

FREE EDUCATOR & LIBRARIAN GUIDE

FLICKER AND THE BELEAF TREE



A gentle read-aloud for conversations about feelings, belonging, communication, empathy, and support.

Recommended for ages 3–8 • Preschool–Grade 2 • Read-aloud, library storytime, classroom & small-group use

Created for educators who want a story to open a conversation.

By Will Barrios | Tatro Toys

This guide uses the CASEL 5 as a reflection framework. Flicker and the Beleaf Tree is not presented as a CASEL-approved or evidence-based SEL program; rather, the story and activities can support conversations that connect naturally to these widely used competency areas.

ABOUT THE STORY

Somewhere beyond the noise of the world stands the Beleaf Tree, where each glowing leaf holds a worry, a hope, or a beleaf of a child somewhere in the world. When a leaf trembles, Flicker follows its call.

In this first story, Flicker reaches a young child who is struggling with the noise, pace, and demands of school. Flicker does not arrive to make the hard feeling disappear. Instead, the story makes space for listening, patience, rest, communication, and support from caring adults.

Why this book can work in learning spaces

- It gives children language and imagery for talking about feelings that may be hard to explain.
- It invites perspective-taking: What might another person be experiencing that we cannot immediately see?
- It models help-seeking and supportive relationships without presenting one universal solution.
- It includes family and human difference as a natural part of the story world rather than as a separate lesson.
- Its fantasy framework lets children approach real emotions at a comfortable distance.

Suggested uses

- Whole-class read-aloud or library storytime
- Morning meeting or community circle
- Small-group reflection
- A bridge into writing, drawing, or feelings vocabulary
- A companion to schoolwide conversations about belonging and supportive relationships

THEMES TO EXPLORE

THEME	A QUESTION TO HOLD
BELONGING	What helps a child feel welcomed, valued, and part of a community?
COMMUNICATION	How can we tell someone what we need when the words are difficult to find?
OVERWHELM	What can a busy or demanding environment feel like from another person's point of view?
EMPATHY	How do we notice, listen, and respond when someone is having a hard day?
FAMILY DIVERSITY	Families can look different from one another while sharing care, connection, and love.
SUPPORT & AGENCY	Asking for help and taking a small next step can both be forms of strength.

Educator note

Keep discussion invitational. Children should be able to talk about the character, invent an example, draw, or pass. The goal is not to require personal disclosure. A Beleaf can be imaginary, about a character, or about something a child chooses to share.

BEFORE READING

Use two or three questions—not all of them. The aim is curiosity.

- The title uses the made-up word “Beleaf.” What do you think a Beleaf might be?
- Look at the cover. What do you notice about Flicker? What kind of character do you think he might be?
- What are some ways our bodies or faces can tell us we are having a big feeling?
- Can two people be in the same place and experience it differently? What might make that happen?
- What does it mean to really listen to someone?
- Who are some people at school, at home, or in the community who can help when something feels difficult?
- What helps a classroom, library, team, or family feel like a place where people belong?

During Reading: pause points

- When a leaf trembles: What do you predict Flicker will do?
- When the child is overwhelmed: What clues help us understand what this moment feels like for him?
- When adults respond: What do you notice about the way they listen or help?
- Near the ending: Has the problem vanished, or has something else changed?

Read for emotional understanding first. Vocabulary, craft, and comprehension can follow.

AFTER READING: DISCUSSION

- Why do you think the Beleaf Tree noticed this child?
- What did Flicker do that helped? What did he not do?
- What is the difference between fixing someone's problem and supporting them through it?
- Which moments showed that the child was being listened to?
- How did the illustrations help you understand what the child was feeling?
- Why might asking for help be difficult sometimes?
- What could a friend say or do when someone seems overwhelmed?
- What can adults do to make it easier for children to communicate what they need?
- How are the people and families in the story alike? How are they different?
- What do you think the story means when it suggests that a hard day does not take away your light?
- If another leaf trembled tomorrow, what kind of story might it hold?

For younger readers

Choose concrete prompts: “How does he feel?” “Who helps?” “What would you tell Flicker?” Invite pointing, drawing, acting, or one-word answers.

For older readers

Push toward perspective and evidence: “What makes you think that?” “Which illustration or moment supports your idea?” “What could the adults have misunderstood if they had not listened?”

ACTIVITY: WHAT WOULD YOU TELL THE BELEAF TREE?

This low-prep reflection invites children to translate a feeling, hope, question, or idea into words or pictures. It can be completed privately, shared voluntarily, or used entirely through fictional examples.

Materials

- Heart-shaped paper leaves or plain paper
- Pencils, crayons, or markers
- Optional envelope, basket, or classroom tree

Prompt

If the Beleaf Tree had a leaf for you today, what might your leaf hold?

Offer choices

- A worry I want someone to understand...
- Something I hope for...
- Something I am proud of...
- Something I wish people knew...
- Something that helps me feel calm or supported...
- A Beleaf for a made-up character who needs Flicker...

Facilitation guidance

- Never require a child to read a personal leaf aloud.
- Let students use a fictional character if personal reflection feels too exposed.
- Explain before beginning how you will handle a message that suggests a child needs help or support; follow your school or library safeguarding policies.
- Respond with curiosity and care rather than promising secrecy.
- For public displays, use only content children have chosen to make public.

