

Literacy

Toolkit and User Guide



21ST
CCLC **NTAC**
National Technical Assistance Center

For out-of-school time and summer learning programs



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Literacy Toolkit User Guide

The Literacy Toolkit consists of this user guide and the 24 tools described and included herein. The tools were developed for 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) programs, but any out-of-school time (OST) program can use them.

How to Access the Tools

The tools are available on the 21st CCLC National Technical Assistance Center (NTAC) website in the Literacy Toolkit, which you can download as a zip file. The zip file includes (1) a PDF version of the user guide and toolkit and (2) a Microsoft Word version of each tool for easy customization.

Ways to Use the Tools

To support professional development:

- Read the tools to increase your understanding of a topic or strategy.
- Note ideas you'd like to put into practice or learn more about.
- Use the tools during staff training sessions as discussion starters or in small-group activities such as think-pair-share.

To help your program implement or improve a practice:

- Use the tools to assess and reflect on what you already know and do — and what you need to know and do — to implement or improve a practice.
- Use them during a planning or strategy session to inform decisions about how to adjust current practices or implement new ones.
- Share bite-size ideas from the tools in emails, text messages, or staff meetings to help program staff implement a new strategy or practice.
- Customize the tools to include information, examples, or guidance specific to your program.

To engage and inspire stakeholders:

- Share a tool (or ideas from a tool) with school-day staff, community leaders, partners, volunteers, families, or students to help them understand a program initiative or to inspire them to get involved.
- Share excerpts or ideas in your newsletter and in emails, social media posts, and other communications with stakeholders.

What's In This Guide

- The full set of tools and ways to use them
- Tips and strategies to support literacy learning and learning recovery in OST programs

Get Resources for Your Out-of-School Time Program

Check the [21st CCLC NTAC website](#) for professional learning opportunities and resources on this and other topics. To stay updated as new content is added:

- Subscribe to our newsletter. Follow us on social media.



How to Customize a Tool

You may customize the Microsoft Word version of any tool to meet your needs.

Tips for customizing tools:

- If you plan to print multiple copies for distribution, you may print the tool in black and white to avoid the cost of color printing.
- If you delete or replace any of the text or graphics, you may need to adjust the formatting or page breaks.
- If you add or revise content, please replace the text box at the end with the following statement:

Note: Parts of this document are based on information in the Literacy Toolkit, a resource developed by the Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) National Technical Assistance Center (NTAC). The toolkit is in the public domain and is available at 21stcclcntac.org.

Keep reading to learn why and how to support students' literacy development and learning recovery in your out-of-school time program. Go to page 5 for the tool titles and descriptions.

Literacy and Its Importance to Student Success

Literacy includes speaking, listening, reading, and writing — the essential communication skills students need to succeed in school and in life. Students typically build fundamental literacy skills in the early grades. Around fourth grade, the focus shifts to using those skills to learn about school subjects such as math, science, social studies, and the arts and to navigate everyday life.

Tips for Out-of-School Time Programs

[Research](#) indicates that OST literacy activities benefit students most when staff:

- **Use a variety of engaging texts to help students learn and practice literacy skills.** Select fiction and nonfiction picture books, graphic novels, newspapers, magazines, and other types of texts that align with students' interests, cultures, and skill levels. Provide opportunities for students to learn and practice the “big five” components of early literacy: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension.
- **Work with the school day to identify grade-level literacy standards, assess student needs, and define learning goals.** The school can help you understand what students are learning in their classes and identify specific needs to help you plan targeted academic support (like homework help and tutoring) and enrichment activities.
- **Incorporate real-world activities.** When students play games, write and tell stories, make recipes, or follow a map, they experience literacy as something that's useful and meaningful to them rather than just “a school requirement.”

Fourth grade usually marks the shift from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.”



- **Consider student choice, grade level, age, and skills.** Consult with students, families, teachers, and librarians to plan fun literacy activities and to select materials that match student interests and skill levels.
- **Assess student progress.** Use informal assessment tools like observations and student portfolios to help identify student strengths and areas for improvement. Also, examine school and program data on student attendance, behavior, and academic performance, and use your findings to set goals and priorities.
- **Provide training for program staff.** Staff members need a common understanding of why and how to support students' literacy development. They also need to learn and practice strategies for integrating literacy into enrichment activities and academic supports. Consider engaging a district reading specialist or school-day teacher to help provide ongoing training.

Here are 10 steps for implementing high-quality literacy activities in OST programs:

- **Build a program team** to help you strategically plan literacy initiatives and identify school and community resources to support implementation.
- **Conduct a needs assessment** to identify the literacy needs of the students and families your program serves. For example, this assessment can help you identify the specific needs of English learners and students who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or Section 504 plans that specify certain supports for reading, writing, speaking, and/or listening.
- **Develop SMART goals** based on the results of your needs assessment. SMART goals are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound. You can have program-level and activity-level SMART goals.
- **Plan logistics** (budget, space, time, materials, and staff training) to support your program's literacy goals.
- **Intentionally design activities** based on SMART goals and student interests.
- **Intentionally recruit students** to ensure that those who could most benefit from your program's literacy activities attend program activities.
- **Recruit high-quality staff and partners.** Your program team can help with this.
- **Engage families.** Share strategies they can use at home to support their child's literacy. Also, invite them to share their child's strengths and interests.
- **Ensure fidelity of implementation.** Make sure activities are implemented as designed.
- **Celebrate successes.** Acknowledge big achievements and little victories with your students, staff, families, and community.

Literacy for All

See the **Instructional Strategies for English Learners** and **Vocabulary Development Ideas and Activities** tools to support the language and literacy needs of students and families whose first language isn't English. To better serve students with disabilities that affect their language processing and literacy development, see the **Literacy Activity Center Planner** and **Graphic Organizers to Support Literacy** tools.



General Strategies

The U.S. Department of Education's [guide to supporting learning acceleration](#) suggests the following strategies for providing high-quality OST learning experiences to support students' social, emotional, and academic needs. These strategies are especially helpful for supporting learning recovery for students who've fallen behind and aren't meeting grade-level standards:

- **Align OST programs academically** with the school curriculum so OST educators can build on material and skills students are already learning.
- **Adapt instruction to individual and small group needs.** OST groups of more than 20 students per staff member are shown to be less effective.
- **Provide high-quality, engaging learning experiences** that provide academic support and access to enrichment activities that develop students' social and emotional well-being and leadership skills.
- **Target student recruitment and retention efforts** to ensure that students with the most need for additional support have adequate opportunity to participate in OST programs.
- **Assess program performance** regularly, using disaggregated results to improve or adjust the program as needed.
- **Partner with community-based organizations and local intermediary organizations** to increase access to high-quality OST opportunities. Partnerships create opportunities for community engagement and may provide additional enrichment opportunities for students. Partnerships also expand the opportunity for students to interact with organization staff who may be more racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse.
- **Support students with disabilities** by providing services that can help accelerate learning. Students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and Section 504 plans can provide OST program staff with helpful information about meeting individual student needs.

Learning Recovery: Acceleration vs. Remediation

[Learning acceleration](#) is a learning recovery strategy to get students on grade level by providing just-in-time foundational support connected to the grade-level content they're learning. [Research cited by the U.S. Department of Education](#) shows that learning acceleration is an important strategy for advancing equity and that students who experienced acceleration struggled less and learned more than students who started at the same point but experienced **remediation** (repeating lessons or practicing skills they didn't master during previous grades) instead.

Want to Know More About Learning Recovery?

The 21st CCLC NTAC **Learning Recovery Toolkit** includes a **Learning Recovery Research and Practice Brief** that contains additional information about learning recovery and a bibliography with links to research and resources.



Tool Titles and Descriptions

The Literacy Toolkit includes the following tools. Use this annotated list to identify the tools you need.

- The list is organized into three categories: (1) Learn, (2) Plan and Implement, and (3) Assess and Reflect.
- Each tool described below is included in this document.
- If you want to use or distribute a tool “as is,” you may print the pages for that tool.
- If you want to customize a tool, visit the [21st CCLC NTAC website](#) and download the Literacy Toolkit zip file, which includes a Microsoft Word version of each tool.



Learn

Learning Recovery Tip Sheet — This tip sheet has ideas you can use to support students’ learning recovery in OST, whether they need help with literacy or another subject area.

Phonemic Awareness and Playing With Sounds — This tool shows how phonemic awareness grows as students learn to isolate, blend, segment, and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words. It also provides easy ways to incorporate word play into OST program activities.

Strengths-Based Literacy Progression Ladders — This tool presents various anchor skills (such as “Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently”) and shows what the skills look like in students at various grade levels.



Plan and Implement

Before-During-After (BDA) Reading Activity Planner — Use this checklist as an activity planning tool to incorporate the BDA framework and improve students’ reading comprehension.

Editing Tips for Students and Writing Activity Leaders — This chart gives various editing tips and examples to use with students according to their grade level. It may be helpful to implement an “Editing Tip of the Week” to help students target a specific skill during their writing workshop times or as a mini-lesson during their revision conferences.

Effective Questioning for Readers — This tool has questions to use when reading aloud to or with students. These questions model self-questioning strategies for students to practice and use.

Effective Vocabulary Instruction Using Marzano’s Six Steps — This tool describes six steps for effectively teaching vocabulary in an interactive way.

Graphic Organizers to Support Literacy — This tool includes explanations and examples of how to use questioning techniques and graphic organizers to support group discussions, vocabulary development, and the writing process.

Instructional Strategies for English Learners — Use these strategies to help facilitate the program activities and support student success. It includes strategies for building background knowledge and academic language and vocabulary.



K-12 Literacy Ideas for Programs and Families — This list of literacy ideas and activities is organized by school level. Use the ideas in your program or share them with families to try at home.

Literacy Anchor Standards With Planner — This tool shows how to align with the school day and support students' learning recovery by using anchor standards as you develop literacy activities. It has examples of anchor standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language (to support multilingual learners). Anchor standards are statements that describe the literacy skills all students need when they graduate.

Literacy Activity Center Planner — This tool provides ideas and reminders to help you plan activity centers that engage students in hands-on, independent exploration and learning targeted to specific objectives.

Literacy Everywhere — Use this table to identify where you can include activities that build reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in your program.

Prewriting Activities — This tool describes 10 activities you can use to generate questions and ideas that will help students to get started on their writing.

Reading Fluency Strategies — Fluency is the ability to read text accurately, quickly, and with proper expression. This tool provides guidance to help you choose strategies that fit your students, resources, time, and staff as you seek to improve students' fluency.

Step-by-Step Literacy Adventures — This tool describes four literacy activities you can use to engage students at various grade levels: (1) interactive read-alouds, (2) guided oral reading, (3) readers theater, (4) book clubs, and (5) literacy focus groups (which may also include families and school-day partners).

Vocabulary Development Ideas and Activities — This tool provides key concepts for developing students' vocabularies (foster word consciousness, play with language, and explore word meanings) and for supporting English learners. It also provides step-by-step instructions for two activities (a vocabulary collage and a vocabulary parade) that incorporate these concepts.

Writers Workshop — This tool can help you plan a workshop experience for students as they hone their skills while writing about topics they choose. It describes key steps in the writing process.



Assess and Reflect

Active Listening: Skill-Building Strategies and Self-Assessment — This tip sheet provides strategies you, your staff, and students can use to become active listeners. It also includes an active listening self-assessment.

Peer Editing Checklist — This checklist reminds students to look for specific grammar, usage, and formatting errors during peer editing activities. There's one version for grades K-3 and another for grades 4-12.

Reader Questionnaires — This tool has questionnaires to use with students at grade bands K-1, 2-3, 4-6, and 7-12.



Reading Comprehension Checklist — Comprehension questions can help you identify students who read the words well but have difficulty creating meaning from the text. Use this checklist to ask different levels of comprehension questions and to ensure students understand and analyze the text during the reading process.

Six Stages of Reading Development: A Skills Checklist — Use this checklist to assess the stage of reading development a student has achieved so you can identify what the student should work on to advance to the next stage.

Text Genre Checklist — Review a list of text genres and place a check in the box next to each one that's represented in your library. Then identify titles and sources to fill any gaps you identify.

This resource was developed in 2024 by the Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) National Technical Assistance Center (NTAC), funded under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Department) and administered by Synergy Enterprises, Inc. under Cooperative Agreement No. 287E230009 with the Department's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Department, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the Department or the federal government. This resource is in the public domain and is available at 21stcclcntac.org. Authorization to reproduce it in whole or in part is granted.





Active Listening: Skill-Building Strategies and Self-Assessment

What to do: Review these active listening tips and strategies. Then work with program staff and students to practice these strategies and build your skills.

Why it matters: Developing a program culture that values active listening can increase students' comprehension, build self-regulation skills, and increase awareness of others' feelings and opinions.

Tips for Improving Active Listening Skills

1. **Look at the person** — their eyes, mouth, and expressions. Remove all distractions, such as phones or other materials, that are likely to take attention away from the speaker.
2. **Listen not only to the speaker's words** but the information and content they are sharing: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?
3. Recognize the **difference between hearing and listening**:
 - Both involve using our ears, but hearing does not need our direct attention.
 - Listening requires *intention* on the part of the listener. For example, when we listen carefully to a song intending to learn the words, we can learn to sing it from memory.
 - Listening is processing sounds to understand the meaning behind them. Our brains must figure out how the sounds form words or sentences that we can understand.
 - To understand what another person is talking about, we must listen with *intention* and for a *purpose*.
4. **Restate or paraphrase** in your own words what the speaker said. For example, "So what you're saying is, when I'm solving a math word problem, I should first read the entire problem and talk to myself about what it means. Then, I create my own visual model of the problem."
5. **Ask clarifying questions.** These are simple questions of fact. The instructor needs to model this practice for students since young people may not have experience asking these types of questions. Some examples of clarifying questions are:
 - Is this why you said ...? Did I restate or paraphrase what you said correctly?
 - What resources should I use to begin?
 - Did I hear you say ...?
 - Did I understand you when you said ...?
 - Did I hear you correctly when you said ...?
6. **Be mindful of your own feelings and opinions** and those of the person speaking. Pay attention to facial expressions, body language, and movement to help you understand what the speaker is trying to convey.

Many students mistakenly believe that listening is simply not talking while others speak. Listening involves much more. It's an active process that requires not only hearing but also comprehending and interpreting ideas.



7. **Practice!** Provide two students with a familiar topic and ask them to engage in a conversation while the others watch. During the conversation, pause and ask each student to “think aloud” — to say aloud what they are thinking, hearing, and understanding by restating, paraphrasing, and asking clarification questions.
8. **Incorporate listening skills in your everyday activities.** You can ask students to listen as you share procedures and expectations related to your homework help or tutoring session, for example. While listening, encourage students to take notes, draw quick sketches, and tell you what they heard, what they understood, and any thinking or questions that came about from what you said.

Active Listening Self-Assessment

Using the chart below, conduct a debrief session after you’ve instructed students on improving their listening skills. Have them perform this self-assessment to determine how well they listened.

Did you ...?	How well did you do it? 1 – Very well 2 – Well 3 – Not so well
1. Look at the person, their eyes, mouth, and expressions? Remove all distractions such as phone or other materials that were likely to take your attention away from the speaker?	
2. Listen not only to the words but the content? <i>Who? What? Where? Why? When? How?</i>	
3. Restate or paraphrase what the person said in your own words?	
4. Ask clarifying questions?	
5. Pay attention and stay mindful of your own feelings, expressions, and opinions?	
Reflect: I will work on...	

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Before-During-After (BDA) Reading Activity Planner

What to do: See the checklist and the sample activity plan for ways to improve students' reading comprehension strategies. Then use the template to plan what you'll do before, during, and after (BDA) a reading activity to improve students' comprehension strategies.

Why it matters: By using the BDA framework, you can create reading activities that help students focus as they read or listen to various types of text, identify key pieces of information, and learn strategies to use during independent reading to improve comprehension.

