

# Once Upon a Library: How a Storytime Collaboration Helped Build FYE Engagement

Student engagement activities are often thought of as fun, one-off events, but there are also long-term projects your library can initiate to deepen your relationship with students. In this case study, we examine how a librarian at a mid-size public university teamed up with an FYE faculty member and the campus daycare provider to improve student engagement, teach valuable information literacy skills, and help students meet their service-learning requirements.

## Increasing Engagement through Collaboration and Service Learning

To help students get excited about their academic future, the librarian and FYE professor created a semester-long service-based project. Community and service-based learning is defined by the AAC&U as a high-impact practice within the first year experience, so they collaborated with the university's daycare center to get their students involved in the daycare's children's storytime. This project encouraged students to engage with the campus community and reflect on various communication concepts—all while learning library and research skills at every step.

The project had 4 primary steps for students to complete during the semester:

- ✓ **Introduction to the library:** Visit the library and check out 17-20 children's books, then create an annotated bibliography for the list.
- ✓ **Community participation:** Sign up as a reading volunteer at the university daycare (optional and applicable to service-learning requirements).
- ✓ **Familiarization with library services:** Tour the library, learn about their services, and receive instruction on creating an annotated bibliography.
- ✓ **Connection and understanding:** Complete a reflective assignment to better understanding learned communication concepts.

Reading to the daycare children helped the students gain real-world experience, both in terms of the communication concepts they were learning in class, and in understanding the role of books in lifelong learning. Visiting the library and meeting its helpful staff during the project opened their eyes to the many services provided by the library.



## Happily Ever After: Long-lasting Program Benefits

By the end of the semester, students had formed a stronger relationship with the institution as a whole, and the library specifically through their participation. Many commented about how meaningful they found the project. In addition to becoming more invested in the college, they cultivated valuable academic skills, both of which are considered strong factors in retention and graduation rates. Because students' introduction to the library was such a positive experience early in their academic career, they are now more likely to use its service as they advance.