

Highlights in the Classroom

Introduction

Highlights magazine provides a wide variety of literacy activities that can fit easily into the school day. It can reinforce reading skills and strategies instruction or extend learning with stories, nonfiction articles, games, puzzles, and other features that motivate and engage students to read and become lifelong readers and learners.

How to Fit *Highlights* into the School Day

Here are some ideas on how teachers can integrate *Highlights* into the daily routine at school:

- Reading Block

Assign or have students self-select features to supplement core reading materials. *Highlights* is a great option for independent reading, especially for students who need extra motivation to read. The magazine format and visual design make content more accessible and interesting to readers at all levels.

- Shared Reading or Story Time

Many selections and features in the magazine lend themselves to a shared reading experience in the classroom during whole or small group time. For example, select a story or nonfiction article with illustrations or photos that you think would be of interest to your students. As you read, ask questions to engage students in the reading and make it a more interactive experience.

- Reader's Workshop

Highlights is a great choice for independent reading time in the Reader's Workshop model. The stories, articles, and features provide a wide variety of text and genres for students at varying reading levels to apply reading strategies taught in whole group instruction. Many activities and selections can be enjoyed individually or with a partner.

- Reading Corner/Center

Place *Highlights* magazines in the Reading Corner for an independent and fun reading experience. The magazine offers a great alternative to traditional books, especially for the reluctant reader.

- Writing Center

Encourage students to write independently by selecting one of the features from the *Fun Things from You* section of the table of contents. Help them send their work to the magazine, using the information provided on the page.

You may wish to have them apply the writing process (brainstorm, draft, revise, and publish) to improve their writing. Since not all submissions can be published by *Highlights*, “publish” or display student work in the classroom.

- Reading in the Content Areas

The magazine format with its strong visual design is highly effective for introducing and supporting content instruction in the classroom. Supplement Science instruction with the *My Sci* feature and other nonfiction articles. Encourage students to write their own science questions and send them to the magazine. Students might also write their own science questions and research the answers individually, with a partner, or in small groups. Provide opportunities for them to share their research with other class members.

Supplement Social Studies instruction with nonfiction articles on a variety of topics. Have students identify the locations on a map, discuss customs in different parts of the world, and identify careers that are mentioned in the articles.

- Change of Pace

Sometimes a quick activity can break up the daily routine or reengage students during the school day. *Highlights* provides many opportunities for fun and stimulating activities that need no preparation. For example, choose a question from *BrainPlay*, share a joke or riddle, or read a poem.

Reading Levels

The Parent-Teacher Guide at the bottom of the table of contents provides a guide for reading levels. While students should be encouraged to self-select their own reading material, guiding students to identify accessible text may help to ensure reading success and a more positive reading experience.

While there are many factors that affect reading level, including interest and development, you may wish to use the following as a guide to help match students to selections and features: Early (red star): ages 5-7; Moderate (blue diamond): ages 7-9; Advanced (purple square): ages 9-12.

Differentiated Instruction

In addition to matching students to text, you can differentiate in other ways to make the magazine more accessible or more challenging:

- Read Aloud/Shared Reading

If text is appropriate for a student's interest level but too difficult for him/her to read independently, read the text aloud during small group time or during shared reading time.

- Partner Reading

Make reading interactive by having children pair up and share the reading. For example, for the feature *Ask Arizona*®, have a less-advanced reader read the question, callouts, and illustration blurbs. Have a more-skilled reader read Arizona's answer. Encourage the partners to discuss whether they think Arizona gave a good answer and whether they have other suggestions.

- Visual Literacy

The visual design and format of a magazine appeal to children, who are used to a variety of media filled with images. Students having difficulty reading may especially enjoy doing activities in the magazine that focus on visual images, such as *Hidden Pictures*®. Students can also use photos and art in other features to get information or to create their own stories.

- Going Beyond the Text

Have students read more about topics they are interested in, such as those presented in the *My Sci* feature. Have them look for books as well as information on age-appropriate Web sites that match their reading level. Encourage them to share what they have learned with the class.

ELL Support

For English Language Learners, you can apply some of the ideas suggested in Differentiated Instruction, such as Visual Literacy. Here are additional ideas:

- Build Background

When children move to the U.S. from other countries, they may be unfamiliar with a variety of things that other students take for granted. For example, if they are from a place with a warm climate, they may be unfamiliar with snow and cold-weather activities. Or if they are from an inland area, they may be unfamiliar with the ocean. Daily customs and activities may also be different.

