

Resources for Children’s Literacy Tutors

Summer Reads



Title: A Guide to Interactive Reading

Author: Rachel Amerman, Tess Halac, and Victoria Rachmaninoff (Summer Reads VISTAs)

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Topic(s):

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About Summer Reads:

This children’s literacy tutor resource was created by Summer Reads VISTA members. Summer Reads is an [AmeriCorps VISTA national service](http://www.americorps.gov/vista) program of Literacy Minnesota. For 8 weeks over the summer, Summer Reads VISTA members volunteer full-time as children’s/youth literacy mentors in schools, libraries and out-of-school-time programs across Minnesota. They bring literacy to life for low-income students through a variety of activities – one-on-one tutoring, creative enrichment activities like using arts and drama to explore language or practicing vocabulary and comprehension in science and other subjects. They also connect students and parents/caregivers to community resources through wrap-around basic needs support. At the same time, the VISTA members build their own leadership, explore career paths, pay for college and become lifelong advocates for the communities they serve due to the power of their experience. www.literacymn.org/summerreads

A Guide to Interactive Reading

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Introduction

What is interactive learning?

Interactive learning can come in many different forms. However, this style of learning is based on the goal of connecting classroom lessons to real world experiences that the students will encounter. It often incorporates more “hands-on” activities that allow students to move, make, and process the topic. This type of learning can be very effective in that it encourages students to see how their education can enrich their understanding of the world around them. It can also aid students who struggle in a more traditional academic setting by giving opportunities for students to learn in a variety of ways.

How do reading and interactive learning work together?

For a struggling reader, flashcards are not always the answer. Of course, many traditional reading intervention methods have been proven effective time and time again. But for many students, providing the opportunity to play games, do art, move, and think outside of the box in connection to reading may be the difference that proves to them that reading really can be fun.

Beyond contributing to a child’s enjoyment while reading, interactive learning also has the potential to enrich their comprehension and aid them as they make connections to topics beyond the text. For example, a student who struggles with alphabets may not visually be able to recognize letters. However, if you ask the student to create the letter with their body rather than on paper, this muscle memory may help reinforce their visual comprehension.

Interactive activities can range from as simple as this example to much larger projects that span over an entire curriculum with great results. Thus, we have created this book of activities that we hope parents and teachers can use as a springboard when trying to teach their children how to read.

Story Telling Cards

Intended Ages: Kindergarten-5th grade

Supplies:

For the cards

- Cardstock
- Drawing materials

For the book

- Drawing materials
- Paper
- Binding materials

Directions for making the cards:

1. Cut each piece of cardstock into 8-16 rectangles.
2. Have the students decorate each piece of paper with a “story starter.” For a more focused activity, they could draw different components to the story – i.e. a character, setting, problem and/or object. If the students want less direction, they can have the freedom to draw anything they would like to eventually incorporate into their story.

Suggestions: Label the story cards to avoid confusion regarding the intended drawings. If drawing the different components of a story, color coding them in some way (adding different construction paper borders works well) is helpful when creating your story. Laminate or cover the cards with contact paper for prolonged use.

Using the cards: Pick out cards (if you chose to draw the specific components, pick out one from each category) and use them as a basis for the story. Be flexible here; maybe the student wants to use all the cards, maybe he or she only wants to use one or two. The emphasis here is on creativity and having fun!

Why it works: Storytelling is a critical tool for a student’s educational development. It enables vocabulary acquisition and understanding of different themes and/or problems and solutions. It can enhance intercultural understanding while also encourages the use of imagination and creativity. Storytelling cards provide an excellent way for students to practice these skills through a guided activity.

Paint to Stories

Intended Ages: Pre-K–3rd Grade

Supplies:

- Book, story, or poem
- Paint and brushes or other drawing supplies
- Paper

Other ideas:

This activity is also great to do outdoors!

Instructions:

Although this activity can be done in a variety of ways, one way that seems to work well is to leave the activity very open-ended. You can do this by giving the child or children the painting or drawing supplies and telling them to paint or draw whatever the story makes them think of as you read to them. A more focused way to do this activity is to pick a story with quite a bit of description and a strong narrative storyline and have the child or children draw the sequence of events.

Benefits of the activity:

Often, comprehension activities are taught after reading skills have been developed. However, this activity can help improve comprehension skills for many age groups. It is also great for allowing children to connect literacy with creativity and art.

Other notes:

While there is the chance that the students will draw something somewhat unrelated or stray their focus away from the story if you use the more open-ended approach, this activity gives the child or group the opportunity to translate the text into their own ideas. On the other hand, the sequence of events method can help improve the child's attention to detail and also forces him or her to listen to the story as a logical and cohesive whole.

Story Based Crafts

Intended Ages: Pre-K-2nd grade

In this activity, students first read a story and then do a craft that applies to it. For example, you could read *The Rainbow Fish* and then have the students color their own rainbow fishes (use tin foil as the “special scale” for extra pizzazz) and ocean scenery.



Benefits:

Children learn by repetition and by engaging their senses. Storytime crafts can enrich a student’s experience with books by engaging their senses to heighten their pleasure and helps them remember the book’s story, characters, or message.

