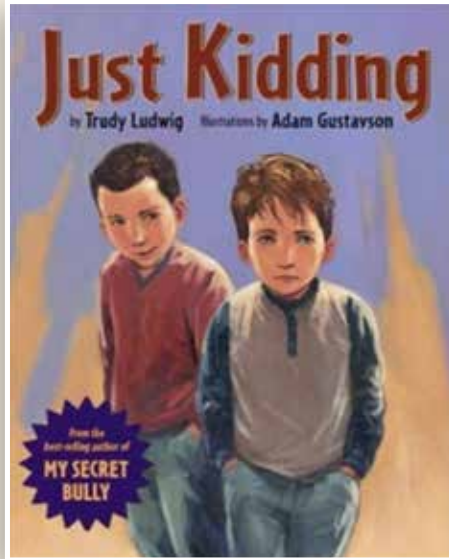
1 2 3 4 5

## ***Just Kidding,*** by Trudy Ludwig

DJ's friend, Vince, has a habit of teasing people and then saying, "Just kidding!" as if that makes everything okay. DJ feels that Vince's jokes aren't funny and have a sharp edge that can "cut you to pieces". With the help of his father, brother and his teacher, DJ learns to take positive action in response to the harmful teasing.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. How could you tell that DJ was bothered by Vince's teasing?
2. When Vince said he was "just kidding", did you believe him? Why or why not?
3. Do you and your friends tease each other? How can you tell if your friends like it when you tease them? How do you let your friends know when their teasing hurts you?
4. When do you think teasing is okay and when is it not?
5. Who can you go to if you have a problem with teasing?
6. What would you do if you saw other kids teasing your friend in an unkind way?



### **Activities:**

1. Using the board or chart paper, ask the class to call out words or phrases that stood out to them – just kidding, tattling, etc. As a word or phrase is added to the list, ask the class to define it. You can use this as an anchor chart for additional discussions about teasing and bullying.
2. Put a T chart on the board, with Kidding, and Harmful Teasing as labels. Present various scenarios to the group, asking them to decide which column each would go into. The scenarios may be printed onto smaller cards so that they can physically be placed into the columns or you can use happy face/sad face sticky notes to indicate where each belongs.

### **Examples of possible scenarios:**

- \*The person being teased and the person teasing both laugh and swap roles happily.
- \*Joking continues even when one person becomes upset or says, "Stop!"
- \*The joking is meant to get everyone to laugh.
- \*The joke is "one-sided" – only one side or one person finds it funny.
- \*The joke is meant to laugh at the person.
- \*The joke is meant to laugh with the person.
- \*The joking stops if a person becomes upset or says, "Stop!"
- \*The joking makes the person look uncomfortable.

1 2 3 4 5

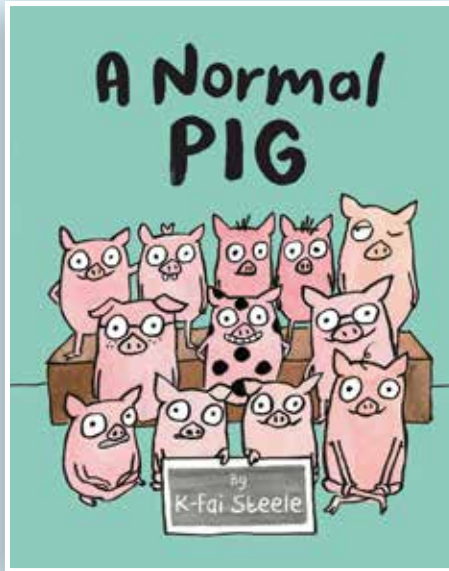
## A Normal Pig, by K-fai Steel

**Lesson Focus:** Students will be able to recognize that they are unique and share their uniqueness with others.

Link to Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SI4mWTT4yng>

### Playful/Artful Learning Experience

1. Pip thought she was not "normal". However, once she visited the big city, she realized everyone was different.
2. Grab some markers and draw as many different pigs as you can.
3. Grab some Play-doh and sculpt as many pigs as you can.
4. Grab a paper plate and make a pig mask.
5. No two pigs will be the same, yet they are all pigs.
6. Have students identify what makes each pig special.



**Key Message:** Normal is relative. Stand up to bullies. Be proud of who you are.

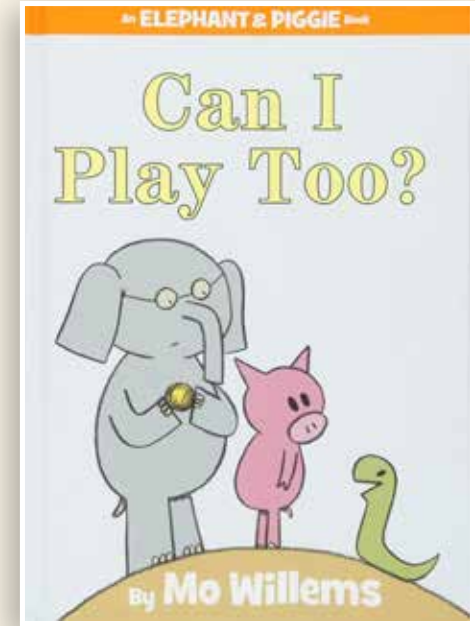
### Types of Play in this Experience

Creative  
Imaginative  
Locomotor  
Dramatic  
Social

1 2 4

## Can I Play, Too? By Mo Willems

Piggy and Elephant are about to start a game of catch, when their friend Snake asks "Can I play, too?" Both are puzzled by the request because Snake has no arms. But the three friends try hard to find a way to include everyone in the game. After trying different solutions, poor Snake is about to give up, saying "Well, I guess I can't play after all". This is a wonderful read-aloud book with very funny illustrations.



### Discussion questions

1. Why is Snake so sad?  
What do you think Elephant and Piggy can do? How can they solve the problem?
2. Have you ever had to think of a new way to do something so that a friend could play with you?

### Activities

1. Give each student a piece of paper folded into 4 squares. In each square, students write or draw: 1) something they observed in the book, 2) something they wondered about, 3) a sensory description – smell, touch, etc., and 4) how the story is like something they did or that happened to them. Allow time for all to share if they choose.
2. Let small groups of children act out parts of the book for the class.



