

Improving Literacy Through Read Aloud Picture Books at Klis Christian Elementary School

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ABSTRACT

This Community Service Activity aims to improve the literacy of elementary school students through the read-aloud method using picture books at SD Kristen Klis, Klis Village, Pulau Moa District, Southwest Maluku Regency. The background of this activity is the low interest and reading ability of students, caused by the lack of variation in teaching methods and limited vocabulary. The activity was conducted in December 2024 and included several stages: planning, program development, implementation of read-aloud sessions, and evaluation. The picture books used were selected based on the age appropriateness for the students and the inclusion of character values. The read-aloud sessions are conducted expressively and interactively, accompanied by follow-up activities such as drawing, writing short sentences, and discussions. The results of the evaluation through observation and comprehension tests show an increase in reading interest, listening skills, speaking confidence, as well as understanding of the story content and character values. More than 80% of the students were able to correctly answer most of the comprehension questions. In conclusion, the read-aloud method with picture books is effective in enhancing early literacy skills and shaping students' character through enjoyable and meaningful learning experiences.

Keywords: character education, community service in education, early literacy, picture books, read aloud method

INTRODUCTION

Literally, literacy comes from the English word "literacy," which means letters. Etymologically, this term is rooted in the Latin word "literatus," which refers to someone who learns (Ahyar, Zumrotun 2023). Literacy in children is a continuous and dynamic process, starting from the emergence of curiosity, critical thinking skills, oral language skills, to reading and writing abilities. As time progresses, these skills continue to develop and are used in lifelong learning processes (Fajriana, Fitriani 2024). Literacy is a set of skills that includes reading, writing, and speaking, numeracy, and accessing and using information (Syafirudin, et al, 2023). Good reading skills not only affect the understanding of various subjects but also enhance students' critical thinking, creativity, and self-confidence. Based on data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), in 2012 Indonesia ranked second lowest out of 65 countries in the world. This condition poses a challenge for educators to build and instill a culture of reading among children (Ayunda Sayyidatul Ifadah, Ika Irayana, 2023). This indicates that students' reading interest in Indonesia is still very low and must be improved, including students at SD Kristen Klis.

Based on the results of interviews and observations at SD Kristen Klis, it was concluded that one of the main challenges in developing literacy among elementary school students is the low motivation to read and the lack of understanding of the texts being read. Some students tend to have difficulty understanding the content of the reading, especially if they are not yet familiar with the vocabulary used in the text. In addition, the limited variety of reading instruction methods in the classroom can also affect students' interest in developing their literacy skills.

The Read Aloud method or reading aloud with picture books has become one of the effective strategies to improve children's literacy. Read Aloud consists of two words, namely "read" which means to read and "aloud" which means loudly. In general, this term refers to the activity of reading aloud (Nuryanto, 2017). The Read Aloud method is an effective learning approach that can be applied by educators and parents alike, by reading storybooks as an initial step (Endahwati et al., 2022; Nuryanto, 2017). The Read Aloud method is the most effective way to teach children how to read. Through this method, a child's brain can be conditioned to associate reading with enjoyable activities. In addition, this method also helps build foundational knowledge, enrich vocabulary, and provide examples of good reading as a model for children (Wardani & Syamsiah, 2022). Through this method, teachers or parents read books with engaging expressions, involve students in interactions, and help them understand the story better. Picture books are a very useful tool in helping children learn to read, especially for those who are still at the early stages or not yet fully fluent. The illustrations in the book serve as visual cues that reinforce children's understanding of the storyline (Kanigara et al., 2025). Through the Read Aloud Picture Book activity, it is hoped that students at Kristen Klis Elementary School can increase their reading interest, understand new vocabulary, and develop their imagination and critical thinking skills. With the habit of reading aloud, students will be more interested and motivated to read independently, which will ultimately improve their overall literacy.

METHOD

This Community Service was carried out at SD Kristen Klis, located in Klis Village, Pulau Moa District, Maluku Barat Daya Regency, on December 16, 2024. This activity is designed as an effort to improve the literacy of elementary school students through a read-aloud approach using picture books. The stages of implementing the community service activities are as follows: 1) Planning and Preparation. The activity began with the process of identifying and selecting partner schools, in this case, SD Kristen Klis. The service team then conducted initial coordination with the principal and teachers to develop an activity implementation plan and prepare technical needs such as illustrated books, an implementation schedule, and evaluation instruments. 2) Development of the Read Aloud Program. The team developed a read-aloud-based literacy program by selecting picture books relevant to the students' age and socio-cultural context. The selected books contain moral messages and Pancasila values such as mutual cooperation, love for the homeland, and tolerance. This program is also equipped with follow-up activities such as simple discussions, drawing characters or events from the book, and writing impressions or messages drawn from the story. 3) Read Aloud Activity with Students. The core activity is carried out in the form of read-aloud sessions with students, especially for early grades. The team reads picture books expressively and interactively, inviting students to actively listen, answer questions, and engage in simple discussions about the story's content. Students also read aloud in front of the class and are then invited to express their understanding through activities such as drawing, writing simple sentences, or retelling the content of the book. Through these activities, students not only improve their reading and comprehension skills but also learn to instill positive character values. 4) Evaluation. The team conducted an evaluation to assess the improvement in students' literacy skills through instruments such as student activity observation sheets, teacher reflections, and tests consisting of simple comprehension questions post-activity. In addition, students' attitudes during the activities (such as enthusiasm, curiosity, and ability to cooperate) are also assessed to determine the reinforcement of character values.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Community Service Activity aimed at improving student literacy through the read-aloud method with picture books has been successfully implemented at SD Kristen Klis, Klis Village, Pulau Moa District, Maluku Barat Daya Regency, in December 2024. This activity is designed to strengthen students' basic literacy skills while instilling character and national values based on Pancasila. Here