BDA Purpose Checklist

Before Reading

Purpose(s):

- Activate prior knowledge.
- Discuss new vocabulary.
- Establish a purpose for reading.
- Build background knowledge.
- Make predictions.
- Generate questions.
- Other: _____

During Reading

Purpose(s):

- Engage with the text.
- Integrate new information with prior knowledge.
- Summarize the text.
- Self-monitor comprehension.
- Create graphic organizers.
- Verify and formulate predictions.
- Visualize the text.
- Other: _____



After Reading
<p>Purpose(s):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reflect on the content.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Answer questions related to the text.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Respond to the text through discussion.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Respond to the text through writing/drawing.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate predictions.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Retell or summarize.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p>

Sample BDA Reading Activity Plan

Activity title or theme: Reading activity: <i>Otis</i> by Loren Long	Grade level: K-2	Time: 45 minutes	Date: 6/27/2023
<p>Learning objective(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make predictions, learn new vocabulary, and demonstrate comprehension of the story. • Participate in discussion and respond to the text in meaningful ways through writing or drawing. • Develop group work skills by working together and listening to others. 			
<p>Materials needed: A copy of the book (<i>Otis</i>), chart paper, writing or drawing paper, crayons or colored pencils, and resources about farms and farm animals.</p>			
<p>Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read <i>Otis</i> and develop questions for discussion. • Begin a word wall or chart of the new vocabulary words that the story introduces (e.g., bales, bawl, calf). • Create a Know-Want-Learn (KWL) chart to use during the activity. You'll use the chart: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Before reading: To record students' <i>prior knowledge</i> relevant to the book ○ During reading: To record questions about <i>things they want to know</i> ○ After reading: To record <i>what they learned</i> 			



BDA Chart for Reading Activity

Before Reading	During Reading	After Reading
<p>Purpose: Activate prior knowledge, make predictions, discuss vocabulary</p>	<p>Purpose: Engage with the text, self-monitor comprehension</p>	<p>Purpose: Examine questions that guided reading; respond to the text through writing/drawing</p>
<p>Strategy: Preview, KWL chart, use of vocabulary word wall or chart</p>	<p>Strategy: Read aloud, ask during-reading questions</p>	<p>Strategy: Discuss and use a graphic organizer to summarize</p>
<p>Procedure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preview the cover of the book by pointing out the title, author, and picture. Ask students about background knowledge about farms, cows, and tractors. Record students' answers on a KWL chart. 2. Ask students to make predictions about what will happen in the story. 3. Introduce the new vocabulary words on the word wall or chart. 	<p>Procedure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read the book aloud. 2. Ask questions to promote comprehension (e.g., "Why did the farmer buy the new tractor?" and "How did Otis feel when the new tractor came to the farm?"). 3. Ask students for additional questions or responses to the text. 	<p>Procedure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss the themes of the story (e.g., friendship) and ask students what they learned. Complete the KWL chart. Ask students for questions or initial responses to the ending. 2. Have students complete an illustrated response to reading (e.g., story map). Ask students to draw out the story map or favorite parts of the story. 3. Extend learning if time permits. Continue to read books about farms or farm animals. Have students work in groups to write a sequel to <i>Otis</i>.
<p>Evaluate (outcomes to look for and additional notes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students show an understanding of the characters, setting, plot, and themes of the story. • Students increase background knowledge and vocabulary related to the reading content. • Students grow in understanding of the BDA reading process. • Students work together to create a response to the reading. 		



BDA Reading Activity Plan Template

Activity title or theme:	Grade level:	Time:	Date:
Learning objectives:			
Materials needed:			
Preparation:			

BDA Chart for Activity

Before Reading	During Reading	After Reading
Purpose:	Purpose:	Purpose:
Strategy:	Strategy:	Strategy:
Procedure:	Procedure:	Procedure:
Evaluate (outcomes to look for and additional notes):		

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Editing Tips for Students and Writing Activity Leaders

What to do: Use the following chart to provide editing tips and examples for students based on their grade level. Try using an “Editing Tip of the Week” to help students target a specific skill during writing workshops or as a mini-lesson during revision conferences.

Why it matters: Writing is a daunting task for many students, and editing can present even more of a challenge. Many students choose to write a minimal amount with the mindset of “The less I write, the less I have to correct.” Having targeted areas for editing increases mastery, decreases frustration, and creates achievable goals.

Grades K-2	Grades 3-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't forget to capitalize the first word of the sentence. • Endings matter! Use end marks (periods, question marks, and exclamation points) correctly. • More than one? Use singular and plural nouns correctly (e.g., tooth vs. teeth). • Use contractions (e.g., won't, can't, I'm) correctly. • Let's agree to have subject-verb agreement (e.g., he runs, they run). • Be complete! Use complete sentences in writing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Past, present, or future tense? Stay consistent! • Use future tense correctly. • Some words sound alike, but they're different! Use the right homophone (e.g., it's vs. its, your vs. you're, their vs. there). • Use prepositions correctly (e.g., in the past, from one to another). • And or but: Use conjunctions logically (e.g., I like dogs but am allergic to them). • Learn to use the apostrophe for possessive nouns (e.g., the dog's house, the dogs' houses). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be careful about homophones — words that sound the same (e.g., sale and sail). • Learn how to use a semicolon between two independent clauses (e.g., I studied late into the night; thus I passed the test). • Truly, really, wonderfully: Use adverbs correctly! • Use comparative and superlative adjectives correctly (e.g., The ruby is <u>harder</u> than the emerald. The diamond is the <u>hardest</u> gem). • Whether I, you, we, he, or she: Maintain consistent point of view (e.g., first-, second-, or third-person subject). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid dangling modifiers like the one in this sentence: <i>After standing in line for hours, the tickets were sold out.</i> • Guess who matters? Use <i>who</i> (subject) vs. <i>whom</i> (object) correctly. • Don't get confused! Use commonly confused words correctly (e.g., accept vs. except, can vs. may). • Stay active! Use active voice except when passive voice is appropriate. • Get it straight! Use parallel construction in clauses. The last clause in this sentence is missing a parallel verb before “dogs”: On vacation I love to sleep late, lie in the sun, and dogs on the beach.



The Vocabulary of Grammar: Tips for Activity Leaders

If you select an “Editing Tip of the Week,” take advantage of the opportunity to help students learn the vocabulary of grammar — words they may encounter in school but not on the playground. Using these words in the context of writing activities and explaining what they mean can be especially helpful to multilingual learners. Use this vocabulary cheat sheet to refresh your knowledge and to explain these terms in a simple way.

Active voice — Puts the doer before the doer’s action: “Lynn told him,” not “He was told by Lynn” or — even less clear — “He was told.”

Adjective — A word that describes a person, place, or thing: “*red* doors,” “*brave* leader,” “the park was *crowded*.”

Adverb — A word that describes a verb: “He walked *slowly*,” “*Luckily*, he caught himself,” “They *seldom* spoke.”

Apostrophe — A curly mark before an *s* that shows ownership (*Natalie’s*) or stands in for missing letters in a contraction (*don’t*).

Clause — A group of words that has a doer (a subject) and an action (a verb). A clause may be an incomplete sentence (“the straw that broke the camel’s back”) or a complete sentence (“That was the straw that broke the camel’s back”). Clauses that are complete sentences are called *independent clauses*.

Comparative adjective — A word that helps you understand how one thing compares to another. Generally formed by adding *er* at the end of the word or *more* before the word: *bigger*, *more excited*.

Conjunction — A word that connects nouns, phrases, or clauses: *and*, *or*, *but*, *so*.

Contraction — Two words jammed together with an apostrophe standing in for the letters that got crowded out: *let’s* is a contraction that means “let us.”

Homophone — A word that sounds the same as another word but is spelled differently (*coarse* vs. *course*).

Parallel construction — Using similar word form and order for related clauses (such as items in a list): “I packed up, waited for the bell, and dashed out the door” not “I packed up, waited for the bell, and *dash* out the door” nor “I packed up, waited for the bell, and *it was time to go*.”

Passive voice — Puts the doer after the doer’s action, or omits the doer entirely, which can lead to wordiness or confusion (“He was told by Lynn,” “He was told”); uses a “to be” verb (e.g., *be*, *been*, *is*, *was*) followed by a past tense verb (e.g., *told*).

Plural noun — A person, place, or thing of which there is more than one. Usually a plural noun ends in *s* (*students*) or *es* (*beaches*), but not always (*children*).

Point of view — The perspective from which a story is told — who’s talking to whom? One way to determine point of view is to look at what pronouns are used in the telling (e.g., *I*, *you*, *they*).

Possessive noun — A noun that has an apostrophe + the letter *s* (*girl’s*) added at the end to show ownership. Or, if the noun already ends in *s*, an apostrophe alone may show ownership (*girls’*, not *girls’s*).



Preposition — A word that marks the relationship between words in a sentence. It usually indicates location, time, or direction (e.g., *in*, *on*, *at*, *under*, and *over*).

Semicolon — A punctuation mark (;) used to join two closely related independent clauses in the same sentence: *She was late for class; that's why she missed the instructions.*

Sentence — A group of words that contains enough information to stand alone as a statement, question, command, or exclamation. It typically includes a *subject* (a person, place, or thing that the sentence is about) and a *predicate* (a word or phrase that includes a verb and tells something about the subject): *You [subject] were so helpful yesterday [predicate].*"

Singular noun — A person, place, or thing of which there is only one (*student*, *beach*, *curriculum*).

Subject-verb agreement — A grammatical rule stating that the subject (a singular or plural noun) and the verb in a sentence must agree in number (one or more than one). A singular subject requires a singular verb ("The *student arrives* right on time"), and a plural subject requires a plural verb ("The *students arrive* right on time").

Superlative adjective — A word that indicates the highest degree of a characteristic in comparison to others. Generally formed by adding *est* at the end of the word or *most* before the word: *biggest*, *most excited*.

Tense — A grammatical indication of whether something already happened, is happening now, or will happen in the future; usually evident in the form that the verb takes in the sentence ("It *is* time for a snack," "It *was* time for a snack," "It *will be* time for a snack soon").

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Effective Questioning for Readers

What to do: Use the questions below when reading with — or reading aloud to — students.

Why it matters: These questions model self-questioning strategies for students, so over time they internalize these practices and use them as needed while reading. Teaching questioning techniques can help all students become more engaged, active readers.

Before Reading

- Is this fiction or nonfiction?
- What do you already know about this topic?
- Based on the title, what do you think this is going to be about?

Strong readers are active readers. One thing they have in common is asking themselves questions while they're reading. Questioning helps a reader self-monitor, clarify thoughts, and make connections. This kind of reflection increases comprehension.

During Reading

- What is the author trying to say here?
- What does this word mean?
- Based on what you've read so far, what do you think will happen next?

After Reading

- What was the author's main point or reason for writing this?
- Did any of your prereading or during-reading predictions change as you read?
- Does this reading connect with anything else you've read?

Extend Your Knowledge

See the 21st CCLC NTAC **Reading Comprehension Checklist** tool for more questions you can use.

See the **Before-During-After (BDA) Reading Activity Planner** for a sample plan and template you can use to intentionally incorporate the BDA framework into reading activities.

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Effective Vocabulary Instruction Using Marzano’s Six Steps

What to do: Use these six steps to help students understand new vocabulary terms and later recall what they’ve learned. For more about this process, search online for “Marzano’s six steps for effective vocabulary instruction.”

Why it matters: Having a systematic approach that is proven effective maximizes your efforts and increases student achievement.

Step 1: Describe	
	The teacher provides a description, explanation, or example of the new term.
Step 2: Restate	
	Students restate the explanation of the new term in their own words.
Step 3: Create	
	Students create a nonlinguistic representation (a drawing or model) of the term.
Step 4: Participate	
	Students do activities that help them add to their knowledge of vocabulary terms.
Step 5: Discuss	
	Students are asked to discuss the terms with one another.
Step 6: Play	
	Students are involved in games that allow them to play with the terms.

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Graphic Organizers to Support Literacy

What to do: Consider the purpose of your activity and what your targeted outcome should be. Review the graphic organizers to see if one of them may be useful for the lesson, then follow the instructions provided for that tool.

Why it matters: Research shows that graphic organizers can help students learn, process, and remember information. These tools are especially useful for students who find it hard to listen or to focus their attention.

Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers structure information visually and may include text, images, diagrams, and other elements to show key concepts, relationships, or processes. Some common examples are Venn diagrams, concept maps, and timelines. Graphic organizers can be used:

- **Before an activity:** To preview learning and help students map relevant knowledge and skills they already have.
- **During an activity:** To present key concepts and aid learning and retention.
- **After an activity:** To summarize and review key concepts and as a springboard to extend learning.

Semantic Mapping

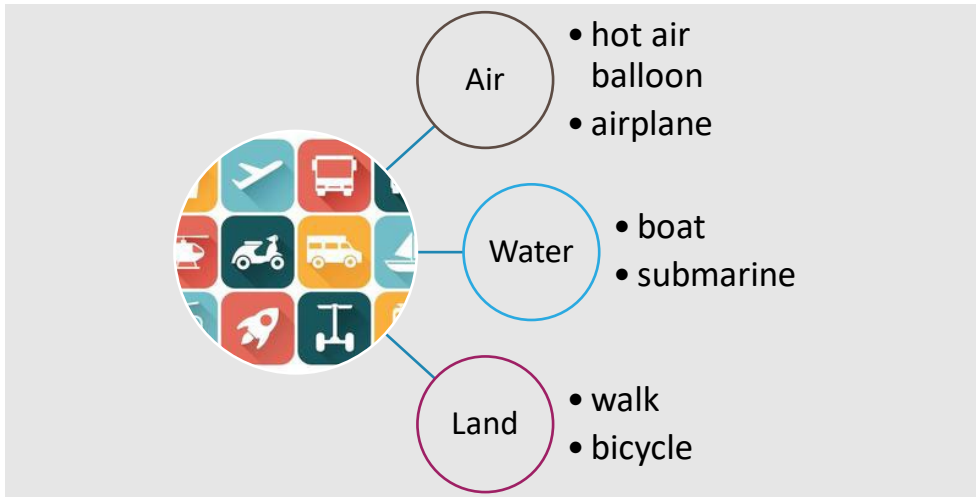
Semantic mapping is a graphic organizer that can help students build their vocabulary by visually displaying a word or phrase and a set of related words or concepts.

How to teach semantic mapping:

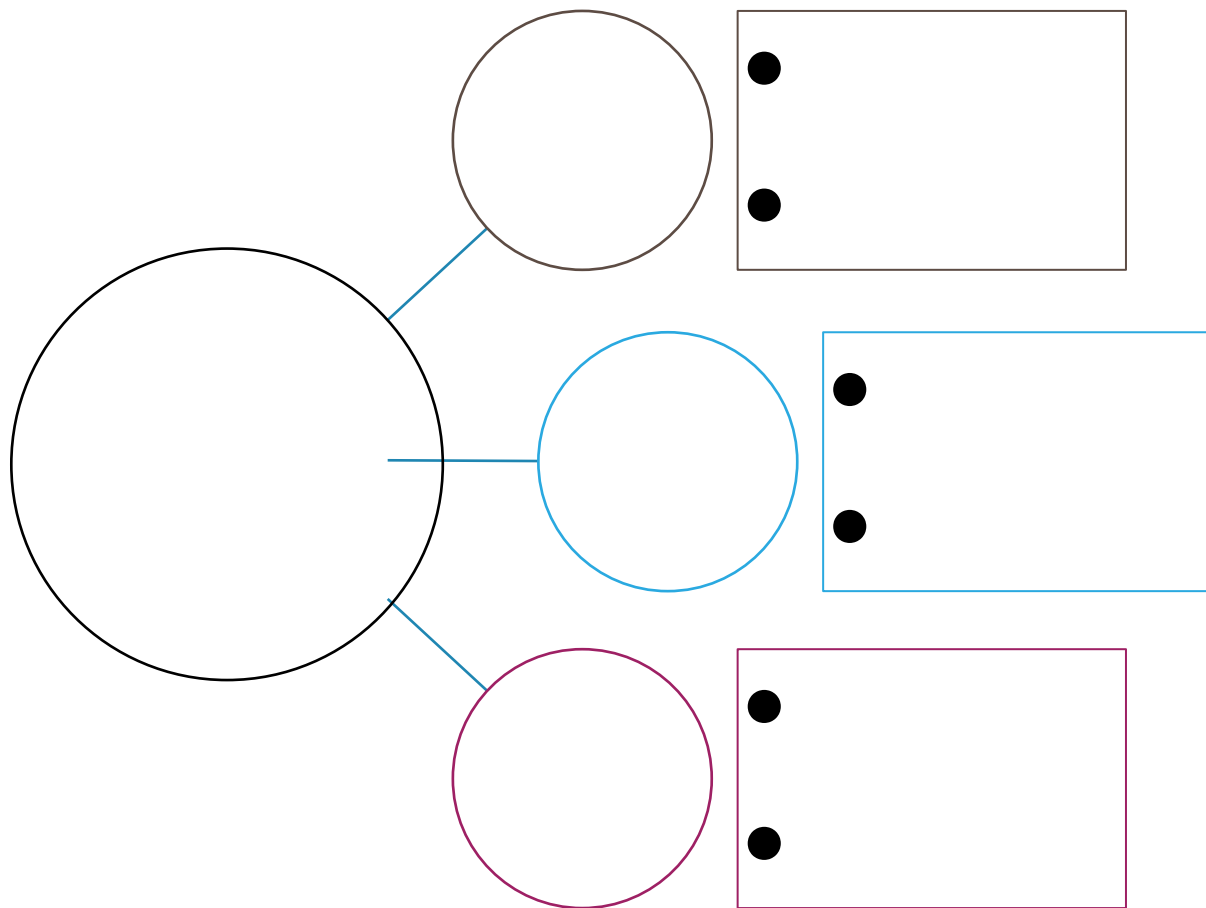
1. Have students choose a word they don't know from a text they (or you) are reading.
2. Use a blank map or begin to draw a map or web. Simple shapes work best, such as circles, squares, triangles, or rectangles.
3. Place the unknown or unfamiliar word in the center.
4. Have the student pronounce the word. You may need to model first.
5. Read the text around the word to see if there are related words you can add to the map.
6. Look up the word using a print or online dictionary or thesaurus to find the definitions and synonyms.
7. Find words and phrases that fit with the meaning. Find pictures (from the internet or magazines), draw pictures, or write words that help illustrate the meaning of the word.
8. Add these words, phrases, and images to the map.
9. Reread the text, asking students to apply the meaning of the word to the text. If needed, discuss that many words have more than one meaning, and that it's important to know how the word is being used. This might mean a broader conversation about context.
10. Have students share, compare, and discuss their maps with peers.