In small groups, encourage students to ask questions if they don't understand what they are reading. Identify information and concepts that are key to understanding a selection. Whenever possible, use visual aids such as real-world photos or illustrations to explain a concept. Encourage students to look for other images in magazines and books that relate to new concepts.

- Develop Vocabulary

It is important for English Language Learners to build their academic vocabulary. Whenever possible, identify key content vocabulary in selections. Provide images such as real-world photos and illustrations to help explain the meanings of new words. Invite children to share the words in their home language with classmates.

Have students create an illustrated dictionary with the new words they are learning. They can search for images in magazines or draw their own pictures.

- Teach Idioms and Expressions

One of the hurdles for ELLs is learning English idioms. Preview selections to identify these expressions. Discuss them in small groups. Students may enjoy creating idiom books in which they draw pictures of literal representations of the expressions. For example: "Don't count your chickens until they're hatched." Encourage them to share idioms from their home language.

- Read Bilingual Text

Have children create bilingual dictionaries with new words they are learning.

Note: *Highlights High Five* magazine (for children ages 2 to 6) publishes a story in English and Spanish each month.

Character Development

For features that focus on values and character development, see the Social-Emotional Learning icon (orange circle) in the Parent-Teacher Guide at the bottom of the table of contents. Also note the Web icon (black arrow) for features that have an interactive version on HighlightsKids.com. Here are some ideas on how to use these features:

Goofus and Gallant®

- Have students act out the scenarios, taking turns being Goofus and Gallant.
- Have students create their own scenarios. Focus on different settings, such as classroom, playground, or home.

- Encourage students to send *Highlights* their own Goofus or Gallant Moment by using the form accessed from the Story Soup area of HighlightsKids.com.
- Create Gallant medals and award them to students who have done something kind or thoughtful. Encourage students to identify other classmates who have done something kind or thoughtful.

Your Best Self

- Have students create their own *Your Best Self* scenario. Display them on a bulletin board or in a scrapbook. Consider having this as an ongoing activity throughout the year.
- Pair students up. Have one student in each pair draw a scenario for *Your Best Self*, and have the other student fill in the speech bubbles to go with the picture scene.
- Have students act out *Your Best Self* scenarios. For a twist, two or three students can make up a scenario, pantomime it, and have other classmates guess the scenario.
- In an Art or Writing Center, offer students pieces of paper with the names of different settings, such as school, home, playground, grocery store, or library. Have students select a setting and draw a picture of themselves doing something thoughtful or kind in that setting. Encourage them to add speech bubbles.

Ask Arizona®

- Have a volunteer pretend that he or she is Arizona for the day (or week). Invite students to share problems, and have the classroom Arizona offer solutions. Brainstorm alternative solutions.
- When a problem arises in the classroom, ask the class how Arizona might respond. Have students discuss solutions as a whole group, in small groups, or in pairs. Provide an opportunity to share ideas.
- In a Writing Center, create two boxes, one labeled “Problems” and the other “Solutions.” Have students anonymously write problems on pieces of paper and put them in the Problems box. Then have them select one of the Problems (other than their own), write a solution, and place it in the Solutions box. Students can look for the solution to their problem at the end of the day or week.
- In a Technology Center, have students check out The Arizona Zone on HighlightsKids.com, where they can listen to and comment on monthly stories, share their own questions, download Ask Arizona podcasts, and print out Arizona note cards.

Creative and Critical Thinking

For stories, articles, and features that foster thinking skills, see the Creative and Critical Thinking icon (green triangle) in the Parent-Teacher Guide at the bottom of the table of contents. Also note the Web icon (black arrow) for features that have an interactive version on HighlightsKids.com. Here are some ideas on how to use these features:

BrainPlay

- Place some of the questions in a Writing Center. Have students randomly select one and write an answer.
- Have students work in pairs and take turns selecting and reading questions out loud. Then have them discuss their answers.
- Choose one question as the “Question of the Day” and discuss it in a small group.
- Have students think of their own questions and place them in the Writing Center for others to answer.

Thinking

- Place the *Thinking* page in a Writing Center and have students choose a question and write an answer.
- Have students work in pairs and take turns asking and answering the questions on the *Thinking* page.
- Have students work in pairs and take turns creating and answering new questions about the picture on the *Thinking* page.

