

Developing Children's Literacy and Social and Emotional Skills: Family Engagement, Language, and Literacy Webinar Series

Emily Adams: Hello everyone, and welcome to our webinar. Today we're going to be talking about family engagement, and language and literacy. My name — and social and emotional skills. My name is Emily Adams from the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. And we are very lucky today to have this wonderful webinar on Developing Children's Literacy and Social and Emotional Skills. We're so excited to have you join us, and thank you so much to everybody who has already participated in the chat, sharing with us some of their favorite books from childhood that they just keep coming back to. And with that, I'm so very excited to turn this over to our wonderful presenters Debra Sosin and Betty Bardige, who have both just really given their hearts to this work. Thank you so much and welcome. Welcome, Debra and Betty.

Debra Sosin: Hello, and welcome everyone. We're so delighted to have you here today. I'm Debra Sosin, the director of Family Connections, a systemic early childhood mental health consultation and professional staff development program. Family Connections is a program of the Brazelton Touchpoints Center. As a clinical social worker and a special educator, I've worked together with children, families, and providers for over 40 years, supporting families facing adversities. I've had the privilege of training providers throughout the country in urban, rural, and tribal communities. I'm using "Tell Me a Story" to support the social and emotional growth and development of young children. I also have the opportunity to read to children using "Tell Me a Story" at Head Start sites in Boston. And to encourage their parents to use the model to address social and emotional issues. I'm so delighted to be here today. And now I'd like to introduce my co-presenter Betty Bardige. Betty

Bardige: Hi. I'm Betty, and I'm the author of several books on children language, and literacy development, including "Talk to Me Baby" and "Building Literacy with Love." I'm also really privileged to chair the board of Brazelton Touchpoints Foundation, which supports Family Connections, "Tell Me a Story," and other wonderful work at the Brazelton Touchpoints Center. Debra and I are so thrilled to be talking with you today, and for those of you who already started using the chatbox to share your favorite books, thank you. I hope you'll be thinking about them as we go through the webinar, and we may be coming back to some of them, as well. Today what we'd like to do is engage with you -- oh, the other thing I wanted to remind you is, Deb and I are quite happy to have you email us. Let me just go back to our emails for a second. If there are any questions that you don't get answered today. So, today what we hope to do is engage with you, I'm thinking about the connections among language literacy, and social-emotional development. And about how we can support children's development in all those areas. But our focus is going to be on using books and telling stories, to spark conversations with children and with their families that build social-emotional strength.

We'll introduce you to the "Tell Me a Story" model, and we hope you'll come away eager to implement it in your programs and better equipped to engage with families and help them to help children to identify, understand, and talk about their own feelings and those of others. So, I'm going to start by talking about language and literacy and using books to support them and to support social-emotional development using stories as well. And then Debra will talk more specifically about 'Tell Me a Story.' And in your handout, we've given you lots of resources, so please download it, including sources of affordable, high quality, multicultural, multilingual children's books, and more information on "Tell Me a Story," which you'll be able to get from the website, and also some articles that we recommend. So let's

begin with language. Language develops in caring relationships through back and forth conversations that build on children's natural curiosity and their desire to connect. It's key not only to literacy, but to social-emotional strength and approaches to learning.

That are equally important to school and life success. What we give children when they are little builds foundations for thinking, making trends, and continuing to learn. It can affect their entire lives. Language enables children to express feelings, talk about tough situations, and engage in problem solving. So, that's one reason why it's so important. It supports both emotional and social development. Think about young toddlers who use words like "huh" and "gentle" to control their own behavior. And two year old who become happier and less frustrated when they learn to use their words, we are always saying that to them, right? to express their wishes and feelings and to resolve conflicts, although of course, they still may need some adult support. And almost as soon as they can communicate with gestures or words, children begin to tell us stories to let us know what happened, what we should notice, what they're thinking or imagining or worrying about, and what they want to talk to us about. Reading and talking about books with children are powerful ways to build language, literacy, and social-emotional strengths. And it's not just books. Telling stories about the past including telling children stories about themselves has been shown to promote school readiness. And helping toddlers to retell and elaborate simple stories about what happened, what they did that day, has been shown to build both storytelling skills and memory for new events. And of course, it also strengthens relationships. Language and the sounds, the meaning, the feeling that it carries is what matters most for literacy. And I noticed some of you when asked for books that you keep coming back to, chose books with wonderful sounds. But sounding out the words is an important but very small part of reading.

