



Literacy Beyond Language Arts

Learn from your peers! They shared so many actionable ideas and resources during [Literacy Beyond Language Arts](#) — a virtual Huddle hosted by the 21st CCLC NTAC in April 2026 — that we simply couldn't keep them to ourselves. The focus was on incorporating activities in out-of-school time (OST) that help students in grades 6-12 transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” across subject areas. The Huddle demonstrated interactive tools, such as graphic organizers and spoken word performances, that amplify student voice and support critical analysis of complex texts. Participants chimed in. Take a look!

Bright Ideas From Your Peers

- **Munch & Listen** — In our OST program, I read aloud during meal time. It's an opportunity to read novels for all grade levels. We've read four Roald Dahl novels this year, and they love it!
- **Game on!** — I have the “nonreaders” read the instructions for games — anything to get them reading!
- **Everyday Choices** — To get students to read, make it interesting, easy, and part of their daily routine. Let them choose books they enjoy. Connect reading to their interests. And keep it fun with activities such as games and storytelling.
- **Book Break** — Set aside a short time each day for reading. Encourage students with positive feedback. When students feel confident and engaged, they're more likely to develop a love for reading.
- **Joystick Junction** — To incorporate esports, have students write the rules, create a playbook, and script a press conference!
- **Flip the Switch** — Have students take pictures of 10 of their favorite people, places, and things. It could be songs, sports, etc. They can then write about each picture and compile a photo-illustrated journal or book to share with peers. Discuss the author's purpose and what they'd want others to get out of reading what they create. This can get students involved in being more consciously curious about reading other texts. You also get to see what their interests are, which helps you plan engaging, relevant, rigorous lessons. This activity incorporates reading, writing, speaking, and listening. You can do informal assessments of students' written expression and reading fluency. This activity has worked really well with students from K-12. You need to give them access to a way to print their pictures and remind them to “keep it classy” by setting some boundaries around what appropriate pictures are.
- **Myself on a Shelf** — We had a group of students write and publish their own books, which were then put in the school library.
- **Comic Adventures** — The kids made and shared their own comic books. They loved it!
- **The History of Me** — Engage students in compiling their own family history books.



- **Make-and-Take Packs** — We send home wellness kits with nutritional information, recipes, and sometimes the ingredients. The motivation to read is “baked in.”



Action Tips

- **Think outside the book box.** Reading books isn't the only way to build literacy. You can embed opportunities to read, write, speak, and listen into everyday program activities, such as welcomes, breaks, and mealtimes. Engage students with a variety of materials, such as games, instructions, video clips, and environmental print (e.g., signage).
- **Make students creators (not just consumers).** Putting students in the author's seat — and giving them an audience — helps them develop new skills, perspectives, and understanding about why and how to use language purposefully.
- **Turn up the volume on motivation.** Connect literacy materials and activities to students' interests. Build their interest and confidence little by little, one step at a time, by embedding literacy into experiences they can enjoy and succeed at.
- **Engage family, school, and community partners.** You can't do it all on your own. Partnering can expand resources and possibilities as you explore creative ways to embed literacy into meaningful learning experiences for your students.



Resources

- [Literacy Toolkit](#) — This free resource from the 21st CCLC NTAC includes 23 tools and a user guide to help you infuse literacy into OST program activities.
- [Literacy Group](#) — Swap ideas with other 21st CCLC professionals in this virtual group in the 21st CCLC NTAC Knowledge Network. For instructions on how to access the Knowledge Network, go to <https://21stcclcntac.org/prof-learning-portal>.



“You can teach literacy even if you're not an English teacher. When we provide rich learning experiences, we expand students' worlds.”

— Charles (“Chaz”) Sumners, Technical Assistance Liaison, 21st CCLC NTAC

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