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Chapter 2

Holistic Literature Education as an Effective Tool for Social–Emotional Learning

Juli-Anna Aerila

University of Turku, Finland

Johanna Lähteelä

University of Turku, Finland

Merja Anitta Kauppinen

University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Mari Siipola

University of Turku, Finland

ABSTRACT

This chapter concerns a model of holistic, structured literature education, which has pedagogical value for social-emotional learning. Fiction supports children’s personal growth in many ways. The special emphasis lies on the reading process, which aims at empathizing reading and sharing of text-based emotions and experiences. Further individual and common arts-based meaning-making is an intrinsic part of the reading process. The empathized reading process as well as supportive reading environment need to raise educators’ consciousness. Creative, arts-based activities offer channels to make children’s interpretations of fictional texts visible. There are several presented examples of arts-based methods for literature education and the family literacy practices that have an impact on social-emotional learning. The methods are individual story ending (ISE), kamishibai theater, silent books, and structured reading moments.

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INTRODUCTION

Different emotional disorders and social problems tend to remain stable from early childhood and are often predictive of a variety of negative outcomes in life (Daunic et al., 2013). Therefore, all possible means to prevent this harmful circle are needed. Literature offers a chance to enhance the social-emotional welfare of humans in all phases of life. The same skills that are associated with social-emotional development are also involved in enhancing literacy competences (Daunic et al., 2013). This means that children's literature serves as an appropriate tool for enhancing the learning of social-emotional skills and the overall well-being of children and adolescents. The social-emotional skills are developed throughout the lifespan (Weissberg et al., 2015). Especially in the early childhood and school-age, they include several skills, like maintaining relationships, making responsible decisions, communicating clearly and appropriately, solving problems, having empathy for others, and recognizing emotions in oneself and others and managing with them (Durlak et al., 2011).

Literature's pedagogical value for social-emotional learning (SEL) has been recognized throughout the ages; the most ancient stories teach us about how to live a good life (Bruner, 1986) and literature has been seen useful for both moral education and exploring and interpreting one's life experiences (Vygotsky, 1986). Rosenblatt (1978) underlines the potential of literature for enhancing our understanding of others. In this sense, literature's high quality and intentional literature education are more important than ever. Through literature, children with different backgrounds can make connections and empathize with each other (Kauppinen & Aerila, 2020a). Literature as a form of art provides us with common ground to experience happenings and express feelings and memories with all of our senses. Issues of language and culture do not matter, while the power of imagination is all that matters (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2021).

Literature education provides a framework for building social-emotional concepts such as empathy and relationships. Fiction supports the reader's personal growth, with emphasis on the development of reasoning skills, values, and identity as well as the general understanding of human and societal reality (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2013). The power of factual and fictional literature is supported by investigations into children's and adolescents' recreational reading. Howard's study (2013) shows how children's voluntary reading is motivated by entertainment as well as stress relief and reassurance about their feelings and experiences. According to Morrow (2016), children motivate themselves to be involved with books and reading for pleasure and information. The information, in many cases, is about how to cope with life or feelings. Furthermore, the most proficient readers are called *intertextual readers*, which refers to the capability for making connections between the text and their lives (Hartman, 1994). Best et al. (2020) investigated children's reading during the COVID-19 pandemic. They noticed that children value reading as an escape from harsh reality, as a possibility for feeling comforted, and as a chance for reflecting on and coping with negative emotions.

Children's literature, with an emphasis on emotions and social skills, provides versatile opportunities for holistic learning projects. In holistic, literature-based learning, social-emotional themes occur during the reading process, while having conversations that are based on the reading experiences and during activities before and after reading the story (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2021). Children's literature contains information about different aspects of life as well as ideas for solving problems that will be encountered later in life (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2013). However, the possibilities of literature are not recognized by all educators or parents; many view children's literature as only a means for academic success and better literacy skills (Aerila, 2010; Kauppinen & Aerila, 2019). Prior research (Clark & Teräväinen, 2015) highlights the meaning of good literacy skills and the importance of reading for mental health, self-esteem,

and positive self-image. Literature and reading engagement support children's well-being in many ways. Good literacy skills, the reading material's content, and the moments when the reading occurs all entail features that have a positive impact (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2020a). Therefore, concerning literature's meanings as a vehicle for growth, there is a deep need to raise educators' consciousness and know-how.

Using literature for SEL is challenging for some educators since reading and books require personal attachment and engagement (Cremin, 2019). Teachers are not always sufficiently familiar with children's literature or sufficiently motivated to get to know new children's books or literature education methods (Kauppinen & Aerila, 2019). However, exposing children to a variety of books and stories allows families, teachers, and caregivers to introduce and reinforce social-emotional skills that help children succeed in school and beyond (Santos et al., 2012). According to Aerila et al. (2020), most families feel that reading to their children is important from the perspective of social-emotional aspects. Using the appropriate literature, parents can approach the challenges in children's behavior, bring up different and current family issues, calm the children, and be close to their children. Frequent reading moments make the act common and give it a special meaning.

Creating a meaningful connection to a text is not a simple process; it depends on many aspects, such as the reader's attitudes and prior experiences with reading and literature as well as vocabulary and literacy skills, culture, and worldview (Aerila et al., 2016). The younger the readers or listeners are, the more the interpretations of a text vary (Appleyard, 1991). Consequently, more effort must be made to solidify the children's interpretations and give the children tools to make their interpretations visible to themselves, their peers, and adults (Kauppinen & Aerila, 2020).

Different creative, arts-based activities seem to offer a channel for these interpretations. They enable children to feed their imagination for expressing their thoughts, feelings, and life connections aroused by literature (Essa, 2012). Some connections might be subconscious, and the arts-based activities bring these interpretations to the surface (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2020b). Children's literature can enhance their ability and willingness to talk about feelings and empathize with others' feelings (Nikolajeva, 2013; Suvilehto et al., 2019). In order to implement arts-based activities as a tool to illustrate children's thoughts and feelings the outcomes should be presented, perhaps compared to each other and discussed: what kind of feelings does to outcome visualize and how does it relate to the literature being used as a starting point to arts-based activity or to the child's life experiences (Aerila et al. 2019).