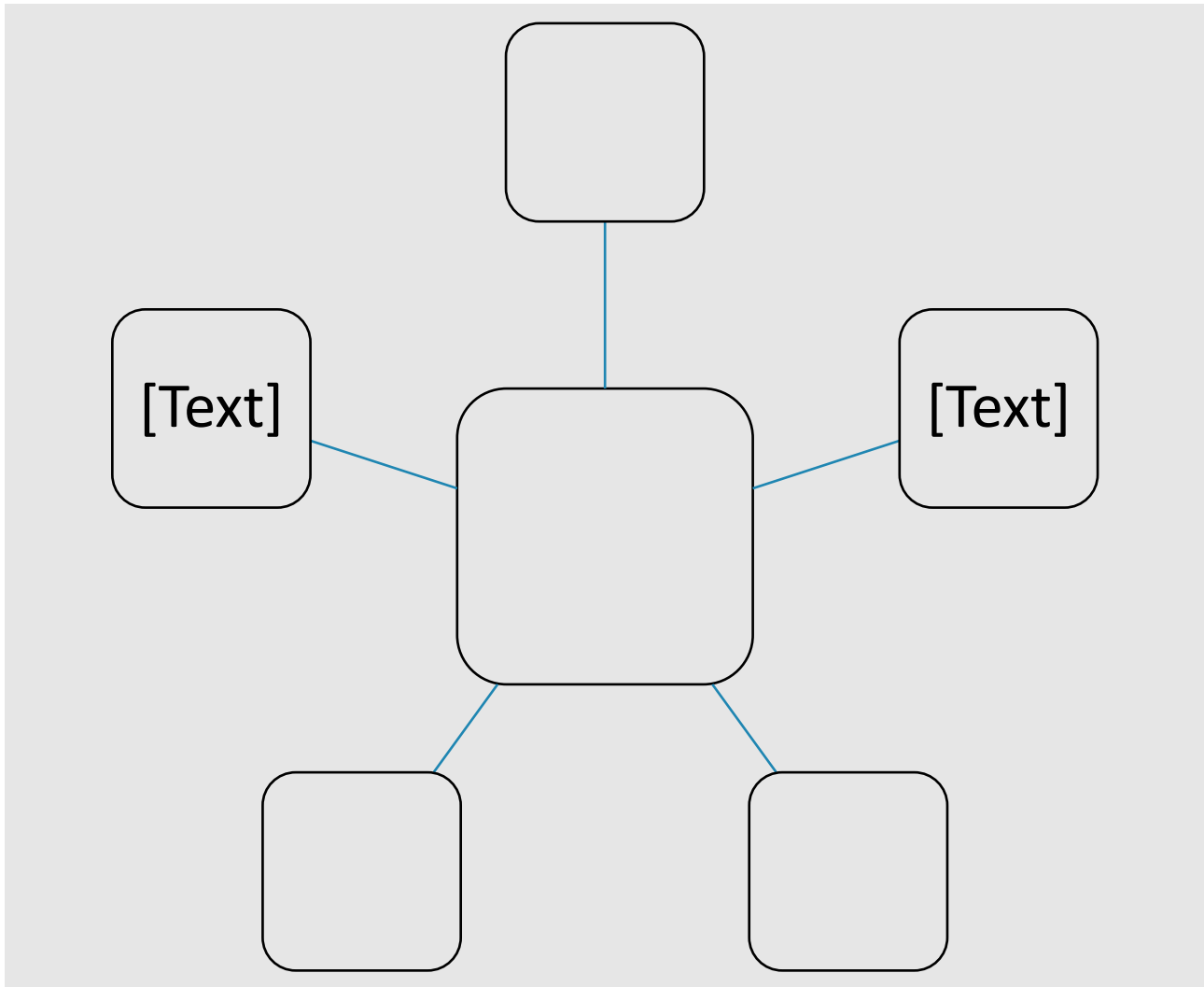


Semantic Mapping Example: Transportation



Semantic Mapping Template A



Semantic Mapping Template B**Frayer Chart**

This graphic organizer (shown on the next page) can be an effective way to introduce a new vocabulary word in the context of a story or academic content.

Steps for Using the Frayer Chart

1. Place the target word in the center of the chart.
2. Solicit a list of characteristics of the word or concept from the students and place those in the upper right box.
3. Guide students to generate an accurate definition in the upper left box.
4. Ask students to generate examples for the lower left box. These are often examples from their lives and help to create personal connections.
5. Ask students to generate nonexamples to put in the lower right box. Nonexamples help students to avoid misconceptions.



Framer Chart Example

<p>DEFINITION If people are emancipated, they are freed from unpleasant or unfair social, political, or legal restrictions.</p>	<p>CHARACTERISTICS freedom separation have power you didn't have before no one controlling you</p>
<p>EXAMPLES turning 18 U.S. breaking from Britain leaving the military after being drafted enslaved people gaining freedom after the Civil War same-sex marriage rights</p>	<p>NONEXAMPLES school contract military jail tyranny (e.g., North Korea) held against will/enslaved</p>

Framer Chart Template

<p>DEFINITION</p>	<p>CHARACTERISTICS</p>
<p>EXAMPLES</p>	<p>NONEXAMPLES</p>



Writing Organizers

Most graphic organizers for writing are specific to a prompt or type of writing, such as narrative, persuasive, or informational. Below are basic writing graphic organizers that students can use to get started with narrative or persuasive writing. Modify graphic organizers for younger students by having them begin by mapping out their story using pictures and phrases.

Narrative Writing

Narrative writing tells a story. This type of writing can be:

1. Fiction to entertain and describe (e.g., fantasy, tall tales, realistic)
2. Nonfiction to inform or describe (e.g., biography, essay, instructions, memoir)

Narrative Writing Personal, Fact, or Fiction	
Name:	Date:
Title:	
<p>Beginning: Create a situation or establish a theme (central topic, subject, or message in your story). Try to get the reader's attention with something that's interesting, different, or introduces a surprising fact. Include some information that familiarizes the reader with the narrator (storyteller or speaker) or characters in your story.</p>	
<p>Middle: Step by step, describe when and where the story takes place, what happens, and why the main theme or event is happening. Try to include some experiences and sensory details to make the reader feel like they are with you (for example, sights, sounds, smells, textures, and tastes).</p>	



Narrative Writing
Personal, Fact, or Fiction

Ending or Conclusion: Tell what happened after the main event. You might also share a lesson about what the narrator or writer learned and how their life is changed or different.

Persuasive Writing

Persuasive writing is a form of nonfiction that requires students to develop logical arguments. This type of writing helps students learn how to research facts about and formulate specific reasons for their opinions. They also learn how writing can influence and change another’s thinking or beliefs — and sometimes actions.

Persuasive Writing

Name:

Date:

Goal or Thesis Statement: This “topic” sentence describes one side of an arguable viewpoint without providing reasons yet. What is the thesis or point you are trying to argue?

Support/Main Reasons: Brainstorm the reasons, evidence, and details to support your position. You can write these on a semantic map, index cards, or sticky notes — or create a T-chart and brainstorm reasons to support both your position and the counter-position. When you finish brainstorming, use this section to briefly state the three main reasons that would convince someone that your thesis or point of view is valid.

Reason 1:

Reason 2:

Reason 3:



Persuasive Writing

Facts or Examples: Write down some facts or examples that support each reason and help you validate (authorize or confirm) your argument.

Fact or Example 1:

Fact or Example 2:

Fact or Example 3:

Conclusion: Summarize the most important details of the argument and state what the reader should believe or do based on your argument. You may also offer advice or pose questions back to the reader to prompt them to reflect on your topic or position.

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Instructional Strategies for English Learners

What to do: Use the chart below to make the most of your English learners’ activity time.

Why it matters: Maximizing the effectiveness for any activity gives students the greatest chance for success. These strategies can be readily incorporated in whole-group, small-group, and one-on-one activities to benefit not only English learners but all students.

Instructional Strategy	Description	Actions to Take
Activate prior knowledge	Activating prior knowledge means discovering what learners already know about a topic. “Prior knowledge” can be accurate or inaccurate, and it can impact comprehension of new content as students connect new learning to prior knowledge. Identifying prior knowledge gives you a chance to clear up misconceptions. It also gives you a starting point for building students’ knowledge.	<p>You can activate English learners’ prior knowledge by engaging in activities such as these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss and reflect on what they know about a concept. • Draw a sketch or diagram to show their understanding. • Respond to an anticipation guide (a set of statements or questions that trigger students’ thinking and curiosity about a topic).
Build background knowledge	<p>Building English learners’ background knowledge lays the foundation for learning new content. You need to activate students’ prior knowledge to identify the background knowledge that you need to build.</p> <p>Knowing each student’s background and culture can help you select strategies that will connect with their prior experiences and knowledge.</p>	<p>Here are some ways to build English learners’ foundational (background) knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present images, videos, or audio clips. • Provide hands-on activities and experiences. • Have students interact with real objects, known as realia. <p>Tip: Be mindful when using sayings or phrases that are part of American culture. For example, the meanings of “That’s a piece of cake” and “That’s how the cookie crumbles” have nothing to do with food. Sayings like “A penny saved is a penny earned,” “We’re not in Kansas anymore,” and “the South” might be unfamiliar to newcomers. If you’re sharing a book, video, or audio clip, introduce new words or saying in advance.</p>



Instructional Strategy	Description	Actions to Take
<p>Build academic language and vocabulary</p>	<p>Academic language is used in schools, textbooks, and other academic settings. Helping English learners build academic language and vocabulary knowledge can take time. This language tends to be cognitively demanding because it's used to describe concepts and abstract ideas, has a specialized vocabulary, and has a more complex sentence structure than social language. Academic English includes words like <i>classify</i> and <i>evaluate</i>, as well as content-specific words like <i>denominator</i> and <i>adverb</i>.</p> <p>For comparison, social language is used in social settings and everyday life. It tends to be quick for English learners to pick up because its simple vocabulary and sentence structure make it cognitively undemanding and easy to understand. Social English includes phrases like "what's up" and "catch you later." You'll probably notice that English learners become proficient in social English more quickly than academic English.</p>	<p>Here are some strategies to try:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use visuals to demonstrate what a vocabulary term does and doesn't mean. • Integrate graphic organizers, such as the Frayer Model, where students write the definition in their own words, write characteristics of the term, and draw/write examples and nonexamples. • For languages that are close to English, use cognates — words that are similar in spelling and meaning in both languages — to help students learn vocabulary or academic terms they may be familiar with in their first language. • Scaffold language by using sentence frames, sentence stems, and paragraph stems to help English learners form sentences with proper English sentence structure (word order) and communicate their thoughts. • Implement Marzano's six-step process for building academic vocabulary (see the 21st CCLC NTAC Effective Vocabulary Instruction Using Marzano's Six Steps tool). • Total physical response is an approach that uses props, gestures, facial expressions, pictures, and equipment to communicate the meaning of a vocabulary term as it's introduced. English learners mimic these movements as the instructor says the word. Doing this as a fun whole-group activity helps to minimize intimidation and gives English learners visual cues to aid understanding. A variation is to have students choose their own gestures, facial expressions, and visuals to physically communicate the meaning of a vocabulary word, and then present them as a group to the entire class. This creates a safe learning space as students present together.



Instructional Strategy	Description	Actions to Take
Model expectations and instructions	Acting out instructions for an activity and modeling expectations provides clues to help English learners understand verbal and written instructions.	<p>Here are some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a Gallery Walk activity, where students can draw or write their ideas about a topic that's posted on chart paper. Start by physically showing them where each group will start. Then provide an example of a written response and a drawn response. Point to the clock and hold your hand up with how many minutes they have at each station. Then ring the timer and walk to the next station so they know what action you expect them to take when they hear the timer. It's also helpful to have these steps clearly outlined on a slide or chart, with visual cues for each step. • Use nonverbal cues, gestures, hand signals, facial expressions, and visuals such as pictures and video clips to support English learners who are at the beginner and intermediate proficiency levels of language acquisition. These types of support can help them start to feel comfortable participating in small- and large-group activities. It also helps with engagement because they won't feel "lost" or confused about what to do.
Use icebreakers that value culture	Icebreakers are opportunities for English learners to share about their culture and experiences.	<p>Here are some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In My Culture: English learners stand in a circle. The facilitator pulls a topic from a hat. Students take turns standing in the center of the circle and sharing about that topic in their culture. (For example, if music is the selected topic, students might share a favorite song or type of song, like a mariachi song.) Depending on how comfortable group members feel, you could ask them to draw or write their responses before sharing with an elbow partner. Those partners then share with two other partners. This can reduce anxiety about sharing with the full group. • Our Sayings: English learners share popular sayings used in their first language.



Instructional Strategy	Description	Actions to Take
		<p>Encourage them to try to translate it into other languages represented in the group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Hope, One Challenge: English learners share one hope they have (or had) as a newcomer to the U.S. and one challenge they face (or have faced). This can help build a sense of community for newcomers. It also gives them an opportunity to share their solutions for overcoming barriers.
Integrate technology	A variety of technology devices, software, and apps can accelerate language acquisition.	<p>Here are some ways you can use technology to support English learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online collaboration tools: Students can collaborate in groups with mixed levels of language proficiency, which helps them practice their fluency skills. Google Classroom is one example. • Digital portfolios and collaboration platforms: Students can upload images, video, audio, and text to collaborate online. Some examples include Seesaw and Flipgrid. • Audio apps: Students can record themselves speaking, practice pronunciation, listen to their responses to the instructor’s questions, and refine their responses as needed. This provides useful practice as some State language assessments include a speaking component that is scored and becomes part of each student’s “level of language acquisition” score. An example app is ELSA. • Software and online licenses: Here are some examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rosetta Stone helps English learners learn English for different situations. ○ IXL is an online application in which English learners can begin with their current level of understanding in a content area like math or science and progress to reach grade-level expectations or standards.



Instructional Strategy	Description	Actions to Take
Offer cooperative learning	Cooperative learning can accelerate English language acquisition by putting English learners in groups that include native English speakers and English learners at various levels of language development.	<p>Here are some ways to help English learners become comfortable in group learning settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intentionally group students with mixed levels of language proficiency. This allows English learners to interact with others and develop language skills and concepts. Small teams help English learners build confidence, express themselves, and observe one another solving problems. • Consider rotating cooperative learning roles so students interact with one another in different ways (e.g., reporter, recorder, timekeeper, task manager, and materials manager).

