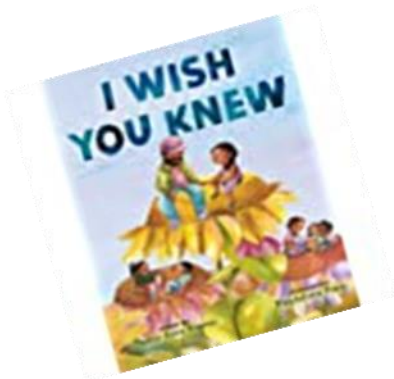




PROJECT CORNERSTONE

# Asset Building Champions

CHAMPION YEAR



### Book of the Month

Title: I Wish You Knew  
Author: Jackie Azúa Kramer  
Illustrator: Magdalena Mora  
Publisher: Roaring Book Press

**Key Phrase**  
Listen with  
Your Whole  
Heart



## BOOK SUMMARY

Estrella misses her dad when he has to leave because he was not born in this country. She feels alone and wishes she could share her angst with someone. Other students and staff at her school also have worries. Because Estrella opens up about her situation, other students and adults feel comfortable to share their stories under the branches of the oak tree where compassion and empathy grow. This old oak tree represents a caring community and demonstrates that “no one is alone if others are willing to listen.”



## FRAMEWORK

### Social Emotional Learning (SEL):

Social Awareness (Tolerance, Acceptance, Belonging, and Safety)

### Developmental Assets:

- Support - #3 Caring Adults, #5 Caring School Climate
- Social Competencies - #33 Interpersonal Competence, #34 Cultural Competence
- Positive Values - #26 Caring, #27 Equity and Social Justice, #29 Honesty
- Positive Identity - #37 Personal Power, #41 Positive Cultural Identity
- Boundaries and Expectations - #15 Positive Peer Influence
- Empowerment - #10 Safety
- Commitment to Learning - #24 Bonding to School

### Developmental Relationships:

- Express Care – Listen, Believe in Me, Encourage
- Provide Support – Navigate, Empower, Advocate



## GOALS

- Students will develop and practice empathy skills, such as active listening, perspective-taking, and compassion.
- Students will examine their own biases, assumptions, and prejudices that may hinder their ability to empathize with others.
- Students will promote empathy as a means of resolving conflicts, reducing stress, and building stronger connections with others.
- Students will identify caring adults and become aware of support systems available to advocate for them.



## KEY IDEAS

Key ideas are respect, empathy for others, active listening, examining biases, and perspective-taking. The power of connection and empathy helps students improve their mental health by learning to understand underlying issues in a person's life. Active listening skills allow the students to:

- Better understand the situation
- Improve retention of information
- Enhance engagement
- Refine communication skills

The use of active listening allows students to gain insight into the speaker's experience. Thus, perspective-taking builds empathy.

As you discuss the key points, sensitive topics may be introduced by the students. Remember that as a caring adult your superpower is to listen. Be an active listener, encourage students to express themselves without interrupting or judging. Use age-appropriate language in response and validate their feelings that it is normal to feel scared, sad, angry, or confused sometimes. Most importantly, be honest about your own feelings. This will help children understand that it's okay to feel vulnerable and that they are not alone.

It is important that volunteers understand that they will not be able to resolve some of the deeper issues students are experiencing. Realize that being heard will help students process the situation. If you hear concerning information about the safety or welfare of a student, be sure to report this to the teacher, so that resources can be provided.



## CONVERSATION STARTERS

K-6

### **Beach Ball Toss Icebreaker**

Materials: beach ball or other soft ball

Ask students this question: What do you wish grown-ups knew about kids? Pause. Tell students that you will toss the ball to one of them. When you catch it, shout out your idea. Then pass the ball to another student. Continue until everyone has had a chance to answer. You can change the question mid-way through the students, if needed.