Currently in the educational settings, literature is used for social-emotional learning both more intuitively and more intentionally (Storey, 2019). Teachers, personnel in early childhood education as well as parents spontaneously choose material for reading of children and groups' needs. When some emotional theme is current or social interaction situation is needed to become in handle, books' themes offer solutions. Sometimes reading is an intentional activity by parents or teachers, sometimes it has intuitive roots in parents' or teachers' minds.

This study introduces the model of holistic literature education, which structures the use of literature in educational contexts and makes the learning outcomes of literature education more visible. It also provides research-based evidence literature education and reading moments concerning social-emotional learning and skills. Holistic literature education offers practical examples of arts-based methods for literature education as well as the family literacy practices that are effective for SEL. The study is based on a Finnish project called Innovative Approached to Language Education (IKI), which aims to identify and promote innovative models for the use and development of language in education. The subproject of IKI is called IKI-Store and it concentrates on different literature-based approaches (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2020c). The theoretical framework is based on perspectives of children's literature, literature use in early

childhood education as well as primary school education. It also covers family literacy practices and their connection to social-emotional learning and skills. Practical materials and methods include individual story ending (ISE), kamishibai theater, silent books, and structured reading moments.

FICTIONAL LITERATURE AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Fictional literature offers various routes to handling social-emotional issues with children and adolescents (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2020a). First, most children's and young adult books have themes that concern relationships and feelings. There can be a main character who raises strong feelings in readers or a plot that consists of characters' complex relationships. Second, books with specified social-emotional themes, such as parental divorce, are also available. Third, any fiction includes elements through which the reader can empathize with the experiences or feelings that the story brings forth (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2021).

Children's literature, as its central themes, has versatile social-emotional perspectives. There are stories about peer and family relationships, positive and negative emotions, and stories that illustrate how to cope with disappointments or frustration (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2021). Almost all the books arouse emotions and help children with recognizing and regulating emotions (Tartar, 2009). There is also a growing number of books that are targeted especially at social-emotional skills (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2020). According to Daunic et al. (2013), authentic children's literature is well-suited for addressing social-emotional issues. However, the books must be evaluated by using specific criteria: developmental appropriateness, cultural and ethnic diversity, a clear story structure, and social-emotional topics to which the readers can relate. Furthermore, the reading moments should contain activities that will help children to empathize with the book. This means involving different creative activities such as drama, role-plays, dance, or other art forms. Some children are keen on characters of the books, and visualization of the characters is one way to get them inside the feelings and thoughts of them. Another child may be inspired in the plot, and in that case, mini dramas or animation composing may be a suitable route to fiction's world.

Many children can cope with negative feelings and stressful situations through literature (Suvilehto et al., 2019). In early childhood education, children's literature is used to explore topics such as emotion, relationships, conflict, motivation, decision-making, point of view, and worldview (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2021). According to previous studies, children's literature may enhance children's ability and willingness to talk about their feelings and empathize with others' feelings (Nikolajeva, 2013; Suvilehto et al., 2019). In other words, literature education provides several opportunities for dialogue: meaningful, personal engagement in the theme, as well as connection, meaning making, and reflection (Storey, 2019).

Understanding fiction is a complex process, and the reader needs to use imagination and feelings to immerse and empathize with situations, people, and events that are described in a text (Rosenblatt, 1978). This process is close to empathy, and therefore, being exposed to literature enhances one's ability to empathize with others (Nussbaum, 1995). Alongside empathizing with others, literature exposes children to more sophisticated forms of language and literacy, such as using longer sentences and a larger and diverse vocabulary, as well as building increasingly complex communication skills. This enables children to express more widely and deeply their needs, feelings, and ideas and interact with others (Santos et al., 2012).

Learning through literature, or the arts in general, is more effective than learning in a common academic route. This is because literature involves the process of learning more holistically (Kauppinen &

Aerila, 2020b). Bruner (1986) says that life is a story, and with literature, we will create our life story. The structure of stories helps children see the continuum in their lives, and they will, for example, understand that the hardships of life may turn into happy solutions (Izumi-Taylor & Scott, 2013). Through stories that echo children's needs and life situations, children will be comforted and gain confidence that they are not the only ones with certain problems and other encounters in life (Tartar, 2009). Literature is especially powerful in early childhood education since for children an imaginative world is almost the same as the real world (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2021; Appleyard, 1990).

Stories in general are a valuable mechanism that helps us to explain our experiences and understand those around us (Bruner, 1991). To use children's literature as a tool for learning, literature must be highly engaging, including attention-grabbing illustrations and suitable vocabulary, as well as plots that involve levels of difficulty and interest (Brinton & Fujiki, 2017). In social-emotional learning, the books and stories must also be viewed from the perspective of social-emotional themes. They should entail rich, emotional content, a variety of social scenarios, a chance to empathize with others' perspectives, a chance understand and regulate emotions, and make social inferences (CASEL, 2021). It is critical to select books that are appropriate for the child's developmental level, have clear, emotional content, an accessible language structure, a well-defined plot, and appealing illustrations (Brinton & Fujiki, 2017).

Brinton and Fujiki (2017) suggest that books that illustrate characters who are learning to appropriately express feelings, positively manage emotions, and behave in friendly, prosocial ways are especially helpful. Additionally, they recommend books that belong to a book series: if a child likes the series, the familiar characters increase the child's enjoyment of the story, support comprehension, and help the child to predict events and recognize characters' emotional dispositions. The same phenomena can be realized by choosing picture books that have similar themes, characters, and plots. Sometimes, the same effect might be accomplished by introducing children to stories of the same author. For example, Jacqueline Wilson has books deep emotional and similar features, but are individual books. Many children choose to listen, read, or browse the same books multiple times. This usually means that the book contains themes that are topical for the child's social or emotional needs, and the book is helping them to solve the problem, become confident, or understand the theme (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2021).

Choosing literature for social-emotional purposes can be challenging when children have special needs. For example, for children who are struggling with interpreting and producing literacy skills, picture books might be one solution (Brinton & Fujiki, 2017). Especially when the story can be composed by the pictures help children to find the characters and the plot her/himself. The own story expands self-confidence in literacy learning. It is important that nobody is left outside of experiencing the story (Alsup, 2015). If a child's vocabulary is limited, they may only be able to produce fundamental emotions such as mad, happy, or sad. In this case, the words may have several meanings and be accompanied by negative counterparts (Brinton & Fujiki, 2017). From the perspective of social emotional learning and helping children connect with literature the book choices must be quite individual. According to Allington and Gabriel (2012) it is almost useless to make children read books too difficult for them (too difficult to read, too difficult vocabulary). Furthermore, versatile ways of getting connected to stories should be used (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2019). Sometimes audiobooks or an adult reading aloud may be the best solution as well as taking benefit of different heritage languages of families (Nemeth, 2016).

