



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.

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