



# Adventure: “Holy Reading, Batman!”

*Make your own comic, and read some too!*

*Aventura: ¡Sea un superhéroe en la biblioteca con novelas gráficas y cómics!*

**Age Range:** K + up

**Group Size:** flexible

**Time Range:** 45-90 min





## Adventure Goals:

Our goal for every adventure is for children to [have fun with books and reading!](#) In this adventure we will read a comic or graphic novel together; explore a variety of comics and graphic novels to read and borrow; and write our own short comic stories!

*\*Note: this adventure could be repeated multiple times by exploring reading and writing with different genres. I.e. poetry, picture books, non-fiction, etc.*



## Measurable Objectives and Outcomes:

**Objective:** Participants will write and illustrate their own comic story.

**Outcome:** Participants will be able to create their own comic using one or more of the elements discussed during the adventure.

**Objective:** Participants will explore comics and graphic novels.

**Outcome:** Participants will choose a graphic novel or comic to borrow.



## Adventure Outline:

Graphic novels integrate words and pictures in dynamic ways to tell stories that motivate striving and reluctant readers, foster visual literacy, and develop critical thinking skills. In this adventure we will:

- Talk about our favorite cartoon and/or comic characters
- Read a comic or graphic novel together
- Explore graphic novels and comics to read and check-out
- Create our own short comics to take home





## Supplies:

- A large enough selection of graphic novels and/or comics so that all participants have choices that match their reading level, interests, and language needs. See: [Graphic Novel Suggestions](#)
- A graphic novel or comic to use as a read-aloud. See: [Graphic Novel Suggestions](#)
- A short comic strip that you enjoy (ex. Garfield, Asterix, Mama's Boyz, Mafalda, etc.)
- Whiteboard or flipchart paper for group brainstorming, and appropriate markers.
- Copies of [3-panel](#) and [6-panel](#) Comic Templates
- Pencils for all participants
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils for all participants
- Staplers
- Optional:** Superhero or other comic-related costume materials such as capes, masks, or other props.



## Adventure Considerations

- For the graphic novel read-aloud consider:
  - Are the images big enough for everyone to see?
  - If not, do you have access to an overhead projector or document camera?
  - If you are reading a short selection, could you make copies for participants to follow along with?  
**Note:** In general it is considered fair use to copy 1 chapter or 10% of pages, whichever is longer. For more copyright and fair use guidance see [Education World: Is Fair Use License to Steal?](#)
  - If you have access to downloadable ebooks and a projector, consider projecting an ebook version or a freely available [webcomic](#).
- Consider how you will set up your program space:
  - Where will participants sit during the read aloud so that they can all see?
  - Where will they write their comics?
  - How will supplies be distributed?

# Adventure Plan

## Hook: My favorite character (5 min)

Tell the group about your favorite cartoon or comic character, making sure to tell them why the character is your favorite. Consider sharing a comic strip featuring the character or another piece of fun realia.

### Let's Think About This!: Favorite character think, pair, share!

**Think:** Ask participants to think about their favorite characters. Write the question on the whiteboard or flipchart paper for participants to reference throughout the activity. Give participants about 1 minute of thinking time before having them pair-up

**Question:** Who is your favorite comic or cartoon character? What do you like most about them?

**Say:** *Now it is your turn to tell us about your favorite comic or cartoon character. Take a moment to think to yourself; who is your favorite comic or cartoon character? What do you like most about them?*

**Pair:** Ask participants to share their thoughts with another participant.

**Say:** *Let's all pair up! You can pair up with a friend, someone sitting near you, or with your family. Tell them about your favorite character and then have them tell you about their favorite character. Talk together in whatever language feels most comfortable to you. Make sure to tell them why the character is your favorite. If you need help thinking of what to say, you can use the sentence prompts written here to get you started (point to the prompt and read it aloud to the group).*

### Sentence Prompts:

- My favorite character is ...
- They are my favorite character because ...

**Share:** If time, call the group back together. Invite pairs to share what they talked about.

- Encourage participants to expand upon their ideas as needed. Use the sentence prompts to guide participants to provide details.
- Try to enhance language without making participants feel corrected. Things to try: validating individual views; connecting observations; restating with rich vocabulary; and pointing out differences of opinion.

## Navigation

[Oral Language Development:](#) Providing ample low-anxiety opportunities for participants to talk develops oracy skills that are crucial to reading and language development.



**Tip:** Modeling your thinking process for children through verbalization helps them to understand and analyze their own thinking processes.