One option for multilingual groups is silent books. Silent books balance the language demands of a book and let all the children attend to the social-emotional theme (Lähteelä, 2021). Furthermore, educators can do a lot to help multilingual children partake in reading or listening to a story. It is possible to summarize the story with the child's root language, to support the understanding of the text with pictures, or

to learn the central words of the text in advance (Nemeth, 2016). All efforts that support the multilingual child with participating in the reading moments and comprehending stories will have a positive effect on his or her self-esteem (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2021). From the perspective of multilingual children, there is a need for culturally relevant materials, and educators should invest in fostering safe and encouraging relationships and learning environments (Slaten et al., 2015).

Some picture books are especially targeted at teaching social and emotional concepts. These books contain instructions for conversations with children and for approaching different social and emotional content (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2020a). They are especially useful for parents who are unsure of how to handle social-emotional issues (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2021). However, these stories are not always the best choice. They might not resonate with the children's emotional needs, and the stories may contain complex language structures and vocabulary. If books require too high reading comprehension skills, children aren't able to get in their themes and the emotional content either. Furthermore, some books may involve simple language, but the emotional content requires sophisticated inferencing skills (Brinton & Fujiki, 2017). To summarize the aspect of choosing literature for social and emotional learning purposes, we will quote Rose's (2011) thoughts:

For children, the most important feature in getting engaged in literature is having stories that are engaging and have relevant connections with their life. The children must be able to recognize themselves in the literature and have a chance to choose and feel autonomy. (p. 22)

LITERATURE-BASED ACTIVITIES AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Structured Reading Moments Illustrate Emotions

Storybooks with social-emotional content that is connected to intentional, literature-based activities and dialogic reading foster social-emotional development (Daunic et al., 2013). A reading moment that is conducted in a safe, encouraging small group helps children associate the reading with social interactions with other children and with the teacher. This can help children gain confidence in their skills and see themselves as readers (Doyle & Bramwell, 2006).

In early childhood education, literature education enhances social-emotional learning and skills; it is present in the theme of literature, the reading moments, as well as in the activities before, during, and after the reading (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2020a). When children work together in a story-based, creative activity, they have a chance to learn about teamwork and negotiation skills, leadership, and coping with stress. Furthermore, arts-based activities allow children to work in their own way, and this gives educators a chance to observe and learn from children (Lo & Matsunobu, 2014).

During reading moments, emotional competence appears in a variety of ways. Socially and emotionally competent 5-year-olds show their social and emotional skills in various ways. They are learning about different emotions, displaying complex emotions such as guilt, pride, and shame, and understanding that it is possible to feel different on the inside than what is shown on the outside. Socially and emotionally competent children, to get along with others and notice how others are feeling, can cooperate and share (Flynn, 2019). They are also learning about the rules of displaying emotions in different situations and discussing their emotional experiences (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2020a).

For children, reading moments are meaningful; they are about togetherness, stories, and reading as well as about literacy skills and books (Aerila et al., 2020). This makes reading moments very important, and all the moments should be planned carefully (Santos et al., 2012). The reading moments' atmosphere should be peaceful and support empathizing with the theme and the story's social-emotional content (Fettig, 2018). The conversations and activities during reading moments are as important as the story itself (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2020). For example, it seems that the illustrations of picture books are not used as effectively as they could (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2013). Additionally, as adults read or tell stories to children, their facial expressions and intonation create a visual and auditory connection to the emotions being represented by and through the reading; as parents, caregivers, and teachers model emotions, children become more aware of their, as well as others', emotions (Santos et al., 2012). Activities that are connected to reading moments engage children with literature and emotions (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2020b).

During reading moments, it seems that children prefer peer collaboration and the possibility of relating to other children's lives (Rose, 2011). In practice, this might mean reading and sharing reading experiences in pairs (f.e. PALS-activities). Furthermore, they like hands-on and dynamic activities that enable them to implement creativity and originality as well as make connections to the real world (Rose, 2011). Even though the reading moment that has social-emotional aims should be planned carefully, it is important to adapt to children's needs and interests as much as possible (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2021). Adults must be ready to change the plan if children show particular interest in certain aspects of a story. These aspects must be discussed in more detail, and children may be encouraged to draw comparisons to their own experiences and elaborate on story content. If children range too far off-topic, however, it may be necessary to guide them back to the story content (Finton & Fujiki, 2017).

Reading moments should always contain verbal interactions between adults and children (Aerial & Kauppinen, 2021). Interactive behavior occurs during a shared book reading activity when adults help children understand and interpret a text by referencing the children's experiences and background. Furthermore, it is vital that children receive immediate feedback and that adults can adjust their instruction to meet children's current level of understanding. Moreover, children regulate their learning by asking adults questions, which enables them to construct meaning and make sense of the text (Doyle & Bramwell, 2006).

While reading moments are aimed at social-emotional learning, they usually render the best results in small groups (Brinton & Fujiki, 2017). With the youngest children, these moments can often be quite brief and organized in different phases of the day. During situations of providing care and nurturing are often the best. For example, during a diaper change, the adult can play a rhyme with the child and share the joy of two-way interaction (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2021). Generally, children who read in small groups demonstrate better story comprehension than children who read in larger groups. Additionally, small-group activities enable the children to participate more, the teacher gets to know the children better, and the children form relationships with other children that are more meaningful (Doyle & Bramwell 2006).

According to Brinton and Fujiki (2017), some techniques facilitate that kind of text interpretation and expression of reading experience in reading moments, that are especially suitable for social-emotional learning. These techniques are

- advising the reader or a presenter of a story to slow down
- simplifying language
- paying special attention to words' stress and intonation, facial expressions, and gestures
- offering prompts with increasing support

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- concentrating on children's responses
- retelling the story
- checking for comprehension.

One option is using a story-circle activity during reading moments (Flynn, 2019).