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K-12 Literacy Ideas for Programs and Families

What to do: Review these activities and highlight the ones you'd like to try. Some activities focus on literacy and directly teach literacy skills, while others embed literacy without providing direct instruction. Implement explicit and embedded literacy activities regularly in your program to support students at all levels of literacy development.

Why it matters: Rich literacy experiences promote learning across various topics and situations. Helping students develop literacy skills in enjoyable ways helps them connect school-day learning to personal goals and interests.

Elementary School Activities

Storybook Circle

Each day, break students into small groups and have an adult read aloud to them. As reading skills improve throughout the year, have students take the lead and ask them to practice reading with emotion. Focus on developing fluency. Hold a brief book discussion after each session.

Literacy Instruction: Explicit

WebQuest

Each week, develop an online "scavenger hunt" where students explore a topic of interest (e.g., something they are learning about during the school day). Have them decipher clues, follow directions, and conduct research to learn more about the topic. Emphasize research skills, digital literacy and safety, and reading along the way. Have students create a visual display to present their findings.

Literacy Instruction: Embedded

Sight Word Memory

Using sight word memory cards, have students in pairs or groups of three play a game of "memory" or "concentration" by trying to find a match. Students should say each word aloud when flipping over the cards. Assign groups by skill level.

Literacy Instruction: Explicit

Find a "Just Right" Book

Show younger students how to choose a "just right" book using the Five Finger Rule: (1) Pick a book you think you'll like. (2) Read the second page. (3) Hold up a finger for each word you don't know or aren't sure you know. (4) If you're holding up five fingers or more, pick a book that's easier for you. (5) But if you're not yet ready to give up on your first choice, try the five finger rule on two more pages.

Literacy Instruction: Explicit



Weekend Update

On Monday or Friday afternoons, ask a few students to talk about their weekend activities — either what they did or will do. Have students who prefer not to share aloud write a few sentences or draw a quick picture of their answer.

Literacy Instruction: Embedded

Middle School Activities

Debate Club

Every two weeks, introduce a position statement related to something they're learning in school. For example, if they're studying nutrition, the statement might be "Sugary snacks shouldn't be allowed at school." Split students into two groups — one for and one against the statement — and give them a week to research the topic and hone their arguments. Have students engage in proper [debate](#) the following week. Allow time for them to debrief and reflect after the debate.

Literacy Instruction: Embedded

Life as a Pilgrim

In the fall, read aloud or have students read historical fiction that depicts life as a Pilgrim at Plymouth Colony. After reading the book, have students find facts about the size of the Mayflower and measure and mark an outline with chalk or small play equipment in an outdoor area.

Literacy Instruction: Embedded

Find a "Just Right" Book

Show students how to use the I PICK strategy to choose a book that's "just right" for them: (1) **I** choose a book. (2) **Purpose:** Why do I want to read it? (3) **Interest:** Does the book interest me? (4) **Comprehension:** Am I understanding what I'm reading? (5) **Know:** Do I know most of the words? This strategy originated with authors Gail Boushey and Joan Moser.

Literacy Instruction: Explicit

Share a Read Aloud

Have students record themselves reading stories aloud. Share the videos or audio recordings with students' families. Make sure to follow the program protocols for using technology.

Literacy Instruction: Explicit

High School Activities

Spoken Word

Have students perform poems they have selected or written themselves. Try introducing a different theme each week to use as the starting point around which students select or create a piece to perform. Allow time during the week for students to craft their performance and work on their public speaking and performance skills. Consider having the students perform at a local poetry night, or set one up specifically for the program.

Literacy Instruction: Explicit



Program Marketing Team

Have students work with program leaders to design effective ways to market the program and program activities. Tasks can include creating visual displays, flyers, posters, and other marketing aids. Students can also craft messages and images for the program social media channels. Make sure to monitor the students' messages for appropriate content.

Literacy Instruction: Embedded

Writers Workshop

While reading both fiction and nonfiction texts, have students provide written responses to questions about specific literary elements. Later, have students work with the instructor or in small groups to discuss and refine their written responses. Check out the 21st CCLC NTAC Writers Workshop tool.

Literacy Instruction: Explicit

Family (Adult and Student) Activities**Night at the Museum**

Students choose a famous person or event from history. For several weeks, students read about their figure or event. The culminating family night is a "wax museum" where students dress as their character and families and community partners stop at the "exhibits" to learn about each person or event. This activity can easily be modified into another theme, such as "Holidays Around the World" wax museum, "Inventors" wax museum, or something chosen by your staff or students.

Literacy Instruction: Embedded

Movie Night

Host an outdoor movie night. Have a partner provide food, such as hotdogs and hamburgers. Prepare vocabulary bingo cards in advance and have participants listen for the words on their cards and call out if they get bingo! Then, after the movie, facilitate a conversation about the movie. Make sure everyone has a chance to speak. Add to the fun by offering books as door prizes.

Literacy Instruction: Embedded

Story Sleuths

Set up as a mystery theme, families complete a scavenger hunt throughout the building. At each stopping point, they have an opportunity to read together or participate in a literacy-themed activity. Examples of stations include reading together with detective spyglasses, working as a family team to find words in text during "sight word bingo," and inviting the community library to sign up families for library cards. At each station, you can also place follow-up questions about the plot of the story.

Literacy Instruction: Explicit



Family Dinner Night

Host a potluck or partner-provided dinner to motivate attendance. As dinner entertainment, have someone — perhaps a local writer, artist, musician, or actor — read a story while people eat, and then let families talk about the story as they do a related craft or activity. This is a good way to get families talking with each other.

Literacy Instruction: Embedded

Family Folk Story

Have parents share a family folk story or fairy tale by writing it out as a series of captions in blocks on the bottom half of sheets of paper. Then, have students illustrate the story above the captions. This activity can be completed during a family engagement event or at home.

Literacy Instruction: Explicit

Family Reading Night

Hold a Family Reading Night, open to all students and their families, at regular intervals throughout the program year. Ask students and families to share a book as they picnic, go on a library tour, or engage in fun reading games. Consider providing books that students can choose to take home with them and keep.

Literacy Instruction: Explicit

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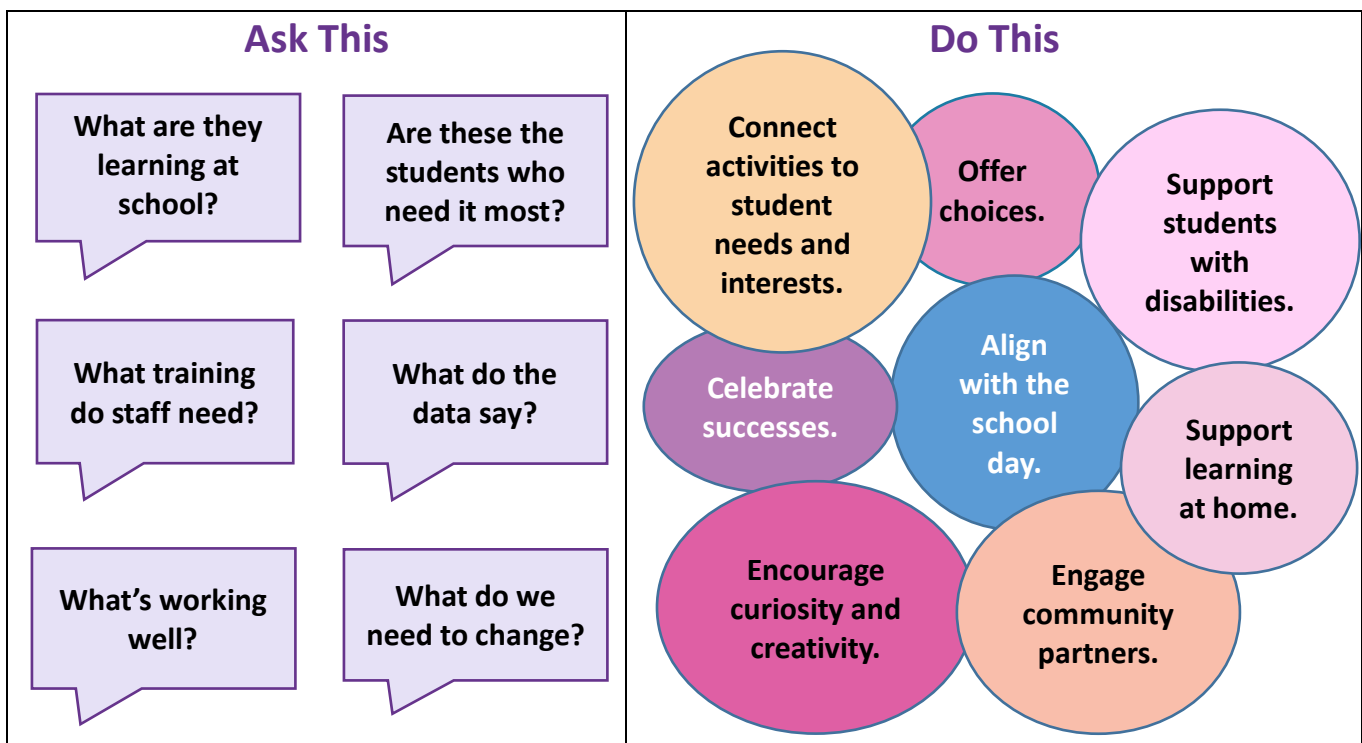


Learning Recovery Tip Sheet

What to do: Review this tip sheet and the U.S. Department of Education’s [guide on learning acceleration](#) for strategies to help you provide quality out-of-school time (OST) learning experiences. See the **Learning Recovery Toolkit** on the 21st CCLC NTAC website for practical tools to support students’ academic and social-emotional learning recovery in OST settings.

Why it matters: These strategies are especially helpful for supporting learning recovery for students who’ve fallen behind and aren’t meeting grade-level standards.

To Support Learning Recovery in Your OST Program...



Learning Recovery: Acceleration vs. Remediation

[Learning acceleration](#) is a learning recovery strategy to get students on grade level by providing just-in-time foundational support connected to the grade-level content they’re learning.

[Research](#) shows that learning acceleration is an important strategy for advancing equity and that students who experienced acceleration struggled less and learned more than students who started at the same point but experienced **remediation** (repeating lessons or practicing skills they didn’t master during previous grades) instead.



Check the 21st CCLC NTAC website for professional learning opportunities, tools, and resources on learning and learning recovery — including the **Learning Recovery Research and Practice Brief**.

Use the space below to record your ideas, insights, and questions about ways to support students' academic and social-emotional recovery.

Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out.

— Robert Collier

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Literacy Activity Center Planner

What to do: Set up rotating activity centers as a regular part of your program to support literacy all year long. Make the purpose, rules, and expectations clear to participants. Continue to build a collection of activity centers that participants can choose from. Experiment with making simultaneous activities available for students to move among freely.

Why it matters: Well-planned activity centers engage children and youths in hands-on exploration, allow for both independent work and collaboration with other students, and provide targeted learning on specific objectives.

Overview

Centers may be available at set times, or during homework time for those who have no homework or who finish early, or as a break. Centers may be an area of the room or simply activities kept in shoeboxes and worked with on a side table. Watch centers in use to see if they're effective. Determine if children seem engaged, distracted, or bored. Talk to students to get ideas for centers and involve them in the planning. Discuss with staff and make revisions as needed.

Center Starter Ideas

Decide on an overall theme for the centers, and how each activity will fit with the theme. Specify the learning objectives in the planning stage, and the materials and resources you'll need for each center. Check out these inspirations for center activities, organized by learning area and grade level.

Reading (Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, Comprehension)

K-2: Letter/sound match ♦ alphabet puzzles ♦ magnetic letters ♦ pipe cleaner letter making
alphabet memory games ♦ alphabet flash cards ♦ letter blocks/manipulatives ♦
percussion/rhythm instruments (e.g., for syllable counting or matching a poem's beat)

Grades 3-5: Word cards ♦ word family strips ♦ puppets for retelling a story ♦ props for readers theater

Grades 6-12: Newspapers ♦ magazines ♦ dictionaries ♦ journals

All: Age- and level-appropriate reading library of informational and fictional texts

Writing (Pre-Writing, Drafting, Revising/Editing, Production)

K-2: Pipe cleaner letter making ♦ magnetic letters ♦ modeling clay to make letters or words

Grades 3-5: Dry erase boards ♦ chalkboards ♦ paint strips for storyboarding

Grades 6-12: Dictionaries or reference materials ♦ style guides

All: Writing utensils (e.g., crayons ♦ markers ♦ pencils ♦ colored pencils ♦ colored pens) and loose-leaf paper or stationary ♦ computers



Oral Language (Speaking, Listening)

K-2: Fingerplays ♦ poetry ♦ rhyming games ♦ word games ♦ role-playing

Grades 3-5: Audio-assisted reading or audiobooks ♦ audio recording devices ♦ props or costumes for skits or plays

Grades 6-12: Scripts for skits or plays ♦ poems ♦ films ♦ music lyrics ♦ computers ♦ digital recording devices ♦ audio recording devices

Center Worksheet

Complete separately for each center activity.

Description or Theme of Center: _____

Literacy area focus (check all that apply):

Reading Writing Speaking and Listening Language Other

Learning objectives/purpose: _____

Number of users at one time: _____

Primarily for: Individuals Pairs Small groups Any

Instructions:
 Can be clearly written ahead of time
 Need to be explained or demonstrated by a facilitator
 Can be explained by peers

Availability: Always Days/times: _____
 Homework By request

Supervision: None, general only Periodic check
 Demonstrations and explanations needed
 Active supervision

Supplies needed:

Instructions (instruction card or paper to include): _____

Materials, tools, equipment: _____



Observation Checklist:

- Actively used
- Instructions clear, little supervision needed
- Used by all participants
- Positive outcomes (e.g., engagement)
- Meets objectives

Comments, changes, extensions:

*Let us remember: One book, one pen, one child,
and one teacher can change the world.*

— Malala Yousafzai

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Literacy Anchor Standards With Planner

What to do: Review this information about literacy standards. Ask an English language arts teacher for information about related grade-level standards for literacy in your State. Then use the planner on the last two pages to help you incorporate these standards in literacy activities.

Why it matters: You can use this information to plan out-of-school time (OST) activities that align with the school day to support your students' literacy development and/or learning recovery.

Anchor Standards

Whether your State uses its own standards or the Common Core State Standards, rigorous college and career readiness standards for developing literacy are likely to agree on the reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language skills that all students must demonstrate to successfully pursue the college and career paths of their choice. Notice the similarities among the three standards in the graphic below. Then keep reading to learn more about these statements and their relevance to OST programs.

College and Career Readiness Literacy Anchor Standard: Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

Example from a State that adopted Common Core State Standards: Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information, and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others.

Example from a State that didn't adopt Common Core State Standards: Listen, ask clarifying questions, and respond to information being communicated about a topic, text, or issue under study.

- The first example is a speaking and listening standard from the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards (hereafter, Literacy Anchor Standards). These are broad literacy standards that define what students need to be able to do by the time they graduate from high school. These anchor standards underlie all the standards in the Common Core.



- The second standard is a fourth-grade speaking and listening standard from a State that adopted the Common Core State Standards.
- The third standard is a fourth-grade speaking and listening standard from a State that hasn't adopted the Common Core State Standards.

This general alignment of State standards to the Literacy Anchor Standards means OST programs can use the anchor standards to guide students in developing literacy skills and know that they support the literacy standards their State has adopted.

Reading Anchor Standards

You can use these reading anchor standards, along with grade-level standards, to develop literacy activities.

Key Ideas and Details
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. 2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. 3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
Craft and Structure
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Interpret words and phrases in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone. 5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole. 6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats — including visually and quantitatively — as well as in words. 8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence. 9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.



Writing Anchor Standards

You can use these writing anchor standards, along with grade-level standards, to develop literacy activities.