To become good readers, children need vocabulary, background knowledge, the ability to imagine and visualize what the words describe, the ability to follow a narrative, and the curiosity to go beneath the surface and ask what the words really mean and what they can learn from them. And they need to hear the rich language that is often found in oral stories and in storybooks like Goodnight Moon, but is rarer in every day speech. Children also need to engage emotionally with stories that have meaning for them. When we share meaningful stories with children we invite conversation about the story and its connections to their lived experience. Children learn life lessons as they identify with the characters, and a lot of you suggested books with wonderful life lessons in them.

They also learn concepts and vocabulary in ways that stick. And this is especially true in what in some cultures are called grandmother stories. but it's also true of books. For example, in this picture David identifies with the main character in, No David. One of you mentioned that as a favorite book. And asks to hear the story over and over again. The book just says little words. No, David, and yes, plus pictures that invite interpretation. But as they share the book together, he and his mother may use words like careful, considerate, forget, excited, and proud, and talk about big ideas like responsibility and helpfulness. Well chosen books touch children's hearts and resonate with their feelings, fears, wishes, and emotional experiences. They may give children words that label their feelings or models that help them think differently about stressful or frightening situations and resolve problems in positive ways. Think about Go Away Big, Green Monster as an example. From babyhood through school age and beyond, stories play important roles in children's lives. They support language and concept development, provide information and entertainment, deepen adult-child relationships, and help children become experts on their favorite subjects.

For a young child, a book can be a familiar friend or a door to an exciting new world. As Vivian Gussy Paley has taught us, the poetry and prose of the best children's books enter our minds when we are young and sing back to us all our lives. But all of these potentials can only be realized when we choose books well, share them with purpose in a way that engage children, and use them as springboards for enriching conversations. And the same is true of oral stories. Reading aloud to children is one of the most powerful tools we have for building language, literacy, curiosity, general knowledge, and social-emotional strengths. But, as captured in the joint statement of NAEYC & the International Reading Association, "it is the talk that surrounds the story book reading or the story telling that gives it power." And that talk can't just be one way. It needs to be genuine conversation that engages both partners. So here you see a family child care provider who is engaging a toddler and holding her rapt attention with a book that usually appeals to slightly older children.

On the wall behind them are pictures of the children's homes, and next to them is a dollhouse, that the children have been playing in. So, if they read the book together, the teacher helps the toddler and three year old to connect its words and pictures with their real experience and with their pretend play. So, now we'd like to hear from you. As you read with young children, or as you model reading with young children with parents, what techniques do you find effective for holding their attention and engaging them in conversations?

Emily: Thank you, Betty. And we'll give people a moment. I can see a lot of people are jumping in to share what techniques they use to hold young children's attention and engage them in conversation. I'm excited to hear what people have to say. Pausing, so going slowly, being patient, relating it to their life. Oh my goodness. There are so many great ideas.

Betty: Impression and your use of your voice and your pitch.

Emily: Mmm hmm.

Betty: Talking about different characters, using different voices and sometimes getting the kids to. I love asking an 'I wonder' statement.

Emily: Me, too.

Betty: I think that's a great way to engage kids. And predicting, encouraging them to predict. Using your face to show emotion. I can't even keep up with this. You guys are fantastic.

Emily: I know. Your own enthusiasm. That's a great one.

Betty: Asking the child 'what' and 'why' questions. Getting the child to ask you 'what' and 'why' questions. Eye contact, very important. Using props, making it fun, especially with younger children. Getting, giving them a chance to act it out with puppets and these are all fantastic ideas. And don't forget that you don't have to read all the words in the book. You can tell the story. You can talk about the pictures. And of course you can read different ways with different readings, of books. So let's look at... I don't mean to cut off this dialogue. I hope you've already got these ideas, because they're great. And they're great things to share with families because they can do that too. But let's talk about choosing books, that can spark those powerful conversations. So, for young babies, almost any book will do. They like to hear our voices.

