

# Demonstration Project: The Reading Connection

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The Afterschool Program that makes Reading  
Relevant in Denver Public Schools

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## *The Afterschool Program that Makes Reading Relevant in Denver Public Schools*

The Reading Connection is an innovative program that requires teachers and media center librarians to work together to create year round after-school programs and activities that support and enhance classroom learning goals. The Reading Connection provides a framework for targeting Denver Public School (DPS) student performance goals. Interdisciplinary in nature, the Reading Connection focuses on achieving student outcomes that demonstrate thinking, reading and writing critically across the curriculum. The Reading Connection programs and activities reinforce the Colorado content standards for reading and writing and introduce the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (P21) organization's student outcomes as measurement benchmarks.

### **Mission**

The Reading Connection demonstration project aims to establish a model of collaboration between Denver Public Schools (DPS) media center librarians and DPS teachers to achieve desired student learning outcomes in the classroom.

### **Needs Assessment**

In 2009 the Denver Public Schools Board of Education adopted student performance goals. The Reading Connection demonstration project targets the following DPS student achievement goals for 4<sup>th</sup> grade students:

1. On average, the proficiency rate for grade level cohorts will increase 3.5% in reading and writing each year.
2. 3.5% of English language learners will become proficient or better on the Colorado English Language Assessment (CELA) overall rating each year. (Denver Public Schools 5-Year Goals, 2009, p.3)

A study conducted by the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning Laboratory (McREL), commissioned by the Institute of Education Sciences, Department of Education, found that out-of-school-time (OST) “strategies can have positive effects on achievement of low-achieving or at-risk students in reading and mathematics” (McREL, 2004, p. 76). This study also found that:

1. Program duration, student grouping, cost, and implementation issues, such as staff recruitment and program location, influence program effectiveness.
2. OST strategies need not focus solely on academic activities to have positive effects on student achievement.
3. Administrators of OST programs should monitor program implementation and student learning in order to determine the appropriate investment of time for specific strategies and activities. (McREL, 2004, p. 77-78)

These findings provide the guidelines for the Reading Connection demonstration project. The learning programs and activities proposed offer a range of high-quality services in one core academic area: reading and literacy.

### **Target Population**

Fourth grade students in five schools identified as high-poverty and low performing: Ford Elementary School; Green Valley Elementary School; Greenwood Elementary School; Oakland Elementary School; and Waller K-8.

**Table 1: Baseline Achievement Levels**

SY 2008 CSAP Results		Ford % Proficient	Green Valley % Proficient	Greenwood % Proficient	Oakland % Proficient	Waller % Proficient
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading State Avg. 61.70% Proficient	Hispanic	27.42%	24.44%	46.97%	27.03%	27.78%
	Black	25.00%	30.56%	NA	29.41%	36.84%
	English Language Learners	35.56%	32.50%	54.10%	(SY 2009) 13.64%	5.88%
	Economically Disadvantaged	26.15%	26.76%	45.33%	23.40%	25.49%

## Project Design

Goals, Objectives, and Tasks		Time Line	
		Begin Date	End Date
Goal: Build capacity for collaboration between school media center librarians (SL) and teachers (ST).			
<b>Objective A:</b> <b>SL and ST collaborate to remove barriers to sharing resources, knowledge, and innovating practices that improve student learning.</b>		10/1/2010	Ongoing
<b>Critical Success Indicator:</b> <b>School media center collections are aligned with Colorado Department of Education (CDE) content standards and curriculum objectives.</b>			
<b>Task A<sub>1</sub>:</b>	Assess school media center collections for alignment with CDE content standards and curriculum objectives. Content areas: reading and language acquisition. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output: An evaluation plan template that can be used to assess alignment in the future.</li> </ul>	10/1/2010	11/30/2010
<b>Task A<sub>2</sub>:</b>	Map school media center programs/initiatives to CDE content standards and curriculum objectives. Content areas: reading and language acquisition. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output: Coauthored curriculum maps and course schedules.</li> </ul>	10/15/2010	12/15/2010
<b>Task A<sub>3</sub>:</b>	List school media center collection items related to CDE curriculum objectives. Perform a gap analysis to determine what is available to support classroom objectives and what is needed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output: Plan for obtaining needed resources</li> </ul>	10/15/2010	12/15/2010
<b>Task A<sub>4</sub>:</b>	Design and develop school media center programs that support student learning in the classroom (reading and language acquisition content) and include social learning activities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output: Collection of programs ready for use</li> </ul>	11/1/2010	3/1/2011
<b>Task A<sub>5</sub>:</b>	Identify and train program instructors (both traditional and online). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output: Instructor developed lesson plans</li> </ul>		
<b>Task A<sub>6</sub>:</b>	Field test the programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify participant test group</li> <li>• Survey participants</li> <li>• Revise materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Output: Assessment survey</li> <li>◦ Output: Programs ready for use</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
<b>Task A<sub>7</sub>:</b>	Associate school media center programs with DPS classroom activities for the academic year. Coauthor program/class descriptions. Schedule school media center programs to correspond with DPL class schedules. Schedule ongoing online choices and traditional programs in school media centers during permissible after-school hours. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output: School media center offerings scheduled to support classroom objectives</li> </ul>	3/1/2011	4/1/2011
<b>Task A<sub>8</sub>:</b>	Market school media center programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output: Marketing plan</li> </ul>		
<b>Task A<sub>9</sub>:</b>	Implement programs and evaluate results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output: Program evaluation report</li> </ul>		

