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# READ

READ EXCEL ACHIEVE LEAD®

# An Interactive Read-Aloud Mentoring Program

REVISED FEBRUARY 2026

VERIFIED BY:

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### SUGGESTED CITATION

Scholastic Research & Validation. (2026). Scholastic R.E.A.L.: An interactive read-aloud mentoring program. Scholastic.

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# An Interactive Read-Aloud Mentoring Program

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VERIFIED BY:

LXDRESEARCH
AT CHARLES RIVER MEDIA

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# The Challenge

Studies show that children who grow up with greater exposure to reading and books are more likely to find employment as adults (Evans et al., 2015) and demonstrate higher academic competence than their peers (Sikora et al., 2018). The benefits of reading can be detected early, and research suggests that having books at home in childhood is associated with higher brain function in adulthood (Berns et al., 2013; Weinstein et al., 2021), greater understanding of others (Kidd & Castano, 2013), and better physical health (Dewalt & Pignone, 2005; Weinstein et al., 2021).

However, not all children have consistent access to books. A 2010 study revealed that nearly one-third of American families (28 percent) have fewer than 25 books in the home (Evans et al., 2010). In addition, recent data from The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicate that fewer kids read independently for fun (NAEP, 2022). Only 14% of students surveyed reported reading for pleasure every day, down three percentage points from 2020 and 13 percentage points from a decade earlier. Research shows that children who read for pleasure tend to have larger vocabularies, greater background knowledge, and higher reading test scores than their peers who do not (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003). This is because frequent reading "feeds engagement and agency, which increases effort and practice" (Miller & Lesesne, 2022, p. 233).

Access to books (Manu et al., 2019), mentoring (LaVenia & Burgoon, 2019), and family engagement (Park & Holloway, 2017; Jeynes, 2005) are powerful tools for improving student engagement and literacy achievement. Scholastic R.E.A.L. is designed to do exactly that. By directly addressing the challenges described, R.E.A.L. strengthens students' relationships with reading through interactive read-alouds, meaningful adult modeling, literacy-focused mentoring, increased family connections to texts, and expanded home libraries.

# Description of R.E.A.L.

Scholastic R.E.A.L. is a mentoring program centered on literacy that equips schools, districts, public libraries, and community organizations with the resources they need to recruit and prepare community members to serve as reading mentors.

By using a variety of books—each paired with a companion guide that structures literacy-related activities—mentors support children's engagement with literacy and academic success through interactive read-alouds and book discussions. Following these discussions, students take home the book, expand their home libraries, and gain opportunities to share and engage in conversations about the text alongside their families.

Scholastic R.E.A.L. was developed for students in PreK through eighth grade, with content and discussion prompts tailored to meet a range of developmental needs. Each grade-level set includes four unique titles with 10 student copies and one mentor copy (44 books total). The full implementation package includes:

- **High-Quality Books** representing a variety of experiences, authors, and topics
- **Student Guides** to help readers find evidence, make real-life connections, and respond in writing
- **Family Guides** with engaging activities and discussion prompts to support literacy at home
- **Mentor Guides** that include book-specific sample discussion questions
- **An Implementation Guide** with step-by-step guidance and sample letters
- **A Community Recruiting Guide** to engage, support, and sustain mentors during the implementation cycle
- **A Mentor Success Guide** (digital only) with tips to build mentors' confidence and skills
- **A Digital Resource Website** that allows facilitators to access materials online and customize supports to meet implementation needs

## Logic Model

The 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) encourages districts and schools to adopt evidence-based programs with a well-specified logic model explaining how programs will likely improve outcomes. Figure 1 provides a conceptual model of R.E.A.L.'s design to facilitate engagement with literature and improve short- and long-term outcomes. Specifically, this logic model outlines the essential resources required to launch the R.E.A.L. program successfully, including books, guides, mentors, and facilitators. It details the targeted activities necessary to produce direct and tangible outputs, such as read-aloud sessions with mentors and interactive learning experiences. These outputs contribute to a deeper understanding and appreciation of literacy among students. In turn, the outputs lead to both short- and long-term outcomes, such as the expansion of home libraries and increased attendance rates. These outcomes help define the expected results of the program and inform the selection of key variables for evaluating its success.