But very soon, as young as six months, they begin to associate words with meanings. And they like sturdy books with clear pictures and things to touch, and chew. I have an 11-month-old grandson. And new research shows that books can prompt more interactive talk with one year old, even than toys, cause the baby might say, "ba," and we say, "you found the ball." And the baby says, "ba" again, and we say, "yes, it's a red ball like yours." And they get the idea that "ba" means ball. And we get the idea that "ba" means -- when they say "ba" they mean ball. Choosing for toddlers, most toddlers love books, and they want to get their hands on them. Sometimes they'll sit still for a story. But often they want to be the ones to turn the pages, point to pictures, and decide when it's time to stop. Toddlers are torn between their desire for closeness and their desire for independence. They want to be taken care of and they want to do things for themselves. So, they like books that they can play with by touching, labeling, finding things, making fun noises, and saying fun words. And there's a list here of all the different kinds of books that might spark that, and there's more in your handout. So, two and three-year-olds like, especially resonate with books where they can identify with human and animal characters who feel and behave like they do. One of you mentioned the little critter books, perfect example of that.

They like books that tell reassuring stories about characters who get lost and are found, run away and come back, or make mistakes and are forgiven. Sometimes these stories have special resonance for particular families. So, I want to share a story that was told to me by the director of a home visiting program. A member of her team came to a staff meeting full of consternation. She had been working with a very young mother and her almost 3-year-old. The sessions had been going well, but recently the boy seemed restless and unhappy. Pregnant with her second child, the mother too seemed disengaged and distracted, and increasingly emotionally distant from her son. She asked the home visitor if the child's grandmother could continue the home visits in her place, and hinted that she might be going away. No wonder she was worried. The team suggested a classic for the next visit. *Are You My Mother?* One of you mentioned that. As the three of them read the story together, the home visitor encouraged mother and child to chime in on the sound effects and on the repeated question: are you my mother?

As the story ended, the mother saw that question in her son's eyes. "I am your mother," she responded as they hugged each other, "and you are my best little boy." The power of a story. For preschoolers, books fuel dramatic and creative play with interesting facts, scenarios to reenact and vary, characters to emulate, and things to make and do. We want to take advantage of all of those opportunities. In classrooms that often means reading a book several times, bringing a different focus to each reading. It also means placing books where children can look at them or pretend to read them themselves, and going beyond the book with a range of play and learning opportunities, referring to story characters when every day problems crop up, which of course is something that parents frequently do at home. And again, parents can do this, seeking answers to the new questions that an interesting book may prompt a good excuse to go to the library.

Preschoolers like a variety of books, and again there's more in your handouts. Different books serve different purposes, as do the same books when you read and talk about them with different focus. But the stories with the most emotional resonance often feature characters who struggle with conflicts with peers, with feelings of smallness or inadequacy, or feelings of being left out or different, and small heroes who triumph over big challenges, even over their own emotions. Of course, we want to support families in engaging with their children in all of these ways. Sharing books and stories to spark conversations. We also want to keep families abreast of what's happening in school, what their children are learning, wondering or worrying about, new words, signs, and gestures they may be using, and their

favorite books and songs. And we want to make it easy for families to do the same for us, so we all know, what children may want to talk about, what stories they may want to hear, tell, and retell. So Deb, can you tell us about Tell Me a Story?

Debra: Thank you, Betty, for sharing your insights on young children, language development, literacy, and social-emotional expressiveness. I'd now like to share with you "Tell Me a Story." The power of telling a story is strong in most cultures. In many cultures, storytelling is a strong tradition whether one is literate or not, we all have the capacity to share a story. The written word and oral stories are both compelling ways to share and connect. Think of the stories that you heard as a child. So, many of you went back to them at the beginning of our webinar. Some from your own tradition, some from others. Take a moment and reflect. Which are the most powerful stories? The stories of adversity, big or small, and resilience. "The Little Engine That Could," "The Kissing Hand," "Goodnight Moon," "No David," "Where the Wild Things Are." These are stories that bring the difficult to light and help us join, to cope, manage, or solve the problems or challenges at hand, to move on and to grow. Stories can delight us or sadden us. Hopefully, they always make us reflect and see the world from a slightly different perspective. "Through Tell Me a Story," it's our hope that children will see their struggles, disappointments, fears, challenges, and joys from a slightly different perspective.