Some additional questions could be:

- What would you do if you won the lottery?
- If you were in charge of the school, what would you change?
- What advice do you wish someone had given you when you were in kindergarten?
- If you had a magic wand, what would you change about the world?

3-6

## D-Icebreakers

Materials: D-Icebreaker handout for each group, 10 dice

You can use this icebreaker activity in a group setting or in pairs. This activity supports students getting to know each other. All you need is a dice! Each number they land on corresponds to a different question on the handout. As students answer the questions, they will learn more about each other.

1. Divide the class into 10 groups of 3 or 4.
2. Pass out a handout to each student.
3. Have students take turns to roll the dice and then answer the question that corresponds with the number rolled.
4. Debrief with the students: What did they learn from this game? Was it hard to listen? Did some of your assumptions prove different than you thought?
5. After you read the book, have students play the game again in different groups.



## READ THE BOOK

Before reading the book, take a picture walk through the story. With a picture walk you are just looking at the illustrations and not reading the text.

- The title of the book is *I Wish You Knew*. What does the word wish mean?
- What do you notice?
- What emotions can you detect in the characters?
- Are there recurring themes? How would you describe the illustrations?
- What do you notice about the use of color in the book?

Now read the story. Everytime someone in the story says "I wish you knew", touch your heart or make a heart with your hands.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

K-2

1. Why is Estrella sad? How do you know she is sad?
2. Can you always know how someone is feeling by just looking at them? What can you ask someone to find out how they are feeling?
3. Estrella misses her father and wished he knew things. What would you wish to tell a special person in your life?
4. Why does Estrella "sit alone at lunch and cry over things"?
5. What happens to make her feel better?
6. What would you share in a sharing circle?
7. What are some signs of nature in the book?
8. How does being outside in nature help your mindset?
9. Who are the caring adults in the book? Who are your caring adults at school and at home?

3-6

1. What does the title of the book, *I Wish You Knew*, mean to you?
2. How does Estrella's sense of loss over her father affect her?
3. What are some of the things students in her class wished others knew?
4. Discuss the influence of nature on Estrella, her dad, and the teacher.
5. What is the power of the sharing circle?
6. What things do you wish adults knew about you?

7. Look at the illustrations in the book. Can you tell how someone is feeling? Why are the illustrations drawn like that? What point is the author and illustrator making?
8. Have you ever made an assumption about someone? What happened?
9. How can we stop making assumptions? (*Stop, THINK, and Understand* why they might be acting that way.)
10. What can you say or do to be thoughtful and kind to others?



## ACTIVITY OPTIONS

K-2

### Who Wears This Shoe?

Materials: different types of shoes (tennis, ballet, hiking shoe, cleats, slipper)

Set out the shoes. Talk about the shoes. Ask students to think about these questions. What do the students see? Who might wear those shoes?

- Hold up a tennis shoe.
  - Who wears tennis shoes?
  - What does a person do while wearing tennis shoes?
  - Is it ok to say that all people who wear a tennis shoe do active things, like play sports, walk, run etc.?
- Hold up a ballet shoe.
  - Who wears this shoe?
  - Is it ok to say that only kids wear this type of shoe? Do adults wear them?
  - (Repeat with other shoes if students are engaged.)

Stop and discuss their answers. Explain that we often make guesses or assumptions about people based on the way they look or what they wear, without real information.

- Hold up the tennis shoe again. Who could wear this shoe? Let's think of all the people that might wear this shoe.
- Was our guess or assumption that only people who are active wear tennis shoes correct?
  - No, we discovered that many people wear tennis shoes.
  - We made a wrong guess (assumption).
- Do same with ballet and other shoes.

When we look at shoes, it only gives us a piece of information about someone. Discuss ways to challenge initial guesses and broaden how to get to know others in a real way without guessing.

