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Promoting Social-Emotional Development in Elementary Children Through the Use of Quality Picture Books: A Content Analysis

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Promoting Social-Emotional Development in Elementary Children Through the Use of Quality Picture Books: A Content Analysis

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PROMOTING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ELEMENTARY
CHILDREN THROUGH THE USE OF QUALITY PICTURE BOOKS: A CONTENT
ANALYSIS

A Graduate Research Paper
Submitted to the
Division of School Library Studies
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
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by
Shauna Mostek
May 2023

This Research Paper by: Shauna Mostek

Titled: Promoting Social-Emotional Development in Elementary Children Through the Use of Quality Picture Books: A Content Analysis

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research project was to analyze picture books recommended for teaching and developing emotional intelligence in children, to determine which should be considered as quality additions in order to provide teacher librarians, classroom teachers, counselors, and parents with a compiled list of quality picture books to use for the social-emotional development of children in grades K-5. The books were evaluated using *Wilson's Children's Core Collection* as well as the following four top school library reviewing sources: ALSC Notable Children's Books, *Booklist*, *School Library Journal*, and the We Need Diverse Books website. It was then determined how the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning's (CASEL's) five components of social-emotional learning (SEL) were portrayed in the books. The social and emotional competencies listed by CASEL include: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. This study used the directed analysis of content approach (Wildemuth, 2017) to examine 51 picture books. This researcher's personal recommendations concur with the reviewers' recommendations for 50 of the 51 books to also recommend them for SEL teaching; 1 book is not recommended by this researcher for the teaching of SEL themes.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society.”

Theodore Roosevelt

Justification/Problem

According to The University of British Columbia (2015), “Social and emotional learning (SEL) is increasingly recognized as playing a critical role in the promotion of positive mental health and the prevention of mental health disorders among children and youth” (para. 1). According to Perala (2017), a member of the Minnesota Literacy Council, educators have the responsibility to prepare children to be successful in school and beyond, which includes modeling important social-emotional behaviors and reactions to help students learn through the sharing of literature that incorporates themes of social and emotional concepts. Moran (2017) further explains the importance of integrating social skills books to, “help kids build empathy, talk about emotions, navigate tough experiences, and more” (para. 1). An analysis of picture books that other teacher librarians, book review sources, and teachers have suggested for use in supporting social-emotional development in children is needed in order to build a targeted, high quality collection of materials recommended for use by teacher librarians, classroom teachers, counselors and parents to support the social and emotional growth of elementary school age children. The social and emotional competencies listed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, known primarily as CASEL (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and

responsible decision making) are directly connected to multiple shared foundations and key commitments of the American Association of School Librarians' national standards (AASL, 2018) such as “Include – Demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to inclusiveness and respect for diversity in the learning community” (p. 60), “Collaborate – Work effectively with others to broaden perspectives and work toward common goals” (p. 61), “Explore – Discover and innovate in a growth mindset developed through experience and reflection” (p. 63), “Explore: “Reading widely and deeply in multiple formats” (p. 104), and “Engage – Demonstrate safe, legal, and ethical creating and sharing of knowledge products independently while engaging in a community of practice and an interconnected world” (p. 64). Further, the AASL released a text in 2019 by Schlosser and Granatini titled, “AASL Standards–Based Learning for Primary Grades: 21 Lessons Inspired by Picture Books,” to help connect learners and educators implement the new AASL standards.

Emotional Intelligence and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

Emotional intelligence is defined as “the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189). One way to increase a child's emotional intelligence level is through further development of their social and emotional skills. Social and emotional learning (SEL) includes the steps people follow as they successfully develop and manage healthy identities, emotions, relationships, and decisions (CASEL, 2018).

Components of SEL

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2018) suggests five core social and emotional competencies, and gives specifics for each. Those five include self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. As informed by CASEL the indications of each competency are as follows:

- “Self-awareness: The ability to accurately recognize one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one’s strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a ‘growth mindset.’
- “Self-management: The ability to successfully regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals.
- “Social awareness: The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.
- “Relationship skills: The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.

- “Responsible decision-making: The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others” (para. 4).

SEL is Essential for Academic and Future Success

Gulbrandson (2018) describes the many situations in which people of all ages rely upon their social-emotional skills. Quite simply, Gulbrandson says there is “never a time they aren’t needed” (para. 7) as they are essential in daily routines at home among siblings and friends, in parent-child relationships, and in relationships at school, work, and community. According to Gayl (2017), the five core social and emotional competencies as earlier explained are associated with students’ long-term academic and career success. Numerous sources support Gayl’s claim in emphasizing the need for social-emotional learning as a critical need for children. It helps establish a firm foundation through teaching students the importance of cooperation and helping others by means of safe and positive learning proven to enhance life success in positive peer and social relationships, academic achievement, and successful careers (Clark, 2018, Gunn, 2018, Ludwig, 2012, NEA, 2017, Weissberg et al, 2016). Clark (2018) highlights a twenty year study that tracked students beginning in kindergarten, to examine how their early social-emotional skills related to their well-being as adults. While in school, teachers rated these students using a scale of one to five, indicating their level of specific social competence skills. Highlights of the results state:

For every one-point increase on the 5-point scale in a child's social competence score in kindergarten, he/she was:

- Twice as likely to attain a college degree in early adulthood;
- 54% more likely to earn a high school diploma; and
- 46% more likely to have a full-time job at the age of 25.

For every one-point decrease in a child's social competence score in kindergarten, he/she had:

- 67% higher chance of having been arrested by early adulthood;
- 82% higher rate of recent marijuana usage; and
- 82% higher chance of being in or on a waiting list for public housing

(Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2015, para. 7).

The Committee for Children (2016) explains that a multitude of skills including communication, problem solving, and collaboration are commonly integrated in social and emotional learning and are among the many skills employers are seeking in applicants for 21st-century jobs. Duffel summarizes the necessity of social-emotional learning in saying, "Social-emotional learning is how we become the change we want to see in this world, and teaching our kids to practice social-emotional skills is the most hopeful work we can do" (Duffel, 2018, para. 4).

SEL in Elementary School

The National Education Association (2017) explains that the five core social-emotional competencies become even more important and relevant as children begin to socialize and interact with adults and peers beyond those living under the same

roof. They further emphasize that “social and emotional skills play a role in determining how well-equipped children will be to meet the demands of the classroom and if they are able to engage fully in learning and benefit from instruction” (p. 2). Escola with the Committee for Children speaks on the importance of skills being taught early on, explaining: “The foundation laid by early social-emotional instruction has the potential to alter the course of a child’s life and change that child’s view of the world” (Escola, 2018, para. 1). In addition, she specifically mentions, “Early learners and young elementary schoolers learn about the world and their environment at an exponential rate” (Escola, 2018, para. 5). *School Library Journal* (2017) also explains that it is during preschool and a child’s early elementary years that many foundational skills connected to social emotional learning are developed.

The Development of Social-Emotional Skills Through Children’s Literature

Author and children’s advocate Ludwig (2012) explains that using children’s literature to develop social-emotional skills is not a new practice. The idea dates back to Ancient Egypt when the words *psyches iatreion*, which means “healing place of the soul” was inscribed in the doorway of a sacred library (p. 1). Ludwig continues to point out that the term *bibliotherapy* was created in 1916 to further explain the use of literature for therapy. She suggests choosing literature that includes a well-written story with safe and practical solutions to problems, is age-appropriate in content and reading level, and contains ethnically and culturally diverse characters - considering only stories that include honest portrayals rather than stereotyped characters. Many proponents of social and emotional learning encourage the use of literature to promote the social-emotional

development of children. Regardless of the length of books, McSheehy (2018) explains how readers experience emotions through their connection with the characters:

The characters in them experience the ups and downs of the human condition, often in dramatic fashion. And as we read along, we feel things, too - about the characters and ourselves. For these reasons, literature offers a gateway to social-emotional learning (SEL) in your classroom (para. 1).

Whether at school or at home, supporting social and emotional development in children should be done intentionally and one of the best ways to do that is with books. Children's literature can be used to support current social and emotional skills such as friendship, cooperation, bullying, dealing with anger, and problem-solving, or can be used to introduce a new skill such as accepting the differences of others while helping children in their journey toward becoming responsible, successful, caring, and intelligent people (Crippen, 2012; Gulbrandson, 2018; Ho & Funk, 2018). In support of this, teachers and parents should provide access to quality materials to guide children as they learn to appreciate valuable children's literature as well as enhance their personal development through connections made to that literature (Crippen 2012, para. 8).

SEL and Picture Books

Librarian and Diversity Coordinator Laura Reiko Simeon is a strong supporter of using picture books to promote social and emotional development in children. While sharing how she uses picture books to connect to the school counselor's skill of the week, she also explains why picture books are ideal for supporting social-emotional learning. Simeon explains, "Picture books are ideal because they are infinitely flexible: a

5-year-old and a 12-year-old can enjoy the same picture book while understanding it in dramatically different (but equally valid) ways” (Lee & Low, 2017, para. 5).

Rationale

Schools are concerned with education, and mental health is an essential part of that. “Because of this important interplay between emotional health and school success, schools must be partners in the mental health care of our children” (President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, 2003, p. 58). To provide all students with the best possible education, educators must help develop the emotional intelligence of those they teach as well. Using high quality picture books and aligning those with five core social and emotional competencies to support social-emotional learning and therefore help students increase their emotional intelligence is one way teacher librarians, counselors, therapists, and teachers can help address the needs of all students as individuals.

Deficiencies in Past Research

There are numerous suggestions on picture books that can be used for social and emotional development in children (Lee & Low, 2018, Second Step, 2013, Open Circle, 2018, Moran, 2017, *School Library Journal*, 2017, Spiegel, 2010). There have also been studies on integrating and embedding social and emotional learning into literacy curriculum (Kennon Hippert, 2015; Wood, 2017; Tiedeman Brow, 2017), and additional studies on emotional literacy and learning in connection with the school library (Fry, 2015). However, there are no research articles identifying quality picture books that meet

specified criteria of an SEL program to be included in a list ideal for supporting SEL in elementary school children.

Summary of Problem

Quality picture books that can be utilized to help young children develop their emotional intelligence and align with the five core social and emotional competencies provided by the Collaborative for Academics, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) are needed by students, parents, librarian, counselors, therapists, and teachers to help create a foundation that sets children up for success in school and in life.

Purpose

The purpose of this literary qualitative content analysis is to analyze children's picture books using *Wilson Children's Core Collection* and four top school library children's review sources (ALSC Notable Children's Books, *Booklist*, *School Library Journal*, and the We Need Diverse Books website) recommended by the American Library Association (2023) to compile a list of high quality books, as noted in the review sources, that also address CASEL's five components of SEL and can therefore be recommended to support SEL development in young children.

Research Questions

1. What picture books are most highly recommended for students, parents, librarians, counselors, therapists, and teachers to use to promote SEL development?
2. Which of CASEL's five components of SEL are portrayed in the books?

Assumptions and Limitations

This study is limited to quality picture books to be used with children at the K-5th grade levels.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this research project is to analyze picture books recommended for teaching and developing emotional intelligence in children, to determine which should be considered as quality additions in order to provide teacher librarians, classroom teachers, counselors, and parents with a compiled list of quality picture books, as noted in the review sources, to use for social-emotional development of children in grades K-5. Prior research related to this topic fell into several categories: qualities or components of effective social and emotional learning programs; the analysis, selection, and evaluation of picture books for specific identified purposes; and criteria used to identify quality picture books.

