

Highlights™



2012
REPORT



For the fourth year, *Highlights* magazine turned to our readers to ask their thoughts on subjects important to their world, and to ours. This year's State of the Kid survey gives kids a national platform on which to share their thoughts on reading, inclusiveness and the presidency.

In the more than 55,000 letters and emails that kids send *Highlights* every year, they share their creativity, their ideas, their hopes and their fears. Reading those letters is one of the best and most rewarding things that my fellow editors and I do. Every child who writes to the magazine gets a personal response. We believe that listening is one of the greatest services we can do for children. In fact, we believe that—as grownups who work to make the world a better place for children—it is imperative that we do so.

Christine French Cully

Christine French Cully
Editor in Chief, *Highlights* magazine

Contributor Bios

Amy Lupold Bair, M.S. Ed.

Amy Lupold Bair, blogger, social media marketer and mom, is the founder of Resourceful Mommy Media. In 2008, Amy burst onto the social media scene when she invented the Twitter Party—a hashtagged social event with panelists and a conversational theme catering to the needs of clients ranging from e-commerce start-ups to nationally recognized, trusted brands. A former English teacher and a writer at heart, Amy continues to blog on her personal site, ResourcefulMommy.com. If you would like just a small dose of Amy, she is always available in 140 characters or less at [@ResourcefulMom](https://twitter.com/ResourcefulMom) on Twitter.

Amy Mascott

Amy Mascott is the creator of teachmama.com where she shares tools and resources parents can use to become the best teachers for their children. Recognizing the need for more peer collaboration, Amy built the community 'we teach', a forum for parents and teachers to connect, share ideas, and grow as educators—no matter the classroom. 'we teach' has quickly become one of the most successful and highly-trafficked educational forums on the web. A Reading Specialist, writer, consultant, and mom to a crazy-cool 8, 7, and 5-year-old, Amy's reflections on literacy, parenting, and social media have been featured on dozens of online and print publications, including Scholastic Parents, PBS Parents, readwritethink.org, Mom's Homeroom, and more. You can find her at teachmama.com and on Twitter at [@teachmama](https://twitter.com/teachmama).

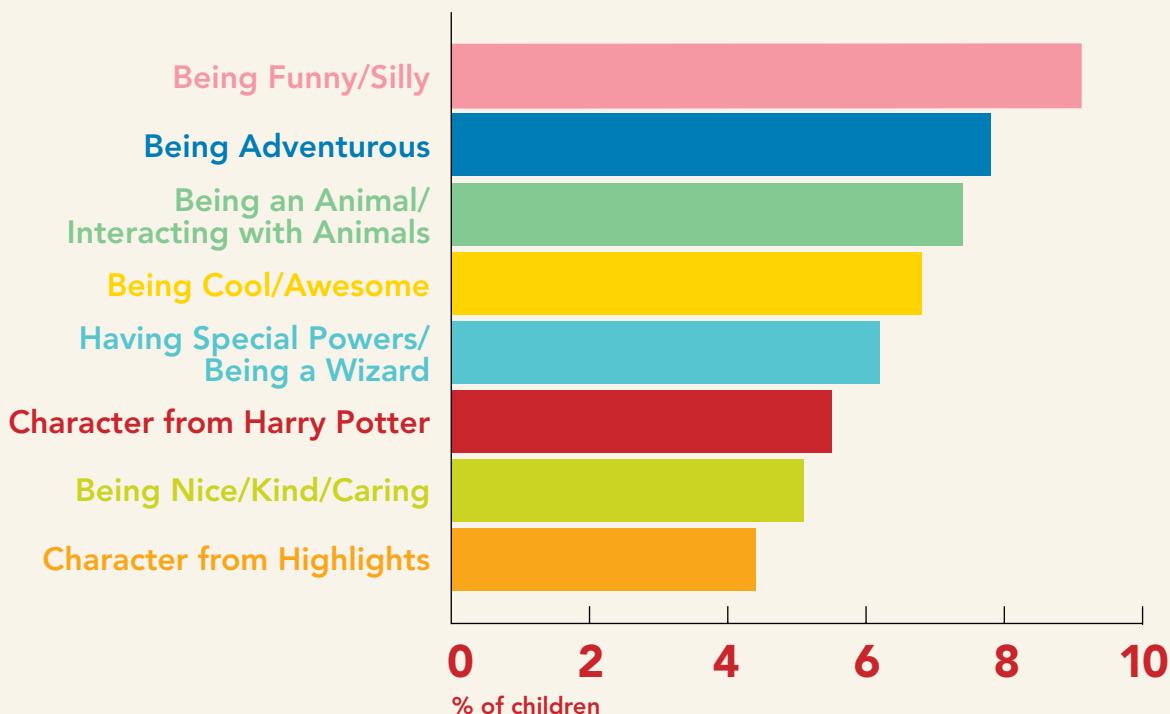
“If you could trade places with a character in a book, who would you like to be? Why?”

