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## METHODS OF DEVELOPING READING CULTURE IN 3RD AND 4TH-GRADE STUDENTS THROUGH THE ORGANIZATION OF EXTRACURRICULAR READING ACTIVITIES

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**Annotation.** This article explores effective methods for developing a reading culture among 3rd and 4th-grade students through extracurricular reading activities. At this developmental stage, children transition from foundational reading to independent comprehension, making it a critical period for instilling a lifelong love for books. The study highlights various interactive and pedagogical approaches, such as reading clubs, role-playing games based on literary characters, and group discussions, designed to make reading an engaging rather than obligatory task. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of a supportive reading environment created through the collaboration of teachers and parents. The proposed methods aim not only to improve reading fluency but also to enhance critical thinking, expand vocabulary, and foster moral values in young learners.

**Key words:** Reading culture, extracurricular reading, primary education, 3rd and 4th grades, interactive methods, independent reading, student engagement, critical thinking.

The transition from the 3rd to the 4th grade marks a pivotal psychological and cognitive shift in primary school students. At this age, children evolve from merely decoding words to reading for comprehension and pleasure. Extracurricular reading activities play a fundamental role in this transition by transforming reading from a mandatory academic duty into an engaging and voluntary journey. Unlike standard classroom lessons, which are often bound by strict curricula and grading systems, extracurricular reading provides a flexible, stress-free environment where children can freely explore diverse literary worlds. The primary pedagogical goal here is not just to improve reading fluency, but to cultivate a deep-rooted reading culture that will remain with the child throughout their life.

One of the most effective methods to achieve this is the organization of interactive reading clubs. In these informal settings, students gather to discuss a recently read fairy tale, short story, or poem. The teacher acts as a facilitator rather than a strict instructor, encouraging students to express their personal opinions about the plot and the characters' actions. By asking open-ended questions like "What would you do if you were in the hero's place?", educators stimulate critical thinking and empathy. This collaborative environment teaches children to respect different viewpoints and boosts their self-confidence in expressing their thoughts.





Another highly engaging approach is the integration of dramatization and role-playing games into reading sessions. Children aged nine and ten have vivid imaginations and naturally gravitate towards play. Allowing them to act out scenes from a book or dress up as their favorite characters bridges the gap between text and reality. When students memorize lines and embody a character, they internalize the moral lessons of the story much more deeply. This method not only enhances reading comprehension but also develops their emotional intelligence, public speaking skills, and teamwork.

Gamification is also a powerful tool in fostering a reading culture. Teachers can introduce concepts such as "Reading Passports" or "Literary Quests." For example, for every book a student finishes, they receive a stamp or a sticker in their personalized passport. Setting up a classroom reading tree where each leaf represents a book read by a student creates a visually rewarding representation of their collective achievement. Friendly, non-competitive challenges motivate students to read more frequently and introduce an element of excitement into the process, making them look forward to their next literary adventure.

Furthermore, linking reading with other creative activities significantly increases student engagement. After finishing a book, students can be tasked with drawing their favorite scene, designing an alternative book cover, or even writing a different ending to the story. This cross-disciplinary approach caters to various learning styles, ensuring that visual and kinesthetic learners also find joy in literature and can express their understanding of the text in multiple ways.

Finally, the success of extracurricular reading heavily relies on the collaboration between the school and the family. Teachers must guide parents on how to create a reading-friendly environment at home, emphasizing the importance of family reading time. When a child sees adults valuing books, they are more likely to mirror that behavior. Ultimately, by employing these diverse, interactive, and child-centered methods, educators can successfully nurture a generation of passionate readers who view books as lifelong companions rather than mere academic tools.





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