1 2 4 5

## **Not Your Typical Dragon,**

by Dan Bar-el

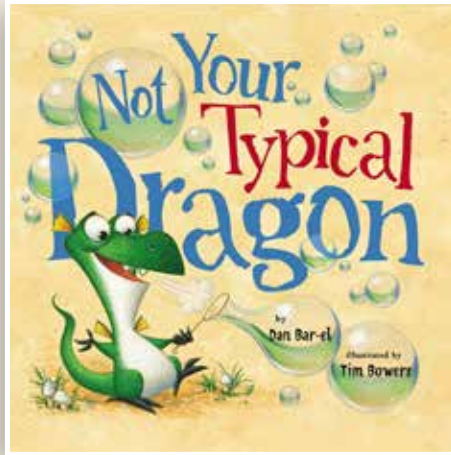
Crispin is a dragon who is about to turn 7 – the age that dragons start breathing fire. When his big day comes, Crispin just knows he will be the one to light the candles on his birthday cake. However, it's not fire that comes out, it's whipped cream! Crispin tries over and over to breathe fire, but is disappointed each time (marshmallows! Really?) After wondering if he'll ever find his inner fire, a family emergency ends with Crispin using his not-typical abilities to save the day.

### **Discussion questions:**

1. What made Crispin different from the other dragons?
2. How did his family react? What else could they have done?
3. How do you think you should treat someone if they are different from you?

### **Activities:**

1. With a partner, talk about what makes you special. Allow time for pairs to share with the group what makes their partner stand out, like Crispin.
2. Given paper, allow students to write or draw their responses to "I'm not your typical dragon. When I open my mouth, \_\_\_\_\_".
3. Cooking activity – Fireless S'mores. Combine bite sized graham crackers, mini-marshmallows, mini-chocolate chips. Stir, then scoop into individual cups.



2 5

## **Not A Box,**

by Antoinette Portis

**Lesson Focus:** Students will be able to use their imaginations to explore the potential of ALL shapes and sizes of boxes. Just as different boxes have various purposes, so do people have lots of potential.

Link to story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXqFv610g0o>

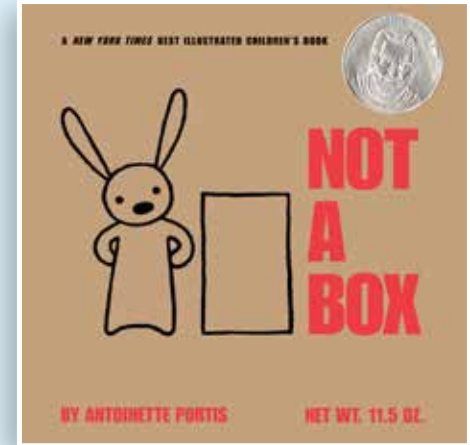
### **Playful/Artful Learning Experience**

1. Collect as many shapes and sizes of cardboard boxes as you can.
2. Stand back and watch the students' creativity and imagination come to life!

**Key Message:** Imagination can take you anywhere!

### **Types of Play in this Experience**

Creative  
Imaginative  
Social  
Symbolic  
Deep  
Object  
Dramatic  
Rough and Tumble  
Role  
Socio-Dramatic

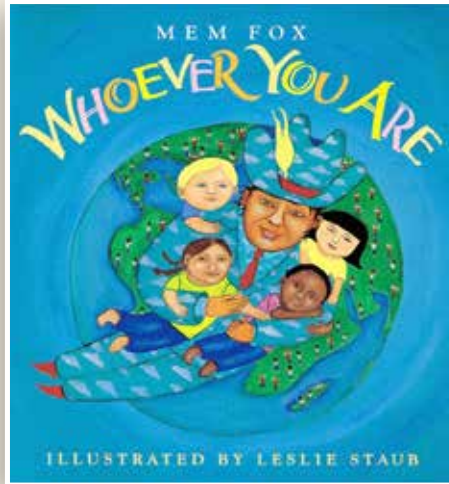




2 4

## **Whoever You Are,** by Mem Fox

This story celebrates those qualities that make us different and the same. This is seen through the book's vivid illustrations of children all over the world who have different customs, languages, food, homes, and schools. It reaffirms the idea that even though we may appear different we share a common bond of joy and pain.



Do a picture walk through the book prior to reading it. Ask students to concentrate on the pictures, describing those things they see that are familiar or different, writing them on a T chart Same/Different.?

### **Discussion questions**

1. What words does the author keep repeating? Why do you think she repeats those words?
2. What are things that make you special and different?
3. How do our differences make us happy? How do our differences make us sad?



### **Activities:**

#### 1. Interviews

Come up with a list of questions students would like to ask each other. Allow the group to divide into pairs of students, each interviewing the other, using questions developed by the class. Depending on ability, students could record their answers on paper, to be shared with the group. This would be a good way to introduce Unified pairs and a great get-to-know-you activity early in the year.

Examples of questions may be:

- What games do you like to play?
- Do you have brothers/sisters?
- What food do you like to eat?
- What is your favorite animal?
- What music do you like to listen to?
- What places do you like to visit?

#### 2. Stretch a Sketch

Pass out paper, asking students to draw and color what they think is the most important message in the book. Allow each student to share their drawing.

#### 3. Class Venn Diagram collage

Pass out magazines, scissors, crayons/markers. Ask students to locate and cut out pictures that illustrate differences and similarities people may have. On a long piece of bulletin board paper with a Venn diagram drawn on it, have students put things that show similarities in the center and images that show differences on the outside.

1 3

### **Pass It On,** by Sophy Henn

**Lesson Focus:** Students will be able to experience the joy of giving.

Link to Story: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HG\\_HsTBa\\_-Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HG_HsTBa_-Q)

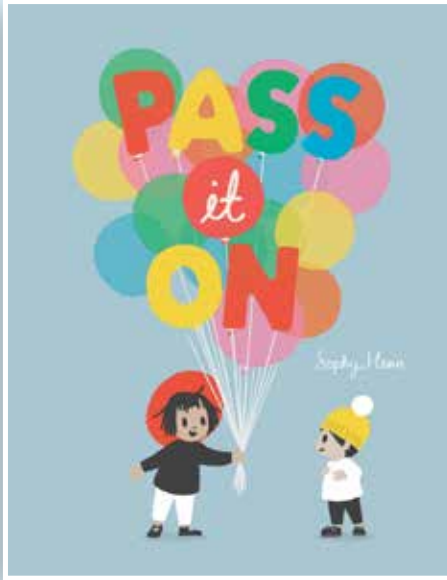
#### **Playful/Artful Learning Experience**

1. Do a quick Internet search for paper box patterns. You will find there are a lot of them.
2. Print a several.
3. Fold them up into boxes.
4. Put something special inside.
5. Pass it on.
6. In the South we call thoughtful little surprises like this "sursies."
7. Have fun making others happy!

**Key Message:** Spread sparkle around. Create happiness for others. Smile, its' contagious!

#### **Types of Play in this Experience**

Communication  
Creative  
Social



1 2 4 5

### **Different Is Awesome,** by Ryan Haack

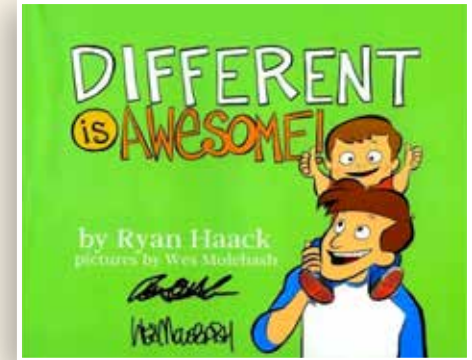
A little boy brings his big brother, born with only 1 hand, for Show And Tell. The students ask him all sorts of questions about how he does things with only 1 hand. They quickly realize that he can do anything they can, only he does it differently. Along the way, the students see that we are all different in one way or another.

#### **Discussion questions:**

1. What are some things Ryan did differently?
2. What would you have asked Ryan? How do you think he would have answered?
3. What makes you awesome? (record responses for later use.)

#### **Activities:**

1. Try to do something one-handed, like tie your shoes, put on your socks, etc. Was that hard? Were you able to do it?
2. Pick something that makes you awesome. On a piece of paper, draw or write about what makes you awesome. Share with the class. (check the previous chart for ideas, if needed.)



1 2 3 4 5

## ***Pete the Cat and the New Guy,***

by Kimberly and James Dean

There's a new guy in town, and Pete the Cat can't wait to meet him. When they finally meet, Pete realizes that they are very different from each other. Pete tries to get Gus to do the same things he does – like climb trees, and jump – but Gus just can't – he's a platypus.

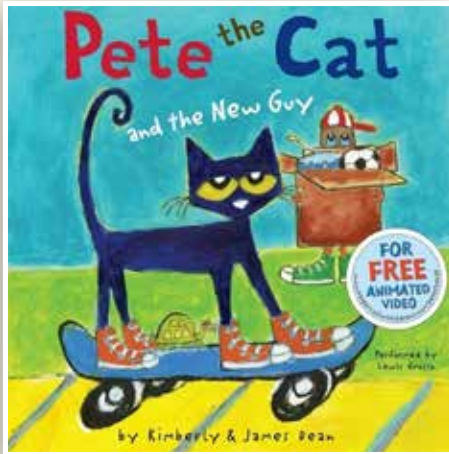
Gus is special in his own way, just like Pete, and has things he can do. Pete realizes that everyone has their own special things, and that being different is cool.

### **Discussion questions:**

1. What were some things Pete tried to do with Gus? Why couldn't Gus do the same things Pete did?
2. How do you think Gus felt when he couldn't climb or jump like Pete? How do you think Pete felt?
3. How did Pete discover Gus' talent? Why did that make him happy?
4. When Pete says that there is something everyone can do, what does he mean?

### **Activities:**

1. Make a Being a Good Friend chart. Brainstorm things that good friends do. This can be used as an anchor chart to remind students how to be a good friend.
2. Complete the sentence. Set up a template for "My friend \_\_\_\_\_ is very good at \_\_\_\_\_". As ability allows, let children complete the sentence by writing or recording responses. Let children illustrate their sentences. Display on bulletin board.



1 2 3 4 5

## ***The Hippo-NOT-amus,***

by Tony and Jan Payne

**Lesson Focus:** Students will be able to use common materials to engage in imaginative play to communicate new ideas.

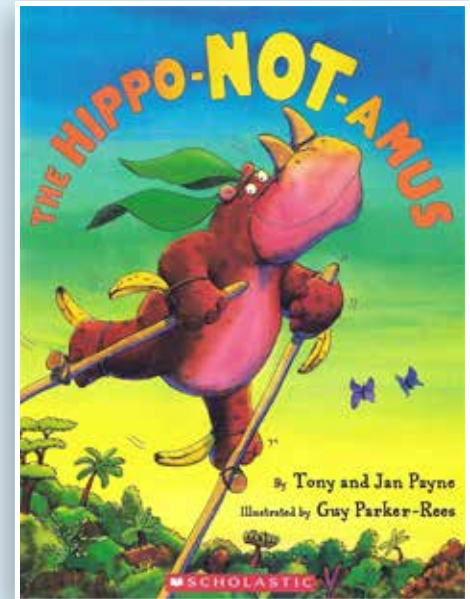
Link to Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZP2Owvt1LFU>

### **Playful/Artful Learning Experience**

1. Gather random materials from around the classroom and repurpose them to be parts of an animal just like the main character of the story.
2. Have students doodle the animals their classmates create.
3. Students should pick their favorite animal and learn facts about that animal to share with classmates.

### **Types of Play in this Experience**

Creative  
Role  
Imaginative



1 2 3 4 5

## **Rules,** by Cynthia Lord

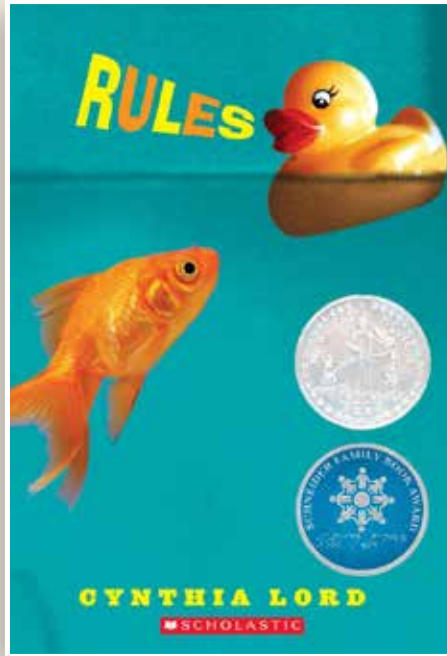
Catherine just wants a normal life – which is not possible when your brother has Autism. She has spent years trying to teach David the rules – from “no toys in the fish tank” to “keep your pants on in public”, in order to change behaviors that embarrass her. One summer she meets Jason and Kristi, the neighbors for whom she has always wished. It is her own surprising behavior that changes everything and makes Catherine question what is normal?

### **Discussion questions:**

1. What are some of the rules Catherine thinks David should learn? How would they make her life easier?
2. How do you feel when you are with friends and encounter someone with a disability? What do you do? What would Catherine suggest you do?

### **Activities:**

1. With a partner, think of additional rules David or Catherine should learn. Share your rules with the class or add them to a class list of Rules.
2. Whole group: Brainstorm the names of the characters in this book. Write them on chart paper, leaving room for the class to add character descriptions. Using the chart and the descriptions, allow students the time to choose a character to draw.



