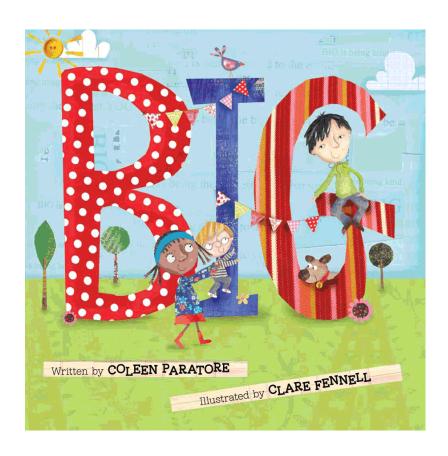
# Little Pickle Press



# Lesson Plans for Teachers Kindergarten - Grade 3

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# Overview

In *BIG*, author Coleen Paratore presents a delightful account of what it means for young children to be big. The book begins by transcending traditional notions of big in relation to age, stature, or accumulation of wealth, and encourages children to think deeply about "being the biggest you that you can be."

*BIG* addresses the concept of being big in a manner that is accessible and easily comprehensible by children of all ages. The book offers opportunities for teachers to cultivate children's understanding of how they can be big every day, including a focus on being:

- Bright and imaginative using your own creative resources to design new experiences
- Healthy making good decisions to take care of your mind and body
- Kind and helpful considering others in your daily interactions
- Valuable actively participating in family, school, and community
- An active citizen thinking and acting locally and globally
- A friend not just to yourself but to the world

The text concludes with a consideration of how children will know whether or not they have achieved being big. *BIG* teaches young readers that being big is not an end point, but a journey taken every day, little by little. The reward for this journey is not a tangible item to display on a shelf, but rather an internal and intangible "feeling of goodness that makes its home in your heart." The book promotes the essential message that children can take ownership of this big journey by thinking and acting in a multitude of little but important ways.

Classroom activities in this instructional unit invite children to reflect on how the little thoughts and actions they engage in on a daily basis add up to living in a big way. These activities draw on students' experiences as individuals, as well as their experiences as members of a family, a classroom, a school, and a community. Projects transition students from consideration of when big happens to how they can measure their own journey toward being big, and culminate with an understanding of the value that being big adds, not only to our own lives, but to the lives of others. The instructional activities also enable teachers to cultivate children's character development through the pillars of community, courage, and responsibility.

This unit includes three lesson plans as well as supplemental online resources to augment the more straightforward projects. The design of each plan allows teachers to build and embellish the activities to a level that best suits the needs of their classroom. Each lesson can be taught in class as described, though options for extension and an integrated community project are included.

At each grade level, the lessons align with the Common Core State Standards Initiative for Speaking and Listening (<a href="http://bit.ly/corecurriculumstandards">http://bit.ly/corecurriculumstandards</a>). The Common Core was recently adopted by the majority of states and is especially pertinent for educators in the United States.

*BIG* is a picture book printed on recycled materials using soy inks and is an excellent addition to every school library. Please visit the links at the end of the lesson plans to see all of our products.

# Project 1 When Does Big Happen?

# Background

What does it mean to be big? Does it mean being as tall as a skyscraper? Does it mean being as round as a hot air balloon? Yes, but it also means so much more. It means acting big like a grown-up. Is there a time at which big happens? Even adults are still growing and learning, becoming bigger every day through the actions they take and the choices they make. Big isn't really a destination that you arrive at one day when you reach a certain age or height or level of success. Big has more to do with maturity, especially in how we treat others and ourselves, through our thoughts, words, and actions. Big happens over time, little by little, every day.

