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# Capitalizing on Social and Transactional Learning to Challenge First-Grade Readers

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## **CAPITALIZING ON SOCIAL AND TRANSACTIONAL LEARNING TO CHALLENGE FIRST-GRADE READERS**

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### **Abstract**

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A classroom teacher capitalizes on social learning and reader response theories to challenge her accelerated first-grade readers by implementing literature circles. The aim of this action research was to identify a clear view of how to use literature circles with first-graders and what might be accomplished. Three constructs emerged from the interviews and observations that support the potential for using literature circles with primary students including: engagement and independence, reading benefits, and writing improvement. With respect to social learning and reader response theories, literature circles were found to be possible, practical, and beneficial for supporting the literacy perceptions and practices of accelerated primary students.

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As I reflected on the ways my students learn about literature, I decided to seek something that would allow my independent readers to think and talk more deeply about the stories they were reading. I have used guided reading groups in my classroom for several years now, however, I realized that I end up doing a majority of the talking about the text following reading. As a result of this realization, I aimed to nurture my students' engagement and learning independence by focusing on our responses to reading.

The focus of this research is to explore a group of first-graders' engagement in reading from the social learning and transactional/reader response theoretical perspectives in literature circle contexts. Literature circles appear to be a worthy literature response activity due to their social learning attributes. I used the following questions to guide my efforts: How might social learning and reader response activities associated with literature circles impact the reading engagement of the accelerated readers in my first-grade classroom? What are the observed literacy behaviors and perceptions of first-graders involved in literature circles? The intent was not to look at what they were learning, but how they learned and their views of reading experiences as participants in literature circles.

## **Defining Literature Circles**

It was necessary to define literature circles in order to determine how to implement them into my first-grade classroom and answer my first research question. I used practical guide-books, research articles, and information retrieved from teaching websites to do so. As a result, this study was framed by Harvey Daniels' (2002) approach to conducting literature circles. This structured approach provides the scaffolding my students and I needed to get started. In this model, each group member is assigned a role (e.g., passage picker, word wizard, artful artist, etc.) to give students a purpose for reading and to help them bring thoughts to the discussions that follow readings. The cycle then repeats itself using a different piece of literature and different roles.

## **Guiding Theories and Research**

Many reader response learning experiences, like literature circles for instance, are grounded on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of learning. Through this framework, learning is social, or influenced by interactions with others. Children are actively engaged in knowledge construction while immersed in social learning

contexts. The teacher considers the zone of proximal development of the students in order to determine just how much instructional support each needs. Essentially, the teacher provides an abundance of support early on and slowly draws back as the students gain efficacy. As the teacher relinquishes responsibility, peers continue to support one another through text discussions.

Louise Rosenblatt's (1978) Transactional Theory, or Reader Response Theory, sheds light on the way students respond in literature and how they bring their own knowledge to group discussions of what they have read. According to this theory, it is believed that an individual reader may have a unique understanding of a text that is different from the understanding of other readers due to his/her varied background knowledge of the text's content (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). The reader actually brings meaning, as a result of individual background knowledge and experience, to the text and constructs understanding during and after reading through aesthetic and efferent responses (Rosenblatt). Efferent responses indicate that the reader's attention is on the information presented in the text, whereas aesthetic responses are more focused on what Hancock (2008) describes it as, "feelings and thoughts that flow through the reader's mind and heart as she or he reads" (p. 8). Furthermore, Rosenblatt believed that most readers slide on a continuum between the efferent and aesthetic stances as they engage in the reading process (Hancock).

Rosenblatt (1982) further explains the foundation for linguistic development as needing, "a nurturing environment that values the whole range of human achievements, the opportunity for stimulating experiences, cultivation of habits of observation, opportunities for satisfying natural curiosity about the world, and a sense of creative freedom" (p. 273). With this in mind, I saw literature circles playing a key role in allowing students to interact with the text and their peers through conversations about those texts. This vision drove me to seek answers to the question: What are the observed literacy behaviors of first-graders involved in literature circles?

