

Literacy Resources for Out-of-School Time Programs

Out-of-school time (OST) programs have a unique opportunity to help youth build their literacy skills while engaging with literacy through a variety of practices. Light-touch literacy is the intentional strategic exposure of literacy practices that include conversation, reading, literacy games, and activities, and writing. The following resources, though not exhaustive, are shared to assist OST programs in their efforts to incorporate light-touch literacy practices such as read-alouds, book looks/independent reading, literacy play, reader's theater, conversation, and writing into programming.

Reading

Giving children the opportunity to read and engage with books can happen in various ways. There are several resources available for support with implementing read-alouds, independent reading, shared reading, and reader's theater. Here are a few:

- *Read aloud:* [Dialogic Reading: An Effective Way to Read Aloud with Young Children](#): a method of reading in which the adult aids the child in becoming the teller of the story through listening and questioning. The article provides fundamental techniques, prompts, and an example video to facilitate the application of Dialogic Reading. (Reading Rockets)
- [Paired Reading](#) is a research-based fluency strategy in which students read to each other. This resource provides processes for implementing paired reading, an example video in the classroom, links to language arts and social studies examples, and guidance for differentiated instruction (second language learners, students of varying reading skills, and younger learners). (Reading Rockets)
- A general overview of [Independent Reading](#), this article also offers suggestions for fostering the activity in the classroom. (Reading Rockets)
- This introduction to [Reader's Theater](#) and brief instruction includes an example video of Reader's Theater, lesson plans with scripts, and options to adapt the activity for math or social studies topics. The article concludes with guidance for differentiated instruction (second language learners, students of varying reading skills, and younger learners). (Reading Rockets)
- [Reader's Theater Scripts](#), divided by grade level and time of school year, and general instruction for performance. The scripts aim to facilitate essential practice in oral reading fluency and public speaking. Cost is dependent on the A-Z Reading membership plans. (Reading A-Z)
- Free [resources for readers' theater](#), including scripts, lesson plans, and relevant books. Supplemental resources include a general guideline for readers' theater and tips for application to the classroom. (Scholastic)
- [How to Make Independent Reading Work](#) provides seven valuable tips to gain positive results from independent reading activities. Information is conveyed in written form and in an animated YouTube video. (Reading Rewards)

Literacy Play

Literacy play and games allow children to engage with literacy in a different way. They can provide an exciting opportunity, motivation, problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, and fun! Literacy play can be used as an activity during programming or as a tool during transitions and brain breaks. The following resources include links to sample lessons and books for purchase.

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- [Energizers! 88 Quick Movement Activities That Refresh and Refocus K-6](#), by Susan Lattanzi Roser, includes instruction for a variety of brief “energizer” activities, labeled by grade level (K-6). These movement-based activities can be implemented during transition times, mornings, or as brain breaks to refocus and facilitate connection. (Available for purchase online or at your local bookstore)
- [80 Morning Meeting Ideas for Grades K-2](#), by Susan Lattanzi Roser, offers direction and resources for “Morning Meeting” time in K-2 classrooms. Aiming to begin the day in an engaging manner and build community, “Morning Meeting” includes activities, as well as friendly greetings, empowering sharings, and inspiring messages. (Available for purchase online or at your local bookstore)
- [79 Games to Play While Waiting In Line](#)- Plan transition times throughout the school day, aided by this collection of 79 games to play while waiting in line. Activities are generally imaginative, energizing, and collaborative.
- [9 Early Literacy Activities For Kids](#)- Mainly aimed at parents, PBS offers literacy activities that will extend the language ability and vocabulary of preschoolers. The activities do not require much equipment or preparation, allowing them to be conducted at home.

The Art of Conversation

Engaging children in conversation supports the development of their language and listening skills. The following resources offer ways to incorporate the practice of verbal conversation into programming.

- [Foundational Literacy Ties to Speaking and Listening: What Research Tells Us About Speaking and Listening](#) by McGraw Hill (2020), provides a brief overview of research surrounding the value of speaking and listening. Linked at the bottom of the article is the full research review consisting of recommendations for speaking and listening instruction, as well as an introduction to additional foundational literacy skills.
- Teaching Expertise provides [28 Elementary Speaking Activities](#), including 28 conversation-based activities to facilitate the incorporation of speaking and listening into daily play. Activities include tongue twisters, board games, and storytelling, ultimately aimed to improve literacy.
- This article, [Using E-Books to Get Young Readers Talking](#), published by Harvard’s Graduate School of Education, summarizes and highlights parts of a study exploring the efficacy of e-books in promoting literacy. Certain techniques with e-books can be used to improve literacy skills and, more specifically, incite conversation. The article outlines methods in which parents can guide children in developing oral skills with e-books.
- Sanford Harmony offers a conversation starter and community-building activity toolkit for older and younger youth. The toolkit is available for purchase online, or free downloadable versions are available for [younger youth](#) and [older youth](#).
- [Morning Meeting Question Cards](#) are available to help guide conversations in your program. Each card offers a new question. Try a new question for each day. Packets available in various themes, by month, etc.

