Using Literature Circles to Improve Literacy Skills of English Language Learners

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ABSTRACT

Using Literature Circles to Improve Literacy Skills of English Language Learners

The increasing number of English language learners in mainstream classrooms continues to be one of the greatest challenges for educators. English language learners not only must learn the literacy skills necessary to be successful in American society, but they must also learn social and cultural skills. Literature circles are a successful way to improve comprehension skills while also providing English language learners with authentic social interactions. Many educators find literature circles to be an effective way to improve literacy, social, and cultural skills, yet they fail to implement them in their classroom. This research project will consist of a literature circle unit for fourth grade readers at the extending or fluency level of reading. This plan is based on (a) Colorado State Reading and Writing Standards, (b) a review of literature on literacy strategies and literature circles, and (c) personal experience.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The number of students in mainstream classrooms who do not speak English as their first language is increasing. Since 1993, the number of English language learners in the state of Colorado has increased 250.2% (National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 2005). The Supreme Court ruling, Lau v. Nichols (1974, as cited in Escamilla, 1998), ruled educators in public school districts are legally required to provide a meaningful education to all non-English speaking children. In order to provide English language learners with an education equally meaningful to that of English speaking peers, educators have started developing curriculums that are based on needs of students and sound pedagogical principles (TESOL, 2000). As a result, many researchers (Cheung & Slavin, 2005, Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999, & National Reading Panel, 2000) have studied literacy curricula to find effective ways to teach English language learners reading and writing skills to become successful in the mainstream classroom.

Part of teaching literacy skills includes providing students with cultural knowledge to activate background knowledge. Vygotsky (1978) has suggested student cultural development appears at two levels, first on a social and later on a psychological level. Literature circles are a way to provide students with cultural and social skills that allow them to become more critical thinkers when reading independently (King, 2001).
Statement of the Problem

The population of minority students in public schools is rapidly increasing. In Colorado alone the number of English language learners in classrooms has increased by about 66,000 over the last ten years. Nationally, as a group, English language learners’ score among the lowest in reading achievement (Peregoy & Boyle, 2000). The majority of teachers in today’s classrooms are Anglo and their native language is English (Wynn & Laframboise, 2006). These teachers often lack the techniques and background necessary to help English language learners successfully develop literacy strategies and skills (Beckett & Haley, 2000). Language acquisition is a complex process that may take at least twelve years (Collier, 1989).

The majority of educators have agreed it is valuable for English language learners to participate in peer discussion as a way for them to become more familiar with social, cultural, and political issues. Also, peer discussion allows them to become more familiar with social skills that help in the development of cultural knowledge. However, only 33% of these educators reported using peer discussion as a learning tool in their classroom (Lloyd, 2004). With the pressures of state testing, teachers are still controlling small group discussion by asking questions to measure comprehension. Literature circles are viewed as the long way around to achieve higher test scores (Lloyd, 2004).

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to provide a reference of literature circle strategies and activities for monolingual English speaking teachers. The strategies are to be used with intermediate level elementary school students who receive minimal ESL instruction.
Through guided reading groups, teachers are able to ask questions based on comprehension. However, these activities are often based on materials focusing on native English speakers and eliminate the genuine conversation that can occur in the classroom. Literature circles provide educators with a way to create passionate, enthusiastic readers that ask genuine questions about the text (Lloyd, 2004).

The purpose of this project is to provide teachers with strategies that can be used in small group literature circles to assist students in language development, literacy skills, and critical thinking skills. The researcher plans on developing strategies based on current research, classroom observations, and information found in trade books.

Definition of Terms

The following are a list of terms that are often used when discussing language acquisition and literature circles.

*ESL:* English as a second language. This is a form of instruction for students whose native language is not English. ESL instruction is based on a special curriculum that does not involve instruction in the native language. For the majority of the day the students spend time in mainstream classes. They are pulled out only for a small portion of the day. (NCBE, 1996)

*First language or native language:* the language the student first communicated (NCBE, 1996)

*Guided Reading:* small reading groups that are teacher led usually focusing on answering comprehension questions or completing Cloze activities (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).
Literature circle: small group discussion involving groups of peers reading the same text. Groups are led by peers. The group meets regularly and each member comes to the group ready to take on a specific responsibility or task.