Using literature circles in the primary classroom is an uncommon approach for teaching literacy because most teachers feel that students are still decoding at this point in school and need to continue practices that allow for increases in reading fluency. Most of the research focusing on the value and potential for using literature circles comes from intermediate and secondary grade levels where comprehension in reading plays a major role (Avcı & Yuksel, 2011; Whitaker, 2012). I believe that literature circles have a place in the primary classroom. My

research will help to fill the gaps in early literacy instruction by attending to the need to teach comprehension in tandem with early reading skills.

Literature circles can be used to support primary readers through opportunities to respond to reading during social learning experiences.

Much can be learned from research including older students. However, a handful of studies conducted with younger elementary learners were identified to show the promise and potential of using literature circles to support my first-graders. Martinez-Roldan and Lopez-Robertson (1999) challenged themselves to use literature circles with first-grade bilingual students to promote meaningful language practice. They found that literature discussions promoted the transactional engagement of students and allowed them to share their constructed meaning of readings with peers.

Certo, Moxley, Reffitt, and Miller (2010) explored the perceptions and experiences of first, third, fourth, and fifth grade students participating in literature circles. These researchers found that members of the groups were engaged, experienced enjoyment, learned how to talk about books, monitored their own comprehension, and learned new vocabulary. Furthermore, engaging students in writing activities before and after literature circles led to improved discussions. Finally, the students themselves expressed the value of learning from peers during discussions.

Pearson (2010) infused literature circles in a third grade classroom to explore the function and value of student talk in response to reading. She discovered that students often emulated the voices of book characters and peers as they negotiated the meaning of a text through discussion. The mimicking of others proved to support student understanding of diverse perspectives. They also reported that consistent use of literature circles enhanced reading engagement and invigorated the text discussions that followed.

Jewell and Pratt (1999) conducted small group literature discussions with second and third grade students. They explored the way that students used discourse and how their teachers interacted with the groups to prepare them for discussions. They found that the literature discussions involving the teacher enhanced reading comprehension. Most importantly, however, this study showcases a possible model of literature circles to be used in the primary classroom and the potential for its use. Consequently, this model serves as a framework for delving into the use of literature circles in my own classroom.

## **My Classroom**

I set out to implement my own action research using socio-cultural theory, reader response theory, and the previous classroom studies as guides. Schwandt (2007) describes action research as a viable model for practicing teachers to attend to classroom issues using detailed planning, actions, observations, and reflection. In this article, I present the practice of implementing literature circles with a group of my first-grade students at Roland Elementary (a pseudonym) located in the mid-western United States. The student population (292) of the school is comprised of 49 percent low-income and predominantly (91%) white.

I chose to observe and work with only 10 of my 23 students because I had never tried literature circles before and wanted a smaller group to experiment with. I also chose the accelerated readers, feeling they needed to move beyond decoding and working with words. I had observed them being “bored” at times and I wanted to challenge them. These students were defined as accelerated because they could read fluently based on classroom assessments (i.e., reading series checks for understanding, and DIBELS) and demonstrated comprehension of the stories they read through retelling and answering questions during one-on-one conferences. During the three months of research during the second half of the school year, I observed my students an average of three days a week and collected data through surveys, field notes, photos, videotaping, audio recordings, and interviews.

Having combined lenses, that of my own teaching experience and the views of those using literature circles with older students, I hoped to gain insight into how primary grade children might take responsibility for using and revealing explicitly taught reading comprehension strategies on their own as they respond to readings during social learning experiences inherent to literature circles. My work here contributes to the ongoing research of literacy instruction, focusing on the potential for using upper grade level reader response practices to support primary readers. Furthermore, this article is intended to offer primary grade teachers practical ideas for implementing literature circles.

