

Willow series - Teaching Guide for Kindergarten Teachers

About the Willow series

The Willow series is a collection of picture books about how the shyest child in the class deals with social and emotional challenges. These picture books are an asset to any primary-grade classroom seeking to enhance understanding, empathy, behavior management and self-regulation. They correlate directly with the “four frames of learning” approach that many current kindergarten programs follow.

About the Author

LANA BUTTON was born and raised in the tiny border town of St. Stephen, New Brunswick, where she transformed all of her rubber skipping ropes into microphones and sang to large crowds of imaginary people in her bedroom. Growing up, Lana took any opportunity to perform. She studied theater performance at Concordia University in Montreal and spent some time in Vancouver acting in TV and film.

About the Illustrator

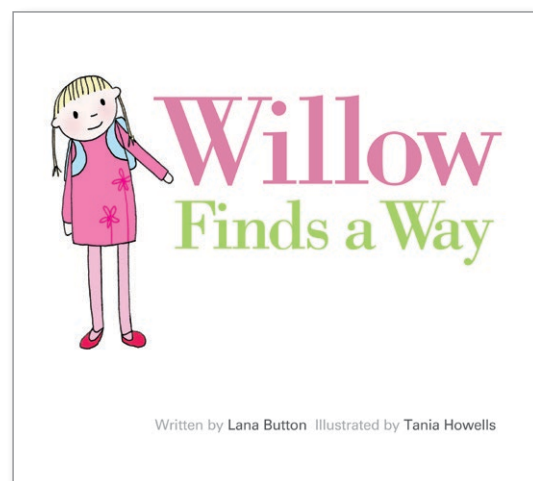
TANIA HOWELLS lives in Toronto with her husband and son, Finch. She graduated from the Ontario College of Art and Design in 1997 and has been a freelance illustrator for fifteen years. Tania has done work for clients such as *Today's Parent* magazine, *Chirp*, Holt Renfrew, the *National Post* and many others. She is currently a stay-at-home mom, and after bedtime, she works on her drawings.

Overview

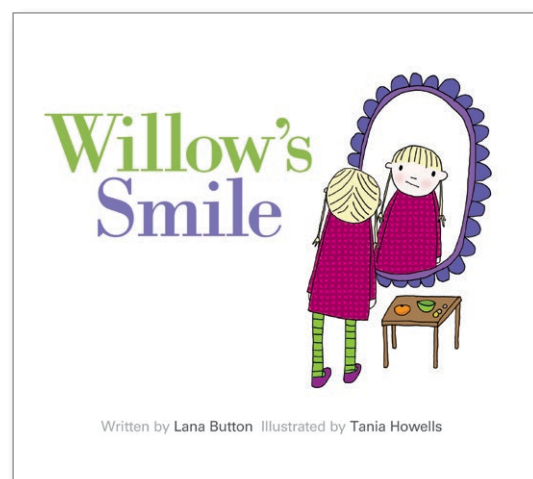
Following are teaching guidelines and activities that cover overall expectations and related specific expectations within the kindergarten program.



ISBN 978-1-55453-280-3



ISBN 978-1-55453-842-3



ISBN 978-1-77138-549-7

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Activities for *Willow's Whispers*

When Willow speaks, her words slip out as soft and shy as a secret. At school, her barely audible whisper causes her no end of troubles, but Willow is as resourceful as she is quiet. She fashions a magic microphone from items she finds in the recycling bin, but Willow's clever invention is only a temporary solution. How will this quiet little girl make herself heard?

Suggested activities that cover Full Day Kindergarten Overall Expectations and Specific Expectations:

LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION AFTER READ-ALOUD

- What were some uncomfortable things that happened to Willow when people couldn't hear her?
- What changed for Willow when people could hear her? (See recording challenge for extension.)

(**Expectation 27:** Recognize bias in ideas, and develop the self-confidence to stand up for themselves and others against prejudice and discrimination. Develop strategies that enhance their personal well-being, comfort and self-acceptance — i.e., speaking confidently, stating boundaries, making choices. **Expectation 27.2:** Think critically about fair/unfair and biased behavior toward both themselves and others, and act with compassion and kindness.)

- How do we know that Willow was sad at school when her words were whispers? What are some ways we could make someone feel better in our classroom?

(**Expectation 27.3:** Recognize discriminatory and inequitable practices and behaviors and respond appropriately.

Expectation 2.5: Develop empathy for others and acknowledge and respond to each other's feelings.)

ACTIVITIES

- Provide a variety of tubes/toilet paper rolls and other art materials that children may choose to use to re-create the microphone from the story. (**Expectation 30.2:** Explore a variety of tools, materials and processes of their own choice such as recycled materials to create drama, dance, music and visual art forms in familiar and new ways.)
- Explore volume with and without the use of a variety of funnels, tubes, etc. (**Expectation 31:** Demonstrate basic knowledge and skills gained through exposure to and engagement in drama, dance, music and visual arts. **Expectation 31.2:** Explore different elements such as volume.)
- Provide a variety of recycled materials in the creative art area to allow for three-dimensional art experiences. (**Expectation 23.2:** Use problem-solving skills and their imagination to create visual art forms. **Expectation 20.4:** Build three-dimensional structures using a variety of materials and identify the three-dimensional figures their structure contains.)
- Provide chart paper and markers and introduce opportunities to compare and record how Willow's day changed once she was heard. Children may create a T chart, draw a diagram, use a variety of illustrations, create separate lists, etc. (**Expectation 13.4:** Communicate results and findings from individual and group investigations.)



