

## **Mr. Paul Shares a Different Perspective on the Little Red Hen (Story word: bread)**

Mr. Paul had been teaching fifth grade for many years. He noticed that in the middle of the year conflicts often would arise among the students. He knew that students were thinking about moving on to middle school next year and that some friendships were changing.

The school provided the fifth grade class with many chances to be leaders in the school. They got to organize the used book sale, put on a musical, plan a tea for the class volunteers, and help out at the end-of-the-year party for the kindergarten class.

All of these events provided the kids with new ways to grow and shine as leaders. But, in the planning of these events, there were often hurt feelings and disappointments that stressed even long-standing friendships.

Mr. Paul saw how frustrated kids got when they had an idea and couldn't find others to support it. When a student's idea was rejected, the student felt rejected too.

On Fridays, the class had weekly meetings. That Friday, Mr. Paul said, "I'd like to discuss something with you. Does anyone remember the story of 'The Little Red Hen'? No one did. "Well, in the story, the little red hen wants the other animals to help her harvest grain, grind it into flour, and bake a loaf of bread. At each step in the project, she asks the other animals for help, but the other animals always refuse."

"Yes, that's right, I remember," Cory interrupted. "But at the end she asks them if they want to help her eat the bread. The animals say 'yes,' but then she says, 'No, you aren't getting any of the bread because you didn't help.'"

"Yes," Mr. Paul said. "The point or moral of the fable is that lazy people should not expect to share in things. But what if we look at the fable from a different point of view? What if the animals weren't just lazy but were unwilling to help for a different reason?"

Jamal said, "You mean because the animals had their own projects? Or that the animals felt like the little red hen was bossy and always telling them what to do?"

Mr. Paul said, “I like where you are going with that idea, Jamal. I think sometimes we are focused on having the best idea. But we don’t appreciate that it can be a challenge to get other people to want to participate in our plan because that might mean giving up their own ideas.”

Nan said, “I think sometimes everyone wants credit for having a good idea. They don’t just want to follow the little red hen!”

Mr. Paul laughed. “I have had many fifth grade classes. And the classes that have had the best experiences somehow work together so that everyone shapes the plans. It was like they were all little red hens.”