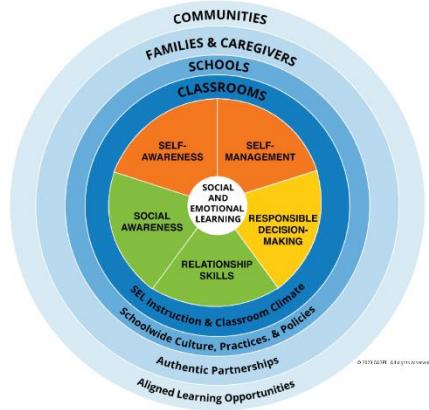


## HOW READING TOGETHER ADVANCES CHILDREN'S SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

At every age and stage, reading together builds skills like fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, auditory learning, and comprehension. But in addition to those important academic literacy skills, **it provides the unique opportunity to make meaning together while building trust and intimacy.** Here's more...

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF READING TOGETHER ON CHILDREN'S SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

- **Self-awareness** - Children gain access to the inner life of characters in ways they cannot through other means. They grow in their ability to identify complex emotions and deepen their own sense of identity.
- **Self-management** - Children learn to better focus their attention when an adult is patiently reading a story or passage to them instead of just reading on their own. The care of an adult shown by reading together offers a positive association and a happy, caring emotional memory in a situation that can otherwise be a lonely struggle for some young readers. Additionally, when the text is challenging, adults can show how you work on understanding new words by looking them up or decoding from the context. It shows kids that it's okay not to know what something means and to learn!
- **Social awareness** - Stories offer an authentic experience in taking another's perspective and gaining empathy for a character's life and background who may be very different from the child's own.
- **Relationship skills** - Every story has a conflict and often that conflict involves relationships of varied kinds. Children have the chance to get a peek into how others manage their friendships, romances, and relationships with teachers, parents and others to help them understand what words and actions build healthy relationships and what might be destructive to a relationship.
- **Responsible decision-making** - Through the eyes of their favorite book character, children must wrestle with hard choices in the face of fear and danger. Stories allow children to test out what is right and wrong, dark and light, and through this they begin to develop their moral judgment. When we as adults tackle tough choices with them and look ahead to potential consequences to others, we offer them the necessary practice in responsible decision-making.



### WHAT AND HOW CAN WE READ TOGETHER IN A WAY THAT WILL MOTIVATE MY CHILD?

Children can benefit from reading school assignments, age-appropriate magazine articles, fiction, nonfiction and graphic novels. Check out the National PTA's Healthy Minds Book Lists (add link) for recommendations. Here are a few tips to inspire reading together in your home.

- **Follow your child's interests on book choice.** They will be more motivated to read with you if they are genuinely interested in the story or content. One way to do this is by taking a trip to your local library and seeing what books your child seems attracted to.



- **Create a routine** in which you read together at the same time each day or each week so that you and your child have expectations set and you can look forward to that time together.
- **Make it special** by getting snacks out, lining up pillows or going somewhere special in your home (a cozy corner?) to read.

## HOW CAN PARENTS GET THE MOST OUT OF READING WITH CHILDREN?

Parents can...

- **Predict**...as you read a story together. Ask simple questions like, "what do you think will happen next?" See if your predictions come true or if the story surprises you.
- **Practice empathy by identifying emotions**...of the main characters. When you encounter a conflict in the book, ask how the character is feeling. Be sure you ask if there may be more than one feeling involved helping your child begin to understand emotional complexity.
- **Reflect**...on how the story made you feel. Was there a lesson or moral? What was it? How does it apply to your life? Is there a different ending you'd prefer?

## HOW CAN PARENTS EXTEND THE LEARNING?

- **Display**...your favorite books in your home so all family members can see them. Have your child write why she recommends each book on an index card to place on the display to share specifics with other readers in your household (as they do with staff recommendations in a library or bookstore).
- **Build on themes**...from the book. Were there food or drinks highlighted? Make them. Did the character dress in a particular style? Dress up as the characters.
- **Create your own**...Does the story lend itself to a puppet show? A skit? Perhaps your child would like to use the characters but write her own version or part two of the story? Maybe illustrate the characters and setting? Spending some time creating your own version of the book deepens a child's appreciation, love and memory of the experience with the book.

For other great articles on this topic, check out:

[\*Parents Make Bedtime a Social-Emotional Moment with Your Kids\*](#) by Maurice Elias and Jennifer Miller

From Committee for Children, [\*Using Children's Literature to Build Social and Emotional Skills\*](#) by Trudy Ludwig

[\*Using Literary Characters to Teach Emotional Intelligence\*](#) by Traci Vogel