



Maximizing School Age Literacy

North Carolina CCR&R School Age Initiative



NC DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES
Division of Child Development
and Early Education

CCR&R Council
North Carolina Child Care Resource & Referral Council

Southwestern
CHILD DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION

Literacy development is a key component of quality school age care. Research conducted by the Annie E. Casey Foundation highlights that elementary-aged students who have consistent access to literacy materials are more likely to succeed academically and graduate high school (Annie E Casey Foundation, Early Reading Research Confirmed, 2013). Data from the NC Department of Public Instruction supports these findings, stating that North Carolina students who receive literacy support by the beginning of fourth grade achieve better employment and a higher quality of life into adulthood (NC Department of Public Instruction, Science of Reading Overview, 2021).

Your school age program is the perfect space to support literacy success. Below are three easy ways to help students maximize their literary skills and reading proficiency.

1 Is your literacy area inviting?

The overall look and feel of an activity area is essential to its effectiveness. If your reading area looks boring and uninviting, students will not use it. Think about the places you like to personally read. Is it a Starbucks, a local coffee shop, or a library? These adult spaces are set up specifically to ensure comfort, style, and calmness. Providing a reading area with similar characteristics can be applied directly to your program's literacy space.

Consider adding elements of comfort to your literacy space to make the space inviting. Add a collection of soft materials like soft mats, pillows, and soft chairs. If your reading area is in a gym or shared space, use rugs to provide softness and some visible boundaries.

Outside of softness, incorporate inviting furniture and decorations. Adding a small coffee table to your literacy space enhances the look of the space and provides students with a useable area to do homework, play games, or draw. Decorative lamps offer even more style to the area, and give students the freedom to add more light if needed. Look at the walls around your literacy space. Placing framed student artwork, family pictures, and potted plants to a reading corner will enhance aesthetics and provide student contribution to the program environment.

It is also important to be intentional about the literacy selection available to students. Too many books in a literacy space can be overstimulating to students and distract attention away from literacy activities. On the other hand, not having enough literacy materials can lead to challenging behaviors and student disinterest. Determine the right amount of materials that fit the needs of your students and take time to incorporate these materials to support lesson plans and learning themes.

NC CCR&R School Age Initiative Literacy Trainings

The NC CCR&R School Age Initiative is the go-to resource for school age literacy training in North Carolina. We provide training in-person, virtually, and through our On Demand platform. For questions contact Jonathan Williams at williams.jon@swcdcinc.org.

➔ **Making Reading Fun - .2 CEU**

➔ **Why Questions Matter - .2 CEU**

2

Ask questions!

One of the easiest ways to help students strengthen literacy skills is by incorporating open-ended questions into daily communication. Open-ended questions push students to delve deeper into a topic and fine-tune their vocabulary. Other early learning literacy skills directly tied to open-ended questioning include:

- Self-reflection and storytelling development
- Active listening and sensory processing development
- Research development and an understanding of facts

Here are a few examples that show the difference between simple questions and open-ended questions. As you read these examples, reflect on how the open-ended question can enhance literacy and vocabulary development.

Simple Question

How was your day?



How many legs does this insect have?



What are you coloring?



Open-Ended Question

Tell me about the best part of your day?

Why do you think the stag beetle has so many legs?

Tell me the story behind that picture you are coloring?

Perfect Times to Ask Open-Ended Questions

- Snack time sitting with students
- At arrival or departure from program
- Exploring nature or conducting a science experiment
- During transitions when students are waiting
- Outside when playing with students
- During reading times when looking at a book together
- Group time with all students



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Consider all learning styles!

Literacy development is directly linked to learning style. Students learn in different ways based upon the development and neurological make-up of their brain. Some students learn best with visual support or through reading. Other children may retain information better if concepts are connected to audible instruction or physical (kinesthetic) movement (Flemming and Baume, 2006).

Get creative with how you structure literacy activities throughout your program day. Allowing reading and journal time is fantastic, and can be coupled with literacy movement games, dramatic play development, and other forms of literary exploration. Make sure that your weekly lesson plans include literacy activities for all learning styles and that students have access to various literacy materials that meet their learning needs.

Visual Learners

- Storytelling
- Puppet shows
- Dramatic Play performance
- Creating comic books
- Picture books
- Word search or matching games

Auditory Learners

- Open-ended questions
- E-books or recorded books
- Storytelling
- Listening or creating music and musical lyrics
- Creating poetry

Kinesthetic

- Physical games tied to letters, words, or literacy concepts
- Dramatic storytelling
- Connecting literacy to the outdoors
- Board games

Reading/Writing Preference

- Journaling
- Reading time
- Board games
- Creating personalized books and stories
- Book clubs with peers