ACTIVITY: BUILD A CLASSROOM BELEAF TREE

Turn the story's central image into an ongoing community ritual—without turning the tree into a public feelings board.

Set up

- Create a simple tree trunk and branches on a bulletin board, wall, poster, or library display.
- Prepare heart-shaped leaves in a basket nearby.
- Choose a rotating prompt connected to classroom or library life.
- Decide whether leaves are public, private, or a mix—and tell children clearly before they write.
- Revisit selected public leaves during community circles or storytime conversations.

Prompt ideas

- A way someone helped me belong this week...
- A small act of kindness I noticed...
- Something I learned about another point of view...
- One way I can ask for help...
- Something our class can do to help everyone feel included...

Extension: From leaf to action

Invite the group to choose one non-private theme—such as welcoming a new student, listening better, or making quiet space available—and identify one realistic action the community can take.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING CONNECTIONS

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CASEL AREA	CONNECTION	TRY THIS
SELF-AWARENESS	Naming feelings; noticing internal signals; connecting feelings, thoughts, and needs.	Name or draw what a Beleaf might hold.
SELF-MANAGEMENT	Considering strategies for navigating stress or overwhelm and identifying supports.	Discuss what can make a hard moment feel more manageable.
SOCIAL AWARENESS	Perspective-taking, empathy, compassion, and recognizing that people experience the same setting differently.	Use illustration clues to infer another character's experience.
RELATIONSHIP SKILLS	Listening, communicating, asking for help, offering support, and collaborative problem-solving.	Compare “fixing” with listening and supporting.
RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING	Considering caring, constructive responses and consequences for individual and community well-being.	Choose one action that could make the classroom more supportive.

WRITE, DRAW & IMAGINE

Choose one prompt after reading. Children may write, draw, dictate, or create a comic.

Draw a new Beleaf. What does it hold? What color does it glow? What made it begin to tremble?

Write Flicker a note. Tell him something a child might want a good listener to know.

Create Flicker's next visit. Who needs support? What does Flicker notice? What small thing changes?

Design a belonging place. Draw a classroom, library, home, or imaginary place where everyone feels welcome. Label what makes it feel that way.

Show two perspectives. Draw the same busy place from two characters' points of view.

Optional ELA extension

- Character: What do Flicker's choices tell us about him?
- Setting: How does the visual environment change the emotional tone?
- Inference: What can we understand even when a character does not say it directly?
- Point of view: How might another character tell the same moment?
- Theme: What does the story suggest about belonging, support, or hard days?

Meet Flicker & Friends

Flicker & Friends is a story world built around a simple idea: children do not always need someone to fix the problem. Sometimes they need someone to notice, listen, and stay.

Flicker — a curious fox who follows the Beleaf Tree when someone needs support.

Luma — a friend who leads with empathy.

Wink — a quick-minded friend who loves a plan.

Bloop — a friend who believes in small, manageable steps.

Noodle — a thoughtful friend who takes time to think deeply.

Across the world, different characters can help children explore different ways of thinking, feeling, communicating, and responding. The Beleaf Tree connects the stories: each leaf holds something that matters to a child.

The magic opens the door. The conversation belongs to the child.

A note on inclusion

Use the book as an invitation to notice many kinds of families and experiences without asking individual children to explain, defend, or represent an identity. Let differences be ordinary, and keep the focus on respect, curiosity, and belonging.

AUTHOR VISITS & BOOK INFORMATION

Bring Flicker into your classroom, school, or library

Author and creator Will Barrios can tailor a session around storytime, creativity, belonging, the making of Flicker, or the Beleaf Tree activity. Programs can be designed for young readers, family audiences, or educator/librarian groups.

- Interactive read-aloud + Q&A
- Flicker & Friends creativity session
- Beleaf Tree reflection activity
- Behind-the-book conversation for educators/librarians
- Virtual inquiries only, in-person sessions are unavailable at this time.

Book details

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Author	Will Barrios
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Hardcover ISBN	979-8-9950074-2-5
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Price	Please see Tatro Toys or your preferred bookseller for current pricing.
Ordering	Search by title, author, or ISBN through your preferred bookseller or library purchasing channel.
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REFERENCES & RESOURCES

The educational discussion prompts, activities, and social-emotional learning connections in this guide were informed by the following resources. *Flicker and the Beleaf Tree* and this Educator & Librarian Guide are independently created resources and are not affiliated with, endorsed by, or certified by CASEL.

Social & Emotional Learning

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Book & Publisher Information

Barrios, Will. (2026). *Flicker and the Beleaf Tree*. Tatro Toys.

Tatro Toys. *Flicker and the Beleaf Tree* and *Flicker & Friends* publisher materials, character information, and educational resources.

About the CASEL Connections in This Guide

CASEL identifies five broad, interrelated areas of social and emotional competence: **self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making**. These competencies can be developed and applied across classrooms, schools, homes, and communities.

The activities and discussion questions in this guide have been independently developed to create opportunities for reflection and conversation related to these areas. References to the CASEL 5 are intended to help educators identify potential connections between the story and established social-emotional learning concepts.

No endorsement or affiliation is implied. *Flicker and the Beleaf Tree*, *Flicker & Friends*, Tatro Toys, and this Educator & Librarian Guide are not CASEL programs and have not been evaluated, certified, or endorsed by CASEL.