- *Stop, think, and understand* before speaking
- Observe body language, facial expressions, tone of voice
- Ask questions to learn more about people
- Listen to them
- Respond to the questions
- Do things together so you get to know each other

Have students look at their own shoe and think about who they are. What would they like others to know about them? Have students:

- Trace the sole of their shoe. Cut out the shoe. Write their name on the back.
- Dictate to an adult or fill in this sentence, My shoe likes to \_\_\_\_\_.
- Draw a picture of your shoe doing this on the front.
- If there is time, collect the shoes and read a few of the backs and have students guess whose shoe it is.
- End the activity by reminding students to *stop, think, and understand* before making an assumption about others.

K-6

### Healing Hand Activity

Materials: construction paper, pencils, scissors, Hand handout (K-1), crayons

After your discussion about the different situations that Estrella and her classmates experienced, have students' popcorn some of their thoughts about what a child might worry about. Their thoughts might be about making friends, eating lunch, arriving on time to school, forgetting their homework, how to tie their shoes etc.

Have students trace their hands on a white piece of paper. Cut out the hand. In the middle of their hand have students write their worries and challenges. Let them know that they will be able to choose if they wish to share what they write. Then on each finger have them write a way to cope with their challenges. Not every challenge has an easy solution. Encourage students to think of how to ask for help and from whom as a step to helping with the challenge. This process will give them a sense of agency over their situation.

\*Kinder to First graders can trace their hand with a pencil or use the hand handout and draw a picture. Then they can dictate what they would like have written to a caring adult.

After students have finished, offer options to share with the group, a peer partner, or an adult. Give students the option not to share as some things may be too personal. Giving students these options allows reflection and opportunity to connect on a deeper level with their peers. It provides a way to connect with empathy towards others. This also promotes the classroom as a safe space.

3-6

### Active Listening Partners

Materials: Chairs, How Do I Stand in Your Shoe Handout

Explain to the class that they are going to practice mindful listening, which means paying full attention to what the other person is saying without interruption or judgement. One person speaks, while the other person listens mindfully. The speaker shares about a personal experience or a feeling they are currently experiencing. Topics for students can be found on the Conversation Starter handout.

Listen Up:

- Pair up students and have them sit facing each other. One student is the speaker and the other the listener.
- The speaker will talk about a personal experience, a feeling, or a topic they are passionate about, while the listener will actively listen without interrupting. Here are some topic ideas:
  - Describe your experiences in school when you were young.
  - Has anyone dipped into your bucket? What happened?
- Set a timer. Start with short time periods to help students develop listening skills.
- While they are listening, have the student practice their nonverbal body language: eye contact, head nodding, smiling, and gestures.

Paraphrase Back:

- After the speaker has finished talking, the listener will then repeat back what they heard to make sure they fully understood the speaker's message.
  - Take a breath and pause for a few seconds.
  - Paraphrase what you heard in a neutral tone. Say,
    - "What I hear you saying is ...."
    - "So, you are saying that ..."
    - "What I understood was ..."

- Ask a question for clarification if needed.
- The roles are then switched. If time allows, you can have students change partners and continue the active listening. You can introduce a new topic if you wish:
  - Who are the caring adults you can go to for help at school or home? Tell about them.
  - What worries do you have about the world, environment, your life, the future?

This activity allows students to practice active listening skills and encourages empathy and understanding between partners. Jeff Zwiers, in *Next Steps with Academic Conversations* (2019)



### Walking in Someone Else's Shoes

Materials: shoes for half the class, print 1 copy of Walking in Shoes cards (cut, fold, and place in a shoe with gray side up

This activity allows students to apply their understanding to real world situations and encourages children to see things from another person's perspective. This may lead to discovery of personal biases or assumptions that impede the ability to empathize with others.

In each shoe, cut and place a folded card gray side up so that the situation statement is visible. For example:

- On front (gray) it says: I didn't finish my homework. On the back it says: I ran out of time because I was at soccer game and we got home too late.

Divide students into partners. Pass out one shoe to a pair with a card in it.

