



Positive Effects of Literature Circles

Student success depends upon adequate reading comprehension skills. However, 2022 results from the National Assessment for Educational Progress show that nearly a third of 4th and 8th graders can't read at "basic" achievement levels. For 2022, in Louisiana, 43% of 4th graders and 34% of 8th graders scored below reading grade level. Studies show that declines span all socio-economic, gender, racial, and ethnic groups in both subjects and grades.

With alarming rates of students falling behind in reading comprehension, it is imperative for educators to employ methods of engaging students in preferred reading that offers interest areas and improves reading skills. Literature Circles are one-way educators can accomplish this. Literature Circles are small groups of students gathering around to discuss the same book at an appropriate level.

Reasons for effectiveness of Literature Circles include students' ability to pick their preferred genre, groups consisting of mixed reader ability, and facilitating discussions between students within the Literature Circles. Choice in which book to read is essential, as it makes it more likely for students to enjoy and finish reading books. Discussion solidifies the learning of students, while building classroom cohesion.

Specific research has shown to promote student self-determination (ability to achieve goals based on valuing oneself), exposes students to multiculturalism and different perspectives, and develops reading enthusiasm. Thus, Literature Circles promote literacy for students while at the same time facilitating language learning with students from diverse cultural backgrounds and reading abilities.

Not only are literature circles effective for the general student population, but they have also been found to be effective by teachers of students with learning disabilities and gifts and talents. Participation in Literature Circles increases oral language, reading, and writing achievement in a supportive and collaborative learning environment. Literature Circles ensure that all students are equal contributors in their Circle.

In addition to positive effects on learning and achievement, Literature Circles may also have a positive effect on the social-emotional learning of students. Studies have shown Literature Circles promote student growth in intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. In particular, growth in social awareness, social metacognition, empathy, and self-management was evident in a study of fifth-graders participating in Literature Circles.

Resources:

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