Chapter Summary

The number of English language learners and limited English proficient students continues to grow in public schools. In order for these students to receive a quality education, it is necessary for educators to find a way for these students to develop the appropriate social, language, and literacy skills. Educators face the challenge of developing skills that will enable students to embrace their culture while developing the necessary skills for them to be able to actively participate in American society. Educators need to adapt literature circles and peer group discussion in the classroom to better fit the needs of English language learners. By doing so, students will experience more authentic social interaction while also being encouraged to think more critically about their reading.
Chapter 2

STUDENT AND TEACHER POPULATION

English-language learners (ELL), or students who speak another language at home and have limited proficiency in English are one of the fastest growing groups in the United States school districts. Over the last twenty years, the population of English language learners has increased by 138% (Harper & de Jong, 2004). By 1998, the number of English language learners increased to 3.6 million (NCBE, 2000). In the Colorado 2000 census figures from the census showed that 23% of children under the age of 18 were Hispanic. This is an increase of approximately 40% since the last census count (Kreck, 2001).

Educators have not kept up with the growth of English language students in the school districts. According to Wynn and Laframboise (1996) the majority of teachers continue to be Caucasian and their native language is English. These teachers have not been provided with the scope and sequence ELL students need to be successful (Beckett & Haley, 2000). Also, a shortage of teachers trained in ESL exists (Olsen, 2000). For these reasons, limited English proficient students lack the necessary skills and strategies to successfully develop the English language.

English Language Acquisition Objectives

During the 1980’s and early 1990’s the goals of English language teaching were focused on social fluency. The ability to communicate was the primary goal (Beckett & Haley, 2000). Teachers presented academic content in the student’s first
language, based on the belief that students cannot learn if they do not know the language of the teacher or the textbook (Olsen, 2000). Collier and Thomas (1997, as cited in Olsen) reported it takes three to seven years before a student could become sufficiently fluent enough in English to master academic content presented in English. In the late 1990’s educators and the general population supported a movement to limit the amount of time a student spends in the native language (Gersten, 1999). Personnel in many school districts, as well as members of state departments of education proposed plans that require students to start English language instruction at a young age and to reduce the amount of time spent in academic instruction in native language (Gersten, 1999).

Language Development

*First Language Acquisition*

Early language development begins for almost all children at the age of two (Berger & Thompson, 1998). The ability of the child to communicate within his/her native language structure, words, and rules is due to the fact that, in infancy, the brain is attuned to speech sounds, word patterns, and linguistic expressions (Berger & Thompson, 1998).

Even though the time frame of acquisition of language may differ for each individual, all children follow the same sequence in early language development. The ability to move from one stage of language development to the next stage depends on successful processing of language structures at the earlier age (Spada & Lightbrown, 1999). Early communication includes cries, facial expressions, babbling, spoken words, vocabulary growth, and sentence formation (Berger & Thompson, 1998).
Adults foster these skills by responding appropriately to the child’s communication. Children learn language best in the context of social communication.

Second Language Acquisition

The brain is most capable of recognizing speech sounds and word pattern during early stages of life. As a result an individual can more successfully learn a second language the earlier she/he is exposed to it (Berger & Thompson, 1998). The developmental nature of language has implications for the acquisition of a second language.

Researchers (Spada & Lightbrown, 1999) have found that the ability to process language at one stage is dependent upon the mastery of the language at the previous stage. Language learning can occur only when learners are exposed to the next step in the language learning process (Spada & Lightbrown, 1999). According to Krashen (1985, as cited in Spada & Lightbrown), second language learners should simply be exposed to comprehensible input that includes what the learner needs.

One system of second language learning is termed as the acquisition learning hypothesis (Krashen 1985, as cited in Schutz, 2000). This system is similar to the process used by first language learners. Interaction in the second language is natural and meaningful. Via code switching, second language learners can make the transition from the first to the second language and vice versa.

Berger and Thompson (1998) reported Spanish speaking kindergarten children in an English speaking classroom took skills developed in the first language and applied those skills to social and cognitive strategies for communication in the second
language. The three social strategies used were: (a) act as if you know what is going on, (b) give the impression, that you speak the language by speaking a few words, (c) count on friends to help. The five cognitive strategies used were: (a) assume what people are saying is related to the task on hand, (b) take something you understand and start talking, (c) look for repetition, (d) use what you have, and (e) work on the big things first.


