Building Strong Foundations

Enhancing Foundational Education for Health and Well-being

Presented to

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March 2026

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2. Foreword

Every child deserves an education that extends beyond academic achievement, one that nurtures emotional resilience, compassion, creativity, and the confidence to thrive in an ever changing world.

The formative years of primary education, ages 5 to 12, offer a critical opportunity to cultivate social, emotional, and ethical competencies essential for lifelong learning and wellbeing. UNESCO and UNICEF's Building Strong Foundations initiative, together with UNESCO's Mainstreaming Social and Emotional Learning in Education Systems, underscore the importance of integrating health, wellbeing, and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) into inclusive educational approaches that nurture the whole child.

Guided by these international frameworks, GoInwards presents *Education Through the Arts*, a mindfulness-based social and emotional learning initiative that combines storytelling, creative expression, guided reflection, and age-appropriate mindfulness practices. Through nine illustrated storybooks and complementary learning activities aligned with the nine thematic concepts, the program seeks to strengthen five core SEL competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Together, these experiences promote children's health, safety, inclusion, and holistic development.

Our vision extends beyond introducing a curriculum. We aspire to transform how schools nurture children's intellectual, social, and emotional development. Beginning with a carefully designed pilot, the initiative will prioritize educator capacity building, culturally responsive resources, child safeguarding, family engagement, and measurable outcomes. This evidence informed approach will lay the groundwork for continuous improvement, institutional ownership, and sustainable expansion.

Aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3), Good Health and Wellbeing, SDG 4, Quality Education, and SDG 17, Partnerships for the Goals, this initiative reflects our commitment to creating inclusive and supportive learning environments where every child can have the opportunity to flourish.

We invite UNESCO, UNICEF, education authorities, philanthropic foundations, academic institutions, and community partners to join us in translating this vision into meaningful and lasting impact. Through shared expertise, strategic investment, and collective action, we can empower educators, strengthen school communities, and build a future where every child is equipped not only to succeed, but to thrive.

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GOinwards
the journey within

3. Executive Summary

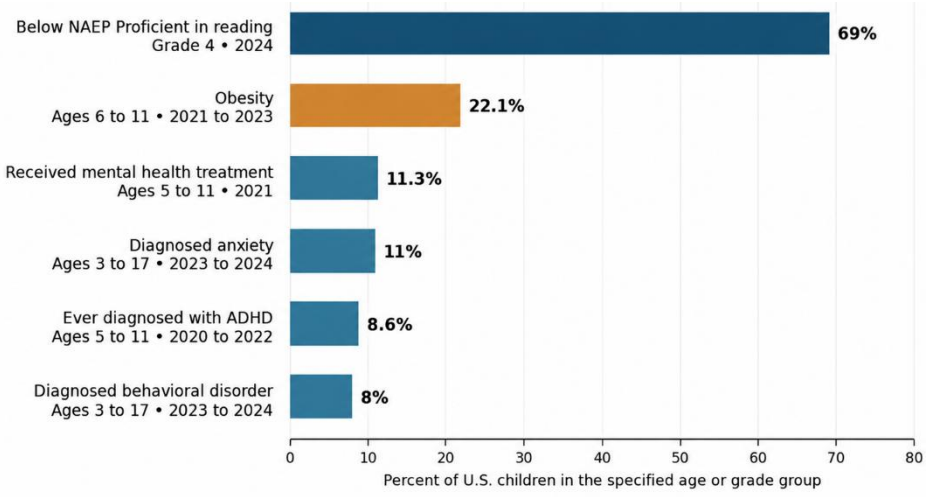
GoInwards seeks grant funding to pilot *Education Through the Arts*, a Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) initiative designed to cultivate children's social-emotional competencies through arts-integrated, mindfulness-based learning. The pilot will explore how these approaches can be effectively embedded into everyday classroom instruction while developing a practical and sustainable framework for long-term implementation within participating schools.

The initiative responds to significant educational and wellbeing challenges in the United States. In 2024, 69% of fourth-grade students performed below the NAEP Proficient level in reading. National health data indicate that 22.1% of children aged 6 to 11 had obesity during August 2021–August 2023, while 11.3% of children aged 5 to 11 received mental health treatment in the preceding 12 months, according to the 2021 National Health Interview Survey. Additionally, 11% of children aged 3 to 17 had current, diagnosed anxiety in 2023–2024, while 8.6% of children aged 5 to 11 had ever received an ADHD diagnosis, according to 2020–2022 survey data. These indicators underscore the need for inclusive educational approaches that address children's diverse learning and developmental needs.

Grant funding will support the development of structured, arts-integrated SEL curriculum resources, including illustrated storybooks, activity books, flashcards, and interactive learning materials. Funding will also support educator training, classroom implementation, child safeguarding, family engagement, and program evaluation. These resources will equip educators with practical tools to foster emotional awareness, self-expression, empathy, creativity, and positive social interactions.

By the conclusion of the pilot, GoInwards aims to deliver a refined SEL curriculum resource package, trained educators, an evaluation report, and school-level sustainability plans. These outputs will establish the educational, operational, and financial requirements for continued implementation, providing an evidence-informed foundation for future program expansion and broader adoption across schools.

Figure 1: Challenges Affecting Primary School Children in the United States



Sources: NCES/NAEP 2024; CDC NHANES 2022-2013: CDC NHIS 2021 and 2020-2022: Children's mental health estimates 2023-2024.

4. Statement of Need

Strengthening Academic Achievement, Emotional Resilience, and Lifelong Wellbeing

Academic achievement is closely linked to children's social and emotional development. During the primary years, the ability to manage emotions, build healthy relationships, demonstrate empathy, and make responsible decisions supports learning and participation in school life. These competencies require purposeful instruction and regular opportunities for practice.