Reading moments tend to be the most effective if there is a chance for connecting children emotionally with the story characters' experiences (Flynn, 2019). The basis of this holistic experience lies on the fact that our attention, learning, memory, and decision-making capabilities are intimately connected with emotions. They can be enhanced during all phases of the reading moment.

The following guidelines might help with creating emotionally and socially engaging moments (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2021):

1. Activities before Reading
 - a. Create a story corner. Use soft and cozy lounging materials, turn on dim lights, and have the children hold soft toys.
 - b. Create a routine. For example, in the beginning, say the same words with a specific tone, such as "Are you ready to hear a story?" If you know a specific poem or short song, you can also use this.
 - c. Welcome every child individually to a reading moment. You can use a hand puppet to say hello and hug each child.
2. Activities during Reading
 - a. You can include anything to make a story more engaging. If the story has soap bubbles, you can include them. Popping the bubbles will delight the children.
 - b. Ask the children what kind of emotions they think a character is feeling, why something has happened, what should happen next, and how to solve the situation. You can make this more concrete by using pictures of different emotions.
3. Activities after Reading
 - a. Include accessories that fit the story, such as toys, balloons, bubbles, etc. Children can practice sharing the toys and playing together, and you can observe how they include the story in their play (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2021).

Family Literacy Practices are Vital for Social-Emotional Learning at Home

Previous research shows that parents feel that their children's prosocial and emotional skills should be developed more and that there is a need for carefully planned social skills interventions that involve parents (Neitola, 2018). Across cultures, books and stories are a source for teaching moral lessons and values to the next generation (Bruner, 1986). Written and oral stories provide the framework for building important social-emotional concepts such as empathy and relationships in the home context (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2020a; National Research Council, 1999). Exposing children to a variety of books and stories allows families, teachers, and caregivers to introduce and reinforce social-emotional skills that help children succeed in school and beyond (Santos et al., 2012). Although parents assessed children's emotional skills that are most in need of guidance and development, these skills were less taught by parents. It can be argued that children do not get enough fundamental guidance for their emotional learn-

ing and development, especially those with peer relationship issues; this can lead to limited emotional skills. (Neitola, 2018).

Prior research (Aerila et al., 2020) shows that literature is almost the only way for parents to support social-emotional learning. Parents often choose books that are based on social or emotional conflicts that have transpired in their families and realize that reading routines make children feel safe. Furthermore, many families have ‘power books,’ which they read constantly and have a special emotional affinity for them. Many parents realize that the benefit of literature is the possibility of approaching difficult topics from a distance. Furthermore, parents value how reading moments influence the children and parents. Literature calms both the parents and the children down. (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2020a) According to Ledger and Merga (2018), for parents, the most important thing during reading moments is the children’s joy while they are reading. Even though most parents try to read to their children, they sometimes do not have enough time or are not willing to invest time in reading with children. Additionally, parents feel that they spent enough time reading with their children, but the children do not feel this way (Ledger & Merga, 2018).

As previously noted in this chapter, while adults read or tell stories to children, adults’ facial expressions and intonation create a visual and auditory connection to the emotions being represented (Conors-Tadros & Tate, 2003). As parents, caregivers, and teachers model emotions, children become more aware of their own as well as others’ emotions (Neitola, 2018). For example, while reading instructions together, parents often help their children with learning how to follow instructions and pay attention to details that are required to complete a task (Conors-Tadros & Tate, 2003).

Even though reading moments are beneficial for children, many families stop reading together after the child learns how to read. However, there is research on the positive effects of family reading moments if the parents and the children read their books even after the child has acquired the reading technique (Ledger & Merga, 2018). Parents can read to children, and children can read to their parents. Social-emotional learning during reading moments is not dependent on the act of reading itself. It can happen during the reading moment and while discussing the content of the reading.

Considering social-emotional problems, it is vital to find ways to support parents’ readership (Aerila et al., 2020). According to Swain & Cara (2017), different family literacy programs are being actively used, but they have little or no effect on the reading of reluctant families, meaning that inequality and, in the worst case, family literacy programs will increase polarization among families and children (Swain & Cara, 2017). One challenge for parents is that they are unsure of how to implement literature as a tool for social-emotional learning. For example, sometimes it would be effective to add conversations to the reading moments instead of just reading aloud. (Mullis et al., 2017; Santos et al., 2012) In previous study (Aerila et al., 2020) one mother was worried and reluctant to read because she did not know how to expressively read. From the perspective of early childhood educators, it is important to understand a family’s different starting points and to appreciate even the small steps that have been taken by families toward a family reading culture (Aerila & Kauppinen 2021).

Supporting both readership and social-emotional learning is especially vital among immigrant families (Repo et al., 2019). Immigrant families need to be supported both in learning and using the mainstream language as well as the family’s heritage language (Open the Doors for Reading, 2020). This can support the integration of the family into society and positively affect the agency and self-esteem of both the parents and children (Rabkin et al., 2018). For immigrant families, the meaning of literature is even greater: reading, getting to know the society, sharing stories, and investigating the illustrations will provide the children with information about the society and how to act within it (Aerila et al., 2020), which will

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bolster the children's confidence (Fettig, 2018). Prior research shows that becoming engaged in literature has a positive influence on immigrant children's vocabulary and overall language skills (Bland, 2015).

Family literacy practices are part of the home literacy environment (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2020). Hannon (2003) divides family literacy practices into 1) literacy practices at home, which are based on family routines and theoretically linked to the sociocultural approach to reading literacy development, and 2) educational institutions' formal programs, where parents are involved in their child's learning. Most family literacy programs are led by educational institutions and do not take advantage of the existing literacy practices that are ensuing in the home. Family literacy programs generally involve children aged four to seven years and their parents (Swain & Cara, 2017). Family literacy practices are affected by parents' literacy behaviors and attitudes, for example the amount of parents' free-time reading and their perception of the importance of literacy and the quality of reading materials at home, as well as the family's existing literacy practices, for example the amount of time spent reading, the frequency, and parental involvement in reading-related homework (Swain & Cara, 2017).