Qualities/Components of Effective SEL Programs

When considering the impact a social and emotional learning program will have on students, one must consider the qualities or components of the program. In *SEL-Focused After-School Programs*, researchers Hurd and Deutsch (2017) look at what is necessary for an effective SEL after-school program. Recognizing after-school programs became not only a safe place for children to belong when parents were working, but also a place that promotes SEL-related skills, yet finding these programs had a limited impact on SEL in children, researchers set out to determine whether or not after-school programs are effective programs for promoting SEL in children. Hurd and Deutsch share that according to the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine,

environments that offer “physical and psychological safety; appropriate structure; opportunities to belong; positive social norms; support for efficacy and mattering; opportunities for skill building; integration of family, school, and community efforts, and nurturance and support” provide opportunities for SEL (pp. 98-99). They then applied those items to promoting SEL in after-school programs.

Realizing the impact staff alone had on SEL in after-school programs, researchers took a subsequent look at supporting program staff. They enlisted the help of the SEL Challenge to identify eight specific areas to focus on when supporting the staff. Those areas included: the recruitment of young people so staff can see the impact they are making, appropriate training for staff members, planning and reflection time for staff members as individuals as well as for collaboration, support for staff mental health and well being, and a focus on continuous improvement. When considering the impact after-school programs with SEL components have had on students, Durlak, Weissberg, and Pachan (2010) completed a meta-analysis. Their study shared that while after-school programs with SEL components did have a positive influence by increasing youth confidence, grades, etc and decreasing drug use and violence, “Only programs that used evidence-based skills-training approaches were effective in boosting students’ SEL outcomes” (Hurd & Deutsch, 2017, p. 104). Using the acronym SAFE, those programs included: sequenced activities, active learning, a focus on SEL, and explicit learning objectives. This study informs the current study to compare evidence-based skills approaches in real life situations with the events seen in the picture books chosen for analysis.

A Review of the Literature on Social and Emotional Learning for Students Ages 3–8: Characteristics of Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs (part 1 of 4) by O’Conner et al. (2017) is a study which considers a plethora of information available on SEL programs and puts together that information in a way that helps educators determine what programs are best for their learners. Their research questions considered the characteristics of effective SEL programs, strategies and policies supporting SEL programming, what educators can do to contribute to social and emotional learning of their students, and outcomes of different student populations and settings. Characteristics of effective SEL programs include skills focused and environment focused techniques, and researchers again recommend the core be based on the components in the acronym SAFE. This study again informs the current study to strongly consider evidence-based skills approaches in real life situations with the events seen in picture books chosen for analysis.

Another specified area of focus for effective SEL programs in this study was the consideration of support for employees and determining the needs of and goals for the student population in a building in order to align those with the best SEL approach. The chosen SEL program needs to be one that is aligned across grade levels and can receive secure school and community support to remain successful. The *Social and Emotional Learning: A Framework for Promoting Mental Health and Reducing Risk Behavior in Children and Youth* study by Payton et al. (2000) uses the work of CASEL to identify key competencies and features of quality programs that enhance SEL competencies and as a result, suggest criteria for educators to consider when looking to adopt a program. The

results of the program review have been published in a consumer's guide by CASEL with the intent that it, "will contribute to improved program selection and thereby help young people succeed in their academic, personal, and social lives" (p. 184). This study informs the current study to include the key competencies identified by CASEL when determining quality picture books recommended for use in promoting social and emotional development in elementary age children.

Analysis/Selection/Evaluation of Picture Books for Specific Identified Purposes

Picture books are often used for a multitude of specific themes, units, and purposes in an elementary school classroom. *What Kind of Book? Selecting Picture Books for Vocabulary Acquisition* by Larragueta and Ceballos-Viro (2018) discusses a two-phase study of vocabulary acquisition in a bilingual school by an English teacher in Latina, Spain. Consideration was given to the levels of text and image complexity as well as the number of sessions spent with EFL learners. The first phase lasted three consecutive weeks with text complexity as the focus, and the second phase used books with only pictures and focused on image complexity for three consecutive weeks following the first phase. Results of the study showed, "Storytelling is a great tool to be used in the classroom to teach English as a foreign language" (p. 84). Some key observations in this study are that students learned more from shorter, more specific texts and from books with pictures that were independent from the background rather than pictures that contained important elements which blended in with the background. Understanding, "the effectiveness of the book for vocabulary acquisition can be affected by the complexity of the narration and the complexity of the illustrations" (p. 85) may be

reason to consider the same aspects when identifying quality picture books for SEL development in elementary age students.

Von Drasek's (2016) study *Grief in Picturebooks: An Evaluative Rubric* examines the content of ninety-two picture books on death and grief for children in preschool through early elementary with regards to child development. The researcher employed the assistance of Dr. Boss to review rubric criteria she determined would be met by picture books considered to be exemplar in meeting the needs of students dealing with the grieving process. Von Drasek began her study with a list of 277 titles from Amazon after searching "death and dying" and "picturebooks." She found 92 of those titles in nearby libraries and chose to examine those based on literary value, artistic merit, identification, age relevant content, and memorialization. When determining literary value, she consulted the Children's Book Committee at Bank Street College of Education and the American Library Association/Association for Library Service to Children's Newbery and Caldecott Award Criteria. Artistic merit was determined by the appropriateness and excellence of the picture book illustrations and how they portrayed the story, theme, mood, and concept of the information presented. Identification and age relevance included whether or not the characters were authentic and relatable, as well as whether or not the author used child friendly language the reader may adopt for use in expressing his/her own emotions. Finally, Von Drasek rated each picture book on the inclusion of modeling for remembrance of the loved one lost. Each book examined was given a score from one to five for each of the attributes. The overall score determined which titles Von Drasek found to be exemplar titles. The results included five titles from the list that

received a score of five in each criteria section and would therefore be recommended to families of grieving children. This study informs the current study through its inclusion of rubric criteria that is relevant such as determining literary value by consulting American Library Association/Association for Library Service to Children's Newbery and Caldecott Award Criteria, artistic merit by the appropriateness and excellence of illustrations and how they portray the story, theme, mood, and concept of the information presented, identification and age relevance by whether or not the characters are authentic and relatable, and whether or not the author used child friendly language the reader may adopt for use in express his/her own emotions, when determining the quality of selected picture books.

Bryant's (2008) *Character Traits in Newbery Award Literature 1997-2007* consists of a content analysis study of exemplary character traits found in Newbery Award winning books from 1997-2007. The researcher references *Introduction to Research in Education* by Ary et al. when determining her purpose for educational research and when identifying the steps of content analysis research. She continues by developing a coding system, leading a training session on using the system to identify occurrences of character traits in the chosen Newbery books, and comparing ratings of others with her own in multiple categories to determine a numerical end product. Bryant states her final product is numerical as suggested by Earl R. Babbie in *The Basics of Social Research* when using quantitative measures to analyze content. She also included the three steps for conducting value analysis given in Ralph K. White's *Value-Analysis: The Nature and Use of the Method* to provide maximum objectivity in a study analyzing

subjective content. The coding system created by Bryant was composed of several sections including one for general information, one for each a positive and a negative character trait ranking form, and nine others depending on the character element being examined using the acronym C.H.A.R.A.C.T.E.R. created by the researcher. The researcher chose three readers in addition to herself to read and analyze the Newbery Award books. The other readers included an intermediate school teacher librarian and former classroom teacher of third through fifth grade students, a psychology and sociology instructor who is also a mother of three children ranging 10 years in age, and a university librarian who was formerly a classroom teacher of fifth and sixth grade students, a school librarian for kindergarten through twelfth grades, is a mother of four children ranging 14 years in age, and avid reader and new author. Each book was read and rated by all four reviewers. The reviewers read each book and used the codebook developed by the researcher to evaluate each book with a 0-3 numbering system indicating the frequency of given elements appearing in each text before they met as a group to debrief. The data collected was entered into the SPSS computer program and sorted to show the number of times each character trait was demonstrated by characters in each of the texts as quantitative measures as well as qualitative measures showing whether specific traits were specifically mentioned in each of the texts. The researcher determined that all texts evaluated included characters who demonstrated at least seven of the character traits making up the acronym C.H.A.R.A.C.T.E.R. This study informs the current study through its provision of steps to develop a coding system to use when analyzing content of selected SEL picture books.

Pringle and Lamme (2005) from the University of Florida explain the purpose for their research project *Using Picture Storybooks to Support Young Children's Science Learning* is to, “identify storybooks appropriate for supporting learning of science among young children and to suggest criteria that can be used by classroom teachers in selecting storybooks with science themes for use in their classrooms” (p. 3). They chose to focus their research on narrative and expository books related to animals because it is not practical for young children to study such a variety of animals as they exist in their natural habitats. The largest criteria piece Pringle and Lamme use when analyzing and selecting books for recommendation is accuracy. They focus on the accuracy of the scientific content, realistic illustrations including sizes and proportions, scientific terminology, and factual information. They also considered differences in perspectives, the animal habitat, and the ability to entertain while still providing factual information. The study concludes with book suggestions of different types – those of observing nature, some considered animal biographies, and others written to help save animals from extinction. This study informs the current study to place emphasis on accuracy as well as perspectives and the ability to entertain while still providing factual information when determining criteria to consider when analyzing the collection of SEL books.

Criteria Used to Identify Quality Picture Books

There are specific professional resources ideal for helping determine the quality of different picture books. According to the American Library Association (2017), “For library professionals to make informed choices, selection policies for all types of libraries ... should include criteria to guide in the resource selection process” (para. 1). A number

of items should be considered when determining criteria including but not limited to subject areas and formats as well as age appropriateness, the diversity of the population the library serves, the intended use of the materials, and the literary quality. Four of the top school library reviewing sources recommended by the American Library Association include: Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) Notable Children's Books, *Booklist*, *School Library Journal*, and the We Need Diverse Books website. The ALA also provides a link that offers 115 additional review resources. This study informs the current study through its inadvertent suggestion to compare the previously suggested SEL picture books with recommendations from *Wilson Children's Core Collection* as well as reviews given by those of the top five school library reviewing sources recommended by the American Library Association which are applicable to elementary picture books, to determine which are quality picture books.

The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) Collection Development handout by Carter et al. (2010) lists several resources one may reference when selecting books. The resources are divided into sections including "Retrospective Selection Aids," "Review Journals," "Subject Specific Journals," "Online Resources," "Blogs," "Individual American Book Awards," and "Lists." Included in the numerous resources are four of the top five school library reviewing sources recommended by the American Library Association. The one not mentioned by Carter is the We Need Diverse Books website, however there were other recommended resources for selection of materials that meet the needs of diverse populations. This study further informs the current study to consider criteria used to identify quality picture books by comparing the previously

suggested SEL picture books with recommendations from *Wilson Children's Core Collection* and reviews given by four of the top five school library reviewing sources recommended by the American Library Association which are applicable to elementary picture books, to determine which are quality picture books.

Wilson and Bishop (1999) reviewed 152 reviews in journals by reviewers of children's books in their work *Criteria for Reviewing Children's Books*, to determine which of those met the majority of the criteria predetermined by professionals to be important information included in book reviews. Wilson and Bishop conducted their research study through the course of the following five steps: First they selected a pool of 16 experts who had previously commented on criteria for book reviews and asked them to share what makes a quality book review. They then listed the criteria given by the experts and narrowed the list down by choosing only the items at least three of their experts had mentioned. Their list included: Description of the Content, Definition of the Audience, Info Re: Scope, Tone, Style, Point of View, Comparison with Authors Other Works or Similar Works, Appropriateness of the Art to the Text, Reviewer's Personal Opinion, Strengths and Weaknesses, Uses of the Work, Brevity, and Judgment of Literary Quality. Next, they determined which journals they would include in their study and chose: *Booklist*, *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, *The Horn Book Magazine*, and *School Library Journal* because all four had been used previously in noted studies. The last step of the study involved the analysis of the previously published reviews to determine if they met the ten criteria. Research findings indicated, "SLJ contained the most criteria identified by the experts as essential for a quality book review. However,

SLJ, BL, and BCCB were quite close in the total number of criteria met by each journal” (p. 11). This study informs the current study to compare the previously suggested SEL picture books with reviews from the top school library reviewing sources recommended by the American Library Association that are applicable to elementary picture books, to determine which are quality picture books.

