

The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat Webcast Professional Learning Series

Viewer's Guide



Multimedia resource for professional learning



Curriculum Services Canada | Service des programmes d'études Canada

reach every student

 Ontario

On this DVD you will find ...

On this DVD you will find the video and print resources for *Literature Circles*.

- Select “Featured Webcast: Play All” in order to access video files formatted to play from a regular DVD player or your computer’s DVD drive.
- Open the folder entitled “Print and Video Resources” to access Windows Media Version (WMV) and QuickTime (MOV) files formatted for downloading from your computer's DVD drive and using in your PowerPoint presentations; PDF files of key print resources are also contained here.
- The booklet entitled *Viewer’s Guide* offers a snapshot of the webcast segments.

Webcast Segments

- Before Viewing
- Literature Circles: Overview
- Teacher-Facilitated Literature Circle
- Student-Facilitated Circle
- Self-assessment through Media Construction
- Teacher Debrief

Print and Video Resources

- Viewer’s Guide (PDF)
- *Print Resources* (PDF)
- Video Files (WMV and MOV)

To order the multimedia package *Literature Circles*, contact ServiceOntario at 416-326-5300 or toll-free at 1-800-668-9938.

<http://www.publications.serviceontario.ca/ecom>

The webcast segments and related resources are also accessible online at <http://www.curriculum.org/secretariat/circles/index.shtml>.

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Table of Contents

Overview	2
Webcast Segments	3
Before Viewing	3
Literature Circles: Overview	3
Teacher-Facilitated Literature Circle	4
Student-Facilitated Circle	5
Self-assessment through Media Construction	8
Teacher Debrief	8
References and Related Reading	10
Technical Instructions	11
How to Access the Print and Video Resources	11
How to Save the Video Files to Your Computer	12
How to Insert Video Clips (WMV files) into a PowerPoint Presentation	13

Overview

Over the years, literature circles have grown in popularity, taking root in schools around the world as an instructional strategy to get students talking and thinking about text and presenting and writing in response to text.

Students enjoy the choice offered in this approach and also the opportunity to talk and interact with peers. They develop habits of mind such as open-mindedness, seeking alternative perspectives and being respectful of multiple ways of understanding that will serve them well during their school years and beyond.

Originally introduced on the book club model, literature circles have tended to focus on novels and short stories. But that is changing as our understanding of “text” has expanded to include a range of modes and formats for conveying meaning. Today’s literature circles include discussion not only of traditional literary genres but also of informational text, video clips and pieces of art.

Literature circles are centred on student interest and response. They need to be small to ensure that all students have the chance to speak, heterogeneous to provide the group with a range of skills and perspectives, and timetabled regularly to give students the opportunity to build understanding and delve deeper into the print or media texts before them. Students can discuss the same text or different texts joined by a common theme, genre or style.

The teacher and later the students “chunk” the text so that it is manageable for the group. Together they also determine who will play the key roles and they decide when they will meet. Orienting to the importance of the gradual release of responsibility, the teacher models facilitation strategies during the first sessions and then slips away from the circle when students are confident and competent to take over the role of facilitator. Through observation, the teacher assesses the quality of student questioning and thinking as well as their communication and collaboration. The teacher provides explicit feedback at the end of every session and, in collaboration with students, determines next steps to move the learning forward.

Through the interaction that this collaborative learning structure provides, students develop critical literacy and communication skills. Through their talk, they stretch one another’s thinking and deepen their understanding not just of the text but of themselves and their world.

The key is to select a piece of text that is of interest to students and worthy of discussion. In this resource, students are discussing a newspaper article.

Webcast Segments

Before Viewing

Duration: 1:40

This segment provides a brief guide to the topics explored in the video segments. All of the segments were originally filmed for and included in the multimedia package *Engaging Boys: Powerful Possibilities for All Learners*. For viewers' convenience, these have been repackaged as the stand-alone resource, *Literature Circles*.