Bedtime Story Shelf as a Family Literacy Practice

Bedtime story shelf is a collection of 25 children's picture books that are in a daycare or preschool group (see Figure 1). If needed, the educators can include the books with guidelines for activities (f.e. conversations). Children can borrow books from the shelf and read them at home as bedtime stories. Shelves can contain pre-existing literature, donated literature, or books from a local or multilingual library. StoRe's bedtime story shelf activity is easy to implement and has therefore become widespread in both early childhood and primary education. The effectiveness of bedtime story shelves relies on positive compulsion: the books must be returned to the shelf the next morning and must be read on the same day as loaned (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2019). In multilingual groups, literature used for the bedtime story shelf can be chosen accord to the children's first language, the children and their parents' language skills, or silent books can be coupled with other literature.

The bedtime story shelf activity can begin with a family event, where the parents and the children became acquainted with the bedtime story shelf activity. In these events, the bedtime story shelf is attractively displayed, and early childhood educators present the book collection and model reading moments to the families. Furthermore, the families can independently study the book collection. In the multilingual groups, educators can read the same book in several languages, and in these moments, the cultural connection of the illustrations in the books sparks debate. The multilingual family evening event nurtured families to appreciate multilingualism and cultural diversity, and many children lent home literature that was written in a foreign language (Kauppinen & Aerila, 2020).

The support for families to have reading moments has social-emotional benefits. However, a carefully selected collection of storybooks that involve social-emotional themes and instructions for literature-based activities, or conversing about the book's theme, will render it even more effective. Sometimes a child seems to act like reluctant reader, whose attitudes towards reading and activities with books are negative. In this case, it might be a good idea for the educator to choose books for children or ask children to describe the book and the reading experience to other children (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2021).

Figure 1. The Bedtime Story Shelf of a Nursery School



In Aerila et al. (2020) study, the bedtime story shelf activity was used to enhance children's social-emotional learning. During this project, ten families were interviewed about their reading habits and their connection to social-emotional learning (Aerila et al., 2020a). It appears that families appreciate reading and that in most families, at least one of the parents, in most cases the mother, has been an engaged reader since childhood. All the families valued family reading moments especially as a bedtime story routine. Most of them considered the closeness and peacefulness of the moments were even more important than the reading activity and the books. They felt that books were vehicles both for the child and for the parent to show emotions and closeness, and the reading moments, as routines, support the child's feeling of being safe. From the perspective of social-emotional learning, the books were used to discuss social-emotional issues from a distance. They prepare the child for some future event, for learning about having empathy for others, and for managing negative feelings and stressful situations (Aerila & Kauppinen 2021). According to these families, books seem to be an easy tool for the families to share feelings and be close as well as to calm down or feel safe. The families were motivated to develop their

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reading habits to support social-emotional learning and skills if the books for social-emotional learning were available.

According Aerila et al. (2020a), families were satisfied with the bedtime story shelf activity. Many books stimulated good conversations about different emotions or social situations. Parents felt that reading social-emotional-themed children's books was beneficial. According to parents' interviews, the themed books helped the parents to value the book's content rather than concentrating on literacy skills. They also highlighted that, the children were motivated by the activity since other children in the group read the books and the reading experiences were shared in the group (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2021). The books were different from what the family usually read, and most importantly, by borrowing a book from the shelf, they knew that one of the parents would spend time with them in the evening (Aerila et al. 2020).

Multi-Arts Activities that Support Social-Emotional Learning in Literature Education

Child-centered arts-based activities in connection to reading or listening to children's books provide children with a tool for visualizing and expressing their thoughts and feelings, for themselves and others (Drew & Rankin, 2004). Arts-based activities help people connect and help educators to focus their activities in the direction of children's interests and needs. If the activities are implemented in a group, children will learn to work together (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2021).

Art has traditionally had a central part in an early childhood education curriculum. Different arts-based activities are valued since they diversely enhance children's development and support abilities and skills that have applications in different content areas (Englebright Fox & Schirmmacher, 2014; Essa, 2012). Children seem to prefer art activities because they can find satisfying emotional and sensory experiences and work in their own way (Lo & Matsunobu, 2014). For children, art is considered partly an expression of the subconscious, and arts-based activities provide insight into children's personality and emotional experiences. Additionally, children enjoy arts-based education since it allows them to release emotion and express themselves freely (Aerila et al., 2019; Essa, 2012).

Previous studies (Fancourt & Finn, 2019) have shown that arts-based activities support the well-being of at-risk children, since they reduce anxiety and aggression and increase self-confidence, willingness to strive, and concentration (Fancourt & Finn, 2019). An artistic activity can also reduce loneliness and social exclusion. Artistic experience promotes children's learning conditions, social skills, and a positive self-perception. It also provides people with the ability to make sense of, and therefore structure, their surrounding environment (Rissanen & Mustola, 2017). The therapeutic nature of art helps someone manage strong emotions. With the help of art, it is possible to create a sense of order for confusing events and emotions. Children can experience and find themselves in different ways. Instead of wording, they are able to make self-expression by colors, body, instruments or puppets. Via these tools or ways of expression, they can view, identify, name, and explore their feelings. From a social-emotional point of view, those arts-based activities that can be carried out in a group setting, and for producing both social cohesion and inclusion, are especially effective. In the process of artistic creation, one can encounter another person, as working together and talking about experience provides an opportunity for sharing and receiving (Pusa, 2009).

A core advantage of applying the arts in education is the way they expand and enrich our cultural perceptions, ideas, and values (McClure et al., 2017). Arts-based education, as a part of a curriculum, can also be viewed as a means for children to develop a secure sense of themselves, both as individuals

and members of various groups within multicultural societies (Arts and Cultural Education at School in Europe, 2009). Therefore, implementing arts-based education enhances children's participation in learning (McClure et al., 2017). Especially during early childhood and preschool, children need organized materials and a rich environment that invites discovery, interaction, sensory and kinesthetic exploration, and imagination that is implemented by sensitive, responsive teachers who support children's development through arts-based experiences (McClure et al., 2017).

Arts-based activities take many forms and offer learners multiple ways of learning, gaining information, and being engaged (Appleton et al., 2013). They are designed to help children develop a solid knowledge base and effective problem solving and collaboration skills, as well as become self-directed, motivated learners. Through arts-based activities, such as stories, it is easy to produce realistic learning problems that resonate with children's experiences, foster flexible thinking, and engage children in learning (see, e.g., Deci & Ryan, 2000; Hmelo-Silver, 2004). According to Morizio et al. (2021), arts-based programs may be a particularly effective, engaging, and age-appropriate approach for teaching children about empathy and social-emotional skills. Arts-based empathy instruction has the potential for helping young children develop important interpersonal skills early in life, while also exposing them to art, empowering them to engage in the creative process, and fostering emotional connections to their art and to their peers. The act of creating art and sharing it with others represents a powerful opportunity for children to development their conceptualization of self and serves as a source of pride.