### **Getting Started**

At the beginning of the year all first-grade students in my class were introduced to “The Daily 5” by Boushey and Moser (2006). The month-and-a-half long implementation allowed students to build stamina and become more independent with literacy activities: listen to read alouds, read to someone, read to self, word work, and work on writing. With much modeling and practice of these

routines, my students were able to learn without me for 20-30 minutes at a time while I met with guided reading groups. I began to notice that my accelerated readers needed to move beyond “The Daily 5” (Boushey & Moser) and craved a sixth component. Then it happened, a serendipitous conversation with a reading professor I know opened my eyes to the idea of extending student learning by enhancing social learning experiences and introducing opportunities to respond to reading. Literature circles would offer both for my accelerated readers.

I immediately began to journal about my ideas for using literature circles. I also inquired with peers to find out what they knew. None of the other teachers at my school were using literature circles so I had to seek answers elsewhere. I found a variety of teaching resources, but they focused primarily on the use of literature circles in the upper- elementary grades. Using those, and staying focused on my knowledge of teaching first- graders, I was able to come up with an idea of how I would challenge my accelerated students to grow as readers by exploring ways to respond to literature with peers.

### **Time and Text**

I began by thinking about time, when and how long literature circle sessions might occur. I had a block of time during the afternoon labeled “intervention time”. This 30-minute block was already used for “The Daily 5” (Boushey & Moser, 2006) with the whole class, so it would allow time for the striving readers to get guided practice from the Title I teacher on fluency and decoding or to read independently while I was implementing literature circles with my accelerated readers.

After selecting the time of day for literature circles, I needed to decide what texts the groups would read. I sought multiple copies of literature that would appeal to my students and inspire them to read and share their reactions with peers. I also identified themes and concepts that would serve to guide my search for texts (i.e. winter, school, friendship, black history, etc.). I checked my own shelves, the local library, the school library, and asked other teachers. I even went to a local book sale to purchase inexpensive sets of books.

I chose to offer a choice of at least three different books for each theme in order to positively motivate my students to read (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006) and to inspire their responses. This was new to my students because they were used to me choosing their texts during guided reading groups. I offered choices to capitalize on student interest and promote engagement in hope of invigorating

reader response discussions. Their choices included fiction, nonfiction, chapter, and picture books.

### **Student Roles**

I wanted to scaffold student learning by providing some direction for their responses at literature circle time so I purposefully chose six roles to guide student learning. The roles included: Artful Artist, Question Asker, Connector, Word Wizard, and Passage Picker. Each would give students a chance to practice various strategies when thinking about and discussing the text they were reading. I also incorporated the role of Circle Supervisor to provide opportunities for students to practice and showcase their leadership skills. It was the responsibility of the Circle Supervisor to question their peers to get them talking. They also decided how many pages the group would read to prepare for discussions. Roles changed with the reading of each new book. This allowed students to explore each role, focus their efforts while reading, and practice leading.

### **Purposes and Processes**

At the onset of this research, I met with a group of 10 accelerated readers to explain the purposes and processes for using literature circles. On the first day we sat on the carpet and simply discussed what literature circles were. I explained, "Literature circles are when groups of people read the same book and meet together to discuss what they have read." I went on to explain how they would be in charge of leading their discussion and making their own decisions in their group. I said that they would have to determine their own questions to discuss and work together with their peers to find answers. To ease their tension and build anticipation I told them, "Each of you will have a role to help when you read and discuss. We will talk about each of these roles tomorrow."

I then talked the group through the process we would go through each week, Monday through Thursday. On the first day, I would present what books they could choose from with a short book talk, we would form groups based on their text choices and then start reading. On the second and third days they would continue their readings and write in a journal. On the fourth day, after finishing their reading and journal work, they would discuss the text with their book group. I informed the group that we would practice the process this week and I would model and answer questions so the purposes and process would become clear. To conclude our implementation meeting, the students constructed their own journals out of construction and ruled paper.