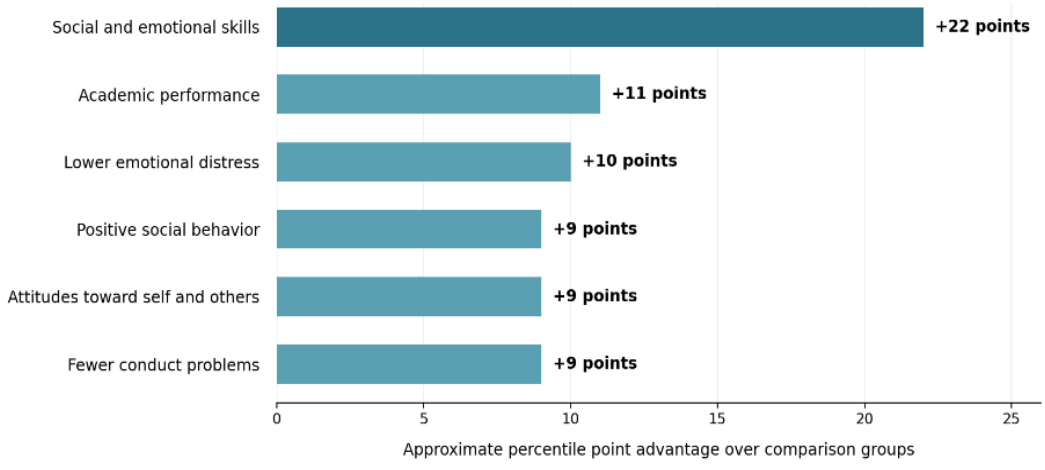
Research demonstrates the measurable benefits of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). A meta-analysis by Durlak et al. (2011), involving 213 studies and 270,034 students**,** identified significant improvements in social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance. Participating students demonstrated an average 11-percentile-point advantage in academic achievement compared with control groups. The findings also showed that instructional practices and implementation challenges influenced program outcomes, highlighting the importance of quality delivery.

Translating this evidence into everyday education requires practical support for schools. Educators need accessible learning materials, clear instructional guidance, and preparation to facilitate discussions about emotions, relationships, and behavior. Resources must reflect children's developmental stages, cultural backgrounds, and varied learning needs, while fitting within classroom routines.

The need addressed by *Education Through the Arts* is to make SEL both meaningful for children and manageable for educators. Illustrated stories provide a shared foundation for exploring feelings, choices, and consequences. Creative expression, cooperative activities, and guided reflection offer opportunities to practice these competencies and connect them to everyday experiences.

By pairing classroom resources with educator development, GoInwards seeks to strengthen schools' capacity to deliver purposeful, consistent SEL instruction. This approach addresses the practical conditions needed to translate research into learning experiences that support children's academic, social, and emotional development.

Figure 2: Impact of Social Emotional Learning



Sources: Durlak et al. (2011) Child Development 82(1), 405-432; U.S. Department of Education, 2012 research.

5. Program Overview

Building Strong Foundations: Establishing Foundational Education for Health and Well Being

Education Through the Arts is a comprehensive Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) initiative developed by GoInwards to promote the holistic development of primary school children aged 5 to 12. The program combines storytelling, creative arts, reflective learning, and age-appropriate mindfulness practices to cultivate five core SEL competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.

At the heart of the initiative are nine illustrated thematic storybooks, complemented by activity books, coloring resources, flashcards, posters, and interactive learning exercises. These educational tools transform essential life skills into engaging classroom experiences that strengthen emotional literacy, empathy, resilience, creativity, and positive relationships. Through guided discussions, artistic expression, and cooperative activities, children are encouraged to understand their emotions, respect differences, resolve conflicts, and apply SEL competencies in everyday situations.

Drawing on the CASEL framework and UNESCO and UNICEF's guidance on foundational education, the program integrates social and emotional learning with themes of health, safety, inclusion, and wellbeing. Its culturally responsive approach is intended to make learning meaningful and accessible to children with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and learning needs.

Table 1: Program Focus and Learning Outcomes

Thematic Concepts	Program Focus and Learning Outcomes
1. Skills for Health and Well Being	Strengthen emotional awareness, self-regulation, mindfulness, healthy coping strategies, and responsible decision making.
2. Social Relations	Develop empathy, respectful communication, cooperation, healthy friendships, and constructive conflict resolution.
3. Understanding Gender	Promote fairness, mutual respect, gender equity, inclusion, and appreciation of individual differences.
4. Violence Prevention and Staying Safe	Build awareness of bullying prevention, personal boundaries, safe behavior, and seeking assistance from trusted adults.
5. Values, Rights, and Culture	Encourage ethical decision making, cultural appreciation, dignity, respect, and responsible citizenship.
6. The Human Body and Development	Support age-appropriate understanding of physical development, body awareness, personal dignity, and healthy boundaries.
7. Sexual and Reproductive Health and Development	Introduce developmentally appropriate concepts of bodily autonomy, consent, personal safety, and respectful relationships.
8. Mental Health and Psychosocial Well Being	Cultivate emotional literacy, resilience, positive coping strategies, self-expression, and appropriate help seeking.
9. Nutrition and Physical Activity	Encourage healthy eating awareness, mindful movement, physical activity, and balanced lifestyle choices.

6. Theory of Change

The Theory of Change Logic Model outlines a strategic pathway for strengthening children's social-emotional development and well-being through mindfulness-based practices. By integrating arts-based, learning resources, educator capacity building, structured classroom instruction, and family engagement, the model connects program activities with measurable developmental outcomes and long-term educational benefits. It provides a framework for implementing and evaluating the *Education Through the Arts* pilot while establishing a foundation for sustainable, inclusive, and scalable integration of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) within schools.

Table 2: Theory of Change Logic Model

Component	Strategic Approach	Deliverables and Intended Results
Long Term Impact	Holistic Child Development	Children develop emotional resilience, healthy relationships, and responsible decision-making skills that support holistic wellbeing.
Strategic Goal	Institutional Integration of SEL	Establish a practical, inclusive, and culturally responsive model that integrates SEL into daily classroom instruction and school culture.
SMART Objectives	Measurable Commitments	Introduce nine SEL modules, assess progress at three points, and create a continuation plan for each school.
Inputs	Financial, Human, and Educational Resources	Indicative funding for nine illustrated storybooks, classroom materials, educators, curriculum specialists, school partnerships, safeguarding procedures, and evaluation resources.
Core Activities	Evidence Informed SEL Instruction	Provide storybooks, activity books, and flashcards with affirmations, reflection, and mindfulness activities. Support delivery via educator training, coaching, family workshops, and implementation support.
Outputs	Direct Program Deliverables	Nine modules introduced, delivery records maintained, family activities completed, and three evaluation stages conducted.
Short Term Outcomes	Emotional Awareness and Educator Readiness	Students improve emotional vocabulary, recognition of feelings, and understanding of empathy. Educators build confidence and practical SEL teaching skills.
Medium Term Outcomes	Social Competencies and Classroom Engagement	Students strengthen emotional regulation, cooperation, communication, conflict resolution, and classroom participation. Teachers integrate SEL into daily practice.
Long Term Outcomes	Sustainability and School Culture	Schools sustain SEL practices, strengthen family participation, and embed educator skills to support continued student development and replication informed by evidence.

7. Program Implementation

Implementation of the Building Strong Foundations program will follow a structured, phased approach with defined responsibilities, timelines, and deliverables. School leaders and program staff will coordinate classroom activities, distribute learning resources, ensure safeguarding, and support educator readiness.

The number of participating schools, students, and educators will be determined based on funding and implementation capacity. The pilot will follow four phases: curriculum and training resource development, educator training and launch, program delivery, and evaluation and sustainability planning. Coaching, classroom observations, family engagement, and baseline, midline, and endline assessments will support implementation, measure progress, and inform future sustainability.

Table 3: Phased Implementation Framework

Timeline	Strategic Objective	Key Activities and Deliverables	Responsible Parties
Phase 1: Preparation and Readiness	Establish institutional partnerships, safeguard student participation, and prepare culturally appropriate learning resources.	Confirm agreements with two schools; establish a steering committee; assess school readiness; review and adapt nine thematic modules; finalize safeguarding and referral protocols; conduct baseline assessments.	Program Director, SEL Coordinator, School Leadership, Curriculum Specialists, Evaluation Officer
Phase 2: Educator Development and Pilot Launch	Strengthen educator competencies and establish consistent classroom delivery practices.	Train approximately 4 educators; distribute storybooks and classroom toolkits; introduce SEL instructional routines; initiate supervised classroom activities; assess educator readiness and provide coaching.	SEL Trainers, Program Coordinator, Teachers, School Administrators
Phase 3: Program Delivery and Continuous Improvement	Deliver structured SEL instruction, monitor quality, and strengthen family and school engagement.	Implement thematic lessons through storytelling, creative arts, reflection, cooperative learning, and optional mindfulness practices; conduct classroom observations; provide teacher mentoring; organize family engagement activities; complete midline review and implement improvements.	Teachers, SEL Coordinator, Evaluation Officer, School Leadership
Phase 4: Evaluation and Sustainability Planning	Assess outcomes, document lessons learned, and establish institutional continuation and replication readiness.	Complete endline assessments; analyze student and educator outcomes; review implementation fidelity and costs; prepare evaluation reports; develop school continuation plans and a replication toolkit; share findings with stakeholders.	Program Director, Evaluation Officer, School Leadership, Education Partners

8. Partnerships and Collaborations

Strategic partnerships are essential to the successful implementation and long-term sustainability of GoInwards' *Building Strong Foundations: Education Through the Arts* initiative. Collaboration with schools, educational institutions, SEL specialists, mental health professionals, community organizations, and philanthropic partners will bring together expertise, resources, and institutional support to strengthen program delivery, educator capacity, and children's social-emotional development through arts-integrated, mindfulness-based learning.

Joint planning, regular consultation, and shared accountability will guide curriculum development, educator training, classroom implementation, safeguarding, and evaluation. Feedback from educators, families, and specialist partners will support continuous improvement and ensure responsiveness to classroom needs and community priorities. Clearly defined partnership roles and contributions will promote effective coordination, resource mobilization, institutional ownership and sustainable program.

Table 4: Strategic Partnerships and Contributions

Strategic Partners	Primary Role	Expected Contributions
Education Authorities and School Leadership	Institutional Integration	Facilitate school approvals, align activities with educational priorities, coordinate teacher participation, provide implementation oversight, and support SEL integration.
Universities and Research Institutions	Research and Evaluation	Advise on evaluation design, strengthen data quality, support curriculum review, and contribute technical expertise for program improvement.
SEL Specialists and Educational Organizations	Curriculum Quality and Educator Development	Review learning materials, provide specialist training and coaching, strengthen instructional practices, and support curriculum adaptation.
Mental Health and Child Protection Professionals	Student Well Being and Safeguarding	Advise on age-appropriate practices, establish referral pathways, support safeguarding procedures, and guide appropriate responses to student concerns.
Parents, Caregivers, and Community Organizations	Family Engagement and Community Ownership	Reinforce SEL learning at home, participate in workshops, provide feedback, and support culturally responsive implementation.
Philanthropic Foundations, CSR and Private Sector Partners	Resource Mobilization and Sustainability	Provide financial or in-kind contributions, educational materials, technical resources, and support for evaluation and future replication.

9. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan

GoInwards will implement a structured Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework to assess the effectiveness, quality, and sustainability of the Building Strong Foundations: Education Through the Arts initiative. The framework will track children's social-emotional development, educator capacity, classroom engagement, and program implementation, ensuring that findings inform continuous improvement and future expansion.

A mixed-methods approach will integrate age-appropriate SEL assessments, structured classroom observations, educator feedback, school records, and stakeholder consultations. Baseline, midline, and endline evaluations will measure progress, identify implementation challenges, and assess emerging outcomes. The number of participating schools, students, and educators will be determined during the planning phase based on available resources and implementation capacity.

Evaluation findings will guide program refinements, strengthen accountability, and inform sustainability planning. Results will be interpreted considering the pilot's scale and evaluation design, providing an evidence-informed foundation for continued implementation and potential replication.

Table 5: Strategic Partnerships and Contributions

Eval. Component	Key Indicators and Methods	Timeline
Student SEL Competencies	Assess changes in Social Emotional Learning (SEL) skills using appropriate instruments and structured teacher observations.	Baseline, midline, endline
Classroom Engagement	Monitor participation, peer interactions, and behavioral incidents through classroom observation and school records.	Periodic assessments
Academic Engagement	Review attendance, classroom participation, and academic indicators to explore associations with SEL development.	Baseline and endline
Educator Capacity	Measure training completion, instructional confidence, and classroom application through assessments, observation, and coaching records.	After training and quarterly
Implementation Quality	Track curriculum coverage, lesson delivery, student participation, resource availability, and safeguarding compliance.	Monthly
Stakeholder Engagement	Document family participation, stakeholder feedback, satisfaction, and school leadership involvement.	Quarterly
Institutional Sustainability	Assess teacher readiness, school ownership, resource requirements, and completion of school continuation plans.	Monthly
Program Learning and Accountability	Consolidate findings, review implementation challenges, document corrective actions, and assess readiness for continuation or replication.	Quarterly and endline

10. Sustainability Plan

The sustainability strategy for *Building Strong Foundations: Education Through the Arts* focuses on integrating Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) into everyday classroom practices and strengthening long-term institutional ownership. Key priorities include educator capacity building, school leadership engagement, accessible arts-integrated, mindfulness-based learning resources, family participation, and diversified funding to sustain program delivery beyond the initial grant period.

Sustainability planning will begin during the pilot, with each participating school developing a continuation plan outlining leadership responsibilities, educator support, resource requirements, potential funding sources, and monitoring arrangements. Evaluation findings and lessons learned will guide continuous improvement, strengthen institutional readiness, and establish a practical foundation for sustainable implementation and future program expansion.

Table 6: Evaluation Plan Components

Sustainability Pillar	Strategies Actions	Proposed Indicators of Success
Financial Sustainability	Diversify funding through philanthropic grants, school contributions, corporate social responsibility partnerships, and in-kind support.	Two school specific continuation budgets developed; potential funding sources documented.
Institutional Integration	Incorporate SEL into classroom routines, school improvement priorities, and existing educational activities. Designate school leadership representatives to oversee continuation.	Both schools complete an SEL integration and continuation plan.
Educator Capacity and Local Leadership	Train approximately 4 educators, provide coaching, and identify teacher SEL Champions who can mentor colleagues and support future instruction.	At least 90% of enrolled educators complete training; at least two SEL Champions identified per school.
Community Ownership	Engage parents, caregivers, and community partners through workshops, feedback mechanisms, and practical home learning resources.	At least two family engagement opportunities delivered per school and stakeholder feedback documented.
Resource Sustainability	Develop reusable teaching materials, facilitator guides, activity resources, and implementation tools that schools can maintain and adapt.	Each school receives an approved SEL resource toolkit and guidance for continued use.
Monitoring and Continuous Improvement	Integrate simple SEL monitoring tools into existing school processes, review implementation challenges, and use evaluation findings to improve delivery.	School level monitoring procedures established and incorporated into continuation plans.
Responsible Replication	Document implementation methods, costs, lessons learned, and conditions required for effective delivery in other schools.	One replication toolkit and a pilot based expansion recommendation completed.

11. Budget Overview

The proposed budget will be developed in consultation with funding sponsors, considering their input, funding priorities, and available resources to ensure alignment with program objectives and implementation requirements. Funding will support the development, implementation, and evaluation of *Building Strong Foundations: Education Through the Arts*, a Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) initiative designed to strengthen children's social-emotional competencies through arts-integrated, mindfulness-based learning.

A defining feature of the investment is the development of nine original illustrated storybooks, accompanied by activity books, flashcards, educator guides, and classroom learning resources. Each set of learning materials will address one of the nine thematic areas identified in UNESCO and UNICEF's foundational education guidance, translating essential life skills into engaging, interactive, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences.

Table 7: Revised Summary Budget

Budget Category	Scope of Investment
Original Curriculum and Content Development	Original writing, illustration, curriculum design, editing, publication layout, and creation of companion resources.
Program Coordination and Management	Dedicated program coordination school partnerships, scheduling, implementation supervision, and donor reporting.
Educational Materials and Production	Printing and distribution of nine storybooks, student activity materials, educator toolkits, and shared classroom resources.
Educator Training and Professional Development	Training for approximately 4 educators, workshops, instructional coaching, and practical teaching resources.
Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning	Baseline, midline, and endline assessments, data collection, analysis, classroom observations, and final reporting.
Classroom Implementation Support	Specialist instructional assistance, teaching demonstrations, school visits, and technical support.
Safeguarding and Educational Quality	Specialist review of sensitive content, developmental appropriateness, and referral procedures.
Family and Community Engagement	Parent workshops, family learning resources, school engagement events, and stakeholder consultation.
Finance and Administration	Financial management, procurement, accounting, records management, and compliance reporting.
Contingency Reserve	Reserve for unforeseen production, personnel, and implementation costs, subject to approval.
Total Proposed Budget	To be determined in consultation with funding sponsors.