Text Types and Purposes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. 2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. 3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
Production and Distribution of Writing
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. 5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach. 6. Use technology — including the internet — to produce and publish writing, and to interact and collaborate with others.
Research to Build and Present Knowledge
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation. 8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism. 9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
Range of Writing
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Write routinely over extended periods (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter periods (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Speaking and Listening Anchor Standards

You can use these speaking and listening anchor standards, along with grade-level standards, to develop literacy activities.

Comprehension and Collaboration
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. 2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. 3. Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.



Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.
6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Language Anchor Standards

You can use these language anchor standards, along with grade-level standards, to develop literacy activities.

Conventions of Standard English

1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Knowledge of Language

3. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

4. Determine or clarify the meanings of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.
5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
6. Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

Adapted from College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards: www.corestandards.org



Standards Activity Planner

	Standard	Questions to Ask	Ways to Implement
Example	Reading Anchor Standard 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think the author is saying here? • What do you guess or predict will happen next? • What evidence do you have from the text? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During a read-aloud, the facilitator stops occasionally to have students discuss meaning and make predictions. • Students make notes about words, phrases, or quotations from the text that support key conclusions.
Reading			
Writing			



	Standard	Questions to Ask	Ways to Implement
Speaking and Listening			
Language			

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Literacy Everywhere

What to do: Use the table to identify where you can include activities that build reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in your out-of-school time program.

Why it matters: Literacy isn't an isolated skill or specific to language arts instruction. It's part of everyday life. Students can gain background knowledge, build vocabulary, and develop literacy skills through authentic interactions and experiences.

	Snack	Homework Time (For Early Finishers)	Enrichment 1-2 Times per Week	Enrichment 3+ Times per Week	Physical Activity
Reading	<p>Activity: Create letters and shapes using snacks.</p> <p>Skill: Recognize and sort letters.</p> <p>Other ideas:</p>	<p>Activity:</p> <p>Skill:</p>	<p>Activity:</p> <p>Skill:</p>	<p>Activity:</p> <p>Skill:</p>	<p>Activity:</p> <p>Skill:</p>
Writing	<p>Activity:</p> <p>Skill:</p>	<p>Activity: Five-minute daily writing (from <i>Four Components of Literacy</i>).</p> <p>Skill: Convey ideas clearly and effectively.</p> <p>Other ideas:</p>	<p>Activity:</p> <p>Skill:</p>	<p>Activity:</p> <p>Skill:</p>	<p>Activity:</p> <p>Skill:</p>



	Snack	Homework Time (For Early Finishers)	Enrichment 1-2 Times per Week	Enrichment 3+ Times per Week	Physical Activity
Speaking	Activity: Skill:	Activity: Skill:	Activity: Skill:	Activity: Book Club (from <i>Book Clubs</i>) Skill: Lead a discussion and participate in a range of conversations. Other ideas:	Activity: Skill:
Listening	Activity: Skill:	Activity: Skill:	Activity: Skill:	Activity: Skill:	Activity: Warm up to a song that directs students' dance moves (e.g., Cha Cha Slide). Skill: Listen carefully and follow directions. Other ideas:

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Peer Editing Checklist

What to do: Review the checklist, guidelines, and expectations for use with students. Establish a culture where appropriate feedback is a gift to help us improve. (For younger students, an adult or older student may need to read the questions aloud for the peer editor.)

Why it matters: Students need to learn to think critically to evaluate their own writing as well as the writing of others. Using a predetermined system helps students identify the necessary conventions required to achieve quality writing.

For Grades K-3

Writer's Name: _____ Peer Editor's Name: _____

Directions: Read your partner's writing. Then read each question. Circle the smile if the answer is yes or the frown if the answer is no.

- Does each sentence begin with a capital letter?
- Are all sentences complete sentences?
- Does each sentence end with a punctuation mark?
- Are the words spelled correctly?
- Is the handwriting neat and easy to read?
- Are all paragraphs indented?
- Are all proper nouns (names) capitalized?



For Grades 4-12

Writer's Name: _____ Peer Editor's Name: _____

Directions: As you edit your partner's writing, use this list to guide what you look for. Mark your edits on your partner's paper using a colored pen and the symbols in the list. Check the "Reviewed" column when you finish with each element, then move on to the next.

Reviewed	Symbol	Description
	inc.	Incomplete or fragmented sentence
	r-o	Run-on sentence
	¶	Begin a new paragraph
	≡	Make this letter a capital letter (use three underlines)
	/	Make this letter a lowercase letter
	Ⓢ	Spelling error (add correct spelling to spelling list)
	⊙	End punctuation is missing
	→	Indent
	←	Left align
	^	Insert missing word or punctuation
	v	Insert missing apostrophe (') or quotation marks (" ")
	↯	Switch order of word or group of words
	⸮	Delete a word or group of words
	⸮	Join words together
	WC	Word choice
	? []	Section is confusing — clarify or reword
	©	Copyright — site the source

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Phonemic Awareness and Playing With Sounds

What to do: Read this document to learn about key elements of phonemic skill development: the ability to isolate, blend, segment, and manipulate sounds) Work with school-day staff to clarify any questions you may have. Then follow the suggested steps for playing with sounds to have fun supporting phonemic awareness in your out-of-school time program.

Why it matters: In any language, a phoneme is the smallest unit of sound. Phonemes combine to make new sounds and ultimately to make words. Phonemic awareness is the foundation for all future reading endeavors. It's what helps readers tell one word from another.

Isolate Sounds

- Isolating sounds is the ability to recognize the separate phonemes (sounds) in a word.
 - *Cat* has three phonemes: /k/ - /a/ - /t/.
- When working with students on this skill, it's easiest for them to recognize sounds before being able to produce them.
 - Which of these pictures begins with the sound /m/?
- Isolating beginning sounds is the easiest, then final sounds, and lastly medial (middle) sounds.
 - What is the first sound in *sun*? /s/
 - What is the final sound in *clock*? /k/
 - What is the medial sound in *map*? /a/

Blend Sounds

- Blending sounds is the ability to hear separate sounds and combine them to make a word.
 - /k/ - /a/ - /t/ = cat
- When working with students on this skill, it's easiest for them to blend words with initial continuous sounds:
 - f, h, l, m, n, r, s, v, w, y, z
- Later, they can work on stop sounds:
 - b, c, d, g, k, p, t
- Lastly, have students blend words with consonant blends:
 - e.g., sol, sp, -mp, -st, cl, bl, pr

Segment Sounds

- Segmenting sounds is the ability to hear a whole word, tap or count out the phonemes in the word, and say each phoneme in isolation.
 - *Cat* has three sounds; they are /k/ - /a/ - /t/.
- Shorter words are easier than longer words.
 - *At* vs. *splat*



Manipulate Sounds

- Manipulating sounds is the ability to form different words by adding, deleting, or substituting sounds in a given word.
- Easiest to more difficult:
 - Adding sounds is the easiest skill, followed by deleting sounds, and lastly by substituting sounds.
 - Shorter words are easier than longer words; words with consonant blends are more difficult than single consonants.
 - Initial sounds are easiest, followed by final sounds, and lastly medial sounds.
 - Add initial sound: Say *ant*. Now say *ant* with a /p/ at the beginning.
 - Add final sound: Say *car*. Now say *car* with a /t/ at the end.
 - Delete initial sound: Say *ran*. Now say *ran* without the /r/.
 - Delete final sound: Say *clamp*. Now say *clamp* without the /p/.
 - Delete medial sound: Say *plain*. Now say *plain* without the /l/.
 - Substitute initial sound: Say *bag*. Now say *bag* but change the /b/ to /r/.
 - Substitute final sound: Say *sad*. Now say *sad* but change the /d/ to /p/.
 - Substitute medial sound: Say *clock*. Now say *clock* but change the /o/ to /i/.

More Ways to Play With Sounds

Additional terms that are good to understand when helping students develop their phonemic awareness are “onset” — the initial phonological unit of any word (e.g., “c” in *cat*), and “rime” — the string of letters that follows (e.g., “at” in *cat*). Look for these concepts in the following language games you can play with emerging readers:

Rhyming and Word Families

Build phonological awareness by introducing children to the common elements in word families.

- Read literature with rhyming patterns, like *There’s a Wocket in My Pocket* or other Dr. Seuss books. Ask students to recall some of the rhyming pairs.
- Build word family charts by creating word lists with the same rimes: /at/ = bat, cat, sat, and rat.
- Odd Word Out: Provide three words and ask students to eliminate the word that doesn’t rhyme (e.g., coat, stick, and boat).
- See the Collect Resources section on the Onset-Rime Games page of the Reading Rockets site for additional activities: <https://www.readingrockets.org/classroom/classroom-strategies/onset-rime-games>.

Word, Syllable, and Phoneme Counting

Ask students to count the number of sounds in a word, syllables in a word, or words in a sentence.

- The word *shut* has three sounds: /sh/ - /u/ - /t/.
- The word *banana* has three syllables: ba-na-na.
- The sentence “I ate cereal for breakfast” has five words.



Sound Synthesis

Provide students with a selection of phonemes that, when put together, make a familiar word.

- It starts with /m/ and ends with /an/; put it together and it says ... (man).
- Put these sounds together to make a word: /gr/ - /a/ - /b/ = grab.

Sound-to-Word Matching

Ask students to either pull sounds from words or confirm that a certain sound is present.

- What is the first sound you hear in the word *fish*? (/f/)
- Is there a /b/ in *ball*? Is there a /g/ in *rug*?

Where Is the Sound?

Recite a word to students and ask them to identify the location of a particular sound: either the beginning, middle, or end of the word.

- Where do you hear the /b/ in *bat*? (At the beginning)
- Where do you hear /g/ in *bug*? (At the end)
- Where do you hear /a/ in *cat*? (In the middle)

Sound Segmentation

Ask students to break a word apart into sounds. Students can do this orally or on paper. You can also use [Elkonin sound boxes](#) as a visual tool to show each sound or phoneme in a separate box. The student can move a small object like a coin or toy car into the box when they hear that sound.

- What sounds do you hear in the word *sit*? (/s/ - /l/ - /t/)
- What sounds do you hear in the word *chip*? (/chi/ - /i/ - /p/)

Word Manipulation Through Phoneme Deletion

As students become good at phonemic awareness activities, increase the demand by challenging them to remove a phoneme from a word or divide compound words.

- Say *hot dog* without the word *dog* ... (hot).
- If I said *blast* without the /b/, I'd have ... (last). If I said *stink* without the /t/, I'd have ... (sink).
- What sound do you hear in *meat* that is missing in *eat*? (/m/)

Letter-Sound Association

Ask students to identify the letter that makes the sound in a particular position in a spoken word.

- What letter goes with the first sound in the word *dog*? (d)
- What letter goes with the last sound in the word *kite*? (t)

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Prewriting Activities

What to do: Use these warmups with students when you start a writing activity. Provide sample texts to give students a model for writing, inspiration for creativity, and motivation to do their best work. These activities can be done individually, in pairs, in small groups, or as a whole group depending on the writing task and time allotted.

Why it matters: Prewriting activities generate questions and ideas that will help students begin. They also help students organize their thoughts and produce more focused writing.

Activity	Description	Sample texts or resources to use
Alphabet Book or Picture Dictionary	Write the letters of the alphabet, A through Z, each on a page of a booklet to create an alphabet book or picture dictionary. For an alphabet book, students can list words that start with the letter on the page. For a picture dictionary, students can draw and label pictures that start with the letter on the page.	
Choosing Sides	Pick an issue or current event and write a strong statement that will generate differing opinions (e.g., “Pizza is better than hamburgers”). Under the statement, draw a horizontal line designating “Agree” at one end and “Disagree” at the other end. Have students check or put an X somewhere on the line to show the strength and position of their opinion, and have them note a reason under it. After discussing student opinions, read a text about the issue and see if students’ thinking changes.	
What’s Your Opinion?	Write an interesting yes/no or multiple-choice question (e.g., “Do dogs make better pets than cats, hamsters, or birds?”). Make a chart for students to mark their votes. Gather results and help students express their opinions and listen to opinions that differ. Staff may also want to lead students in creating a graph to represent the data they collect.	
Brainstorm Web	Invite students to create a giant web of ideas, using a starter word in the middle of a piece of paper. Add to the web by connecting one thought or idea to another. Each addition is one word, in a circle, with a line to the connecting word or idea, whether the original or another addition. Have students share their thinking as they build the web and connect ideas.	



Activity	Description	Sample texts or resources to use
Venn Diagram	Challenge students to find similarities and differences in three objects, topics, or places. Draw three large intersecting circles, two on top, one on the bottom. Where circles overlap, list commonalities. Where there is no overlap, list unique features. The goal is to get at least one commonality in the center and at least two in each of the three other overlapping areas.	
Group Poem	Inspire students to write poetry. Start with a sentence or phrase, explaining that it's the first line of the poem. Everyone will add a line or two, building off the previous line. Students will collaborate, using descriptive language and poetic elements.	
Get the Facts!	Ask students to research local and national news stories or reference sources to gather information about a particular person, issue, topic, or event. Have them answer the questions of who, what, where, why, when, and how on sticky notes to create a fact chart.	
Letter to the Editor	Have students work together to write a letter to the editor. Outline the basic parts of the letter and generate topics to write about. Have students vote on a topic to address. Start with a sentence or phrase, explaining that it's the first line of the letter. Everyone will add a line or two, building off the line before. Students will collaborate, using persuasive language.	
Storyboard	Provide each student with a storyboard outline (e.g., three squares, six squares, or eight squares). Each square will represent a scene or phase of their story. Have the students illustrate and write a description for each square.	
Story Starter	Write the first line of a story (e.g., "Once upon a time, there lived a handsome frog ...") For ideas, go to http://thestorystarter.com). Everyone will add a line or two, building off the line before. Students will collaborate using transition words, plot elements, and figurative language. The final story should have a beginning, middle, and end.	

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Reader Questionnaires




What to do: Have an adult administer the questionnaire to each student individually. You'll gain insight by completing the process one-on-one because some students will share additional information about their answers as you go along.

Why it matters: Research has shown students' attitudes toward reading are directly linked to their reading performance. Understanding students' attitudes about reading provides important information you can use when designing and facilitating out-of-school time activities.




Reader Questionnaire: K-1




Student's name: _____ **Date:** _____




How do you feel about reading in school?   

How do you feel about spending free time reading?   

How do you feel about getting a book for a present?   

How do you feel when your teacher reads a book to the class?   

How do you feel about reading instead of playing?   

How do you feel when you have to read aloud in class?   



Reader Questionnaire: Grades 2-3

Student's name: _____ Date: _____

I'm a good reader.

A lot like me	A little like me	A little different from me	A lot different from me
---------------	------------------	----------------------------	-------------------------

I make pictures in my mind when I read.

A lot like me	A little like me	A little different from me	A lot different from me
---------------	------------------	----------------------------	-------------------------

My teacher thinks I'm a good reader.

A lot like me	A little like me	A little different from me	A lot different from me
---------------	------------------	----------------------------	-------------------------

I'm getting better at reading.

A lot like me	A little like me	A little different from me	A lot different from me
---------------	------------------	----------------------------	-------------------------

I don't like reading something when the words are too hard.

A lot like me	A little like me	A little different from me	A lot different from me
---------------	------------------	----------------------------	-------------------------

I like when my teacher asks me questions about what I'm reading.

A lot like me	A little like me	A little different from me	A lot different from me
---------------	------------------	----------------------------	-------------------------

I like to read for fun.

A lot like me	A little like me	A little different from me	A lot different from me
---------------	------------------	----------------------------	-------------------------

I read better than other kids in my class.

A lot like me	A little like me	A little different from me	A lot different from me
---------------	------------------	----------------------------	-------------------------



Reader Questionnaire: Grades 4-6

Student's name: _____ Date: _____

I'm a good reader.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	----------	-------------------

If the teacher discusses something interesting, I might read more about it.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	----------	-------------------

I only read when I have to for school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	----------	-------------------

I don't like reading something when the words are too hard.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	----------	-------------------

Reading makes me feel happy inside.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	----------	-------------------

When I read, I can figure out words better than other kids.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	----------	-------------------

My teacher thinks I'm a good reader.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	----------	-------------------

I understand what I read as well as other kids do.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	----------	-------------------



Reader Questionnaire: Grades 7-12

Student's name: _____ **Date:** _____

If the teacher discusses something interesting, I might read more about it.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	----------	-------------------

I only read when I have to for school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	----------	-------------------

I enjoy spending free time reading.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	----------	-------------------

I understand what I read as well as other kids do.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	----------	-------------------

My classmates think I'm a good reader.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	----------	-------------------

When I read, I don't have to try as hard as I used to.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	----------	-------------------

I read more than other kids.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	----------	-------------------

I believe reading will help me get ahead when I'm no longer in school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	----------	-------------------

Being able to read well is important to me.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	----------	-------------------

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Reading Comprehension Checklist

What to do: Use this checklist to ask different levels of comprehension questions and to make sure students understand and analyze the text during the reading process. Questions should range from literal, knowledge-based questions to higher-order questions that require students to make inferences, synthesize information, analyze and evaluate, and make judgments.