1. *Silent/Receptive Stage*, limited English proficient learners associate sound and meaning. They develop listening skills and indicate comprehension non-verbally. Initially, they are unresponsive but progress to one word responses.

2. *Early Production Stage*, limited English proficient learners focus on key words, contextual clues, and relate words to their environment. They understand main ideas without understanding all parts.

3. *Speech Emergence Stage*, limited English proficient learners produce what is heard. This includes words that have been heard many times and are understood even though they might be mispronounced.

4. *Immediate Fluency Stage*, limited English proficient learners continue to enhance their vocabularies. They have not mastered grammar. They may make more errors as the complexity of their speech grows.

5. *Advance Fluency Stage*, limited English proficient learners’ continue to enhance vocabularies and begin to make fewer errors. They participate in
transitional English reading programs but may not be ready for all academic classroom language.

Vocabulary

The goal of English language strategies and methods is to produce individuals that can function in American society. In order to do so, English language learners must master vocabulary and be literate. Before English language learners can master literacy, they must process some English vocabulary and language structure. Nist and Simpson (1993, as cited in Reutzel & Cooper, 1996) identified four levels students use to learn words. The first level is the definition of the word. The second level is knowledge of antonyms and synonyms. The third level involves the understanding of connotations. The meanings of words are not identical in two different languages. English language learners must learn the words and the cultural setting that gives words meanings (Meyer, 2000). In order to participate in social activities, students must have cultural and background knowledge to help them understand (Meyer, 2000). The fourth level is the ability to use the word.

Literacy

Students cannot master content area knowledge without being literate. Also, it is difficult to achieve social success without having achieved success in literacy (Peregoy & Boyle, 2000).

Evidence exists to support the position that literacy in the student’s first language is the optimal method for the development of literacy in the second language (Olsen, 2000). The level of literacy the English language learner has
achieved in his/her first language positively affects acquisition of the second language (Krashen, 1991). Knowledge obtained in the first language provides the student with background knowledge that can be used in the second language. By reading in a language that the student already knows, beginning reading and comprehension are easier. These skills can be transferred to the second language.

Fitzgerald (1985, as cited in Peregoy & Boyle, 2000) believes the process of reading in English is basically the same for native and English language learners. This includes five steps: (a) readers have a purpose when they read, (b) readers bring background knowledge to the text, (c) readers use background knowledge to make predictions and question, (d) readers use vocabulary and grammar to decode the print, and (e) readers use familiarity with text structure to aid comprehension. English language learners who are literate in their first language bring background knowledge and decoding skills that better help them to read English (Peregoy & Boyle, 2000). English language learners who are not literate in the first language do not possess these skills.

In contrast, Gersten (1999) reported there is no evidence to support that content knowledge and skills will transfer from the first to the second language. Many children read successfully in the second language without ever having read in the first language. Children can be taught to read and write in English without negative effects even if they lack literacy in their native language.
Misconceptions Regarding ELL students

Many misconceptions have been formed about the way in which this diverse group of students should be taught in mainstream classrooms. As ELL populations increase, researchers (Harper & de Jong, 2004 and Oxford, 1994) have studied common misconceptions made by mainstream classroom teachers, and the implications they have when teaching English language learners.

In many mainstream classrooms, teachers view ELL students as being equal to English proficient students. It is a common misconception that ELL students will learn a second language simply by exposure to and interaction in the second language. However, interaction between English-language learners and native English speakers does not occur naturally in a classroom. Even cooperative learning activities may not be optimal for ELL students because they require language skills that many of these students do not have, including being able to question, present an opinion, and ask for clarification appropriately (Pica, 1994).