Yes, there are many kids who yearn for a year at Hogwarts or (oddly) want to try their skills in the arena of the *Hunger Games*. What we found most interesting was why kids told us they would like to trade places with these characters. The most-cited reason was that a character is funny or silly. Being funny or silly even out-ranked characters they saw as having tremendous adventures! Kids also wanted to trade places with characters who got to work or play with animals. Some children did look for characters like themselves (4.1%). But for kids, as is often the case for adults, there was strong appeal in imagining a world where they had special powers

(6.2%). After all, who wouldn’t like to have a wand’s assistance in middle school, like the wizards in *Harry Potter* (the most popular answer)?

I’m thrilled to see the variety of characters on this list, which proves that kids are reading—and reading a lot—and that they are really connecting with the characters in the books they read! I am surprised that so many children wanted to be characters that were funny or silly, and I wonder if it hits on that innate desire we all have to be liked, to be able to bring joy and happiness to others.

—Amy Mascott



“If you could trade places with a character in a book, who would you like to be? Why?”

I would trade places with Fern (from The Anybodies).
For one thing she has an exciting life! But it would
be neat to shake things from books! Don't you think?

Snow White's Evil Queen. Because She
does not have to be treated like
Snow white.

I would like to be Peter Pan so I
can fly + see other places

I would trade places with the Cat in the Hat
because he always knew how to have a fun
time and still clean up his mess.

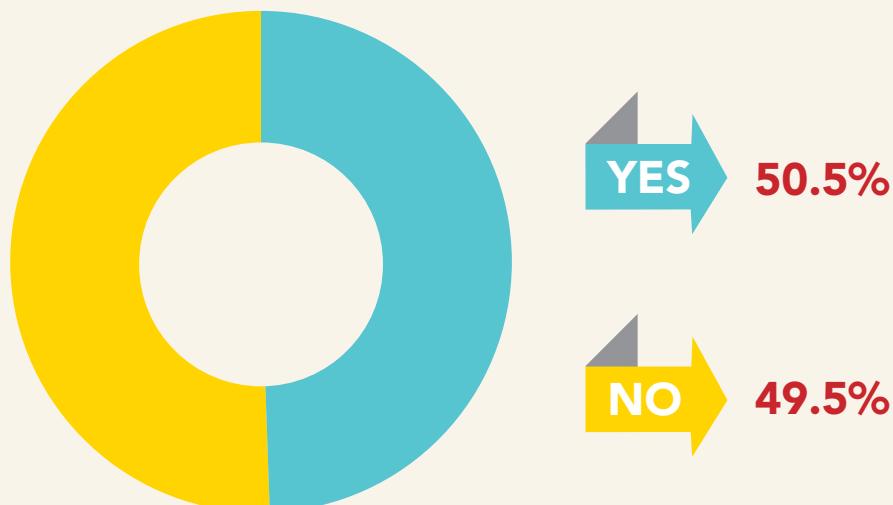
Harry Potter because I think his life is pretty
cool and I also want to try some “magical” candy/
drinks.



“Do your parents read books and magazines aloud to you?”

We all know that reading to children is important, both for improving their reading skills and for allowing parent and child share an inner world, if just for a few minutes each day. It defines Fun with a Purpose! Half of kids of all ages (50.5%) told us that their parents read to them. There was a noticeable decline in positive responses based on the age of the child. Younger children (66.5%) were more likely to say they are read to than older kids.

