How Literature Supports SEL

We are storytelling and conversation creatures. Our brains are hardwired for stories and including stories can be key to building strong social emotional skills in our students.

Books can provide opportunities for students to hear situations that display a character’s emotions and behaviors and can be used to help them understand their own emotions and behavior choices in a non-threatening way. Students can see the modeling of social skills through the books that we read and engage with in the classroom.

Our ELA Standards (Speaking & Listening and Reading) require students to determine a theme or central idea, describe how characters respond or change and participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about texts.

Books emphasizing the social emotional skills can used to provide opportunities for students to meet the standards and understand emotions that may be present in books and begin to connect those to themselves.

Students are more relaxed and open to discuss a “character’s struggles” rather than their own. Adults can offer guidance, reflection and decision skills using the books as an opening.

Illinois Social Emotional Learning standards are made up of 3 goals divided into 10 standards.

Goal 1 – Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.
- Standard 1A- Identify and manage ones emotions and behavior.
- Standard 1B- Recognize personal qualities and external supports.
- Standard 1C- Demonstrate skills related to achieving personal and academic goals.

Goal 2 – Use social awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.
- Standard 2A- Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others.
- Standard 2B- Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.
- Standard 2C- Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.
- Standard 2D- Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.

Goal 3 – Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school and community context.
- Standard 3A- Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions.
- Standard 3B- Apply decision-making skills to deal responsibly with daily academic and social situations.
- Standard 3C- Contribute to the well-being of ones school and community.