

Curriculum Overview

Welcome to the *Peace of Mind Curriculum for Grades 4 and 5!* All of the ***Peace of Mind Curricula***, including this one, integrate mindfulness practice, brain science, social emotional learning, and conflict resolution for elementary school students.

In this curriculum we have also included lessons on recognizing and addressing implicit bias, noticing and responding to gender stereotypes, and understanding and standing up to bullying behavior.

The **Peace of Mind Program** helps students develop the skills to notice and manage their emotions, to focus their attention, to practice kindness, empathy and gratitude, to build healthy relationships, and to solve conflicts peacefully.

Peace of Mind also aims to equip and inspire kids to address unkindness and unfairness when they encounter it at school or with friends, and to feel confident in their capacities to contribute to making the world a better place.

Teaching the ***Peace of Mind Curriculum*** weekly over the course of the whole school year, year after year, and integrating elements of ***Peace of Mind*** into every day, creates positive change in a classroom and, over time, in school climate, moving schools toward kindness and inclusion.



For an overview of the philosophy, history and goals of the **Peace of Mind Program**, please watch the short video introduction by Peace Teacher and curriculum author Linda Ryden on our website: TeachPeaceofMind.org/videos/.

Curriculum Structure

All ***Peace of Mind*** curricula include three critical, integrated components:

- Mindfulness
- Brain Science
- Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) with an emphasis on Kindness, Conflict Resolution. This curriculum includes a focus on and addressing bias and stereotypes, as well.

Every lesson begins with mindfulness practice, and every lesson ends with Kindness Pal practice. Brain science, social emotional learning (SEL) and conflict resolution lessons are particularly effective because they are built upon this foundation.

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to our thoughts, our feelings, and what is happening around us, and putting some space between our reactions and our response. Mindfulness practice in this curriculum might include quietly sitting to focus on breath awareness, practicing mindful listening, noticing how our bodies feel when we have different emotions, engaging in active movement, and more.

Mindfulness practice is becoming more prevalent in schools because research shows that mindfulness training can help to enhance children's attention and focus (Zenner et al., 2014; Zoogman et al. 2015), improve self-control and emotion regulation (Metz et al., 2013), and improve overall social emotional competence including increased empathy, perspective-taking, and emotional control, and less peer-rated aggression (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2014; Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010).

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which we learn to manage emotions; set and achieve positive goals; feel and show empathy for others; establish and manage positive relationships; and make responsible decisions. (CASEL.org)

A growing body of research shows that tending to students' social and emotional needs has positive benefits. A meta-analysis of 213 school-based SEL programs with over 270,000 students found that students who received SEL instruction, compared to a control group, showed significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes and behavior, and an 11 percent gain in academic achievement. (Durlak et al., 2011).

Peace of Mind's SEL components include kindness practice in every lesson through Kindness Pals; lessons on empathy, gratitude practice, building connection, addressing bullying, implicit bias, apologizing and using a set of tools to resolve conflicts peacefully.

Ultimately, the goal of **Peace of Mind** is to create a school culture of kindness. Creating a kinder, more positive school climate and dedicating class time for social and emotional learning are two important and evidence-based approaches to bullying prevention (Bradshaw, 2015; O'Brennan & Bradshaw, 2013).

Peace of Mind's goals and lesson structure are aligned with the 5 Core Competencies identified by the Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL).

Peace of Mind teaches Mindfulness-based Social and Emotional Learning.

We know that mindfulness and SEL both have positive benefits for our students and our schools. But here's what's really exciting: we have learned in over a decade of teaching this work to students that integrating mindfulness with SEL is an even more transformative approach than teaching either mindfulness or SEL on its own.

Ultimately, when taught and learned together, mindfulness and SEL have the potential to transform our communities and our world with the former cultivating the tendencies for compassion and ethical ways of living and the latter teaching the skills to make that happen.

- Linda Lantieri, Senior Program Advisor for CASEL and Adjunct Assistant Professor, Columbia University, Teachers College

Brain science is a key ingredient in **Peace of Mind's** mindfulness-based SEL approach. **Peace of Mind** offers students a basic understanding of the roles of the amygdala, the hippocampus and the prefrontal cortex in reacting and responding to stimuli. This knowledge helps kids understand how and why we get angry, for example, and how and why practicing mindfulness can help us calm down enough to make a decision that moves us closer to the outcome we'd like to have.

We can't know what challenges our children will face as they grow, but we have confidence that the combination of these internal and external approaches will give students the ability to meet them with skill and kindness.

Now let's have a look at the curriculum.

Lesson Themes

The 33 weekly lessons in the **Peace of Mind Curriculum for 4th and 5th Grade** are divided into 7 units focused in the following areas:

Unit 1: Welcome (back) to Peace Class

The first four lessons introduce some new and some familiar mindfulness practices (for those who have had *Peace of Mind* before), encouraging students to take ownership of their practice this year, learning to notice which practices are most helpful to them.

Unit 2: Learning our Body's Language

In this unit, we explore the embodiment of feelings. When we can notice where feelings begin in our bodies, it gives us a head start on gaining control over how we respond to them.

Unit 3: Empathy in Action

In this unit, we'll review Heartfulness and the THiNK Test and then move into a set of lessons on perspective taking related to understanding and addressing bullying.

