

## **Intervention: Reading Strategies/Literacy Centers**

### **Book Clubs in Secondary Grades (Intermediate Grades 7-8; High School 9-12)**

Book Club integrates reading, writing, speaking, and listening in a variety of learning contexts. These contexts for learning -- which range from reading independently to sharing ideas with the whole class -- overlap constantly while they support and enrich one another. For the purposes of discussion, however, we divide the Book Club program into the following components.

#### **Reading**

Students begin by reading high-quality trade books that inspire them to think, ask questions, and make connections to their own lives.

#### **Writing**

As they read, students record their responses in reading logs. Over time, each student builds a repertoire of response types that includes a wide variety of personal, creative, and critical responses.

#### **Student-led Book Clubs**

Groups of four to five students share ideas from their reading logs. As students become more comfortable with the format, their conversations flow more naturally.

#### **Community Share**

Ideally, a book club is a heterogeneously mixed group, representing the diversity of gender, race, ethnicity, economic background, and academic abilities in the classroom. A student's understanding of a text is enhanced by interacting with other readers.

Information Adapted from [www.smplanet.com](http://www.smplanet.com)

From:

<http://cms.springbranchisd.com/High/ReadingInstruction/EstablishingRoutines/BookClub/tabid/1637/Default.aspx>

## Intervention: Reading Strategies for ELLs/Literacy Centers

**Literature Circles** by Amanda Schutt in *Colorín Colorado* (2005) (Grades 5-12)

### **Background**

Literature circles are group meetings in which students get together to read, recollect, reflect, and analyze the assigned reading/book. This concept works like a Book Club, in which people meet to discuss the book they have read, reflect on the themes, characters or plot, analyze them, and give their opinion based on their personal experiences (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000). Educators may use this activity to promote comprehension, as well as vocabulary skills. Literature circles may also benefit students who lack confidence in their reading skills as they allow them to have peer support to comprehend the material read. But most important of all: English language learners (ELLs) are included in literature circles and they have the opportunity to interact with English proficient students as they model appropriate language skills.

Working in groups provides ELLs with an opportunity to reflect and relate elements from the reading back to their personal experiences. ELLs may also benefit from interactive oral discussions, which allow them to gain a deeper level of understanding about the subject. Once second language learners have had an opportunity to listen to their peers discuss the book, they can begin to build knowledge and develop higher order thinking skills. Cooperative learning is an important component in literature circles, and this model is most beneficial to ELLs as they begin to participate and expand their vocabulary. Students begin to become active learners as they receive support from their peers and learn English as their second language (Bottini & Grossman, 2005).

### **Classroom application**

Amanda Schutt has created literature circles that also require students to work in centers. She wanted to see her students working cooperatively, but was concerned that some of her ELLs would not be able to participate comfortably. So she decided to make her literature circles "active learning centers." She felt that allowing her students to discuss the assigned book using pictures, charts, and visual representations would benefit ELLs' comprehension of the book. Amanda Schutt allows students to work cooperatively and to learn from each other as she assigns specific tasks for each center, which students need to complete as a group.

The centers she presents to her students are:

- **Vocabulary Center** — "*Definition Detectives*" Students are responsible for finding unfamiliar words and describing their meaning, which they later share with the class. Students may choose to either create a presentation or a poster with the definitions they have found.

- **Basic Story Elements Center** — “Advertising Agents” Students in this group need to find the main idea, characters, and story line to create a movie poster advertisement for the story.
- **Summarizing Center** — “Cartoon Creators” Students are responsible for summarizing the main parts of the story. They need to write a summarizing sentence for each page or chapter and need to create cartoon frames for each of their sentences.
- **Research Center** — “Research Wranglers” Students in this group are responsible for looking up information related to the book on the Internet or the school library, which they later present to the classroom in a poster form.

Amanda Schutt also creates groups where ELLs are provided with peer support during these activities. Specifically, if one of her students is having difficulty finding the main idea or plot of the story she will purposely assign the student to the basic elements center or "Advertising Agents." In other words, students are strategically placed in groups in which they can learn from each other and gain confidence. She also highlighted the importance of providing students the opportunity to work in different groups as they read a variety of texts and stories.

### **References**

Bottini, M., & Grossman, S. (2005). Center-based teaching and children's learning: The effect of learning centers on young children's growth and development. *Childhood Education, 81*(5), 274-278.

Harvey, S., Goudvis, A. (2000). *Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension to enhance understanding*. Stenhouse Publishers, Portland, Maine, US.

From: <http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/13351?theme=print>

## Intervention: Literacy Centers

### **Making Center Learning Meaningful for ELL/ESL Students by Tobey Bassoff. (All Grades)**

For those of you not familiar with the centers concept, please visit:

<http://www.ncacasi.org/jsi/2001v2i1/literacy>. It is a comprehensive site that defines and explains centers. It also offers links for further research.