Literature Review Summary

Overall, these studies have shown consistency in stressing the importance of quality when it comes to promoting social and emotional development in children. As shared by Hurd and Deutsch (2017), “Only programs that used evidence-based skills-training approaches were effective in boosting students’ SEL outcomes” (p. 104). These approaches employed the use of the acronym SAFE which is further supported by others (O’Conner et. al., 2017). Additionally, the key competencies identified by CASEL should also be considered (Payton et. al., 2000). These studies also shared that while picture books are often used for numerous purposes in an elementary building, text and image complexity (Larragueta & Ceballos-Viro, 2018), literary value, artistic merit, identification, age relevant content (Von Drasek, 2016), accuracy, perspectives, and the ability to entertain while still providing factual information (Bryant, 2008) are critical elements to consider. Finally, it is imperative to determine the quality of picture books through the use of reliable sources such as ALSC Notable Children’s Books, *Booklist*, *School Library Journal*, the We Need Diverse Books website, *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, and *The Horn Book Magazine* (American Library Association, 2017; Carter et. al., 2010; Wilson & Bishop, 1999).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this literary qualitative content analysis was to analyze children's picture books using *Wilson Children's Core Collection* and four top school library children's book review sources (ALSC Notable Children's Books, *Booklist*, *School Library Journal*, and We Need Diverse Books website) recommended by the American Library Association (2023) to compile a list of high quality picture books, as noted in the review sources, that also address CASEL's five components of SEL and can therefore be recommended to support SEL development in young children. This research included identifying an initial list of quality SEL picture books by cross-comparing 51 titles from suggested SEL picture book lists with title recommendations by the four review sources. Each item from the collection identified as a quality SEL picture book was then analyzed by the researcher using criteria in CASEL's five core social and emotional competencies for SEL theme identification.

Research Design

This study used qualitative content analysis to evaluate the selected picture books. As Wildemuth (2017) explains, this approach "goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts" (p. 318). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) define qualitative analysis of content as, "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (p. 1278). This approach was appropriate for this study because the selected picture books were examined for themes and patterns connected to

social and emotional development in elementary age students which is an aspect of social reality. Previous studies (Hurd & Deutsch, 2017; Durlak et. al., 2010; O’Conner, 2017; Payton et. al., 2000) shared criteria to consider when evaluating programs for themes connected to social and emotional development, while additional studies (Larragueta & Ceballos-Viro, 2018; Von Drasek, 2016; Bryant, 2008; Pringle & Lamme, 2005) focused on the evaluation of children’s picture books for specific identified purposes. Connecting the work of these studies helped determine the criteria to be used in the current study.

Sample of Books

The sample of books chosen for analysis in this study were 51 picture books selected from three SEL book lists (155 books total) suggested by educators and others for use in supporting social and emotional growth of elementary age students (see Appendix A). Sampling was started by performing a Google search using keywords “picture books,” and “social emotional learning.” From the results provided, the researcher chose lists of books offered by, “Open Circle,” “We are Teachers,” and “Lee and Low Books.” The researcher chose this sample because it provided a book collection from a variety of contributors invested directly in the SEL development of children. The list creators are associations and publishers, but they provided no information detailing whether or not those books were chosen based on quality or other criteria. The researcher cross-compared those 155 books to find those available through a large public library youth collection (Lafayette Parish Public Library) in her area (74 of the books). These were compared with the Wilson Children’s Core Collection, limiting the list to those that were also recommended in the source (51 books). The researcher then read reviews of the

51 books from three sources recommended by Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) Notable Children's Books, *Booklist*, *School Library Journal* to determine which are quality books. Finally the researcher read the recommended book lists on diversebooks.org (the We Need Diverse Books website) to determine which are included in featured lists on the site. A table of the 51 books from this comparison is shown in the results of this paper.

Procedures

Data Collection and Analysis

This study used the directed analysis of content approach, which Wildemuth (2017) described in eight steps. The first step is to prepare the data. That involved compiling a list of proposed books by searching for picture books recommended for SEL development in children and narrowing that list by using those available locally and narrowing further to those included in the *Wilson's Children's Core Collection*, as described in detail above. The second step involved identifying the content to be analyzed in the study. This research focused on one or more professionally written reviews of books and the researcher's review of the illustrations and text of children's picture books. The third step in the directed analysis of content approach is to develop categories and a coding scheme. The researcher used the five core social and emotional competencies provided by The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2018) as an initial coding scheme, which included the demonstration of those skills by the characters in the picturebooks examined (see Appendix B). The fourth step was to test the coding scheme of CASEL descriptions and a close reading of the reviews on a sample

of texts. The researcher chose three books to test the coding scheme on - one book from each of the original three lists: *New Shoes* by Susan Lynn Meryer, *Aaron Slater*, *Illustrator* by Andrea Beaty, and *All Around Us* by Xelena Gonzalez. It was determined that the CASEL components would be an effective way to identify SEL themes in the books. Step five involved applying the CASEL coding scheme to the entire collection of texts. Assessing coding consistency is the sixth step; no alterations to CASEL were needed. Step seven was to draw conclusions from the coded data. The final step was to report the methods and findings of the research. As the researcher, I described whether the CASEL components portrayed in the books (when present) validated what the reviews said. I also determined from my own reading of the books, if elements of the book supported the CASEL competencies. As such, this research answered the two research questions: 1) What picture books are most highly recommended for students, parents, librarians, counselors, therapists, and teachers to use to promote SEL development? And 2) Which of CASEL's five components of SEL are portrayed in the books?

Limitations

One limitation of this study is that the researcher is the only reader and coder of the books. Wildemuth (2017) does express that, "Human coders are subject to fatigue and are likely to make more mistakes as the coding proceeds" (p. 322). To address this concern, the researcher routinely tested the coding scheme throughout the research process, as initially done in step four.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this literary qualitative content analysis is to analyze children's picture books using *Wilson Children's Core Collection* and four top school library review sources (ALSC Notable Children's Books, *Booklist*, *School Library Journal*, and the We Need Diverse Books website) recommended by the American Library Association (2023) to compile a list of high quality books that address CASEL's five components of SEL and can therefore be recommended to support SEL development in young children. Research question 1 asked what picture books are most highly recommended for students, parents, librarians, counselors, therapists, and teachers to use to promote SEL development. Research question 2 asked which of CASEL's five components of SEL were portrayed in the books. The social and emotional competencies listed by CASEL include: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. The researcher read each book and determined the best category for the books based on the criteria given by CASEL for each of the competencies.

Research Question 1: Picture Books Most Highly Recommended for SEL

Development

24 Books that are "Essential" on WCCC and Recommended by Reviewers

Of the 51 picture books studied, just under half (24) were determined *Essential* by *Wilson's Children's Core Collection* and each received positive reviews/recommendations from at least two of the four top school library review sources: ALSC Notable Children's

Books, *Booklist*, *School Library Journal*, and the We Need Diverse Books website. Only eight of the books received positive reviews/recommendations from three or more review sources. One of those eight received positive reviews/recommendations from all four top school library review sources in addition to being determined *essential* by *Wilson's Children's Core Collection*. Seven books received positive reviews/recommendations from three of the four review sources, and the remaining 16 titles were recommended by two of the four review sources.

Table 1: Top 24 SEL Picture Books Labeled Essential in WCCC, Sorted by Copyright Date.

Key: Wilson Children's Core Collection (WCCC) Levels: Essential, Recommended, and Supplemental. CASEL codes: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.

Suggested Title / Author (Copyright Date):	WCCC	ALSC / Awards	Booklist	SLJ	CASEL Competency Most Prominent	Researcher's Personal Notes
A Chair for my Mother by Vera B. Williams (1982)	Essential	Randolph Caldecott Medal 1983	Not reviewed	Yes	Decision making	Rosa started working at a restaurant where her mother worked. Between Rosa and Mama, they were saving money in a jar to buy a big comfortable chair because they had previously lost everything they had in a house fire. After filling the jar with change and cashing it in, they were able to buy the perfect chair for Rosa, mama, and grandma to

						enjoy.
Too Many Tamales by Gary Soto (1993)	Essential	Notable Children's Recordings 2012	Yes	Yes	Self awareness	For Christmas dinner, Maria and her mother were making tamales together. Maria had tried on her mother's ring, without her mother knowing, and ended up mixing it into the food. Maria and her cousins ate all the tamales searching for the ring. Maria was about to confess to her mother what happened when she noticed her mother had the ring. Maria explained. The family made another batch of tamales while Maria's Aunt Rosa tells her the second batch of tamales always tastes better.
Pink and Say by Patricia Polacco (1994)	Essential	None	Yes	Yes	Relationship skills	This is Sheldon Curtis' story retold. Sheldon (nicknamed "Say") was a white boy injured in the Civil War and rescued on the battlefield by an African American boy, a former slave, (Pinkus) who had lost his company. At Pinkus' home, his mother (Moe Moe Bay) helped take care of both boys until they were able to return to battle. Marauders showed up at the house and Moe Moe was able to hide the boys but she ended up being shot and killed. The boys were followed, captured, and taken to a camp where Say ended up surviving,

						while Pink did not. This story is very emotional and not one I would recommend for the youngest elementary age students.
Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse by Kevin Henkes (1996)	Essential	None	Yes	Yes	Social awareness	Lilly loved school and wanted to be a teacher because she adored her teacher, Mr. Slinger. One morning she went to school excited to show everyone what she got when she went shopping with her Grammy. She interrupted class too many times and Mr. Slinger ended up taking her things and holding them until the end of the day. Lilly drew a mean picture of Mr. Slinger, wrote angry notes, and decided she did not want to be a teacher. When she got home she chose to sit in the uncooperative chair until she was ready to write an apology. With the help of her parents, she arrived at school with an apology for Mr. Slinger and had a much better day. This is a sweet book about a child self-regulating their emotions and showing understanding and consideration for others.

The Dot by Peter H. Reynolds (2003)	Essential	None	Yes	Yes	Self awareness	This is a story about how Vashti felt she couldn't draw until one dot celebrated by her art teacher encouraged her to do more and more. Vashti's dots were put on display at the school art show where she met a child who also felt they couldn't draw. Vashti encouraged him to start by drawing a line, and she had him sign it.
Yesterday I Had the Blues by Jeron Ashford Frame (2003)	Essential	None	Yes	Yes	Self awareness	The speaker shares descriptions of his emotions and the emotions of others by first explaining the deepest saddest blues, followed by the greens, the grays, the pinks, the indigos, the yellows, and the reds.
Grandmama's Pride by Becky Birtha (2005)	Essential	None	Yes	Yes	Responsible decision making	Sarah Marie and her sister traveled with their mother each summer from the north to the south to visit their grandmother. Grandmama was able to keep the reality of segregation from Sarah Marie until she was able to read. Sarah Marie was ready to go back home to the north and wasn't sure she was interested in visiting the south again but by the following summer things had changed in the south.