1 2 3 4 5

## **Can I Join Your Club?** By John Kelly

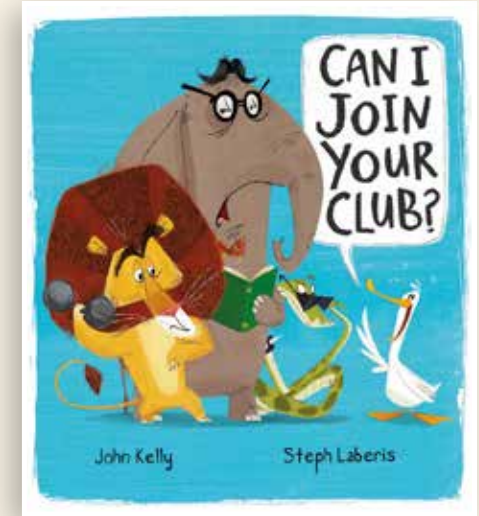
Duck really wants to join a club – any club. Even though he tries hard to fit in, it just doesn't work: he can't roar like Lion or trumpet like Elephant. So, Duck decides to start his own club, with his own rule – Everyone is Welcome! Lesson learned? When it comes to making friends, being yourself is what counts.

### **Discussion questions:**

1. What types of clubs did Duck try to join? What were the rules each club had? Why was Duck's application denied?
2. Duck still wanted to join a club, so what did he decide to do? What was his rule for joining his club?
3. Which club do you think would be the most fun? Why?

### **Activities:**

1. Divide class into several small groups. Ask each group to come up with an idea for a club, and a rule that would allow everyone to join it. (Ex: Cooking Club – if you eat, you can join). Use paper to make a poster for your club. Share with the class.
2. Place the different club posters around the room. Set the timer and let the class wander around, signing up for the clubs of their choice. When the timer rings, all return to the carpet. Using the posters, ask different children to explain why they signed up for a given club.



1 2 3

***I Am Perfectly Designed,***  
by Karamo Brown

**Lesson Focus:** Students will be able to identify someone they admire.

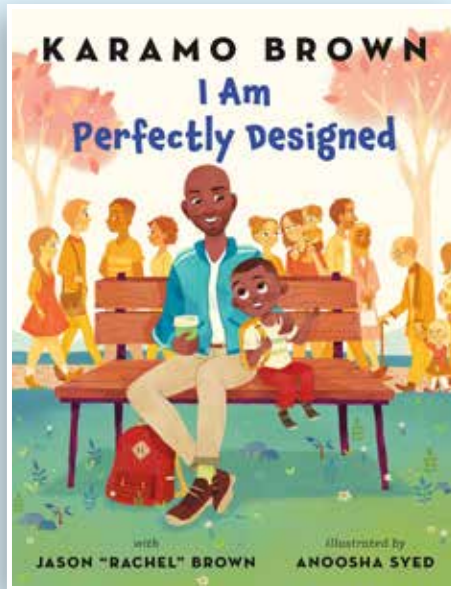
Link to Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ItEBHg4DdTo>

**Playful/Artful Learning Experience:** It is important for students to have role models and people they admire in life

1. Much like a family tree, have students create a "role model" tree. It can be crafted however students like. It can be made using basic art materials or recyclable materials.
2. Once the base of the tree is created, have students add leaves with the names of people they admire.
3. Allow time for students to share who they admire and why.

**Types of Play in this Experience**

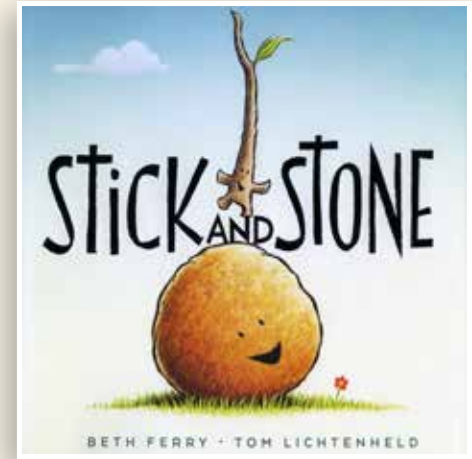
Creative  
Imaginative  
Social  
Dramatic



1 2 3 4 5

***Stick and Stone,***  
by Beth Ferry

This is a story about friendship. Stick and Stone become good friends, especially after Stick stands up for Stone when Pinecone bullies him. An unexpected twist comes in the form of a hurricane, which blows Stick away and leads Stone to search high and low for his buddy. The picture book lends itself to lessons on friendship and bullying. The illustrations are wonderful – simple and expressive.



**Discussion questions:**

1. Who are the main characters in this story? What problem do both Stick and Stone have?
2. How did Stick stand up for Stone? How did Stone feel when he couldn't find his friend?
3. What is the moral/lesson of this story? (be a good friend, be kind to everyone)

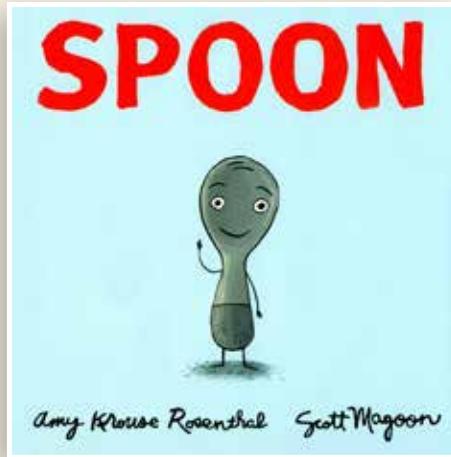
**Activities:**

1. Divide a piece of paper into three sections. Students are asked to think of three ways they can be a friend. Depending on ability, students may complete this on their own, with a buddy or can dictate their response and do their own illustrations. Allow time for students to share their ideas with the class.
2. Take class outside to look for their own Stick and Stone. Use markers to draw a simple face on a rock and a stick. Encourage pairs to act out parts of the story, using their Sticks/Stones.

235

**Spoon,**  
by Amy Krouse  
Rosenthal

Spoon thinks his friends have it so much better than he does. He doesn't get to cut and spread like Knife. He doesn't get to go practically everywhere like Fork, and he's not cool and exotic like Chopsticks. Then he finds out that his friends think Spoon is the lucky one. He gets to be silly and bang on a pot, unlike Knife who is always handled so seriously. Fork wishes he could measure things like Spoon. Lessons in this book include be happy with what you have, and accept your own unique gifts.



