

# Tips for Promoting Reading and Literacy

## In Out-of-School Time Programs for Children Ages 5-12

You don't have to be a literacy expert to help children develop reading, writing and communication skills - all part of literacy. Following are some simple ideas for promoting reading and literacy that can be implemented in any out-of-school time program.

**Create a Print-Rich Environment:** Make books a prominent part of your environment. Solicit book donations from families of children in the program, local businesses and booksellers. Develop a diverse book collection and rotate the books that are set out on a regular basis. Include plenty of simple books for new readers. Pop-up books can help younger children get interested in books. Children are also fascinated by "How things Work" books and books on favorite topics such as cars, airplanes, planets, and animals. Magazines with colorful pictures such as National Geographic are also a big hit. Include classic children's literature and books that emphasize development of positive character traits. Create a cozy, inviting reading corner with bookshelves, beanbag chairs, a rug, and pillows.

**Set Aside a Reading Time:** Set aside a regular time period every day or on certain days of the week when children read on their own or to each other. Let children see staff reading their own books during this time.

**Read Aloud:** Have children help you select books to read aloud to the group. Be sure to include multicultural books. Books with chapters work well for older children so that you finish one chapter each time you read. Younger children generally like stories that can be read in one session. Be sure that readers read with animation and enthusiasm. Young children especially like it when a reader changes voices for different characters.

**Create Plays or Skits from Favorite Books:** Have children work in small groups to create a play from a book they have read. Plays can be very simple, put together in an hour or so or they can also be elaborate, week- or month-long projects, complete with scripts and costumes.

**Assign "Reading Buddies":** Have older and younger children read to each other on a regular basis. Give older children simple training about appropriate "reading coach" techniques.

**Keep Journals:** Give each child a small notebook and set aside a few minutes each day for them to write and/or draw. Encourage children to write about thoughts and feelings as well as events of the day. Help children get started by giving them a question to answer such as: What is the best thing that happened to you today? If you could go back and do last week all over again, what would you do differently? Assign a staff person to regularly respond to journals through individual conversations with children or comments in their journal. Younger children can draw pictures in their journals and explain their drawings to staff. Drawing helps children express themselves on paper and prepare for writing.

**Start a Newsletter/Newspaper:** Have children write a regular newsletter about past and future neighborhood and/or program activities. They can include opinion columns, photos, interviews.

**Write Stories:** Have children make up and write out stories. Encourage them to draw illustrations for their stories and create storybooks. Children can work individually or in small groups. Use computer word processing programs if available.

**Read Instructions:** Ask children to read instructions for games, computer software, crafts, etc.

**Engage Children in Conversation:** Encourage staff to talk actively with children, to ask them questions about school, hobbies, and family life. Snack, recreation and transition time can be an especially opportune time for these conversations. As staff ask questions and listen attentively to

answers, children can learn to organize their thoughts, present clear answers, and enjoy conversation. Research shows that interactive conversation is very important to developing literacy and reading skills.

## RESOURCES

The following resources are offered as a sampling of the many resources available on this subject. This listing does not constitute an endorsement by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time.

### Books

The following books are available at your local bookstore or through an on-line bookseller.

*101 Read Aloud Classics* by Pamela Horn

*Children's Classics to Read Aloud* by Edward Blishen

*Developing Multicultural Awareness Through Children's Literature : A Guide for Teachers and Librarians, Grades K-8* by Patricia L. Roberts, Nancy Lee Cecil.

*The Service Learning Bookshelf: A Bibliography of Fiction and Nonfiction to Inspire Student Learning and Action* compiled by Cathryn Berger Kaye. Available by calling 310-397-0070.

### Web Sites offering Resources

For Elementary School-Aged Children (primarily K-3)

[www.nwrel.org/learns](http://www.nwrel.org/learns) - The LEARNS site features downloadable resources, innovative ideas for literacy practices, and conversations on timely issues with others in the field of literacy and education-based national service projects.

[www.ed.gov/inits/americanreads](http://www.ed.gov/inits/americanreads) - Offers information related to the America Reads challenge and links to many resources for promoting literacy. On-line publications available on this site include:

- Read\*Write\*Now! Basic Kit: Activities for Reading and Writing Fun
- Read\*Write\*Now! Partners in Tutoring program: ideas for activities, reading lists
- America Reads Challenge Resource Kit: Designed to assist in the set up of an America Reads Challenge project, offers tip sheets and further links

[www.ciera.org](http://www.ciera.org) - The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement's site includes a Toolkit for Tutors, reviews of publications, profiles of model programs and family literacy ideas.

[www.ash.udel.edu/ash](http://www.ash.udel.edu/ash) - The Alphabet Superhighway site contains ideas for tutoring sessions, ready-made activities for kids, and many resources and links.

For Older Children and Pre-Teens

[www.twc.org/forums/index.html](http://www.twc.org/forums/index.html) - WriteNet encourages direct dialogue between students, writers and teachers involving literary contests, e-mail feedback from teachers on writing, and correspondence with writers-in-residence.

[www.nypl.org/branch](http://www.nypl.org/branch) - For older children, the New York Public Library System offers "Teen Link" featuring a book list for young adult readers, writing by teens, and links to homework help.

[www.pen.org/readers](http://www.pen.org/readers) - Readers and Writers sends writers and their books into schools and out-of-school time programs to promote excitement about reading and writing.