Literature Circles: Overview

“Three principles from brain research: emotional safety, appropriate challenges, and self constructed meaning suggest that a one-size-fits-all approach to classroom instruction teaching is ineffective for most students and harmful to some.” (Tomlinson, 1998)

Duration: 13:38

Synopsis:

Each of the principles of effective teaching – emotional safety, appropriate challenges and self-constructed meaning – identified in brain research is embodied in the literature circle presented in this introductory segment.

Grade 6 teacher Sandra Borzellino speaks about scaffolding the learning as students prepare to be part of a literature circle. By explaining the steps prior to, during and after the literature circle, she clarifies her expectations throughout the learning process. She explains her role in supporting and assessing students and discusses how they will become independent literature-circle participants.

To deepen understanding:

Engaging students by offering a choice in texts based on their interests, needs and strengths sets students up for success.

Before partnering with your colleagues to determine which texts to offer, how will you determine your students' interests, needs and strengths?

What details do you need to consider when setting the stage for a literature circle experience?

How might you address these details?

Print Resource 1
Literature Circles

Learning Conditions	Details / Challenges	Possible Solutions
Offering choice		
Heterogeneous grouping		
Assessment and feedback		

Research indicates that students become engaged in their learning when they have a choice in what they are learning, how they are learning and how they are being assessed. They also are motivated to learn when the tasks are challenging and relevant, when they receive explicit feedback. We also know that time for talk and interaction in flexible groupings enhances student achievement. These conditions for learning are all part of the literature circle learning experience.

You may wish to use Print Resource 1 (on the DVD) to organize your thinking.

Teacher-Facilitated Literature Circle

“The measure of my success is the extent to which these different texts sustain and extend our conversation about ... human nature. Many voices and texts, each one demanding different reading and writing skills, helps students develop the textual intelligence they need for the world in which they live and for which they must prepare.” (Burke, 2001)

Duration: 8:33

Synopsis:

The literature circle presented in this segment demonstrates how probing questions can help create an expanded understanding not only of text but of oneself and one's world. The teacher skillfully models how to ask such probing questions in a respectful manner and, in so doing, move the conversation to deeper levels. Each member of the circle is encouraged to participate by listening attentively and communicating his/her thoughts succinctly. At the end of the session, circle members reflect on how the process has impacted their thinking and learning.

To deepen understanding:

You may wish to refer to Print Resource 2 (on the DVD) to explore how to promote student reflections.

Print Resource 2

Literature Circles: Questions to Promote Student Reflections

1. What role do you assume most frequently when participating in a literature circle?
2. How is timely feedback helpful to you to improve your understanding of the text and your participation in the literature circle?
3. What insights did you gain from watching yourself and the other group members on video participating in a literature circle?
4. What did you learn during the video editing process?
5. How has your participation in literature circles changed the way you as a learner?
6. Would you recommend literature circles as a way of learning to other teachers and students? Explain your answer.

Students select the text they wish to study.

How do you address the issue that some students in the group may not be able to understand the text?

As the teacher facilitates the session and models for students how to deepen their thinking, she provides an opportunity to assess students' understanding of the text and also their communication skills.

How would you facilitate the recording of this ongoing assessment?

What format of feedback would be most helpful to students in order to move their learning forward?

Student-Facilitated Literature Circle

“The research on how the brain thinks and the emergence of knowledge regarding intelligence, creativity, and learning styles all argue that social interaction is critical in the development of intelligent behaviour.” (Rolheiser & Bennett, 2001)

Duration: 11:43

Synopsis:

This segment shows students becoming more comfortable with the roles and responsibilities of the literature circle and becoming increasingly involved by areas of interest. Students gradually assume responsibility for the session as they begin to feel confident enough to do so. The teacher slips away from the circle and occasionally checks in to offer assistance as needed. Students take turns assuming the role of facilitator and all participants actively contribute to the flow and depth of the dialogue.