Another common misconception about English language learners is that all of these students learn English in the same way and at the same rate. Teachers often believe that ELL students will pick up social language before academic language. However, for older learners who are literate and have a strong foundation in their native language, this may not be the pattern (Harper & de Jong, 2004). Teachers need to remember there are many personal factors that interact with students’ learning rate. Motivation, aptitude, personality, and view of their native language also influence student learning (Cummins, 1986).
English-language learners often learn to read in their second language before they speak the second language (Harper & de Jong, 2004). Language acquisition is a complex process that may take at least twelve years (Collier, 1989). Students that seem to understand and express themselves in a second language often have not mastered the more complex skills. For these reasons, seemingly proficient students may not perform as well on school and state assessments. ELL students that learn to read before speaking the second language may perform poorly when asked to retell the story orally or when asked comprehension questions orally. Other ELL students may be identified as lacking vocabulary and problem-solving skills (Baca & Cervantes, 1998).

Teachers often use Know, Would Like to Know, Learned (K-W-L) charts to activate background knowledge for students. These are considered good teaching techniques for native English language learners. However, English language learners do not always have the necessary language skills to participate in the activity (Ogle, 1986). K-W-L charts are considered good teaching techniques in mainstream classrooms. However, what is considered good teaching for native language learners may not be best for English language learners. English-language learners often do not have the basic decoding problems that basic native English readers have. For this reason, activities that focus on decoding skills may be inappropriate for ELL learners. However, reading skills and strategies developed in students’ native language may transfer to their second language (Garcia 1998). For this reason, ELL students may need instruction in applying the first language literacy skills to English.
These common misconceptions have many implications in the classroom. When trying to effectively teach ELL students, it is important to be aware of modifications that need to be made. When teaching English-language learners it is important to front load a lesson with activities that highlight vocabulary words. Also, discussions should link background knowledge and highlight key words. In order for English language learners to succeed, it is important teachers consider a wide range of factors when trying to understand English-language learners. Also, it is important to consider linguistic and cultural assumptions underlying activities (Harper & de Jong, 2004).

Pre-service Programs and Staff Development Opportunities

Teacher education programs have began to change pre-service and professional development opportunities based on the belief that English-language learners need multiple pathways to help in the understanding of language. Second language learning most integrated into social and cultural contexts of learning (Gonzalez & Darling- Hammond, 2000). According to Gonzalez and Darling-Hammond (2000), schools and teacher education programs are pushing students to learn English at unrealistic rates. This does not allow for these students to focus on the connections between their first language and the second language. For this reason, it is important teachers are trained in ways that encourage students to find strategies to relate the two languages. Also, it is important that teachers give students time to practice these strategies in the mainstream classroom.
Teacher education and professional development opportunities often times focus on the components of language, for example phonology, lexicon, or syntax. Language needs to be related to students’ life, school, or community as well as being grammar driven (Gonzalez & Darling-Hammond, 2000). Language development needs to be less teacher centered and more learner centered. Teddick and Walker (1994) believe language development is a process in which the student needs to be an “active agent.”

Teachers need to find lessons that are hands on that also encourage discussion based around cultural and social aspects of the learner. In order to do this, it is important teachers are aware of themselves and their students as cultural beings (Gonzales & Darling-Hammond, 2000).

If a student feels relaxed and confident, language learning will be maximized. Literacy development in the first language will transfer to the second language (Ada, 1993). In order to make students feel more comfortable, teachers can use materials in L1 to help build a child’s confidence in their literacy skills.

As administrators learn more about English language learners, pre-service programs and staff development programs are starting to include classes that better prepare teachers to teach limited English proficient students. Teacher education programs now include coursework in cultural awareness, theoretical knowledge, content knowledge, knowledge of pedagogical methods, and fieldwork.
Reading Strategies for English Language Learners

*Active Listening*

Researchers (Blum, 1995; Walters & Gunderson, 1985) have found listening to stories read aloud in the first and second language provide many benefits for English language learners. One benefit was students learned how terms from the first language transfer to the second language. Active listening can take place by having an adult read aloud or by having students listen to audiotaped stories.

*Personal Dictionaries*

A personal dictionary can be used to allow students to write down the spelling or meanings of words. In order to use a personal dictionary, students need to have developed limited fluency and proficiency in the second language (Walters & Gunderson, 1985). The personal dictionary helps students to become more independent. Students have more control over their learning.