Writing

Writing activities can be stand-alone activities that help kids practice writing, or they can be extension activities to expand upon what kids are reading.

- According to this article, [Poetry as a Tool for Students’ Personal Growth](#), poetry offers an accessible mode of assessing student language and vocabulary, confidence with language, spelling, writing, and grammar. A structure for an example poetry activity named the “re-creation myth,” is outlined.

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- [Magnetic Poetry](#) kits include magnetic words that are arranged/re-arranged on a magnetic board to create sentences, paragraphs, or stories. A variety of word kits are available for purchase.
- Story Writing Academy provides [10 Fun Writing Activities for Kids to Improve Writing Skills](#) including activities that can help children write in fun and creative ways.

Digital Resources

The following resources are online, accessible modes of developing literacy skills. Often engaging students with entertaining, interactive activities, digital resources are an effective way of expanding upon and practicing existing skills.

- [ABCYa](#) is an educational games website for children in grades preschool all the way through 6th grade. Literacy-specific games include those centered on speech and writing. A free version is available alongside three subscription options.
- [Bookr Class](#) is a reading app for children aged 4-14. Allowing access to 1000 books, 4000 flashcards, and 5000 games, the app is specifically aimed at those learning English as a second language. Bookr Class allows teachers to assign and monitor reading activities. The app is \$3.99/month or \$34.99/year.
- [Classroom Screen](#) is an online application that offers “highly customizable widgets” aimed at supporting teachers in the classroom. Widgets include those that organize lesson plans, collect feedback from students, and increase engagement. While the “pro” plan is priced at \$29 per year, Classroom Screen also offers the free-of-cost “basic” plan.
- [Education.com](#) consists of a collection of free, expert-developed digital resources, tools, and learning materials. Worksheets, games, and lessons can be sorted by grade level (Pre-K to eighth grade) and subject.
- [Epic!](#) is an ebook service for children aged 2 to 12, offering over 35,000 books. Selections include bilingual books in Spanish/English, Chinese/English, and French/English. Further, various statistics on reading can be tracked. This is a paid, subscription-based tool.
- [HeadSprout](#) is an adaptive, subscription-based online reading program for K-5 students. Adjusting based on the performance of students, Headsprout provides a customized format that can be monitored by instructors. Headsprout also offers lesson plans, a professional development blog, and offline activity suggestions.
- [Read Theory](#) provides free online reading activities customized to the individual abilities of students. Enabling teachers to diversify literacy instruction to span across individual levels, Read Theory also offers reports for tracking student progress. The platform has implemented game mechanics into the activities to encourage and engage students.
- [Reading A-Z](#) provides a variety of materials and resources for teaching reading.
- [Reading Rockets](#) curates evidence-based resources to support the reading development of children.
- [Scholastic](#) offers resources and teaching tools, as well as books and supplies for purchase.
- [Storyline Online](#) is a free streaming platform providing videos of celebrated actors reading children’s books. With each book accompanied by a downloadable supplemental curriculum, named the “Teacher’s Guide,” Storyline allows an exciting, novel mode of strengthening comprehension, verbal, and writing skills.

Research

- [Classroom Reading Groups: What Works and What Doesn’t](#)
Despite the inclination to create reading groups based on general reading levels, this article in Education Week offers a research-based recommendation to instead separate based on specific skills. Evidence, further details, and logistics of implementation can be found in the article.

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- [Celebrating Linguistic Diversity in Your Classroom](#)
Students' language backgrounds are valuable in fostering a sense of belonging and celebrating differences in the classroom. Therefore, this article offers instruction for one example of an activity, language portraits, centered on celebrating linguistic diversity.
- [The Science of Reading and Writing](#)
This collection of articles by Education Week highlights the necessity of writing in providing effective reading instruction. Generally, the articles detail research-based methods in which instructors can embed writing into the curriculum to improve literacy.

Literacy Resources to Teach about Racism and Inequity

These resources may be suitable to share with families looking to initiate conversations about racism and inequity with their children.

- [Teaching Tolerance: Student Resource Text](#) - Use the Filter Texts feature to find recommendations by text type, grade, social justice domain, subject area, and/or topic.
- [Social Justice Books](#) - This list of multicultural and social justice books is for children, young adults, and educators.
- [Embrace Race: Looking for Excellent "Diverse" Books for Children? Start Here!](#) - Offers links to tips on evaluating diverse and multicultural books, book finders, children's book sites and blogs, and resources for creating an anti-bias children's book collection.
- [Article 21 Network: Talking with Kids about Protests](#) - Download the 4-page guide, which includes a list of books that approach race and protests in a child-friendly way.
- [Raising Race Conscious Children: Children's Books](#) - This list is updated periodically. Includes books that explicitly name race or show a diverse cast of characters, books that can be used to talk about various themes of diversity and books about protests.

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