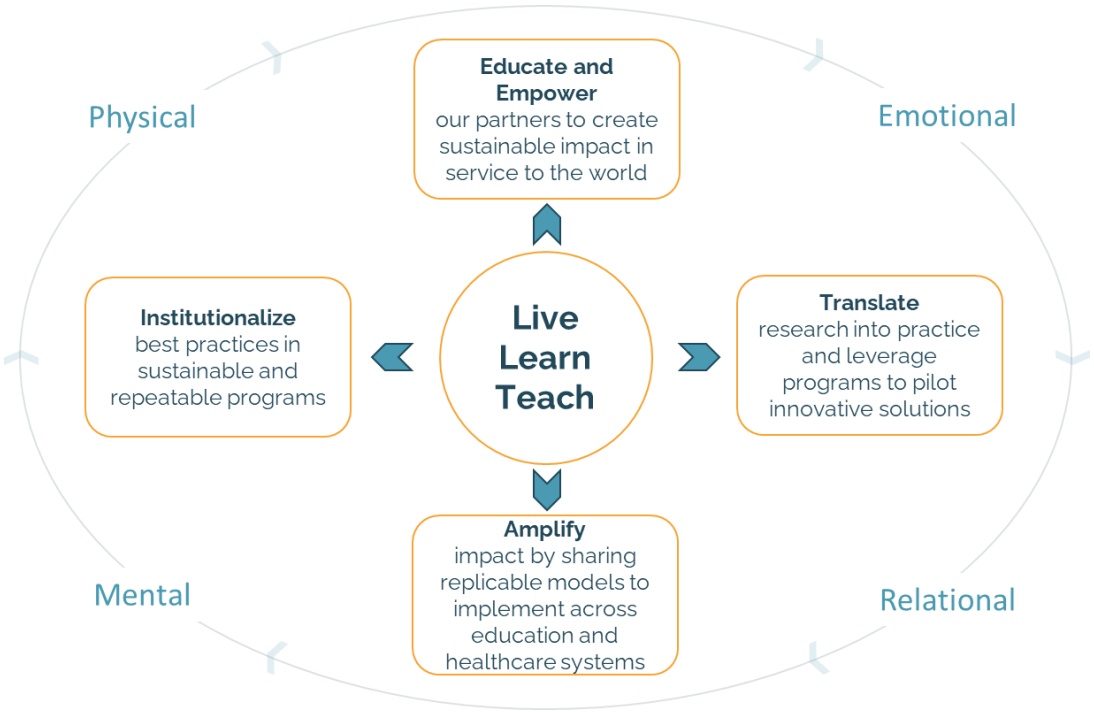
12. About GoInwards

GoInwards is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing individual and collective well-being through inner transformation. By integrating scientific research with holistic wellness practices, we develop evidence-informed programs that promote self-awareness, emotional resilience, and purposeful living while supporting physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being across diverse communities.

Guided by the belief that sustainable change begins within, GoInwards employs an interdisciplinary, trauma-sensitive, and culturally responsive approach that incorporates mindfulness, movement, breathwork, storytelling, and creative expression. These practices are designed to strengthen emotional regulation, resilience, empathy, and overall well-being.

Through experiential, developmentally appropriate programs delivered in schools, healthcare settings, workplaces, and communities, GoInwards equips children and adults with practical tools to navigate life's challenges and foster lasting positive change. Its approach emphasizes inclusivity, accessibility, and collaborative partnerships to support sustainable individual and community development.

Figure 3: GoInwards Sustainability Framework



GoInwards Founders



Vinny Devi is a globally respected thought-leader and social innovator, renowned for her pioneering work at the intersection of humanitarian development and holistic wellness. With over three decades of management consulting experience, she leads transformative efforts that advance equity, well-being, and empowerment through bold, systems-level change.

Positioned at the intersection of policy and local impact, Vinny Devi has collaborated with institutions including the United Nations, the U.S. Department of State, and the Government of India to implement high-impact programs in education, health, and economic development.

An accomplished author and speaker, she has written influential concept papers such as Yoga as a Healing Modality for Stroke Rehabilitation and Yoga for Pelvic Floor Dysfunctions for Northwestern Medicine. Her Social Emotional Learning (SEL) framework for UNESCO informs education models worldwide and contributes to global strategies for child well-being and development.

Vinny Devi brings together strategic insight and mindfulness-based practice to cultivate emotional intelligence through movement, breathwork, and creative expression in schools, healthcare settings, and community spaces. A visionary leader, Vinny Devi continues to bridge ancient wisdom with modern innovation, advancing a more compassionate, connected, and conscious world.



Michael Landry is a seasoned public sector leader and systems strategist, widely recognized for his work in transforming complex government operations through innovation, collaboration, and mindful leadership. With over three decades of experience, he has served in leadership roles across the Executive Office of the President and the Departments of Commerce, Interior, Homeland Security, and Treasury.

At the intersection of federal policy and operational reform, Michael has led high-impact programs in IT modernization, cross-agency collaboration, and global working groups. His ability to align strategy with implementation has earned him recognition as a trusted appointee and program architect across multiple sectors.

An advocate for human-centered systems, Michael brings a unique lens to leadership, combining technical depth with an understanding of the emotional and cultural dynamics that drive change. He creates space for thoughtful dialogue, shared purpose, and collective innovation within complex environments.

At the core of Michael's journey is a deep commitment to purpose-driven leadership. He believes in the transformative power of awareness, connection, and intention—infusing every project with a conscious approach to systems change. By combining his technical acumen with a grounding in mindful practice, Michael continues to shape solutions that elevate both structures and the human experience within.

13. References

Below are academic papers, key resources and reference frameworks that have been leveraged to support the proposed mindfulness-based Social Emotional Learning (SEL) program:

1. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
    - CASEL. (2023). 2023 Report on Social and Emotional Learning in Schools.
    - CASEL. (2013). Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs.
    - CASEL. Guide to Schoolwide Social and Emotional Learning.
    - Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). "The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions." *Child Development, 82*(1), 405-432.
2. American Psychological Association (APA)
    - APA. (2023). *Mental Health Statistics in Children*. Retrieved from https://www.apa.org/
3. UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)
    - UNESCO. (2023). Foundational Education for Health and Well-Being (FEHW) Report.
    - UNESCO & UNICEF (2024). Building Strong Foundations: Foundational Education for Health and Well-being.
    - UNESCO (2024). Mainstreaming Social and Emotional Learning in Education Systems: Policy Guide.
4. Zenner, C., Herrnleben-Kurz, S., & Walach, H. (2014).
    - Zenner, C., Herrnleben-Kurz, S., & Walach, H. (2014). "Mindfulness-based interventions in schools—a systematic review and meta-analysis." *Frontiers in Psychology, 5*, 603.
5. National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development (SEAD)
    - Aspen Institute. (2019). From a Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope: Recommendations from the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development. Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute.

These references provided the necessary foundation for our discussions, particularly in designing the SEL program, evaluating its effectiveness, and ensuring its sustainability. The references from CASEL and UNESCO were particularly instrumental in aligning the program with current best practices and global standards.

