

Recorded Read Aloud Project

Faculty Guide

Background and Rationale

When the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted in-person instruction for both Mercer and local schools in March 2020, reading tutoring programs immediately stopped. United Way of Central Georgia, which runs the Read2Succeed initiative to support literacy education for elementary-age children, collaborated with Mercer's Center for Engaged Learning to pilot a Recorded Read Aloud Project for the 2020-21 school year. In lieu of the in-person reading tutoring for Macon undergraduates, students in Read2Succeed service learning courses created "storytime videos" that educators throughout Middle Georgia could access to support reading education in the classroom and at home. This pilot was adapted from an [assignment that Dr. Amy Borchardt, associate professor of psychology at Mercer, developed for her INT 201 students](#) in response to the March 2020 shift to virtual learning.

The Center for Engaged Learning combines students' videos into an electronic catalogue of read aloud videos that is updated each semester with new additions from students. United Way shares this catalogue with their education partners throughout Middle Georgia, and the availability of these read aloud videos has been an integral component of teacher outreach and relationship development as United Way works to expand its Read United programming beyond Bibb County.

Although Read United has been able to implement limited reading tutoring in the 2021-22 school year, they have expressed a strong need for more read aloud videos to share with educators and parents in the region. With feedback from service learning faculty during 2020-21, we have revised this project to better support faculty and student needs and learning goals while still meeting the need identified by United Way.

[To view the current catalogue, click here.](#)

Project Scope

Students will work independently or in small groups to create a read aloud video of a children's story and an accompanying cover letter that describes the purpose and goals of the read aloud video. The stories, which should be appropriate for children in grades K-3, can be selected by the student(s). The number of videos that a student creates within a semester is at the discretion of the instructor.

Project Structure

The Recorded Read Aloud project should be implemented in three phases:

1. Planning and preparation (August – September)

Introduce the project early in the semester and share the Student Guide with your class. Invite [Lauren Shinholster](#) from the Center for Community Engagement to speak with your students about the context of this project and its value to the community (we recommend you schedule this prior to September 10, 2021). Engage your students in thoughtful planning about what they want to achieve with their story selection. Encourage them through reflective assignments and/or class discussion to make a thoughtful, deliberate book choice with specific goals in mind. Have

your students submit a proposal explaining their choice of book, what they want to achieve or convey through the story, and their plans for preparing to record.

Recommended Sample Assignments:

- Sample Assignment: Effective Practices for Read Aloud Videos
- Sample Assignment: Video Proposal

If you would like for your class to have the opportunity to meet virtually with a representative of the community partner, United Way, **contact [Lauren Shinholster](#) with your interest, class time, and target dates at least three weeks in advance.** Although we cannot guarantee that we can arrange a meeting in the first half of the semester, we will do our best to support this relationship development.

2. Production (September – November)

Students will work independently or in groups to record and edit a polished and engaging read aloud video. Resources to help students do this are available on the CEL website.

Recommended Sample Assignment:

- Sample Assignment: Producing a Read Aloud Video

3. Review, Reflection, and Dissemination (November – December)

Once students finish their videos, they should publish their videos as “unlisted” on YouTube and share the link and their explanatory cover letter with their course instructor. The class should engage in peer review and personal reflection, either via formal individualized feedback or via class presentations, and students should make revisions as needed to their recordings based on peer feedback. Final video links should be shared with the class instructor, who will then share the video links and cover letters with Lauren Shinholster in the Center for Community Engagement for inclusion in the Read Aloud Catalogue.

Recommended Sample Assignments:

- Sample Assignment: Cover Letter
- Sample Assignment: Service Reflection

If you would like for your class to have the opportunity to present their videos virtually to a teacher, class, or United Way representative at the end of the semester, **contact [Lauren Shinholster](#) with your interest, class time, and target dates no later than Monday, October 11, 2021.** Although we cannot guarantee that we can arrange a meeting, we will do our best to support this relationship development.

Recommendations from Faculty Experiences

Faculty reported the greatest success when they integrated this project into the course discussion throughout the semester, much as they would a direct service project, rather than assign it as a standalone project. Faculty achieved this integration in a variety of ways:

- Engage students in class discussion about the most influential children’s books in their lives and what they learned from those books.
- As your course texts introduce issues affecting education, children’s educational achievement, literacy, or other related topics, challenge students to identify children’s book titles that could address these topics at a developmentally appropriate level with children.
- Ask students to write a proposal (formal or informal) for their video that includes: an explanation of the issue they want to address for children in K-3; a description of the book they have selected for their video and how it helps them achieve their goal; a list of the strategies they will use during the read aloud to achieve their goals (dramatic reading, pausing to ask comprehension questions, sharing a summative lesson at the conclusion of the story); an outline of their production plan (recording and editing); and examples of read aloud videos online that they are modeling their own videos after and why.
- Regularly incorporate questions in class discussion that tie course content to the read aloud video project. Examples:
 - How might this topic that we’re reading about manifest in the day-to-day life of a child? What kinds of books could you look for that you could use in your recorded read aloud to help kids deal with/recognize/develop skills related to this topic?
- Assign students a final reflection essay that prompts them to reflect on their learning from the project and its connections to what they learned from the texts.

Attachments

- Recorded Read Aloud Project Student Guide
- Sample Assignment: Effective Practices for Read Aloud Videos
- Sample Assignment: Video Proposal
- Sample Assignment: Producing a Read Aloud Video
- Sample Assignment: Cover Letter
- Sample Assignment: Service Reflection