Print Resource 3
Literature Circle Session: Student Self-Assessment

Name: _____
Text: _____
Date: _____

Criteria	Met	Not Yet Met	Next Steps
I listened attentively.			
I supported my ideas with evidence.			
I took a critical stance.			
I participated in the conversation.			
I encouraged others to participate.			
I came prepared for the session.			
I questioned ideas. Respectfully.			
I considered alternative perspectives.			

Before this session I thought...

After this session, I understand...

To deepen understanding:

You may wish to refer to Print Resources 3 and 4 (on the DVD) as tools to help students improve their self-assessment skills both as individuals and as a group. Print Resource 5 (on the DVD) provides a checklist for your assessment of the circle.

One issue we noticed when taping this session was that some incorrect information was shared during the conversation. Since the teacher was not present, students accepted the information as “fact.”

Do you see this as an issue? If so, how would you address the validity (or lack of validity) of what is shared during the dialogue?

Print Resource 4
Literature Circles Group Assessment Sheet

Group members:

Date of literature circle session: _____
Text: _____

What we did well as a group:	What we need to improve:	Next steps:

Print Resource 5
Literature Circle Session Assessment

Name: _____
Text: _____
Date: _____

Criteria	Met	Not Yet Met	Next Steps
The student			
Engaged in attentive listening			
Gave evidence to support their ideas			
Assumed a critical stance			
Participated in the conversation			
Showed respect for group members			
Came prepared for the session			
Questioned ideas respectfully			
Considered alternative perspectives			
Probed for deeper meaning of the text			

Additional comments:

This segment reveals a group of students that are very respectful of one another. They listen carefully and respond honestly during the conversation and they question each other's thinking without shutting the conversation down.

What do students need to know and be able to do in order for such a robust dialogue to happen?

These students came prepared to participate. They referred to their notes and to the text as they spoke.

How would you support your students so they would also come to the literature circle session well prepared?

Reflection is an important part of the literature circle experience.

What strategies would you use to ensure that students reflect deeply about the text and their response to the text?

How are your board's character attributes considered during the reflection?

Self-assessment through Media Construction

Duration: 4:59

Synopsis:

Students edit the videotape of their literature circle session in order to reflect on their communication and collaboration skills. They are also creating a piece of media to explain to other students and teachers how literature circles work, thereby learning about media by creating media. They are writing and editing for a specific purpose and audience. Their motivation is genuine because they need to communicate clearly in order to persuade their audience that literature circles are worthwhile and doable.

To deepen understanding:

How might you scaffold this editing and self-assessment experience for students who need extra support?

A great deal of rich dialogue is happening during the editing process.

What strategies might you suggest to students to capture their thinking for the purpose of further reflection?

Teacher Debrief

“All of us are walking anthologies of the texts we have read, texts which have in some sense stayed with us. Books and other texts affect children’s views of themselves, including their views of gender identity.”
(Barrs, 2000)

Duration: 5:18

Synopsis:

Teachers reflect on the impact of literature circles on student learning and in particular on the effectiveness of the selection of texts they presented to their students.

To deepen understanding:

Texts for literature circles need to be relevant, interesting and worthy of study.

How will you determine which texts to introduce to students?

What strategies might you use to involve students in the selection of texts?

After viewing this video, reflect on literature circles in relation to your own practice.

What ideas resonated with you?

What are your concerns?

What do you need to investigate further?

You may wish to refer to Print Resource 6 (on the DVD) to organize your debriefing.

Print Resource 6 Literature Circle: Reflections Name: _____
Cheers What do you especially value about literature circles? Hurrah!
Fears What worries you about Literature Circles? !
Unclears What questions do you have about Literature Circles? ?

References and Related Reading

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- Tomlinson, C.A. (1998, Nov.). Teach me, teach my brain: A call for differentiated classrooms. *Educational Leadership*.