Social learning theory played a significant role in supporting the entire process. I defined the roles (i.e., Passage Picker, Word Wizard, Artful Artist, Connector, and Question Asker) and modeled how to use each to create a written or verbal response using books from our classroom library. To follow, we talked about discussion expectations and etiquette. These were also modeled for the group. While I modeled, each student was given a “When I have a Conversation...” paper that listed tips for helping in their discussion along with pictures to help them connect visually.

To further expand on their ability to navigate the process on their own, I presented them with a text that we had previously read from our reading series so each would have a copy while we explored how to generate responses in a practice discussion. The students were given time to reread the text and write down their thoughts in their journals while thinking about the roles they were assigned. I was amazed by my students’ interest and engagement in the process! They carried smiles on their faces and eagerly learned about their roles through each step of the process.

On the final day of that practice week, the ten students broke up into two smaller groups of five and discussed the practice text for the first time. I monitored their social learning behaviors by physically moving from one group to the next and listening in on their conversations. This gave me a chance to write anecdotal notes on individual student needs and begin to identify ways to support their ability to take on the challenge of discussing the text on their own. After reviewing my notes, I crafted my instruction for the following week. I decided that we would watch a short video on YouTube to view and hear what a literature discussion might look and sound like. During the viewing, I purposefully pointed out ways that the students in the video were pulling ideas from the text as they talked. We then read another story to practice the process before moving on to choosing texts. This gradual release of responsibility helped the students to become more independent as readers and discussants. I was tickled to witness their growing enthusiasm throughout the practice process.

### **Instruction and Assessment**

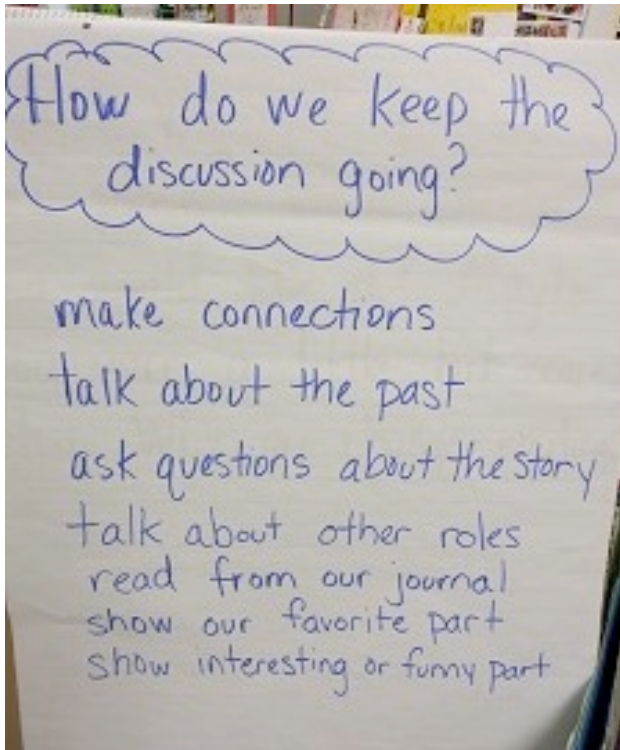
Once students seemed to grasp the procedures, on Monday of the third week, I officially launched literature circles by introducing a choice between two books. I conducted a brief book talk to introduce each text and inspire student interest. They were then instructed to write their first choice on a post-it and submit it to me. Since I had a limited number of books, I told the students that if

they did not get their first choice this time around, they would the next time. My students were thrilled to be given the chance to choose what they read! They couldn't wait. We used this anticipation to launch the process. Students had a few days to read and respond in their journals before the first discussion. I aimed at focusing on assessing their communication and comprehension needs revealed in the discussions in order to guide any instruction I could provide to support their growth.