### [Vocabulary](#)

“Comic” in Spanish = *el cómic/ el dibujo animado*

“Character” in Spanish = *el personaje*

“Cartoon” in Spanish = *la caricatura*

### [Family Cohesion and](#)

[Engagement:](#) Specifically inviting families to work together supports research that shows that Latino families from a variety of backgrounds have a preference for activities that maintain family cohesion.



### [Short on Time?:](#)

Consider using a bell or call and response clap after about a minute to let participants know when to switch and let their partner talk.

## Getting Started: Graphic Novel Read-Aloud (10 mins)

Read a short graphic novel, selection from a graphic novel, or a comic aloud to the group.

Before Reading: Show a page from the book that contains common graphic novel elements such as: balloons, panels, or emanata. See: [Vocabulary](#)

- Draw attention to the balloons and panels on the page. Invite participants to tell what they know about these different elements. You could ask questions like “Has anyone seen a word balloon like this? What does it mean?” Define elements as needed.

### While Reading:

- Act it Out! Use different voices for characters and emphasize sound effects. Have participants help you with the sound effects.
- Use your finger to show how to read panels from left to right and top to bottom.
- Talk about the pictures and make predictions about what will happen next.
  - Rephrase and expand on participants’ thoughts to enhance language skills and vocabulary without overly correcting.
  - Things to try: validating individual views; connecting observations; restating with rich vocabulary; and pointing out differences of opinion.

**Translanguaging:** Encouraging participants to use their entire language repertoire to discuss and make meaning supports multilingual children’s language development, social emotional growth, and affirms their cultural and language identities.



**Tip:** Sentence prompts give structure that supports young children, reluctant speakers, and those learning English to share their ideas. You can allow participants to alter and/or deviate from these prompts depending on their need.

**Extended Learning:** Invite participants to [dress-up in character](#).



**Vocabulary:**  
“Graphic Novel” in Spanish = *la novela gráfica*

“Balloons” in Spanish = *los globos*

“Panels” in Spanish = *los paneles*

**Family Engagement:** Share a family engagement message during your read-aloud if caregivers are present.

**Interactive Read-Alouds:** Involving participants while reading by asking prediction questions, modeling analytical thinking about the story, and clarifying meaning through explanation or dramatic retelling, helps children improve comprehension and engagement.



**Variations:** When selecting your read-aloud consider a webcomic or an ebook to model [joint media engagement](#) with families and caregivers.

## Transition

**Say:** *Wow, you are all such creative readers and thinkers! Now we are going to start working on creating our own comics using characters and stories from our imaginations. First, let's take a few minutes and browse some more graphic novels to get ideas for our stories and some great books to borrow to read at home.*

## Book Browsing Time: Talking Comics (10-15 mins)

**Booktalk:** If time, pick a couple of graphic novels to briefly booktalk for the group. This is a chance for you to model how they can use this time to find mentor texts to help them with their creations.

### Example Mentor Text Talk

**Say:** *I like how when the mouse is struggling to button their coat there are little sweat drops coming off of them so you can really see how hard they are working. I am going to try to use this idea in my comic.*



(Image from: *Little Mouse Gets Ready*, Jeff Smith, 2009.)

A cartoon of an anthropomorphic little mouse struggling to button their coat. They are talking to themselves saying “One...More...Button...” and “THERE!” (Image from: *Little Mouse Gets Ready*, Jeff Smith, 2009.)

**Open Exploration:** Invite participants to select books and read them either silently or with a caregiver. Invite caregivers to participate by browsing books themselves and/or reading with/to their child(ren). Walk around and help participants find good books for them. Encourage participants to:

- Try out multiple books to figure out a book that will work for them.
- Look at the style of the illustrations, the way the author uses speech or thought bubbles, and the ways they show action or emotion in the story to get ideas for their own writing.
- Pick a book or two to borrow!



**Tip:** A [Booktalk](#) is a short and informal oral book recommendation you give to participants, or they give to each other, to get them excited about a book!



**Tip:** Mentor texts help beginning writers and illustrators by providing examples.



**Choice, Access and Time:** To become strong readers children need access to lots of books, the ability to choose what to read, time to engage in reading, and the opportunity to talk about what they are reading.

**Family Engagement:** Share a family engagement message about choice before starting book browsing time if caregivers are present.



**Variation:** Consider including ebooks to foster [joint media engagement](#).

**Neighbor Share:** Gather the group back together and invite participants to share with another participant about one of the books they looked at. Use a bell or a call and response clap to prompt participants to switch roles after about a minute.