Why it matters: Comprehension questions help identify students who read the text well but have difficulty creating meaning from it, and those who have very concrete thought processes versus those who can draw from experiences or from the text to connect and synthesize information. Armed with knowledge of students' strengths and areas for growth, educators can individualize literacy activities.

Questions to Ask

Literal Questions

Who? What? Where?
When? How? What does _____ mean?

Questions That Require Inference and Synthesis

Why?
What caused ...?
How are _____ and _____ alike? How are they different?
Tell me in your own words
What happened first, second, third?
What is [the character/setting] like?
How do you think [character] was feeling?
What is the main message or idea of this text?

Questions that Require Analysis, Evaluation, and Judgment

What do you think will happen next? Why do you think so?
What would happen if ...?
Do you think [action] was [good or bad/right or wrong/justified or unjustified]?
Do you agree with the [actions/decisions/choices] of [character]?
If this story were told from [character]'s point of view, how would the story change?

Tips for Building Background Knowledge

Each reader brings a unique set of skills, abilities, knowledge, and life experiences to each text. Building students' background knowledge is an important way to help them understand what they read. In out-of-school time, you can:

- Read aloud and discuss a variety of engaging texts written for different purposes and audiences.
- Teach new words before reading activities, and continue to use them afterward.
- Use visual aids.
- Provide rich learning experiences. Each field trip to a farm, concert, science lab, or town council meeting expands students' worlds!



Student Reading Strategies for Comprehension Checklist

Directions: Staff can assist younger students in using this checklist after reading; older students may use this checklist independently. Students fill out the checklist to monitor their comprehension and reflect on the reading strategies they used.

Student name: _____ Date: _____

Title of text: _____

Reading Strategies I Used Today	Yes	No
Thought about what I know		
Knew why I was reading		
Previewed text		
Made and checked predictions		
Created mental images		
Asked and answered questions		
Made inferences		
Monitored my understanding		
Used “fix-up strategies” (e.g., reread a passage, slowed down, read ahead, identified unknown words)		
Identified main ideas and summarized		

What strategy was most helpful today? Why?

What can I do to improve my reading comprehension?

Note: Some ideas in this checklist were adapted from the [Florida Center for Reading Research](#).

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Reading Fluency Strategies

What to do: Choose fluency improvement strategies that fit your students, resources, time, and staff. You can use multiple strategies at once or use different strategies at different times.

Why it matters: Reading fluency is the ability to read text accurately, quickly, and with proper expression ([National Reading Panel, 2005](#)). It's the all-important bridge between word recognition and comprehension. Fluent readers can focus on the content of what they're reading, rather than on the process of sounding out words. The more fluent a reader is, the better equipped they are to tackle longer and more complex texts.

Strategy	Description	How I Can Use This Strategy
Read Aloud (Modeling)	The teacher reads the text aloud to model or demonstrate fluency.	
Audio-Assisted Reading or Audiobooks	Students listen to recordings of stories fluently read aloud while following along in a book. (See next page for ideas.)	
Buddy Reading	An adult or older-grade/higher-ability student reads aloud to model reading.	
Choral Reading	All the students read the same text aloud at the same time along with the teacher.	
Echo Reading	The teacher reads a line, paragraph, or page of the text aloud and all the students repeat it aloud together. This continues until they read all of the designated text.	
Repeated Reading	Students practice rereading text individually, in pairs, or in a small group. Students may reread part of a book or specific phrases.	
Partner/Paired Reading	Each student has a copy of the text. Students can take turns reading aloud and giving support or feedback to one another.	
Independent or Silent Reading	Students practice reading text on their own. They may also read at home and track hours in a log.	



Strategy	Description	How I Can Use This Strategy
Poetry/Rhymes	Students learn and read various types of poetry/rhymes. Students recite poetry/rhymes independently or aloud to others as they are comfortable.	
Readers Theater	Students receive copies of a text and practice reading for performance. Memorization of text isn't necessary. Students may have individual roles to act out using props.	

Audiobook Resources

Reading aloud to children is one of the best ways to improve their reading skills. Audio-assisted reading can allow more children in your program to benefit from hearing fluent readers model for them:

- **PBS Kids Read-Alongs** offers YouTube videos of authors and famous people reading books aloud. Perfect for story time or read-alongs.
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLa8HWWMcQEGStVxurBtLn8nkDxGc3j3ow>
- **Story Seeds** is a podcast that features short story collaborations between children's authors and students ages 6-12. Also, students can submit their own story ideas.
<https://www.storyseedspodcast.com>
- **Storyline Online** allows you to stream videos of celebrities reading children's books:
<https://storylineonline.net/library/>
- **Storynory** is a podcast that features short retellings of myths, fables, fairy tales, and folklore from all over the world. Most are just a few minutes long.
<https://www.storynory.com/>
- **The Libby app** lets you borrow audiobooks for free from your local library. Check for English and Spanish. <https://libbyapp.com>

Let families know about these resources, and consider helping them access the resources during a Family Literacy Night. You can help them sign up for a library card (if they don't have one already), download the Libby app, and bookmark other sites on their smartphones.

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Six Stages of Reading Development: A Skills Checklist

What to do: Use this checklist to assess students' current stage of reading development.

Why it matters: Knowing a student's current stage of reading development can help you provide reading activities and materials that are challenging but accessible. Meeting students "where they are" and building on current knowledge and skills builds their confidence and helps them advance to the next stage.

Student's Name:	Skill Check Date:
Stage 1: Visual Cue Word Recognition Children play with oral language, learn about the world around them, and develop skills they'll later apply when learning to read.	
	Pretends to read books
	Labels objects in books
	Comments on characters in books
	Listens to stories
	Recognizes print in the environment (for example, company logos)
	Knows that it's the print that is read in stories, not the pictures
	Understands and follows oral directions
	Notices some sequences of events in stories
	May begin to attend to rhyming words
	May identify a few letters, especially those from their own name
	May begin to attend to beginning sounds of words
Stage 2: Phonetic Cue Word Recognition Children generate rhyming words and sentences with alliteration, separate the beginning sound of a small word from the rest of the word, and use letter and sound relationships to recognize words.	
	Knows the parts of a book and their functions
	Begins to track print when listening to text being read
	Recognizes and can name all uppercase and lowercase letters
	Understands the relationship between the sounds in a spoken word and the sequence of letters in the word when it's written down



	Learns most one-to-one letter-sound correspondences
	Recognizes some words by sight, especially very common ones (e.g., a, the, I, my, you, is, are)
	Notices when simple sentences fail to make sense
	Makes predictions based on illustrations
	Can hear a word and separate it into its distinct sounds (mat = /m/-/a/-/t/)
	Given spoken sets like “dan, dan, den” can identify the first two as being the same and the third as being different
	Given spoken sets like “dak, pat, sen” can identify the first two as sharing the same middle sound
	Can merge spoken word parts into whole words (cow + boy = cowboy)
	Given a spoken word, can produce a rhyming word
Stage 3: Controlled Word Recognition	
Children acquire accurate word-recognition skills, which means they’re able to make use of all the letter information in a word.	
	Reads aloud with accuracy and comprehension any grade-appropriate text
	Uses letter-sound correspondence knowledge to sound out unknown words when reading text
	Recognizes common sight words (e.g., have, said, where, two)
	Monitors own reading and self-corrects when an incorrectly identified word doesn’t fit with the surrounding words
	Reads and comprehends both fiction and nonfiction that’s grade appropriate
	Discusses similarities in characters and events across grade-appropriate stories
	Reads and understands simple written instructions
	Predicts and justifies what will happen next in stories
	Discusses prior knowledge of topics in texts designed to inform or instruct the reader
	Describes new information gained from texts in their own words



Stage 4: Automatic Word Recognition	
Children can recognize words accurately and with relatively little effort. This stage of reading development is all about the reader gaining control of reading processes.	
	Reads aloud with fluency any grade-appropriate text
	Reads and comprehends both fiction and nonfiction text that's grade appropriate
	Uses letter-sound correspondence knowledge and structural analysis to decode unknown words
	Reads longer selections and beginning chapter books independently
	Can point to or clearly identify specific words or wordings that are causing comprehension difficulties
	Summarizes major points from text
	Distinguishes between cause and effect, fact and opinion, and main idea and supporting details
	Asks how, why, and what-if questions in interpreting nonfiction texts
	Uses prior knowledge and context clues to aid comprehension
	Begins to learn from independent reading
	May exhibit stronger listening comprehension than reading comprehension
	Recognizes most words that are in their personal spoken vocabularies
Stage 5: Strategic Reading	
Word recognition skills are automatic, and children routinely use reading comprehension strategies, including basic "fix-up" strategies when they fail to understand something they read.	
	Demonstrates automatic word recognition and fluent reading
	Reads aloud with fluency any text that's grade appropriate
	Regularly uses strategies to aid comprehension
	Selects the appropriate strategy to fit the need
	Responds to increased demands of text
	May demonstrate better reading comprehension than listening comprehension
	Reads a wide variety of texts
	Understands more than one point of view
	Deals with more than one set of facts and theories, though integration may still be at a beginning level



Stage 6: Proficient Adult Reading	
The defining feature of this stage of reading development is highly developed comprehension abilities, which depend on highly skilled word recognition. Proficient readers are insightful, analytical, and reflective.	
	Is highly skilled at word recognition
	Demonstrates highly developed reading comprehension (may be domain- or subject-specific)
	Can make higher-order connections within and across texts
	Integrates knowledge from a wide variety of sources
	Selects text to match need
	Constructs new ideas and knowledge from reading
	Grapples successfully with difficult text
	Handles increasingly complex vocabulary
Comments:	

If you know how to read, then the whole world opens up to you.

— Barack Obama

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Step-by-Step Literacy Adventures

What to do: Use the literacy adventures in this tool to engage students and support all aspects of language development. Ideal grade levels for each are noted.

Why it matters: Rich literacy experiences enable students to become active, engaged members of worldwide community of learners. Strong literacy skills promote learning across all subjects and throughout life's experiences.

Adventure #1: Interactive Read-Alouds

Grades: K-12

Time Commitment: 15-20+ minutes; daily for K-3, weekly for 4-8, monthly for 9-12

Most would agree that reading aloud to young children is beneficial to early literacy development. However, it has become clear that reading aloud bestows similar benefits to students in upper grades — including middle school and high school.

What to do: In as few as 15 to 20 minutes a day, out-of-school time practitioners can help students reap the benefits of exposure to all types of reading materials, particularly ones that are on and above their present levels of independent reading. Use these tips to facilitate read-aloud activities.

Why it matters: Read-alouds are powerful. Without fear of failure, listening to a good story allows students to imagine, wonder, and question. They motivate, excite, build background knowledge, support language acquisition, model fluent reading, introduce students to multiple genres of literature, build comprehension skills, and support the development of thinking skills.

Think Aloud

Reading aloud is most influential when it involves more than just reading the words. During an interactive read-aloud, the reader occasionally stops and poses an open-ended question, a thought, a wondering, or a “think-aloud.” These opportunities to connect text to real-life experiences and issues make stories come alive. The conversations and discussions that result deepen comprehension and impact.

Turn and Talk

A simple way to provide frequent opportunities to engage in conversation is to stop reading and have students turn to another student and briefly talk something through. It's important that students understand how to take turns and share equal talking time.

Open-ended questions help students to think critically and require more than a few words to answer. Listen in on paired conversations in turn-and-talk to keep conversations moving and take



the pulse of student understanding of text. To keep student conversations on track, consider providing a structure for the discussion. For example:

First student: “When the book said _____, I was thinking _____ because _____.”

Partner: “I agree with you because _____.” Or “I disagree with you because _____.”

How to Conduct an Interactive Read-Aloud

- Read the material yourself before sharing with students.
- Mark text with potential spots to stop and pose a question, thought, or think-aloud.
- Include frequent opportunities for students to talk about texts. Use turn-and-talk or other partner and group discussion strategies.
- Set the stage before reading each day. Discuss what you read previously and what might happen next.
- Make the book come alive. Use expression and tone to layer meaning. Try voicing characters uniquely and pausing to create suspense.
- Make the listening environment comfortable.
- Limit sessions to 20 minutes or less.

Tips for Implementing Interactive Read-Alouds

- Read aloud from a variety of genres: fiction, nonfiction, informational texts, poetry, popular and news magazines, newspapers, picture books, and more.
- Find ways to connect characters, events, settings, and other details to the lives of students.
- Make reading aloud routine. Schedule a time that fits in the daily routine of your program.
- Ask students to suggest read-aloud selections.

Extension Activities

- Follow up on read-alouds with art or writing projects that use the readings as jumping-off points.
- Look for other books by favorite authors or on topics of special interest.
- Develop readers theater scripts (see Adventure #3) or plays to act out interesting or important scenes from texts.
- Build literacy mystery boxes. These boxes hold items related to a story you’ll read. For example, to help students predict what *Jumanji* by Chris Van Allsburg is about, you could include a game piece, a set of dice, a plastic lion, an umbrella, and a plastic chimpanzee.

Resources

- **Reading Is Fundamental** (<https://www.rif.org/>). This national organization promotes reading aloud. Find book lists and many other resources here.
- **National Association for the Education of Young Children** (<https://www.naeyc.org/>). Explore the Literacy page of this website for information and ideas about reading aloud: <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/literacy>.
- **Reading Rockets** (<https://www.readingrockets.org/>). See the Reading Aloud page of this website for ideas about reading in your program, information from research, and professional learning materials for practitioners: <https://www.readingrockets.org/topics/reading-aloud>.



Adventure #2: Guided Oral Reading

Grades: 1-5

Time Commitment: 15 minutes per student, 1-3 times per week (less for older, stronger readers)

Guided reading is best accomplished with reading passages of 50 to 200 words. These may be pages from any textbook or library book. However, it's important that the reading material be easy enough for the student to read with few or no errors. Here's a good rule of thumb: The student should make no more than one error every 20 words (this means the student is reading with an accuracy rate of about 95 percent). It's easy reading that makes reading easy!

What to do: Familiarize yourself with the procedures for guided reading below. Consult with school-day staff for additional insight or clarification. Locate appropriate texts for the readers in your program.

Why it matters: Reading fluency is one of several critical components of reading comprehension. Fluent readers can read with speed, accuracy, and appropriate expression. Guided oral reading is one strategy for providing students opportunities to practice fluent reading.

How to Conduct Guided Oral Reading

1. An adult or peer coach reads the selection aloud, modeling fluent and expressive reading.
2. The student then rereads the passage, practicing and rehearsing for fluency. The coach provides error correction and feedback during the reread. Watch a coach providing correction and feedback for a repeated reading in this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rrrLJR7Zbq0>.
3. Types of reading errors students may make:
 - **Mispronunciations:** Not representing the oral version of a written word as expected.
 - Example: The knife is sharp.
 - Student: The k'nife is sharp.
 - **Omissions:** Leaving out a word or words.
 - Example: That tall tree is an oak.
 - Student: That tree is an oak.
 - **Additions:** Saying a word or words that do not appear in the text.
 - Example: The little girl has a cookie.
 - Student: The little girl has a chocolate cookie.
 - **Hesitations:** Pausing longer than four seconds.
 - Example: The boy was fishing at the lake.
 - Student: The boy was /f/... /fi/...
4. When a student makes one of these errors, the coach should let the student read to the end of the sentence to allow for self-corrections. A self-correction is when the student makes an error but realizes the mistake — either immediately or after they have read more — and corrects the error spontaneously. If the student does not self-correct, the coach should point to the error, pronounce the word correctly and have the student repeat the word. Next, the student should



reread the entire sentence with the correct word. The coach shouldn't guide the student in "sounding out" the word or figuring out the word in another way. The purpose of this activity is to provide practice at reading fluently. The coach should simply model for the student — once they are finished — reading the entire sentence while emphasizing the word that the student is having difficulty with.