## Fig.1

| Inputs | Activities | Outputs | Outcomes Short-Term | Outcomes Long-Term |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **R.E.A.L.**<br>• Engaging books that reflect a wide range of experiences and perspectives for students spanning PreK to Grade 8<br>• Guides to support mentors and families in providing interactive read-alouds and literacy experiences<br>• Student guides to increase engagement and build literacy skills<br>• An online Digital Hub of additional support materials<br><br>**Facilitator/School**<br>• Implementation oversight and the recruitment of mentors<br><br>**Assumptions**<br>• Physical location(s) for read-alouds | **Students**<br>• Participate in interactive read-alouds and discussion with both community mentors and with their own families<br>• Engage with activities in the student guide<br>• Build home libraries with take-home books<br><br>**Facilitators/Schools**<br>• Coordinate interactive read-aloud schedules and logistics<br>• Manage community outreach<br><br>**Families**<br>• Strengthen literacy practice with provided take-home books<br>• Deepen knowledge using the hands-on, book-specific activities in the Family Guide | **Students**<br>• Develop comprehension, language skills, and background knowledge<br>• Gain a deeper understanding of the read-aloud text<br>• Increase the number of high-quality books in the home<br>• Foster a positive experience with literacy and a greater feeling of well-being | **Students**<br>• Expand access to books featuring a variety of settings, characters, and plots<br>• Connect with adults who represent the community and receive literacy-focused mentorship<br>• Increased vocabulary and comprehension skills<br>• Increased engagement during literacy activities<br>• Increased access to community-reflective texts<br>• Increased positive attitudes toward reading<br><br>**Facilitators/Schools**<br>• Engage with literacy-focused initiatives<br>• Increase communication between school and home<br>• Increased family communication<br>• Strengthened literacy programming implementation<br><br>**Communities/Mentors**<br>• Become more involved with the schools<br>• Have more frequent and tangible opportunities to participate in literacy events<br><br>**Families**<br>• Greater understanding of how to support their students' literacy development<br>• Increased confidence supporting literacy at home<br>• Increased frequency of literacy-related discussions | **Students**<br>• Improved reading achievement<br>• Increased school attendance<br>• Stronger literacy identity and well-being<br><br>**Facilitators/Schools**<br>• See a rise in positive classroom behaviors<br><br>**Communities/Mentors**<br>• Increase participation in partnership with schools and families<br>• Ongoing mentor involvement<br>• Strengthened school-community collaboration<br><br>**Families**<br>• Foster a positive perception of literacy<br>• Sustained home literacy routines<br>• Positive perception of literacy and school partnership |

# A Deeper Dive into the Components of R.E.A.L.

## Mentorship

Research indicates that academic mentoring relationships can foster children's cognitive, social, behavioral, and academic growth (Rhodes, 2005). When mentors are well prepared, they can also model effective literacy behaviors, such as fluent, engaged reading and monitoring comprehension, or offer direct tutoring support. Additionally, the What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guide highlights modeling as a proven approach for teaching and reinforcing foundational reading skills (Foorman et al., 2016).

Study results show that literacy mentorship programs can have a particularly powerful impact on children's reading and language outcomes (Fives et al., 2013; Ritter et al., 2006; LaVenia & Burgoon, 2019). In one specific study, volunteers visited classrooms and read to students for an hour. Students who demonstrated higher levels of engagement reported greater reading enjoyment and showed stronger fluency gains (Miller et al., 2011).

Findings from a randomized evaluation of the Check & Connect mentoring program further demonstrate mentoring's impact on attendance. In this study, students in Grades 5–7 who participated in the program showed measurable reductions in absences compared with their non-participating peers, indicating that structured, long-term mentoring can be an effective strategy for addressing chronic absenteeism (Christenson et al., 2015). Researchers suggest that this reduction may be attributable to the developmental benefits of building meaningful relationships with a non-familial adult, particularly for students who might not otherwise receive similar guidance (Guryan et al., 2021).

The R.E.A.L. program builds on this research by providing mentors with book-specific guides that use before, during, and after read-alouds to promote engagement and deepen children's comprehension. These supports include 1) introductory content to build background knowledge, 2) guided questions for use during reading, and 3) discussion prompts to deepen understanding after the read-aloud. In addition, the Mentor Success Guide outlines resources for setting expectations and building genuine mentoring relationships.