# Objectives

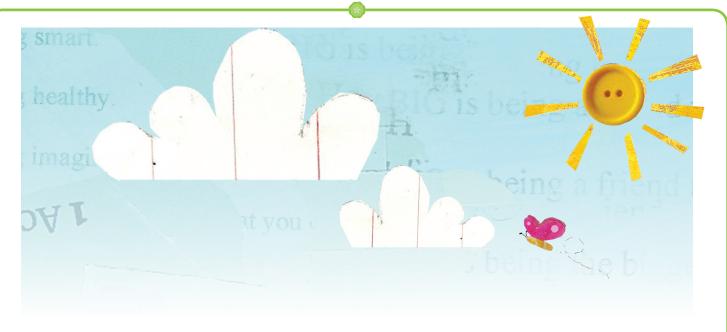
- Students will reflect on how being big is a continuous journey that happens little by little, and on how the little steps they take contribute to big outcomes
- Students will understand that many of the world's greatest resources (ideas, communities, nature) also become big through the culmination of many small but important efforts over time
- Students will develop an understanding that being big isn't about being better (or taller, smarter, wealthier, etc.), but rather about "being the best you that you can be"

#### Focal Activities

#### Guiding Questions:

- What do you think it means to be big?
- Who is big? Older siblings? Adults? Grandparents?
- What do your parents (teachers, older siblings, etc.) think it means to be big?
- Do you think your idea of big is similar to or different from that of your parents?
- What do you get to do (or have to do!) when you're big that doesn't happen when you're not yet big?
- How do you feel about getting big?
- What other things (living or not) become bigger over time?





## Classroom Activity:

Remind students that it's not just people who become big over time, but resources in nature and the community as well. Ask students if any of them have ever started a collection (e.g. stickers, rocks, stamps). Invite them to reflect on how these collections likely started off quite small but grew over time. Encourage students to brainstorm other entities that engage in an ongoing process of growth. To illustrate this idea, help students plant pumpkin seeds (a school garden or planter box is ideal for this project, though seeds can also be planted in small containers and transferred to open space at a later time). As a class, document the growth from seed to pumpkin with photos depicting the plants about once a week. Combine these photos into a journal or linear collage. Ask students to reflect on how these tiny changes in nature produced a big outcome.

# Extension Activity:

Invite students to create a personal timeline for their lives. The timeline might begin with birth and continue through the present, highlighting milestones such as birthdays, birth of a sibling, starting school, learning to ride a bike, etc. Students can include photos, illustrations, and written entries. Help students use their timelines to understand how being big is a process that they have been engaged in throughout their lives. How were you big even when you were little? When you were a small child, you were still you, in the process of being big every day, learning to make good choices, try things on your own, and develop responsibility. Display these timelines in the classroom and encourage students to revisit their timelines and include new milestones throughout the academic year.

# Comprehensive Community Project:

Assist students in creating personal memory books. Once a month (or more often, time permitting), ask students to create a scrapbook page for their memory books. Pages could include a variety of mementos such as self-portraits, writing samples, drawings, measures of height and weight, photos or notes from family, handprints and/or footprints, descriptions or souvenirs from favorite activities, subjects, interests, etc. At the end of the year, students will have a permanent keepsake of the current year's journey to becoming big. You might also have students copy or dedicate certain pages of the memory book to give to family members as a gift. As an alternative, students can use a binder or box as a portfolio to collect important artifacts throughout the school year. From time to time, students can review the items in their portfolio to understand how their ongoing efforts contribute to a big success.

# Character Building Connections

The key character value to cultivate in this project is responsibility. Children can be encouraged to:

- Understand that growth takes time and patience
- Pledge to continually grow and make positive changes, no matter how big or small
- Commit to trying new things that help them grow, even if these new things are difficult at first

## Additional Online Resources

Appreciating Small Things:

http://yhoo.it/PP1hmW

Collections for Kids:

http://bit.ly/NB9LMu

http://bit.ly/NUU9sV

http://bit.ly/PpNcM6

http://bit.ly/MYnlxJ

#### Memory Books:

http://bit.ly/PpNvqq

http://yhoo.it/PZzcv8

http://bit.ly/U97gWy



# Project 2 How Do We Measure Big?



# Background

How will you know if you are big? Big isn't necessarily something that you become, but rather something that you do. We can take ownership over how big we are through the goodness of our thoughts and actions. Instead of receiving a tangible prize for achieving big, we know we are big when we experience an intangible "feeling of goodness" in our heart. Have you ever done something nice for someone else? Did it make you feel good? That's acting in a big way! Big isn't always something that we have to do well either; what counts is the effort we put into trying our best, even if we make mistakes along the way. Key developmental science research has demonstrated that children praised for their efforts rather than their achievement are more likely to experience feelings of success and correspondingly engage greater effort in subsequent endeavors (Dweck, 1975).

