



## **How Thomas the Tank Engine is Teaching Sam**

One of my greatest pleasures is the time I spend playing with my grandsons. There's so much happening during our playtime. My oldest grandson Sam, age three, loves trains and cars. He tells me stories about where the trains are going and what is happening during the journey. Sometimes there are the inevitable crashes between trains or a bridge that collapses. Sam is learning through his play with what he enjoys the most, cars and trains. His imagination is active and exciting. He is expanding his literacy skills as he tells me his exciting stories. Each train has a name and a unique personality. And there are life lessons that each train teaches us. Sam works diligently to build intricate bridges and track formations. These tasks require small motor coordination skills that he will use later in writing and on a computer keyboard. Sometimes he sorts his vast car collection by size or colors or categories (Thomas trains, monster cars, Nascars). Sorting and classification is another important skill he will need.

But most of all this playtime provides Sam and I an opportunity to build a strong relationship. Through the relationships that Sam will build with me and others in his life he will develop the self-confidence, and social skills that will provide a strong foundation for success in later life.