Individual Story Ending

The individual story ending method (ISE) is an application of a storytelling activity in arts-based education and an example of how stories and other arts-based activities could be expanded to support the learning of different content areas (Aerila et al. 2019). The ISE method is about predicting the continuation of a story fragment and creating, based on personal interpretation, a story's ending (Aerila & Kauppinen 2020a). The ISE's starting point is usually a fictional text. However, any written or oral story can be used as long as the story contains characters and a plot to which children can relate. An inspiring starting point might be a story that is based on an artefact or an experience (Aerila et al., 2019; Aerila & Kauppinen, 2019; Aerila & Kauppinen, 2020a).

The most common way to implement the ISE method is to write an own story ending. However, the ISE does not have to be written; it can also be implemented by narrating, drawing, acting, or using any arts-based method that allows the creator to freely express their perceptions (Aerila, 2010). When evaluating illustrations or other artifacts, such as ISEs, every detail is important; facial expressions, postures, locations, sizes, and colors all have meaning (Rönkkö et al., 2016). The features of individual story endings depend on the original story and is related to the creator's background, including their worldview, reading skills, values, and previous reading experiences (Aerila et al., 2019). Like other thinking-aloud tasks, ISE is a good method for visualizing how the reader interprets texts and experiences (Aebli, 1991; Aerila 2010; Grossman, 2001).

The ISE method has many benefits in education. In previous studies, ISE has been used to enhance literature discussions and to discover children's perceptions of social and emotional contexts, history, diversity, humor, and the value of reading (Aerila & Rönkkö, 2015a, 2015b; Rönkkö & Aerila, 2013, 2015) and to estimate children's literacy skills and differentiate learning (Rönkkö & Aerila, 2018). ISE makes the children's interpretations of narratives visible to others; therefore, it is easier for the educator to have the children, depending on the chosen store, participate in discussions about different themes.

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The ISE method enables the teacher to comprehend each child's interpretation and make it visible to the children and others. Therefore, ISE supports making educational conversations more child-centered, and the teacher has access to children's thoughts and understanding. The teacher can let children compare story endings, ask about details, and recognize how people interpret texts and experiences differently and what the interpretation is based on (Aerila et al., 2019; Aerila, 2010).

Aerila & Neitola (2020) tested the ISE method as a part of social-emotional learning in a preschool group. The research data consists of the ISEs of 60 six-year-old children in pre-primary education based on Anneli Kanto's picture book (2013). The children dictated the ISEs to the educators and supported the stories with drawings. The only instruction for the ISE's story and the drawing was to listen to the original story and create an ending to this story as well as accompany it with an illustration. The original story was from a book series called *Viisi villiä Virtasta* (2011->) (The wild five in Virtanen's family); it is about the oldest child in Virtanen's family going to school for the first time. Here is the fragment of the original text used in the study (translated by the authors of this chapter):

Veera is going to preschool for the first time with her friend Kirsti. She feels very happy. While eating breakfast, one of her teeth comes loose. She has some difficulties in talking, but it is only funny to her. At the yard of the preschool, it is a bit too noisy for Veera, and nobody seems to notice her. At preschool, the first assignment is to write your own name, and Veera mistakenly does not write it correctly, and she cannot even pronounce it correctly. In the group, there is one boy who makes fun of everything and Veera. Veera starts to miss home. During a play, Alex does not follow the rules, and Veera feels bad. She goes to the toilet, as she is so upset. While sitting there, she hears someone cry... (p. 12)

The original text was interrupted at this turning point, and the children were asked to end the story. The ISE activity aimed to investigate what kind of information children's stories and drawings contain regarding children's prior experiences of peer relationships. Children, in their ISEs, presented their solutions to the social conflict presented in Kanto's picture book. In this study (Aerila et al., 2020), all the children could produce an ISE. Most had produced a story with a structure and a logical ending to the original story; however, all the ISEs were different, but they had categorizable similarities.

According to the analysis of the ISEs, all the children empathized with the story's characters. They identified reasons why someone is sad and how to cope with someone crying. All the stories had happy endings: everyone was happy and had friends (Figure 2 and Figure 3). In the ISEs, since all the children asked the early childhood educator to come and solve the problem, it was apparent that preschoolers rely on adults' help. From the perspective of social and emotional skills, the children showed that they are willing to help, and they can make notions of why someone is unhappy or sad. They showed active agency in the stories, and, for example, illustrated how the children in their stories hugged each other or the teacher. Additionally, the ISEs illustrated how important it is for preschoolers to have friends and reliable adults nearby.

The following two stories illustrate the differences in the ISEs and their illustrations.

Alex has hurt himself and cries in the toilet. Alex lies to Veera that he has hurt himself, and it is not true. Veera asks Alex to come out (says out in a funny way since she is missing the tooth). Alex does not want to come out and stays in the toilet. (ENP1)

Figure 2. A Child's Drawing as Attachment to the Verbal ISE

Note. Veera and the crying girl become happy and start playing with each other.



Figure 3. A Child's Drawing as Attachment to the Verbal ISE

Note. Everybody is feeling good: the teacher, Veera, the crying girl, and other children.

