



# AFTER SCHOOL TRAINING TOOLKIT

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The goal of **Story and Literature Dramatizations** is to engage students in literature by reading, discussing, and presenting a poem, story, or play. By studying a plot and roles, students build an understanding of characters, motivation, and storytelling. The Dramatization activities include [standards-based](#) multi-media resources including: [research-based](#) practices, sample lessons, interactive activities, and video segments taken from afterschool programs across the country. The most impressive of the support materials are the video vignettes that illuminate all of the practices identified in the study. Since the videos are drawn specifically from the research base established for the entire project, they are an excellent representation of the program in action.

## [TAKE A TWO MINUTE TOUR](#)

In the above video vignette, the viewer is given an excellent overview of the program in action.

### **Practice Title and Abstract**

The AFTERSCHOOL TRAINING TOOLKIT uses evidence-based practices, video examples and lesson plans to support academic enrichment for after school programs.

### **Subject Area and Population**

The After School Training Toolkit comprises **LITERACY, ARTS, MATH, TECHNOLOGY, SCIENCE AND HOMEWORK**. This best practice report will focus on the **Story and Literacy Dramatizations** activity for students K-12.

### **Background**

[Literacy](#) includes speaking, listening, reading, and writing - the essential communication skills students need to succeed, both in school and the world beyond. Students gain confidence as they build competence in communication and critical thinking.

Early elementary students engage in speaking, listening, and writing activities to build fundamental reading skills. Upper elementary students use their literacy skills to learn. They solve math problems, conduct science projects, and explore the social

sciences. Without fundamental literacy skills, students will struggle throughout their school years.

The foundation of this program is the synthesis of many years of research. The researchers at [NPQAL \(National Partnership for Quality After School Learning\)](#) were prompted into action after finding that although some after school program leaders were stumbling onto effective after-school literacy practices; there was no formal research that guided the leaders in finding which methods most effectively promoted academic growth in this area.

question was found by combining data + site visits + professional expertise. The researchers found the winning formula and the met their goal.

### **THE GOAL**

**Incorporate solid research principles in order to provide training and tools to help all program directors improve literacy skills and outcomes for their kids.**

### **GOAL MET!**

#### **FIRST ORDER PROBLEM:**

**Most students who participated in after-school programs were not motivated in language-based subjects.** Although some program directors were able to facilitate positive results with their students, they were struggling to provide a consistent, focused program method.



**Who is Learning?**



#### **SECOND ORDER PROBLEM:**

**Since supervised silent reading was the preferred method for encouraging literacy in after-school, the students were not being engaged and stimulated.** The underlying issue to the second order problem is that the students were tired and bored.



The research team set out to analyze data from sites that were showing positive results in improving literacy skills and interview students, teachers and others involved. The authors hoped to answer the question: "What works to improve literacy skills in after-school?" Their success in answering the

## Conceptual Framework

The Research conducted by the National Partnership for Quality After School Learning indicates that afterschool literacy activities benefit students most when staff apply the following principles:

### **Best Practice Principles**

1. Target texts and integrate skills.
2. Identify standards, assess needs, and define goals.
3. Incorporate real-world activities.
4. Consider student choice, grade, age, and skills.
5. Assess student progress.
6. Provide ongoing staff training.

So..... the researchers have decided on the best practice principals. Do they send out a A.P.B to all teachers and let them know the list of six principles?

### **OF COURSE NOT!**

They take the next step and use sound [pedagogical strategies](#) to design thoughtful, fun and accessible activities. The activities engage students and create a desire to learn and build on what students are learning during the school day.

There are 2 different pedagogical strategies used in the Story and Literature Dramatizations:

**AUTHENTIC INSTRUCTION**  
and  
**COLLABORATIVE LEARNING**

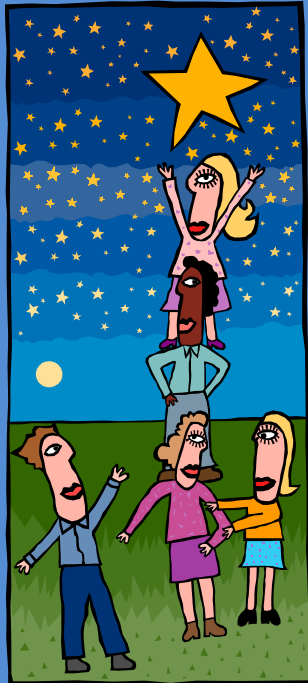
### Authentic Instruction Strategy

Although two main pedagogical strategies are employed in this program, authentic instruction seems to have the most significant impact. The foundation for authentic instruction states that activities should correspond closely to the real world experience. The activity is performance based and the instructor observes the activity in the process of the activity and provides feedback and adjusts the activity accordingly. The students themselves are involved in the process both through peer and self- assessment. This type of activity is more self-directed.

### Example

During the Freeze Frame activity students divide students into small groups and each group to poses to create a picture of a specific event from their text. Then each group member takes part in the picture and says, *Ready, Action, FREEZE!* The observing students are then asked to report and interpret what they see. If those who created the picture have details to add, they can fill them in.

They go around the room until all groups have had a chance to present their frozen picture. Finally the teachers use the lesson plan template to observe outcomes, and ask students to perform a self evaluation.