**Discussion questions:**

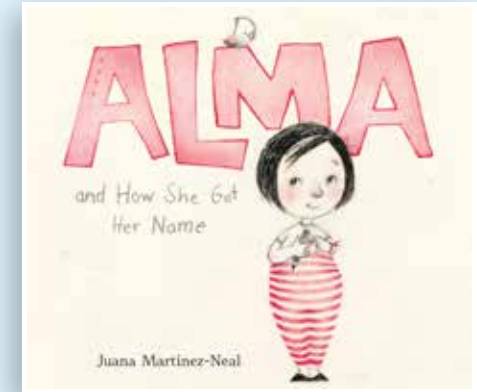
1. Why does Spoon think his friends have it so much better than him?
2. When Spoon couldn't see all the great things about his life, what did mom do to help him? Have you ever felt that way about yourself? What could you do the next time you feel that way?
3. Take a minute and think of at least 2 great things about yourself. Brainstorm a list of the special things you think of – work as pairs or as a class.

**Activities:**

1. Make a paper spoon for each child to help them remember great things about themselves. Make the spoon large enough that words can be written onto the spoon. Decorate them and hang them in the classroom.
2. Create a utensil family, using plastic spoons, forks and knives, along with craft items such as googly eyes, pipe cleaners.

123

**Alma and How She  
Got Her Name,**  
by Juana Martinez-  
Neal



**Lesson Focus:** Students will be able to connect their own names to art.

Link to Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmOQ1IsjydI>

**Playful/Artful Learning Experience**

1. The author has hidden a bird on almost every page. See if you can find them all.
2. After you find them, go on a bird watch outside or online.
3. Have students practice moving like the birds, chirping like the birds, etc.
4. After the hunt is over, doodle birds and give them special names.



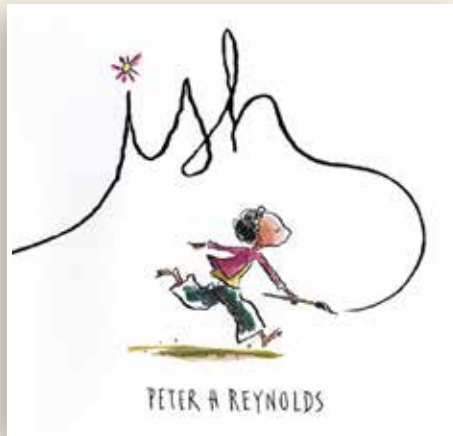
**Types of Play in this Experience**

- Creative
- Imaginative
- Social
- Symbolic
- Deep
- Object
- Dramatic

1 2 3 5

## **Ish,** by Peter Reynolds

Ramon loves to draw – until his older brother makes fun of his drawings. Then one day, he finds someone who enjoys his work – his little sister. From her he learns that his drawing of a vase doesn't have to be perfect, it just has to look "vase-ish".



### **Discussion questions:**

1. How many of you love to draw?
2. Why did Ramon have trouble drawing after his brother made fun of his picture? What could Ramon have said to his brother?
3. What does Marisol mean when she says that the picture is "vase-ISH?"
4. What are some new ideas Ramon finds for his art once he starts to see the world in the new, ISH way?
5. Could you draw a feeling, like Ramon did? What would happy-ish look like?

### **Activities:**

1. Ish-ful Portraits: create an ish-ful portrait. Label them ishfully "Peter-ish", "Tyanna-ish". Class can partner up and do ish-ful portraits of each other.
2. Math – estimation. Quickly show a group of items, not giving class time to count. Ask how many? 10-ish? 5-ish?
3. Fold a piece of drawing paper into quarters. Have class write the name of something Raymond drew in each quarter (ex: tree-ish, house-ish, fish-ish, boat-ish). Let the class have fun drawing their own versions of things Raymond drew.

1 2 3 5

## **Exclamation Mark,** by Amy Krouse Rosenthal

This is a creative story about an exclamation mark who feels out of place around all the periods. He wants desperately to fit in. He meets a question mark and soon discovers how exciting it can be to be different.



### **Discussion questions:**

1. How was Exclamation Mark different from all the periods? How did he try to fit in? What did he do when nothing he tried worked?
2. Have you ever felt different from your friends? What did you do?
3. What happened when he met Question Mark?

### **Activities:**

1. Brainstorm with the class ways in which having a positive attitude (making their mark) can affect their school year, friendships, classroom community, etc. Make a list on chart paper to use as a reference if needed for the next activity.
2. "Make Your Mark" Bulletin Board: Using black and white construction paper, let class make exaggerated exclamation marks (big, black shapes for the line, round white shapes for the dot). Make sure the white dot part is large enough to write words or draw small pictures to illustrate/label strengths each child wishes to show to the world. Typical answers may be along the lines of making new friends, getting better grades, being a good listener, being respectful of others, being a good sport, etc. These can be shared, then put on a bulletin board. Students could write their names with white crayon or chalk on the black part.

1 2 3

## The Legend of Rock, Paper, Scissors

by Drew Daywalt

**Lesson Focus:** Students will be able to make connections between random objects.

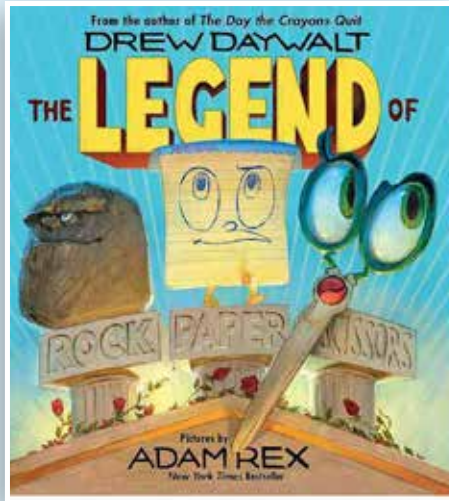
Link to Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vyxcpMhUM7M>

### Playful/Artful Learning Experience

1. Ask students to work with a friend to find three random objects around the learning space.
2. Working in pairs, ask them to make as many connections to the objects as possible. For example - if the students gather a marker, a puzzle, and notebook, they are connected by being made by humans, they have printed images on them, and they are all used in learning.
3. Once they have made connections, ask them to trade items with another partner and repeat the process.
4. Keep repeating this process until the partnerships have had a chance to learn with all the random objects.
5. Share together as a group all the connections that were made.

### Types of Play in this Experience

Creative  
Imaginative  
Social  
Symbolic  
Object  
Dramatic



3 4 5

## One, by Katherine Otoshi

This is a simple picture book about the power of being yourself and standing up to bullies. It shows children that one person can make a difference.

