

2015

Bright  
Futures  
Afterschool  
Program

**[MAKING LITERACY FUN]**

What is the role Afterschool programs can play in building students' literacy skills?

## Strategies and Ideas

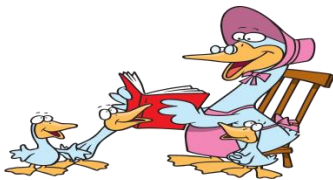


**Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS):** Students look at a picture and answer three questions about it:

1. What's going on in this picture?
2. What do you see that makes you say that?
3. What more can we find?

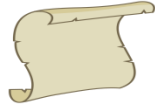
Other questions, such as "What do you think happened next?" can be added as desired.

- Use photos, magazines, internet images, freeze frame shots, paintings, etc.
- Can do as a large group or broken up into smaller groups.
- Students may be hesitant at first, but usually they get each other interested and excited about it as they discover more and more about the picture.
- Can be combined with other activities, such as writing – after discussing the questions out loud together, students write stories about the picture or a particular character in the picture; art – students can draw their own picture of what they think happened next.
- Website: <http://www.vtshome.org/> (not necessary to buy anything – can easily be created just with own pictures).



**Story Retelling:** Students read a short story together (Reading A-Z groups), and then the teacher gives the students a few simple props and gives them 10 minutes to come up with a skit acting out what they just read.

- Great reading comprehension check
- Motivates students to focus during reading
- Positive reinforcement of the importance of reading



**Reader's Theater:** When students are assigned roles in a short text or script that they will perform together while reading aloud.

- Encourages students to share literature; read aloud; write scripts, work collaboratively; integrate reading, writing, speaking & listening in an authentic context; gain confidence; improve self-image; acquire reading motivation; enjoy opportunities for cooperative learning.
- Creating a script – use short, simple stories with lots of dialogue and cut out unnecessary detail- descriptions, transitions, etc., or use simple picture books and have students create their own script.
- The teacher should model expressive reading as often as possible.
- Teach basic steps of performance – highlight parts, interpret part and read expressively, stage positions
- Keep a master copy of the script at school with everyone's parts marked, and send a highlighted copy home with each student for them to practice.
- Rehearse and provide needed direction and support regarding interpretation, pacing, expression, volume, motions, position, etc.
- Use props sparingly.
- Create a short play in one week, 30 minutes a day:
  - Monday: purpose & procedures and assigning parts – teach basic steps of performance, highlight parts, read expressively, properly hold scripts, review & teach vocabulary
  - Tuesday & Wednesday: practice parts in groups
  - Thursday: rehearsal
  - Friday: performance



**“Page to Stage”:** Students write their own short stories (maybe from a visual prompt like VTS), and a local high school drama group makes the stories into skits and performs them for the students.

- Builds confidence, encourages positive role models, provides positive recognition of students’ writing and storytelling abilities, allows students to express themselves
- Can make it a story contest and vote on the top 3 best stories
- Can make it collaborative so the class writes a story together
- High School students come to afterschool and make props and costumes with the students
- High school students come to perform the skit for students

**Puppets:** Students can make their own puppets and stories and perform in groups.

- Practices writing, creative thinking, illustrating, listening and speaking
- Builds confidence
- Collaborative work



**Claymation:** Students create characters out of clay and crafts, write stories about them, and “film” the stories by taking pictures of each action of the character and putting them together on Movie Maker.

- Start with a topic, plan, and completed storyboard. Claymation can be used for storytelling, creative writing, recreating historical time periods and events, describing scientific processes, visualizing mathematical concepts, etc.
- Build characters (they recommend Model Magic clay)

- Create backgrounds out of magazine photos, paintings, construction paper, etc.
- One student moves and positions the characters in between shots, while another student takes photos of each scenario
- Use Movie Maker to create a short film with added narration.
- Examples on YouTube: [http://youtube/AZt\\_akqRJzc](http://youtube/AZt_akqRJzc)



**Personal Narrative Lesson:** Students are given the opportunity to share their personal stories in a safe environment while simultaneously improving their vocabulary and writing skills. The lessons build from the students describing basic information about themselves, to talking about their favorite things, to describing their journeys to the U.S. and talking about their home countries.

- The teacher can pre teach the vocabulary used in the “All About Me” project either with the whole class as a group, or for a smaller group of lower level students according to the needs of the students.
- Students get into small groups and discuss “All About Me” questions.
- Students are given framed paragraphs to complete about themselves.
- Students use the framed paragraphs to write a short essay about themselves, adding any details they would like to share.
- \*Optional - Students can draw a picture to go with their essay.
- Students then use the essays to create Power Point presentations about themselves (pre-created template) and/or students can create illustrated booklets about themselves.
- Same format with “My Favorite Things” and “My Journey to America.”
- Optional – Students can ask each other survey questions to find out about how their peers’ favorite things are similar to or different from their own.

The teachers who created these lessons worked with unaccompanied minors from South America and found it to be a very effective way of both building up their students’ language skills and providing them a safe and healthy outlet for their emotions in dealing with their experiences in coming to the U.S.



### **S.W.I.R.L. – Speaking, Writing, Illustrating, Reading, Listening**

An approach to teaching ESL (and a variety of other subjects) that has been integrated at various schools. Teachers are encouraged to provide students with activities that incorporate speaking, writing, illustrating, reading, and listening in every lesson.

Speaking activities:

- Add on to the Story: A student begins telling a story with a sentence, and each successive student adds a sentence onto the story.
- Reason and Rhyme: The teacher chooses a topic from a lesson and asks a student to talk in rhyme about the subject. Can be as simple as “What is your favorite food and why do you like it?” or complex as “What were the key factors that led to the start of WWI?”
- Taboo: A student is given a card with a word that he or she has to describe to the class in order to get them to guess the word, but included is a list of words that the student cannot say. This game can be graded to each students’ English level – easier, one-word cards for low level, more challenging cards for higher levels, but all can play at the same time and learn from each other.
- A.N.D. – Agree, Disagree, Neutral: Signs with “Agree,” “Disagree,” and “Neutral” are placed on the walls of the classroom. The teacher makes a statement from that particular lesson, and the students move to stand under the sign that indicates what they think about the statement. Students then explain why they chose their answer.

Writing activities:

- Add on to the Story – A student begins a story with writing a sentence, and each successive student adds a sentence on to the story.
- Journaling
- Scattergories
- Thinking Maps – Students are given a topic and must use a Thinking Map to illustrate it and then write about it.

#### Illustrating activities:

- Pictionary – A student is given a word on a card which he or she must draw on the board without using any words or motions, and the class must guess the word.
- Students can draw illustrations of stories that they read or listen to.

#### Reading activities:

- Vocabulary matching – students match words with pictures, words with other words, etc.
- Paraphrasing – Students read a short text or story and then retell it in their own words.

#### Listening activities:

- Content Bingo – Bingo created with vocabulary from a particular lesson
- Interviews – Students are given interview questions and paired off to interview each other, and then they summarize and share with the class what they learned from their partner.

(Literacy strategies and materials were gathered from a variety of sources and some are used as current best practices in our programs).