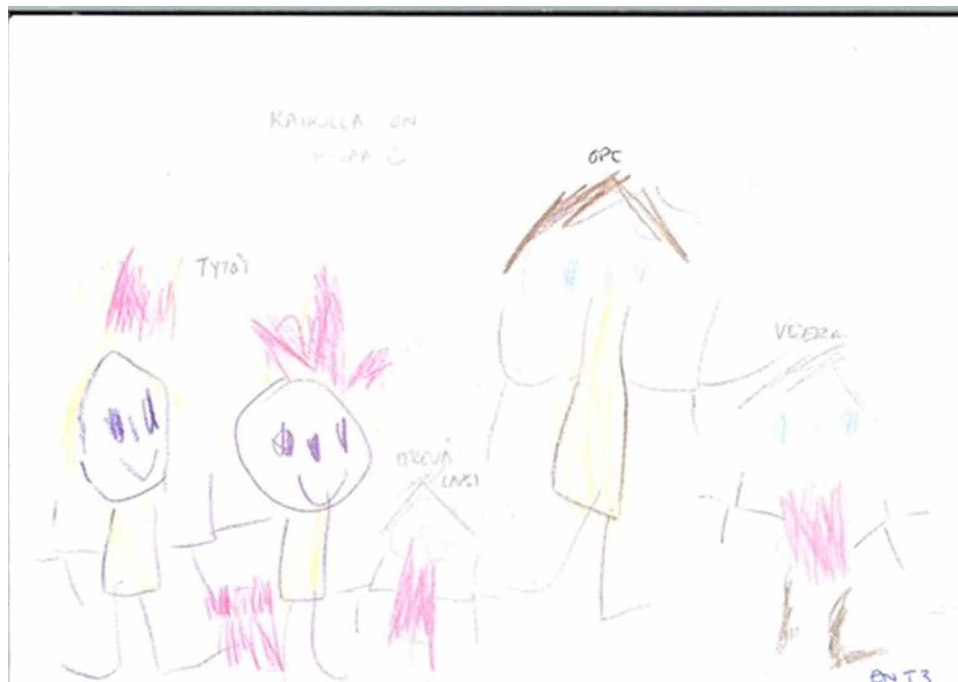


Figure 4. A Kamishibai Theater



All the other children also came to the toilet. They opened the door and there was Veera's friend, Kirsti. The children asked her why she was crying. She said that she is feeling homesick. They hugged her and went to play hide and seek together. (SIST)

The results of the ISE's social-emotional content reveal that the ISE method might serve as a useful tool for educators to evaluate and visualize children's interpretations of different social and emotional contexts (Aerila & Neitola, 2020). The analysis (Aerila & Neitola, 2020) revealed that the empathy illustrated in the children's stories is in line with their age and they possess prosocial abilities, such as helping, which indicate positive peer relations and promote prosocial development (Dirks et al., 2018). However, more data and research is needed to certify whether the ISE method reveals children's real feelings and conceptions, their expectations of peer relationships, and the relationship between literacy skills and children's capacity for illustrating their experiences.

Kamishibai Theater

Kamishibai (紙芝居) is a native Japanese art form and means paper theater. According to Orbaugh (2018), the history of kamishibai theater dates back to seventh-century Buddhist monasteries, where this form of theater was used to tell about a monastery's history. The monks called kamishibai theater a picture-roll story (*emakimono*), and it represents the earliest ways to combine images and text in storytelling. Kamishibai was a popular street entertainment activity for Japanese children in the late 1920s until the coming of television in the 1970s. Kamishibai theater requires three components: a narrator (*kamishibaiya*), a stage that can be constructed as a box, and an illustrated story in the form of loose papers (Lee, 2003). The narrator sits or stands next to the stage and tells the story of the images, and there is a

notch on the side of the stage through which the narrator can place an image onto the stage. The stage's structure often includes a curtain, which allows it to be closed between different scenes. (Lähteelä, 2021)

Today, kamishibai is used in teaching as an arts-based way of working. Kamishibai theater encourages interaction as the narrator's face is pointing towards the audience, and the audience and the narrator share emotions with each other (Paatela-Nieminen, 2008). The narrator's empathetic presentation of the text tells viewers about the narrator's interpretation and, at the same time, supports the understanding of both the images and the text. In addition, kamishibai combines several art forms as it offers many different roles for children: they can write, draw, act, and narrate the kamishibai story (Lee, 2003). In education, the kamishibai story can come from many sources. The narrator can tell the story in their own words and hence deeply empathize with the story. The story can always be pre-written behind the next picture, allowing the story to be read word-for-word, and the images that are used in the kamishibai presentation can be ready-made kamishibai story images, art images, children's drawings, or any images. When you frame tissue paper as a kamishibai image and use your cell phone as a light, you can also make a shadow theater kamishibai presentation (Lähteelä, 2021).

The kamishibai stories in the 1930s did not align with Japanese schools' policies since the stories were bright, grotesque, melodramatic and full of humor, and many educators were afraid that such stories were not suitable for children; however, children enjoyed these presentations and came eagerly back to hear more of these stories (Orbaugh, 2018). Street kamishibai also offered multisensory experience, as children were sitting close to each other in a crowd and the narrator sold candy to children, and played musical instruments (Orbaugh, 2012). Educational kamishibai can also be a multisensory experience since kamishibai can be combined with music, sound effects, dancing or other movement, and various narrator roles. Kamishibai thus enables communal storytelling and enables children to express their creativity and feel connected to each other. For the viewer, the pedagogical kamishibai performance appears as a theater that directs attention and helps the audience focus on listening. Early childhood educators have found that children enjoyed kamishibai stories and were calm during the kamishibai storytelling time (Vermeir & Kelchtermans, 2020).

From the perspective of language awareness and multilingual children (Richards, 2011), kamishibai theater has many elements that support understanding of the story and vocabulary learning since the performance is easy to follow with the help of pictures even if there is no common language (Kauppinen & Aerial 2020), multisensory learning is well-suited for multilingual groups (Kauppinen & Aerial 2020; Nemeth, 2016) and the storytelling moment encourages both narrator and the listeners to empathetic use of different emotions (Kauppinen & Aerial, 2020).

For example, Katagiri (2019) used kamishibai to teach Japanese culture to immigrant students, who found it difficult to listen to things about Japanese culture because it was contrary to their cultural beliefs. Using a kamishibai presentation, Katagiri addressed the differences and similarities between Japanese and other cultures. The images helped with intercultural understanding, and the storytelling involved shared intimacy between the narrator and the audience, which created a safe space. Kamishibai has also been studied to develop primary school children's understanding of how the story is constructed and their ability to structure the story in parts (Geier, 2006).

In the IKI StoRe (2018–2021) project, the kamishibai method was used for two weeks in 5 classrooms of 10 - 12-year-old students' language lessons (N=71). Children could write their own kamishibai stories and illustrate them with a variety of fine art techniques. In this way, children had the opportunity to produce their interpretations and bring their own culture to the fore in the form of a presentation. After

testing the kamishibai method, the participated children completed a survey about their kamishibai experiences. The answers were analyzed with IBM SPSS Statistics 25 and the Mann-Whitney U test.

