

FLORIDA GRADE-LEVEL READING CAMPAIGN

PROMISING LITERACY PRACTICES IN K-5 OUT-OF-SCHOOL-TIME PROGRAMS



The ability to read is an essential tool for children's success, not only in their academic career, but in life. Research shows that in third grade, students shift from learning to read, to reading to learn allowing for mastery of complex subject matter they encounter in fourth grade and beyond. Therefore, third grade reading proficiency is a critical milestone. Most students who fail to reach this milestone falter in the later grades and often drop out before earning a high school diploma.

Although schools must be accountable for helping all children achieve by providing effective teaching for all children in every classroom every day, the Florida Grade-Level Reading Campaign believes that schools cannot succeed alone. Results from Florida's school and district-wide English Language Arts student assessments reinforce the idea that additional supports from community partners must be mobilized to remove barriers, expand opportunities, and assist parents in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities to assure student success.

Many school-age children spend up to one-third of their waking hours during weekdays in some type of out-of-school-time program. These before- and afterschool programs offer an ideal opportunity to expand learning experiences and support struggling

readers in achieving success. Research shows that afterschool programs can help build reading skills and positively impact numerous reading-related outcomes when there is intentional focus on including literacy skill development into programming, even when it is not necessarily the primary goal of the program. These programs can also fill gaps that exist in children's access to books and reading materials, especially for low-income and minority populations.

The following list of promising literacy practices details elements of K-5 afterschool or summer programs that may provide positive effects on reading achievement and are aligned with the seven domains of the Florida Standards for Quality Afterschool Programs. In order to have a positive influence on young children's reading trajectory, programs must provide experiences that complement learning occurring in the classroom. Along with these promising literacy practices, there is a reference section that includes important afterschool or summer resources, as well as literary reviews that support integrating literacy into everyday practice. As your program works on developing its literacy practice implementation plan, the Florida Grade-Level Reading Campaign staff are available to provide technical assistance by contacting the campaign at www.FloridaGLR.net.

1. ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION

Guiding Principle: Program leadership leverages data and student outcomes to determine the effectiveness of literacy programming and measure its impact.

Promising Practices:

- Program leaders engage staff to develop clearly defined goals and a plan for literacy activities and programming that includes measurable milestones.
- Literacy programming is continuously evaluated through input from parents, participants, and staff to promote continued enhancement and improvement.

2. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND STAFF

Guiding Principle: The program provides ongoing professional development and resources to staff to build their capacity to support the literacy skills of students.

Promising Practices:

- Literacy skill development is integrated into overall program goals with content and training provided to staff through regular staff meetings, separate topic-specific trainings, and ongoing literacy professional development activities.
- Partnerships are established with school districts and community organizations with a literacy focus to provide program staff with additional opportunities to upskill their abilities.
- Staff are given a variety of resources and tools to engage struggling or reluctant readers through research-based best practices, strategies, and activities.

3. COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION

Guiding Principle: Staff use multiple strategies to provide ongoing encouragement to children to not only support the development of reading skills, but also promote reading as an enjoyable and interesting activity.

Promising Practices:

- Targeted strategies are implemented to improve engagement between staff and students to build trusted relationships, promote literacy dialogue, and support mentorship.
- Program staff speak with students regularly to gain a better understanding of interests and preferences in order to identify and curate a book selection more aligned with topics, genres, and languages that resonate with them.



4. PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND ACTIVITIES

Guiding Principle: Literacy activities are designed around evidence-based strategies to promote reading skills and are intentionally incorporated into program structure.

Promising Practices:

- Procedures and expectations are established to create familiar routines for children to utilize the program's literacy materials and engage in reading activities every day.
- Staff engage children in frequent read-alouds and encourage children to make personal connections by pausing often to check for understanding, asking them to make predictions, and posing questions to help deepen understanding and comprehension.
- In addition to reading, children are given multiple opportunities to engage in writing activities like journaling, storytelling, and conducting interviews with guidance and positive feedback from staff.
- Various strategies like small group discussions, "turn and talks", and shared storybook reading are regularly implemented to help improve readers' ability to demonstrate understanding of both fiction and non-fiction texts.
- Active participation is encouraged in literacy discussions by focusing on topics of interest to students, demonstrating methods to respectfully consider differing opinions with peers, and switching to alternate activities when students become restless.

- Literacy programming also includes fun and engaging activities to increase children's motivation and enjoyment like rhyming games, story dramatizations, and book clubs.

5. HEALTH, SAFETY, AND NUTRITION

Guiding Principle: The program offers student supports or family resources that incorporate health, safety and nutrition elements tied to reading.

Promising Practices:

- Program provides or informs families of community health screenings for vision, hearing, and dental needs of students.
- Program offers a nutritional literacy component during snack or meal times, discussing portion sizes, nutritional values, and food safety including temperatures and food expiration.

6. PROGRAM ENVIRONMENT

Guiding Principle: The program creates accessible, literacy-rich environments for all children to experience and interact with quality written and spoken text on a daily basis.

Promising Practices:

- Children are provided ample access to a variety of age-appropriate fictional and informational text sources and audiobooks covering multiple topics and spanning grade-levels and abilities.
- Comfortable spaces, supervised by staff, are available for all children/youth to engage in reading and writing activities, both in groups and individually, during time set aside specifically for leisure reading.
- Program promotes reading as a critical element of daily activities by featuring home, work, and life experiences that require and celebrate reading.
- Program provides an inclusive environment that is respectful of all families' home languages and creates spaces and opportunities where English Language Learners feel safe and comfortable practicing their speaking skills.

7. FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Guiding Principle: The program recognizes the importance of family involvement in child development and prioritizes collaboration with families and the broader community as an intentional and regular aspect of the program.

Promising Practices:

- Families are strategically incorporated into the program through family-focused community literacy events, suggested at-home reading activities, and frequent communication with program staff.
- Partnerships are formed with schools, organizations, and local museums/enrichment institutions throughout the community to build collaboration, share resources, and strengthen literacy support for students.

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES OF PROMISING PRACTICES

- [Barbara Bush Foundation Extending and Enhancing Literacy Learning in Afterschool Programs: A Practice Guide](#)
- [Curriculum Planning and Learning Management System \(CPALMS\)](#)
- [Department of Children and Families: Supporting Literacy in School-Age Programs Course](#)
- [Expanding Minds and Opportunities: The Power of Afterschool and Summer Learning for Student Success](#)
- [Florida Core Competencies for Afterschool Practitioners](#)
- [Florida Department of Education - Just Read, Florida!](#)
- [Florida Grade-Level Reading Campaign](#)
- [Florida Standards for Quality Afterschool Programs](#)
- [Indiana Specialty Standards for Afterschool \(Literacy\)](#)
- [Supporting Literacy in Out-of-School Time: Summary of Evidence](#)
- [Youth Today OST Hub for Language & Literacy](#)