*Semantic Mapping*

It is easier for children to learn new words and concepts when they can link them to words or notions they already understand. Semantic mapping shows students how words, ideas, or categories are related (Johnson, 1984). In semantic mapping, prior to reading the teacher selects a word that describes the major theme. Children then brainstorm as many words as possible that are related to the selected word. After reading the selection, it is then possible for students to go back and add more information to the map.
**K-W-L charts**

K-W-L charts are a way for students to combine new knowledge with prior knowledge. Ogle (1989) argues that using K-W-L charts allow teachers to model procedures that should be used when reading content texts. Also, they allow students to preview vocabulary, key concepts, and to retell what they have learned. The student divides a sheet of paper into three columns. The first column is a list of things the student knows about the topic. In the second column the student writes a list of things they would like to learn about through their reading. The third column is completed after reading. It provides information on what the student learned and what they still need to learn through more reading and research.

*Have Students Read a Variety of Text*

Reading a variety of texts familiarizes students with the layout and language of different types of reading material. The text provides the student with an opportunity to become familiar with the glossary, chapter headings, and other text cues for understanding. It also makes it possible to incorporate various learning strategies into reading. For example, students can make predictions, integrate new information, make word/idea associations, and use questioning (Chamot & O’Malley, 1986).
Literacy Programs for English Language Learners

Success for All

Success for All is a literacy model that provides schools with a curriculum that focuses on systematic phonics in primary grades. In intermediate grades, it focuses on cooperative learning, direct instruction in comprehension skills, and other elements (Cheung & Slavin, 2005). This program involves extensive staff development, frequent assessment, one-on-one tutoring for struggling readers, and family support programs. There are two different variations for English language learners in the Success for All program. The first variation is the Spanish bilingual program, which teaches reading in Spanish in grades 1-2 and then transitions them to English only instruction. The other variation, English language development teaches students in English with appropriate support. This includes the development of vocabulary strategies. Researchers (Cheung & Slavin, 2005) found that students enrolled in the Spanish bilingual program improved significantly on word identification and word attack skills. Students in the English language development variation improved significantly on word identification, word attack, and passage comprehension (Cheung & Slavin, 2005).

Direct Instruction

Direct instruction is a program that starts in kindergarten. Teachers have instructions on how to teach beginning reading skills. Reading materials for this program have teachers focus on phonetically controlled vocabulary, rapidly paced instruction, regular assessment, and systematic approaches to language development.
This program was not written directly specifically for English language learners, but it is often used with them (Cheung & Slavin, 2005). At the end of two years in the program 75% of students scored at or above grade level on the total reading scale compared to 19% of comparison students (Cheung & Slavin, 2005).

Reading Recovery/Descubriendo la Lectura

Reading recovery is a tutoring program for young readers who are experiencing difficulty in the first year of reading instruction (Clay, 1993). Children in this program receive one-to-one 30-minute lessons for 12-20 weeks with a certified, specially trained teacher. These lessons include assessment, reading familiar stories, writing a story, and working with cut-up sentences. Descubriendo la Lectura is the Spanish adaptation of Reading Recovery. It is equivalent in all of the major aspects to the original program. After seven months of studying students, researchers (Cheung & Slavin, 2005), found substantial growth and students from the program were ahead of other students that started the year with similar reading ability.

Libros

This is a school and home reading program for Spanish-dominant kindergartners. Teachers introduce and discuss a Spanish story. Each story is photocopied and sent home with children every three weeks through kindergarten. Parents are encouraged to read with their children and are shown a videotape of a parent reading and discussing the story. At the end of one year researchers (Cheung
& Slavin, 2005) found students significantly improved in letter and word identification. However, they did not improve as much on comprehension measures.

*Bilingual Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (BCIRC)*

BCIRC is an adaptation of Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition, an intermediate level elementary reading program based on cooperative learning. It has been successfully evaluated in several studies (Stevens, Madden, Slavin, & Farnish, 1987). BCIRC is adapted to meet the needs of students in bilingual programs who are transitioning from Spanish to English reading. After a teacher introduction, students participate in a set of activities related to a story they are reading. This includes partner reading, team activities focusing on vocabulary, story grammar, summarization, reading comprehension, creative writing, and language arts (Calderon, Hertz- Lazarowitz, & Slavin, 1998). This program adds ESL strategies to better meet the needs of limited English proficient students. These strategies include total physical response, relia, and appropriate uses of cognates, to help students transfer skills from Spanish reading to English reading. Students in this program scored significantly higher on assessments at the end of one year.