Finding as much time as we'd like to read to and with our children is something we struggle with in my family due to busy schedules. We have found that making the time more interactive has encouraged our kids to commit with us to carving out family reading time. A favorite idea? Each member of the family reading a different character's voice! We also love to take turns reading pages with the kids leading the way.
– Amy Lupold Bair

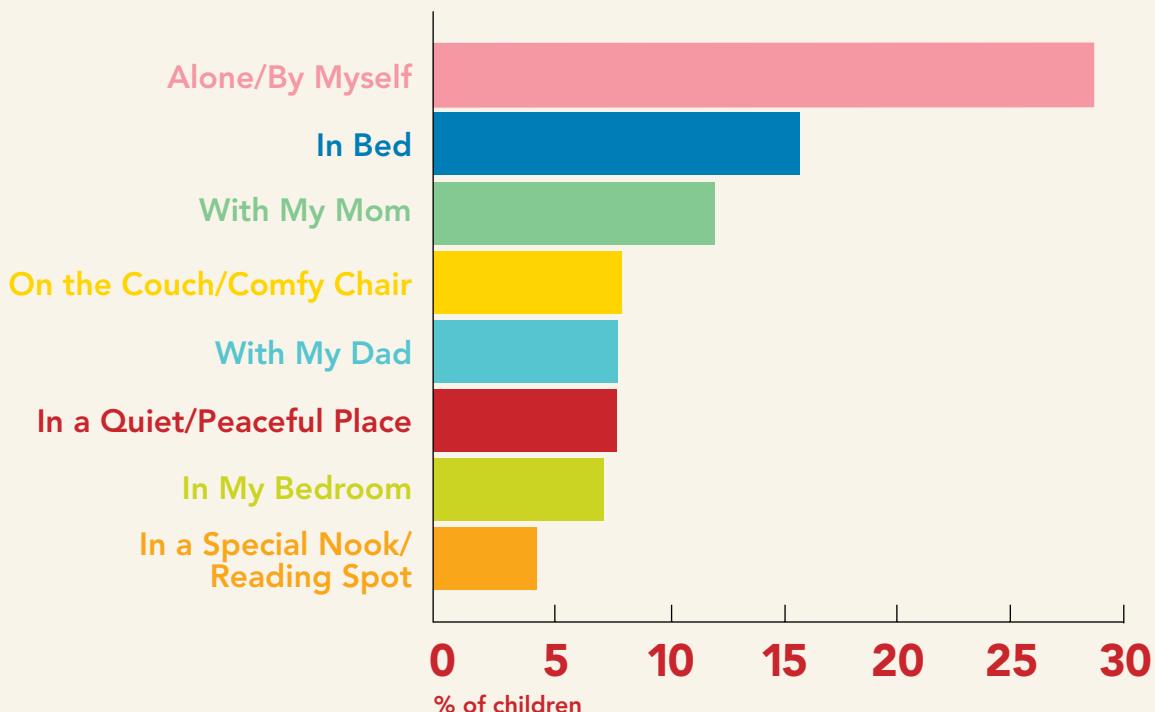


“What is your favorite way to read?”

Perhaps mirroring the habits of their parents, kids reported that their favorite way to read is in bed (15.9%). Reading with mom (12.2%) and dad (8%) were not far behind. Many children have a favorite spot to read, be it their bed, a comfy chair, a hiding place or somewhere peaceful. Lots of kids also have a favorite reading routine: special snacks, stuffed animals and reading with pets were all mentioned with some frequency.

As the mom of an 8-year-old voracious reader, I can attest to children's love of reading in bed! Many nights in our home end with a book, a flashlight and one more gentle warning to wrap it up.

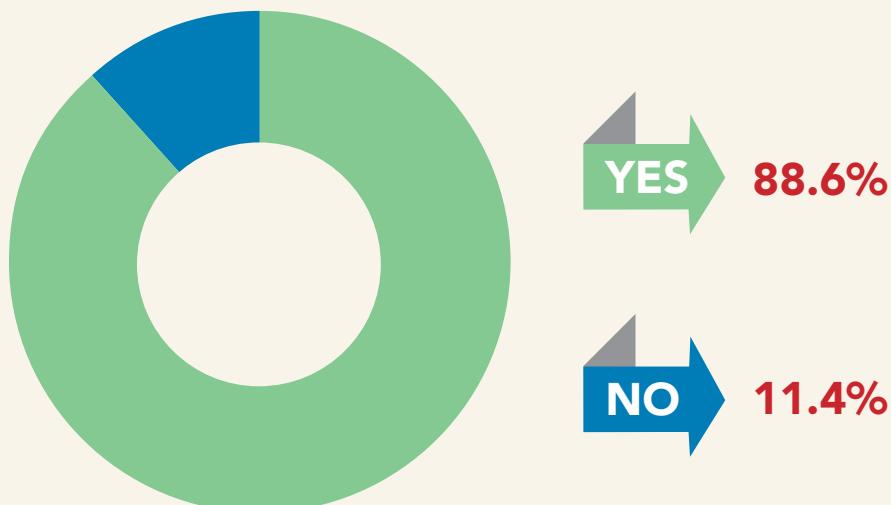
—Amy Lupold Bair



“Do you have a friend(s) who is different from you in race, religion or other beliefs?”