5. The student reads the passage aloud again one to two times, working toward improving speed, accuracy, and expression.
6. After these rehearsals, the student reads the passage back to the coach who offers feedback and encouragement. Having the coach listen to the student allows for immediate guidance, which helps the student improve fluency. Examples of coaching comments:
 - "You read the words correctly, Sean, but you read so fast that it was hard for me to understand what you were saying."
 - "LaKeshia, the way you made each character sound different in this dialogue was fantastic!"
 - "I really like how you paused between sentences. This gave me a chance to think about the author's message. Now think about finding places to pause for just a second more inside longer sentences."
 - "I loved how you made your voice strong and loud in this section, Mateo. It really told me that this part of the passage was important."
 - "Try slowing down here and making your voice a bit softer."

Adventure #3: Readers Theater

Grades: 2-12

Time Commitment: One week, 30 minutes per day (more for longer or student-written scripts)

Unlike traditional theater, readers theater needs no costumes, props, or memorization. Reading aloud from a script, readers use only their voices, facial expressions, and gestures to interpret the emotions, attitudes, and motives of characters. The goal is to effectively read a script aloud, so the audience visualizes the action.

What to do: Review the steps and tips below for implementing a readers theater. If this is your first experience with readers theater, you might want to check with a school-day English language arts teacher or visit the [Reading Rockets website](#) to watch a video and find scripts that fit your students' interests and abilities.

Why it matters: This highly engaging and motivating reading strategy promotes connected text fluency — reading aloud with expression and confidence. Repeated reading of scripts is the key component of readers theater. Research shows that repetition builds word-level automaticity, which enables a focus on oral reading expression. Students are more likely to reread if they know they'll be performing for an audience. Because fluency is an important issue for English learners, this strategy is supportive for them.



How to Conduct Readers Theater

1. Locate or choose a script that is appropriate in content and difficulty for the readers.
2. Model expressive reading of the script.
3. Assign reading parts that include student voice and choice. Try choral reading and echo reading to boost reading confidence before asking individuals to read on their own.
4. Ask students to read and reread to practice expression.
5. Practice the basics of performing (i.e., speaking loudly and clearly so the audience can hear and not worrying about small mistakes).
6. Perform for an audience!

Tips for Implementing Readers Theater

- Model expressive reading.
- Introduce readers theater using prepared scripts. Students need to grasp the concept of readers theater and become familiar with the format of a script before writing their own.
- Give the students lots of time to prepare. Emphasize practicing and rereading. Practice roles in different ways: individually and in small groups, privately and in front of others.
- Rehearse with the readers, providing needed direction and support around interpretation, pacing, expression, volume, positions, and motions.
- Teach the basic steps of performance: how to use highlighters to mark the part, how to interpret the part and read expressively, how to hold the script, and when to assume various stage positions.
- Begin with short presentations.
- Perform for an audience as often as possible.
- Use props sparingly.

Extension Activity: Writing Scripts for Readers Theater

Once students build confidence using fully developed scripts, they might begin adapting and even writing their own scripts. The power of readers theater increases when students integrate reading, writing, and thinking skills. In the process of breaking down a story to turn it into a simple script, students learn about fundamental aspects of literature, such as character, plot, setting, and structure.

When creating a script, students should first choose a story they like, or a section of a book that takes about five minutes to read. Stories are best suited for adaptation when they are rich in dialogue and have well-defined, exciting characters. A compelling storyline, a tale that flows at a steady pace, action, and conflict make a story a good candidate for readers theater.



Adventure #4: Book Clubs

Grades: 2-12

Time Commitment: From one week to a full program year

What to do: Book clubs are groups of readers who read the same book(s) independently then get together regularly to discuss what they've read. Review the steps below to familiarize yourself with how to set up a book club.

Why it matters: Book clubs can offer a positive, social, supportive reading experience for students, which can increase motivation for reading.

How to Conduct Book Club

1. Decide how often the group should meet. It might be weekly, especially for young students reading short books. Older students might choose a number of chapters to read each week, and meet weekly to discuss them, or they might agree to meet monthly and finish the book before the meeting.
2. Provide a variety of titles for children to choose from. Because it's unlikely that the whole group will always agree on one book, you may need to have the group narrow the decision down to two or three books and rotate the final decision among group members.
3. Have students lead a book discussion. Provide questions to jump start the discussions:
 - What was your favorite part and why?
 - How would you feel if you were _____?
 - What words would you use to describe _____?
 - Did you expect the book to end differently? If so, how?
 - Which character did you find most interesting?
 - What surprised you as you read?
 - What questions do you have after finishing this book?
 - What did you learn about?
4. Have students keep track of the books they've read.

Tips for Implementing Book Club

- A book club shouldn't feel like school. Don't assign questions or worksheets to complete. Children should simply read an agreed-upon book and be ready to talk about it with peers.
- When it's time to select a book, offer choices that vary by interest, genre, and difficulty.
- Small groups of three to six students work well because they result in more students being involved in engaging discussion. This may happen naturally as students gravitate to different books to read.

Extension Activities

- **Act it out.** Have students choose a favorite character and act out a scene from the chapter they are reading.
- **Write it out.** Have students choose two characters from the story and write a scene that could take place between those characters. After writing, they might act out the scenes.



- **Illustrate it.** Have students choose a scene to draw using the art supplies.
- **Review it.** Have students write a book review and rate each book using a star system. Create a chart for them keep track of the books they like best. Show them models of book reviews from newspapers or online book lists.

Resources

- **Planet Book Club** (<https://www.smplanet.com/planetbookclub/>). This website explains the methodology of book clubs, offers examples of book club materials, and has interactive components for students and teachers.
- **ReadWriteThink** (<https://www.readwritethink.org/>). This website provides an overview of literature circles (a structured format for book clubs) along with free resources that provide additional information about their benefits and how to implement them: <https://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/literature-circles-getting-started>.

Adventure #5: Literacy Focus Groups

Grades: 2-12, plus school-day partners and families

Time Commitment: Staff prep time: four hours (and two weeks advance notice to adult participants); focus groups: 30 minutes

What to do: Use this guide to plan focus groups to gain insights that can help you create literacy activities that are engaging and connected to student needs and program goals. It includes an overall framework and questions for school-day staff, students, and families.

Why it matters: Literacy is the single biggest predictor of academic success. Having input from all parties involved helps structure and target program literacy activities to increase their effectiveness.

How to Conduct Literacy Focus Groups

1. Decide on the purpose of your literacy focus group.
2. Decide which role group(s) to include in a focus group. For instance, you may decide to conduct one focus group with school-day staff, one with students, and one with families.
3. Decide how many people to include in the group, and when and where to conduct the focus group.
4. Decide on the format you'll use. Will it be virtual or in person?
5. Designate a notetaker.
6. Invite people to participate. Be sure to include the date, time, location, and purpose.
7. Use the script below to initiate conversation. It suggests icebreakers and activities to use with various role groups. Feel free to modify the script to fit your needs.



Literacy Focus Group Script

Opening

Thank you for participating in this focus group on literacy and reading for our 21st CCLC program. You've been selected to participate in this discussion because of the valuable insight you'll be able to provide. This discussion will last about 30 minutes. I'll be the group facilitator, helping to guide our discussion. I encourage each of you to share your ideas with the other members of the group.

I'll start by asking some general questions; however, it's your voice that I'm interested in hearing today. I will not participate in the discussion and will listen fully to what you have to say.

One last point before we begin: While we'll be using the information you provide to strengthen how we meet students' literacy needs, your identities and opinions will be kept confidential. We want this to be a safe space where everyone can speak openly and honestly.

That said, are there any questions before we begin?

School-Day Staff

Icebreaker: Let's go around the room. Introduce yourself to the group and tell us what you had for lunch yesterday.

Questions:

1. How do your students react when asked to read in class?
 - a. How do your students react when asked to read *aloud* in class?
 - b. How do your students react when asked to read *quietly* in class?
 - c. How does [specific student] react when asked to read in class?
2. Do your students generally appear confident in their reading ability?
Follow-up: Does [specific student] appear confident in their reading ability?
3. In what specific ways do your students tend to struggle in reading?
Follow-up: In what specific areas of literacy does [specific student] tend to struggle?

Students

Icebreaker: Let's go around the room. Tell us your name and your favorite food.

Questions (simplify for younger students):

1. Do you enjoy reading? Why or why not?
2. When you think about how much time you spend reading:
 - a. What percentage of that time is on a screen?
 - b. What are some of your favorite kinds of sites to read online? This could be subject-based websites, social media feeds, or blogs, for example.
3. What kinds of books (whether paper or electronic) do you like to read?
4. Are there any other kinds of paper materials that you like to read, such as magazines, graphic novels, or newspapers? Which ones?
5. When choosing something to read for yourself, what do you look for? For example, do you read the cover, look for certain authors, or choose based on the cover art?



Families

Icebreaker: Let's go around the room. Introduce yourself to the group and tell us how you would describe yourself in just three words.

Questions (emphasize that there are no right answers):

1. Do you have a lot of books or reading materials at home? What kinds?
2. Does anyone in your family have a library card? Would you be interested in getting a library card?
3. Do you enjoy reading?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. What kinds of books do you like to read?
 - c. What other kinds of materials do you like to read?

Closing

Final Question: Before we conclude this discussion, is there anything you'd like to add?

I'd like to thank everyone for participating in this focus group today. If you have any questions or concerns about what we've discussed during our time together, please reach out to our program director, [insert program director's name and contact information]. Also, please be on the lookout for future 21st CCLC events and activities and information on how you can continue your involvement in our literacy programming. Thank you, and enjoy the rest of your day!

Tips for Implementing Literacy Focus Groups

- Consider scheduling a virtual focus group with families so that those who work during program hours can participate.
- Some people may feel comfortable sharing their thoughts in a large group, while others may prefer to write their responses. If you accept written responses, review them with the whole group.
- Prepare a script to help you keep the focus on literacy, but let the discussion develop naturally.
- Follow up! Review the notes from the focus groups, identify themes (within and across focus groups), discuss findings with program staff, and decide what changes you'll make as a result of what you learned. Make a plan that's specific about the timeline for making the changes and who's responsible for each next step. Consider sharing information about the changes with the focus group participants so they can see the impact of their feedback.

This resource was developed in 2024 by the Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) National Technical Assistance Center (NTAC), funded under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Department) and administered by Synergy Enterprises, Inc. under Cooperative Agreement No. 287E230009 with the Department's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Department, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the Department or the federal government. This resource is in the public domain and is available at 21stcclcntac.org. Authorization to reproduce it in whole or in part is granted.





Strengths-Based Literacy Progression Ladders

What to do: Use these progression ladders in out-of-school time literacy activities to help staff and students identify the standards and key skills for different literacy strands at each grade level. Focus the work on strengths with the “I can” format.

Why it matters: Knowing what’s expected at each grade level helps staff have consistent and realistic expectations and provides them guidance when generating lessons and activities. Having this information gives students a target for what they’re trying to achieve and lets them see where they’ve been and where they’re headed next.

Strand: Reading Informational Texts	
Anchor Skill 10: Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.	
Grade	“I Can” Student-Friendly Outcome
11-12	I can read and comprehend grade 11 and above literary nonfiction proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
9-10	I can read and comprehend grades nine through 10 literary nonfiction proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
8	I can read and comprehend grades six through eight literary nonfiction independently and proficiently.
6-7	I can read and comprehend grades six through eight literary nonfiction proficiently, with support as needed at the high end of the range.
5	I can read and comprehend grades four and five informational texts like history, social studies, and science independently.
4	I can read and comprehend grades four or five informational texts like history, social studies, and science with support.
3	I can read and comprehend grades two and three informational texts like history, social studies, and science independently.
2	I can read and comprehend grades two or three informational texts like history, social studies, and science with support.
1	I can read informational texts on grade level with help.
K	I can actively participate in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.



Strand: Writing	
Anchor Skill 6: Use technology, including the internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.	
Grade	“I Can” Student-Friendly Outcome
11-12	I can use technology to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.
9-10	I can use technology to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products; to link to other information; and to display information flexibly and dynamically.
8	I can use technology to produce and publish writing, to present the relationships between information and ideas, and to interact and collaborate with others.
7	I can use technology to produce and publish writing, to link to and cite sources, and to interact and collaborate with others.
6	I can use technology to produce and publish a three-page paper and to interact and collaborate with others as needed.
5	I can use technology to produce and publish a two-page paper and to interact and collaborate with other students as needed under moderate guidance and support from adults.
4	I can use technology to produce and publish a one-page paper and to interact and collaborate with other students as needed under moderate guidance and support from adults.
3	I can use technology and my emerging keyboard skills to produce and publish writing assignments that include interacting and collaborating with other students as needed with some help from adults.
1-2	I can use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing alone or in a group of students with help from adults.
K	I can explore a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing alone or in a group with help from adults.

Strand: Speaking and Listening	
Anchor Skill 3: Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.	
Grade	“I Can” Student-Friendly Outcome
11-12	I can evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, and I can assess the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.



9-10	I can evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, and I can identify any false reasoning and exaggerated or distorted evidence.
8	I can delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims; evaluate the soundness of the reasoning, relevance, and sufficiency of the evidence; and identify when irrelevant evidence is introduced.
7	I can describe a speaker's argument and specific claims, and I can evaluate the soundness of the reasoning and the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence provided.
6	I can describe a speaker's argument and specific claims and distinguish claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.
5	I can summarize the points a speaker makes and explain the reasons and evidence supporting each claim.
4	I can identify the reasons and evidence a speaker provides to support particular points.
3	I can ask and answer questions about information from a speaker and offer details in my answers.
2	I can ask and answer questions about what someone says to gather additional information or deepen my understanding of a topic or issue.
1	I can ask and answer questions about what someone says to get additional information when I don't understand something.
K	I can ask and answer questions about what someone says to seek help or information when I don't understand something.

Strand: Language

Anchor Skill 6: Acquire and accurately use a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college- and career-readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

Grade	"I Can" Student-Friendly Outcome
9-12	I can use academic and content-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college- and career-readiness level and gather more vocabulary knowledge about a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.
6-8	I can use words and phrases that I learn through listening and reading and gather more information about a word or phrase when it's important to understanding or expressing an idea.



5	I can use words and phrases that I learn through listening and reading, including words that help to contrast, add to, and indicate a relationship.
4	I can use words and phrases that I learn through listening and reading, including words that describe actions or emotions, and that are central to the topic being discussed.
3	I can use words and phrases that I learn through listening and reading, including words that describe space and time.
2	I can use words and phrases that I learn through listening and reading and use adjectives and adverbs to describe.
1	I can use words and phrases that I learn through listening and reading and connect related ideas with linking words, like <i>because</i> , <i>and</i> , <i>but</i> , and <i>or</i> .
K	I can use words and phrases that I learn through listening and reading.

Adapted from www.thecorestandards.org.

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Text Genre Checklist

What to do: Review the list of text genres below. Place a check in the box next to each genre that’s available to the students and families in your program. On the next page, identify titles and sources to fill in any gaps you identify. You may want to ask a school or local librarian for recommendations that match your students’ ages, interests, and reading levels.

Why it matters: Access to materials written in various styles for a range of audiences and purposes can help students become proficient readers.