Word Spelling Game

Intended Ages: 1st- 4th grade

Supplies:

- 3-4 sets of large alphabet letters printed on paper
---Each set should have all the letters of the alphabet but more common letters such as vowels should be repeated.
- List of age appropriate words for kids to spell

Directions:

1. Split your kids into small groups and give each of them a set of letters.
2. They should spread them out so they can see them all.
3. Call out the word they need to spell and have them attempt to spell the word.
4. Whoever sets out the correctly spelled word first wins.

Benefits:

Spelling is often overlooked when it comes to literacy activities. This game engages the students both physically and mentally, and they will have their peers to help them figure out the spelling. Every student loves a little competition, so this game will give them the extra boost of motivation to play!

Water Balloon Phonics

Intended Ages: Kindergarten- 1st grade

Supplies:

- Water Balloons
- Paper

Directions:

1. Around an outside area, hang up the beginning letter of many one-syllable words.
2. Make water balloons and write the rest of the one-syllable words on them.
3. The students will pick a water balloon and try and find the missing beginning letter.
4. Once they find the letter, they say the complete word and then throw the balloon at it

Example: If a student picks up a balloon with "ug" written on it, they will look for a T, P, L etc.

Benefits:

Young kids love doing things that involve water, even if they don't get wet. By having the student read and find the missing letter, you are increasing their ability to form words on their own. The more fun they having doing it, the more memorable it will be!

Peanut Butter Playdough

Intended Ages: Pre-K-2nd grade

Ingredients:

- 1 cup peanut butter
- ½ cup honey
- 1 cup powdered sugar (scant)

Directions:

Mix the ingredients together. Store in airtight plastic baggie.

NOTE: If working with multiple students, we found that this recipe makes enough for 3-4 kids.



Instructions:

After making the playdough, there are a variety of activities you can do with your students using it.

- Letter formation: If working with younger students, simply asking them to make different letters might be enough of a challenge. For something more difficult, ask them to make the letter that the word _____ starts with, or the letter that their favorite _____ starts with.
- Sculptures: For more advanced students, have them engage their creative side by asking them to sculpt different things. Examples include:
 - o Something that starts with the same letter of their name
 - o Something that rhymes with _____

ADDITIONAL IDEA: For extra practice with letter recognition and sight words practice, use letter stamps or raised Styrofoam letters to stamp out words.

Benefits:

Working with playdough enhances fine motor skills. It also offers a fun way to practice letter recognition and sounds. It enables a hands-on approach for letter formation and learning critical skills in letter sounds.

Action Play

Intended Ages: Kindergarten or younger

Supplies:

- White board
- Paper slips with the numbers 1-10 and a small bag/bin to put them in

Directions:

1. Have a list of ten verbs on the board, number them 1-10 and go over them with your students
2. Then you will reach into your bag and pull out a paper slip with one of the numbers on it, quietly show your students

3. The students will have to look for that number on the board, read the verb, and then act it out

Benefits:

This activity is great for students who learn best through movement. It helps them create a physical connection to the words because the students will remember what it means and how to read it the next time they see it on paper using muscle memory.

Play Acting

Intended Ages: Pre-K-2nd grade

Instructions:

Choose a book that has characters with strong personalities so that they are more easily acted out. Read the story and discuss it afterwards to check for understanding. From here the sky is the limit! The activity can be as basic as choosing students to act out different roles to using props and scenery. Content is also flexible. While simply retelling the story may be enough for some students, you could challenge other groups by asking them to write their own ending or altering it in some other way.

Benefits:

Embodying characters allows the students to make a personal connection with the story as well as better understand his or her perspective within the tale. The activity also improves oral language skills – vocabulary and narrative understanding – which are the basis of reading comprehension. Finally, acting out a story also helps teach students story elements and sequencing.

Twister Sight Words

Intended Ages: 1st-3rd Grade

Supplies:

- Twister mat and spinner
- 24 medium level and age appropriate spelling words

Directions:

1. Put a word on every colored circle on the twister mat



2. The game is played just like normal twister only when a student is about to put his foot or hand down on a circle they have to read the word that is on it first.
3. If they get it wrong, correct them and then they will try a different circle.
4. The last one standing wins!

Benefits: This game is a fun way to keep the kids engaged. This way they are still practicing reading words that are difficult for them but it's less intimidating because it's a game.

First Sound Cards

Intended Ages: Pre-K-1st Grade

Supplies:

- Paper
- Magazines or Markers

Instructions:

There are two ways this activity can be done. The first is that you can ask the child to look through magazines and find pictures of words that start with each letter of the alphabet or the specific letters you are teaching. Then, the student writes the letter at the top of his or her paper, glues the pictures on the card, and writes the word that each picture shows. It is helpful if the student also underlines the letter in order to further solidify the connection between the sound and the letter. It is also possible to do this activity by drawing pictures of words that the students come up with rather than using magazine cut-outs.

This activity on its own can be helpful for creating a connection between letters and the sounds they make. But it can also be helpful to use these cards in a similar way to flashcards.

Benefits:

This activity is great for children who struggle with basic alphabets. When the students create their own study tools, they are often more excited to use them.

