



Curriculum Overview

Welcome to the *Peace of Mind Core Curriculum for Third Grade!* 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 – in short, to develop the tools to face life’s challenges with compassion and skill.

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 life, 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, gratitude, and conflict resolution.

Every lesson begins with Mindfulness Practice. Brain science, social emotional learning (SEL), and conflict resolution lessons are particularly effective because they are built upon this foundation.

Mindfulness in this Curriculum 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 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).

Brain science is a key ingredient in *Peace of Mind's* 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 students 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.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which we learn to manage emotion, 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).

We are excited about recent research on gratitude which confirms its benefits for social and emotional well-being. According to a white paper produced by the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley for the John Templeton Foundation in 2018, "research suggests that gratitude may be associated with many benefits for individuals, including better physical and psychological health, increased happiness and life satisfaction, decreased materialism, and more."

SEL lessons focus on gratitude and other important topics including kindness, empathy, gratitude, relationship building, inclusion and conflict resolution. *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.org).

Conflict Resolution lessons invite students to integrate the mindfulness, brain science, and SEL skills and understandings built over the course of the year. Inspired by the work of William Kreidler of Educators for Social Responsibility, we created **The Conflict C.A.T.** as a way of remembering the three steps to working out a conflict.

- C** is for Calm Down This is where students tap into their mindfulness practice.
- A** is for Apologize Students can't be involved in an escalating conflict without doing or saying something for which they could apologize.
- T** is for Toolbox The Conflict Toolbox is a list of eight ideas to help work things out, such as sharing, taking turns, and compromising.

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, 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).

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 compassion.

Lesson Themes

This curriculum is divided into seven sequential units. Through these units, students will build self-awareness and self-regulation skills and develop their ability to build healthy relationships with others. Lessons help students develop individual awareness of their emotions, strengthen their own personal mindfulness practices, and practice compassion and kindness toward themselves. Lessons also help students practice gratitude for others, practice kindness toward others, and solve conflicts peacefully.

Here's how the units flow:

Unit 1: Mindfulness Foundations (5 lessons)

This unit builds a critical foundation for all the lessons that follow, introducing students to a range of mindfulness practices. Students experience the effects of each practice personally and begin or continue (if they have had *Peace of Mind* in younger grades) to discern which practices are most helpful to them.

Unit 2: Gratitude and the Brain's Negativity Bias

In this unit, we explore our brain's tendency to focus on the negative and how gratitude practice helps to balance this tendency by focusing on small good things we experience. Through stories, games, and activities, students experience this for themselves.

Unit 3: Metacognition

In this unit, we help kids begin to learn to notice what they are thinking. We discuss the powerful ideas that we don't have to believe everything that we think and that we have choice in where to focus our attention. Skills for life.

Unit 4: Feelings and Sensations (6 lessons)

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

Unit 5: Kindness and Compassion

In this unit, we turn our focus to our relationships with other people. Lessons focus on skills and practices that help us treat others with compassion and kindness. Children experience the benefits of these practices for themselves and others.

Unit 6: Brain Science

In this unit, we review the functions and interrelatedness of three key parts of our brains: the amygdala, the hippocampus, and the prefrontal cortex. Through stories and role plays, students gain powerful insight into themselves and why mindfulness helps us calm down.

Unit 7: Applied Mindfulness: Conflict Resolution

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

End-of-Year Activity

We end with a Kindness Chain as a final way of connecting with each other and appreciating all that we have learned together.

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 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.

That said, please note that 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.

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. You'll find more on the Mindfulness Helper in the next section.

- **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**

Many lessons use stories to help engage kids in the ideas and skills being taught. Other lessons engage students in acting out stories 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 include a Kindness Pal Activity and close with Kindness Pals. 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. This practice is described in more detail in the next section.