are the results of each stage of the activity implementation: The planning stage proceeded systematically with active support from the school. The PKM team coordinated directly with the school principal and class teachers to convey the objectives, benefits, and technical implementation of the program. This process includes the preparation of tools and materials for activities, the scheduling of events, and the selection of picture books that are relevant to the students' age and social environment. The selected books are not only visually appealing but also contain moral messages such as tolerance, a spirit of togetherness, honesty, and concern for the environment.

The literacy program is developed with a thematic-contextual approach, adapting to the local cultural background of children on Moa Island. Picture books are used as the main tool in the read-aloud process, with an emphasis on narrative elements, illustrations, and meanings that children can comprehend. In addition to listening to the story, students are also involved in further creative activities such as drawing characters, writing a sentence about their impression of the story, and having a brief discussion about the message conveyed. This approach has proven to facilitate students' understanding of the story's content while also developing their language skills. This is reinforced by Hasana et al. (2024) that in the read-aloud method, books serve as one of the learning media utilized to foster and enhance children's reading interest. Additionally, through the storytelling method with the read-aloud technique, it has a positive impact on the development of vocabulary, pronunciation, comprehension, listening skills, reading, speaking, and students' communication abilities (Asmaiyah, et al 2023).



Figure.1 Read Aloud Activity with Students

The main activity in the form of a read-aloud session was conducted directly in the classroom, involving students from grades I to III. The team read the story expressively with engaging intonation and encouraged students to be active in the reading process. The students responded very positively; they engaged in a question-and-answer session, asked questions, and tried to retell the story in their own words. Some students appeared more confident in expressing their opinions in front of their peers. Follow-up activities such as drawing story characters or writing a message from the story strengthen their comprehension of the reading material and train their expression and imagination. In some small groups, students are also invited to discuss the good actions performed by the story's characters, so that there is a transfer of values from the reading to real life.

The evaluation was conducted using two approaches, namely observing students' behavior during the activity and administering a simple comprehension test after the read-aloud session. The

results of the observation indicate that most students showed improvement in aspects of concentration, listening skills, and speaking courage. The students' enthusiasm while listening to the story and their involvement in the discussion became positive indicators of the success of the read-aloud method. Comprehension tests were conducted in the form of multiple-choice questions and short answer questions, which assessed understanding of the story's content, character roles, and the moral message contained in the story. The test results show that more than 80% of students were able to correctly answer 3 out of the 4 questions given, which included: (1) the main character of the story, (2) the sequence of important events, (3) the character values displayed by the characters, and (4) the students' reflections on the story's message. This shows that read-aloud is not only enjoyable but also effective in improving reading comprehension among early childhood students.

Based on the results of the activities and evaluations conducted, it can be concluded that the read-aloud approach using picture books is an effective method for improving the literacy skills of elementary school students, particularly in the aspects of listening, comprehension, and retelling the story's content. In addition, this method also serves as an enjoyable educational tool to convey character values contextually. This program also proves that reading activities do not have to be boring and can become a social experience that strengthens the relationship between students and teachers. The interactive approach used opens up space for students to express their opinions, ask questions, and actively engage in the learning process.

CONCLUSION

The Community Service activities at SD Kristen Klis using the read-aloud approach with picture books have had a positive impact on improving students' literacy skills, especially in grades I to III. This method has proven effective in improving listening skills, expanding vocabulary, and helping students understand and express the content of the read-aloud stories. Evaluation results through observation and tests show that this method is capable of creating an active and enjoyable learning atmosphere. The results of the observation showed an increase in students' concentration, enthusiasm, and courage to express their opinions during the activity. Meanwhile, the results of the comprehension test given after the read-aloud session showed that 80% of the students were able to correctly answer at least 3 out of 4 questions covering the main character, the plot, the moral values in the story, and the students' reflections on the story's message. These findings reinforce that the read-aloud activity not only impacts the cognitive aspects of students but also serves as an effective educational medium for instilling character values in a contextual and enjoyable manner. Support from the Principal, teachers, as well as the active involvement of students and the PKM team are the main factors for the success of this program. This program is recommended for sustainable development and can serve as an alternative model in basic literacy education in other schools, especially in areas with similar challenges.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We extend our highest gratitude and appreciation to the Principal, teachers, and students of SD Kristen Klis, as well as all parties who have supported and actively participated in the Community Service activity titled "Improving Literacy Through Read Aloud Picture Books at SD Kristen Klis," which was conducted in December 2024 in Klis Village, Pulau Moa District, Southwest Maluku Regency.

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