**Say:** *Take a minute to share with your neighbor or someone you know about one of the books you were just reading that you like. You might want to tell them why they would want to read the book and share a favorite panel or page. If you have trouble thinking of what to say you could try (read the prompts and write them so everyone can see):*

### Sentence Prompts:

- I picked....  
*Yo elegí...*
- You should try this book because....  
*Debes leer este libro porque...*
- This is my favorite part of the book because....  
*Esta parte del libro es mi favorita porque...*

## Adventure: Creating Comics (30-40 mins)

Guide participants through making their own short comics!

### Brainstorming:

**Say:** *Let's think back to the book we read together at the beginning and to the books we each just browsed. What are some of the important elements of those stories that we will want to add to the stories we write?*

Guide participants to identify the following elements and write them on a whiteboard or flipchart paper:

- Character
- Setting (where is the character?)
- Action/problem (what is the character doing?)
- Solution (how does the story end?)

Go back to each element and have participants give ideas for each.  
Character= dog. Setting= dog park. Problem= lost ball.



### Vocabulary:

“Setting” in Spanish =  
*el escenario / donde  
toma lugar*

“Action” in Spanish =  
*la acción*

“Solution” in Spanish =  
*la solución*

Writing: Exploring writing helps kids master reading.



### Short on Time?:

Consider writing up the story elements ahead of time and just focusing on having participants brainstorm some ideas for each element.

Extended Learning: Extend the brainstorming session by creating a short comic story together as a group.

## Writing:

**Say:** Now it's your turn to draw and write your own comic. You can work alone or with another person. Your story can include words and pictures or just pictures, it's all up to you! This is a time to let your imagination loose and to get creative. Don't worry about spelling all of the words correctly, just focus on telling the story.

### Make sure everyone has access to:

- Comic templates
- Plain paper
- Pencils
- Colored pencils/ markers/ crayons
- Staplers

Move around the room and help participants as needed. Make sure participants and caregivers know that this is a time to explore writing creatively, and not to worry about perfect spelling and grammar. Encourage participants to develop their story by asking them open-ended questions and prompting them to think creatively about their work. Consider writing these discussion prompts for adult participants to see and use with their young writers :

- Tell me about...
- I noticed you added...
- What do you think you could add?
- How would you draw that?
- What words do you know that describe that?
- Can you picture it in your head?



**Tip:** If some participants finish early, encourage participants to keep writing more comics or to add more detail to their story. Guide them to look at their mentor texts for inspiration.



**Variation:** Consider providing access to an online comic creation tool to add a fun accessible variation during this activity.

**Family Engagement:** Share a family engagement message about supporting young writers if caregivers are present.



**Tip:** Encourage participants to look through the books they picked out during book browsing time to get ideas for their comics.



**Tip:** Encourage adult participants to support their young writers by asking open-ended questions about their work.

**Writing:** Encouraging young writers to experiment with expressing their ideas without the expectation of perfect spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc., helps to foster a safe environment for creativity and play.

## Wrap-up/Share: Share Out

**Say:** *Take a moment and share the comic that you created with a person sitting near you, a friend, or a person you came with. You could read your comic aloud to your partner(s), or exchange comics and read each other's stories to yourselves. Share with your partner what you liked about their story, any ideas you have that would add to their story, and any questions you have about their story. Here are some sentence prompts to get you started thinking and talking.*

### Sentence Prompts:

- I really liked the part where...
- Tell me more about...
- What if you added...
- What is your favorite part of the story?
- What would you like to add to your story?

**Take Home:** Invite participants to take home more comic templates so they can continue writing, and remind everyone that the books they browsed are available to borrow!

**Say:** *I hope everybody had fun today reading and creating! Now, at the end of an adventure, I like to ask these three very important questions! I'll give you a hint: the answer to these questions is always... ¡Que sí! Or Yes!*

1. Are we happy to help you find good books to read? (Yes!)  
¿Nos gusta ayudarte a encontrar buenos libros para leer? (¡Que sí!)
2. Do we love to talk about books with you? (Yes!)  
¿Nos gusta conversar sobre los libros contigo? (¡Que sí!)
3. Is all reading good reading? (Yes!)  
¿Toda lectura es buena lectura? (¡Que sí!)

## ICON KEY



A Tip



Time



Spanish word



Choice



Variations/More ideas

# Variations and Extended Learning

*Consider some of these tips for engaging participants of various ages, cultures, languages and abilities.*

## Hook: My Favorite Character

### Short on Time?

- Skip the final group share. Start by introducing your favorite character, have participants think about theirs, and then have them pair up and talk before moving on.
- Keep things moving by setting a time limit and prompting pairs to switch who is talking with a bell or call and response hand clap.

