

## The SEL Interactive Read Aloud Collection

### Tulare County Office of Education

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#### Rulers of the Playground by Joseph Kuefler

Self-Awareness (understanding personal desires, leadership, and fairness)

Self-Management (handling emotions like frustration, competition, and fairness)

Social Awareness (understanding fairness, inclusion, and others' feelings)

Relationship Skills (collaborating, resolving conflicts, and making friendships stronger)

Responsible Decision-Making (making fair choices and treating others with respect)

##### Background

*Rulers of the Playground* is a playful yet insightful story about two children, Jonah and Lennox, who both try to take control of the playground. At first, their leadership makes them feel powerful, but soon they realize that ruling over others doesn't make them happy. When their friends stop playing with them, they must learn that the best way to be a leader is through kindness, fairness, and teamwork. The book explores themes of power, cooperation, and friendship, making it a great way to discuss playground dynamics and conflict resolution.

##### Before You Read

Look at the cover—what do you notice about the playground? What do you think “rulers” means in this story?

What makes someone a good leader? What do good leaders do?

Have you ever been in charge of something? How did it feel?

What happens when someone tries to control everything? How do others feel?

Why is it important to treat others fairly when playing?

##### While You Read

##### Guiding Questions

(Self-Awareness) Why does Jonah want to be the ruler of the playground? What does he think will happen?

(Social Awareness) How do the other kids react when Jonah takes control? Why do they listen to him?

(Self-Management) How does Jonah feel when Lennox challenges him? Have you ever felt competitive like that?

(Relationship Skills) What happens to the other kids when Jonah and Lennox both

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	<p>want to be in charge? How do their actions affect others?</p> <p>(Responsible Decision-Making) Why do the other kids stop playing with Jonah and Lennox? How do you think that makes them feel?</p> <p>(Self-Awareness) How does Jonah react when he realizes he doesn't have any friends left? What does this teach us about leadership?</p> <p>(Social Awareness) What do Jonah and Lennox learn about being a leader? How do their actions change?</p> <p>(Relationship Skills) What does Jonah do to make things right? How do the other kids respond?</p> <p>(Self-Management &amp; Responsible Decision-Making) What is the difference between bossing people around and leading with kindness?</p> <p>(Social Awareness &amp; Relationship Skills) What lesson does this book teach us about playing fairly and including others?</p>
After Reading	<p><b>K-2 Activity: "What Makes a Good Leader?" Chart</b></p> <p>Objective: Students will identify leadership traits and practice positive leadership.</p> <p>Activity Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discussion: Ask, "What makes a good leader? What makes a bossy leader?"</li> <li>2. Chart Activity: Draw two columns labeled Good Leaders and Bossy Leaders. As a class, sort examples of leadership behavior into the right columns.</li> <li>3. Role-Playing: Give students simple playground scenarios (e.g., deciding who goes first, choosing teams) and have them act out good leadership behaviors.</li> <li>4. Reflection: Ask, "How can we be good leaders on the playground?"</li> </ol> <p><b>3-5 Activity: "Fair Play" Conflict Resolution Writing</b></p> <p>Objective: Students will reflect on playground conflicts and brainstorm fair solutions.</p> <p>Activity Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discussion: Ask, "Have you ever seen a disagreement on the playground? What was it about?"</li> <li>2. Writing Prompt: "Write about a time when you or someone else wanted to be in charge. What happened? What could have been done differently?"</li> </ol>

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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3. Partner Discussion: Students share their ideas with a partner and discuss better ways to solve playground conflicts.</li><li>4. Class Agreement: As a class, create a Fair Play Agreement with rules for sharing, taking turns, and including others. Post it in the classroom.</li></ol>
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