### **Observations and Focus Lessons**

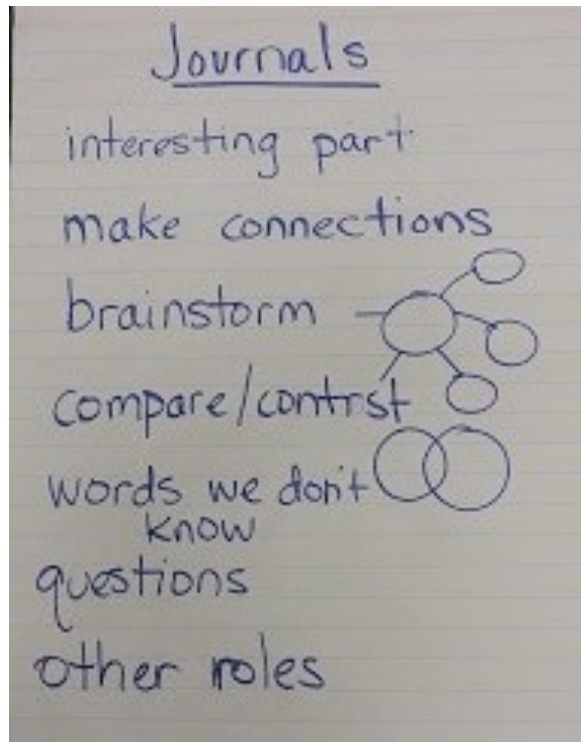
As I observed students' conversations and read their journal entries, I identified certain etiquette issues or reading skills that needed to be addressed. Schlick Noe and Johnson's (1999) book, "Getting Started with Literature Circles" guided me through the process of developing "focus lessons" to address those needs. "A focus lesson targets instruction in one area and emphasizes strategies used in authentic situations" (p. 81). The instructor typically uses the focus lesson to showcase and model the skills and strategies used by proficient readers. These lessons allowed me to guide student attention to the how and why of discussing texts with peers.

One of the first lessons we had as a whole group was driven by the question, "Why do we meet for literature circles and talk about books with friends?" Students offered answers to this question that I recorded on a chart for all to see. We often referred back to these reasons to give our discussions purpose as we continued literature circles in the weeks to come. Although students used the list to give purpose to their discussions, I soon realized that my groups were only discussing for a few minutes and thought they were "done". So, I responded with a focus lesson titled, "How do we keep the discussion going?" I used another anchor chart (see Figure 1) to record the students' thoughts so they could refer to it to strengthen and lengthen discussions.



**Figure 1: Lengthening Discussions**

I also noticed that some students were unsure about what to write about and respond to in their journals, so we had a focus lesson on “Journals”. We listed ways to journal on another chart for all to read (see Figure 2). The focus lesson and anchor chart provided the initial instruction and continued support that the students needed. Afterwards, I observed students responding more extensively in their journals and discussing for longer amounts of time. Although all focus lessons were impactful in supporting student learning, some proved to immediately enhance student learning and offered substantial opportunities for reflection that served to generate ideas for the next focus lesson.



**Figure 2: Journal Ideas**

**A focus lesson on discussion.**

After several weeks of discussions on their own, we had a focus lesson that centered on watching a video recording of a particular discussion that took place in the groups. I wanted students to experience what I was seeing while observing their discussions. We sat on the carpet, huddled around my laptop to view the video. They were asked to watch and listen to the video and then to identify strengths and point out ideas for improvement. As we began the video, one boy asked if he could record his thoughts of the discussion in his journal while he watched. This inspired all of the students to get out their journals to take notes and I noticed each of them jotting down their thinking throughout the viewing.

As we listened and watched the video, I chose to stop the video at predetermined points to draw their attention to particular student behaviors and the content of the discussion. One video observation discussion played out like this:

Mrs. M: Alright, let's stop there. Jeremy said, "Why do you like happy endings?"... and...Laura didn't quite answer that, did you? (looking at Laura) Laura: I didn't know what he meant?