<p>Crossing Bok Chitto by Tim Tingle (2006)</p>	<p>Essential</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Relationship skills</p>	<p>Martha Tom was sent to collect blackberries and crossed the Bok Chitto river from the Choctaw side to the plantation owner and slaves side. While on the other side of the river she witnessed the calling together of the forbidden slave church. Noticing she was lost, a man sent his son (Little Mo) to walk Martha Tom back to the river. This created a friendship between the two that led to helping Martha Tom's family helping Little Mo's family find freedom.</p>
<p>Looking Like Me by Walter Dean Myers (2009)</p>	<p>Essential</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Self awareness</p>	<p>Jeremy sees himself in the mirror and identifies himself as Jeremy, brother, son, writer, crowd, city child, an artist, dancer, talker, runner, dreamer. The speaker encourages the reader to find a mirror and others who can help make a list of who you are.</p>

<p>I Want My Hat Back by Jon Klassen (2011)</p> <p>*NR - Not recommended by the researcher</p>	<p>Essential</p>	<p>Theodor Seuss Geisel Award 2012</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Self management</p>	<p>A bear lost his hat and searching for it, he went from animal to animal asking them if they had seen his hat. The rabbit who was wearing the bear's hat lied to the bear. The bear thought about it later and remembered the rabbit wearing the hat. He was angry and went back to get the hat from the rabbit. In the end, a squirrel asks bear if he has seen a rabbit wearing a red hat and bear responds telling the squirrel that he hasn't seen the rabbit and that he wouldn't eat a rabbit...implying that he did eat the rabbit. While cute, it also may condone lying (perhaps children would get the idea it's ok if they're angry) to some extent. - Not one I would personally recommend.</p>
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<p>Each Kindness by Jacqueline Woodson (2012)</p>	<p>Essential</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Relationship skills</p>	<p>Coretta Scott King Award - A story about a student (Chloe) and her reaction to a new student in her class. The new student, Maya, came in with ratted clothes. Chloe explains that Maya sat next to her and smiled but that she didn't smile back. When Maya tried to invite Chloe and her friends to play, they walked away. When Maya tried talking to Chloe, classmates teased Chloe and Chloe insisted Maya was not her friend. Despite Maya's efforts, Chloe and her friends whispered and laughed about Maya. One day when Maya was absent, the class had a lesson on kindness and how kindness goes into the world like ripples from a pebble dropped into a bowl of water. Chloe couldn't think of a time she'd sent kindness into the world. Maya never returned to school because her family had moved and each day Chloe had hoped she would have returned because she would have changed things.</p>
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<p>Deep in the Sahara by Kelly Cunnane (2013)</p>	<p>Essential</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Social awareness</p>	<p>A child wants to wear a malafa for many reasons: because it's colorful, it's beautiful, it makes you look like a lady, etc. As she talks with her mother, her sister, and others she learns more about why the ladies wear a malafa. She shares with her mother that she wants one to wear as they pray. In the end, Lalla has learned that a malafa isn't just for mystery, tradition, and belonging but for faith.</p>
<p>Everyone Can Learn to Ride a Bicycle by Chris Raschka (2013)</p>	<p>Essential</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Self awareness</p>	<p>A simple and encouraging story about the steps to riding a bicycle to share with children the importance of never giving up. It's a story of perseverance and grit even when there are times of failure (or falling off the bike in this case). "Find the courage to try it again, and again, again.....until by luck, grace, and determination, you are riding."</p>
<p>The Invisible Boy by Trudy Ludwig (2013)</p>	<p>Essential</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Social awareness</p>	<p>Brian is feeling left out by his teacher who is having to turn her attention to other students for misbehavior and by his peers who are choosing other friends for games and discussing parties he wasn't invited to. A new student, Justin, joins the class and while other students are teasing him, he and Brian become friends. Justin then</p>

						becomes friends with Emillion and just when Brian feels he's going to be left out again he finds he's included in the trio of friends.
Knock Knock: My Dad's Dream For Me by Daniel Beaty (2013)	Essential	None	Yes	Yes	Self management	Coretta Scott King Award Winner - This is a heart wrenching story told from the perspective of a boy missing his father. It's his story of how he loved when his dad used to play a "knock, knock" game to greet him in the mornings and how when his father was no longer present he longed for the "knock, knock" as well as for the experiences they shared and knowledge he had yet to learn from his father. The story doesn't say why the father was absent, so it's easy for many different children to relate to. Reading the author's note at the end, Daniel Beaty explains that the incarceration of his father was traumatic for him and that it also helped him later understand his students going through the same.
Take Me Out to the Yakyu by Aaron Meshon (2013)	Essential	None	Yes	Yes	Social awareness	A child shares why he loves baseball in America and Japan while comparing and contrasting the two, sharing facts and some related words in both languages.

Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah by Laurie Ann Thompson (2015)	Essential	Notable Children's Books 2016	Yes	Yes	Self management	Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah was born in Ghana, West Africa with a deformed leg. Despite his physical disability, and with the encouragement of his mother, Emmanuel made sure he worked to do what others could do and refused to become a beggar like others with disabilities. He proved that people can reach their dreams despite limitations that may be placed on them.
New Shoes by Susan Meyer (2015)	Essential	None	Yes	Yes	Social awareness	A white child and her parent are helped first at a shoe store. "...I know colored people always have to wait." The white girl was able to try on multiple pairs of shoes before purchasing while the black girl had to have Mama trace her shoes on a piece of paper to find the right size. The main character (Ella Mae) and a friend from school (Charlotte) become determined to make a difference. They work for old pairs of shoes and create their own shoe shop.
Crown: Ode to the Fresh Cut by Derrick Barnes (2017)	Essential	John Newbery Medal 2018, Notable Children's Books 2018, Randolph Caldecott Medal 2018	Yes	Yes	Self awareness	In this story, a young African American boy shares the life changing experience of a trip to the barber shop. The detailed language allows the reader to truly feel the excitement and celebrate the confidence young boys feel after leaving the

						barber shop with their new "do".
Jabari Jumps by Gaia Cornwall (2017)	Essential	Notable Children's Books 2018	Yes	Yes	Self management	After finishing swim lessons, Jabari decided he was going to jump off the diving board. He felt scared but with the encouragement of his father he jumped.
A Friend for Henry by Jenn Bailey (2019)	Essential	None	Yes	Yes	Relationship skills	Henry is a young boy on the autism spectrum, seeking to find a friend at school. This story is told from his point of view sharing his frustration, fear, anxiety, and feelings of being alone. It also shares how he is slowly able to relate to another child through differences, and finds his first friend.
The Oldest Student: How Mary Walker Learned to Read by Rita Loraine Hubbard and Oge Mora (2020)	Essential	Notable Children's Books 2021	Yes	Yes	Self management	This is the true story of Mary Walker - a former plantation slave, a wife, a sharecropper, a mother, a babysitter, and more. Mary became the oldest student in the nation and learned how to read at the age of 116. It's an inspirational story sharing a message of hard work and determination, along with Mary's message that, "You're never too old to learn."
Eyes That Kiss in the Corners by Joanna Ho (2021)	Essential	Notable Children's Books 2022	Yes	Yes	Self awareness	Note: This is the only book featured on We Need Diverse Books website (Jan/Feb 2021). The way this author describes Asian eye shapes is poetic. It's such a creative way to share the beauty in diversity.

Milo Imagines the World by Matt de la Pena (2021)	Essential	Notable Children's Books 2022	Yes	Yes	Social awareness	Milo and his sister take monthly train rides to see their mom who is incarcerated. To keep the excitement at bay, Milo imagines the lives of several people he sees on the train. From a businessman living in an apartment to a boy in a suit living in a castle, and a bride being whisked away in a hot air balloon, Milo draws pictures of all he imagines about each of the strangers. He thinks about what others might imagine when they look at his face. As he sees the boy in his suit ahead of him walking through the metal detector that he will also be walking through, he realizes you can't really tell so much about someone just by looking at their face.
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Eyes That Kiss in the Corners by Joanna Ho (2021) was the only book out of all 51 that was featured on the We Need Diverse Books website. This story shares the appreciation of Asian eyes, from the view of an Asian girl. The way the author describes eye shapes is almost poetic. It is such a creative way to share the beauty in diversity. Another book sharing and celebrating details of diversity is *Deep in the Sahara* by Kelly Cunnane (2013). In this book, a child wants to wear a malafa for many reasons: it is colorful, it is beautiful, it identifies you as “a lady”, etc. As she talks with her mother, her sister, and others she learns more about why the ladies wear a malafa. She shares with her

mother that she wants one to wear as they pray. In the end, Lalla has learned that a malafa isn't just for mystery, tradition, and belonging but symbolizes their Muslim faith.

Both *The Oldest Student: How Mary Walker Learned to Read* by Rita Loraine Hubbard (2020) and Oge Mora and *Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah* by Laurie Ann Thompson (2015), share the true stories of perseverance and determination and how those qualities lead to success. In the true story of Mary Walker - a former plantation slave, a wife, a sharecropper, a mother, a babysitter, and more, Mary becomes the oldest student in the nation and learns how to read at the age of 116. It's an inspirational story sharing a message of hard work and determination, along with Mary's message that, "You're never too old to learn." Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah was born in Ghana, West Africa with a deformed leg. Despite his physical disability, and with the encouragement of his mother, Emmanuel makes sure he works to do what others could do and refuses to become a beggar like many others with disabilities there do. He proves that people can reach their dreams despite limitations that may be placed on them.

Knock Knock: My Dad's Dream For Me by Daniel Beaty (2013) is a Coretta Scott King Award winner. This is a heart wrenching story told from the perspective of a boy missing his father. It's his story of how he loves it when his dad plays a "knock, knock" game to greet him in the mornings. When his father is longer present he longs for the "knock, knock" as well as for the experiences they shared and the knowledge he has yet to learn from his father. The story does not say why the father is absent, so it's openness makes it easy for many different children to relate to the situation. Reading the author's note at the end, Daniel Beaty explains that the incarceration of his father was traumatic

for him and that it also helped him later understand his students going through similar circumstances. Another Coretta Scott King Award winner, and book strongly recommended by the researcher, is *Each Kindness* by Jacqueline Woodson (2012). This story shares the reaction of a student (Chloe) to a new student in her class. The new student, Maya, comes in with tattered clothes. Chloe explains that Maya sat next to her and smiled but that she didn't smile back. When Maya tries to invite Chloe and her friends to play, they walk away. When Maya tries talking to Chloe, classmates tease Chloe, and Chloe insists Maya is not her friend. Despite Maya's efforts, Chloe and her friends whisper and laugh about Maya. One day when Maya is absent, the class has a lesson on kindness and how kindness goes into the world like ripples from a pebble dropped into a bowl of water. Chloe can not think of a time she has sent kindness into the world. Maya never returns to school because her family moves, and each day Chloe hopes she would return because she would change things.

Books that the researcher would not recommend or would recommend with caution include *I Want My Hat Back* by Jon Klassen (2011) and *Pink and Say* by Patricia Polacco (1994). *I Want My Hat Back* is a story about a bear who loses his hat and goes from animal to animal asking them if they have seen it. The rabbit who is wearing the bear's hat lied to the bear. The bear thinks about it later and remembers the rabbit wearing the hat. He is angry and goes back to get the hat from the rabbit. In the end, a squirrel asks the bear if he has seen a rabbit wearing a red hat and the bear responds telling the squirrel that he has not seen the rabbit and that he would not eat a rabbit...implying that he did eat the rabbit. While cute, it may condone lying (perhaps children would get the idea it is

okay if they are angry) to some extent. *Pink and Say* by Patricia Polacco (1994) is Sheldon Curtis' story retold. Sheldon (nicknamed "Say") was a white boy injured in the Civil War and rescued on the battlefield by an African American boy, a former slave, (Pinkus) who had lost his company. At Pinkus' home, his mother (Moe Moe Bay) helps take care of both boys until they are able to return to battle. Marauders show up at the house and Moe Moe is able to hide the boys but she ends up being shot and killed. The boys are followed, captured, and taken to a camp where Say ends up surviving, while Pink does not. This story is very emotional and is one the researcher would recommend for older elementary students, but definitely not for the youngest elementary age children.

12 Books That Are “Recommended” On the WCCC and Recommended By Reviewers

Of the 51 books studied, 12 were listed as *Recommended* by *Wilson’s Children’s Core Collection* and received positive reviews/recommendations from at least one of the top school library review sources: ALSC Notable Children’s Books, *Booklist*, *School Library Journal*, and the We Need Diverse Books website. Only one book of the 12 received positive reviews/recommendations from three of the top school library review sources, nine of the books listed as recommended received positive reviews from two of the top review sources, and the remaining two books received positive reviews from only one of the top review sources.