*Enriched Transition*

Enriched transition is a program designed to help English language learners transition from Spanish to English. This program focuses on literature study, writing, discourse, skill building, reading comprehension, independent reading, teacher reads aloud, and other elements (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1996). At the end of one- year, students in this program showed positive results on an English reading measure test.
However, the results were not significantly different. The results from this study were only the first year of a three year study.

*Vocabulary Intervention*

This intervention involves the introduction of vocabulary strategies and new vocabulary words. Students are introduced to 12 vocabulary words each week using a variety of strategies including: charades, 20 questions, discussions of Spanish cognates, word webs, and word association games. Researchers (Carlo, August, McLaughlin, Snow, Dressler, Lippman, Lively, & White, 2004) carried out a two year evaluation of this program. Students were taught in one five-week unit and two six-week units the first year, and three five-week units in the second year. At the end of one year, students showed positive results at the end of the first year, however at the end of the second year gains were lower.

*Small Group Reading*

Reading instruction is an important part of the daily routine in classrooms. Small group reading provides students with the opportunity to work at their own level. Also, it allows for students to discuss their reading with other students in the class.

*Guided Reading*

The purpose of guided reading is to meet the various instructional needs of students in the classroom. It is a teaching approach that helps individual students learn to process a variety of texts with fluency and understanding (Fountas & Pinnell,
Guided reading brings small groups of students together that have similar reading behaviors and text-processing needs. It provides the teacher with an opportunity to demonstrate how a reader constructs meaning, makes personal connections, and goes beyond the text.

Guided reading groups can be dynamic. This allows the teacher to better meet the needs of students. Some groups can be made up of students at different instructional levels that share common needs. Dynamic groups are important for effectiveness, efficiency, and social support. When students read at their instructional level, they build strategies they need to read new books on their own. Class sizes make it difficult to reach every student every day. For this reason, guided reading groups are an efficient way to reach more students at one time. Need based, dynamic groups help give teaching maximum impact. Some strategies that may be taught during this time include: (a) phrasing or fluency, (b) solving multisyllable words, (c) learning to read new kinds of text, (d) connecting to the reading, (e) learning to read tests, and (f) learning to think more deeply about text (Fountas & Pinnell, 1994).

Dynamic guided reading groups provide students with social support. It encourages students to communicate and help one another. Forming and re-forming groups creates a sense of community in the classroom. It also provides English language learners with an opportunity to interact with peers on a more authentic level.
Literature Circles

Literature Circles are small classroom-based student reading and discussion groups. They combine the skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Discussion is often guided by response to what students have read. Often discussions focus on characters, events, the author’s craft, and personal experiences. Literature circles provide students with a way to deeper understand what they have read through structured discussion and extended written response.

Through literature circles teachers can develop passionate, enthusiastic readers. There are three key elements that are brought together in literature circles (Fountas & Pinnell, 1994). The first one is shared experience. Students enjoy a common experience that allows them to learn and construct understanding together. Second, it provides students with rich text. The text provides students with the opportunity to form interpretations across layers of meaning. The third key element is the personal response. Each child’s response is important to the discussion. Readers learn to value their responses to the text, share them with others, and expand their understanding.

Fountas and Pinnell (1994) have defined four main paths in which students explore meaning. These paths are: (a) talking, (b) writing, (c) reading, and (d) visual and performing arts. All four paths are important to establish a foundation for literacy analysis. Students usually use more than one mode of expression to explore the meaning of their text. However, talk is the central path that is used in literature circles (Fountas & Pinnell, 1994).
Students often learn the process of asking genuine questions in literature circles. By doing so, literature circles then become an activity in which the reader is responsible for more than finding predetermined meaning to text (Lloyd, 2004). Once students learn how to actively participate in questioning, Keehn and Roser (2002) found 26% of their talk centered on making inferences. Also, 22% of the time they were informing peers of discoveries they found in the text, and 20% of the time was spent interpreting newly discovered information.

