



AFTERSCHOOL *news*



Improving Literacy Skills With Read Alouds

Who doesn't love a good story? Read alouds are great ways to expose students to literature and help them become better readers. Very young children respond well to books with vivid illustrations and predictable or repetitive patterns. Older students will be drawn to stories with engaging storylines that deal with subjects that match their interests.¹

Before you read aloud, take time to select a story that is appropriate for your students' ages and interests. Read the book ahead of time to anticipate questions students might ask and plan extension activities that students can do after the story. Once you have gathered students to hear the story, spend some time on a pre-reading discussion. By asking some questions related to the story, you help students tap into what they already know about a topic. Point out the cover, author, and illustrator. Students may also enjoy a picture walk—an activity where you flip through the book, look at illustrations, and ask students to predict the story's plot.

During the story, read with expression, using different voices, pitches, and emphases to bring the characters to life. Pause occasionally to let students look at illustrations and ask questions. You can also model good questioning by saying, "I wonder why . . ." or "This makes me think of . . ." Don't forget to ask students questions to check for understanding.

After you finish the story, ask students to give their feedback. What did they like about the story? What didn't they like—and why? This post-reading discussion will encourage students to connect the story to their own lives, other books they have read, and the world around them. The discussion will also improve comprehension and help them get started on any extension activities you have planned.

You can learn more about read alouds in the Afterschool Training Toolkit for Literacy at www.sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits/literacy/pr_read_aloud.html. Click "view video" to watch a video of a read aloud in an afterschool program.

¹ These read aloud tips come from the National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning's Afterschool Training Toolkit for Literacy. The literacy toolkit was developed by Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.



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The National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning helps state education agencies and local practitioners develop high-quality programs for academic enrichment as well as youth development activities.

www.sedl.org/afterschool/



FEATURED *resource*

WANT MORE LITERACY ACTIVITIES?

The Afterschool Lesson Plan Database has activities for six content areas, including literacy. Lessons are browsable by content area and grade level.

www.sedl.org/afterschool/lessonplans/index.cgi?location=menu&show_subject=Literacy

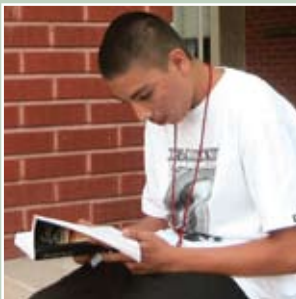


Photo by Ontario Middle School Success

"We know that kids love to read about what interests them—which means their lives and their friends' lives!"

SUZIE DOUGLAS
site coordinator

Ontario Middle School Success Afterschool Program

ONTARIO, OREGON

At the Ontario Middle School Success afterschool program in Ontario, Oregon, students learn about literacy by writing and presenting their own works. The program consists of a summer program and the afterschool program held during the school year. Literacy activities include journaling, scrapbooking, and writing poetry. Students compose an "I Am" poem by writing stories and then using words or phrases from those stories in their poems. Site coordinator Suzie Douglas points out how these activities lend themselves to mastering language arts standards: students writing poems practice using metaphors and synonyms, and the scrapbooking class helps students use paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting. They also practice writing rough drafts and editing their friends' writing. "We know that kids love to read about what interests them—which means their lives and their friends' lives!" Douglas says.

Day-school teachers report that afterschool participants have improved their grades and are beginning to express themselves in writing. Douglas notes that those aren't the only benefits. "Some of the biggest success comes when our students get up in front of large groups . . . to read their poems," she says. "The students are unlikely public speakers. Some are shy, some are considered 'troublemakers,' some are in gangs, and some struggle to speak English. But they read their words out loud, usually bringing tears to the audience."

IN YOUR words

Which of these literacy activities do you do in your afterschool program? (Select all that apply.)

- Read alouds
- Book discussion groups
- Story and literature dramatizations
- Writing
- Tutoring

To participate in this survey and view results, submit your vote at www.sedl.org/afterschool/afterwords/survey200803.html.

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SEND US A LINE

Does your afterschool program have a newsletter, Web site, or blog?

We would like to hear more about how afterschool programs communicate with families, community members, and day-school staff. If your afterschool program has a newsletter, Web site, or some other way of promoting your program, please tell us about it. E-mail us at afterwords@sedl.org with the word "communications" in the subject line.

EVENTS calendar

April 14–15 "Linkages to Learning"
Southeast Regional Conference
ATLANTA, GA

May 1–2 PEAK Afterschool Workshop Series:
Math and Science
DENVER, CO

For more events, visit our calendar at
www.sedl.org/afterschool/training/calendar.html.

Newsletter available online at www.sedl.org/afterschool/afterwords/