For the purpose of this article, I will define a literacy center as "a physical area designed for specific learning purposes (Betsy Van Deusen-MacLeod, *Journal of School Improvement* (2001). " A classroom utilizing centers usually has four or five defined learning areas that are differentiated to meet student needs. Each center may focus on discrete literacy skills, or it may integrate literacy with other content areas, like science or math. Centers, by design, are meant to be independent work stations where teacher involvement is not required. (*Teachers are often meeting with small guided reading groups during this time.*)

Creating centers that are accessible and meaningful to students with little or no English is challenging because ESL students often don't have the ability to read directions, or the schema to help them decode unfamiliar vocabulary words. The other roadblock is that many ESL students are coming from countries where centers instruction does not exist, or may look different from your classroom.

Now that we've framed the problem, let's discuss some solutions: The following is a time line of ways to make centers meaningful to your new ESL arrival.

**Week 1: Buddy Mentor:** The first week that your ESL student arrives, it is important to make her feel welcome and like a part of the community. Therefore, assigning her a buddy mentor to engage in the first round of centers is key. I have found that it is more important to establish a sense of belonging and security in that first week than it is to have ability-appropriate lessons. You need to assess your ESL students' literacy skills first. Do not assume that your new arrival knows no English. I have learned that many students acquire at least some English before they step foot in my classroom.

**Week 2: Practice Centers:** Now that you've had time to assess your students' basic literacy skills in English, it is important to establish routines and practice them. Find time during the day to practice the center that your ESL student will attend during your literacy hour. If your literacy block begins first thing in the morning, then practice the center the day before. When you practice, take nothing for granted. Go through all the expectations that you have of any student participating during a center. (If other teachers in your school use centers, then arrange a tour of those classrooms and acquaint them with different "pictures" of the same concept. This may seem confusing at first, but I have found that the more exposure my ESL students have to what is a "normal" part of the day, the more comfortable they feel when the centers change down the road.

**Week 3: Designing Meaningful Centers:** Core Value #1- all students want to succeed. Core Value #2 - all students want to feel like a part of the overall community. Bearing these two core values in mind, design centers with success as the goal. [Sheltered Content Instruction](#) by Jana Echevarria and Anne Graves (Allyn and Bacon 1998) is a wonderful

resource if you're trying to understand where your student falls in the scope of academic English acquisition. The second Core Value is also key when you are selecting activities. Many of you have expressed concern about making the ESL student's center activities too "childish" compared to the work of the rest of the class. You have a right to be concerned. You must strive not to alienate your new ESL student while attempting to design meaningful center work. The way I do this in my own class is to design my literacy centers around a common theme. Everyone has work related to that theme. This month, our theme is "In the Wild." All students are studying concepts related to wildlife preservation, endangered or threatened species, and habitats and ecosystems. My latest newcomer from Mexico has activities at each station that allow her to feel like a member of the community, while she is learning English and strategies to be a successful student.

No matter where you are in the design process of centers, remember to keep your Core Values in mind. All students want to feel accepted and they want to be successful. Good Luck! If you need an idea for a center, or if you had an idea that worked, [please email me](#).

### **Center Ideas for ESL Students**

1. **Blends** - Have students match blends (th, ch, st, etc...) to picture word cards. Then, they can look through books for additional words to match blends and they can design their own picture word cards.

2. **Listening Center** - Make a cassette recorder and books on tapes available for ESL students. Have them recreate the story through pictures and whatever words they learned using a tri-fold "beginning, middle, and end" story sheet. Fold an 8 1/2 by 11 sheet of paper horizontally. Cut 1/2 into thirds. Write beginning, middle, and end on the flaps and have the student draw the pictures. For an added challenge, have them create the flip chart with visual instructions.

3. **Patterning** - Make patterns on cards and have the students match the patterns to a board.

4. **Visual Vocabulary Dictionary** - Students begin their own dictionary of vocabulary words in English by looking through magazines and cutting out pictures of words they learn by reading a high interest book in English. Students record the spelling of the word in the book, and they keep the book with them. If your class has a theme like "Space," then this center could be used in conjunction with the class study. Select pictures and words that the rest of the class was also learning.

5. **Labeling** - Take a book with a picture of vocabulary words that you hope your students have already mastered. Have them label as many of the pictures as they can identify using English. (Post-It notes work well for this type of activity.)

6. **Draw and Write** - Arrange a folder containing pictures of objects and writing paper. Have students draw their own picture of an object in the folder, and then have them write sentences about the picture. Again, if the class is studying a theme, like "space," then have the pictures relate to the theme. The students' vocabulary will grow when they can connect it to other things in their life.

From: <http://www.teachersnetwork.org/ntol/howto/eslclass/centerlearn.htm>