Expected Outcomes for Goal A	
<b>Outcome A<sub>1</sub>:</b>	<p>The quality of the SL and ST partnership is evidenced by project staff consistently rating collaboration, team member satisfaction, and customer service satisfaction indicators in the high range; a reduction in the time spent rehashing old issues; and an increase in the time spent on tasks that contribute to goal achievement.</p> <p><i>Performance targets:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>95% of the ratings on collaboration and satisfaction indicators are in the high range</li> <li>50% fewer complaints about group work by the end of the first year</li> <li>80% of the products/programs developed during the project life cycle introduce/implement new ideas/practices</li> <li>No team members quit the project</li> <li>&gt;90% of project programs completed</li> <li>&gt;95% of the programs implemented meet customer needs</li> <li>&gt;90% of products customers find useful</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome A<sub>2</sub>:</b>	<p>Significant student achievement gains measured by the change in Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) scores and Colorado Growth Model measures.</p> <p><i>Performance targets:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>80% of the school media center program participants demonstrate mastery of the skills attempted</li> <li>On average, the proficiency rate for grade level cohorts (4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades) participating in school media center programs increase 3.5% in reading</li> <li>80% of the school media center program participants score proficient or better on CSAP in the content area(s) attempted</li> <li>80% of the school media center program participants score proficient or better on the CELA assessment</li> <li>80% of the school media center program participants score proficient or better on the Colorado Basic Literacy assessments</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome A<sub>4</sub>:</b>	<p>ST and students increase their use of the school media center.</p> <p><i>Performance target:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; 20% increase in use of the school media center</li> </ul>

### Colorado Model Content Standards—Reading and Writing

(<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/documents/OSA/standards/read.htm#standard1>)

Standard	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Expectations
<b>1. Students read and understand a variety of materials</b>	Use a full range of strategies to comprehend materials such as directions, nonfiction materials, rhymes and poems, and stories.
<b>2. Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.</b>	<p>Generate topics and develop ideas for a variety of writing and speaking purposes (for example, telling a story, publishing a class newsletter, writing a letter to an adult, writing or orally presenting a book report, creating and producing a play, introducing a speaker or an event, narrating a presentation);</p> <p>Organize their speaking and writing;</p> <p>Choose vocabulary that communicates their messages clearly and precisely;</p> <p>Revise and edit speech and writing; and</p> <p>Create readable documents with legible handwriting or word processing at the appropriate time.</p>

Standard	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Expectations
<b>3. Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.</b>	<p>Know and use subject/verb agreement;</p> <p>Know and use correct modifiers;</p> <p>Know and use correct capitalization, punctuation, and abbreviations; and</p> <p>Spell frequently used words correctly using phonics rules and exceptions.</p>
<b>4. Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.</b>	<p>Recognize an author's point of view;</p> <p>Predict and draw conclusions about stories;</p> <p>Differentiate between fact and opinion in written and spoken forms;</p> <p>Use reading, writing, speaking, and listening to define and solve problems;</p> <p>Respond to written and oral presentations as a reader, listener, and articulate speaker;</p> <p>Formulate questions about what they read, write, hear, and view; and</p> <p>Use listening skills to understand directions.</p>
<b>5. Students read to locate, select, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources.</b>	<p>Use organizational features of printed text (for example, page numbering, alphabetizing, glossaries, chapter heading, tables of contents, indexes, captions);</p> <p>Recognize organizational features of electronic information (for example, pull-down menus, icons, key word searches);</p> <p>Use organizational features to locate media or electronic information (for example, passwords, entry menu features, pull-down menus, icons, key word searches);</p> <p>Take notes, outline, and identify main ideas in resource materials;</p> <p>Sort information as it relates to a specific topic or purpose; and</p> <p>Give credit for borrowed information by telling or listing sources.</p>
<b>6. Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.</b>	<p>Read, respond to, and discuss a variety of literature such as folk tales, legends, myths, fiction, rhymes and poems, non-fiction, and content-area reading;</p> <p>Read, respond to, and discuss literature as a way to explore the similarities and differences among stories and the ways in which those stories reflect the ethnic background of the author and the culture in which they were written;</p> <p>Recognize the concept of classic or enduring literature, and reading and listening to classic works;</p> <p>Use literary terminology such as setting, plot, character, problem, and solution; and</p> <p>Use new vocabulary from literature in other context.</p>

**Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Student Outcomes**  
[\(<http://www.p21.org>\)](http://www.p21.org)

<b>21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> Century Student Outcomes</b>
<b>Core Subjects and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Themes:</b>	Competence in these subjects and themes: English, reading or language arts World languages Arts Mathematics Economics Science Geography History Government and Civics Global Awareness Financial, Economic, Business and Entrepreneurial Literacy Civic Literacy Health Literacy
<b>Learning and Innovation Skills</b>	Creativity and Innovation—think creatively; work creatively with others; implement innovations Critical Thinking and Problem Solving—reason effectively; use systems thinking; make judgments and decisions; solve problems Communication and Collaboration—communicate clearly; collaborate with others
<b>Information, Media and Technology Skills</b>	Information Literacy—access and evaluate information; use and manage information Media Literacy—analyze media; create media products Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) Literacy—apply technology effectively
<b>Life and Career Skills</b>	Flexibility and Adaptability—adapt to change; be flexible Initiative and Self-Direction—manage goals and time; work independently; be self-directed learners Social and Cross-Cultural Skills—interact effectively with others; work effectively in diverse teams Productivity and Accountability—manage projects; produce results Leadership and Responsibility—guide and lead others; be responsible to others

**Examples of the types of programs and activities the Reading Connection project offers:****4<sup>th</sup> Grade After-School Activities<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Can You Convince Me?</b>  Children learn how to make a convincing argument—an important skill in school and in life.	Grades (3-5) Two –three hours (scheduled in 1 hour sessions over different days). Publisher: International Reading Association  Program Note: Multiple sessions of this activity can be scheduled throughout the year. Five participants per group.
<b>Create Trading Cards for Favorite Characters</b>  Use the online Character Trading Cards tool to have children make cards describing their favorite characters from the books on their reading list.	Grades (3-5) 20-30 minutes per character (scheduled in 1 hour sessions over different days). Publisher: International Reading Association  Program Note: Multiple sessions of this activity can be scheduled throughout the year. Five participants per group.
<b>Creating Comics and Cartoons!</b>  Using published comics and cartoons as examples, children can create their own while playing with images and language.	Grades (3-5) One hour sessions scheduled over different days. Author: Lisa Storm Fink, Urbana, Illinois. Publisher: National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)  Program Note: Multiple sessions of this activity can be scheduled throughout the year. Five participants per group.
<b>Exploring the Library</b>  Plan a visit to a library to discover more about this magical place.	Grades (3-5) 15-hours of exploring—browsing or using the online catalog (scheduled in 1 hour sessions over different days). Author: Lisa Storm Fink, Urbana, Illinois. Publisher: National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)  Program Note: The output is a personal summer reading list. Reward each child who completes their list with their favorite book on the list.  Program Note: Multiple sessions of this activity can be scheduled throughout the year. Ten participants per group.

<sup>1</sup> Activities adapted from resources found at: [www.readwritethink.org](http://www.readwritethink.org)

**4<sup>th</sup> Grade After-School Activities<sup>2</sup>****Fairy Tales and You**

Children will draw on their knowledge of story structure and fairy tales to write their own.

Grades (3-5) Six 1-hour sessions scheduled over different days. Author: Lisa Storm Fink, Urbana, Illinois. Publisher: National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

Program Note: Each participant writes and publishes a book to give as a gift. Participants use the Barnes & Noble TikaTok Web site (<http://www.tikatok.com>) to publish the book.

Program Note: Multiple sessions of this activity can be scheduled throughout the year. Five participants per group.

**Let's Play a Game**

Playing board games or card games can be a fun activity, so why not make your own?

Grades (3-5) Two 1-hour sessions, one to create the game and the additional hour to play the game (scheduled in 1 hour sessions over different days). Author: Lisa Storm Fink, Urbana, Illinois. Publisher: National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

Program Note: Multiple sessions of this activity can be scheduled throughout the year. Ten participants per group.

**Let the Show Begin! Literary Talent Show**

Children choose their favorite songs, poems, or stories to act out in a talent show for friends and family.

Grades (3-5) Six hours needed for preparation plus additional time to perform the talent show (scheduled in 1 hour sessions over different days). Author: Jaime R. Wood, Portland, Oregon. Publisher: National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

Program Note: This is a Readers Theater Club and productions are videotaped to be shown during "Back To School Night" for parents.

