

Promoting Social and Emotional Learning through Shared Book Reading

'SKIP Research Bites' is a series of short summaries based on findings from the Singapore Kindergarten Impact Project.

What does research tell us?

Social and emotional competencies can be classified into two dimensions: intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence. Intrapersonal intelligence is associated with self-reflection, self-awareness, self-understanding, while interpersonal intelligence connects the understanding and assessment of emotions, perspectives, and intentions of people (Gardner, 1983). The former relates with indicators of *self-awareness and positive self-concept, self-management, and responsible decision-making* in the NEL Framework. The latter connects with indicators of *social awareness, relationship management, and responsible decision-making*.

Various teaching strategies for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) across various activities and settings in preschool were suggested in the literature. Some of these strategies associated with Shared Book Reading (SBR) include "Reading and discussing stories in which the characters confront dilemmas with a wide range of feelings", "Teaching students the labels, causes, and consequences of emotions", and "Labeling feelings for students, asking how they feel, and asking them to identify the feelings of others" (O'Conner et al., 2017, p. 7). Studies have predominantly focused on promoting emotional knowledge, where teachers utilized simple strategies (e.g., label) than complex strategies (e.g., discuss causes) during book reading (Beazidou et al., 2013). However, further discussions on differences in perspectives (Bernard & Deleau, 2007), empathy (Aram et al., 2011), emotions (Dyer et al., 2000), reasons and consequences for various behaviors (LaBounty et al., 2008) can be planned for during SBR.

To Learn More:

- ☺ Ng, S. C. & Sun, H. (2021). Promoting social emotional learning through shared book reading: Examining teacher's strategies and children's responses in kindergarten classrooms. *Early Education and Development*, DOI: 10.1080/10409289.2021.1974232
- ☺ Ng, S. C., Vijayakumar, P., Yussof, N. T., & O'Brien, B. A. (2021). Promoting bilingualism and children's co-participation in Singapore language classrooms: Preschool teacher strategies and children's responses in show-and-tell. *Policy Futures in Education*, 19(2), 216–241.
- ☺ Martucci, K. (2016). Shared storybook reading in the preschool setting and considerations for young children's theory of mind development. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 14(1), 55–68.
- ☺ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2015). Skills for social progress: The power of social and emotional skills. OECD skills studies. OECD Publishing.

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What is this study about?

In this study, we examined the social and emotional instructional practices during SBR sessions in a classroom setting and how they related to the intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence dimensions. Our sample consisted of 19 classrooms with 152 K1 children aged four to five years old, from 17 preschools geographically dispersed throughout Singapore.



What did we find?

Teachers' support for SEL was found to occur more frequently when facilitating aspects related to interpersonal learning over intrapersonal learning during SBR, suggesting that more focus was placed on the understanding of others instead of building awareness of self.

When exploring the SEL contents of teachers' prompts within each dimension during SBR, we found that teachers prompted children to identify their personal abilities and preferences most frequently within the intrapersonal dimension. Within the interpersonal dimension, teachers prompted children to label others' emotions most frequently. In understanding self, teachers were not observed to prompt children in reasoning emotions of self. In building awareness of others, teachers were not observed in pointing out differences with others.

In terms of strategies, teachers utilized prompts (i.e., questions) to elicit children's responses most frequently, as compared to providing a direct illustration or exhibiting other strategies (e.g., repeats children's statement or question, or provides evaluation) on the whole, as well as within the respective intra- and inter- dimensions. Our finding exemplifies the importance of teachers' explicit prompts which stimulate children's fitting responses to various contents of SEL, as explicit instruction is one of the features of effective teaching in early childhood classrooms (Pianta et al., 2009).

What does it mean for teaching and learning?

Our study conducted in the Singaporean context concluded that SBR, a common day-to-day activity in early childhood settings, can be used to promote SEL. A balance in facilitating both intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions is recommended, where we had identified the need for teachers to emphasize the understanding of self, such as through the reasoning of personal emotions. This calls for more emphasis on discussing intrapersonal aspects generally, as well as discussing differences within the interpersonal dimension when promoting SEL. Teachers may consider:

- brainstorming for reasons, consequences, and solutions to resolve issues illustrated in the story, or encountered by child (intrapersonal)
- prompting child to identify source or think of reasons for emotions that arise from situations in the book or when relating the situations to child's personal experience (intrapersonal)
- discussing differences and diversity issues to promote understanding of others (interpersonal)
- guiding the children through the decision-making processes in books or in real-life to understand how their personal thoughts and ideas may affect others (intrapersonal and interpersonal)

