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## **Enlarging My Circle**

**Focus:** As a resource teacher I looked for ways to enlarge my boundary line from a pullout program to greater involvement in a classroom setting. The approach that began to bridge the gap was literature circles.

### **Introduction:**

I supported a grade 8 team with 8 classrooms and wanted an opportunity to become more involved. As a resource teacher, I often felt like an ‘island unto myself’ working with my caseload of students. Faye Brownlie’s book, Student Diversity challenged my thinking. I searched for a way to work collaboratively as a resource teacher.

### **Goals:**

- to foster professional development by involving the librarian, literacy support teacher, classroom teacher and resource teacher.
- to explore and apply literature circles in the classroom, as described in F. Brownlie’s book, Grand Conversations, Thoughtful Responses.
- to support the diversity of all students and inspire a love of reading.
- to bridge the gap between resource teacher, classroom teacher and all students.

### **Where to start:**

- the librarian, resource teacher, classroom teacher and literacy support teacher met to discuss outcomes and why literature circles would be a good venue.
- the literacy support teacher and librarian suggested a number of books – between 6-10 novels.
- we decided each of us would read 6 books keeping in mind the reading ability of students.
- ordering and the cost of books were a factor (6 copies of books per class)

- informal assessments using provincial performance standards were completed earlier in the year, so the classroom and resource teacher knew the reading abilities of all students.

### **Framework:**

Explain/describe to students the learning intentions.

- i) highlight 5 parts:
  - to read a lot
  - participate in literature circle conversations
  - response journals
  - weekly or bi-weekly comprehension strategies
  - final project
- ii) explain the differences between a novel study, literature circles with assigned roles and the new idea of literature circles

### **Resource Teacher Role:**

- i) major involvement in the pre-assessment
- ii) ensure there is a wide selection of books at various reading levels
- iii) the emphasis of working side-by-side the classroom teacher
- iv) planning took place a few months prior to ensure everything was in place.
- v) Involvement:
  - a) the Big Sell – each of the adults presented one or two books to introduce to the class.
  - b) literacy support teacher introduced a poem and used the strategy, “Say Something” so students learn to talk about the text. (whip around – question, comment or give a word they liked, or make a connection. Each student can borrow, build on, but can’t pass.)  
\*\*\*Emphasis of reviewing the same skill when I saw my students in the Learning Centre. They lacked confidence so extra practice took place. The conversations deepened their understanding. Also used “Fix-It Strategies to reinforce comprehension
  - c) Journal Responses were taught in class. I reinforced the skill in the classroom and in the Learning Centre. Students felt more confident in the classroom.
  - d) Monday’s or Wednesday’s – introduction of literature circle activity. Reinforcement of the skill would take place in the classroom and in the L.C. Activities were: say something, example of exploring issues, making connections, hot seat
  - e) Final Project and letter to the teacher.

**Benefits:**

- i) increased time with my students
- ii) reinforced skills in the Learning Centre during their assigned blocks (very powerful)
- iii) other students during the learning assistance block were able to listen and participate in some of the activities
- iv) had a better understanding of all the students in the classroom.
- v) changed my role in how I am perceived in the grade 8 team.
- vi) bridged the gap between resource and classroom.
- vii) more students started dropping in my room, so much so that I had no spaces available.
- viii) the teacher said how supported she felt and wasn't left to try a new idea on her own
- ix) administration saw my classroom involvement as very positive and wanted to look at set-up for the following year.
- x) other teachers expressed that they would like to try literature circles involving myself the following year....spills over.

**Negatives:**

- i) some teachers commented that it took me out of the Learning Centre, so I wasn't always available when they wanted to send kids to my room. My response was that they needed to plan ahead and converse with me.