Five participants per group. There can be multiple Readers Theater Clubs performing materials from different genres.

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<sup>2</sup> Activities adapted from resources found at: [www.readwritethink.org](http://www.readwritethink.org)

**4<sup>th</sup> Grade After-School Activities<sup>3</sup>****Read All About It: Neighborhood News**

Children enjoy sharing their thoughts, ideas and opinions in talking with others. Encourage them to write these down and more to share in a neighborhood newspaper!

Grades (3-5) An initial hour to explore and talk about newspapers plus several more 1-hour sessions to create the newspaper. Author: Lisa Storm Fink, Urbana, Illinois. Publisher: National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

Program Note: This is a school Newspaper Club and the newspaper is published monthly on the school's Web site. Participants take on and perform the roles of a newspaper staff. Ten participants rotated in and out each month.

**Start Your Own Book Club**

Children can enjoy a community-building experience by meeting with friends to choose, read, and discuss books together.

Grades (3-5) One hour sessions scheduled over several days. Author: Jaime R. Wood, Portland, Oregon. Publisher: National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

Program Note: This is a school Book Club with open membership. Participants develop and post booktalks (oral and video) on the media center Web site each month.

**Write "Moving" Sports Poetry**

We've all heard the expression "poetry in motion"—this activity gets children writing poems about grace and movement using photos of athletes.

Grades (3-5) Three 1-hour sessions needed to create a poster about movement (scheduled in 1 hour sessions over different days). Publisher: International Reading Association.

Program Note: Multiple sessions of this activity can be scheduled throughout the year.

<sup>3</sup> Activities adapted from resources found at: [www.readwritethink.org](http://www.readwritethink.org)

**Example of an after-school activity plan:**

Title: School Book Club

Purpose: A social learning activity, participants work in small groups (3-5 per group) with a book of their choice to develop audio and video booktalks using various media.

Outcomes: Participants become skilled at:

- Generating topics and developing ideas for writing or oral presentations;
- Organizing their speaking and writing;
- Choosing vocabulary that communicates their messages clearly and precisely;
- Revising and editing speech and writing; and
- Creating readable documents.

Objectives: To integrate technology with booktalks in ways that promote reading, writing and speaking skills. The goal is to sell reading for pleasure, introduce new ideas and new fields of reading, and raise participants' reading levels.

Standards Addressed:

- Colorado content standard—reading and writing (2) Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences, (3) Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling, and (4) Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.
- P21 Student Outcomes: Learning and Innovation Skills and Information, Media and Technology Skills.

Materials:

- Books to read. Books can be chosen from a list provided by the activity facilitator and read by individuals or the group.

- Computers, audio creation software (e.g., Audacity, Garage Band), image manipulation software (e.g.; Paint, GIMP, PhotoShop Elements), video creation software (e.g.; iMovie, Movie Maker, Photo Story), presentation software (e.g.; Inspire, PowerPoint), pencils, storyboard handout, headset microphone, and word processing software (Microsoft Word).

Process:

- Participant(s) choose a book.
- Participant(s) write a short summary about the book highlighting their favorite parts.
- Facilitator instructs on how to create a storyboard or script.
- Participant(s) write a script (storyboard) showcasing their book choice.
- Participants create and edit their audio/video projects.
- Products are posted monthly on the school media center web site.

Guiding resource for this activity: Keane, N. J., & Cavanaugh, T. W. (2009). *The Tech-Savvy Booktalker: A Guide for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Educators*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

## **Program Participant Assessment Strategies**

**Strategy 1:** Use the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) Record Integration Tracking System (RITS) Student Assigned Identifiers (SASID) to request achievement data for student participants.

Assessment data available includes:

- CSAP (Colorado Student Assessment Program) which assesses student proficiency levels in reading, math and science;
- CELA (Colorado English Language Acquisition) which assesses student proficiency levels in English reading, writing, speaking, listening, and comprehension for students having a language background other than English; and
- Colorado Basic Literacy Assessments:

- DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills)
- PALS (Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening)
- DRA 2 (Developmental Reading Assessment).

**Strategy 2:** Participants develop eportfolios of work that demonstrate mastery of content and competence in content areas. Creating eportfolios promotes accountability and authentic assessment, critical reflection and the integration of knowledge.

**Strategy 3:** Assessment rubrics designed to evaluate the products associated with each program activity.

## References

Denver Public Schools. (2009). *Denver Public Schools 5-Year Goals*. Denver: Denver Public Schools.

McREL (Regional Educational Laboratory). (2004). *The Effectiveness of Out-of-School-Time Strategies in Assisting Low-Achieving Students in Reading and Mathematics: A Research Synthesis*. Washington, D. C.: Department of Education.