Implementing Literature Circles

Implementing literature circles in the classroom takes several steps. Researchers (Baker, Dube, & Wilhelm, 2001) have found the gradual release of responsibility to be a successful strategy for implementing literature circles. In this process, reading instruction begins with the most supportive instructional technique. The most supportive instructional technique is teacher read-aloud. This allows the teacher to choose the text and lead the discussion. While discussing the book, the teacher models how to ask important, thoughtful questions about the book. Also, he or she discusses the types of questions that should be asked while reading. After the teacher models this process over about a six week period of time and with several genres of books, the student is ready for guided reading. Guided reading allows the student to read the text with less support, while the teacher still has control over the text that has been chosen. The teacher still guides the majority of the discussion. Finally, students become ready for literature circles. Students become more
responsible. The student chooses the text, reads it independently, and independently uses comprehension strategies to answer questions related to the text.

There are many instructional benefits to implementing literature circles around a comprehension strategy. Literature circles allow students to (a) enjoy and interpret the book, (b) use the questions recorded as a catalyst for discussion, and (c) gain control over independence through authentic questions around text. In addition, conversations model oral communication skills and the use of vocabulary in context for English language learners (Lloyd, 2004).

King (2001) suggests there are several skills students should have prior to introducing literature circles. In order to successfully participate in literature circles a student should be able to use the following skills: (a) summarizing a chapter or section of a book, (b) writing good discussion questions, (c) illustrating a favorite part of a story, and (d) choosing vocabulary words and making guesses about their meaning. These skills allow students to be successful when completing journal responses and participating in group discussions.

**Implications for Literature Circles**

Literature students provide students with the opportunity to comprehend text using a strategy. Self-questioning allowed students to understand the process a reader must go through to understand texts (Lloyd, 2004). Goudvis and Harvey (2000) described comprehension as a complex process involving knowledge, understanding, and active thinking. By focusing on many different strategies and roles in the
literature circle, the reader integrates all of the strategies and carries out the natural process necessary to make sense of a text.

Literature circles allow English language learners to become more familiar with strategies that are used to comprehend text and how they help them to better understand the text. English language learners familiarize themselves with comprehension strategies the more they hear classmates discussing the strategies they used to help them better understand the text (Lloyd, 2004). The dialogue used in literature circles is internalized and soon becomes part of the individual independent thinking process applied to texts that are read alone (King, 2001).

Types of Literature Circles

Literature circles look different in every classroom. King (2004) has successfully implemented several types of literature circles in the classroom. The types of literature circles include: (a) basic literature circles, (b) modified literature circles, (c) literature circles with roles, (d) nonfiction literature circles, and (e) structured literature circles.

Basic Literature Circles

Basic literature circles are very flexible. The student chooses his or her book based on personal preferences and reading ability. Students can read alone, with a partner, or in small groups. The group decides on the number of pages to be read. As students read they write questions or discussion topics on sticky notes or in a journal. On the day of their group meeting they then use their sticky notes to lead a
discussion. Sometimes group meetings also consist of hands on activities such as creating graphic organizers or finding imagery or symbolism in the book.

**Modified Literature Circles**

Modified reading circles are often used with struggling readers. These readers often can not keep up with the fast pace of literature circles. The modified literature circles allow them to be more successful. In this format, shorter books are used and students meet everyday with the teacher. Students participate in some reading aloud as well as reading independently. After reading, the teacher sits in on the meeting to help clarify the main ideas and any vocabulary that may be confusing.

**Literature Circles with Roles**

Literature circles with roles provide students with tools to help them lead a self-directed discussion about the text they are reading. Long and Gove (2003) have found literature circles to be successful when there is: (a) a group discussion leader, (b) summarizer, (c) connector, (d) word master, (e) passage person, and (f) culture collector. The group discussion leader acts as a facilitator and helps keep the discussion flowing. The discussion leader opens the conversation and calls on other members of the group to share findings with the group. The summarizer is responsible for giving a brief, complete summary of the plot. The summarizer needs to include only the important or key events of what they have read. It is suggested he or she do this at the beginning of the meeting to help remind students what they have read. The connector tries to find connections between the text and the real world. Next, the word master focuses on short passages or words in the text. The word
master looks for words that are important in a story. Also, he or she tries to identify new words and discuss the meanings. The passage person is also reading the text very carefully. He/She is looking for literacy devices such as metaphors. Finally, the culture collector notes differences and similarities between the culture represented in the story and his or her own culture. This role has developed in response to the growing number of English language learners in the classroom.