Websites

- But Does it Work? Recent Research on Literature Circles. Excerpted from Daniels (2002). <http://www.literaturecircles.com/research.htm>
- Summary of Literature Circles Research.
<http://www.chasepheifer.com/pdf/LitCrcResearch.pdf>

Technical Instructions

How to Access the Print and Video Resources

To access the **Print and Video Resources** folder in Windows, insert the DVD into the DVD drive of your computer and:

1. Click on the Start menu.
2. Select My Computer.
3. Right-click the mouse on the DVD icon titled **LITERATURE_CIRCLES_DVD** to open a drop-down options list.
4. From the drop-down list, select and click on the Open option.
5. Double-click on the folder titled Print and Video Resources to access the files. Ignore the folders titled Audio_TS and Video_TS.
6. Select the resources you wish to use directly from this folder, **OR** Copy onto the Desktop and open files from the Desktop.

Alternatively, when the DVD is inserted and the options box opens:

1. Select the option Open Folder to View Files.
2. Click on the Print and Video Resources folder.
3. Select the files you wish to use directly from this folder, **OR** Copy the files onto the Desktop and open them from the Desktop.

To access the **Print and Video Resources** folder in Mac OS X, insert the DVD into the DVD drive of your computer and:

1. Exit from the DVD player (which typically opens automatically when a DVD is inserted in the drive).
2. Double-click on the DVD icon titled **LITERATURE_CIRCLES_DVD**.
3. Select the files you wish to use directly from this folder, **OR** Copy the files onto the Desktop and open them from the Desktop.



How to Save the Video Files to Your Computer

The video files can all be copied and saved to your computer using either of the following methods for copying and pasting files.

Method 1

1. Right-click on the file and choose the Copy option.
2. Right-click within any computer folder into which you would like to save the file, and choose the Paste option.

Method 2

1. Left-click the mouse on the file you want to save, so that the file is highlighted.
2. Simultaneously press the Ctrl and C keys (or, for Macintosh users, the Command and C keys) to copy the file.
3. Left-click within any computer folder in which you would like to save the file, and simultaneously press the Ctrl and V keys (or, for Macintosh users, the Command and V keys) to paste the file there.
 - For Macintosh users, the Command key is the one with the following symbols:  

NOTE:

If you want to insert video files into a PowerPoint presentation, you must save these video files in the same folder that contains your PowerPoint file. If you save a PowerPoint presentation to another location (e.g., a memory stick, CD-ROM, etc.), you must also save the video files in the same location in order for the video to play. So, if you transfer the presentation to another computer, you must also transfer the video files with it, or else the video will not link to the PowerPoint presentation.

How to Insert Video Clips (WMV and MOV files) into a PowerPoint Presentation

On this DVD, you will find WMV and MOV versions of all segments of the webcast. To insert a clip into a PowerPoint presentation, follow the directions below.

1. Open your PowerPoint program.
2. Create a new PowerPoint presentation **OR** open an existing PowerPoint presentation, and within it, open the slide on which you would like to add the video.
3. Insert the webcast DVD into the DVD drive of your computer.
4. If a new window opens asking how you would like to view the files on the disk, choose the option Open Folder to View Files; **OR**

If a new window does not open, open the My Computer window from the Start menu. In the My Computer window, double-click on the icon that is shaped like a disk, which will likely be labelled D: or E:.

5. Save the video segment that you want to insert in a PowerPoint into the same folder that contains your PowerPoint presentation.

NOTE: Video files that have been saved to your computer can be cropped and edited into smaller segments using Movie Maker (free on PCs) or iMovie (free on Macintosh).

6. Open the PowerPoint slide on which you would like to insert the video, and click on the Insert menu in the PowerPoint menu bar.
7. From the Insert menu, select Movies and Sounds, and click on the Movie from File option. A window opens, prompting you to select the video file that you would like to add. Find and select the video file that you saved in step 5.
8. Once you have chosen the video file you need, another window opens and asks whether you want your movie to play either automatically when you enter the slide, or only when it is clicked. Choose your preference. (You will notice that the starting image of your movie is not displayed on the slide.)



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