



Yale-New Haven
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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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The Little Engines That Can!

Guide for Curriculum Unit 14.04.03
by Carol Boynton

Wally Piper's *The Little Engine That Could* is one of the greatest tales of motivation and the power of positive thinking ever told. In this well-loved classic, a little train carrying toys to all of the good boys and girls is confronted with a towering, seemingly impassable mountain. This hard work does not go unrewarded, for the Little Engine does achieve his goal. This eight-week unit reaches out to students in this same positive way, first empowering them with knowledge of their bodies and biological systems and then positioning them as engineers who direct the movements their bodies make through yoga, calisthenics, and aerobic exercise.

The human body contains organs intricately connected and functioning in unison and harmony. The organs are made of even smaller units we call cells. The cell is made from even smaller units called molecules and the molecules are made from the tiniest of all substances we call atoms. These little engines can and do by following the principles of cooperative behavior and it is a critical element that I would like to demonstrate in this unit through objective lessons and activities.

Just as the Little Blue Engine's mantra "I think I can - I think I can" keeps him going, my second-graders will know they can!

(Recommended for Science and Health, grades 2-4)

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