### Cooperative Learning Strategy

Cooperative learning is a successful teaching strategy in which small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is responsible not

only for learning what is taught but also for helping teammates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of achievement. Students work through the assignment until all group members successfully understand and complete it.

Cooperative efforts result in participants striving for mutual benefit so that all group members:

- gain from each other's efforts
- recognize that all group members share a common fate.
- know that one's performance is mutually caused by oneself and one's team members.
- feel proud and jointly celebrate when a group member is recognized for achievement.

### Example



*Click to watch seventh- and eighth-grade students at the Citizens Schools afterschool program in Boston, Massachusetts, read and discuss a play adapted from the novel, Nothing but the Truth.*

In the above activity we see that the students in two grade levels are reading a play version of a novel. They bring the story to life by taking turns reading and experiencing others reading as well. During the reading of the play they stop to discuss issues that arise in the book and how they would deal with similar issues in their lives. They also are asked to foresee what characters may do later in the story. When interviewed, the student say that even though they may not read as fast as other students, they feel accepted by their peers and realize that by working together everyone makes improvements. This is an excellent example of the cooperative learning method in effect.

### Technology and Management Plan

#### Technology

There are two technology resources used by students in the Story and Literacy Dramatizations. The first is the video vignette index, which is used to show the practices in action. Students can watch real-examples of the dramatizations as well as hear student reactions to the program. A second component of technology infusion is a link provided in the resource section of the toolkit. The Resource link includes a Technology Tip and sends the user to

[youthlearn.org](http://youthlearn.org). This website lets students take their dramatization to the next level by creating a video. The site also provides an explanation as to the relevance of student video production in reading and writing education.

### Management

This best practice does not offer specific resources for students to plan and manage the program. The resources and planning guides are suited for instructors. The Lesson Planning Template is a practical planning and logistics worksheet for teachers. The template has suggested questions to consider while preparing your afterschool lessons. The questions are grouped into topics that correspond to the Lesson Planning Template. You can [print out the template](#) and use it as a worksheet to plan and refine your afterschool lessons, to share lesson ideas with colleagues, or to help in professional development sessions. The

Teacher Template includes:

***Grade Level***  
***Duration***  
***Learning Goals***  
***Materials Needed***  
***Preparation***  
***What to Do***  
***Outcomes to Look For***  
***Self-Evaluation***

Other tools in this toolkit include Sample Lessons and Resources. The resources include the following Thematically-related Web links:



### Thematically-related Web Links

*The Peace Journey: Using  
Process Drama in the  
Classroom*

*Kennedy Center Theatre  
Lessons*

*YouthLearn*



### Conceptually-related Web Links

*Cooperative Learning*

*Authentic Instruction*

*What is Literacy?*

*Using Drama and Theatre to  
Promote Literacy  
Development*



## Critical Assessment

The AFTERSCHOOL TRAINING TOOLKIT is an excellent example of a best practice. What I find most impressive is that multiple organizations joined forces and worked for several years to research afterschool programs nationwide. The sound methodology gives the user confidence that the program is well researched and well designed to enhance academic achievement. It is important that a program method have resources available so that the user can read the existing research on the foundation of the project. I was able to access the partnership research and numerous support materials that included a literature review. The literature review was an excellent explanation of how the researchers focused on eliminating learning barriers, supporting non-academic strengths, providing an engaging environment and creating a vastly different environment to what students have in school.

Upon review of the Story and Literacy Dramatizations Unit, I can say that I wish I could be in an afterschool program! To sum up the lessons in one word F-U-N! Anytime kids are participating with one another in order to achieve a goal, learning will take place. That is exactly what happens in all of the dramatization lessons. Each lesson can be used with various grade levels, they promote peer-review, can be adapted to the skill level of the participating students, supports academic strengths while encouraging students to do their best for the sake of the group and most certainly provides a very different experience than that of the typical classroom.

Although I have no experience in the classroom, I feel 100% confident that by using the TOOLKIT, I could gather a group of afterschool kids and teach any one of these lessons with minimal preparation time. That is an important factor when an existing afterschool team is considering adapting a new program practice. The site has a link for [10 ways to build professional development with the TOOLKIT](#). Since professional development is the key introducing and maintaining a new program, the researchers have been careful to lay out a detailed resource to implement the TOOLKIT. Getting the staff invested in the program is half the battle and the Professional Development resources are vital to any program. Overall, I give this program an A+.

## Definitions

**Authentic Instruction** - Using real-life situations to motivate and engages students to learn new skills.

[\(Back\)](#)

**Cooperative Learning** - Students work on projects or problems in teams with both personal and team accountability for conceptual understanding. [\(Back\)](#)

**Literacy** - In modern contexts, the word refers to reading and writing at a level adequate for communication, or at a level that lets one understand and communicate ideas in a literate society, so as to take part in that society. [\(Back\)](#)

**Pedagogical Strategies** - General instructional designs that are applied to a teaching or learning unit. [\(Back\)](#)

**Standards-based** - The standards-based reform movement calls for clear, measurable standards for all school students. [\(Back\)](#)

**Research-based** - Staff development that improves the learning of all students and prepares educators to apply research to decision making. [\(Back\)](#)

**NPQAL** - National Center for Quality Afterschool helps state education agencies develop high-quality, balanced programs for academic enrichment. [\(Back\)](#)