So, what is Tell Me a Story? Tell Me a Story is a program designed to help children understand and describe their emotions through the use of literature and discussion. It's a literacy-based social-emotional project, and a social-emotional literacy project. It was developed as part of Family Connections, a systemic mental health and professional staff development model that I mentioned earlier, with the broader goals of promoting social-emotional well-being of young children, their families, and the providers that work with them. More specifically, Tell Me a Story provides developmentally appropriate tools in support of social-emotional growth of young children, and promotes self-reflections in early childhood professionals and families. "Tell Me a Story" is a series of nine professional development workshops which can be found on the ECLKC site, and we'll share that with you later. Tell Me a Story also includes book guides for six specific books with a range of social-emotional themes, and a series of short papers for parents and staff.

Our primary focus today is to introduce you to these resources and consider how you might use them to support the social and emotional being of young children. "Tell Me a Story." I'd like to share the quick history of "Tell Me a Story" with you. In 2003, Family Connections, developed by Dr. William Beardslee and Dr. Catherine Ayoub, received an office at Head Start Innovation Grant to further develop this new approach of supporting families facing depression and other adversities. The Family Connections mental health consultants were spending time in classrooms, and also time meeting with parents, and of course, listening. We observed many examples of deeply caring parents and teachers struggling to respond to a child's sharing of a difficult topic. One example that led us to begin "Tell Me a Story" was at circle time in a classroom. The teacher was going around the room, asking the children about their weekend. One child went to the zoo, one child played ball with their uncle, and another child said, "Daddy hit Mommy and the police came." In that moment, as you might expect, the teacher had some difficulty responding as fully as she might have wished.

We've all faced some moments. "Tell Me a Story" evolved from what we learned in the field by listening to children, parents, and providers, and in thinking about what supports emotional expressiveness. We discovered a gap in training for early care providers, teachers and family service staff, about how to have

these discussions with children about difficult or emotional issues. While there are many fine picture books that exist to address some of these issues, unfortunately those very same books can be somewhat lacking in guidance, in how the reader might respond when a child shares an actual life event. "Tell Me a Story" offers support in getting such communication started. Through "Tell Me a Story" books, we hope to facilitate emotional expressiveness.

So, let's take a moment. We'd like to hear your experiences in the chat box. Would you share a few words with how you responded when a child raised a difficult or painful topic? As a teacher, a home visitor, a family advocate, and of course as a parent. Many of us have many roles with children. And I see that many of you are typing. I'm excited to see your responses. Oh, wonderful!. Asking the child how that made them feel, always staying calm, because children feed off of our emotions, asking the child again how they felt and what they might do, letting them know that all feelings are okay, asking questions, listening to what they say, repeating what they respond.

So many wonderful and thoughtful responses. Telling the child that you're sorry that, that happened, acknowledging the child's feelings and validating them. I'm sure that the list could go on and on. One of the "Tell Me a Story" workshops entitled Strategies for Talking with Children about Difficult Issues, offers some suggestions, many of which, you've already shared with us. That ability to stay calm, at least externally, and think about the message we want the child to receive. I care what's on your mind. It's a good idea to share your feeling and worries with me. My job as a parent, a teacher, a family service staff, is to care for you and make sure that you're safe. We want to listen and acknowledge, let the child know that you heard him or her. And if you need a moment to reflect and you're not entirely sure what the child said, gently repeat their words to confirm.