1. Have them read the front of the card and think about how that person feels.
2. Have them talk about how that might feel or if they have ever experienced something similar.
3. What could be happening?
4. Have students then read the back of the card and discuss. Has this ever happened to them?

Next, have the students pass their shoe. Trade shoes 3 times. Form a circle with the students and discuss the following:

- Ask each student to share thoughts about the last shoe they are holding.
- Have students think about why someone might be behaving in this manner. You may not always know what's going on beneath the surface.
- Ask if we can always be sure that we know how other people feel?
- What can you do to be sure to understand their feelings?
  - Listen.
  - Ask clarifying questions.
  - Name the feelings or ask how they are feeling.
- Is there a particular shoe you share a personal experience with? Tell us about it.

Adapted from Molly Barker, founder of *Girls on the Run*®, <http://startempathy.org/search/node/Molly%20Barker>

## CLOSING

### I Wish Sharing Circles

Decide on an area big enough to make one or two sharing circles. You can go outside under a tree or stay inside and group around the classroom. Remind students that the power of the circle is to be able to share in a safe space. Set some ground rules that will make sharing feel safe (no name rule, what is said stays in the circle, no judgements).

Start with a mindful minute. Begin by asking students to sit comfortably and notice what they are thinking and feeling in their bodies. Ask how they felt before the lesson and notice how they feel now. Ask students to share their thoughts, feelings, and ideas that have come out of this lesson. To help the conversation start you can ask the students to fill in the sentence: I wish \_\_\_\_\_ . Emphasize the idea of feeling safe with what they wish to share. Students not wishing to share with the group, can be given the opportunity to share with the teacher or ABC volunteer.



## SCHOOL WIDE EXTENSIONS

### **Who Lived in Your Community**

Materials: tablets, paper, pencils

Have students visit the website [native-land.ca](http://native-land.ca) and search which Indigenous lands your school, neighborhood, or homes are on. Identify the names of the nations and tribes from the land you occupy. Note the history of the land and any related treaties. Research the names of living Indigenous people from this community. Learn the correct pronunciation of the names, tribes, or places that you are including.

As a group, write a land dedication poem to use at all school events that honors these Indigenous cultures. Find out information and key facts to be included and honored in your school community. Set up a special place to honor these cultures. Invite a guest speaker to visit your school.

### **Mandala Bulletin Boards**

Materials: 4 Mandala handouts, crayons, colored pencils, or markers

A mandala contains symbols of a person's inner self, guiding principles, and overall ideas about the world. This Mandala of Me is a get-to-know-me exercise. Coloring mandalas is a relaxing activity that helps us feel centered and peaceful. It also promotes self-expression and a way to share about personal beliefs. Students can choose one of the 4 designs to fill in information about themselves:

- Middle - Self
- Heroes/Heroines
- Hopes for the future
- Goals and principles
- Personal Strengths

Post the finished mandalas on bulletin boards so that the school community can view.

### **Stand Together in Empathy**

Materials: pencil, crayons, large butcher paper for each class to stand on

Students can trace their shoes directly on a large piece of butcher paper and write their name in this and it becomes a floor mural. Ask them to write one of the following responses:

- What they can *say or do* to *stand in this shoe* and show empathy?
- Write about a time when they showed empathy to someone.
- Write about times when they received empathy from someone else.

This can also be done with tracing their shoe on a piece of paper and cutting it out to paste on the mural or along a wall in the school.



## **Create Community with Los Dichos and ABC Programs**

Have ABC and Los Dichos volunteers meet to select and plan out a project to do and a timeline for completing the projects:

- Start a school garden.
- Plant and grow sunflower seeds.
- Create an area to be used for I Wish Sharing Circles.
- Service project that promotes thinking of others.
  - Make cards for people in nursing home, soldiers, immigrants in detentions centers.
  - Make an oragami heart for caring adults to say thank you.
- Plan a Project Cornerstone Week that focusses on kindness.
- Tap into the volunteers expertise. Ask for help in planning an event that celebrates music, dance, or art.