

AFTERSCHOOL *news*



Exploring the Art of Storytelling

When we think of literacy, we often imagine students reading books, engrossed in someone else's story. Anyone who has heard students' lively chatter at an afterschool program knows that students have their own stories to tell. Most are eager to share stories about school triumphs, family fun, sports, pets, and anything else that captivates their interest.

If you're not sure how to direct a group of students buzzing with excitement, don't worry about quieting them. Have them write their stories down. Writing does more than provide a creative outlet; it also boosts literacy skills. Afterschool programs provide great opportunities for students to practice writing. Moreover, engaging activities and regular practice tend to increase students' desire to write. Consider some of these ideas when you have students write:

- Have younger students tell their stories out loud while an adult writes them down and then reads them back.
- Save spell check for later. If students are not sure of correct spellings, they can sound out words and keep writing. Encourage students to keep "word banks" or lists of new words that they can use in future writing projects.
- Ask older students to review one another's work and offer helpful suggestions.
- Use technology. Ongoing writing activities like journal writing can become blogs. Students can share news and essays through podcasts.
- Get the community involved. Ask students to interview family and community members and then write essays based on the interviews.
- Celebrate student writing by allowing them to perform a play, read a story, or find another way to share their written masterpieces.

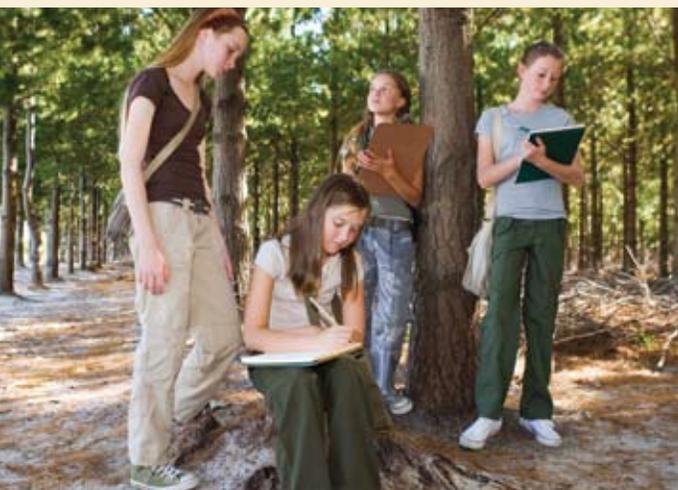
Writing in afterschool can be fun. It is a promising practice, an afterschool instructional strategy with evidence suggesting links to student achievement. More information about using writing activities can be found in the literacy section of the Afterschool Training Toolkit (www.sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits). The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory developed the content for the literacy section of the Afterschool Training Toolkit.



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The SEDL National Center for Quality Afterschool helps state education agencies and local practitioners develop high-quality programs for academic enrichment as well as youth development activities.

www.sedl.org/afterschool



RECOMMENDED *resource*

USING THE AFTERSCHOOL TRAINING TOOLKIT FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Afterschool Training Toolkit professional development sessions that were offered this summer were so popular that SEDL is offering them again. This 2-day training session will be held in Austin, Texas, on January 14–15, 2009. Space is limited, so register now!

www.sedl.org/cgi-bin/mysql/afterschool/news.cgi?announcement=44



"We want to train [students] in using their voices and words and teach them tools of arts expression as they grow as artists and learners."

EMILY SKETCH
project coordinator

Voices Breaking Boundaries' Spoken Word Club

HOUSTON, TEXAS

Spoken Word Club is a program that conducts writing and performance workshops for students at Lee High School in Houston. The program is offered by Voices Breaking Boundaries (www.vbbarts.org), a nonprofit that supports artists of diverse backgrounds, skills, and experiences. Students in Spoken Word Club perform their work at such events as Third Thursday, an open-mike session held once a month during the school's lunch period, and Voices Breaking Boundaries' citywide Words for Peace multimedia performance. "We believe all students have something to say, and we want to train them in using their voices and words and teach them tools of arts expression as they grow as artists and learners," says project coordinator Emily Sketch. In addition to performing in public, students work with professional artists. The artists read and perform original work, facilitate workshops, and give students feedback on their work.

Voices Breaking Boundaries also reaches out to the community by featuring student writings and media work on its Web site and promoting Spoken Word Club in its e-newsletter. Sketch explains that much of the program's recruitment comes from teens watching their peers perform. After seeing their peers express themselves and receive positive responses, other students realize that they, too, have something to say.

IN YOUR words

What types of fun writing activities do students do at your afterschool program? (Select all that apply.)

- Journals (online or written)
- Play writing
- Poetry
- Afterschool newspaper
- Technology-based writing like Web sites and podcasts
- Other

To participate in this survey and view results, submit your vote at www.sedl.org/afterschool/afterwords/survey200811.html.

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TRAINING tip

SEDL Virtual Academy for Afterschool

Want to learn more about what other resources the SEDL National Center for Quality Afterschool has to offer? Register for a webinar to learn about the SEDL Virtual Academy for Afterschool, a great new online training resource. Register online at www.sedl.org/webinar.

EVENTS calendar

Dec. 4 & 5 Webinar: SEDL Virtual Academy for Afterschool
www.sedl.org/webinar
ONLINE

Jan. 14-15 Using the Afterschool Training Toolkit for Professional Development
www.sedl.org/cgi-bin/mysql/afterschool/news.cgi?announcement=44
AUSTIN, TX

For more events, visit our calendar at www.sedl.org/afterschool/training/calendar.html.

Newsletter available online at www.sedl.org/afterschool/afterwords