Always reassure the child with your words and touch. And of course, seek support if you need it. we don't have to be in these moments alone. What children really need to know is that they have been heard and acknowledged and that they're cared for. We don't have all the answers and they don't necessarily expect us to. So "Tell Me a Story" is based on developing the emotional competence of young children. Sometimes in that process, we also enhance our own emotional competence. The three key components of emotional competence - knowledge of emotions, emotional expressiveness, and self-regulation - are fundamental to "Tell Me a Story." Infants and toddlers can't yet verbalize their feelings or talk about challenging and disturbing events, although we certainly know it. Preschoolers are developing skills to understand and express a range of feelings. Young children are beginning to identify their emotions. They do this by looking at others' facial expressions, exploring where and how in their own bodies they experience emotions. My tummy gets all mixed up. She's sad. The expression of emotion follows the knowledge how young children begin to make meaning of and verbalize their emotions is so important.

And of course, self regulation. The growing ability to manage and control our own feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. Not a simple process, but it allows children to begin to respond appropriately to their environment. Self regulation truly can be a lifelong process. Emotional competence and particularly self regulation are part of the journey toward school readiness, such an important factor in Head Start and Early Head Start and all early care programming. So what guides our work? Tell Me a Story is guided by research which demonstrates that children who experience engaging conversations with adults during their preschool years have been shown to achieve greater academic success in later years. We want storytelling, as Betty shared, and book reading to be engaging, to be a conversation with the space and

the time for comments, questions, ideas, and feelings, and opportunity for sharing and for expressions. So what else guides our work? Current research has demonstrated that many children who've experienced trauma and adversity may not have developed the ability to use and define emotionally related words and expressions. "Tell Me a Story" provides all children with this opportunity.

And finally in terms of guiding our work, books serve as both providing some distance from our own difficult feelings and also as a bridge to understand those feelings. From infants and toddlers and throughout our lives. Studies have shown that children do get a better understanding of their own feelings, and how to regulate them when the opportunity to talk about books with emotional themes where the characters act on their feelings in a manner that the child might learn from them. So let's talk about implementing "Tell Me a Story." I'm going to ask you to go back to your special stories and remember the feelings you had about the characters. The stories that you shared at the beginning of the webinar. The special relationships that you may have formed with them as we talk about implementing "Tell Me a Story."

I'm sure that when you're preparing to share a book with the children in your care, as a parent or a provider, you think long and hard about what the children may respond with by way of questions or conversations. Even with this preparation, I've often been surprised, and occasionally been at a loss for what a child might bring up. The need for the "Tell Me a Story" reader to be prepared to consider the book, the topic, our own responses and feelings regarding the issues, becomes all the more important. We ourselves may be reacting to a story, so be prepared not only for the child's response, but also our own. There are some books that still cause a catch in my throat when I read them. In one of the classrooms, I was reading a book that was created by the "Tell Me a Story" folks called "When My Mom is Sad." And it tells this story of depression through the eyes of a young preschooler. At the end of the story, the children shared wonderful examples of being sad and mommies or daddies or people that they knew were sad.

After the children were napping and I went back to debrief with the teachers about what the experience was like for them, and what they observed with the children, one of the teachers shared with me, "I'm depressed." So the story certainly resonated for her, and opened the ability for her to begin to talk about her own feelings and emotions and what might be helpful. So again, in thinking about implementing "Tell Me a Story," I'd like you to think about what it might look like in your setting or in your home. "Tell Me a Story" can be implemented by teachers, parents, family service staff, and other professionals.

Our experience through Family Connections has been that a mental health consultant if you do have one at your site or to join you as a home visitor, is an excellent person to begin the process in the classroom or at the home visit, and model the approach for teachers, parents, and other professionals. The mental health consultant is specifically trained in talking with children about difficult topics, and they can help develop or enhance those same skills in others. So, in implementing "Tell Me a Story," if there is a mental health consultant working with the teacher in the classroom, the mental health consultant and the teacher may choose a book together. The books are often adapted to address the culture of the setting.

