

Strengthening Student Literacy: Moving Beyond Homework Help

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Link to slides





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Session Objectives

- ❑ Participants will distinguish between homework help and tutoring.
- ❑ Participants will analyze the benefits of integrating engaging literacy activities into out-of-school programs to improve student literacy outcomes.
- ❑ Participants will explore an online toolkit to locate resources and strategies for designing and implementing effective literacy practices.
- ❑ Participants will collaborate and share insights about what has been effective within their local programs.

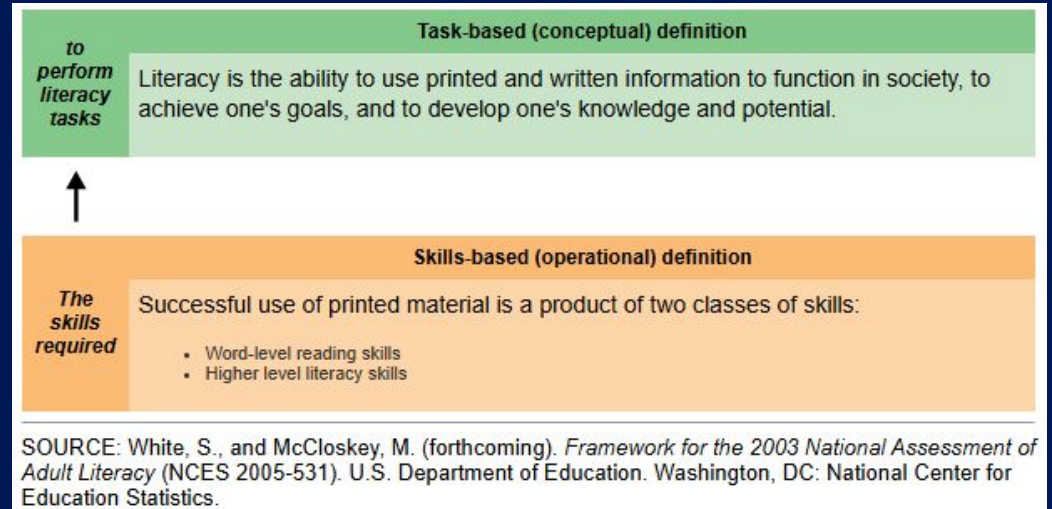


Stop & Jot:

1. Who bears the burden of making sure students are literate?
2. What does it mean to be literate? or How can we define literacy?

Defining Literacy

Literacy has been defined as, “an individual’s ability to use printed information to function in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential” (NALS, 1996).



- This definition presents literacy as both task-based and skills-based.
- How can support the development of student literacy?

The Role of OST Programs in Student Literacy & Achievement

Research shows that tutoring and other school-based programs are tied to **increased academic achievement** in core content areas, **especially for students who traditionally struggle most**, like English learners, students from low-income families, and students in special education programs.

(Peetz & Baker, 2023)

The caveat is that more time on its own isn't the solution...**Extra time on its own isn't enough—districts have to be intentional in how they use it.**

Homework Help vs. Tutoring

	Homework Help	Tutoring
Focus	<p>Centers on assisting students with completing specific homework assignments or projects</p> <p>Aims to clarify immediate questions or misunderstandings related to current coursework</p>	<p>Concentrates on building foundational knowledge and skills in a subject area</p> <p>Addresses long-term learning goals and areas of difficulty for the student</p>
Student Needs	Determined by classroom teachers and the assignments given	Determined by assessment data that has identified learning gaps
Materials	Determined by classroom teachers and the assignments given	High-quality intervention materials are often used
Instruction	Reactive approach, responding to the content and challenges the student brings	<p>Proactive and individualized, following a tailored plan based on the student's needs</p> <p>Often includes diagnostic assessments to identify areas for growth</p>
Goal	<p>Helps students stay caught up with classwork and reinforces current classroom topics</p> <p>Primarily ensures assignment completion rather than skill mastery</p>	<p>Helps students achieve deeper comprehension, skill proficiency, and academic independence</p> <p>Goes beyond immediate assignments to foster long-term success</p>







Turn & Talk:
What were the
differences in the
two approaches?

Student Vignettes



Jayden is a 3rd-grade student who attends the after-school program at his elementary school. His teacher has shared that Jayden is reading below grade level and struggles with fluency and comprehension.

During homework time at the program, Jayden often works on reading assignments but becomes easily frustrated. For example, when asked to read a short passage and answer questions, he spends a long time sounding out words and frequently skips words he doesn't recognize. His answers to comprehension questions are usually incomplete or unrelated to the text.

Jayden enjoys listening to stories during group read-alouds but rarely chooses to read independently. When asked, he says, "Reading is too hard for me." His parents say they try to help him at home, but they're unsure how to support him beyond reminding him to do his homework.

Discussion Questions

- How can the staff of the afterschool program support Jayden?
- Will Jayden benefit most from homework help, tutoring, or a combination of the two?
- If you were creating literacy goals for Jayden, where would you start and what might those goals look like?
- What will afterschool staff need to support Jayden's goals?
- How might collaboration with Jayden's teacher and family enhance his learning?

Marie is a 4th-grade student who attends the afterschool program at her elementary school. She recently transferred from another school and has missed several weeks of class this year due to frequent moves and family responsibilities.

Marie is capable of doing grade-level work but struggles to keep up because she has missed key lessons in math and writing. When she works on homework during the program, she often asks for clarification about what she's supposed to do, saying, "I wasn't at school when the teacher explained this." Once she understands the directions, Marie can complete most assignments independently, though it takes her extra time.

Marie's teacher has expressed concern about her inconsistent attendance but noted that Marie is motivated to learn and catch up when she has the chance. At home, Marie's family is supportive but busy, and they rely on the after-school program to help Marie stay on track with her schoolwork.

Discussion Questions

- How can the staff of the afterschool program support Marie?
- Will Marie benefit most from homework help, tutoring, or a combination of the two?
- If you were creating goals for Marie, where would you start and what might those goals look like?
- What will afterschool staff need to support Marie's goals?
- How might collaboration with Marie's teacher and family enhance her learning?

Tips for Out-of-School Time Programs

Assessment & Alignment:

- ❑ Align activities and instruction to individual and small group needs.
- ❑ Determine those needs through assessments and collaboration with day school staff. Consider if the student needs homework help, tutoring, or both.
- ❑ Develop SMART goals.
- ❑ Monitor student progress.

Instruction & Activities:

- ❑ Build a team to help strategically and intentionally plan literacy activities.
- ❑ Use a variety of engaging texts to help students learn and practice literacy skills.
- ❑ Incorporate real-world applications and student choice whenever possible.
- ❑ Engage families.

Logistics:

- ❑ Plan budget, space, time.
- ❑ Recruit and train high-quality staff.
- ❑ Purchase, provide training for, and use high-quality instructional materials.

Speed Dating Questions

Does your OST staff provide a combination of homework help and tutoring? If so, discuss how this is coordinated. If not, do you think it would be beneficial to include both moving forward?

How does your OST program currently determine a student's literacy needs? What could you consider moving forward?

When intentionally designing literacy instruction and activities, what is your greatest challenge and how have you or could you combat it?

Workshop Time-

Choose your own Adventure

OPTION #1

Explore the Y4Y Afterschool Training Toolkit.



<https://y4yarchives.org/toolkits/afterschool/>

OPTION #2

Explore the Y4Y Tools of your choice.



<https://y4yarchives.org/tools>



<https://bit.ly/OST2025Exit>

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Thank
You