e-ISSN: 2745-9535
No. 105/E/KPT/2022
Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat
Member of: AJEBI
Editorial Office: Jl. Soekarno-Hatta, Rembuksari No. 1A, Malang, East Java, Indonesia, 65113
Contact: Phone: +62 (341) 478494 e-mail: jpm@asia.ac.id
The journal is published by Institut Teknologi dan Bisnis Asia Malang
Website: https://jurnal.stie.asia.ac.id/index.php/jpm
Indexed in: Google Crossref neliti GARUDA Journal Dimensions

Literacy Support and Reading Corner Optimization to Address Students' Reading Challenges at SDN Pasir Luhur, Cipanjalu Village, Bandung Regency

[1]Oka Iqhwan Sejati*, [1]Tiara Arfah, [1]Asvina Putri Triningsih, [1]Pani Agustin, [1]Eliyasinta Melik Harun, [1]Syifa Nurul Aini, [1]Muhammad Fadil Alamsyah, [1]Dandi Hardiansyah, [1]Syumilah Saepudin, [1]Endah Kartikawati
[1]Universitas Al Ghifari, Indonesia
*Corresponding author
E-mail: okaiqhwan28@gmail.com

Volume
7
Issue
2
Edition
November
Page
735-740
Year
2026

Article History

Submission: 02-09-2026
Review: 06-11-2026
Accepted: 22-11-2026

Keyword

Literacy Support;
Reading Corner;
Reading Proficiency;
Rural Primary Schools;
Case Study;

How to cite

Sejati, O. I., Arfah, T., Triningsih, A. P., Agustin, P., Harun, E. M., Aini, S. N., Alamsyah, M. F., Hardiansyah, D., Saepudin, S., & Kartikawati, E. (2026). Literacy Support And Reading Corner Optimization To Address Students' Reading Challenges At SDN Pasir Luhur, Cipanjalu Village, Bandung Regency. Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat, 7(2), 735–740. https://doi.org/10.32815/jpm.v7i2.3112

Abstract

Purpose: The literacy support program and "Reading Corner" facility development at Pasir Luhur State Elementary School (SDN Pasir Luhur) in Cipanjalu Village, Bandung Regency, were initiated in response to the persistently low basic literacy skills among students in rural areas. This study aims to assess students' reading proficiency across grade levels and to evaluate the effectiveness of combining intensive personal guidance with the provision of reading corners in addressing reading barriers, including lingering literacy deficits among students in upper grades.

Method: Using a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach, data were collected through initial diagnostic assessments, participant observation, and document analysis involving 32 students from grades 2, 3B, 5, and 6.

Practical Applications: Assessment results indicate that 46.9% of students are unable to read, 25.0% fall into the "poor" or "not yet fluent" category, and 28.1% demonstrate limited fluency. These findings demonstrate that basic literacy challenges are not confined to lower grade levels but persist into higher grades. Intervention results show that patient, personalized guidance helps alleviate psychological barriers such as shyness, while the presence of a reading corner successfully improves access to books and fosters an interest in independent reading.

Conclusion: Overall, this program has proven effective and can serve as a replicable model offering a solution to strengthen the grassroots literacy ecosystem, thereby promoting equitable educational quality in rural areas.

Introduction

Foundational literacy education serves as a cornerstone for developing high-quality, competitive human resources capable of meeting the challenges of the times. The ability to read and comprehend text from an early age is not only a determinant of student success in school but also a key factor enabling society to engage in continuous learning and development. Therefore, strengthening children's literacy foundations requires close collaboration among schools, teachers, families, and policymakers to ensure a holistic and integrated educational process (Ananda et al., 2025).

In reality, however, reading proficiency at the primary school level remains a major challenge in Indonesia. Various assessments of educational quality—at both national and international levels, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)—indicate that Indonesian children's reading comprehension skills often fall short of expected targets. This situation underscores the need for concrete, comprehensive measures to improve foundational literacy so that the quality of education can steadily improve (Haryati et al., 2024).

The root causes of low literacy skills often stem from a lack of daily reading habits and the suboptimal implementation of school-based literacy programs. Infrequent interaction with storybooks results in slow vocabulary acquisition and diminished interest in reading, ultimately leading to unsatisfactory academic performance. Without proper guidance, children struggle to comprehend school lessons, causing them to fall increasingly behind academically over time (Asiah, 2025).

Disparities in reading proficiency are particularly evident in rural schools, such as at the Pasir Luhur State Elementary School (SDN Pasir Luhur) in Cipanjalu Village, Bandung Regency. Field observations reveal a situation where reading abilities vary significantly among students. Issues regarding the inability to read are not limited to first or second graders but are also found among students in upper grades (grades 5 and 6). Evidence shows that there are still students in upper grades who are not yet fluent readers, and some who cannot even spell out letters (Pratama et al., 2025).