Table 2: Top SEL Picture Books Labeled Recommended in WCCC, Sorted by Copyright Date

Key: Wilson Children's Core Collection (WCCC) Levels: Essential, Recommended, and Supplemental. CASEL codes: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.

Suggested Title / Author (Copyright Date):	WCCC	ALSC / Awards	Booklist	SLJ	CASEL Competency Most Prominent	Researcher's Personal Notes
Crow Boy by Taro Yashima (1955)	Recomm ended	Randolph Caldecott Medal 1956	Not reviewed	Yes	Responsible decision making	Chibi is a tiny Japanese boy who is afraid of others and struggles to learn and to make friends. He was withdrawn and misunderstood by his classmates. It wasn't until the sixth grade when someone (Mr. Isobe, the teacher) showed interest in Chibi and all he knew. Chibi performed in the school talent show, sharing the sounds of crows. Mr. Isobe explained that Chibi learned the sounds because he left his home at dawn and returned home at sunset for six years, and everyone was sad to know how they had misunderstood Chibi for so long.

My Diary From Here to There by Amada Irma Perez (2002)	Recommended	Pura Belpré Children's Author Award 2004	Yes	Yes	Self management	Amada's uses her diary to share her thoughts and feelings about having to move from the family home in Mexico to the United States when her father lost his job. She explains the difficulties of traveling, living situations, and obtaining green cards as well as the comfort she finds in her father finding a new job, her rock, and memories she holds close.
Suki's Kimono by Chieri Uekagi (2003)	Recommended	None	Yes	Yes	Social awareness	Suki wanted to wear her kimono to school on the first day. Her sisters tried to dissuade her from wearing it, afraid people would think she was weird. Students looked, giggled and pointed but Suki ignored it. Suki shared with her teacher and her class about what she did over the summer. She talked about her outfit and dancing at a festival. After sharing, her teacher and classmates applauded. Suki's sisters didn't have a great first day at school, but Suki did.
Across the Alley by Richard Michelson (2006)	Recommended	None	Yes	Yes	Relationship skills	A young white Jewish boy named Abe explains how he made friends with a black boy named Willie, who lived across the alley. Willie showed Abe how to throw a baseball, and Abe taught Willie how to play the violin. Their friendship across the alley became a close

						friendship despite what others think.
Those Shoes by Maribeth Boelts (2007)	Recommended	None	Yes	Yes	Responsible decision making	Jeremy wants a pair of "those shoes" because they're the ones everyone at school is wearing. When Grandma can't afford them, she takes Jeremy to the area thrift stores looking for "those shoes". They found a pair that are too small, but Jeremy bought them anyway. When Jeremy realized the shoes just weren't going to fit and that his friend Antonio could use them more than he could, he gave them to Antonio.
Twist: Yoga Poems by Janet Wong (2007)	Recommended	None	Yes	Yes	Self management	A collection of 16 yoga poses shown in the illustrations and briefly described in short poems. Poems such as "Breath," "Warrior," "Cobra," and "Tree" can be used to help children regain focus and balance.
The Mangrove Tree: Planting Trees to Feed Families by Susan L. Roth and Cindy Trumbore (2011)	Recommended	None	Yes	Yes	Responsible decision making	Dr. Gordon Sato discovered that mangrove trees could be planted near salty water. Many women worked to plant the mangrove seedlings to earn money close to home. The miles of grown mangrove trees helped provide food and resources for people and animals in Hargiso.

All Around Us by Xelena Gonzalez (2017)	Recommended	Notable Children's Books 2018, Pura Belpré Youth Illustrator Award 2018	Yes	Not reviewed	Relationship skills	From planting a placenta under one tree, to ashes of ancestors under another, a timeline is actually a circle and throughout the book, a grandfather points out that there are circles all around us.
Under My Hijab by Hena Khan (2019)	Recommended	None	Yes	Not reviewed	Social awareness	A young girl talks about the hijabs of girls and women in her life and how they are worn in public, but not at home.
She Was the First!: The Trailblazing Life of Shirley Chisholm by Katheryn Russell-Brown (2020)	Recommended	None	Yes	Yes	Social awareness	Shirley Chisholm first became a teacher, then used her leadership abilities to join organizations standing up for women and people of color. She became the first black woman to be elected to the New York State Assembly. She continued working to help the disadvantaged populations. In 1968 she became the first black woman to be elected to Congress. She was also the first black person to run for President.
Aaron Slater, Illustrator by Andrea Beaty (2021)	Recommended	None	Yes	Not reviewed	Self awareness	The main character (Aaron Douglas Slater) was named after Aaron Douglas, an African American painter, muralist, and graphic artist from the Harlem Renaissance period. This story shares a child's struggle with dyslexia and his wish to blend in by second grade. His ability to overcome is an excellent example for

						others with learning difficulties, by teaching that they aren't defined by those difficulties.
John's Turn by Mac Barnett (2022)	Recommended	None	Yes	Yes	Self management	Friday mornings at school mean performances or "Sharing Gifts". From playing musical instruments, to magic tricks and joke telling, students share what they enjoy. John was anxious but performed a ballet dance for his peers. The book ends in applause from his peers and blushing cheeks from John.

My Diary From Here to There by Amada Irma Perez (2002) was the only one of the 12 to receive positive reviews/recommendations from three top school library review sources. In *My Diary From Here to There*, Amada uses her diary to share her thoughts and feelings about having to move from the family home in Mexico to the United States when her father loses his job. She explains the difficulties of traveling, living situations, and obtaining Green Cards as well as the comfort she finds in her father finding a new job, her rock, and memories she holds close. This is recommended by the researcher as a book to read aloud to discuss emotions involved with big changes such as moving whether it's to a new school, a new neighborhood, or a new country.

A strongly recommended book by the researcher that also received favor from two top school library review sources is *The Mangrove Tree: Planting Trees to Feed Families* by Susan L. Roth and Cindy Trumbore (2011). This book details how Dr. Gordon Sato

discovers that mangrove trees can be planted near salty water, and uses that knowledge to help many people. The trees are planted mostly by women, which means this is an opportunity for women to work and earn money close to home. The miles of grown mangrove trees help provide food and resources for people and animals of Hargigo. This story reminds us that the actions of just one person can make a difference in the world.

Another book in this study that was both recommended by *Wilson's Children's Core Collection* and received a favorable review from the examined sources was *Aaron Slater, Illustrator* by Andrea Beaty (2021). In this book, the main character (Aaron Douglas Slater) is named after Aaron Douglas, an African American painter, muralist, and graphic artist from the Harlem Renaissance period. This story shares a child's struggle with dyslexia and his wish to blend in by second grade. His ability to overcome challenges is an excellent example for others with learning difficulties, by teaching that they are not defined by those difficulties.

15 Books That Are “Supplemental” on the WCCC and Recommended by Reviewers

Of the 51 books studied, 15 of them were considered *Supplemental* by *Wilson's Children's Core Collection* and received positive reviews/recommendations from at least one of the top school library review sources: ALSC Notable Children's Books, *Booklist*, *School Library Journal*, and the We Need Diverse Books website. From the 15 books on the supplemental list, only one book received positive reviews/recommendations from three of the considered review sources. Eleven books received favor from at least two of the review sources. The three remaining books from the studied set were considered

supplemental and received a positive review from only one of the included review sources.

Table 3: Top SEL Picture Books Labeled Supplemental in WCCC, Sorted by Copyright Date

Key: Wilson Children's Core Collection (WCCC) Levels: Essential, Recommended, and Supplemental. CASEL codes: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.

Suggested Title / Author (Copyright Date):	WCCC	ALSC / Awards	Booklist	SLJ	CASEL Competency Most Prominent	Researcher's Personal Notes
Upside Down Boy/El niño de cabeza by Juan Felipe Herrera (2000)	Supplemental	None	Yes	Yes	Self management	This is the author's memoir told by a child, Juanito, whose migrant family traveled for work. The child shares his feelings when the family settles and he begins school in a new area, learns English, and tries to find his place. Feeling out of place and like he doesn't belong, he calls himself "the upside down boy".
First Day in Grapes by L. King Perez (2002)	Supplemental	Pura Belpré Youth Illustrator Award 2004	Yes	Yes	Responsible decision making	Chico's family traveled between migrant camps, resulting in many "first days" in new schools. This story tells about Chico's experience in grapes. He faced an uncomfortable ride on the bus with the bus driver and unkind/unwelcoming

						children on the bus and at lunch, but had encouragement from his family, classmates, and teacher which helped him have confidence to stand up for himself.
Sometimes I'm Bombaloo by Rachel Vail (2002)	Supplemental	None	Yes	Yes	Self management	When Katie Honors is behaved and manages her emotions well, she is "Katie". When she gets so angry she cannot control herself, she is "Bombaloo". This book does a nice job of describing the intense emotions a child can feel including expressing anger with feet and fists rather than words, smashing things, and feeling like hating everything. It explains that when Katie is "Bombaloo" she is sent to her room until she can control herself again. It ends by sharing the process of apologizing and moving forward from an outburst.

<p>Destiny's Gift by Natasha Anastasia Tarpley (2004)</p>	<p>Supplemental</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Responsible decision making</p>	<p>Destiny's favorite place to be was at Mrs. Wade's bookstore. She loved reading books, meeting authors, and helping out at the bookstore. Destiny began writing and shared her writing with Mrs. Wade. One Saturday, Mrs. Wade received a notice of increased store rent and was sure she would need to close the store because she couldn't make the money to keep it open. The community came together to raise money and increase business. Wanting to give Mrs. Wade a gift, Destiny wrote about all the things she loved about the bookstore. Unsure of the future of the bookstore, Destiny and Mrs. Wade know they will continue to enjoy books (and powerful words) together.</p>
<p>George Crum and the Saratoga Chip by Gaylia Taylor (2006)</p>	<p>Supplemental</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Self management</p>	<p>George Crum was a boy who was part Native American and part African American growing up during the 1830's. He struggled in school but he loved the outdoors. As an adult, he learned he had a passion for cooking. With perseverance he became a chef in Saratoga Springs, New York where he accidentally invented the potato chip. After a</p>

						lifetime of experiencing inequality because of skin color, Crum later opened a restaurant where all customers were treated equally.
Four Feet, Two Sandals by Karen Williams (2007)	Supplemental	None	Yes	Yes	Relationship skills	When used clothing was thrown by relief workers to refugees, Lina found a sandal left behind. She looked around for the matching sandal, and saw Feroza who was wearing the sandal. Feroza later offered the single sandal to Lina because it didn't make sense to have only one. The girls decided to share the sandals, which was the start of their friendship. When Lina's name appeared on a list to go to America, the girls decided to each keep a sandal...to remember.
Ruthie and the (Not So) Teeny Tiny Lie by Laura Rankin (2007)	Supplemental	None	Yes	Yes	Self management	Ruthie loved teeny tiny things. When Ruthie finds a camera at recess and another student claims it's his, Ruthie lies and says it's hers because she wanted it so badly. Ruthie felt awful that afternoon. When she got home she started to feel the guilt even worse and talked with her parents about it. When she returned to school the next day she told the teacher the truth and apologized to the other student. The other student got his camera

						back and Ruthie felt better knowing she had told the truth. Such a great way to share with students how telling the truth helps them personally as much as it helps others involved.
Shades of People by Shelly Rotner (2009)	Supplemental	None	Yes	Yes	Social awareness	A book full of photographs of children's faces, with mention of the many different shades of skin colors. This book teaches that while we all have different skin shades, our skin doesn't determine what kind of people we are.
Big Red Lollipop by Rhuksana Khan (2010)	Supplemental	None	Yes	Yes	Self management	A young girl, Rubina, runs home excited to be invited to a birthday party. Not understanding the cultural differences, she's told she's allowed to go only if she takes her little sister with her. She doesn't get any other invitations for a long time. Sana is later invited to a birthday party and the littlest sister, Maryam, asks to go. Understanding how Sana feels, Rubina asks that Sana not have to take Maryam to the party. Sana didn't have to take Maryam, and Sana and Rubina developed a closer connection because of it.