### Extended Learning:

- Invite participants to come dressed as their favorite character or to bring a prop that represents their character. You could also provide costume/ prop items for participants to use. Provide some time before participants pair up for them to really get into character.
- Set up a photo booth! Take photos of participants/families dressed-up and ask them to write a caption for their photo. Share photos and captions on a bulletin board, website, or on social media. Note: Make sure to get appropriate permission and/or photo releases from families before taking or sharing any photos.

## Book Browsing: Talking Comics

### Short on Time?

- Skip the booktalks but do make sure to model how to look for mentor texts. This can be as simple as showing one panel from a comic/graphic novel and modeling what parts you would use in your own comic.

### Variation:

- Consider including a laptop or tablet with access to your library's ebook collection for participants to browse. Highlight an ebook during your booktalk and give participants some quick tips on how to open and navigate electronic books.
- Consider including a laptop or tablet with access to a select list of freely available [webcomics](#) for participants to browse. Highlight a webcomic during your booktalk and give participants some quick tips on how to navigate the web comic site(s) you selected.



# Adventure: Creating Comics

## Brainstorm: Short on Time?

- Write up the story elements ahead of time and focus on brainstorming ideas for each element.

**Say:** *You may have noticed that the stories we read today shared some of the same elements. They all had characters, settings, action/ a problem to solve, and a solution or resolution. Keep these elements in mind as you are writing your comics! Let's brainstorm some ideas for each element.*

## Extended Learning:

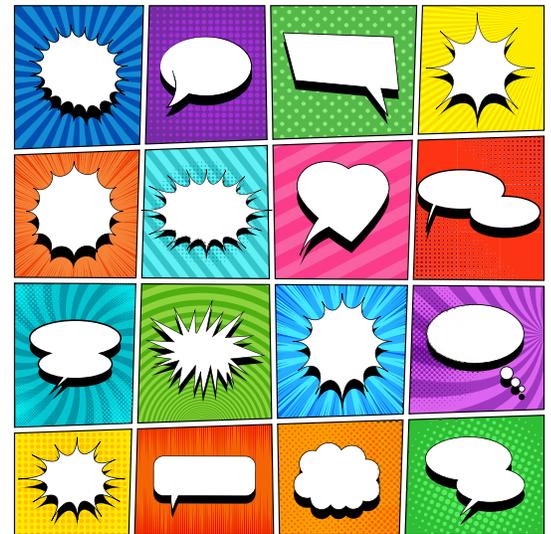
- Extend the brainstorming session by creating a short comic story together as a group. If you have participants who are eager to draw in front of the group, invite them to help with drawing the panels. Or, you can be the artist and solicit ideas from the group as to how each panel should look. Focus on modeling how to incorporate story elements as well as elements specific to comics/graphic novels like balloons, emanata, and panels.



## Write:

### Variation: Online Comic Creators

- Consider offering access to a free online comic creation tool for participants to use on a laptop or tablet. These tools allow young writers to create a comic story by choosing pre-drawn elements like characters and backgrounds and then adding their own dialog with type written speech bubbles if they choose. These tools offer another entry point into comic creation for participants who may have barriers to writing and/or drawing, many have options for printing finished work and/or sharing through email or social media.



### Online Comic Creation Resources:

- [readwritethink.org: Comic Creator](http://readwritethink.org:Comic-Creator)
- [Makebeliefscomix.com](http://Makebeliefscomix.com)
- [Toondoo.com](http://Toondoo.com)

# Vocabulary Extension Activities

Introducing new vocabulary provides many opportunities for extension activities. Here are a few you might try:

- Write the word on an index card or small poster so children see the word as well as hear the word.
- Say and use the word as many times as possible and reasonable during your introduction to the word and throughout the activity.
- Ask the children to say the word aloud. Turn to a partner and say the word. It's important that they get used to pronouncing the word.
- Playful interactions with the word help reinforce comprehension. Ask children to make a face that looks like the word, act it out, draw it in the air, etc. If there is an antonym (word with opposite meaning) ask the children to act/draw this out as well.
- Using the word in context is the single best way for new word learning to solidify. Try to use the word throughout your activity. Encourage the students to try out using the word as well. Celebrate student's attempts as a whole group.
- Invite the children and families to try using these words throughout the rest of their day when possible.