While planning is essential, research shows that effective implementation is an even stronger driver of mentoring success (Luo & Stoeger, 2023). The Mentor Success Guide supports this transition by outlining practical steps and strategies that promote a structured and authentic experience for both mentors and students. For example, mentors are encouraged to practice pronunciations of unfamiliar words in advance and use the read-aloud as an opportunity to build relationships with students.

## Family Engagement

Family engagement is a collaborative process through which educators and caregivers partner to support children's learning (Office of Head Start, 2025). According to the U.S. Department of Education, children spend less than 20% of their time in school, with most of the remaining time spent with family or in the community. As a result, parents and the home environment play a major role in children's academic development. Research has also demonstrated that higher levels of family engagement are associated with better student outcomes. Studies show that high levels of family engagement are associated with:

**Increased student achievement:**

- Jeynes' (2005) meta-analysis of 77 studies involving more than 300,000 students found that parental involvement is consistently linked to meaningful academic gains across grade levels. Likewise, Park and Holloway (2017) reported that all three forms of school-based involvement they examined—private-good, public-good, and parent networking—were associated with significant improvements in students' math achievement, with private-good involvement also predicting advances in reading performance.

**Improved attendance and behavior:**

- Family-school engagement has been shown to support students' overall development, including increases in helpful, cooperative behaviors and decreases in disruptive actions, difficulties with concentration, and challenges in managing reactions across both elementary and middle school settings (Smith et al., 2019). Schools that implemented structured school-family-community partnership programs experienced an average attendance gain of 0.5%, whereas comparison schools without such initiatives saw attendance rates decline (Sheldon, 2007). Longitudinal research also indicates that increases in parental involvement over time predict reductions in children's problem behaviors and corresponding improvements in interpersonal skills during the elementary years, even when academic achievement remains unchanged (El Nokali et al., 2010).

**Improved interpersonal and behavioral skills:**

- A comprehensive meta-analysis of family-school interventions showed meaningful gains in children's development, including moderate improvements in behavioral competence ($d$ = .332) and mental health ($d$ = .391), with especially strong positive effects for African American students (Sheridan et al., 2019). Family-school engagement initiatives have also been shown to enhance the quality of parent–teacher communication (ẟ = .34) and strengthen relationships between families and educators, both of which are associated with improved well-being and behavior among children (Smith et al., 2020). Additionally, when parents participated in TIPS (Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork) interactive homework activities, students reported greater family involvement, completed more assignments, and earned higher science grades—demonstrating stronger family-student collaboration and increased academic support at home (Van Voorhis et al., 2013).

**Increased graduation rates:**

- Parents' educational expectations have been shown to play a substantial role in student outcomes, serving as a significant predictor of high school completion and postsecondary enrollment—even for students who ultimately pursued a GED (Ross, 2016). Ross also found that parents' participation in school activities was positively associated with both high school graduation and college attendance, independent of demographic characteristics. Parental involvement in students' academic work similarly predicts stronger outcomes for students who are academically at risk; for low-achieving high school students, such involvement is a powerful indicator of high school graduation (Nguyen et al., 2022). Both students and parents recognize this engagement as essential to academic progress, and higher levels of parental participation are associated with substantially reduced dropout risk—even among populations most vulnerable to school disengagement.

To foster meaningful family engagement, educators can begin by cultivating strong, positive relationships with families and then identify authentic ways to involve them in the educational process. Moody and Matthews (2022) highlight the importance of fostering a more connected and effective partnership between school and home learning environments by creating "an ecology where both generic and home literacy practices are valued" (p. 123). In their model, teachers are empowered to:

- Recognize and value the literacy practices of multilingual families
- Involve families in program creation
- Design reading activities that are both meaningful and effective

Researchers have shown that when caregivers and children share books, the quality of their interactions improves over time, leading to more frequent conversation and deeper caregiver insight into children's learning (Fletcher & Reese, 2005). However, these interactions are limited or nonexistent when families lack access to books. In contrast, children in homes with more extensive home libraries read more, have higher-level reading skills, and attain more years of education than those with access to fewer books, even after controlling for parental education level (Crook, 1997; de Graaf et al., 2000; Evans et al., 2010; Georg, 2004; Musengamana, 2023; Park, 2008; Peterson, 2025). R.E.A.L. puts these research findings into action by expanding home libraries in ways that reflect children's lived experiences and interests, while strengthening family involvement in learning.