<p>Seeds of Change: Planting a Path to Peace by Jen Cullerton Johnson (2010)</p>	<p>Supplemental</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Responsible decision making</p>	<p>Wangari Maathai's mother introduced her to the magumo tree and its importance. At a time when it was unusual for girls to go to school, Wangari's family sent her to receive an education. She followed her passion to become a scientist. She later became a professor and worked for equal rights for female scientists. With her lead, and many women supporting her, Kenya became healthy again with trees plentiful enough to sustain life in Kenya through persistence, patience, and commitment.</p>
<p>The Hula-Hoopin' Queen by Thelma Lynne Godin (2014)</p>	<p>Supplemental</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Relationship skills</p>	<p>Kameeka and Jamara are to have a hula-hooping' contest to determine who is the Hula-Hoopin' Queen of 139th St. Kameeka first has to help prepare for a birthday party for Miz Adeline who lives next door. The party ends up moving outside with everyone hula hooping.</p>
<p>Lend a Hand: Poems About Giving by John Frank (2014)</p>	<p>Supplemental</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Not reviewed</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Social awareness</p>	<p>This is a book of encouraging poems that tell stories of people reaching out to others and making a difference in the world in many different ways. Some ways include: sharing lunch with someone, making friends with an elderly neighbor, donating hair, cleaning</p>

						trash from a stream, planting trees, and writing a letter to a soldier.
Poems in the Attic by Nikki Grimes (2015)	Supplemental	None	Yes	Yes	Social awareness	The speaker found poems in her grandma's attic, that had been written by her mother many years earlier. The poems tell about her mother's childhood experiences as a child with a parent in the Air Force.
When Sophie Thinks She Can't by Molly Bang (2018)	Supplemental	None	Not reviewed	Yes	Self awareness	Sophie thinks she "can't" do something especially when told she "can't" by others. When she's encouraged and shown the power of "yet" she continues to work hard and succeeds. She then shares the power of "yet". Growth mindset focused!
A Small Kindness by Stacy McAnulty (2021)	Supplemental	None	Yes	Not reviewed	Relationship skills	"Like a game of tag" kindness is passed from one person to another between students, the teacher, and the custodian in the form of smiles, sharing, helping each other, and more. Color is added to the characters each time someone gets "tagged".

First Day in Grapes by L. King Perez (2002), was the only supplemental book in this study that received positive reviews/recommendations from three of the considered review sources. Chico's family travels between migrant camps, resulting in many "first

days” in new schools. This story tells about Chico’s experience as a migrant worker. He faces an uncomfortable ride on the bus with the bus driver and unkind/unwelcoming children on the bus and at lunch, but has encouragement from his family, classmates, and teacher which helps him have confidence to stand up for himself.

In the story, *When Sophie Thinks She Can't* by Molly Bang (2018), Sophie thinks she "can't" do something, particularly when told she "can't" by others. When she is encouraged and shown the power of "yet" she continues to work hard and succeeds. She then shares the power of "yet". This is a book about problem solving with a growth mindset focus. Additional stories from the supplemental list with a focus on strong emotions that are recommended by the researcher are *Ruthie and the (Not So) Teeny Tiny Lie* by Laura Rankin (2007) and *Sometimes I'm Bombaloo* by Rachel Vail (2002). In *Ruthie and the (Not So) Teeny Tiny Lie*, Ruthie loves teeny tiny things. When Ruthie finds a camera at recess and another student claims it is his, Ruthie lies and says it is hers because she wants it so badly. Ruthie feels awful that afternoon. When she gets home she starts to feel the guilt even worse and talks with her parents about it. When she returns to school the next day she tells the teacher the truth and apologizes to the other student. The other student gets his camera back and Ruthie feels better knowing she told the truth. The story is a great way to share with students how telling the truth helps them personally as much as it helps others involved. In *Sometimes I'm Bombaloo*, Katie Honors explains that when she behaves and manages her emotions well, she is "Katie." When she gets so angry she cannot control herself, she is "Bombaloo." This book does a nice job of describing the intense emotions a child can feel including expressing anger with feet and

fists rather than words, smashing things, and feeling like they hate everything. It explains that when Katie is "Bombaloo" she is sent to her room until she can control herself again. It ends by sharing the process of apologizing and moving forward from an outburst.

Research Question 2: Books Listed by CASEL's Five Components of SEL

Self-Awareness

Nine of the books from the study sample aligned with the self-awareness area of competence addressed by CASEL (see Tables 1 through 3 and Appendix B). This component includes one's ability to understand their own emotions, thoughts, and values and how those things influence behavior in a variety of situations. There were various ways these nine books were determined by the researcher to support the development of self-awareness as described by CASEL. *Crown: Ode to the Fresh Cut* by Derrick Barnes (2017), and *Looking Like Me* by Walter Dean Myers (2009) are stories which integrate personal and social identities. *Crown: Ode to the Fresh Cut* by Derrick Barnes (2017), *Too Many Tamales* by Gary Soto (1993), and *Eyes That Kiss in the Corners* by Joanna Ho (2021) all identify personal and cultural assets in their story lines. *Crown: Ode to the Fresh Cut* by Derrick Barnes (2017), *Yesterday I Had the Blues* by Jeron Ashford Frame (2003), *When Sophie Thinks She Can't* by Molly Bang (2018), and *The Dot* by Peter H. Reynolds (2003) all contain characters working to identify their emotions. Lastly, *When Sophie Thinks She Can't* by Molly Bang (2018), *Everyone Can Learn to Ride a Bicycle* by Chris Raschka (2013), *The Dot* by Peter H. Reynolds (2003), and *Aaron Slater, Illustrator* by Andrea Beaty (2021) are all books that focus on having a growth mindset.

Self-Management

Thirteen of the books from the study set aligned with the self-management area of competence addressed by CASEL. This component includes one's ability to achieve goals through the management of their own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors including stress-management, self-discipline, and self-motivation in a variety of situations. Many of the books in this collection focus on characters managing their own emotions. Among those are *Big Red Lollipop* by Rhuksana Khan (2010), *Jabari Jumps* by Gaia Cornwall (2017), *Knock Knock: My Dad's Dream For Me* by Daniel Beaty (2013), *John's Turn* by Mac Barnett (2022), *I Want My Hat Back* by Klassen (2011), and *My Diary From Here to There* by Amada Irma Perez (2002). When discussing managing emotions with children using these books, *I Want My Hat Back* should spark additional conversation about telling the truth. While it is a cute book, it may condone lying (perhaps children would get the idea it's okay if they are angry) to some extent, making it not one of the books I would personally recommend. On the other hand, however, it could be used to initiate a discussion about the importance of being truthful. Several books in this collection include characters developing courage to complete tasks, which shares with children that it is normal and okay to feel anxious at times as they work through those feelings to reach their goals.

Social Awareness

Twelve of the books from the study set aligned with the social awareness area of competence addressed by CASEL. This component includes one's ability to understand the perspectives and strengths of others from various backgrounds and cultures, and

empathize with them. Several of the books in this collection focus on characters' understanding norms for behavior depending on the settings. In *Deep in the Sahara* by Kelly Cunnane (2013), a child wants to wear a malafa for many reasons: because it is colorful, it is beautiful, it makes you look like a "lady", etc. As she talks with her mother, her sister, and others she learns more about why the ladies wear a malafa. She shares with her mother that she wants one to wear as they pray. In the end, Lalla has learned that a malafa is not just for mystery, tradition, and belonging, rather it is for faith. In *Suki's Kimono* by Chieri Uekagi (2003), Suki wants to wear her kimono to school on the first day, despite her sisters trying to dissuade her from wearing it, afraid people would think she was weird. Students look, giggle and point but Suki ignores it. Suki shares with her teacher and her class about what she did over the summer. She talks about her outfit and dancing at a festival and, after sharing, her teacher and classmates applaud. The main character in *Under My Hijab* by Hena Khan (2019), is a young girl who talks about the hijabs of girls and women in her life and how they are worn in public, but not at home.

Additionally, several of the stories in this competency show the demonstration of empathy and compassion as well as the concern for the feelings of others. Books from the studied set include *The Invisible Boy* by Trudy Ludwig (2013), *Lend a Hand: Poems About Giving* by John Frank (2014), and *She Was the First!: The Trailblazing Life of Shirley Chisholm* by Katheryn Russell-Brown (2020). In *The Invisible Boy*, Brian is feeling left out by his teacher who is having to turn her attention to other students for misbehavior and by his peers who are choosing other friends for games and discussing parties he was not invited to. A new student, Justin, joins the class and while other

students are teasing him, he and Brian become friends. Justin then becomes friends with Emilion and just when Brian feels he is going to be left out again he finds he is included in the trio of friends. *Lend a Hand: Poems About Giving* is a book of encouraging poems that tell stories of people reaching out to others and making a difference in the world in many different ways. Some ways include: sharing lunch with someone, making friends with an elderly neighbor, donating hair, cleaning trash from a stream, planting trees, and writing a letter to a soldier. Shirley Chisholm, in *She Was the First!: The Trailblazing Life of Shirley Chisholm*, first becomes a teacher, then uses her leadership abilities to join organizations standing up for women and people of color. She became the first black woman to be elected to the New York State Assembly. She continued working to help disadvantaged populations. In 1968 she became the first black woman to be elected to Congress. She was also the first black person to run for President.

Relationship Skills

Nine of the books from the study set aligned with the relationship skills area of competence addressed by CASEL. This component includes one's ability to communicate and work collaboratively with others while developing and supporting healthy relationships, resolving conflicts, and demonstrating leadership. The researcher found that in this collection the books that best support the development of relationship skills as determined by CASEL were *Across the Alley* by Richard Michelson (2006), *Crossing Bok Chitto* by Tim Tingle (2006), *Each Kindness* by Jacqueline Woodson (2012), *Four Feet, Two Sandals* by Karen Williams (2007), *Pink and Say* by Patricia Polacco (1994), *A Friend for Henry* by Jenn Bailey (2019), and *All Around Us* by Xelena

Gonzalez (2017). On the other hand, *A Small Kindness* by Stacy McAnulty (2021) and *The Hula-Hoopin' Queen* by Thelma Lynne Godin (2014) fit the category but were not as impactful as the others.

Across the Alley by Richard Michelson (2006), *Crossing Bok Chitto* by Tim Tingle (2006), *Pink and Say* by Patricia Polacco (1994), and *A Friend for Henry* by Jenn Bailey (2019) are ideal for demonstrating the development of positive relationships and setting examples for children to resist the negative social pressure that appears in several forms. In *Across the Alley* a young white Jewish boy named Abe explains how he made friends with a black boy named Willie, who lived across the alley. Willie shows Abe how to throw a baseball, and Abe teaches Willie how to play the violin. Their friendship across the alley becomes a close friendship despite what others think. The story *Crossing Bok Chitto* tells how Martha Tom is sent to collect blackberries and crosses the Bok Chitto river from the Choctaw side to the plantation owner and slaves' side. While on the other side of the river she witnesses the calling together of the forbidden slave church. Noticing she is lost, a man sends his son (Little Mo) to walk Martha Tom back to the river. This creates a friendship between the two that leads to Martha Tom's family helping Little Mo's family find freedom. The development of friendship between Sheldon, a white boy, and Pinkus, an African American boy and former slave, took place in *Pink and Say* when Pinkus rescues Sheldon upon finding him injured on the battlefield during the Civil War. In a different situation, *A Friend for Henry* is the story of a young boy on the autism spectrum, seeking to find a friend at school. This story is told from his point of view

sharing his frustration, fear, anxiety, and feelings of being alone. It also shares how he is slowly able to relate to another child through differences and finds his first friend.