## Passive Program Idea: Comic Creation Station

Create a comic creation station in your library/program space with access to the following:

- A poster or handout that highlights common story elements (character, setting, etc.), elements specific to comics (balloons, panels, empanada) and an example of a 3-panel comic.
- Comic-making supplies like paper, pencils, art supplies, and a stapler.
- Plenty of comics and graphic novels for participants to browse and checkout.
- A parent handout with examples of open-ended questions to ask children about their writing.



Examples:

- Tell me about...
- I noticed you added...
- What do you think you could add?
- How would you draw that?
- What words do you know that describe that?

○ Can you picture it in your head?

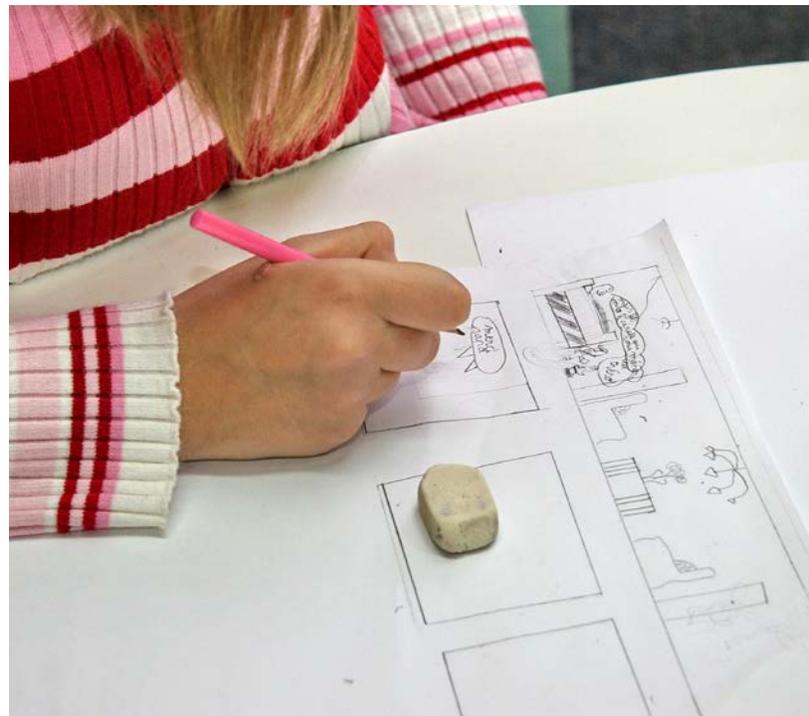
- Optional: A laptop or tablet with online comic creators bookmarked. See [variations and extended learning](#) for resources.

## Beginning Reader Storytime Ideas

Consider incorporating elements from this adventure into a storytime for beginning readers. For example you could:

Share a simple comic book, graphic novel, or picture book with common comic/graphic novel elements such as multiple panels per page, balloons, or emanata. [Toon Books](#) or [Balloon Toons](#) are two great series that offer simple stories that appeal to young readers. Follow the [Graphic Novel Read-Aloud](#) instructions as you read your story. Consider adding these activities to extend learning after the read aloud:

- Make enough photocopies of a page from the book you read aloud that includes 2-3 panels for participants to share with their grown-ups. Cut apart the panels before passing them out. Invite grown-ups and children to work together to put the panels in the right order. You could also invite them to play around with the order of the panels and make up a new version of the story.
- Invite children and their grown-ups to “write” and illustrate one panel of their own comic story based on the story you read. Invite them to include a picture of the character and a word balloon. Encourage grown-ups to allow children to practice their pre-writing skills by scribbling their own word into the word bubble. Grown-ups could also write the word the child scribbled next to it and talk about the letters that make up the word and how they are shaped.



# Adventure Supports



## Vocabulary

**Graphic Novel:** a story told in a series of pictures.

**Balloon:** Balloons contain the text of the story. Common types of balloons include: speech, thought, narration and sound effects.

**Emanata:** Squiggles or lines that emanate off of a character or object to express a sense or emotion. Ex. wavy lines coming off of a skunk.