14. Intervention Approach

Education Through the Arts is a research-informed, mindfulness-based program designed for primary school children ages 5 to 12. Rooted in evidence-based practices, the initiative integrates storytelling, creative arts, and age-appropriate mindfulness techniques to strengthen core social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Each story is strategically aligned with UNESCO's nine thematic concepts under the *Building Strong Foundations* initiative. The narratives and accompanying activities address critical topics such as emotional literacy, respectful communication, gender equality, peer dynamics, and safety. By combining the expressive power of the arts with mindfulness tools, such as deep breathing, body scans, visualization, and mindful listening, the program creates safe, inclusive, and engaging environments that allow children to explore emotions, develop empathy, and build resilience.

This integrated, child-centered approach not only supports international education standards but also fosters the holistic well-being of young learners, equipping them with lifelong skills to navigate complex social and emotional landscapes.

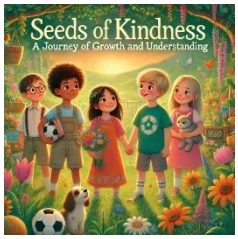
Alignment with UNESCO's Nine Thematic Concepts

1. **Skills for Health and Well-Being** – Developing emotional regulation, self-awareness, and decision-making through mindfulness practices.
2. **Social Relations** – Fostering empathy, inclusion, cooperation, and healthy relationships.
3. **Understanding Gender** – Promoting respect, equity, and appreciation for gender diversity.
4. **Violence Prevention and Safety** – Empowering children to identify unsafe situations, establish boundaries, and seek help.
5. **Values, Rights, and Culture** – Encouraging ethical behavior, resilience, cultural respect, and human rights awareness.
6. **The Human Body and Development** – Supporting knowledge of bodily changes, development, and self-respect.
7. **Sexual and Reproductive Health** – Promoting age-appropriate understanding of consent, compassion, and safe practices.
8. **Mental Health and Psychosocial Well-Being** – Strengthening coping strategies and emotional resilience through accessible mindfulness tools.
9. **Nutrition and Physical Activity** – Encouraging healthy lifestyles, balanced nutrition, and movement-based learning.

The following tables offer a detailed mapping of how each thematic concept is operationalized through the curriculum's stories and chapters. Each table outlines targeted learning objectives and illustrates the alignment between narrative content, SEL outcomes, and international education priorities. This structured approach ensures that every component of the program meaningfully contributes to the development of healthy, socially responsible, and emotionally intelligent learners.

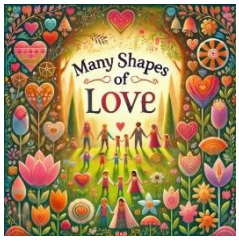
Thematic Concept 1: Skills for Health and Well-Being

Table 8: Seeds of Kindness

Requirements	Title: Seeds of Kindness
• Identify respectful and disrespectful communication (knowledge) • Name different types of emotions and identify the emotional state of others (knowledge, skill) • Define peer pressure and describe examples of good and bad peer influence (knowledge) • Model at least one behavior that could positively influence peers (skill) • Describe decisions and how they can have good and bad consequences (knowledge) • Acknowledge that sometimes children need help from a parent, guardian, or trusted adult to make decisions (attitudinal) • Identify a parent, guardian, or trusted adult who can help make good decisions (skill) • Demonstrate ways to seek help from a trusted adult (skill) • Discuss examples of true and false information in media (knowledge)	 Chapter 1: The Power of Words: Characters manage emotions and use respectful communication during conflicts. Chapter 2: Understanding Our Emotions: Characters explore and express emotions through art, building self-awareness and empathy. Chapter 3: The Influence of Friends: Characters navigate peer influence, making responsible choices and resisting negative pressure. Chapter 4: The Choices We Make: Characters face a dilemma, learning to weigh consequences and make thoughtful decisions. Chapter 5: Seeking Help When You Need It: Characters recognize the importance of asking for help from trusted adults during challenges. Chapter 6: The Truth in Media: Characters critically evaluate online information, distinguishing between true and false media. Chapter 7: Growing Together: Characters collaborate to nurture a garden, symbolizing teamwork and personal growth. Chapter 8: Carrying the Light: Characters reflect on their growth and commit to applying SEL lessons in daily life. Epilogue: A Garden of Kindness: Characters apply the lessons they've learned to create a more inclusive and respectful community.

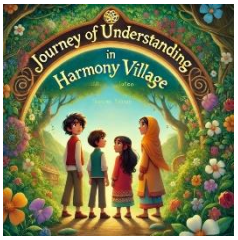
Thematic Concept 2: Social Relations

Table 9: Many Shapes of Love

Requirements	Title: Many Shapes of Love
• Describe different kinds of families and discuss that all of them should be respected (knowledge, attitudinal) • Demonstrate skills to communicate one's needs and roles within the family (skill) • Describe key components of healthy friendships and how to express these to others (knowledge, skill) • Demonstrate ways to treat others with fairness, kindness, dignity, and respect (skill) • Describe the concepts of family and marriage (knowledge) • Develop a basic understanding of what consent means, including defining safe touch and unsafe touch, and how to say no to something they don't like (knowledge, skill)	 Chapter 1 - A New Beginning: The children gather at the library where Ms. Sage introduces a special story about the many shapes of love and families. Chapter 2 - The Garden of Families: The children learn that families come in various forms, all deserving love and respect, just like flowers in a garden. Chapter 3 - Understanding Family Roles: Ms. Sage teaches the children about the different roles within a family and the importance of communication and support. Chapter 4 - The Heart of Friendship: The children explore the key components of healthy friendships, including trust, kindness, and conflict resolution. Chapter 5 - Fairness and Respect: The children learn the importance of treating others with fairness, kindness, dignity, and respect in their daily lives. Chapter 6 - The Meaning of Family and Marriage: Ms. Sage explains the concepts of family and marriage, highlighting love, commitment, and teamwork. Chapter 7 - Understanding Consent and Safe Touch: The children are taught about consent, safe and unsafe touch, and the importance of respecting boundaries. Chapter 8 - The Journey of Growth: The children reflect on the lessons they've learned and discuss how they will apply them in their lives. Epilogue - Carrying the Light: The children return to their daily lives, using their new understanding to create a kinder, more respectful community.