### Discussion questions:

1. What does Blue think of himself? How does that change when he is around Red?
2. What happened to Red when no one asked him to stop being mean?
3. What happened when One stood up to Red?
4. What does it mean "to count" - to feel like you have value? When was Red asked to be part of the group that counts?

### Activities:

1. Using chart paper or the board, write "Every 1 counts!" The 1 can be very large and decorated with colors seen in the book. Underneath the 1, you can ask the class to come up with positive things to do when someone is being mean - "use kind words", "be a good friend", "ask a friend to play", etc. Students can then use paper and crayons to make their own "Every 1 Counts" posters, signing their names under the positive response.
2. Cut out red, blue, yellow, green, purple and orange circles and numbers from one to seven. Ask students to use the shapes and numbers to act out or retell the story of One. How did they feel acting out the different colors and numbers?

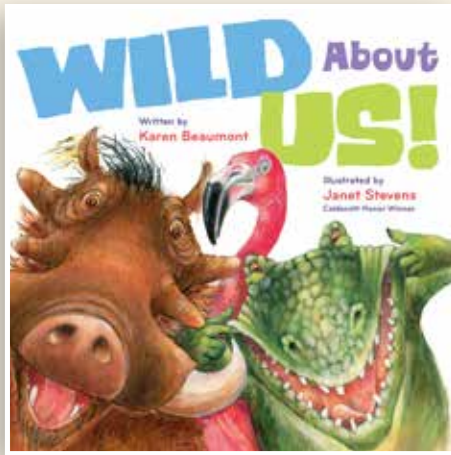




234

## **Wild About Us!** by Karen Beaumont

Wild About Us is a cleverly written and beautifully illustrated book about the celebration of differences. Warty Warthog takes you on a journey through the zoo, looking at ways his zoo friends embrace that which makes them unique, whether it is Elephant's long nose, or Kangaroo's huge feet. This book about acceptance, self-confidence and compassion will bring out the best in all of us.



### **Discussion questions:**

1. What are some of the words used in this book to describe the animals?
2. How did they seem to feel about the way they looked?
3. The animals in the book are "wild" about themselves. Why?
4. What connection can you make to these zoo animals?

### **Activities:**

1. Brainstorm different words used to describe the animals in Wild About Us! Add other descriptive words as appropriate to the list.
2. Describe why you are wild about yourself to a friend. Now, draw a self-portrait showing why you are wild about yourself. Share your picture with the group.
3. Using the list of descriptive words, draw a picture of an animal, focusing on the chosen word. Example: Drawing a zebra with lots of stripes or a crocodile with many sharp teeth.

123

## **I Got Rhythm,** by Connie Schofield-Morrison

**Lesson Focus:** Students will be able to create instruments from recyclable materials.

Link to Story: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_JTAXAqcpJw&t=3s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_JTAXAqcpJw&t=3s)

### **Playful/Artful Learning Experience**

1. After reading about rhythm, remind students that its ok to march to the beat of their own drum.
2. Make a drum. Get creative. There is no wrong way to do it.
3. Plan a parade around the school with students marching and beating their own drums.

### **Types of Play in this Experience**

Creative  
Imaginative  
Social  
Object



1 2 3 4 5

## **The One and Only Ivan,** by Katherine Applegate

This Newberry Award winning chapter book is told through the eyes of Ivan, a silver back gorilla who has been living in captivity for 27 years. The book begins with Ivan living at the Exit 8 Big Top Mall and Video Arcade, along with Stella, an elephant and Bob, a stray dog. Ivan tells his story through flashbacks of where he has been, challenges he faces, and his hopes for the future. When the owner of the Mall brings in a baby elephant named Ruby, Ivan understands what captivity really means and begins to work to find a better way of life for himself and his friends.



### **Discussion questions:**

1. Who are the main animal characters in the story? Why are they important to Ivan?
2. How does Julia try to help Ivan?
3. How does Ivan learn about the outside world? What do you think is the most important thing for him to learn?
4. How does the arrival of Ruby change things for Ivan? What does he promise Stella?
5. The idea of belonging is important in this story. Discuss the idea of belonging from the view point of each character. Compare that to what belonging means to you.

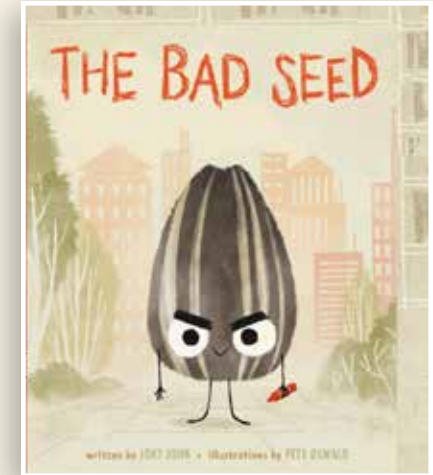
### **Activities:**

1. Make an anchor chart showing the 4 places Ivan has lived. Help class brainstorm details of Ivan's life in each place. When finished, use the anchor chart for additional activities. Students may write their responses on sticky notes to add to the chart.
2. Go online to learn about the real Ivan, who inspired this book, and find out how he adapted to life at Zoo Atlanta.
3. Allow students to research mountain gorillas, their natural habitat and what can be done to help them. Go to [www.gorillas.org](http://www.gorillas.org) to find out what is currently being done to protect these animals.

1 2 3 5

## **The Bad Seed,** by Jory John

This is a book about a seed – a bad seed. He has a bad temper, bad manners, and a bad attitude. He knows he's bad. Everyone thinks he's bad. So, he acts bad. But what would happen if he decides he wants to change and be happy? This book shows that positive change is possible for everyone – with some will power, acceptance and just plain being yourself.



### **Discussion questions:**

1. Why does the main character call himself a “bad seed”? What are some of the “bad” things the seed does?
2. Why do you think the bad seed decided he was ready to be happy? What are some of the things he does to try to be good?
3. Have you ever had days when you acted like the bad seed?



### **Activities:**

1. The bad seed says he wasn't always a bad seed. How do you think he felt when he heard others call him a “bad seed”? How could others have helped him instead? Draw a picture of something you would have done to help the bad seed. Share your drawing with the class and explain your thinking.
2. Seed Sort: Give children a paper plate with different types of seeds. Have them sort the seeds into groups and explain why they sorted the seeds the way they did.
3. Sunflowers: Materials: paper, paint – brown, green and yellow, paint brushes and forks. Paint a small brown circle in the center of the paper. Use green paint to make a stem and a leaf or two. Dig the tines of the fork into the yellow paint, and starting from the brown circle, draw outward to make the petals.
4. This book would be a great addition to a plant unit. Visit this site for tons of seed activities for children: [fantasticfunandlearning.com](http://fantasticfunandlearning.com) and search for “35 Seed Activities for Young Kids”.