Mrs. M: Could you have asked him that? Could you ask him a question? Could you say, what do you mean Jeremy? (She agrees with a nod)

Mrs. M: Yeah! And do you think he could have answered and then discussed more? (Laura nods and smiles)

Mrs. M: Yeah, so you have a conversation about it. (We continue watching)

Later, we paused and talked about other strengths and needs noticed in the discussion. For example, Jeremy had marked a page in his text with a post-it during discussion. We had talked about using these post-its earlier, but only a few students had employed them during discussion to hold their thinking and capture thoughts to share with peers. They could see how Jeremy was using the post-it to find the part of text he wanted to discuss and commented on it.

Sierra: I like how Jeremy marked his page.

Mrs. M: Ohhh, I saw that too!

Sierra: So he knew what he was going to share.

Mrs. M: Okay. So marking our page with a post-it, right? Do you think it helps your discussion when you already know where the spot is?

Group: Yeah.

Mrs. M: He knew right where it was, right? He didn't have to flip through his whole book to find it, right?

Sierra: So he didn't have to go like flip, flip, flip (showing the motion of flipping through the book) and take him a long time so...he put that there and it was a lot easier.

Mrs. M: Yes. Now what do you think? If we are using a post-it to mark our favorite part...or page, do you think we could write on the post-it? So we would already know?

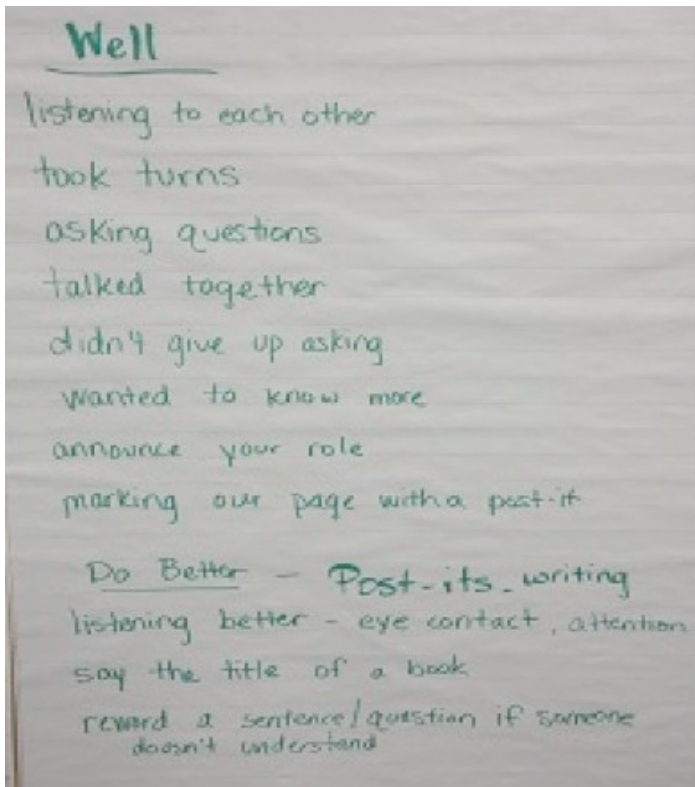
Group: Yeah, yeah.

Mrs. M: Jeremy, what do you think? Would that be helpful? Jeremy: Yes.

Mrs. M: Yeah, so when someone asks you, you'll know right away why you picked that part. So that is why you can use these post-its.... Okay?

Danny: That is why Mrs. M got them. Mrs. M: Right...

We continued to discuss and list (see Figure 3) behaviors that students could work on from the video: listening better, giving eye contact to show attention, saying the title of the book at the beginning of discussion, rewording a statement or question when someone doesn't understand, and using/writing on post-its to help with thoughts about the text.



**Figure 3: Effective Discussion Behaviors**

The next day students had a chance to go back and reread parts of their text to practice using post-its to capture their thoughts on certain passages they wanted to discuss. On the following day, the students used those notes in discussions. As a result, the students connected to the text, asked questions of each other, and shared their favorite parts with reasons to support their views.