The next morning, Willow jumped out of bed and headed for the recycling bin. She rooted and rummaged until she found just the thing.

Then she gathered markers and glitter and glue and rushed to her room. When Willow finally came out, she was holding a magic microphone!



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Activities for *Willow Finds a Way*

Shy, quiet Willow silently wishes she could find a way to say no to her bossy classmate Kristabelle's demands, but the words never seem to come when she needs them. That is, until Kristabelle starts using the powerful threat of uninviting children from her "fantastic" birthday party to keep them in line. Willow decides she's finally had enough. Surprising everyone, even herself, Willow steps up and bravely does something shocking, and it changes the entire dynamic of the classroom.

Suggested activities that cover Full Day Kindergarten Overall Expectations and Specific Expectations:

LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION AFTER READ-ALOUD

- What does Kristabelle do to make friends?
- How do the children feel about that?
- What are some good ways to make friends?

(**Expectation 3:** Identify and use social skills. **Expectation 3.3:** Demonstrate an awareness of making and keeping friends.)

- A classroom is a group. A dance class is a group. What are other kinds of groups? Willow's group is her classroom. How did Willow help her group? How could you help your group?

(**Expectation 26:** Develop an appreciation of the multiple perspectives encountered within groups, and of ways in which they themselves can contribute to groups — i.e., school, family, sports team, religious community and group well-being.)

- What is Willow's strategy to stand up for herself and others?

(**Expectation 27.1:** Develop strategies for standing up for themselves and apply behavior that enhances personal well-being and comfort.)

- What happened that was unfair in *Willow Finds a Way*? What happened that was kind?

(**Expectation 27.2:** Think critically about fair/unfair behavior toward both themselves and others, and act with compassion and kindness.)

- Willow never says a word in this story. How does she get her message across that she wants to be a good friend, with the list and with Kristabelle in line?

(**Expectation 4:** Demonstrate an ability to use problem-solving skills in a variety of contexts, including social contexts.)

ACTIVITIES

- Provide materials that would allow children to create a variety of lists (lists of groups they know, lists of what you would need at a birthday party, etc.) (**Expectation 19:** Collect, organize, display and interpret data to solve problems and to communicate information, and explore the concept of probability in everyday contexts.)
- Provide materials that could be used for birthday crowns and/or party decorations. (**Expectation 23.2:** Use problem-solving skills and their imagination to create visual art forms.)



Willow worried she wouldn't be part of the fantastic birthday party, so ... she squished in as well.



At snack time, Kristabelle waved the birthday list in the air and said, "If you want to stay on my birthday list, come sit at my table!"

Willow was comfortable where she was. But then Julian moved. And so did Jane.

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Activities for Willow's Smile

"Sometimes Willow smiled without even trying. But sometimes when she wished she could and knew she should, her smile slipped straight off her face." So when her teacher tells the class that Picture Day is coming, shy Willow starts to worry. What if she isn't able to smile for the camera? How can she have her picture taken without smiling? But then on Picture Day, Willow gets the opportunity to watch the other children being photographed. She sees that all of her friends' expressions are unique and perfect in their own way. By the time it's her turn, she realizes that she doesn't need to worry about smiling for her picture. She just needs to be herself.

Using the book as a tool, educators can cover the following Full Day Kindergarten Overall Expectations and Specific Expectations:

LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION AFTER READ-ALOUD

- When is it hard for Willow to smile? When is it easy for Willow to smile?
Was it hard for anyone else in the story to smile? Why?

(Expectation 1.3: Use and interpret gestures, tone of voice and other nonverbal means to communicate and respond — i.e., name feelings and recognize how someone else might be feeling.)

- When is it hard for you to smile? When is it easy for you to smile?

(Expectation 6.5: Discuss and demonstrate in play what makes them happy and unhappy and why.)

- What strategy does Willow come up with that gives her the self-confidence to take the picture?

(Expectation 27: Recognize bias in ideas, and develop the self-confidence to stand up for themselves and others against prejudice and discrimination. Develop strategies to stand up for themselves that enhance their personal well-being, comfort and self-acceptance — i.e., speaking confidently, stating boundaries, making choices.)

ACTIVITIES

- Provide mirrors and a variety of art materials for children to create self-portraits and class portraits.
(Expectation 22: Communicate thoughts and feelings, and theories and ideas, through various art forms.)
- Add photo booth materials to the dramatic play center (camera, stool, photo props, etc.).
(Expectation 23.1: Use problem-solving skills and imagination to create drama. **Expectation 30.1:** Demonstrate a personal interest and a sense of accomplishment in drama. **Expectation 30.2:** Explore a variety of tools, materials and processes of their own choice to create drama.)
- Invite children to take photos of classmates expressing different emotions. Print the photos and provide children with materials to create books or posters that label those emotions.
(Expectation 13: Use and interpret gestures, tone of voice and other nonverbal means to communicate and respond — i.e., name feelings and recognize how someone else might be feeling.)
- Display old cameras and film for children to explore.
(Expectation 14: Demonstrate an awareness of the natural and built environment through hands-on investigations, observations, questions and representations of their findings.)

