

Reviewed by **Amey Szanto**

Good Morning Yoga: A Pose-by-Pose Wake Up Story

Written by Mariam Gates

Illustrated by Jane Hinder

Boulder, CO: Sounds True, Inc., 2016

What a way to begin the day, from the youngest elementary student to the oldest—focusing with intention on centering themselves. *Good Morning Yoga: A Pose-by-Pose Wake Up Story* is an enchanting book with repetition and sequencing to help young students thrive. This book provides music teachers an opening to connect movement to breath. On every page, the words “As I breathe in, as I breathe out” lend importance to the most fundamental aspect of life, something every child can do. Mariam Gates’ storytelling is rich with adjectives and basic movement vocabulary, building blocks that enhance the Orff classroom, instill confidence in self-expression, and help young students grow comfortable moving their bodies. Sarah Jane Hinder’s illustrations are sweet, colorful, and simply delightful, depicting each featured yoga pose in a vivid, clear, and colorful way that is easy to imitate.

As I read the book for the first time, I thought of how helpful *Good Morning Yoga* would be for kindergarten classrooms by bringing concentration and visualization to my little ones, whom I have the pleasure of seeing the second hour of each day. An opportunity for mindfulness is presented here, wherein each child may decide what feeling or word will be his or her focus of the day—each child, as an individual,

choosing to be happy or cheerful or courageous. Offering various emotions and feelings to help establish a sense of reality goes hand-in-hand with a current focus on social-emotional learning at the elementary level across class structures.

The book affords endless teaching opportunities and programming possibilities each time you read it with your students. For example, it can be used as a poem from beginning to end with the poses intermingled. The descriptive words inspire composed and improvised pieces by older children and text painting by matching unpitched percussion instruments to phrases by younger students. “Today I’m a fiery volcano reaching high,” is just one example of the illuminating text that spurs imagination and creates musical moments for students to experience. With 12 poses in all, one option might be to assign multiple classrooms their own poses to come together for a performance, possibly performing the opening pose and ending pose all together.

I highly recommend *Good Morning Yoga: A Pose-by-Pose Wake Up Story*. As a staple for teachers, it is a positive addition to any classroom and will help cultivate an open and accepting learning environment that embraces the power of the body, mind, and spirit. ■

AMEY SZANTO has taught music for 10 years at Rose Garden Elementary in Universal City/Schertz, Texas where she directs a recorder ensemble, Owl Chorale, Folk Dance Society, and Orff Ensemble. She also serves as gifted and talented coordinator for her school. She is an active member of Central Texas Orff where she has served as recording secretary and corresponding secretary. Amey was voted Teacher of the Year, 2015-2016. She has volunteered for the New Braunfels Theatre Company since 2006, acts and performs throughout central Texas, and has been published in *Southwestern Musician*.

