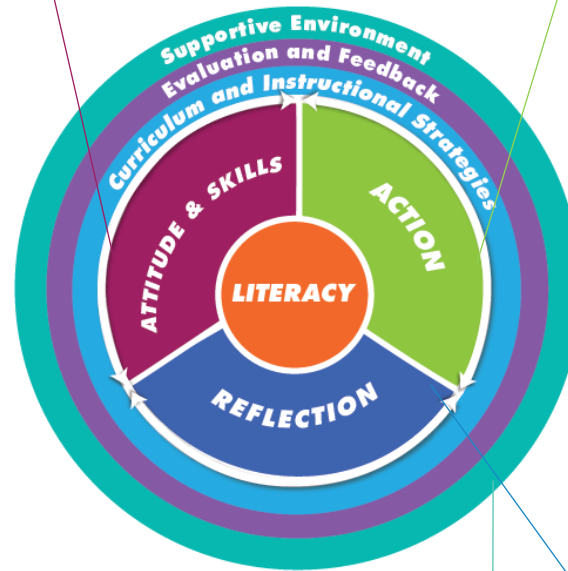


DYCD LITERACY :

BUILDING HABITS, MOTIVATION, AND SKILLS



LITERACY SKILLS & ATTITUDES IN PRACTICE

Skills

Reading critically: predict, infer, connect, and make meaning of texts that matter

Writing purposefully: write to persuade, explain, reflect, entertain, inquire, or describe

Speaking & Listening: build and present ideas and arguments, and reconcile differences

Analytical thinking: learn how to know what to believe; back ideas with reasons

Self-expression: creatively articulate feelings and thoughts

Attitudes

Expanding horizons: participants see their multiple literacies and the potential role of literacy in their future selves

Accepting difference: participants respect other interpretations and opinions

CREATE THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS FOR LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

Text-rich: surround participants with a diverse range of accessible texts, which can be written, seen, heard, or spoken— anything that creates and passes ideas back and forth between people

Text choice: texts should represent diverse cultural, racial, ethnic, and class-based perspectives, and resonate with participants lived experiences and interests

Consistency: routines and procedures exist around literacy practices, like introducing books or writing

Technology: harness the internet and social media resources so participants become responsible consumers and producers of digital information

Engage experts: invite writers, poets, actors, journalists, playwrights — professionals who use language daily and who show participants the many uses of literacy in careers

Staff training: CBO staff receive professional development targeted to literacy; they reinforce the value and relevance of literacy and ask questions, praise effort, and learn alongside participants

Family inclusion: families are informed and encouraged to work alongside program participants

LITERACY IN ACTION

Stand-alone or infused: literacy can be the single focus of an activity (e.g. book club) or it can also be practiced in any content area, including arts, physical activity, even cooking!

Personal: participants forge connections with texts and explore what they think, see, feel, and remember

Project-based: create projects out of connected activities, each using writing and reading to explore engaging topics

Social: collaborate to make meaning of texts and create work

Playful: have fun becoming literate in different areas

Relevant: use literacy to access and create texts related to personal and social issues participants care about

Public: exhibit, publicize, and perform work

Leadership opportunities: participants take on leadership roles (e.g. lead discussions, choose topics to explore, etc.)

LITERACY-BASED REFLECTIVE ACTIVITIES

Encourage literacy through reflection by...

Journaling: write to explore personal/world connections with texts or reflect on completed activities

Turn & Talk: turn to a partner and talk through a prompt to reflect on your ideas

Dialogue Journals: engage in written conversations

Stop & Jot: think deeply and respond to a prompt or write for a set time about anything that comes to mind

Table Talk: structured discussion in groups with participants taking on roles

The purpose of this framework is to build a common language for afterschool literacy activities and to assist providers in mapping out and designing the core components and supports that are needed for quality literacy programming.

CORE COMPONENTS

Skills

Our ability to be literate helps us to distinguish ourselves as unique individuals while connecting us to one another & the world. For adults, “doing” literacy is a little like breathing — we all do it, all the time, but are never really consciously thinking about it. For youth, we need to be more intentional. Practicing literacy skills can take many forms, but should include some combination of reading, writing, listening, speaking, information gathering, creative & critical thinking, and self-expression. Each of these can be broken down even further! For example, when you practice reading, you’re also building skills related to phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. By planning your activities to explicitly build these skills, you will be on the road to engaging youth in intentional literacy practices.

Action

Literacy programming will look different for each provider, and practicing literacy will look different for every young person. There is no single correct approach! Instead of a subject, think of literacy as *a set of tools* that young people can use to explore any topic of interest— personal, social, local, or global. Literacy then becomes a means of learning and communicating about what matters most to a young person, or discovering something new. Youth should be free to choose creative ways of approaching their interests in a way that develops their skills. It can happen at each step in a project that culminates in a presentation or special event. Recognize that there are multiple forms of literacy, and that we are all literate in certain areas.

Reflection

One of the great ways to incorporate literacy in *any* activity is by including time for reflection. Prompt reflection by setting aside time for youth to engage with questions like, “What worked and what didn't for you today?” This allows young people to look back on, think critically about, and learn from their experience or action. Reflection allows everyone to share perspectives and provides opportunities think about and make good judgments. Reflection can happen through writing, speaking, listening, reading, drawing, acting, and any other way you can imagine. Just by reflecting in these ways, you are reinforcing the fact that literacy has many uses and can exist across content areas!

SUPPORTS

Curriculum and Instructional Strategies

As you can see, literacy-based skills, actions, and reflection can be supported in many ways. There are different curricula specially made for afterschool literacy for purchase, like [this](#) or [this](#). Providers can also hire literacy experts as subcontractors to deliver literacy programming. Two that have worked in NYC afterschool in the past can be found [here](#) or [here](#). Or, staff can design their own literacy programming by including certain instructional strategies into activities they’re comfortable with running, like dance, cooking, or art. Check this [guide](#) out for a comprehensive list of strategies that — if used correctly — will successfully include reading, writing, and debate into any activity topic. Consider starting small, seeing what works, then including more of these strategies as staff grow in confidence. If these strategies are sprinkled into every session of an activity, then you have got yourself a literacy activity!

Evaluation and Feedback

Literacy done in out-of-school time should be designed to reach three goals for participants: build literacy habits (like reading a newspaper or letter writing), increase their motivation to do literacy and see it as integral to their identity, and grow literacy skills. To gauge if literacy meets these aims, it is necessary to constantly elicit youths’ feedback. They can share their thoughts on literacy curricula or strategies, particular texts, or make suggestions for change. Staff and community members can also give (and receive) constructive feedback on the ways in which young people are using literacy towards authentic ends. An atmosphere of trust and acceptance will ensure stakeholders are comfortable with giving and receiving feedback.

Supportive Environments

Literacy practices can thrive when reading and writing are viewed as meaningful— when youth are able to read and learn about what concerns them, and write and speak on issues that are relevant and connected to their interests. To facilitate this, programs should have on hand an array of print and electronic texts that reflect the lives of their diverse participants. DYCD has partnered with groups like [First Book](#) to provide programs with high-interest texts at no- or low- cost. Adults’ role in this process is twofold. First, they must be an enthusiastic and supportive guide, asking questions and making connections to lead youth as they analyze, create, and reflect on texts. Second, adults must be role models, demonstrating the various ways that literacy practices are present in their own grown lives. In your program, consider including community members who play with words and language for a living, like authors or playwrights, to expand the horizons of youth and let them see how they too could come to rely on or use literacy as adults.