Picture Puzzler

- Place several *Picture Puzzler* pages in a Puzzle Center. Students can work on them individually or with a partner.
- Encourage students to create a *Picture Puzzler* and give another student the opportunity to solve it. Students can also collaborate: one student can write the puzzler and another can illustrate it.
- In a Technology Center, have students find other puzzles on PuzzlemaniaKids.com and HighlightsKids.com.

Crafts

- Select a *Crafts* activity (or the Craft Challenge) for the Art Center. Preview the activity to identify the materials needed for the project. Younger children may need assistance reading the directions and doing the activity.
- Preview *Crafts* activities to tie to curricula, seasons, or holidays. For example, in May, students might make a Mother's Day craft and give it as a gift.
- For additional *Crafts* activities, visit the Express Yourself area of HighlightsKids.com.

Reading Skills and Strategies

- Developing Vocabulary

Building vocabulary is one of the most important ways that students can grow as readers. Too many unfamiliar words can be frustrating and present roadblocks to comprehending text. Encourage students to use vocabulary strategies such as trying to get meaning from context, using phonological skills to decode a word, and finding the meaning of key words in a dictionary.

Students may want to create a log or word book of new words they have learned. They can use them as reference and also feel a sense of accomplishment as they see their vocabulary expand.

Webbing is a great technique for building vocabulary and concepts. Start with a key content word and have students brainstorm related words.

- Making Connections

When students connect what they are reading to their lives (text-to-self), to the world around them (text-to-world), and to other things they have read (text-to-text), they become stronger readers and learners. Magazines provide an excellent resource for making connections by building background and prior knowledge that will help students read and understand other content.

Search for topics in the magazines that connect to curriculum, such as those in the *My Sci* feature. Check out HighlightsKids.com for additional background information.

- Predicting Outcomes

Predicting outcomes helps students think about what they are about to read. Encourage them to look for clues in the pictures and look at the title to predict what the story or article might be about.

- Monitoring Comprehension

Students can monitor their own comprehension of a story or article by stopping to ask themselves questions when they don't understand what they're reading. Some strategies for clarifying what they are reading include rereading text, identifying the meaning of unknown words using vocabulary strategies, and asking for help.

- Inferring and Drawing Conclusions

For students to develop their proficiency as readers and become critical thinkers, they need to go beyond literal comprehension of text (what and who) to inferential understanding (how and why). Encourage students to look for clues in the text and “read between the lines” to gain a deeper understanding of what they are reading.

- Visualizing

Visualizing is a strategy that can be helpful when students are reading descriptive or figurative language in literature. Encourage them to draw pictures that depict the images described in the text.

- Summarizing

Summarizing is a strategy that requires critical thinking and indicates whether a student understands what he/she has read. Encourage students to summarize a story or an article after reading it.

- Story Mapping

Story maps help students identify the important parts of story. A story map includes the setting, characters, main idea, and important details, including the problem and solution. A simple story map can just include the beginning, middle, and end of the story. Story maps also help students understand how stories are constructed as well as help them write their own stories.

- Using Nonfiction Text Features

Reading nonfiction helps students learn more about the world around them. It also fosters their natural curiosity about the world. To help students learn to read nonfiction, point out features such as photos, captions, headings, diagrams, and maps, and encourage them to get information from these graphic aids.

Reading-Writing Connection

Writing helps students become better readers. *Highlights* magazine provides a wealth of writing opportunities. Several ideas for Writing Centers have been provided for specific features.

- Publishing Student Writing

Writing opportunities are provided in “Fun Things from You,” where children are encouraged to send their writing to the magazine. This section includes monthly features such as *Jokes*, *Riddles*, *Your Own Pages*, and *Dear Highlights*, as well as issue-specific features such as *Creatures Nobody Has Ever Seen*. Information on how to send in students’ work is provided at the bottom of the feature page and on HighlightsKids.com. While not all work can be published, it is still a worthwhile activity to prepare something for publication. You may wish to “publish” students’ work by creating class books or displaying student writing on bulletin boards.

- Responding to Literature

Have students respond to literature that they have read in the magazine. Encourage them to write about whether they liked a story and why they did or didn’t. You might prompt them with questions such as: What did you think about the characters? Was the story believable? Did you like the ending? Students might wish to write a different ending to the story. They can also act out the story or draw a picture of their favorite part.

- Researching Topics

Have students select a nonfiction feature in the magazine that they found interesting and would like to learn more about, such as a topic in *My Sci*, and do more research on the subject. Encourage them to use both online and print resources, including library books and other magazines.