Demonstrating understanding of cultural differences is another relationship skill that this competency focuses on. Three books from the reviewed collection that the researcher found to best support this include: *Crossing Bok Chitto* by Tim Tingle (2006), *Each Kindness* by Jacqueline Woodson (2012), and *All Around Us* by Xelena Gonzalez (2017). In *Crossing Bok Chitto*, the friendship that is created between Martha Tom and Little Mo shares an understanding of differences between their cultures, and in turn connects their families. *Each Kindness* is a story about a student (Chloe) and her reaction to a new student in her class. The new student, Maya, comes in with tattered clothes. Chloe explains that Maya sat next to her and smiled but that she did not smile back. When Maya tries to invite Chloe and her friends to play, they walk away. When Maya tries talking to Chloe, classmates tease Chloe, and Chloe insists Maya is not her friend. Despite Maya's efforts, Chloe and her friends whisper and laugh about Maya. One day when Maya is absent, the class has a lesson on kindness and how kindness goes into the world like ripples from a pebble dropped into a bowl of water. Chloe can not think of a time she had sent kindness into the world. Maya never returns to school because her family moves, and each day Chloe hopes she will return because she would change things. While the characters did not establish a friendship, Chloe did learn about cultural differences and the importance of reaching out to others despite those differences. *All Around Us* is a story where a child's grandfather points out that there are circles all around us, including

timelines. He further explains a circle that shares understanding of their culture - from planting a placenta under one tree, to ashes of ancestors under another.

Responsible Decision Making

Eight of the books from the study set aligned with the responsible decision-making area of competence addressed by CASEL. This component includes one's ability to consider benefits and consequences of outcomes when making responsible decisions involving themselves and others. The most common theme noticed in the books, best determined by the researcher to support the development of responsible decision-making as defined by CASEL, is characters identifying solutions to problems that involve others, themselves, and their communities. In *A Chair for my Mother* by Vera B. Williams (1982) and *Grandmama's Pride* by Becky Birtha (2005), the characters in the stories are tasked with finding solutions to problems that involve themselves as well as their families. In the first book, Rosa and Mama lose everything they had in a house fire and are trying to rebuild their lives. They fill a jar with change that they use to buy a chair that is perfect for Rosa, mama, and grandma to enjoy. In *Grandmama's Pride*, Mama and Grandmama try to keep the reality of segregation in the south from Sarah Marie and her little sister as they travel each summer from the north to visit their grandmother.

In *Crow Boy* by Taro Yashima (1955) and *First Day in Grapes* by L. King Perez (2002), the main characters are being looked out for by others in the stories. The story *Crow Boy* tells about a tiny Japanese boy named Chibi, who is afraid of others and struggles to learn and to make friends. He is withdrawn and misunderstood by his classmates. It is not until the sixth grade when someone (Mr. Isobe, the teacher) shows

interest in Chibi and all he knows. Chibi performs in the school talent show, sharing the sounds of crows. Mr. Isobe explains that Chibi learned the sounds because he left his home at dawn and returned home at sunset for six years, and everyone is sad to know how they had misunderstood Chibi for so long. In *First Day in Grapes*, Chico's family travels between migrant camps, resulting in many "first days" in new schools. This story tells about Chico's experience as a migratory worker. He faces an uncomfortable ride on the bus with the bus driver and unkind/unwelcoming children on the bus and at lunch, but has encouragement from his family, classmates, and teacher which helps him have confidence to stand up for himself.

Three additional stories that met this CASEL competency include ones where the decision making impacted the characters as well as their communities. Destiny's favorite place to be, in *Destiny's Gift* by Natasha Anastasia Tarpley (2004), is at Mrs. Wade's bookstore. She loves reading books, meeting authors, and helping out at the bookstore. One Saturday, Mrs. Wade receives a notice of increased store rent and is sure she will need to close the store because she can't make the money to keep it open. The community comes together to raise money and increase business. Wanting to give Mrs. Wade a gift, Destiny writes about all the things she loves about the bookstore. While the future of the bookstore is not determined by the end of the book, Destiny and Mrs. Wade agree they will continue to enjoy books (and powerful words) together. Dr. Gordon Sato, in *The Mangrove Tree: Planting Trees to Feed Families* by Susan L. Roth and Cindy Trumbore (2011) uses his scientific discovery that mangrove trees could be planted near salty water to plant additional trees which help provide food and resources for people and animals in

Hargigo. In *Seeds of Change: Planting a Path to Peace* by Jen Cullerton Johnson (2010), Wangari Maathai's mother introduces her to the magumo tree and its importance. With her lead, and many women supporting her, Kenya regains its health again with trees plentiful enough to sustain life in Kenya through persistence, patience, and commitment.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this research project was to analyze picture books recommended for teaching and developing emotional intelligence in children, to determine which should be considered as quality additions in order to provide teacher librarians, classroom teachers, counselors, and parents with a compiled list of quality picture books, as noted in the review sources, to use for the social-emotional development of children in grades K-5. The books were evaluated using *Wilson's Children's Core Collection* as well as the following four top school library reviewing sources: ALSC Notable Children's Books, *Booklist*, *School Library Journal*, and the We Need Diverse Books website. It was then determined how the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning's (CASEL's) five components of social-emotional learning (SEL) were portrayed in the books. The social and emotional competencies listed by CASEL include: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. This study used the directed analysis of content approach to examine 51 picture books. This researcher's personal recommendations concur with the reviewers' recommendations for 50 of the 51 books to also recommend them for SEL teaching; 1 book is not recommended by this researcher for the teaching of SEL themes.

Conclusions

Research question 1 asked what picture books are most highly recommended for students, parents, librarians, counselors, therapists, and teachers to use to promote SEL development. The researcher determined that picture books that are listed as essential,

recommended, or supplemental by *Wilson's Children's Core Collection* and also have positive reviews and recommendations from at least one of the four top school library review sources are the highest quality and should be included in the selection when choosing books to promote SEL development. This concludes that while librarians and educators can begin with recommendations from others when curating a collection of picture books that promote social emotional development in children, they should consult additional tools to find quality materials to add to their collection.

Research question 2 asked which of CASEL's five components of SEL were portrayed in the books. The social and emotional competencies listed by CASEL include: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. The researcher read each book and determined that while each book fit best into a category based on the criteria given by CASEL for each of the competencies, there were some instances when books could be used to support multiple competencies. This was not noted in the study, however.

Recommendations for Practice

When curating a collection of picture books to be used for social and emotional learning and development, it is necessary to include key competencies and features of quality programs that enhance SEL competencies. It is imperative that educators ensure the chosen materials are of high quality and are aligned with specific criteria. Teacher librarians, counselors, therapists, teachers, and parents could begin with the attached list, as these books have been vetted through this research. When including additional books, I recommend consulting sources such as *Wilson's Children's Core Collection* and quality

book review sources to determine which books to include. I further recommend comparing those books with CASEL's five core competencies as they are an excellent foundation for SEL programs and materials.

Recommendations for Future Research

Ideas for future research include determining what types of books would be appropriate for middle school age students for further developing social emotional learning. While picture books were chosen for this study, and the focus was on elementary age students, novels may be appropriate for students in middle school. Beyond the length of the books, the competencies being addressed should also be considered. Additional ideas for further research also include the focus on titles from other initial recommending sources and on titles available in other geographical areas. The books in this research set were initially recommended by three sources chosen by the researcher after performing a Google search. The titles were also searched in the researcher's local library database to determine which books were available for in-person review. The availability of the books may change depending on the geographical location of the researcher and local libraries. Finally, another idea for further research includes the focus on titles within a specific date range. The publishing dates of the books in the research set used for this study ranged from 1955-2022. There was one book published in 1955, one published in 1982, one published in 1993, one published in 1994, one published in 1996, and the remainder of the study set published between 2000 and 2022.

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APPENDIX A

BOOK SELECTION CHART FOR TOP SEL RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Suggested Title / Author (listed in alphabetical order under the recommendation list it is from)	Recommendation List	Library Location	WCCC
A Chair for my Mother by Vera B. Williams	Open Circle	M, N, S, W	Ess
Across the Alley by Richard Michelson	Open Circle	S	Rec
Big Red Lollipop by Rhuksana Khan	Open Circle	M, N, S	Rec
Crossing Bok Chitto by Tim Tingle	Open Circle	N, E	Ess
Crow Boy by Taro Yashima	Open Circle	M, S	Rec
Crown: Ode to the Fresh Cut by Derrick Barnes	Open Circle	M, N, S, E, W	Ess
Deep in the Sahara by Kelly Cunnane	Open Circle	S	Ess
Each Kindness by Jacqueline Woodson	Open Circle	M, N, E	Ess
First Day in Grapes by L. King Perez	Open Circle	M	Supp
Four Feet, Two Sandals by Karen Williams	Open Circle	M	Supp
Grandmama's Pride by Becky Birtha	Open Circle	S	Ess
Jabari Jumps by Gaia Cornwall	Open Circle & We Are Teachers	S, E	Ess
Knock Knock: My Dad's Dream For Me by Daniel Beaty	Open Circle	M, E	Ess
Looking Like Me by Walter Dean Myers	Open Circle	M, S	Ess
New Shoes by Susan Meyer	Open Circle	M, N, E	Ess
Pink and Say by Patricia Polacco	Open Circle	M	Ess
Shades of People by Shelly Rotner	Open Circle	M, N, S	Supp
Sometimes I'm Bombaloo by Rachel Vail	Open Circle	M, S	Supp
Suki's Kimono by Chieri Uekagi	Open Circle	S	Rec
Take Me Out to the Yakyu by Aaron Meshon	Open Circle	M, S, E	Ess
Too Many Tamales by Gary Soto	Open Circle	M, N	Ess
Twist: Yoga Poems by Janet Wong	Open Circle	M, S	Rec
Upside Down Boy/El niño de cabeza by Juan Felipe Herrera	Open Circle	S	Supp
When Sophie Thinks She Can't by Molly Bang	Open Circle	M, S, E	Supp

Yesterday I Had the Blues by Jeron Ashford Frame	Open Circle	M, W	Ess
Aaron Slater, Illustrator by Andrea Beaty	We Are Teachers	M, N, S, E, W	Rec
The Dot by Peter H. Reynolds	We Are Teachers	M, N, S, E, W	Ess
Eyes That Kiss in the Corners by Joanna Ho	We Are Teachers	M, N, S, E, W	Ess
Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofose Yeboah by Laurie Ann Thompson	We Are Teachers	M, N, S	Ess
Everyone Can Learn to Ride a Bicycle by Chris Raschka	We Are Teachers	M, S, E	Ess
A Friend for Henry by Jenn Bailey	We Are Teachers	M, S, E	Ess
I Want My Hat Back by Jon Klassen	We Are Teachers	M, N, S, E	Ess
The Invisible Boy by Trudy Ludwig	We Are Teachers	M, S, E	Ess
John's Turn by Mac Barnett	We Are Teachers	M, N, S, E, W	Rec
Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse by Kevin Henkes	We Are Teachers	M, N, S, E	Ess
Milo Imagines the World by Matt de la Pena	We Are Teachers	M, S	Ess
The Oldest Student: How Mary Walker Learned to Read by Rita Loraine Hubbard and Oge Mora	We Are Teachers	M, S	Ess
Ruthie and the (Not So) Teeny Tiny Lie by Laura Rankin	We Are Teachers	M, N, S, E	Supp
A Small Kindness by Stacy McAnulty	We Are Teachers	M, S, W	Supp
Those Shoes by Maribeth Boelts	We Are Teachers	S, E	Rec
All Around Us by Xelena Gonzalez	Lee & Low Books	M, E	Rec
Destiny's Gift by Natasha Anastasia Tarpley	Lee & Low Books	M, S	Supp
George Crum and the Saratoga Chip by Gaylia Taylor	Lee & Low Books	M	Supp
The Hula-Hoopin' Queen by Thelma Lynne Godin	Lee & Low Books	M, N, S, E, W	Supp
Lend a Hand: Poems About Giving by John Frank	Lee & Low Books	M, N, E	Supp
The Mangrove Tree: Planting Trees to Feed Families by Susan L. Roth and Cindy Trumbore	Lee & Low Books	S	Rec
My Diary From Here to There by Amada Irma Perez	Lee & Low Books	M	Rec
Poems in the Attic by Nikki Grimes	Lee & Low Books	S	Supp