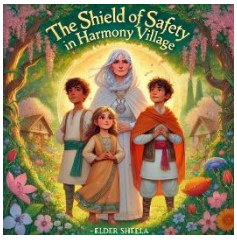
Thematic Concept 3: Understanding Gender

Table 10: Blossoms of Identity

Requirements	Title: Blossoms of Identity
• Define the concepts of biological sex and gender (knowledge) • Give examples of how children learn gender roles from families and communities (knowledge) • Acknowledge biological differences while appreciating that everyone is valuable, regardless of sex or gender (attitudinal) • Identify how people may be treated unfairly because of being a girl, boy, woman, or man (knowledge)	 Chapter 1 - The Hidden Path: The children discover a hidden garden, beginning their journey of understanding gender and diversity. Chapter 2 - The Blossoms of Identity: The children learn the difference between biological sex and gender, emphasizing respect for individual identity. Chapter 3 - The Tree of Stories: A story teaches the children about the limitations of gender roles and the importance of being true to oneself. Chapter 4 - The Mirror of Fairness: The children reflect on personal experiences with gender-based unfairness and learn to stand up for equality. Chapter 5 - The Rainbow of Identities: The children celebrate the diversity of identities, understanding the value of each person's uniqueness. Chapter 6 - The Path of Reflection: The children reflect on their lessons, realizing that respect and understanding are ongoing commitments. Epilogue - Carrying the Light: The children bring their new understanding into daily life, challenging unfairness and embracing diversity.

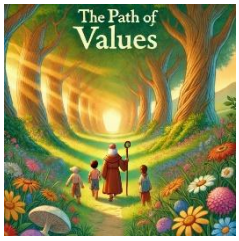
Thematic Concept 4: Violence Prevention and Staying Safe

Table 11: Shield of Safety in Harmony Village

Requirements	Title: Shield of Safety in Harmony Village
• Define different forms of violence, such as teasing, bullying, child abuse (knowledge) • Acknowledge that all forms of violence are wrong, and that a child who experiences violence is never at fault, including when violence is carried out by a family member or other adult (attitudinal) • Demonstrate safe actions they can take if they experience violence, bullying, abuse, or harassment (skill) • Demonstrate how to respond if someone is touching them in a way that makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable (skill) • Demonstrate safe and effective actions they can take as bystanders if they witness others experiencing violence (skill) • Acknowledge that they can talk to a parent, guardian, or trusted adult if they experience or witness violence (attitudinal) • Identify trusted adults and demonstrate how to speak to a trusted adult if they experience or witness violence (skill) • Demonstrate ways to talk to a trusted adult if something they have seen or done on the internet makes them feel uncomfortable or scared (skill)	Chapter 1 - The Secret of Harmony Village: The children learn about the Shield of Safety and the importance of recognizing different forms of violence.  Chapter 2 - The Shadow of Bullying: The children confront bullying and learn the importance of standing up for others. Chapter 3 - The Safe Circle: The children identify trusted adults they can turn to for help and safety. Chapter 4 - The Power of No: The children learn to confidently say no in uncomfortable situations and seek help when needed. Chapter 5 - The Bridge of Choices: The children practice making thoughtful decisions that reflect their values. Chapter 6 - The Garden of Reflection: The children reflect on their journey and embrace the values they have learned. Epilogue: The children grew into guardians of their values, embodying the lessons they had learned and using them to make their world a better place.

Thematic Concept 5: Values, Rights, and Culture

Table 12: The Path of Values

Requirements	Title: The Path of Values
• Define and identify important personal values, such as equality, respect, acceptance, and tolerance (knowledge) • Acknowledge that the values and beliefs we learn from families and communities guide our understanding of ourselves, our feelings, and our bodies (attitudinal) • Gain a basic understanding of human rights, including the right to health and child rights—and how they apply to everyone (knowledge) • Understand how parents, guardians, other adults, and governments should protect children's human rights (knowledge) • Reflect on how people may hold different personal values than others in their school, community, or family (attitudinal) • Acknowledge that some values and social customs can be harmful. Reflect on examples of values that are positive and examples of values that are potentially harmful (attitudinal, skill)	 Chapter 1: Discovering Values - Exploring core values like equality, respect, acceptance, and tolerance. Chapter 2: The Family Tree - Understanding how families and communities shape our values. Chapter 3: The Rights River - Learning about fundamental rights and their importance. Chapter 4: The Mirror Lake - Reflecting on personal values and respecting others' differences. Chapter 5: The Cave of Shadows - Identifying and challenging harmful values and customs. Chapter 6: The Bridge of Choices - Applying values in decision-making and understanding their impact. Chapter 7: The Garden of Reflection - Reflecting on the journey and embracing the values learned for the future. Epilogue: Children learned that by being kind, understanding differences, respecting everyone's rights, and making thoughtful choices, they can make their world a better and more caring place.

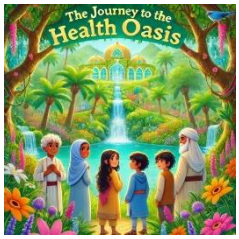
Thematic Concept 6: The Human Body and Development

Table 13: Journey of Self-Discovery

Requirements	Title: Journey of Self-Discovery
• List names of body parts for boys and girls (knowledge) • Identify ways that all bodies (men's, women's, boys' and girls') are the same, the ways they are different, and how they can change over time (knowledge) • Acknowledge that puberty is a normal and healthy part of growing up (attitudinal) • Recognize that being curious about one's body is normal (attitudinal) • Express things that they like about their body to develop a positive understanding of their bodies (skill) • Acknowledge that everyone's body deserves respect, including people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and all genders (attitudinal) • Describe personal hygiene and sanitation practices and their importance (knowledge) • Demonstrate hand-washing skills (skill)	 Chapter 1 - The Map to the Land of Understanding: The children find a mysterious map that leads them to the Land of Understanding. Chapter 2 - The Body Garden: The children learn about body parts, similarities, and the changes during puberty in the Body Garden. Chapter 3 - The Hygiene Oasis: Elder Maya teaches the children about hygiene and self-care in the refreshing Hygiene Oasis. Chapter 4 - The Garden of Understanding: The children explore the Garden of Understanding and learn about empathy and emotions. Chapter 5 - The Bridge of Connection: The children cross the Bridge of Connection, discovering the importance of teamwork and trust. Chapter 6 - The Decision Tree: The children face their final challenge at the Decision Tree, making thoughtful decisions about their journey. Chapter 7 - The Meadow of Self-Discovery: The children reflect on their journey in the Meadow of Self-Discovery, feeling wiser and more connected. Epilogue: The children learned to understand emotions, empathize, support one another, and make thoughtful decisions, carrying their newfound wisdom into a promising future.

