



## The Buddy Bench

By Pattie Brozo

Recess should be a fun and joyful break during the school day but for some children it is a lonely and challenging time. This book is based on a true story about a child in Pennsylvania who was inspired to ask the principal of his school to add a “buddy bench” to the playground. The buddy bench is a place where children can go when they are wanting someone to play with but are too shy, too scared, or too proud to ask. The idea originated in Germany but many buddy benches are popping up on school playgrounds all over the United States. Buddy benches can be any type of designated space for children to stand or sit as they wait for someone to invite them to play.

### Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever felt left out or “unseen” on the playground? How did it make you feel?
2. What are some of the reasons why children in the story were left out on the playground? (Gabe’s leg was in a cast and he couldn’t play; Emma had holes in her pants and shoes; it was Will’s first day and he didn’t know anyone; Cooper is embarrassed because he stutters; Jerome never gets picked because he is small).
3. What does it mean to judge a person’s character by their heart instead of their appearance? Do you think Emma and Jerome were judged by their heart or by their appearance? Why or why not?
4. How can we help new children like Will to feel a part of our class?
5. What does it mean to be filled with pride? Is this a good thing or a bad thing?
6. Do you think a buddy bench could be helpful on your school’s playground? Why or why not?

## Activities

1. Role play how to invite someone to play with you. Puppets can also be used to practice.
2. Create a buddy bench by collecting plastic bottle caps. Go to <https://dontdrophetop.weebly.com/trade-bottlecaps-for-benches.html> for more information.
3. Divide into groups and brainstorm ideas for helping a new student feel welcomed into your classroom. Make a plan and implement. Here are some ideas to get you started:
  - Make a class photo album with each child's picture and name.
  - Have "tour guide" take a new student around the school to locate the bathroom, water fountain, office, front door, library etc.
  - Assign a buddy for the child's first three days to be the "go to person" for questions.