Seeds of Change: Planting a Path to Peace by Jen Cullerton Johnson	Lee & Low Books	S	Supp
She Was the First!: The Trailblazing Life of Shirley Chisholm by Katheryn Russell-Brown	Lee & Low Books	S	Rec
Under My Hijab by Hena Khan	Lee & Low Books	M, S	Rec
Anna Hibiscus' Song by Atinuke	Open Circle	NA	NA
Charlotte and the Quiet Place by Deborah Sosin	Open Circle	S	NA
The Colors of Us by Karen Katz	Open Circle	M, N, S, E, W	NA
Danitra Brown Leaves Town by Nikki Grimes	Open Circle	NA	NA
The Day of Ahmed's Secret by Florence Parry Heide	Open Circle	NA	NA
Enemy Pie by Derek Munson	Open Circle	NA	NA
Freedom Summer by Deborah Wiles	Open Circle	NA	NA
A Gift from Papá Diego/Un regalo de Papá Diego by Benjamin Alire Saenez	Open Circle	S	NA
Grandfather Counts by Andrea Cheng	Open Circle	NA	NA
Grump, Groan, Growl by Bell Hooks	Open Circle	M, S, E	Weeded
Halmoni's Picnic by Sook Nyul Choi	Open Circle	NA	NA
How Are You Peeling? Foods with Moods by Saxton Freymann	Open Circle	NA	NA
I Am New Here by Anne Sibley O'Brien	Open Circle	NA	NA
I Love My Hair by Natasha Anatasia Tarpley	Open Circle	N, S, E, W	NA
I Miss Franklin P. Shuckles by Ulana Snihura	Open Circle	NA	NA
In My Family/En mi familia by Carmen Lomas Garza	Open Circle	NA	NA
King for a Day by Rhuksana Khan	Open Circle	M, S	NA
Lots of Feelings by Shelley Rotner	Open Circle	NA	NA
Mama Provi and the Pot of Rice by Sylvia Rosa-Casanova	Open Circle	NA	NA
Mama's Nightingale by Edward Danticat	Open Circle	NA	NA
Mama's Saris by Pooja Makhijani	Open Circle	NA	NA
Margaret and Margarita/Margarita y Margaret by Lynn Reiser	Open Circle	NA	NA
Muskrat will be Swimming by Cheryl Savageau	Open Circle	NA	NA
My Heart Will Not Sit Down by Mara Rockcliff	Open Circle	S	NA

My Name is Sangoel by Karen Williams and Khadra Mohammed	Open Circle	NA	NA
My Two Blankets by Irena Kobald	Open Circle	NA	NA
Nadia's Hands by Karen English	Open Circle	NA	NA
The Name Jar by Yangsook Choi	Open Circle	N, S, E	NA
The One Day House by Julia Durango	Open Circle	NA	NA
Rain School by James Rumford	Open Circle	NA	NA
Sam and the Lucky Money by Karen Chinn	Open Circle & Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
Say Something by Peggy Moss	Open Circle	M, S, E	NA
Sitti's Secret by Naomi Shihab Nye	Open Circle	NA	NA
Sky Sisters by Jan Boudreau Waboose	Open Circle	NA	NA
Sumi's First Day of School Ever by Soyung Pak	Open Circle	NA	NA
The Three Names of Me by Mary Cummings	Open Circle	NA	NA
The Ugly Vegetables by Grace Lin	Open Circle	NA	NA
The Way I Feel by Janan Cain	Open Circle	NA	NA
Wings by Christopher Myers	Open Circle	NA	NA
Anita and the Dragons by Hannah Carmona	We Are Teachers	M, S	NA
Argyle Fox by Marie Letourneau	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
The Book of Mistakes by Corinna Luyken	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
Brave Every Day by Trudy Ludwig	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
The Camping Trip by Jennifer K. Mann	We Are Teachers	M, N, S, E, W	NA
A Case of the Zaps by Alex Boniello and April Lavalle	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
The Circles in the Sky by Karl James Mountford	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
Clark the Shark by Bruce Hale	We Are Teachers	M, E, W	NA
Big Feelings by Alexandra Penfold and Suzanne Kaufman	We Are Teachers	M, S, E	NA
Cranky Right Now by Julie Berry	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
Dadaji's Paintbrush by Rashmi Sirdeshpande and Ruchi Mhasane	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
Daisy by Jessixa Bagley	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
Evelyn Del Ray Is Moving Away by Meg Medina	We Are Teachers	NA	NA

Giraffes Can't Dance by Giles Andreae	We Are Teachers	M, N, S, E, W	NA
Great Big Feelings by Hallee Adelman	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
Home Is In Between by Mitali Perkins	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
I Am Okay To Feel by Karamo Brown and Jason "Rachel" Brown	We Are Teachers	S, E	NA
I Love Strawberries! by Shannon Anderson	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
Life by Cynthia Rylant and Brendan Wenzel	We Are Teachers	M	NA
Like by Annie Barrows and Leo Espinosa	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
Lying Up a Storm by Julia Cook	We Are Teachers	M	NA
My Mouth Is a Volcano! by Julia Cook	We Are Teachers	M, N, S, E	NA
My Shadow is Pink by Scott Stuart	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
My Very Own Space by Pippa Goodhart and Rebecca Crane	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
Pass It On by Sophy Henn	We Are Teachers	E	NA
Rosa's Song by Helena Ku Rhee	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
Rulers of the Playground by Joseph Kuefler	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
The Shadow Elephant by Nadine Robert	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
The Smile Shop by Satoshi Kitamura	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
Stop and Smell the Cookies by Gibson Frazier	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
The Watifs by Emily Kilgore	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
Ways to Make Friends by Jairo Buitrago	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
What Are Your Words? A Book About Pronouns by Katherine Locke	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
When We Are Kind by Monique Gray Smith	We Are Teachers	NA	NA
You Will Be My Friend! by Peter Brown	We Are Teachers	M, N, S, E, W	NA
Benji, the Bad Day, and Me by Sally J Pia	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
Calling the Water Drun by LaTisha Redding	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
The Can Man by Laura E. Williams	Lee & Low Books	M	Weeded
Catching the Moon: The Story of a Young Girl's Baseball Dream by Crystal Hubbard	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
The Crane Girl by Curtis Manley	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
Dream Builder: The Story of Architect Philip Freelon by Laura Freeman	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
Drum, Chavi, Drum! by Mayra L. Dole	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
The Electric Slike and Kai by Kelly Baptist	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA

Finding the Music by Jennifer Torres	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
The Happiest Tree: A Yoga Story by Uma Krishnaswami	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
Home to Medicine Mountain by Chiori Santiago	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
I Remember: Poems and Pictures of Heritage edited by Lee Bennett Hopkins	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
Ira's Shakespeare Dream by Glenda Armand	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
Juna and Appa by Jane Park	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
Juna's Jar by Jane Bahk	Lee & Low Books	M, N, S, E	NA
Just Like Me by Harriet Rohmer	Lee & Low Books	M	NA
Kiki's Journey by Kristy Orona-Ramirez	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
Kiyoshi's Walk by Mark Karlins	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
Love Twelve Miles Long by Glenda Armand	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
Mama the Alien by Rene Colato Lainez	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
A Man Called Raven by Richard Van Camp	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
Moony Luna by Jorge Argueta	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
The Perfect Gift by Paula Yoo	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
Rainbow Weaver by Linda Elovitz	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
Seven Golden Rings by Rajani Larocca	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
Sparkle Boy by Leslea Newman	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
Take a Picture of Me, James Vanderzeei by Andrea J. Loney	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
The Three Lucys by Hayan Charara	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
The Turtle Ship by Helena Ku Rhee	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA
When the Shadbush Blooms by Carla Messinger with Susan Katz	Lee & Low Books	NA	NA

Note - Library locations are abbreviated as: Main (M), North (N), South (S), East (E), and West (W). Wilson's Children's Core Collection abbreviations include: Essential (Ess), Recommended (Rec), and Supplemental (Supp).

APPENDIX B

IDENTIFIED CASEL COMPETENCIES IN 51 TOP SEL RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Suggested Title / Author (listed in alphabetical order by CASEL item)	Self-awareness	Self-management	Social awareness	Relationship skills	Responsible decision-making
Aaron Slater, Illustrator by Andrea Beaty	X				
Crown: Ode to the Fresh Cut by Derrick Barnes	X				
The Dot by Peter H. Reynolds	X				
Everyone Can Learn to Ride a Bicycle by Chris Raschka	X				
Eyes That Kiss in the Corners by Joanna Ho	X				
Looking Like Me by Walter Dean Myers	X				
Too Many Tamales by Gary Soto	X				
When Sophie Thinks She Can't by Molly Bang	X				
Yesterday I Had the Blues by Jeron Ashford Frame	X				
Big Red Lollipop by Rhuksana Khan		X			
Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah by Laurie Ann Thompson		X			
George Crum and the Saratoga Chip by Gaylia Taylor		X			
I Want My Hat Back by Jon Klassen		X			
Jabari Jumps by Gaia Cornwall		X			
John's Turn by Mac Barnett		X			
Knock Knock: My Dad's Dream For Me by Daniel Beaty		X			
My Diary From Here to There by Amada Irma Perez		X			

The Oldest Student: How Mary Walker Learned to Read by Rita Loraine Hubbard and Oge Mora		X			
Ruthie and the (Not So) Teeny Tiny Lie by Laura Rankin		X			
Sometimes I'm Bombaloo by Rachel Vail		X			
Twist: Yoga Poems by Janet Wong		X			
Upside Down Boy/El niño de cabeza by Juan Felipe Herrera		X			
Deep in the Sahara by Kelly Cunnane			X		
The Invisible Boy by Trudy Ludwig			X		
Lend a Hand: Poems About Giving by John Frank			X		
Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse by Kevin Henkes			X		
Milo Imagines the World by Matt de la Pena			X		
New Shoes by Susan Meyer			X		
Poems in the Attic by Nikki Grimes			X		
Shades of People by Shelly Rotner			X		
She Was the First!: The Trailblazing Life of Shirley Chisholm by Katheryn Russell-Brown			X		
Suki's Kimono by Chieri Uekagi			X		
Take Me Out to the Yakyu by Aaron Meshon			X		
Under My Hijab by Hena Khan			X		
Across the Alley by Richard Michelson				X	
All Around Us by Xelena Gonzalez				X	
Crossing Bok Chitto by Tim Tingle				X	

Each Kindness by Jacqueline Woodson				X	
A Friend for Henry by Jenn Bailey				X	
Four Feet, Two Sandals by Karen Williams				X	
The Hula-Hoopin' Queen by Thelma Lynne Godin				X	
Pink and Say by Patricia Polacco				X	
A Small Kindness by Stacy McAnulty				X	
A Chair for my Mother by Vera B. Williams					X
Crow Boy by Taro Yashima					X
Destiny's Gift by Natasha Anastasia Tarpley					X
First Day in Grapes by L. King Perez					X
Grandmama's Pride by Becky Birtha					X
The Mangrove Tree: Planting Trees to Feed Families by Susan L. Roth and Cindy Trumbore					X
Seeds of Change: Planting a Path to Peace by Jen Cullerton Johnson					X
Those Shoes by Maribeth Boelts					X