# Objectives

- Students will understand that being big is both an individual and a collective effort
- Students will understand that all of their efforts, no matter how small or large, can measure up to big positive results
- Students will develop an understanding that being big isn't about being better (or taller, smarter, wealthier, etc.), but rather about "being the best you that you can be"

#### Focal Activities

#### Guiding Questions:

- Is being big something that you can measure?
- What can you do to be big for yourself?
- What can you do to be big for others?
- What are you going to do to be big today?
- What little things can you do every day to be big?
- How do you feel when you do big things?



# Classroom Activity:

How big was I today? As a class, brainstorm all of the little ways that students can be big, both to themselves and to others. This brainstorming can also encompass the idea of 'how did I show big effort today?' Several questions from the text provide an excellent starting point to launch this discussion:

- How can I be BIG healthy today?
- How can I be BIG in my family today?
- How can I be a BIG friend to the planet today?
- How can I be a BIG friend to myself today?
- How can I be BIG in my community today?
- How can I be BIG kind today?

Use the substance of this discussion to help students create personalized charts depicting specific and measurable things they can do to be big (e.g. I brushed my teeth, I said thank you, I read a book, I recycled). Invite students to record all of the little things they do to be big. You might try to catch students being big during school activities and encourage them to add these elements to their charts. Invite students to make this a family activity by including the big things that parents and siblings do on the chart as well. At the end of a week or month, ask students to share their charts with one another. Praise students and remind them how the individual things they do measure up to big results.

# Extension Activity:

Encourage students to choose a specific activity, ideally one that they are not particularly skillful at, and practice this activity every day for a month. Activities to consider include: a new or challeng-

ing yoga pose (i.e. tree pose), running 100 meters, improving handwriting, or memorizing addition/subtraction/multiplication/division facts. Invite students to record the experience of practicing the new skill in a journal each day. The journal might address topics such as:

- When did I feel most challenged?
- When did I start to notice improvement?
- When did I feel successful?
- When did I feel proud of myself?
- What did it feel like to be proud or successful?
- How much progress did I make in a month?

Remind students that it is normal to make mistakes or feel unsuccessful, particularly when engaging in a new activity. A key part of becoming big is always having room for growth. Talk to students about the roles that persistence and perseverance play in feelings of success, and ultimately, feeling big.



# Comprehensive Community Project:

Talk to students about how being big can be an individual effort, as in the previous activity, but a collective effort as well. Using some of the questions and ideas generated in the previous activities, encourage students to think about how they can pool their individual resources to engage in big activities as a classroom team. Students might consider how the entire class experiences success when each of them does something big individually in the classroom (e.g. I kept my work area neat, I read for 30 minutes, I worked cooperatively with a partner). These collective individual successes might be charted or displayed in the classroom. As an alternative, the class might choose to engage in a group activity (e.g. cleaning up the school yard every day after lunch, launching a canned food drive) where their collective effort leads to a big result. You might tie these bigger activities into thematic studies or seasonal happenings at your school.

# Character Building Connections

The key character value to cultivate in this project is courage. Children can be encouraged to reflect upon the importance of:

- Effort trying your best is the biggest success of all
- Setting goals by identifying where it is we want to be, we are more likely to build a successful path to get there
- Perseverance achieving goals will not always be easy, but following through when times get tough is a big success
- Making mistakes part of being big is allowing ourselves to make mistakes and learning something new from the experience

# Additional Online Resources

Persistence and Perseverance:

http://bit.ly/OrLUj0 http://bit.ly/Pp6gc8 http://bit.ly/NBaihi http://bit.ly/NUUDPH

Developmental Science on Effort and Achievement:

http://bit.ly/OuwsWN http://bit.ly/PZzJNE http://bit.ly/MYnRf4 http://bit.ly/MYnT6E



# Project 3 How Valuable Is Big?

## Background

It's difficult to ignore the material wealth that bombards us in the media and day-to-day life. On the surface, this accumulation of things might seem to be the key to happiness. However, the key to happiness generally isn't found in a big collection of things, but rather, a big feeling of goodness that comes from thinking and acting with a generosity of spirit. To kick off this project, ask students to consider all of the "stuff" they have at home and how often they actually use all of it. Which toys are your favorite and which are just extras? If you had to give away ten things you don't really use, what would they be? How would a child without any toys feel to receive some of your less used treasures? How would it make you feel to see the joy that some of your unused toys bring to someone else? Sharing what you have with others is a very important way to be big. One of the key components of being big is thinking and acting in a way that is valuable, to us and to others. This value doesn't come from monetary wealth; it comes from feeling good about ourselves and simultaneously helping others feel good about themselves as well. Every day provides a fresh start for us to act in a big and valuable way to ourselves and to others.