Fiction	Narratives	Fables	K-12
		Fairy Tales	K-5
		Fantasy	K-12
		Folk Tales	K-5
		Historical Fiction	K-5
		Myths and Legends	K-12
		Realistic Fiction	K-5
		Science Fiction	K-12
		Tall Tales	K-12
		Short Stories	6-12
		Novels	6-12
	Poetry	Nursery Rhymes	K-5
		Rhyming Poems	K-5
		Sonnets	6-12
		Free Verse	6-12
		Limericks	6-12
		Haiku	6-12
	Drama	Comedy	K-12
		Tragedy	K-12
Melodrama		K-12	
Farce		K-12	
Nonfiction	Narratives	Biography	K-12
		Autobiography	K-12
		Memoir	K-12
	Informational Pieces	Description	K-12
		Chronology/Sequence	K-12
		Compare and Contrast	K-12
		Cause and Effect	K-12
		Problem and Solution	K-12
		Essays	6-12
		Speeches	6-12
		Opinion Pieces	6-12
		Journalism	6-12
		Historical or Scientific Documents	6-12



Fill Your Gaps! Identify New Titles/Sources for Your Library

Grades	Genre	Suggested Titles/Sources
K-12	Fables	
K-5	Fairy Tales	
K-12	Fantasy	
K-5	Folk Tales	
K-5	Historical Fiction	
K-12	Myths and Legends	
K-5	Realistic Fiction	
K-12	Science Fiction	
K-12	Tall Tales	
6-12	Short Stories	
6-12	Novels	
K-5	Nursery Rhymes	
K-5	Rhyming Poems	
6-12	Sonnets	
6-12	Free Verse	
6-12	Limericks	
6-12	Haiku	
K-12	Comedy	
K-12	Tragedy	
K-12	Melodrama	
K-12	Farce	
K-12	Biography	
K-12	Autobiography	
K-12	Memoir	
K-12	Description	
K-12	Chronology/Sequence	
K-12	Compare and Contrast	
K-12	Cause and Effect	
K-12	Problem and Solution	
6-12	Essays	
6-12	Speeches	
6-12	Opinion Pieces	
6-12	Journalism	
6-12	Historical or Scientific Documents	

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Vocabulary Development Ideas and Activities

What to do: Review the concepts you can use to support students' vocabulary development. Then put the concepts in action by following step-by-step activity directions for a vocabulary collage or vocabulary parade.

Why it matters: A reader's vocabulary knowledge is the best predictor of their ability to understand text. Activities that improve students' vocabulary knowledge have a direct impact on word recognition, reading fluency, and comprehension.

Vocabulary Development Concept Ideas

Foster Word Consciousness

Word consciousness means being aware of and intrigued by the words and language in one's environment. Being word conscious can increase reading comprehension and help students become more engaged and motivated to read. Here are some simple ways to help students become more word conscious:

- Collect, catalog, or post examples of vivid or meaningful new words.
- Have students locate and share new and interesting words used outside of learning activities. Simply creating an avenue for them to pay attention to the language around them heightens awareness.
- Assign students roles as language detectives, asking them to notice and describe different ways people express similar thoughts.
- Look for interesting word choices in books and have students discuss how the meaning would change if the author chose a different word or phrase.
- Award points to students "caught" using chosen words in conversation or writing.

Play With Language

Students who understand that words and sentences can have more than one meaning are able to think flexibly about language, which is crucial to making sense of text. Students learn to monitor their reading more carefully and consider the context surrounding a word. Here are some ways to help students think about the flexibility of language and its impact on meaning:

- Use jokes, riddles, or multiple-meaning sentences.
 - The chicken was ready to eat. (What does this mean if a farmer says it? What about a chef?)
 - I saw her duck.
 - A duck brought some lip balm to the cash register and asked if he could put it on his bill.
- Play with idioms.
 - Learning idioms is a piece of cake! Introduce each idiom with a picture. Provide a definition and describe the origin of the idiom, if known.



- Here's an example: When something requires little effort to finish, it's "a piece of cake." The origin for this idiom is from the 1870s, when cakes were often given as prizes for winning competitions.
- Then make sure to put the idiom into context by using it in a variety of situations, so students understand the subtleties of its meaning and usage.
- Explore newspaper or magazine headlines, or advertisement copy.
 - Discuss the meaning of newspaper headlines like this one from the *New York Times*: "Balloons have become a high-flying business and sell at inflated prices."
 - Or talk about ad copy such as this from Volkswagen: "If gas pains persist, try Volkswagen."

Explore Word Meanings

Students who understand word meanings at a deep level are better able to access words for their own use to convey specific, accurate, or subtle distinctions. Models that help students explore word meanings from different perspectives encourage deep understanding. See the 21st CCLC NTAC tool titled **Graphic Organizers to Support Student Literacy** for models you can use.

Support English Learners

Acquiring vocabulary in a second language is one of the primary goals of literacy instruction for English learners. Here are some tips to facilitate second language vocabulary acquisition:

- Identify language within text that may be particularly difficult for English learners. Examples include prepositional phrases ("in light of," "by way of," "under the weather," "on the ball"), homonyms, idioms, and slang.
- Preteach essential vocabulary and phrases, using images and objects from everyday life — realia — as teaching aids. Include academic words that they might hear at school but not on the playground, like *analyze*, *summarize*, *forthcoming*, and *therefore*.
- Look for cognates — words that look and sound similar in English and in the student's first language.

Tips for Putting these Concepts Into Action

- Use the step-by-step instructions on the following pages to develop a vocabulary collage activity and a vocabulary parade activity.
- For examples of high-frequency words that students are likely to encounter at school or while reading, check with a school-day language arts teacher or see [The Word Up Project's vocabulary lists](#) for students in grades 2-8 (students in grades K-2 may use the grade 2 list).
- Use the "Root Words, Prefixes, and Suffixes" handout (on the fifth and sixth pages of this tool) beyond the activities to help students continue to learn about word meanings.



Activity 1: Vocabulary Collage

Duration: 45-60 minutes for the student activity (or up to a week if extension activities are included) **Suggestion:** Have students do this activity at least a week before a community art event so that the collages can be displayed at the event.

Learning Goals

- Understand how root words, prefixes, and suffixes can be used to discern word meanings.
- Become familiar with the meanings of common root words, prefixes, and suffixes.
- Practice writing explanatory texts.

Materials Needed

- Blackboard, whiteboard, or chart paper on an easel
- Copies of the Root Words, Prefixes, and Suffixes table found later in these activity directions
- Student-friendly magazines (e.g., *Time for Kids*, *Highlights*)
- Scissors
- Poster board
- Glue
- Writing paper
- Pens or pencils
- Large index cards

Preparation

- Set a date and invite family and community members to a student art event.
- Set up the room for small-group work (three to five people per group) in arts and crafts.
- Print one copy of the Root Words, Prefixes, and Suffixes table per group.
- Distribute supplies so that each group has a few magazines, a poster board, some glue, and scissors. Set aside writing paper and utensils until after collages are completed.
- Bring an example or photos of Transformer™ toys and write “Transformer” on the board easel.

What to Do

- Engage students by asking them to guess how the “Transformer” toy got its name. Hint that they can discover the answer by looking at the “Root Words, Prefixes, and Suffixes” handout. Show them how each word part in *transformer* has a meaning that, when combined, explains the way the toy works: <trans> = across or over, <form> = shape or structure, <er> = a person or thing performing an act. Therefore, a transformer is a robot (person/thing) that can change from one shape (form) to another (across).
- Explore the “Root Words, Prefixes, and Suffixes” handout with students. Have them brainstorm other examples of words that use those root words, prefixes, and suffixes. Ask, “How does knowing the meaning of the word parts help you decode the meaning of the word?” Record these example words and their word part(s) on the board or easel.
- Explain to the students that they’ll be creating a collage, giving it a name by using a combination of the word parts on the handout, and writing a short explanation about their collage. Their collages will form an art display for family and community members. For



example, if students create a collage of scenes from around the world surrounded by eyes and lenses, they might name it “transgeoscope” to convey “looking across the world.” Their text would explain what the collage represents and how it got its title.

- Organize students into small groups and ask each to spend a few minutes looking over magazines for pictures to inspire their collage. Each group should work together to make a collage that’s creative and unique. As they complete their collages, provide paper and writing utensils and have students try different combinations of word parts to title their work. After students agree on a title, have them collaborate to write an explanatory text about what their collage represents and how the collage got its title. The title of the collage, the names of the artists, and a final copy of the text should be written neatly on an index card and displayed next to the collage, like a display card in a museum.
- Present the collages to family and community members at a student art event. Have each group stand by their collage and explain their piece to visitors.
- Extend learning if time allows: Give small groups newspaper articles or other short informational texts and have a competition to see which group can find the most words with word parts from the handout in a set amount of time. Students can also create sculptures for this activity using clay, found objects, etc.

Evaluate (Outcomes to Look For)

- Students recognize word parts in the words they encounter.
- Students identify how word parts convey the meaning of a word.
- Students work collaboratively to create an art piece.
- Students write an explanatory text that conveys their ideas and information about their collage clearly and accurately.

Note: The activity described above was adapted from the “Name That Junk” activity in *Fun Literacy Activities for After-School Programs* by Sue Edwards and Kathleen Martinez, School-Age Notes, Nashville, TN, 2004.

See the next two pages for the “Root Words, Prefixes, and Suffixes” handout mentioned above. It’s ready for you to print and share!



Root Words, Prefixes, and Suffixes

Keep this handout! It has information you can use to unlock the meaning of new words you encounter at school, at work, while reading, or in everyday life. Here are some things to know:

- **Root words** are the part of a word that holds the most meaning.
- Many English words are formed by combining a Greek or Latin root word with a **prefix**, a **suffix**, or both.
- For example *reaction* combines a Latin root word (*act*) with a prefix (*re*, which means “back” or “again”) and a suffix (*tion*, which means “the action or process of doing something”).
- As shown in the chart below, some root words have **combining forms**. For example, the root word *ped* may be followed by an *e* or an *i* when combined with a prefix or suffix to form a word.
- Knowing about root words, prefixes, and suffixes can help you figure out what some words mean — even if you’ve never seen those words before!

Root Words, Meanings, and Examples

Root Words and Combining Forms	Meanings	Examples
act	do, move	action, react, actor, activate
astro	star	astronomy
auto	self	autobiography
bio	life	biography
brevi	short, brief	abbreviate
chrono	time	chronological
cosmo	universe	cosmological
dent	tooth	dentist, dental
form	shape, structure	formal, format
geo	earth	geology
hydro	water	hydroplane
macro	large	macrocosm
micro	small	microcosm, microscope
multi	many	multiply
ped, pede, pedi	foot	pedal, centipede, pedicure
phobia	fear	claustrophobia
phon, phone	sound	phonics, telephone
photo	light	photograph
scope	see	telescope



Prefixes, Meanings, and Examples

Prefixes	Meanings	Examples
ante-	before	anteroom
anti-	against	antibiotic
circum-	around	circumference
ex-, e-	out of, from	exit, escape
extra-	beyond	extraordinary
fore-	front	forehead
inter-	among, between	intersect
intra-	within	intramural
mis-	wrong	mistake, mislead
non-	no, not	nonsense
post-	after	postseason
pre-	before	preview, presume
semi-	half	semiannual
sub-	under	submarine
super, sur-	above, over	superintendent, surpass
trans-	across, over	transfer
ultra-	beyond	ultraviolet

Suffixes, Meanings, and Examples

Suffixes	Meanings	Examples
-an	related to	American, urban
-ary, -arium, -orium	place for	aviary, aquarium, auditorium
-ent, -ant	one who	president, assistant
-er	a person/thing performing an act	runner, handler
-ess	female	heiress
-est	superlative	warmest, smartest
-ful	full of	playful
-hood	state of being	neighborhood, childhood
-ish	like, tending toward	greenish, smallish
-ive	of, having the quality of	pensive
-ize	cause to become or resemble	Americanize, rationalize
-less	without	smokeless, meatless
-ment	act of, state of	bewilderment
-ous	full of, possessing	joyous
-sect	to cut, divide	bisect



Activity 2: Vocabulary Parade

Duration: 45 minutes (can be extended)

Learning Goals

- Understand the meaning of a vocabulary word.
- Use descriptive text and visual representations to express what the word means.
- Teach the meaning of the word to others.

Materials Needed

- Vocabulary word list appropriate to grade level of students (check with a school-day language arts teacher or see [The Word Up Project's vocabulary lists](#))
- Colored paper
- Paper plates
- Yarn or string
- Scissors
- Drawing utensils (e.g., colored pencils, crayons, markers)
- Tape
- Dictionaries (print or online)

Preparation

- Invite family and community members to attend students' vocabulary parade.
- Print enough copies of your vocabulary list so that students in small groups (three to four individuals) can share one list.
- Write each vocabulary word from the word list on a slip of paper.
- Make an example of a vocabulary headpiece and paper plate necklace to show students. (See examples from Debra Frasier, author of *Miss Alaineus: A Vocabulary Disaster*, at <https://www.debrafrasier.com/vocabulary-parades/in-school-vocabulary-parades/>.)
- Set up room for small-group work.
- Collect art materials and distribute so that each student will get a few sheets of colored paper, a paper plate, and enough yarn to hang the plate around their neck. Small groups can share scissors, tape, and drawing utensils.
- Have print dictionaries available or open an online dictionary such as www.merriam-webster.com in a web browser for student use.

What to Do

- Engage students by asking them why it's important to learn new words. Guide conversation around specific areas of study or careers (such as engineering, music, science, medicine, teaching, law practice, library science, or accounting) that will require knowledge of words typically used by people in that field. Ask for examples (e.g., *diagnosis* if you're a doctor or *leavening* if you're a baker).
- Explore the vocabulary list for the students' grade level. Ask students what words they know or have heard before and where they might see this word being used — for example, a basketball coach might use the word *bounce* (from the grade 2 list) as they teach the team how to play the game. Show students the vocabulary headpiece and paper plate necklace



you prepared and share your word, its meaning, a sentence that demonstrates its meaning, and an example of its use in real life.

- Explain that students will be creating their own vocabulary word costumes and presenting their words in a vocabulary parade. Organize students into small groups and have each student choose one of the prepared slips of paper. This will be their vocabulary word for the parade. Each student will design a headpiece using colored paper featuring their word. While some students are working on their headpieces, other students can write the definition of their word on the back of their plates. Help students use the yarn or string to turn their plate into a necklace.
- Encourage students to decorate their headpiece and plate necklace with paper cutouts, pictures, or symbols that will help them remember what their word means. They may also create wristlets or other costume pieces if they wish.
- As they work on their costumes, have students think of a sentence that demonstrates the meaning of their vocabulary word, and an example of where this word would be used. Have them practice this explanation in their small group and get feedback from their peers on their sentence and example. If they wish, students can write their sentence and example on the back of their plate, along with the definition.
- Present students' costumes in a vocabulary parade! Have students parade around and display their costumes to family and community members. Give each student an opportunity to share their word, its meaning, their sentence, and their example. Ask each student to also identify the meaning of one to two other vocabulary words they learned from the parade.
- Extend learning if time allows: Read *Miss Alaineus: A Vocabulary Disaster* by Debra Fraiser. You can find activity ideas to use with the book on the author's website at [In-School Vocabulary Parades](#).

Evaluate (Outcomes to Look For)

- Students work together to gain a better understanding of new vocabulary words.
- Students identify the meanings of two to three new vocabulary words.
- Students identify real-life uses of new vocabulary words.

The limits of my language are the limits of my world.

— Ludwig Wittgenstein

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Writers Workshop

What to do: To engage students in authentic writing tasks that motivate and empower them, incorporate a writers workshop that includes the five stages of the writing process described below.

Why it matters: The workshop setting helps students view themselves as writers capable of becoming more skilled by writing frequently for extended periods on topics they choose.

A writers workshop is a way to organize opportunities for young people to express themselves through writing. It's built on a process similar to the one aspiring professional writers might use. Here are the five stages of the writing process:

Prewriting

Students use this stage to brainstorm ideas, consider their audience and purpose for writing, and use graphic organizers to develop and connect ideas. For ideas to help students begin, see the **Prewriting Activities** tool.

Drafting

Students work independently at this stage. Support students individually as they write, offering praise and suggestions while being mindful of those who might be “stuck” or struggling with the task.

Revising

Show students how to revise their draft to make it clearer and more coherent. Model by reading your own writing and holding a “think-aloud” about ways you could improve it. For example, you might reorganize information, add details, make the language more interesting, or add a catchy title. Seeing you model the process — and then reading their work aloud to classmates during peer conferences — helps students understand what revisions they need to make.

Editing

Show students how to edit their writing so it's free of errors in grammar and usage. Helpful tools are the **Peer Editing Checklist** and **Editing Tips for Students and Writing Activity Leaders**.

Publishing

Having an authentic audience beyond the program or activity gives student writing more importance and helps students to see a direct connection between their lives and their literacy development. Create opportunities for students to publish their work in a variety of ways, such as a bulletin board, letter to the editor, website, or other community outlet.

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