



Supporting Family
Engagement To
Promote Literacy

Grades K-3

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Read Alouds for Grades K-3

A Resource for Educators



Introduction

This resource is intended to support educators in building family partnerships to enhance students' literacy development at school and at home. The goal is for schools, child care providers, and families to effectively partner to engage children in literacy-based activities. By providing practical ideas and resources for families, schools are better able to bridge literacy instruction from classrooms into homes, giving children more literacy opportunities in multiple contexts.

The Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) General Education Leadership Network (GELN) Michigan Early Literacy Task Force (ELTF) created *Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy: Grades K to 3* to improve children's literacy.¹ The Michigan Department of Education endorses the use of the Essentials as quality, research-informed instructional practices. The evidence supporting the family literacy practices is informed by research that meets rigorous standards established by the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) in classroom settings. These evidence-based classroom practices were adapted for home use; however, research has not investigated the efficacy of all of these practices in home contexts.

Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy: Grades K to 3 includes guidance on conducting read alouds of age-appropriate books and other print or digital materials. When reading aloud, adults can model word recognition, fluency, vocabulary building, and comprehension before, during, and after reading. They can also help children build knowledge about print concepts, text features, and text structure. Read alouds offer children opportunities to expand their literacy learning beyond what they can do independently. Adults can also explain concepts and words in age-appropriate ways. Read alouds offer a unique setting for teaching and practicing important literacy skills with children. To help families support literacy at home, you can share this strategy with them.



Sharing Why the Read Aloud Is an Essential Practice With Families

A great deal of research has been conducted over several decades supporting the use of read alouds to help children of all ages develop literacy skills.² In *Becoming a Nation of Readers*,³ the authors noted that read alouds were the most important strategy in helping children become successful readers. Read alouds support many aspects of literacy development. They help build vocabulary and comprehension by stretching children's thinking beyond their actual reading ability. There is evidence that when parents read aloud to children, there is a significantly positive impact on children's comprehension abilities.⁴ Children also develop a great deal of knowledge from read alouds of a variety of texts, including informational texts, and they build both their listening and reading vocabularies as families and teachers read texts aloud and discuss them. When adults read aloud, they model not only fluency and expression, but also the thinking processes during reading, like asking questions and making predictions.⁵ For younger readers, read alouds provide an opportunity to develop concepts of print, such as book orientation and directionality, and word-solving strategies, like breaking apart unfamiliar words. For all children, reading aloud with adults creates interest in reading and promotes positive attitudes toward and motivation for reading.⁶

Read alouds are powerful because they not only help develop children's literacy skills but also can be done by teachers and families alike. This is because the reader can focus on different information and literacy skills depending on the child's needs, the reader's comfort level, or the reading purpose. Read alouds offer opportunities for children to develop their literacy skills before, during, and after reading. On the next page are some suggestions for families to use as they read aloud to children of different ages. These can be used with a wide variety of texts, including storybooks, informational texts, environmental print, and online resources. Using your knowledge of the student as an emergent or developing reader, you can help families focus on the appropriate activities or suggest others.



Suggestions for Families To Use Before, During, and After Reading a Book Aloud With Their Children

BEFORE READING

With emerging readers:

- Ask where the front and back of the book are and where the text starts, and point out the title page; and
- Look at the pictures and talk about what the text might be about and discuss the characters in the text.

With developing readers:

- Talk about the cover and title of the text;
- Predict what the text might be about based on the cover or title;
- Talk about other texts the child has read by the same author; and
- Read the book description on the back or inside cover.



DURING READING

With emerging readers:

- Point to individual words as you read.

With developing readers:

- Predict what will happen next as you read the text aloud;
- Use appropriate tone, pace, and volume to bring the text to life; and
- Ask questions about the text and characters as you read.

AFTER READING

With all readers:

- Ask questions about how the text ended and how it might have ended differently;
- Ask what lesson the text told or what the characters learned;
- Compare that story to another text with which the child is familiar or that the child has read; and
- Talk about the meaning of words in the text and ask what new information the child learned from reading the text.

Supporting Families in the Essential Practice of Read Alouds

Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy: Grades K to 3 also includes collaboration with families in promoting literacy. There are a number of ways that schools can partner with families to learn more about how to read aloud at home. For example, schools can share with families the “Read Aloud” infographic that accompanies this brief. The MiFamily Engagement Framework⁷ outlines several high-impact strategies that help support student achievement and family engagement, including:

- Sharing lists of books and other reading materials to use for read alouds;
- Encouraging families to read books and other reading materials to children in their first language;
- Inviting families into classrooms to observe teachers leading read alouds;
- Showing what a read aloud looks like at family engagement events (e.g., family night);
- Sharing descriptions of read alouds in newsletters;
- Providing families with questions to ask when reading aloud; and
- Sharing videos of read alouds with families to show them what it looks like.

The key is for schools to regularly partner with families to jointly support children’s literacy learning, including learning about read alouds and how they work.



Resources

The following resources provide more information about and examples of read alouds:

Great Books To Read Aloud:

- [Reading Rockets: Great Read Alouds for Kids: Babies to Grade 3](#)
- [Unite for Literacy: Books read aloud in different languages](#)

Tips and Resources:

- [MAISA Professional Learning Resources and Modules for the Essential Instructional Practices for Early Literacy](#)
- [National Center on Improving Literacy: Implementation Toolkits for Parents and Families](#)

Videos:

- [Reading Rockets: Reading Aloud](#)
- [Regional Educational Laboratory West: Interactive Readalouds: Learning from books together](#)

Endnotes

- ¹ Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators, General Education Leadership Network, Early Literacy Task Force. (2016). *Essential instructional practices in early literacy: Grades K to 3*. https://literacyessentials.org/downloads/gelndocs/k-3_literacy_essentials.pdf
- ² International Literacy Association. (2018). *The power and promise of read-alouds and independent reading* [Literacy leadership brief].
- ³ Anderson, R., Hiebert, E. H., Scott, J. A., & Wilkinson, I. A. (1985). *Becoming a nation of readers: The report of the Commission on Reading*. International Reading Association.
- ⁴ Roberts, K. L. (2013). Comprehension strategy instruction during parent-child shared reading: An intervention study. *Literacy Research and Instruction, 52*(2), 106-129. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19388071.2012.754521>
- ⁵ National Early Literacy Panel. (2008). *Developing early literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel*. National Institute for Literacy.
- ⁶ Ledger, S., & Merga, M. K. (2018). Reading aloud: Children's attitudes toward being read to at home and at school. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 43*(3), 106-129. <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol43/iss3/8/>
- ⁷ Michigan Department of Education. (2020). *MiFamily: Michigan's family engagement framework*. https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MIFamily_Family_Engagement_Framework_683447_7.pdf

Acknowledgments

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