**Panel:** (AKA frame) A defined shape (often square or rectangle) where the action and words of the comic are drawn.

“Comic” in Spanish = *el cómic/el dibujo animado*

“Character” in Spanish = *el/la personaje*

“Graphic Novel” in Spanish = *la novela gráfica*

“Cartoon” in Spanish = *la caricatura*

“Balloon” in Spanish = *los globos*

“Setting” in Spanish = *el escenario / donde toma lugar*

“Action” in Spanish = *la acción*

“Solution” in Spanish = *la solución*

## Comic/Graphic Novel Suggestions

There are many great series available for young readers. But here are some suggestions to get started:

### Print Collections:

- [Bean Dog and Nugget \(series\)](#), Charise Mericle Harper. 2013
- [Diario de Nikki \(series\)](#), Rachel Renee Russell. 2015
- [Duck, Duck, Porcupine \(series\)](#), Salina Yoon. 2017
- [Guinea Pig: Pet Shop Private Eye \(series\)](#), Colleen Venable. 2010
- [Little Robot](#), Ben Hatke. 2015
- [Marina Está En La Luna](#), Rubén Varillas Fernández. 2012
- [Owly \(series\)](#), Andy Runton. 2004
- [Nursery Rhyme Comics: 50 Timeless Rhymes from 50 Celebrated Cartoonists](#). 2011
- [¡Sonri!](#), Raina Telgemeier. 2016
- TOON Books- Any of the TOON books would make fine choices but here are a few favorites:

- [A Trip to the Bottom of the World with Mouse](#), Frank Viva. 2016
- [Benjamin Bear in Fuzzy Thinking](#), Phillipe Coudray. 2015
- [Buenas noches, Planeta : un libro Toon](#), Liniers. 2017
- [Escrito y Dibujado por Enriqueta](#), Liniers. 2018
- [Flop to the Top](#), Eleanor Davis. 2015
- [La Matadragones : Cuentos de Latinoamérica](#), Jaime Hernandez, 2017
- [Something's Fishy](#), Kevin McCloskey. 2017
- [Where's Halmoni](#), Julie Kim. 2017

#### Webcomic Resources:

Kidjutsu: [www.kidjutsu.com](http://www.kidjutsu.com)

GoComics Kids and Teens: <https://www.gocomics.com/comics/kids-teens>



## Family Engagement

### *Family Engagement: Messages for Caregivers*

#### **Choice builds engagement:**

Kids read more and develop lifelong reading habits and strategies when they are allowed to choose their own books.

#### **Open-ended questions:**

Asking kids open-ended questions helps them develop critical thinking and communication skills. Open-ended questions are ones that cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no” so they encourage participants to use their vocabulary to respond.

#### **Be a reading role model:**

I’m sure you’ve observed that a lot of the time, your kids do and say what they see you do and say. Make sure they see you reading and writing! Make sure they hear you talking about what you read and write.

**Respond positively to kids’ early efforts at writing -- doesn’t need to be perfect yet!** Children who are learning to speak don’t start out talking perfectly, and we don’t expect it -- nor do we expect them to keep quiet until they’ve mastered all the elements of language! Well, it’s the same with writing. As kids experiment with expressing their ideas through writing, they won’t start out with perfect skills in grammar, spelling, letter formation, and punctuation. But they will start out with enthusiasm, and we adults can keep that enthusiasm and motivation going by responding positively to children as they experiment with writing their ideas down to share with others.

# Supporting Research

- **Library & Afterschool Program Models: Key Finding 1:** Libraries are experts at making reading fun.
- **Library & Afterschool Program Models: Key Finding 2:** Centering books & reading in programming improves children’s attitudes toward reading & books.
- **Best Practices in Reading and Writing: Key Finding 11:** Teaching oracy is instrumental to better reading and writing.
- **Equity: Key Finding 7:** Latino families from a range of backgrounds have a preference for activities that build and maintain cohesion within the family.
- **Best Practices in Reading and Writing: Key Finding 12:** Opportunities for oral language are essential for reading development in the second Language.
- **Best Practices in Reading and Writing: Key Finding 17:** Translanguaging acknowledges and utilizes the bilingual child’s complex language repertoire as a resource.
- **Child Social Emotional Development: Key Finding 1:** “Self-distancing,” by dressing up as a character, can help kids focus on task at hand.
- **Best Practices in Reading and Writing: Key Finding 6:** Interactive read alouds increase reading engagement, vocabulary, and comprehension.
- **Library & Afterschool Program Models: Key Finding 10:** Encouraging joint media engagement between children, caregivers and educators increases literacy benefits of digital tools.
- **Best Practices in Reading and Writing: Key Finding 5:** Access, choice and time reading and discussing engaging text increase reading achievement.
- **Library & Afterschool Program Models: Key Finding 17:** Since writing is key to reading/ literacy, libraries should offer playful creative writing programming for K-3 kids.

## Credits



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