In addition to expanding home libraries, the R.E.A.L. program promotes, encourages, and facilitates family engagement. This program does this by providing an extensive collection of Family Guides (one for each text) in both English and Spanish. These guides include questions and prompts designed to help families start and sustain meaningful conversations about the text, deepen comprehension, make personal connections, and enrich communication. For example, in the Family Guide accompanying the astronomy-themed book *The Sun Is Kind of a Big Deal*, there are activities that encourage the child and family to look at the sky and draw the moon together each night, map out the world's time zones, practice shadow drawing, and calculate their ages on different planets. These guides are specifically designed for families to deepen comprehension, build personal connections to the text, and enrich communication, all while encouraging quality family interaction.

## Literacy Skills

Literacy—the ability to read, write, and comprehend—is a formidable linchpin to school, work, and life success (UNESCO, 2025). Numerous studies demonstrate that early reading achievement is strongly associated with high school completion, college attendance, increased earnings, and better health:

- Kindergarten reading scores predict later earnings, higher education attainment, home ownership, and retirement outcomes (Chetty et al., 2011).
- Children who do not read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school by age 19 than their proficient peers (Hernandez, 2011).
- Individuals with lower literacy rates are less likely to receive regular preventative healthcare (Bennett et al., 2009).
- Adults who read books live almost 23 months longer than nonliterate adults (Bavishi et al., 2016).

Scarborough's Reading Rope (2001) is a widely recognized model that illustrates the complex and interconnected skills required for proficient reading. The model consists of two main strands: word recognition and language comprehension. The language comprehension strand includes background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge.

Interactive read-alouds are an evidence-based instructional strategy that directly supports the development of language comprehension components. According to Johnston (2016, p. 40), an interactive read-aloud is a "systematic approach to reading aloud where the teacher models vocabulary development, reading fluency, and comprehension strategies, and requires the students to interact and become participants in their own learning."

Research shows that interactive read-alouds:

- Build background knowledge by introducing students to new concepts and contexts before reading (Kaefer, 2020).
- Enhance vocabulary acquisition through exposure to rich, varied language that students may not encounter in everyday conversation (Manyak et al., 2020).
- Support understanding of language structures by modeling complex syntax and semantics (Garraffa et al., 2023).
- Foster verbal reasoning by encouraging students to make inferences, predictions, and connections (Moody et al., 2018).
- Develop literacy knowledge by exposing students to varied genres, text structures, and narrative techniques (Kast, Black & Wright, 2023).

According to Ness (2023), reading aloud more complex texts gives students access to advanced vocabulary and illustrates how syntax and semantics work together to convey meaning. This aligns directly with Scarborough's (2001) emphasis on the importance of language comprehension in skilled reading.

Applying metacognitive strategies to reading instruction has been shown to significantly improve student outcomes. According to Kuhn (2000), metacognition involves becoming aware of one's own beliefs and understanding how knowledge is acquired, as well as the ability to strategically apply thinking processes when engaging with new information. In practice, this involves building comprehension and background knowledge and teaching students how to apply these skills strategically to their reading. Research has shown that applying these strategies to classroom literacy instruction improves vocabulary and comprehension (Boulware-Gooden et al., 2007).

Despite its importance, many students continue to leave elementary school without strong reading skills (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2022). Concerns about low literacy rates in the United States have persisted for more than a decade, and the urgency to address them has intensified as long-standing structural challenges have become more visible. Peer-reviewed research identifies several systemic contributors to low literacy, including limited access to age-appropriate books and learning materials, overcrowded classrooms, shortages of trained teachers, and resource-constrained school environments (Santillan, 2023; Kilag et al., 2024). Socioeconomic barriers—such as poverty, low parental education levels, and reduced home literacy support—further restrict opportunities for children to develop strong literacy foundations, reinforcing intergenerational patterns of low literacy (Blanchard, 2023). Additional peer-reviewed studies highlight cultural and linguistic factors, including multilingual learning environments, limited mother-tongue instruction, and community attitudes toward education, which disproportionately affect marginalized and underserved communities and contribute to persistent reading gaps (William et al., 2025).

This context underscores the importance of providing high-quality literacy instruction and learning opportunities to support short- and long-term success. Effective reading instruction requires the systematic and explicit teaching of both code-based skills such as phonics knowledge and decoding, and meaning-focused skills, including content knowledge, literacy understanding, vocabulary, and language structure (NRP, 2000). It also involves processes that connect these areas, like print concepts and fluency, along with the development of self-regulation (Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Connor, 2019). Beyond this traditional type of instruction, research has also shown that expanding access to books at home (Evans et al., 2010) and guiding students through focused, high-quality discussions of text (Shanahan et al., 2010) can lead to better educational outcomes.