A perfect example is when Sophie gets angry, really, really angry. I imagine that many of you are familiar with this book. So it's a book that I've shared and find that children and adults resonate to in urban, rural, and tribal setting. In terms of adaptation, at one part in the book where Sophie gets really, really

angry, she runs out of the house. In some settings, that might be fine and feel safe. In some of the settings in urban Boston, it doesn't necessarily feel safe to the parents or the teachers. So at that point we stop and I ask the children, "Is it safe to run away and out of the house?" And of course, most of them respond, "No!" So we ask, "What might you do when you're angry?" Repetitive reading of "Tell Me a Story" is one of the aspects that helps support the learning.

We read the book three to four times, usually once a week, children, providers, and parents form relationships with the characters that grow and develop with each reading. Each reading goes a bit deeper and focuses on different aspects of the story. The Tell Me a Story Book Guides which are available to all of you on the ECLKC site provide a template to follow that offers a series of questions, activities, preparation, and a post-work to do. I like to begin the activities before and finish the readings afterward with relaxation activities for the children. We're always working on self regulation. We often begin with grieving and relaxation. The readings can be done with large groups and also with smaller groups. Having a copy of the book in the classroom or home between the readings is so helpful. Many times I visited classrooms and a child has greeted me with the book in hand and asked that we read it together. The most fun is when the child wants to read the book to me. Their versions are moving, powerful, and revealing of what is most important to them. So "Tell Me a Story" is a wonderful way for parents to use storytelling as well. Many of the "Tell Me a Story" professional development workshops, which are available on the ECLKC site, can be adapted for families, and we've used many of them with families. This also provides an opportunity for family service staff to join together with families. Three of the "Tell Me a Story" workshops are specifically focused on engaging families using the "Tell Me a Story" model. So one example from a parent workshop at a Head Start site in Boston was so powerful was with a group of 15 parents, we had 9 different countries represented. I asked the parents how many of them remember being read to as a child, and only one parent acknowledged that she had. When I shifted the question, all of the parents remember hearing stories, primarily orally.

Their recollections were both moving and powerful. One of the women talked about sitting outside their hut in the country where she lived where they had no electricity and the stars out at night, and the elders sharing stories with the young children. And she could share this with us in vivid detail. The importance of reading to children or telling children stories is so powerful. Parents can use books and tell stories using pictures even if they are not English readers as many of the parents in this particular workshop or not. So let's talk about Sophie a bit more. As I mentioned, the "Tell Me a Story" material can be found on the ECLKC site. Here is a screenshot, and we'll have a link for you a little bit later. The Book Guides facilitate discussion of the social-emotional themes of the books. The guides are templates that can be adapted to any book you may want to use to address an issue. The readings focus on learning about the plot and characters through questions and conversations.

By looking at the facial expressions and the body language of the characters, how do you know that Sophie is angry? Let me see your angry face. What do you do when you're angry? We always practice self regulations. In the book Sophie, when she gets really, really angry she roars. And I often begin with children. On the count of three, let's all roar like Sophie. One, two, three. ROAR! So as you might imagine the difference between the first reading and the third reading, and the children's ability to regulate is amazing. So Sophie calms down and feels better. What helps Sophie to feel better? What helps you to feel better? And on and on through the books. So in working with the Tell Me a Story Book Guides, a few questions for you to reflect on. How do you think reading stories and using the Book Guides will benefit children in your settings? What challenges might you anticipate? And beyond reading

the book in this way, what follow-up or outreach activities could you use to further allow children to process and reflect on these? And I'll leave these with you to think about.

Our last slide has a link to the "Tell Me a Story" series on the ECLKC sites. Please click it when you have the opportunity and explore the resources.

The introduction to "Tell Me a Story" materials delineates the 9 workshops, the Book Guides, and the short papers available for providers and parents. Through "Tell Me a Story," children explore their own feelings and the feelings of others in a safe and supportive environment. They begin to practice self regulation, learning about and monitoring their own feelings. They have positive interactions with parents and teachers, knowledge of emotions, and strong -and the development of strong social skills. And these are all predictors of academic success and school readiness. And staff and families learn ways to introduce and make storytelling an interactive process. Parents and teachers can explore how to make reading intentionally their own. "Tell Me a Story" highlights strength, and it emphasizes the process of trial and error. Reading and stories can be a learning experience for both children and adults. We hope that you've enjoyed this overview of "Tell Me a Story," and reading books using the "Tell Me a Story" approach. I hope you'll have the opportunity to go in more depth and explore this and implement it in your classrooms or homes. Thank you so much.