Unit 4: Gratitude and the Negativity Bias

In this unit, we explore our brain's tendency to focus on the negative and how we can balance this tendency with gratitude practice.

Unit 5: Brain Science and Mindfulness

In this unit, we review the functions and interrelatedness of three key parts of our brains: the amygdala, the hippocampus and the prefrontal cortex. We put this knowledge to work in a new skit.

Unit 6: Conflict Resolution

In this unit, we integrate everything we've done until this point. Through discussion, skits and games, we apply what we've been learning about mindfulness, kindness, empathy, and brain science to the challenge of resolving conflicts peacefully.

Unit 7: The Story I'm Telling Myself

In this unit, we address the most challenging topics in our curriculum: noticing our own thoughts and learning about stereotypes and implicit bias. In this unit we are helping children begin to use the mindfulness and other skills they've been learning to understand and respond to societal challenges.

End of Year

We close the year with the Kindness Things exercise and a student-directed Capstone Project that invites students to reflect on how they will put what they have learned this year to work.

Lesson Sequence

Lessons are designed to be taught in the order in which they are presented. However, we know that in some cases, it may make sense to you to change the

order of lessons to meet your students' needs or to coincide with events in your school community. Please do what you think best meets the needs of your class.

The very first lesson you teach about mindfulness is actually the first step toward peaceful conflict resolution in your classroom. From Week 1, you will be building the foundation that will enable children to solve conflicts with empathy, compassion and skill. Every lesson is a critical piece of the foundation for successful conflict resolution. Without the foundation, the conflict resolution lessons themselves will be less effective.

However, if you are seeing a great deal of conflict among your students in the beginning of the year, and would like to get to those lessons more quickly, here is an alternative sequence: Teach all of Unit 1 and then go directly to Unit 5, Brain Science and then to Unit 6, Conflict Resolution. After Unit 6, you return to Units 2, 3 and 4, and then move to Unit 7.

All of the lessons bear repeating. If you feel your class needs more practice in a certain area, feel free to repeat a lesson, or segment of the lesson, that feels helpful.



Lesson Framework

Each lesson includes the following components:

- **Mindfulness and Mindfulness Helper**
Mindfulness is the foundation for everything we teach. Reinforcing each child's ability to be a Mindfulness Helper is important. Helping to lead the class in mindfulness practice supports each child in making the practices their own. Leadership of this part of class may be particularly beneficial for children who do not have leadership opportunities in other areas of their lives.
- **Lesson**
Weekly lessons are designed to be engaging and fun with a balance of listening, discussion and activity. Some lessons focus primarily on introducing a new mindfulness practice; most start with a mindfulness practice as the foundation for topics described above.
- **Storybooks and Skits**
Six lessons use topical storybooks to help engage kids in the ideas and

skills being taught. Other lessons engage students in skits to help them practice using the skills and tools they are learning, so that they are available to them when they are really needed!

- **Kindness Pals**

All lessons close with Kindness Pals (except Weeks 32 and 33). Not only do Kindness Pals give students a way to practice kindness, they are an essential tool for building a positive and inclusive classroom and school community.

If you are already familiar with Kindness Pals, you'll find a few new components this year. If you are new to this, or need a reminder, you will find a description of how Kindness Pals work in the lesson for Week 1.

The Kindness Pal practice at the end of each lesson may include:

- Sharing what pals did for each other in the previous week.
- Assignment of new Kindness Pals.
- The Kindness Pal Challenge: a new activity that invites students to find out as much as they can about each other in 90 seconds.
- Sharing what pals learned during the Challenge.

You may not have time for all of these components in every class. That's fine. You might choose to integrate the Kindness Pal Challenge at another time during the week.

NOTE: *In some lessons, you'll find guidance to assign your new Kindness Pals before the end of class in order to have new pals work together on pair activities.*

Materials Needed

You will need the following materials on hand for this curriculum:

- a bell or a chime;
- a means to show videos to your class;
- a talking object, such as a small stuffed animal or bean bag;
- six readily-available storybooks.
 - *Weird, Dare and Tough* by Erin Frankel
 - *Rosie's Brain, Sergio Sees the Good, and Tyaja Uses the THiNK Test* by Linda Ryden

Optional: You may also be interested in investing in these classroom resources. They are not required, but all support the lessons you will be teaching:

- *Ways to Practice Mindfulness - Classroom Poster* that reminds kids of the practices they've learned, and helps them to choose a practice of their own as needed.
- *Peace of Mind Anchor Charts for the Brain and Conflict Toolbox.*
- *The Conflict CAT Game* used in the Conflict Resolution section.
- *Brainy the Puppet*, to help illustrate the Hand Model of the Brain

Please visit TeachPeaceofMind.org/shop/ for a full range of classroom resources.

Teacher Guidance

The first paragraph of each lesson offers you an overview of the lesson.

All of the lessons offer suggested scripts for you. They are there if you need them. Please use them as a support, but feel free to teach the lesson in your own words in the way that feels most natural to you.

Still have questions?

After reading the introductory material here, you may still feel that you would like some support preparing to teach *Peace of Mind*.

We have created a two-hour online course just for you called "**Getting Started with Peace of Mind.**" You can find a link to the course in the Educators section of our website: TeachPeaceofMind.org.