The reading proficiency gap among upper-grade students is further exacerbated by an environment that fails to foster study habits. A scarcity of engaging reading materials beyond mandatory textbooks—both at home and at school—diminishes children's motivation to read independently. Consequently, standard classroom teaching methods prove ineffective for students who have already fallen significantly behind in literacy (Kusumaningrum et al., 2026).

Previous studies have sought solutions to literacy issues in primary schools. Effective strategies identified include strengthening school reading programs (Asiah, 2025), adopting more enjoyable teaching styles (Hombing & Yanti, 2026), and establishing "Reading Corners" within or near classrooms to improve access to storybooks (Khasanah et al., 2023; Wihaya Kusumah et al., 2023). Beyond physical facilities, experts agree that direct guidance and a welcoming approach are essential to alleviate the shame or fear children often feel when learning to read (Naila et al., 2025; Itu et al., 2025).

However, limitations remain in prior research. To date, few studies have deeply examined the combined effects of three interventions—cross-grade reading assessments, intensive short-term personal guidance, and the simultaneous establishment of reading corners—specifically in rural schools where literacy deficits persist into the upper grades. Most earlier research has focused on isolated aspects, such as facility development or teaching methods for lower grades, without addressing the lingering issues in higher grade levels.

Given the urgent nature of rural literacy challenges and the lack of research on such combined approaches, implementing a literacy support program and establishing reading corners at SDN Pasir Luhur presents a significant opportunity for research and documentation. This research not only provides an immediate solution for students in Cipanjalu Village but is also expected to serve as a guide or a model program that can be widely implemented to equalize the quality of education across other villages in Indonesia.

Method

This article employs a descriptive qualitative approach utilizing the case study method. This approach was selected because the researchers focused on describing, exploring, and analyzing real-world phenomena regarding students' literacy levels and the implementation of the mentoring program in an in-depth and naturalistic manner within the field setting (Hombing & Yanti, 2026).

The program and data collection took place at SDN Pasir Luhur, located in Cipanjalu Village, Bandung Regency. The literacy mentoring and student reading ability assessment program was conducted intensively over a full month across multiple grade levels.

The subjects of this research and mentoring program were students from the targeted grade levels, specifically Grades 2, 3B, 5, and 6. Data collection techniques used in this article included:

1. Initial Diagnostic Assessment: Conducted at the start of the program to map the individual reading ability levels of each student. Based on this assessment, students were classified into various reading fluency categories, ranging from non-readers and those with limited fluency to those with emerging fluency and those requiring specialized guidance.
2. Participant Observation and Mentoring: The volunteer team was directly involved in supporting students' daily learning activities, recording response progress, and monitoring student engagement with the newly established reading corner facilities.
3. Document Study: Gathering field notes, summaries of reading ability assessment results by class, and visual documentation of the program's implementation over the one-month period (Itu et al., 2025; Pratama et al., 2025).

The data analysis technique employed follows the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman, comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Raw assessment data for each class was reduced and grouped into patterns or categories of students' reading difficulties, then presented systematically through descriptive narratives and tables to evaluate the effectiveness of the literacy support program at the elementary school.

Result

Based on the initial diagnostic assessment conducted by the community service team during the literacy support program at SDN Pasir Luhur, Cipanjalu Village, significant variations in reading proficiency levels were identified among the students. This assessment covered several grade levels—specifically Grades 2, 3B, 5, and 6—to map the students' actual mastery of basic literacy skills in the field. Quantitatively, the distribution of student reading proficiency levels based on the initial assessment results is summarized in the table below:

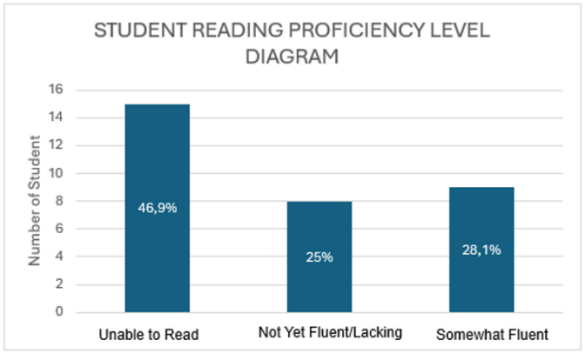
Table 1. Assessment Result

Grade Level	Cannot Yet Read	Lacking / Not Yet Fluent	Somewhat Fluent	Total Affected Students
Grade 2	12 students	4 students	1 students	17 students
Grade 3B	2 students	2 students	7 students	11 students
Grade 5	0 students	0 students	1 students	1 students
Grade 6	1 students	2 students	0 students	3 students
Total	15 students	8 students	9 students	32 students

Source: Author’s Work, 2026.