1 2 3

## **The Many Colors of Harpreet Singh,**

by Supriya Kelkar

**Lesson Focus:** Students will be able to practice expressing their emotions.

Link to Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ula1AWqVg9s>

### **Playful/Artful Learning Experience**

1. Harpreet Singh had many emotions throughout the story - happy, sad, shy, hurt, angry.
2. Have students identify these emotions, what actions may cause them, and how they feel when these emotions arise.
3. Using basic art materials, have students create masks to match these emotions.
4. Once masks are finished, lead students in role playing learning experiences connected to each emotion.

### **Types of Play in this Experience**

Creative  
 Social  
 Socio-Dramatic  
 Symbolic  
 Deep  
 Dramatic



1 2 4

## **Pete and Pickles,**

by Berkely Breathed

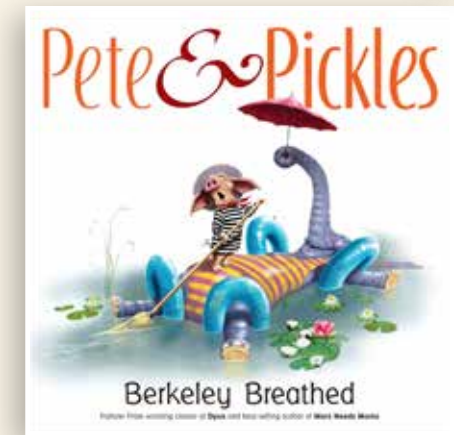
This is a sweet book about acceptance and unexpected friendship, and a pig who is lonely, but just doesn't know it. Pete is a perfectly predictable, practical, uncomplicated pig. At least, he was . . . before a runaway circus elephant named Pickles stampeded into his life, needing a friend. Pickles is larger than life and overflowing with imagination. She takes Pete swan-diving off Niagara Falls. (Sort of) And sledding down the Matterhorn. (Sort of) Pete goes along for the wild ride and begins to enjoy himself, until Pickles goes too far and Pete tells her she must leave.

### **Discussion questions:**

1. Who do you think Paprika was?
2. Why do you think Pickles ran to Pete?
3. How did the pig save the elephants life?
4. Pickles dreams about going all over the world. What do you dream about?

### **Activities:**

1. Make a Valentines Day card for your best friend, your teacher, your mother or father.
2. Make a bouquet of 3 dimensional flowers. Cut out several circles of different sizes. Using one circle make 5 slits (pie slices) but do NOT cut into the middle. Leave room for the middle. Fold the slices up and glue a smaller different colored circle in the middle. For another type of flower, cut 15+ slits around the circle then do the same with another colored circle (the same size). Glue the cut circles together and fold up the skinny slits so you can see both colors. Glue the flowers to popsicle sticks, piper cleaners or thick strips of paper (you can make the strips by folding a piece of paper several times).
3. Plan a grand adventure (sort of) that you can do on the school playground.



2 3 4 5

## Leo the Late Bloomer, by Robert Krause

In *Leo the Late Bloomer*, Leo is behind his friends in reading, writing, drawing, eating neatly and speaking. When Leo's father becomes concerned, Leo's mother explains that Leo is simply a late bloomer. Later, in his own good time, Leo "blooms", pleasing his patient parents and, of course, himself. This is a good book to use to help children understand that everyone does things at their own pace, and that's alright.

### Discussion questions:

1. How do you think Leo felt about not being able to do the things his friends could do?
2. How do you think Leo's parents felt at the beginning of the story?
3. How did Leo learn to draw, write and speak?
4. How do you think Leo and his family felt at the end of the story?

### Activities:

1. Whole group: Ask the class to think of things that they were unable to do when little, but can do now – skipping, reading, writing, riding a bike, etc. Make a list of those skills they are most proud of. Have children draw pictures to illustrate the list. Display the list and illustrations in the classroom.
2. How would you like to celebrate when you learn a new skill?
3. How could you show someone – a friend, brother or sister – how proud you are of them?



1 2 3

## Hey, Wall!, by Susan Verde

**Lesson Focus:** Students will be able to express themselves through collaborative group art.

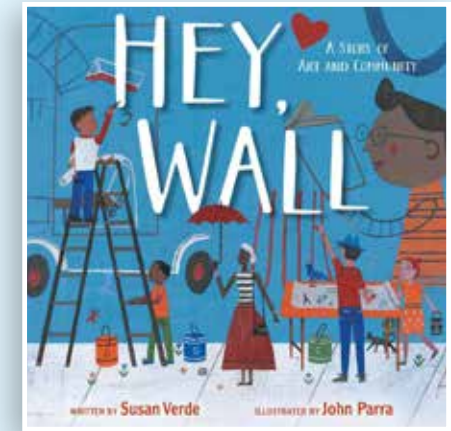
Link to Story: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rMw\\_ZBNs468&t=3s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rMw_ZBNs468&t=3s)

### Playful/Artful Learning Experience

1. After reading the book, place 10 feet of bulletin board on the floor.
2. Provide students with markers, paint, crayons, etc. and ask them to create their own "wall."
3. Display proudly.

### Types of Play in this Experience

Creative  
Imaginative  
Social  
Socio-Dramatic  
Symbolic  
Deep  
Object  
Dramatic



1 2 3 4 5

**Zero,**  
by Kathryn Otoshi

Zero feels empty inside and has a hole right through the center. She feels left out because she wants to count like the other numbers but how can she when she is worth nothing? This book explores how to find value in yourself and others.



**Discussion questions:**

1. What does it mean to have value?
2. Why did Zero only see an empty hole inside?
3. How did Seven help Zero find her value?
4. Have you ever felt like you didn't matter? What made you feel that way?
5. Think of a time when you felt valuable – to friends or to family. How did you feel then?



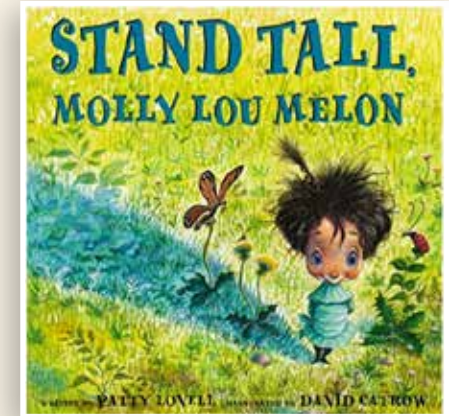
**Activities:**

1. Whole group: Using chart paper or white board, brainstorm a list of words from the book that have more than one meaning (count, value, hole, stretch, open, soar).
2. Prepare paper with a large zero covering most of the page. Ask students to draw a picture of the time they felt really valuable, cut it out and glue it into the center to the zero. Share your picture and story with your classmates.
3. Prepare ahead of time: Cut out large "coins" from construction paper. Write something valuable about each person on their coin. Ex: kind, helpful, understanding, friendly, etc. Give each child their coin. Ask the class to discuss how it feels to know that someone values something about them.

