

Literature Review by Carla Lewis- MLIS candidate 2017

Creating Community Through One Book – Katherine Koch, Caroline Land, and Jonathan Anuik

A book has the power to unite a community. Learn about On the Same Page from the University of Alberta's Faculty of Education and the Edmonton Public Library's One Book One Edmonton. These diverse and innovative programs aim to create community, conversation, and engagement. Learn how to start a program at your library, engage users in person and online, and garner benefits for your community.

Learning Objectives:

- Learn why shared reading is beneficial and has the potential to create community
- Learn how to implement a successful shared reading program
- Learn how social media can be used to engage readers

Literature circles are defined as small, peer-led groups of students who engage in discussions around the same text and then, in some cases, share this information with a larger audience (Batchelor, 2012; Fredricks, 2012). This term is used interchangeably throughout the literature with shared reading, group reading, and book clubs. This method of reading is a commonly used to increase individual engagement and learning with the literature (Batchelor, 2012; Sanacore, 2013; Harder, Howard & Sedo, 2015; Clarke & Holwadel, 2007; Smith & Galbraith, 2011). For all readers, but especially English Language Learners (ELLs), providing them with the opportunities to partake in shared reading can help give them a boost in confidence and self-esteem when it comes to their reading and speaking abilities, while presenting them a chance to interact and converse in social settings (Fredricks, 2012; Walwyn & Rowley, 2011).

One of the most common themes appearing throughout the literature is the ability for these reading groups to create a sense of collaboration, community, and belonging (Batchelor, 2012; Harder, Howard & Sedo, 2015; Forrest, 2011). Once these interpersonal connections are created through shared experiences, all members are motivated to contribute and participate in the reading and discussions (Batchelor, 2012; Clarke & Holwadel, 2007; Smith & Galbraith, 2011; Harder, Howard & Sedo, 2015; Palmer & Peterson, 2007). Because this method significantly increases the amount of interpersonal interactions, individuals can pose and answer higher-level questions, take more risks, and engage with the literature on a critical level (Batchelor, 2012; Sanacore, 2013). It is strongly recommended that the book is not prescribed to the literature circle, and instead the group is allowed to choose the book (Batchelor, 2012; Sanacore, 2013; Clarke & Holwadel, 2007). If the group is unable to choose the book, this can result in the group not being motivated to continue with the selection and decrease in interaction and discussion (Clarke & Holwadel, 2007; Sanacore, 2013).

The importance of shared speaking and discussion was another frequent theme. Discussion is an important learning tool. As expressed by Kerka (cited in Smith & Galbraith, 2011, p. 172) “talk is one of the ways through which human beings make meaning”. Smith &

Galbraith, 2011 continue stating “book club participants can transform collective and individual experiences into meaning or understanding through discussion. Like Bauman, she notes the importance of diversity in membership and informality in structure” (p. 172). If only a few members dominate the conversation, the entire group is missing the opportunity to experience the variety of perspectives, viewpoints, and personal stories group members can provide, so it is important for there to be an opportunity for everyone to have equal speaking time (Batchelor, 2012; Sanacore, 2013; Forrest, 2011; Smith & Galbraith, 2011.). As stated by Sanacore (2013)

[e]ngaging learners in literature circle discussions that support both personal and critical responses can help them grow beyond a narrow perspective on meaning and consider a broader range of viewpoints, especially when they are discussing multicultural and political texts. (p. 120)

While many push for the circles to be critical analysis of the text, there needs to be a balance of personal and critical engagement (Sanacore, 2013; Fredricks, 2012).

For libraries to establish and support successful book clubs, advertisement is seen as one of the most essential components. Fajardo (2010) and Forrest (2011) recommend utilizing several different approaches to marketing and promotion through:

1. Traditional print - well-placed posters or table tents and including actual copies of the books on table displays),
2. Social media - creating a Facebook group with online forum, and
3. Word of Mouth - recruit students and faculty in spreading the word

Palmer and Peterson (2007) suggest continuous advertisement in order to keep a constant awareness of the book club, and to attract newcomers.

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