American children live in a country that is growing increasingly more diverse. An overwhelming majority (88.6%) of children indicated that they had at least one friend “different” from them. The survey specifically identified race, religion and beliefs as differences, but some respondents also noted differences in gender, appearance and abilities. One child, for example, cited her friend with glasses as someone “different” in the next question, and noted how they are friends even though she herself does not wear glasses.

For me, the really exciting thing about the children’s responses was that almost all of them could fall in the general category of “being nice”! Imagine a world where everyone followed the “Golden Rule” every day and was nice to someone who was different from him or her! The kids are speaking, and we need to listen by modeling the very same “Golden Rule” in our everyday adult interactions—no matter where we are or who is in our company.
– Amy Mascott



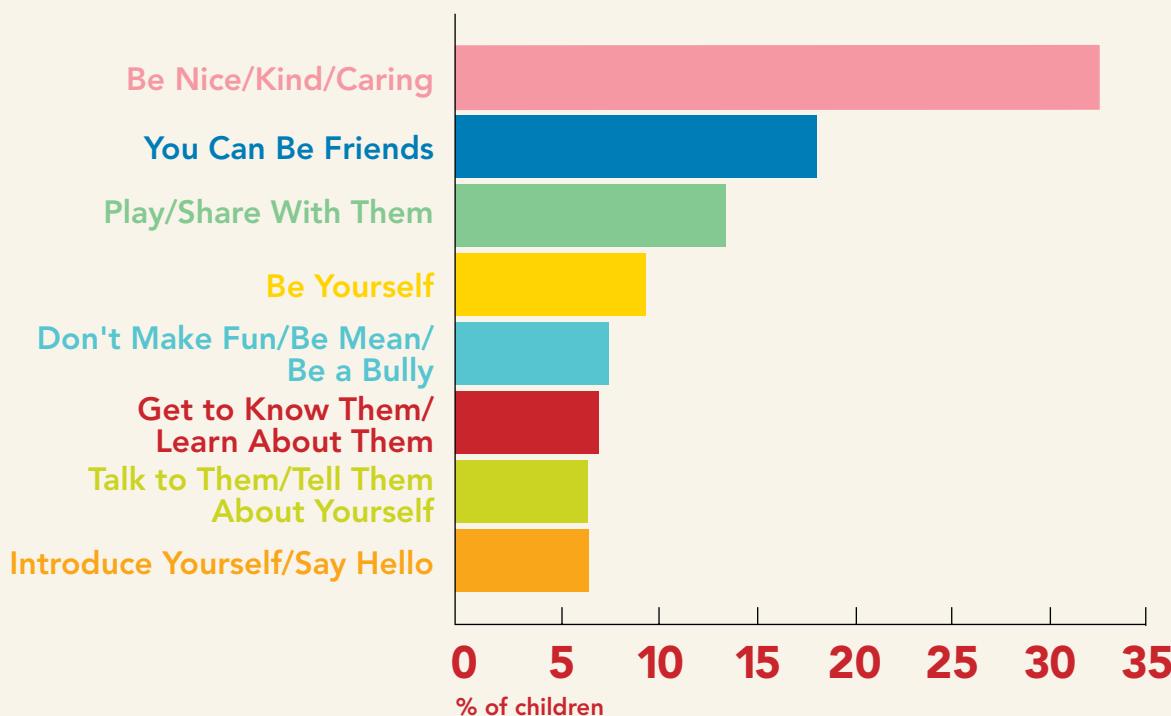


“What advice would you give kids on how to be friends with kids who are very different from them?”

Rest assured, parents, caregivers and teachers: you’re being heard. Many children cited the “Golden Rule” as a good guideline for other kids looking for advice: treat others as you would want to be treated. The most common answer was the most simple, though: 32.4% kids suggested being nice. The general sentiment among kids who responded to our survey is that it is important to recognize and respect differences, but equally important to overlook them to get along, as everyone is different in some way. This is reflected in the answers that suggested asking about differences, finding things in common and accepting friends for who they are.