The data can also be represented via visual diagrams to visualize the proportions of students' literacy barrier levels:

Figure 1. Distribution Of Students' Reading Ability Levels



Source: Author's Work, 2026.

The recapitulation above yields the following key findings:

1. Grade 2: Presents the most significant literacy challenges. The majority of students fall into the "non-reader" category, indicating a need for an intensive foundation in phoneme and syllable recognition from an early stage.
2. Grade 3B: Demonstrates the dynamics of the transition in reading ability. Most students have reached a stage of emerging fluency, although a small group still requires specialized guidance starting from the basics.
3. Grades 5 and 6 (Upper Grades): Reveals lingering literacy obstacles that persist into the upper grade levels. In Grade 6, there are still students categorized as lacking fluency or even unable to read.

These findings confirm a gap in basic reading competence within rural primary schools; literacy challenges are not confined to lower grades but persist among upper-grade students due to a lack of early exposure to print and insufficient early literacy habits (Kusumaningrum et al., 2026).

Discussion

In response to these varying levels of reading ability, a one-month literacy support program was designed using a personalized, step-by-step approach. A volunteer team provided specialized guidance outside of core instructional hours, covering everything from phoneme recognition and syllable blending to reading simple sentences—all tailored specifically to each student's capacity (Pratama et al., 2025). This personalized approach proved effective in alleviating the anxiety or embarrassment felt by upper-grade students experiencing delays in reading proficiency.

As a long-term intervention to sustain a reading culture after the support program concluded, "Reading Corners" were established within the school environment. These reading corners bring access to educational and interactive children's storybooks directly into the students' daily activity spaces. The use of reading corners has proven effective in creating a more relaxed and inclusive learning atmosphere, thereby motivating students who previously faced reading challenges to practice independently (Itu et al., 2025; Hombing & Yanti, 2026).

Through a combination of intensive one-month mentoring and the provision of reading corner facilities, students' psychological barriers have gradually diminished, giving way to heightened enthusiasm for exploring the world of literacy at SDN Pasir Luhur.

Conclusion

The one-month literacy support program at SDN Pasir Luhur, Cipanjalu Village, Bandung Regency, successfully identified and provided tangible solutions to the reading challenges faced by students across various grade levels. Assessment results revealed that basic literacy barriers—ranging from an inability to read to a lack of fluency—were not limited to lower-grade students but persisted as challenges in higher grades as well. Specific findings

showed that among the 32 students assisted, 15 (46.9%) could not yet read, 8 (25.0%) lacked fluency, and 9 (28.1%) demonstrated only limited fluency.

Through a combination of personalized, intensive support and the establishment of "Reading Corners" as long-term resources, the program effectively overcame psychological barriers such as student shyness. Overall, this initiative demonstrates that an interactive learning approach rooted in children's daily lives is effective in reigniting interest and enthusiasm for reading; it also serves as an inspiring model for strengthening grassroots literacy ecosystems to ensure equitable educational quality in rural areas.

Based on the implementation of the literacy support program at SDN Pasir Luhur, several key recommendations are offered for future researchers wishing to develop similar studies or interventions. Future researchers are advised to expand the scope of participating rural schools and deepen the analysis of external factors—such as family support and social environments—that influence children's literacy challenges. Furthermore, given the program's limited duration, subsequent studies should consider implementing a longer support period or conducting periodic follow-up evaluations (longitudinal studies) to accurately measure students' reading independence. Finally, researchers could explore the use of more innovative learning media, such as interactive digital tools or specialized methods designed to address persistent reading deficits, particularly among students in higher grades.

Acknowledgements

The author extends sincere gratitude to all parties who provided support, assistance, and cooperation, enabling the successful and smooth implementation of the literacy mentoring program and the establishment of the "Reading Corner" at SDN Pasir Luhur, Cipanjalu Village, Bandung Regency. Special thanks go to the management and teaching staff of SDN Pasir Luhur for their warm welcome and openness; to the participating students for their extraordinary spirit and enthusiasm throughout the activities; and to the Cipanjalu Village Government for granting permission and facilitating coordination. Deep appreciation is also expressed to fellow volunteers and everyone who contributed their time, ideas, or books to bring this reading corner to life, with the hope that this collaboration will make a tangible contribution to improving the quality of education and fostering a reading culture among children in rural areas.

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