Emily: Thank you so much. This is Emily Adams again from the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. And I really just wanted to say a huge thank you to both of our presenters, Betty and Debra. I really appreciate your taking the time to share with us all of this information. I wanted to point one more thing out to everybody on the webinar that if you follow that link to the ECLKC, and you find the "Tell Me a Story" resources, if you scroll down a little bit, there's a whole specific list of resources for working with families. So I just wanted to point that out particularly for this audience because I think that might be particularly interesting. And the link is still up on the screen. And then I noticed somebody just asked for the presenters' contact information again,

Debra: And Emily, may I jump in?

Emily: Yea.

Debra: I know people have responded to the "Tell Me a Story" materials being available in Spanish. And they will be up on the ECLKC site very soon, I hope. And we're delighted that they are available in Spanish, as well.

Emily: Wonderful. That is really wonderful. I think these are going to be really helpful. Oh, I'm so glad people felt like this was helpful. I just wanted to let people know a few more things. And as Betty mentioned, that handout has some great resources. So it's about four kinds of books children like, but also from places where free or extremely low cost books might be available, especially for programs. So, stay with us if you would like. Right now, I just wanted to let you know, first of all that we have another webinar coming up, end of October, October 31. And the topic of that webinar is Engaging Families of Dual Language Learners. I'm really excited about that one. I think it's also going to be fantastic. And at this point, I would like to go ahead and let you know that we will be here for a few moments to answer questions. You're welcome to use the chat box, and then our presenters will be answering questions. So go ahead and stay with us if you have any specific questions for Betty or Debbie. Go ahead and type them in the chat box. So wonderful. Thank you so much. Does anybody have any questions? I know. I

just wanted to point out we had a couple questions earlier that I'm going to go ahead and point out to our presenters, and either one of you might want to answer this. what books would you recommend for a 4-year-old autistic child?

Betty: Many children with autism have particular interests. Some of them tend to be fairly common on interest in trains for example, and others are quite idiosyncratic. So I would really look for books that allow that child to pursue that interest and be an expert on that subject, and that often means books with pictures that are labeled, that show many different kinds. Sometimes there might be an ABC book about the topic. And they're often more interested in the factual books than in the fictional stories. Other kinds of books, though, that are helpful are books that help them to deal with social issues. The idea of a social story, a book that actually models what you might say, and those are often things that you might actually write for or with the child. But on the CSEFEL site, which is in your handouts, the Center for the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, there you'll find some suggestions there, books that might actually help children to deal with... to interpret social cues and to deal with situations that they might face, every day situations. But, feel free to email me if you want more because and my daughter is an expert on this and I will ask her.

Emily: Wonderful. Thank you so much. And then, so we have another question. And the person said, "Hey, this might be a little off topic, but do you have suggestions for good ideas of books to read before nap or rest time to help children calm down?"

Betty: I mean it's a great question, and Deb you may want to answer this one, too. I think that one of the things that children like when they're trying to calm down are books that have really beautiful language and a really calming rhythm. I mean, think about Good Night, Moon.

Debra: Exactly.

Betty: And, you know, or think about even a book that might be a little bit above children's level, but they might just enjoy listening to the story, enjoy so it might not be a picture book, or it may be a book that you that they've read as a picture book, but then you may want to reread. One of the books that my children loved was 'One Morning in Maine', and a book called 'Time of Wonder.' Basically books with a very poetic description of the natural world. Deb, you want to take it?

Debra: What I would add to what Betty said is that clearly the book's important, but also the way we read the book is important. So a book that in one point in time, we may read with great enthusiasm, expression, and perhaps loud noises, might be read at another time in a very quiet and gentle and soothing way. So if there is a favorite book that the child or children love, and they know the story, reading it in a soothing, quiet way can also be helpful during nap. I've found that sometimes with children that if it's a book that they don't know, they want to stay awake to hear the end. And so we don't want a book, that's going to keep them awake during nap time. I also noticed that many there's some great suggestions I hope everybody's looking at the chat and seeing each other's terrific suggestions.

