

In the last decade, education has increased focus on testing, standards and core subjects. Prescriptive linear teaching practices, less recess, less arts and formalizing kindergarten have become the norm in the current era of accountability. We are systematically reducing our offering of right hemisphere-enriching activities in order to focus more time on left-hemisphere acquisition of core subjects and accountability. While our efforts may make children's progress more measurable, they inhibit the development of executive skills, goal achievement, morality and self-regulation that make true progress possible.

It is critical for educators to understand that we cannot and will not meet our educational vision for children unless we integrate the right hemisphere with the left. When we focus so heavily on left hemisphere practices, we teach children to know right from wrong, but not how to do right from wrong. Knowing we should be respectful and then behaving respectfully requires brain integration. A portal video explaining this information can help increase your understanding of these concepts.



## The Skill of Positive Intent

Positive intent starts in the heart and can open our minds. It upshifts the brain from the lower centers to the higher centers and frames situations in a way that all parties in a conflict can problem-solve together. It also provides a way of integrating the left and right hemispheres so we can access our wise advocate and brilliance to produce win-win results.

***Positive intent is essential for our most difficult and challenging children because they have defined themselves as "bad" or "unworthy," incorporated this into their self-concept and live out this self-fulfilling prophecy in school.***

Imagine you are Mark, a 5-year-old child, sitting at a table with four others. Your kindergarten teacher places a tub full of toys in front of you. The teacher thinks she is putting down counting bears for a math lesson. You know differently! These are toys! You grab the bucket of toys and lock your arms securely around it. Your eyes dart to the other children, daring them to touch your toys.

Suddenly, events unfold that make little or no sense to you. The child beside you starts to cry and another screams for the teacher. The child opposite you folds her arms across her chest and glares, saying, "You're not my friend anymore." The remaining child leaves the table to go to another area. The teacher approaches and you sense an atmosphere of increasing fear. You hold the bucket tighter to safeguard your bears.

The teacher says, "Mark, the counting bears are for all the children. How would you feel if someone had all the bears and wouldn't give you any? Don't you want to share with your friends?" If you could talk to yourself in your head, you would probably say, "No, I want them all. Does it look like I want to share?" At age five, however, you have not developed mature inner speech and communicate mostly through actions. You turn your back on your teacher and hold the bucket even tighter.