# Objectives

- Students will understand that the notion of value is much bigger than material or monetary wealth
- Students will engage in experiences of big value and reflect upon how these experiences enhance their lives and the lives of those around them
- Students will develop an understanding that being big isn't about being better (or taller, smarter, wealthier, etc.), but rather about "being the best you that you can be"

#### Focal Activities

#### Guiding Questions:

- What things are most valuable to you? Why?
- What things do you think are most valuable to your family? To your friends?
- What makes someone valuable?
- What does a valuable person do?
- Do you enjoy giving to others?
- How do you feel when you give to others?



# Classroom Activity:

Teach children about the concepts of "random acts of kindness" and "paying it forward." Emphasize that these notions have nothing to do with paying or receiving money, but rather acting kindly towards others out of the goodness of your heart. Remind students that giving someone a valuable gift does not have to involve making a purchase at the store and wrapping it in fancy paper. Some of the most valuable gifts are those that cost nothing at all. Encourage students to brainstorm all of the valuable but priceless gifts they can give to others and to themselves (e.g. compliments, a pat on the back, words of encouragement). Invite students to keep a journal of these valuable acts and how participating in these acts makes them feel.

## Extension Activity:

Provide students with fabric paints and 12-inch fabric squares. Students can design a piece of original artwork on paper, and then transfer this art to the fabric. You might have students choose a common theme to depict in their art (e.g. family, friendship, nature). Once all students have completed their design, ask a parent volunteer to sew the squares together into a warm and thoughtful quilt. A slight variation on this project might involve having each student choose a favorite piece of fabric, perhaps from a favorite blanket or well-loved shirt, to donate to the quilt. The quilt can be auctioned off to raise money for charity or donated to a shelter or family in need. As an alternative, invite a parent or community member to teach students how to knit or crochet simple but colorful blanket squares. These squares can also be sewn together into blankets to be donated to those in need. Encourage students to think about the big value provided by their efforts and kindness to others.

# Comprehensive Community Project:

Engage your students in a class volunteer project. Choose from options such as planting trees in the community, visiting hospitals or homes for the elderly, and baking goods and delivering them to pantries or soup kitchens for the homeless. You might even have students read *BIG* to younger students or to groups of elders they visit. Or, encourage students to think of additional activities that may be particularly meaningful for members of the class or community. Remind students that their efforts are immeasurably big and valuable to others, particularly those who may be less fortunate than them. Reinforce the idea that volunteering one's time or effort costs nothing but is of infinite value to those on the receiving end. As an added bonus, being kind to others has big paybacks as they're likely to be kind to you in return!



# Character Building Connections

The key character value to cultivate in this project is community. Children can be encouraged to consider the big value provided to others through:

- Empathy showing consideration and compassion to those who may be less fortunate
- Connectedness working cooperatively with others to increase the value we offer to the community
- Caring and thoughtfulness putting the needs and wants of others before our own
- Appreciation respecting the individuality of ourselves and others

#### Additional Online Resources

Random Acts of Kindness:

http://bit.ly/SO8YhM

Pay It Forward:

http://bit.ly/OHOGCJ

http://bit.ly/RqYkMj\_

Valuing Self and Others:

http://bit.ly/TqXzAj http://bit.ly/PP2kDp http://bit.ly/Pqdfr2



# Little Pickle Resources

This concludes our lesson plan for *BIG*. If you have comments, questions, or other ideas please share them with us at the special blog link we have created:

http://bit.ly/bloglessonplans

Additional lesson plans are available for other titles in our collection, so please check the resource link at our webpage often:

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To find the book elsewhere, please use this information:

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