Emily: That is so true. Thank you. And so we have another question here. I know this is for young children, but do you have any books you recommend for 5- to 8-year-old children who maybe struggling with emotions \from parental divorce, or parents not getting along, or maybe other family issues that might be going on?

Debra: If you look on the first book marketplace at some of the books that Ellen Galinsky recommends, I'm pretty sure on your handout I gave you a link to because first book goes up to including older children. And there's Ellen Galinsky has created a collection of books you can search for "Mind in the Making First Book." And you will get that collection. And those include books for older children. But books for specifically deal with particular issues for older children. First Book has actually been working with publishers to develop some of those. And you may also want -- remember that children who are going through emotional difficulties often want to return to books that have been written for younger children that are familiar, but are comforting. So I don't think you have to feel as if it's an entirely different set of books. Obviously it depends on the child. I mean, children, 5-8 year olds, you know by the time they're 8 they can often read themselves and they really want a book about a child who they can connect with and a child whose experience reflects theirs.

Betty: The other thing that I would recommend to folks is that you can go on Amazon and look under your topic, and then you can preview some of the books. There's so many. And some are more applicable or appropriate to one child than another. Certainly one that I've often used is "Mummy and Daddy are Fighting." That's a bit more about domestic violence. There's another called "Daddy Doesn't Live Here Anymore." But there are so many wonderful books available now. Also, the CSEFEL website has a list of books on social and emotional topics, and that might be helpful to folks.

Emily: Thank you so much. So we have another question. And somebody was wondering about if there - - What are some recommendations for books specifically for children, sort of, older toddlers, younger preschoolers around the ages of two to four. She said that the kids seem a little bit more bored or distracted and aren't really paying attention. I wonder if this might also have some suggestions not just for what books, but maybe how to read with children at that age. Sort of, what are some successful strategies?

Betty: Um, what I was going to say is one of the things to remember is that books do not have to be read at circle time, sitting down, or inside. And so choosing books that allow for activity is often very engaging. Even something as simple as Eric Carle has a book called "From Head to Toe," where the animals do something and then the child imitates it. and then you can stand up and act it out right away on every page.

Debra: The other piece that I would recommend is finding ways to engage children in the storytelling. Have them tell more of the story, making sure that we're in addition to reading to children, engaging in conversation with them, and discovering what it is that they like about the story, looking at the pictures, finding the little bird that might be in the corner, counting how many cats there may be on the page. So any ways that we can engage the child in the book and that they feel a part of the process.

Betty: And recognizing that you don't have to do everything with every reading. So, if the children seem to be getting bored, you know, just take the book out again later, or put the book somewhere where children can get it on their own. Cycle books. Put books in a basket or on a shelf where children can get them, but then change those books. But then bring back books that were old favorites. There are lots of ways to get kids excited. And recognize that sometimes children may not be as interested in books as they may be other times. Remember that the nap time books, you know, maybe some kids are more able to pay attention at nap time. Or at home in the bath, I had friends who would read to their children when they were taking a bath or when they were eating because that was when the child was interested.

Emily: Thank you so much. So at this point I'm going to take a moment to just tell everybody thank you so much for attending this webinar that we absolutely are thrilled to have had everybody excited participation. I know I left with a couple of books that I need to go find to read just for my own children. And just before you hang up, I want you to know that our presenters are willing to stay for another 15 minutes and answer questions. So if you have more questions or you are enjoying hearing the answers to other people's questions, please stay on the line. And I have one more resource for you, which is a community engagement resource, where pediatricians are giving books to young children. So this is a lovely program, and I just shared the link in your — in the chat. So again, I just want to thank everybody so much for coming, and thank you for your participation. We're saying goodbye now, for the recording, but we will be available to answer questions for the next 15 minutes. Thank you so much.

Betty: Thank you. We appreciate your joining with us.

Debra: And everything you shared.

Betty: Yeah.

[End video]