

EIGHT WAYS YOU CAN BRING LITERACY INTO YOUR AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM



Contributed by Sara Van Dyke, NAA Special Programs Consultant.

Many of us are aware that daily reading and literacy activity can enhance vocabulary, increase comprehension, and develop an understanding about story structure, among other skills. While young people practice these skills throughout the school day, afterschool programs can provide an environment and opportunities to complement these reading and writing practices. The afterschool environment is a great place where young people can explore their reading and writing interests and cultivate an enjoyment of literacy for life. Whether you've already established literacy practices or are just getting started, use these eight guidelines to broaden literacy learning in your program.

1 DAILY CHOICE.

Make literacy a choice for young people on a daily basis. Develop routines that encourage young people to read at their leisure or participate in a planned read-aloud. Incorporate a writing activity into the daily plan, such as writing a book review, creating a word puzzle or composing instructions for a building project. The possibilities are endless.

2 SPACE.

Create a dedicated space for young people to read and participate in literacy activities when they choose. This space should be near other quiet activities. Place a rug in this space as well as soft, comfortable seating options such as pillows and beanbag chairs. Be sure your library and writing supplies are easily accessible within this space.

3 WRITING MATERIALS.

Having a selection of writing supplies is key to encouraging writing practice. Include a variety of paper and writing utensils. If possible, incorporate technology options as part of your writing materials. Have word games such as Scrabble® and Boggle® as well as reference materials such as a dictionary, a thesaurus or grade-level spelling lists on hand to enhance vocabulary development.

4 LITERATURE SELECTIONS.

Provide a variety of genres including science fiction, comedy, poetry, mystery, fairy tales, historical fiction, nonfiction, autobiography and biography. Also include a variety of literary formats in addition to books, such as magazines, newspapers, graphic novels, audio books and electronic readers. Contact your school or public librarian

for recommendations on high-quality and inclusive literature selections. Be sure to incorporate literature for all age groups and reading levels.

YOUTH VOICE.

Encourage young people to express their voice in daily literacy plans. Invite young people to assist in creating daily writing activities and selecting literature that incorporates a range of interests. Keep literature selections fresh and inviting for youth by rotating a set of books in and out of your library on a monthly basis.

SCHOOL CONNECTION.

Learn about the reading programs or events taking place at students' schools. Partner with schools to discuss ways these programs and events can extend into the afterschool program. Invite school staff to visit and participate in the afterschool literacy activities by leading a writing activity or being a guest reader.

MOTIVATION.

One of the best ways to keep young people motivated to participate in literacy activity is to ensure reading and writing experiences are fun and tap into their interests. Other ways to keep youth motivated include setting a reading goal, either individual goals or a group goal, and celebrate achievement of the goal, showcasing young people's writing activities through presentations and displays, and providing opportunities for older youth to mentor younger youth.

EVALUATION.

Develop a method for program leaders and youth to evaluate the literacy environment and activities on a regular basis. Survey youth regarding their response to the literature selections, the comfort of the literacy environment, their response to writing activities and access to writing supplies. Invite young people to assist in determining a plan for making improvements based upon their feedback.

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SEE MORE AT: <http://naaweb.org/professional-development/item/594-8-ways-you-can-bring-literacy-into-your-afterschool-program>

OPENING DISCUSSION

What literacy practices have you established in your program?

Which of your current literacy practices are most effective? Least effective?

Which of the literacy practices included in the article do you think would be helpful and why (try to pick one specific practice)?

Which of these practices have you seen successfully implemented and what methods were used to implement the practice?

APPLICATION ACTIVITY

The youth in your program lack interest in participating in the literacy activities you have planned. Using the practices in the article, what steps might you take to increase their interest and participation levels?

What are some ways you can involve your families, community members, or school staff in your literacy activities?

CLOSING REFLECTION

What is one practice you would implement to improve your literacy program and what methods of implementation would you use?

If applicable, provide participants with the corresponding certificate of participation and if required ask them to complete the questions included on the certificate.

CERTIFICATE of PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Turnkey**PD**
STAFF DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

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_____ **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT HOURS, EARNED BY:**

CONTENT INCLUDED:

Incorporating literacy activity as a daily choice • Creating an environment conducive to literacy learning • Writing materials and literature selections • Encouraging youth voice • Utilizing the school community to enhance literacy practices • Motivating youth to participate in literacy activity • Evaluating literacy practices

FACILITATOR: _____ **DATE:** _____

- | List three practices to incorporate literacy into afterschool programming.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

- | What types of writing materials and literature would you utilize to encourage literacy engagement?

- | What are two ways to encourage youth to express their voice in relation to your literacy practices?
 - a.
 - b.

Supports Content Area 2, Levels 1-4 and Content Area 5, Levels 1-2 of the NAA Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals