

**39th IBBY World Congress**  
*Join the Revolution! Giving Every Child Good Books*  
Trieste, Italy -- August 30th to September 9th, 2024

**SUNDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER, 15.00 – 16.00**

**Poster Session:** Frontiers and bridges between languages, cultures and countries 2 + Good books as drivers to change.

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**PP 105 – “Empowering picture book engagement: unleashing the potential of the reading builds empathy tool” - Valerie Williams-Sanchez – USA**

Recently, theorists including Hefflin (2001) and Uluğ (2015) have defined essential components for effective picture books, expanding upon Lepman’s (1951) foundational work in the field. Articulated as a categorical rubric, these rules can encompass a broad array of literary subgenres. This extends to picture books exploring social-emotional learning themes, evolving from mere entertainment for young minds to influential tools for shaping them.

Social emotional picture books delve into a variety of subjects, including psychological health, well-being, and emotional intelligence. As the use of picture books expands, technical proficiency alone is no longer the sole criterion for determining quality. Efficacy is now shaped by elements that resonate with readers across various ages, interests, and walks of life.

To this end, the Reading Builds Empathy (RBE) literacy study sought to develop and pilot a new instrument that uses picture book reading to understand empathy development, a facet of emotional intelligence. In the Reading Builds Empathy (RBE) study, 21 parent-child dyads (N=42) piloted a tool measuring children’s empathy development for ages 6-8.

The tool includes collecting parent reports of children’s at-home literacy practices and engagement with picturebooks as well as parents’ perspectives on their child’s empathy development. The tool also includes a researcher-administered tool to directly measure children’s empathy development in a developmentally appropriate format across three domains: affective, cognitive, and ethnocultural empathy.

This paper describes the process for instrument development, initial pilot data, considerations for changes to the instrument, and ideas for how the instrument can be used in

future intervention studies, adding new rigor to assess the complex printed format. This exploration will contribute to the cultural dimensions of children's literature.

**Keywords:** Social-Emotional Learning, Empathy Development, Picture Books, and Reading Builds Empathy

**ACADEMIC AFFILIATION:** St. John's University, Queens, New York, USA

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