With the explicit instruction offered through the focus lessons, students were guided throughout the process of literature circles. I was able to let go of some of the control I had with them in guided reading groups and encourage them to take ownership of sharing their thinking about reading with peers.

## Resulting Literacy Behaviors of First-Graders

Having a clear view of how we used literature circles, now take a look at what was accomplished. Three ideas emerged from the interviews and observations that support the potential for using literature circles to capitalize on social learning and reader response with primary students: engagement and independence, reading benefits, and improvement with writing.

### Engagement and Independence

Creating a learning environment that is engaging is the key to successful literacy practice (Glaveanu, 2011). Social learning experiences were the key to this. Students shared their love for working and reading with fellow peers:

Mrs. M: Do you like literature circles? Jeremy: Yeah.

Mrs. M: What do you like about them? Jeremy: You get to read.

Mrs. M: Okay.

Jeremy: And get to meet with your friends. And see them more than once a week.

At the beginning of my research I had the whole class take a pre-survey to find out their views of group work and reading with peers. One of the questions was: Do you think you would be able to talk with your peers about a book in a group without the teacher? Of those students participating in literature circles, four out of ten believed that they would not be able to meet without the teacher. Then, at the end of my research I interviewed these four students and they all thought they could meet and talk about a text without the teacher.

Mrs. M: At the beginning of literature circles you took this survey (holding up the survey paper) and said that, no, you cannot discuss a story in a group without a teacher there. What do you think about that now?

Bonnie: You can!

Mrs. M: How or why do you say that?

Bonnie: We have been in lit. circles a long time and we know how to do it. Mrs. M: So, you can do it without a teacher?

Bonnie: Yeah!

The others continued to believe that they could actively participate in literature circles without the teacher present. As you can see from reading the spoken words of these students, literature circles show much promise for being used in the primary grades to nurture engagement and independence.

### **Reading Benefits**

Students voiced their acquisition of new information from the books they read and were able to discuss this new knowledge with peers.

#### **Danny's thoughts:**

Mrs. M: What do you think you have learned in literature circles?

Danny: In the George Washington book, he owned 9, 7 dogs and at the end of the war for giving the dog back to the other army, he got a mule and 9 dogs.

Mrs. M: Okay. Anything else?

Danny: That...I really have a connection with it, I like mules and I like animals. And I really care for them. I have a little dog, named Baxter and like he is black and white and he um, is nice and I love him...

Danny's thoughts showcase that he learned new information from literature circles. Students went on and on about the information they learned from the interesting texts they read. This was an exciting time for me, as I knew the students were picking up more than just reading skills from our literature circles. They were using their skills and the support of peers to learn how to read strategically.

#### **Mary's thoughts:**

Mrs. M: What do you think about literature circles? Mary: It's fun...and it helps me learn to read better. Mrs. M: Ok. How?

Mary: Like, if a tough word comes to me, it just helps me because if I read the tough word once before I read it, it just helps me to remember. Then I read that tough word.



Mary's ideas reveal the way that students were learning to read more fluently while using the reading strategies they had learned at the beginning of the year. The students were also showcasing how they were growing in their vocabulary knowledge.

Sierra goes on to explain in her interview how she learned from the story and gained new words along the way.

**Sierra's thoughts:**

Mrs. M: What do you think you have learned about reading? Sierra: Well...I have learned some tricky words.

Mrs. M: Okay. Can you give me an example? Sierra: It was, I think it was "idea".

Mrs. M: Okay. Anything else you have learned about reading?

Sierra: That, some words can be really easy even though they look hard, you just try it.

Not only did students learn new schema from the texts, but they also learned how to read and use the words in the text to gain meaning. Instead of revealing what they were learning, students' reading responses revealed how and why they were doing so.