Children were asked if they were nervous about generally presenting their stories in school. Approximately one-quarter of them (27,5%) said they were very nervous or somewhat nervous about presentations in school. Nevertheless, when compared to those who were not nervous, the nervous children were more excited about participating in kamishibai activities in the future ($U = 321, z = 1.975; p = .048; r = 0.285$). Children from multilingual families did not enjoy reading as much as children from monolingual families ($U = 403, z = 4.019; p < .001; r = .502$), however, children from multilingual families enjoyed kamishibai as much as other children ($U = 219, z = .645; p = .571; r = .082$). In addition, the survey had an open-ended question asking what the best thing about kamishibai was. The most common answers were related to drawing, working together with classmates, creating, and writing the story as well as presenting it.

This study highlights that kamishibai is a well-suited method for oral presentations as it suits for both students who feel nervous about oral presentations and students who have multilingual backgrounds. This study also continues previous studies' findings that kamishibai supports children in expressing their creativity and using their social skills (Lee, 2003).

Silent Books

Silent books, also known as wordless books and non-text books, are picture books that have no text, meaning the story is told using only pictures. Silent books, since the 1960s, have established their position in children's literature, and they emphasize the reader's active role, as their voice acts as a narrator and brings its own view of the work (Arizpe, 2015). The reader is allowed to, in their own way, interpret the book's events, and the same book can become several interpretations among a group. This means that silent books allow for children's voices to be heard. (Lähteelä, 2021)

Silent books are works that do not have a traditional text but are particularly rich in their visuals. They are well suited for readers of all ages, as their visual expression ranges from being simple to very artistic (Lähteelä, 2021). Nonverbal stories are like stories in other books; they can be simple, chronological stories or very complex and multi-leveled stories. Silent books serve as good stimuli for discussion and can facilitate literary discussions on a variety of themes. Oral storytelling develops language skills, vocabulary, and listening skills. (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2021) Picture books are widely used in language education (see e.g., Birketveit & Rimmereide, 2017; Kochiyama, 2017), and they have been successfully used as an engaging narrative tools with non-speaking children (Wormald & Le Clézio, 2012). Silent books could offer even more visual support as the pictures tell the whole story, leaving more space for imagination and creativity. According to International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY, 2016), since silent books tell the story with pictures only, they use language that everyone can understand and therefore they work especially well in multilingual groups of children. They can be read alone, in pairs, in small groups, or even among the whole group.

While reading silent books, children may ask why someone would write a book with no words and how to read such a book, and this awakens children's thinking about visual literacy (Arizpe, 2015). Reading silent books is faster than reading verbal books, but it is still not worth rushing the reading process: interpreting the images requires time. Immersing oneself in the world of silent books can help children who are in difficult situations to momentarily forget about the difficulties of their lives and returning to the stories in the books creates a sense of security (IBBY, 2016).

Different ways to utilize silent books in teaching:

- Discussing. In pairs or small groups, students can tell what they think is happening on each page. What are the characters thinking and feeling? How is this being inferred? Students can be encouraged to explore the pictures in the book, for example, by considering what colors are on the page and why they are being used, and finally students can present to the group what is happening in the book, so that, for example, each student tells about one character (Arizpe, 2015).
- Being part of the story. IBBY (2016) has named a technique called Stop, I was there, where an adult reads the story of a silent book aloud to students. At any point during the reading, the student may say, “Stop, I was there!” After this, they tell the page’s events as if they were physically there: what they smelled, heard, saw, and felt. This encourages students to participate in storytelling and practice describing sensory perceptions.
- Making your own silent book with photos. Arizpe (2015) mentions a method where children can take photos for example with disposable cameras, and these photos can be given a theme, for example: “my important places” or “my favourite things to do”. Once the photos have been printed or developed, the children can place their photos on paper in the order that they want. This results in many one-story silent stories that can be read together among a group.
- Multilingual reading. Silent books can well be lent to students and brought home, which allows a guardian to read an evening tale to their child in their native language. This family reading moment can also be recorded and later listened to with the entire group, making different languages visible to all the students (Lähteelä 2021).

Examples of silent books used in IKI StoRe:

Jeannie Baker (2010). *Mirror*. Walker Books.

Aaron Becker (2013). *Journey*. Candlewick.

Raymond Briggs (1978). *The snowman*. Random House Books for Young Readers.

JonArno Lawson (2015). *Sidewalk flowers*. Groundwood Books.

Suzy Lee (2008). *Wave*. Chronicle Books.

David Wiesner (2006). *Flotsam*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

CONCLUSION

Fiction’s possibilities are limitless and it gives versatile opportunities for individual and communal constructions of meaning. The purpose of the arts-based methods developed in the IKI StoRe project are to expand the minds of various learning-types and connect the learning process to all senses and different ways of interacting, as well as experiencing and comprehending other readers’ interpretations and insights. In this way, literature education becomes a source of learning interaction and empathy as well as learning about oneself (Aerila 2010).

StoRe methods (Kauppinen & Aerila, 2020a, 2020b) emphasize child-centeredness and the learner’s active agency. StoRe is balanced between informal and formal learning and is aimed at the learner’s voluntary engagement, creative activities, and the achievement of learning goals. Regarding StoRe’s approaches to literature education, the methods follow the three-part ASM model: amount-suitability-

meaningfulness (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2019). This model is based on increasing the amount of reading books as well as literature-based action. The suitability of literature means that its selection must be broad enough for each child to find something relevant to himself or herself (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2019) and suitable in terms of difficulty level and content (see e.g., Birketveit & Rimmereide, 2017). According to StoRe, literature is always provided for a purpose, not just because fictional texts are part of the curriculum. Especially with multilingual groups, the literature's suitability should be carefully assessed.

The ASM model motivates children to read and actively create connections between fiction and their lives. Meaningfulness means that literature education, through the use of learning environments and arts-based, creative exercises, provides a finale for the individual interpretation of stories. (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2021) These interpretations are meant to be shared, so the exercises have included community- and arts-based activities that children find meaningful. For example, a painting that was produced based on a reading experience articulates the child's interpretation of a text and might lead to deep conversations about life and emotions. Arts-based reflections of literature that are based on genuine dialogue are at the heart of meaningful reading engagement as well as growing socially and emotionally.

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