The multiple components that make up R.E.A.L. support student development across a wide range of literacy skills:

- Mentor Guides and Student Guides promote close reading of a text by introducing the book and relevant strategies before the read-aloud begins. The guides also provide information about a book's history and topic or theme for context, information to build background knowledge necessary for understanding the book, questions that deepen comprehension (used during and after the reading), and prompts that encourage text-to-self connections, helping students make meaning of a text and extend learning. These instructional practices align with many components, including the "close reading approach" described by Fisher and Frey (2012), which promotes critical thinking skills and a deep understanding of the text.
- The R.E.A.L. Family Guides also support literacy skills by encouraging caregivers and readers to apply strategies and concepts they have learned from the text to personal experiences. This direct application not only builds deeper vocabulary and comprehension skills but also develops an awareness of metacognition and self-regulation strategies (Urban, 2023).

## Engagement and Motivation

The role of joy in reading is well-documented in literacy research (Cubillos & Troncoso, 2025; Gao & Chen, 2025; Lee et al., 2021). Joy can be both the outcome and underlying force driving the motivation to read and a desire to engage with the text. When intentionally cultivated, this dynamic helps explain why both adults and children reach for books for enjoyment. Children who read for pleasure and demonstrate strong reading motivation perform significantly better academically than peers who rarely read (Wilhelm, 2016). Research further suggests that experiencing joy in reading can strengthen both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Gao & Chen, 2025; Lee et al., 2021).

Intrinsic motivation to read develops through the positive emotions and rewarding experiences that occur while interacting with text, a relationship supported by research demonstrating that enjoyment, interest, and engagement in story-based reading contexts significantly strengthen intrinsic motivation (Printer, 2023). These experiences may arise from the story itself, the sense of accomplishment that comes with finishing a book, or the social enjoyment that emerges when discussing plot points or exploring new perspectives with others—patterns consistent with research showing that social and emotional dimensions meaningfully contribute to motivation and reading engagement (Huang & Reynolds, 2021).

Extrinsic motivation, meanwhile, can be shaped by social factors—such as wanting to identify as a reader or affiliate with a particular group—and by tangible rewards embedded in evaluation structures, which aligns with evidence showing that external incentives and contextual pressures significantly influence extrinsic motivation (van der Sande et al., 2023). When schools, families, and communities intentionally collaborate to provide rich reading opportunities, they help ensure that both intrinsic and extrinsic forms of motivation are supported across learning environments, a principle reinforced by meta-analytic findings demonstrating the importance of sustained, interest-driven, and socially grounded reading interventions (van der Sande et al., 2023).

In addition to motivation, genuine engagement is essential for cultivating lasting joy in reading. Students need access to books they can read and understand, spark their curiosity, create connections to what they find familiar, and introduce them to new and exciting people, places, or ideas. Research has identified several ways to promote literacy engagement:

- Using effective teaching strategies, especially with children who are learning to read, is critical for creating engaged readers. This is because students who feel successful as readers are most likely to engage with text (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).
- Allowing students to select what they want to read, as well as providing them with books that align to their areas of interest and reading ability, prompts greater engagement and autonomy (Clark & Rumbold, 2006).
- Promoting and modeling reading for pleasure in the home and classroom encourages children to do the same (Baker & Scher, 2002). Children form beliefs and interests from watching adults. Having good examples of engaged readers around them helps cultivate their own positive relationship with books.

Engagement strategies serve as a pathway to a positive relationship with literacy. Engagement has larger benefits as well. Students who are actively engaged in learning demonstrate better attendance, higher college and career readiness, stronger graduation rates, and lower dropout rates (Rumberger et al., 2017). Connecting children to people with varied backgrounds, broad perspectives, and interesting careers encourages them to develop a more representative worldview (Kite & Clark, 2022). When this is done in tandem with literacy engagement, as with the R.E.A.L. mentors, children also benefit from seeing how books and a positive relationship with literacy can be far-reaching and unifying into adulthood. These experiences allow students to associate literacy with joy, strengthening motivation and engagement. This association becomes increasingly important in higher grades, where text serves as the primary vehicle for acquiring new knowledge.