Thematic Concept 7: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Development

Table 14: Health and Development

Requirements	Title: Journey to the Health Oasis
• Concepts of 'health' and 'illness' and describe ways to protect one's health (knowledge) • Explain that pregnancy and reproduction are natural biological processes (knowledge) • Describe the changes that a woman's body undergoes during pregnancy (knowledge) • Recognize that people living with HIV have the right to respect, care, and support, and to be loved (attitudinal) • Understand that people show love and care for other people in different ways, including hugging, kissing, and loving touch (knowledge)	Chapter 1 - The Path to Understanding Health: The children learn that health is a treasure that must be nurtured daily through healthy choices.  Chapter 2 - The Cycle of Life: Elder Arjun teaches the children about the natural beauty and importance of pregnancy in the cycle of life. Chapter 3 - Embracing Love and Care: The children learn about the importance of showing love, care, and respect to everyone, especially those living with HIV. Chapter 4 - The Heart of the Oasis: Elder Arjun guides the children in a mindfulness exercise, helping them connect with the peace and tranquility of the Health Oasis. Epilogue: The children reflected on their journey, understanding that the lessons of the Health Oasis will guide them throughout their lives.

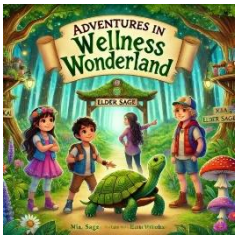
Thematic Concept 8: Mental Health and Psychosocial Well-Being

Table 15: The Journey to Friendship Forest

Requirements	Title: The Journey to Friendship Forest
• Identify and learn how to talk about different feelings and emotions (knowledge) • Demonstrate skills to express different emotions and how to self-regulate one's emotions, such as anger awareness (skill) • Demonstrate emotional regulation and cooperation skills within the peer group (skill) • Identify signs of healthy and unhealthy friendships (knowledge) • Acknowledge that all children need supportive friendships and social connections (attitudinal) • Identify a trusted adult who can be a source of help and support if they experience difficult emotions or mental health challenges (skill)	 Chapter 1 - The New Adventure: Introduction to self-awareness and mindfulness as the children prepare for their journey. Chapter 2 - The Garden of Emotions: The children explore and understand their emotions through self-awareness and mindful breathing. Chapter 3 - The River of Calm: The children learn to manage strong emotions like anger and practice calming mindfulness techniques. Chapter 4 - The Mirror Lake: The children develop empathy and social awareness through mindful listening and reflection. Chapter 5 - The Tree of Trust: The children build trust and strengthen relationships through mindful trust exercises. Chapter 6 - The Path of Choices: The children learn to make thoughtful and responsible decisions using mindfulness techniques like the STOP method. Chapter 7 - The Circle of Support: - The children recognize and appreciate the importance of a supportive network and practice mindfulness to feel secure and connected. Epilogue: The children emerged with a deeper understanding of themselves and others, ready to foster stronger, more empathetic relationships and contribute to a harmonious community.

Thematic Concept 9: Nutrition and Physical Activity

Table 16: Adventures in Wellness Wonderland

Requirements	Title: Adventures in Wellness Wonderland
• Identify different food groups (e.g., fruits, vegetables, grains, protein, dairy) and give examples of foods in each group (knowledge) • Distinguish between healthy foods and unhealthy foods (skill) • Discuss how limiting the consumption of foods that are processed and high in added sugars, salts, and fats is beneficial for health (knowledge) • Describe the importance of clean, safe drinking water for health and identify where to find it in their community (knowledge) • Explaining how being physically active daily is part of a healthy lifestyle for boys and girls (knowledge) • Demonstrate a variety of fundamental motor skills suitable for their age and developmental level (skill) • Demonstrate a positive attitude towards physical activity, including expressing personal interests in physical activities (attitude) • Describe and, where possible, demonstrate water safety skills to anticipate, avoid, and survive common drowning situations (skill)	 Chapter 1 - The Invitation to Wellness: Elder Sage invites the children to Wellness Wonderland, teaching them the importance of mindfulness as they begin their journey. Chapter 2 - The Fruit Forest: The children explore the Fruit Forest, learning about the energy and nutrition fruits provide while practicing mindful eating. Chapter 3 - The Vegetable Valley: In Vegetable Valley, the children discover the vital nutrients in vegetables and the joy of mindful observation. Chapter 4 - The Grain Garden: The Grain Garden teaches the children about whole grains and the value of mindfulness in eating and food preparation. Chapter 5 - The Protein Plateau: The children learn about diverse protein sources in the Protein Plateau and practice gratitude for their role in health and the environment. Chapter 6 - The Dairy Dome: Inside the Dairy Dome, the children learn about the importance of dairy for bone health and visualize its strengthening effects. Chapter 7 - The Waterfall of Wellness: The children visit the Waterfall of Wellness, learning the importance of water and practicing calming water meditation. Chapter 8 - The Fitness Fields: In the Fitness Fields, the children experience the joy of physical activity and the benefits of mindful movement. Chapter 9 - The Safety Shore: The Safety Shore teaches the children essential water safety skills and the importance of mindfulness in staying calm. Epilogue: The Return to Harmony - The children return home, reflecting on their journey and sharing their wellness lessons with their families.