I think it's natural for children to notice differences between one another, but not always the differences we'd imagine. I wouldn't be surprised if the child who cited her friend's glasses as a major “difference” had completely different skin, hair, and eye color than she her friend. It always amazes me—and lifts my heart. The more we talk about differences while at the same time celebrating each person's uniqueness, the better—for all of us!

—Amy Mascott



“What advice would you give kids on how to be friends with kids who are very different from them?”

Start by saying “Hi!” Then ask if they could play with you, or the other way around! That normally works.

Be nice, and tell them being different is special.

To have a talk first to get to know each other.

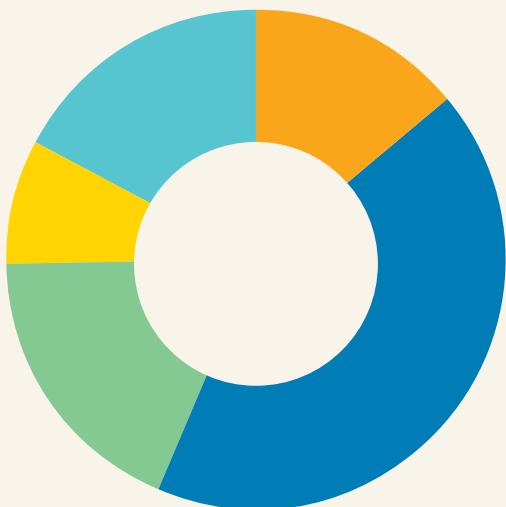
I would say ~~that~~ “With out differences the world would be boring! So accept differences and play.”

I would say treat each other the way you want to be treated.

“Which of these qualities is **MOST** important in a president?”

When we asked kids to select a quality they thought was most important in a president, they had an overwhelming top answer. Choosing from a list of options including intelligence, kindness, experience and courage, honesty won hands down. Kids (42.5%) resoundingly told us that honesty was the most important quality for a president, nearly twice as many as selected the next most popular attribute, kindness. And politicians, take note: these future voters don't care much about your resumes—experience as a desired trait came in last, with only 8.2% of respondents choosing it.

Is there a way we can fast-track the children who responded so they will turn 18 before November?
– Amy Lupold Bair