## Access and Belonging

In *Unearthing Joy*, Gholdy Muhammad states that access and belonging "is teaching and learning that is centered on justice, liberation, truth, and freedom" (Muhammad, 2022, p. 33). This framing is particularly relevant for two reasons: first, proficiency in reading is widely regarded as a civil right; and second, literature serves as a platform for access to rich materials, resources, and perspectives. In essence, learning to read and the act of reading are both historically and academically tied to opportunity.

For children, access to new learning and experiences through literacy can be promoted in several ways. Instruction can be delivered in a way that intentionally celebrates every child's heritage and individuality. Literacy instruction also creates opportunities for students to explore their own identities while developing understanding of others. Research also shows that using various reading activities increases background knowledge and reading outcomes for students (Guthrie, 2008; Worthy & Roser, 2010).

Text and literacy can expand access and foster a sense of connection by exposing readers to experiences and perspectives beyond those encountered in daily life. At the same time, literature can nurture a sense of belonging within the classroom. Literature supports identity development by providing positive representations and affirmation (Heineke, 2023). In turn, literature can also help children understand and appreciate other perspectives, which can reduce negative stereotypes (Al-Hazza & Bucher, 2008). Over time, positive identity and a sense of belonging have also been associated with higher academic motivation and resilience (Butler-Barnes et al., 2018).

Through text selection alone, R.E.A.L. can promote a range of perspectives and an increased awareness by using a varied collection of books for the read-aloud. Allowing children to then take these books home expands their impact further, making a wide range of stories and perspectives available to the whole family. Titles are curated to meet developmental needs from preschool through proficient readers, ensuring that texts promote belonging in age-appropriate and meaningful ways. The result of this work is a list of titles that promote belonging in a way that is relevant for children, regardless of age.

## Well-Being

The classroom setting provides a unique opportunity to nurture the interpersonal, behavioral, and mental well-being of children through literacy. This can be done by providing instruction and leadership rooted in a deep understanding of the biological and physiological processes that are related to learning and development (Gotlieb et al., 2022).

A brief by the Center for Responsive Schools (2020) identifies language instruction as a key area for improving interpersonal, behavioral, and mental well-being. Dresser (2013) emphasizes that focusing solely on cognitive strategies in language arts instruction overlooks a critical component, as students' well-being and individual needs must also be addressed to support meaningful comprehension. Building on this idea, Schlund (2019) noted that literacy offers meaningful opportunities for individuals to explore how their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are connected, to consider different perspectives, and to use language and writing as tools for navigating social interactions and forming relationships.

CASEL (2020) has operationalized these sentiments by identifying five key areas that represent interpersonal and behavioral competencies. Students must build skills in each of these categories, as well as general literacy ability, to fully comprehend and connect with text:

1. **Self-awareness:** The ability to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.
2. **Self-management:** The ability to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations.
3. **Social awareness:** The ability to understand the perspectives of others, including those from various backgrounds and contexts.
4. **Relationship skills:** The ability to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with various individuals and groups.
5. **Responsible decision-making:** Making caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and interpersonal interactions across various situations.

R.E.A.L. promotes well-being, interpersonal skills, and behavioral competency by providing meaningful opportunities for children to connect with members of their community. This approach provides a meaningful shift in classroom routine while allowing students to develop interpersonal skills through literacy-modeling and authentic conversations with the volunteer mentors. The thoughtfully curated library of texts included in R.E.A.L. further supports well-being, offering a wide variety that ensures every child feels represented and included. In addition, the Mentor Guides and Family Guides provide numerous activities and opportunities for personal interactions, behavioral development, and text-to-self connections.

# Conclusion

R.E.A.L. provides a structured, research-based framework that empowers adults to model positive interactions with text and build meaningful mentorship relationships that support children's literacy growth. Through guided read-alouds and structured discussions, children deepen comprehension and strengthen vocabulary. Purposeful rereading of take-home books builds confidence and reinforces key skills. High-quality, diverse texts and Mentor Guides equip adults to introduce new ideas and affirm students' identities. These resources help create supportive environments where children feel seen, valued, and motivated. The program sends books home and provides Family Guides to expand access to home libraries and strengthen literacy engagement across school and home. Together, these elements foster joy in reading, nurture belonging and well-being, and build lasting, positive partnerships with literacy for both children and the adults who support them.

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