**Improving Writing**

Students were able to make connections with other areas of learning in the classroom. Some students realized the value of writing in their journals throughout literature circles. This is a reflection of the work we did in writers' workshop.

Mrs. M: What do you think about literature circles?

Danny: ...that I like it cuz I like reading and I really like writing...

Mrs. M: Okay.

Danny: I like writing big, I like to write big stories like my Titanic story and sometimes I like to make 6 pages, sometimes 5.

Mrs. M: Interesting.

Danny: I love to write, and do stories. I like to do that because I'm a really good writer...

Throughout literature circles, students mentioned and exhibited the skills learned in writers' workshop when crafting literature circle journal responses. The abundance of opportunities to practice writing personal responses to what they had read allowed students to move forward and grow as writing practitioners. From writing just a few thoughts and sentences, to writing more detailed sentences, students used lessons they learned in writers' workshop to improve their journal work.

For example, I observed as one boy read from his journal, "My role is the Artful Artist. I like this story. It is cool." His peers looked on, waiting for him to share more. After realizing he had nothing more, he began to read his notes again. His peers replied, "You already said that". This inspired him to immediately write down more in his journal about the text they had read. The prompting from his peers urged him to continue his growth in writing throughout the weeks that followed.

These observed behaviors from students regarding engagement and independence, reading benefits, and writing improvement, all shed light to what primary students can accomplish when they are introduced to and challenged through a social and responsive learning experience like literature circles. The scaffolding from the teacher and peers allows them to learn the "how" and "why", not just "what" to learn.

## **Limitations / Future Application**

Some people might say that literature circles cannot be used in the primary grades. Others might believe that students are unable to work on their own and have meaningful text discussions in first-grade. I would emphatically disagree. Literature circles can, and should be employed with primary students! Practices might look slightly different than those in the intermediate grades, but powerful learning can still be achieved through the social and transactional learning experiences often reserved for older students.

As I look to the future with literature circles in first-grade, I see a few implementation changes based on the limitations of this experience. One limitation to my inquiry and the findings involves the abbreviated amount of time we have used literature circles in our classroom. We have only scratched the surface on the potential for using literature circles to support accelerated first

grade readers. I would like to try implementing the literature circles earlier in the year as an extension of the “Daily 5” (Boushey & Moser, 2006). This would provide more time for explaining and modeling the process and a connection to the independence associated with the “Daily 5” (Boushey

& Moser). Furthermore, planning the use of literature circles from the beginning of the year would allow me to block an extended amount of time for us to capitalize on them. This would take some careful consideration and require preparation over the summer in order to work with others to arrange a schedule conducive to our needs. Allotting more time would offer more reading practice, greater opportunities to respond to readings in journals, and more frequent/lengthier discussions. A modified and purposeful schedule would also allow more time and opportunities to infuse purposeful focus lessons.

Another limitation involved the small number of text sets offered to my literature discussion groups. This limitation stifled student engagement because I was unable to attend to individual interests or offer their first choice of texts. In the future, to reveal the actual value and potential of literature circles with my first graders, I would allocate more time and resources to accessing and acquiring an abundance of text sets. I could do so by collecting sets from book orders, bookstores, colleagues, and student families.

A final limitation was caused by restricting involvement in literature circles to my accelerated readers, those who have a knack for regulating their own learning behaviors and are able to read a wider variety of texts with greater fluency and comprehension. In the future, I would implement literature circles with the whole class, including striving readers. Literature circles would enhance and extend guided reading group learning by giving striving readers’ greater opportunities to learn through authentic social learning experiences. Students could support one another as learners. Using a fishbowl technique would allow students who are familiar with literature circles to practice and model a text discussion revealing the look, sound, and feel of discussions to novice peers. Just like the focus lesson with the video, students could observe and learn how a group might discuss and reflect on ways that a discussion might be enhanced. Literature circles would also offer more time for striving readers to practice reading and reap the same rewards as their accelerated counterparts. This would serve to extend the learning of all my students.



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