

Sitting Alone: a unit for K–3

One read-aloud, two short sessions, and the first move somebody has to make.

Wyatt the Walrus Makes a Friend

Grade band K–3 · **Time** two sessions of 20–25 minutes · **Grouping** whole class

Frameworks addressed: Connecticut Components of Social, Emotional and Intellectual Habits (Components 3, 4) · CASEL (social awareness, relationship skills) · ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors (M 2, B-SS 2, B-SS 4, B-SS 8) · AASL Shared Foundation II, Include · CCSS Speaking & Listening SL.K.1–SL.3.1

Connecticut school climate: supports instruction under a district school climate improvement plan, C.G.S. §§10-222aa–10-222jj (P.A. 23-167 and 24-45), in force from the 2025–26 school year.

WHY THIS TEXT

Wyatt is a little walrus with one tiny tusk. He is used to being laughed at and used to sitting alone. Then another walrus arrives, and a friendship begins that changes his whole world.

The detail that makes this teachable is who moves first. Wyatt does not fix himself, grow a second tusk, or find the courage to ask. Someone else crosses the gap. That is the part a five-year-old can actually copy, and it is worth making the centre of the lesson rather than the moral about being different.

The cut-paper illustration also gives you a second way in: much of Wyatt’s loneliness is shown in the pictures rather than told in the words, which makes it useful for children who read images better than text.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, students can:

- Describe what being left out looks like, using evidence from the pictures.
- Name one specific thing the other walrus did that made the difference.
- Make a specific invitation to a classmate, and identify one place in school where someone might be sitting alone.

BEFORE YOU TEACH IT

Teach this in the first weeks of a school year or after a class reshuffle, when groups are still forming and the advice is immediately usable. Taught in May it is a story; taught in September it is instructions.

Do not use it to address a specific exclusion that has happened. A room that knows exactly which child the book is about will hear a telling-off, and the child who was left out will be humiliated a second time.

SESSION 1 — READING THE PICTURES

Open (1 min). “*Watch the pictures as much as the words in this one.*”

Read aloud (8 min). Slow down on the spreads where Wyatt is alone and let children look.

Discuss (12 min).

- How do we know Wyatt was lonely? What in the *pictures* told you, not the words?

- Wyatt never asks to join in. Why is that hard to do?
- Who made the first move? What exactly did they do — what did it look like?
- How do you think Wyatt felt right before somebody came over? And right after?

■ CT SEL Component 3, Identify and understand emotions of self and others (Empathy progression) · CASEL Social awareness · ASCA B-SS 4 · CCSS SL.K.1–SL.3.1

Question 3 is the one to stay on. Children will answer “he was nice.” Push for the physical specifics — walked over, sat down, said something first — because those are the behaviours they can repeat and ‘be nice’ is not.

SESSION 2 — THE FIRST MOVE

Where is our Wyatt place? (8 min). Ask the class where in this school someone might end up sitting alone. The end of a lunch table, a corner of the playground, the line-up spot, the bus. Children know these places precisely and adults often do not.

■ CT SEL Component 4, Develop positive interpersonal relationships · CASEL Social awareness · ASCA M 2

Practise the first move (10 min). In pairs, one child sits alone and the other crosses over. Three steps, in this order: go to them, sit or stand at their level, say something that is not a question about joining — a comment about the game, their shoes, the weather. Then invite with a role: “come be on my team”, not “wanna play?”

Swap roles so every child has also been the one sitting alone. That half of the exercise is the half they remember.

■ CT SEL Component 4 · CASEL Relationship skills · ASCA B-SS 2, B-SS 8

Close (2 min). One commitment each, said aloud: a place they will look this week.

Return to it once, briefly, three or four days later. A single follow-up turns a lesson into a habit; without it the effect fades by the following week.

HOW YOU’LL KNOW IT WORKED

Three look-fors, none of which need a rubric:

- **Children cite the pictures** as evidence of how Wyatt felt, not just the words.
- **They name physical actions** — walked over, sat down, spoke first — rather than “was nice”.
- **The places they identify are real and specific.** If the list is vague, they are guessing at what you want rather than describing their school.

DIFFERENTIATION

- **Kindergarten:** read, discuss questions 1 and 3, and practise the first move. Skip the school audit.
- **Emerging English speakers:** the whole of session 1 can be answered by pointing at the pictures. The first-move practice needs three words, not a script.
- **Third grade:** add a written piece — describe a time someone crossed over to you, or a time you wish somebody had.
- **A child who is currently being excluded:** do not pair them as the one sitting alone. Give them the crossing-over role both times.

FOR THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

- Best displayed in the first weeks of the school year, alongside starting-school and friendship titles.
- The cut-paper artwork gives you an art tie-in that most SEL picture books do not — a making session pairs naturally with the read-aloud.
- Neither the book nor this unit uses the word bullying, which makes it easier to hand to a child who would refuse a book that did.
- Part of the AcuteByDesign list of Connecticut authors, for a local-author display.

■ AASL Shared Foundation II, Include · II.B.1 · II.D.1

SENDING IT HOME

A short note to families, if you want one: *“We read about a walrus called Wyatt, who sat alone until somebody came over to him. We practised how to be the one who goes over. If your child mentions it, ask them where in school someone might be sitting by themselves — they will know.”*

■ CT SEL Component 4 · CASEL Relationship skills

FULL STANDARDS MAPPING

This mapping is AcuteByDesign’s own. It has not been reviewed or endorsed by the Connecticut State Department of Education, CASEL, ASCA or AASL. Check it against your district’s framework before citing it in a plan.

FRAMEWORK	STANDARD OR COMPONENT	WHERE IT SITS IN THE UNIT
Connecticut — Components of Social, Emotional and Intellectual Habits (K–3)	Component 3 — Identify and understand emotions of self and others (Empathy progression)	Session 1 discussion
	Component 4 — Develop positive interpersonal relationships	Session 2, school audit and first-move practice
CASEL	Social awareness — understanding the perspectives of and empathizing with others	Session 1; Where is our Wyatt place?
	Relationship skills — establishing and maintaining healthy and supportive relationships	First-move practice
ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors	M 2 — Sense of acceptance, respect, support and inclusion for self and others in the school environment	School audit; the closing commitment
	B-SS 2 — Positive, respectful and supportive relationships with students who are similar to and different from them	First-move practice
	B-SS 4 — Empathy	Session 1, questions 1 and 4
	B-SS 8 — Advocacy skills for self and others and ability to assert self, when necessary	Crossing over; the third-grade written extension
AASL National School Library Standards	Shared Foundation II, Include — demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to inclusiveness and respect for diversity in the learning community	Display and shelving notes
	II.B.1 — Interacting with learners who reflect a range of perspectives	First-move practice

FRAMEWORK	STANDARD OR COMPONENT	WHERE IT SITS IN THE UNIT
	II.D.1 — Seeking interactions with a range of learners	The closing commitment
CCSS Speaking & Listening (Connecticut Core Standards)	SL.K.1 / SL.1.1 / SL.2.1 / SL.3.1 — Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade-level topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups	Both sessions

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