1 2 3 5

**Stand Tall,  
Molly Lou Melon,**  
by Patty Lovell

We are all unique, and no one more so than Molly Lou Melon. She is short and clumsy, has a voice like a bullfrog and has buck teeth so big she can stack pennies on them. But she doesn't mind – her grandmother always told her to walk proud, smile big, and sing loud. Molly puts that advice into practice as she deals with a bully at her new school. David Catrow's illustrations are bright, colorful and funny.



**Discussion questions:**

1. How did Molly Lou's grandmother make her feel special?
2. What happened when Molly Lou moved to a new town?
3. How did Molly solve the problem?
4. How did Ronald Durkin change?
5. What does "standing tall" mean to you?



**Activities:**

1. Whole group: Print hard copies of the sayings Molly's grandmother told her. Ex: "Walk as proudly as you can and the world will look up to you". Display the sayings on the wall or board as you come to them in the story. These sayings can be used throughout the school year to remind students that they can stand tall, like Molly Lou Melon.
2. Take a digital photo of each student or ask them to draw self-portraits. Encourage everyone to think of at least one positive statement about themselves and write it on the drawing or the printed photo. Use these to make a bulletin board in the class.
3. Give each student the story starter "I stand tall by..." Allow time for students to share with the class ways in which they stand tall.

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## Say Something, by Peter H. Reynolds

In this empowering new picture book, Peter H. Reynolds explores the many ways that a single voice can make a difference. Each of us, every day, have the chance to say something: with our actions, our words, and our voices. Perfect for kid activists everywhere, this timely story reminds readers of the undeniable importance and power of their voice. There are so many ways to tell the world who you are...what you are thinking...and what you believe. And how you'll make it better. The time is now: SAY SOMETHING!



### Discussion questions:

1. Why is it important for all of us to say something?
2. In the book, what are some of the ways children found to say something?
3. What is your message for others? What would you like to change in your class, your school or in the world?

### Activities:

1. Whole group: Brainstorm things to say, using the book for inspiration. Ex: Every Voice Matters; Be Kind, Peace, You Are Braver Than You Think, To Have a Friend Be a Friend, Believe in Yourself, Be You!, Follow Your Heart, Be Brave!, Together is Better. Make a class list to use with either of the next two activities.
2. Create Say Something! stations for students to rotate through. Stations can include a painting/art station, a poetry station, a dress-up station, a poster making station, etc. Encourage students to think of something they want to say from the list generated earlier.
3. Say Something! Signs: Signs and posters allow people to creatively use their voice to inspire others. Invite the class to create their own signs using a variety of materials. You can have speech bubbles cut out to use in the signs/posters. When finished, allow each to share their work and take a group photo of all holding up their signs.

# Types of Play



## Imaginative

Play in which learners pretend that real things are otherwise. (Pretending it is raining inside)

## Mastery

Play in which learners attempt to gain control of environments. (Marble mazes, Rube Goldberg's, DNA models)

## Creative

Play that enables learners to explore, develop ideas and make things.

## Exploratory

Play in which learners explore objects, spaces, etc. through the senses in order to find out information or explore possibilities.

## Fantasy

Play in which learners take on roles that would not occur in real life. (Being a superhero)

## Socio-dramatic

The enactment of real-life scenarios that are based on personal experiences. (Playing house, going shopping)

## Communication

Play using words, songs, rhymes, poetry, etc.

## Locomotor

Play which involves movement. (Hide and seek, animal mimicry, dance)

## Rough Tumble

When learners are in physical contact during play, but there is no violence. (energetic play)

## Dramatic

Play that dramatizes events in which learners have not directly participated, as if in front of an audience.

## Symbolic

Occurs when learners use an object to stand for another object. (A stick becomes a horse)

## Recapitulative

Play in which learners might explore history, rituals and myths.

## Role

Play in which learners take on a role beyond the personal or domestic roles associated with socio-dramatic play.

## Social

Play during which rules for social interaction are constructed and employed. (Setting the table, creating a society, board games)

## Deep

An ecstatic form of play that is intense and transcendent. Classified more by mood rather than activity.

## Object

Play in which learners explore items using their senses. Basically, playing with stuff.

## Resources

### Additional ideas to use with the Unified Young Readers Club resource

The following is a list of generic examples of other activities teachers may want to use with any of the books in the Unified Young Readers Club resource, and beyond:

- Role play portions of the story
- Retell the story from the viewpoint of different characters
- Draw a picture about the story
- Write a letter to one of the characters in the book
- Brainstorm additional questions the book may have raised
- Create a "Feeling Wall" using pictures, words, phrases
- Start a Reflection Journal to record individual reactions to the book or to subsequent discussions
- Explore other ways to resolve the problem presented in the book – in the form of discussion, creative writing or role playing
- Interview a classmate you would like to know better
- Ask a different friend to sit with you at lunch
- Start a Random Acts of Kindness project - class or whole school activity

### Audio Books/Reading Websites/Book sources:

- Storyline Online [www.storylineonline.net](http://www.storylineonline.net)
- Tumble Book Library [www.tumblebooklibrary.com](http://www.tumblebooklibrary.com)
- Online Stories for Children Free [www.bing.com/videos](http://www.bing.com/videos)
- Youtube [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)  
Search: animated read aloud books for children
- Scholastic Books [www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com)
- Amazon [www.amazon.com/books](http://www.amazon.com/books)

### Expanded booklist on bullying:

#### Elementary:

- *Bootsie Barker Bites*, by Barbara Bottner
- *Henry and the Bully*, by Nancy Carlson
- *My Best Friend*, by Mary Ann Rodman
- *Thank You, Mr. Falker*, by Patricia Polacco
- *Goggles*, by Ezra Jack Keats

#### Middle School:

- *Super Emma*, by Sally Warner
- *Secret Saturdays*, by Tomey Maldonado
- *The Girls*, by Amy Goldman Koss
- *Emma-Jean Lazarus Fell Out of a Tree*, by Lauren Tarshis
- *Slob*, by Ellen Potter





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**Unified Champion  
Schools**

# **Unified Young Readers Club**

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