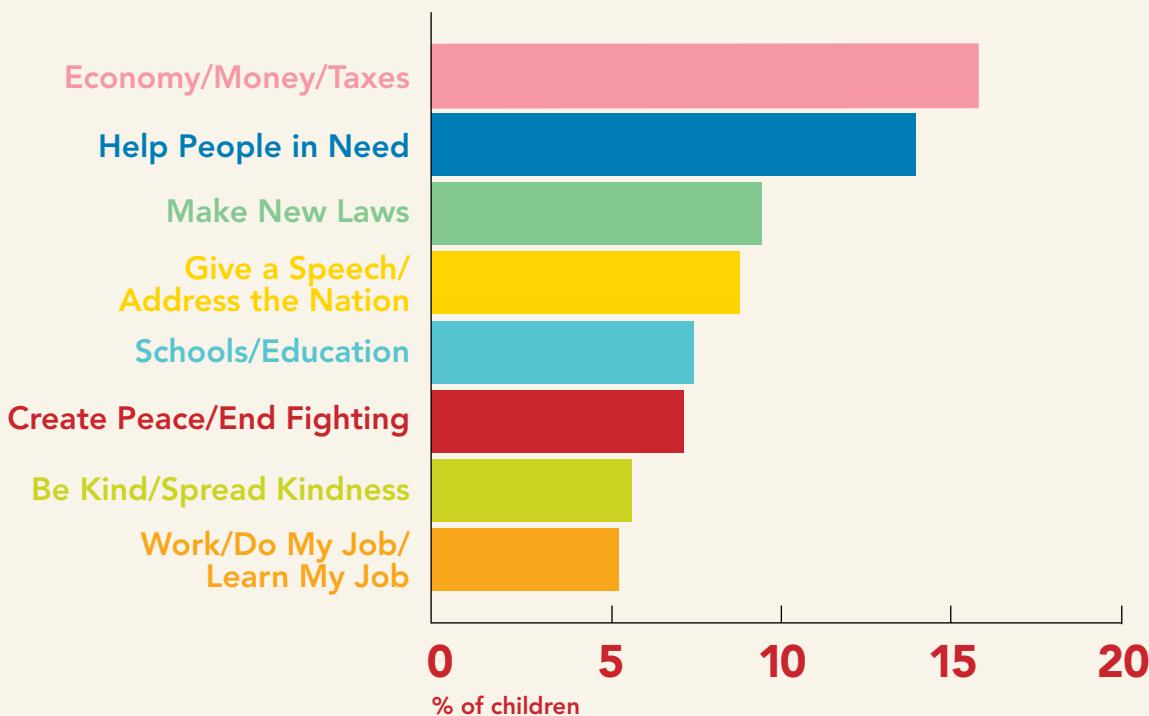


“If you were president, what is the first thing you would do?”

As parents across the U.S. worry about our economic security, it is no surprise that this concern is on the minds of kids, as well. Many kids (15.7%) reported that their first action as president would be to do something about the economy, money or taxes. Boys were by far the most likely to try to fix the economy; girls were more likely to say they would help people in need. Older kids were more aware of the economic problems and ready to take on bigger tasks like making new laws, whereas younger children were focused on the immediate tasks at hand, like giving

a speech to introduce themselves to the nation. Exploring the White House was also a somewhat popular choice, with a number of children specifically mentioning trying out the in-house bowling alley.

Let's face it, don't we all secretly wish we could play a game or two in the White House bowling alley or catch a movie on that in-house theater? I know my kids and I have talked about it on more than one occasion!
– Amy Mascott



“If you were president, what is the first thing you would do?”

If I
were president, first I would try to save money to pay off national debt.

Make up
a committee that help keep the world's wildlife safe from danger.

I would
make no-smoking a law.

Invite
my family to the white house and eat lunch. And then swim in the pool.

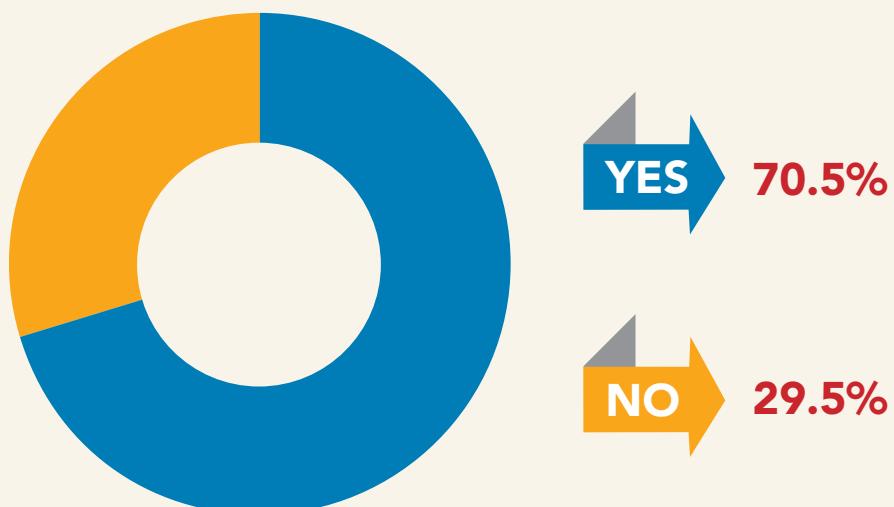
Kids more play time. Give

“Do you think the president and other government leaders will be able to fix most of our country’s problems?”

Despite the fact kids are very aware of the economic and social challenges we face (as demonstrated in their response to the last question) the vast majority (70.5%) of kids believe in the ability of government leaders to tackle most of the country's problems. Younger children were much more likely (81.1%) to believe in our leaders' problem-solving abilities than the older children (62.0%).

My hope is that the same kids who answered that they do not believe in the ability of our government to tackle these problems are also the kids who believe in themselves and look forward to meeting the challenges our country will face in the future. I see the start of a generation ready for change!

– Amy Lupold Bair



“If everyone in the world would listen to you for one day, what would you want to say to them?”

The simplest advice is the most resonant among children: if given a metaphorical megaphone to the whole world for a day, many kids (30%) would like to remind everyone to be kind to each other. And while some kids had requests for money or mass amounts of candy bars, many answers focused on positive and optimistic ideas. Following your dreams was another popular response, as were advising others to eat healthy, do well in school and be kind to animals.

