My Secret Bully

Story: Trudy Ludwig
Illustration: Abigail Marble
Comprehension: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1

WORD WALL: FRIEND
Ally, associate, buddy, chum, companion, friend, partner, playmate.

SYNOPSIS
Monika and Katie have been friends since kindergarten. Recently, however, Katie has been treating Monika unkindly. She spread rumors about her, talked unkindly to her in front of others, threatened her, and excluded her from social interactions. Monika shares her concerns with her mom. Her mom does not blame her or tell her to ignore the problem. Instead, she helps Monika practice ways in which she can stand up for herself. Monika gains the courage to tell Katie that she is not acting like a good friend and to give up her friendship with Katie. She is happier now and has new friends.

DISCUSSION
Use the questions under the An Opportunity for Discussion section (found at the end of the book). Emphasize that relational bullying can happen to everyone, including popular, socially skilled, athletic kids. Say: It is a form of dominance or control that bullies use.

GROUP ACTIVITY
Show students the inside of the book cover (where the “10 Ways to Be a Better Friend” poster is located). Distribute sheets of A4 printer paper (one per student) and say: Today, we will design posters that will include our friendship boundaries and expectations.

Friendship boundaries are the things that good friends do not do, such as lying, telling your secrets, spreading rumors, yelling, insulting your looks or abilities, excluding you from group activities, and threatening you. Friendship expectations are the values of good relationships including things like kindness, honesty, attentiveness, forgiveness, support, and understanding. Hang the poster on the classroom wall as a model for students’ posters. Encourage students to use markers, crayons, and colored pencils to illustrate their posters.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY
Say: It is important to assess our own behavior with our friends and to reflect on how we can improve. Consider the following important behaviors: 1. Helping him/her without being asked. 2. Helping him/her even when it is inconvenient. 3. Accurately recognizing when he/she is sad, angry, or worried. 4. Attentively listening to him/her and regularly checking on my knowledge of their likes and dislikes, aspirations, and wishes.

AT-HOME ACTIVITY
Say: Look for a book you have read or that you would like to read that is about good friends. Write a one-paragraph book review. The paragraph should include the name of the book and the author, the names of the main characters, a description of the friendship, the problem or challenge in the story, how it ends, and the takeaways you got from examining the friendship between the characters.

KINDNESS REQUIRES EMPATHY
Kindness is the desire to lift others’ spirits, help the ones in need, and mend relationships. Kindness requires that I take the time to listen, understand, and take action to benefit other people and the world.