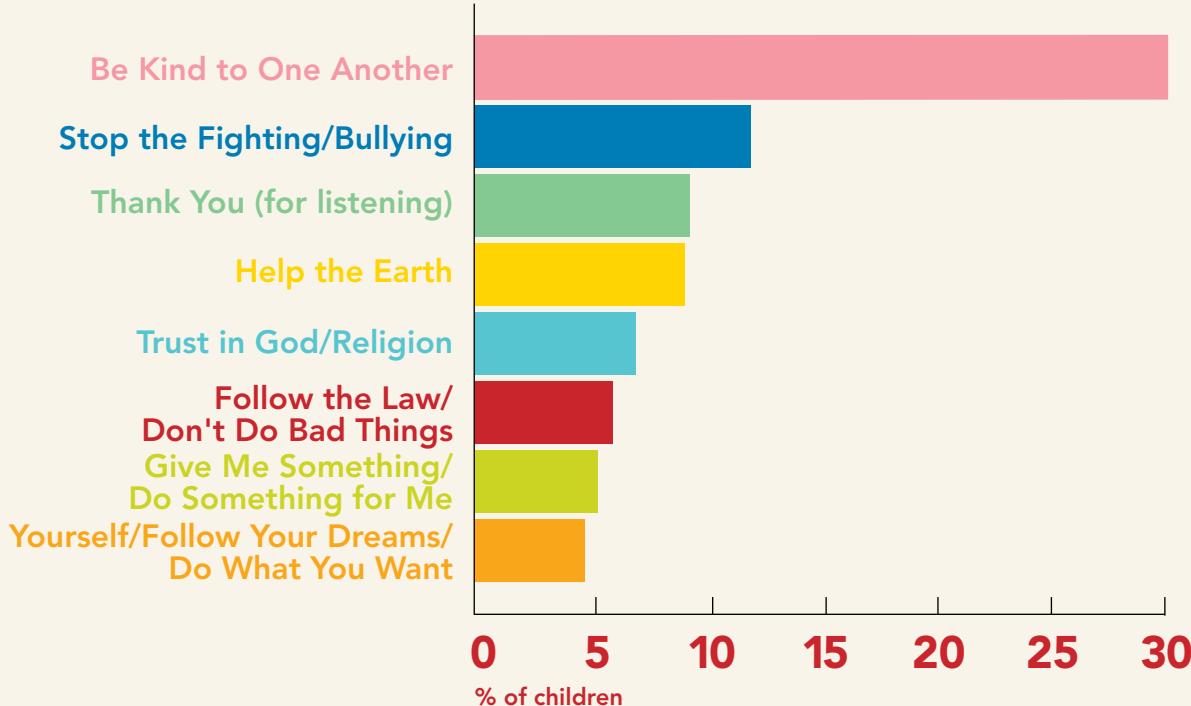
The third most popular answer is a simple response that reminds us at Highlights why we conduct the State of the Kid survey each year. A significant number of respondents (9.4%) just wanted to say “thanks for listening.”

This answer, quite frankly, makes me want to hand over a microphone and a stage to children. “Be kind.” What a profound response. Unlimited candy bars? Not a bad second, in this mom’s opinion.

– Amy Lupold Bair

Honestly, there are some days when I want to shout “be kind to one another” from a mountaintop, so it’s a message that even adults need to hear some days. I also think that being kind begins by taking a moment to listen to each other. Listening shows children that we respect their ideas, that we want to hear their opinions and that their feelings are valid. And when children feel like what they have to say matters, they feel good about themselves all around.

– Amy Mascott



“If everyone in the world would listen to you for one day, what would you want to say to them?”

I'd say "Yo I'm so happy that I'm talking in front of the world."

To not listen to me because I am not their boss.

"People of this world, lend me your ears! It does not matter your race, religion, or culture! Put down your guns, and have peace. Please!"

I would say "Thank you everyone for listening for one whole day."

I would say that kids should have the same rights as adults.



Purpose & Methodology

Highlights produced a bind-in survey for subscribers of the magazine to remove, complete and mail in. We also distributed the survey to teachers throughout the U.S. via mail. With the intention to collect 1,000 responses, *Highlights* received 1,265 completed surveys from readers. A total of 1,265 completed surveys gives us a statistical confidence level of 99% +/- 3.6%, ideal for quantitative purposes. Data was collected in the spring of 2012.

For each of the open-ended questions in the survey, text analysis was completed to categorize the large quantity of verbatim comments.