Nonfiction Literature Circles

Nonfiction books have a slightly different structure than fiction books. For this reason, the literature circles look a little different when reading nonfiction books. Since nonfiction is generally more difficult than fiction text, the students read together everyday. Students can discuss new vocabulary terms and new facts they have learned. In nonfiction literature circles there are reading days and meeting days. On reading days students simply read together and take notes. On meeting days students write a response in their journal prior to the meeting. Students then read and discuss their responses with the group.

Structured Literature Circles

Structured literature circles are very structured groups that meet once a week with the teacher in small group. Other students work independently to prepare for their group when they are not meeting with the teacher. On the first week, the teacher introduces the book. Then the students generally meet and discuss the book for the following three weeks.
Vocabulary Networking

Often vocabulary is a one-shot collective activity that students do not return to. This does not provide English language learners with the consistency necessary to become familiar with the word. Alternatively, vocabulary networking allows students to return to the word frequently. At the top of a sheet of paper students write a word they find difficult. The members of the group are then encouraged to organize meanings, examples, relationships, text references, and impressions for each word based on personal experience, reading, and discussion (Anderson & Roit, 1998).

Text Structures

Teaching text structures to language minority students has been shown to increase comprehension levels (Anderson & Roit, 1998). This procedure is effective starting in fourth grade. It involves teaching text structure such as problem and solution. Students ask a series of questions that correspond to the text structure. The questions are scaffolds for writing. Introducing text structure teaches students to ask important questions, improves reading comprehension, enhances language, encourages discussion, and integrates reading and writing (Anderson & Roit, 1998).

Questioning, Identifying Problems, and Sharing Strategies

Coterall (1990) suggested English language learners benefit from learning cognitive strategies for solving reading problems. All students need to ask questions,
explain their problems, and share ideas for solving them (Anderson & Roit, 1998).

Collaborative strategy instruction is an instructional approach in which students work in small groups to identify aspects that make text difficult, then they work on strategies to resolve those difficulties (Anderson & Roit, 1998).

*Text Explaining*

Language minority students are often good at retelling. However, they may have little understanding for what they have retold. A more effective instructional approach is to ask students to explain what the text means and to compare explanations with other students (Anderson & Roit, 1998). This can be accomplished in literature circles by asking directives such as, “What does this mean?” or “Explain in your own words.”

Text explaining improves comprehension, increases verbal elaboration and language flexibility, and provides the teacher with a informal way to assess whether students have really understood what they read (Anderson & Roit, 1998).

*Providing Culturally Fair Material*

Researchers (Au & Jordan, 1981; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991; Moll & Greenberg, 1990) have shown the importance of integrating students’ cultures into teaching. The most popular and well-researched approach to including culture is through the use of culturally familiar reading materials (Au & Jordan, 1981; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991; Anderson & Roit, 1998). Multicultural materials must be selected carefully. Often these materials illustrate sophisticated cultural aspects, with which students have very little experience. These materials may
generate a sense of pride, but do not inspire understanding. Children’s
encyclopedias, trade books, and magazines provide simple expository information
that provide interesting information about common ethnic experiences (Anderson &
Roit, 1998).

Chapter Summary

In summary, the goal of all programs for the education of English language
learners is to become proficient in the English language. Many reading programs and
language strategies exist to help these students become literate in the English
language. One of these strategies is the use of literature circles.

Many educators agree that literature circles are beneficial to English language
learners. They allow students to discuss text more genuinely while also gaining a
deeper understanding for the text they are reading. Typically, educators fail to use
literature circles in the classroom. The purpose of this project is to modify existing
literature circle curriculums for the use with English language learners. The
strategies were based on the theories of language acquisition as well as existing
research.

Presented in Chapter 3 is the method by which this project will be developed.
Also, specific goals are presented.
Chapter 3

METHOD

This research project is necessitated by the large number of English language learners who attend public schools and are in mainstream classrooms. The Supreme Court ruling, Lau vs. Nichols, determined educators in public schools are legally required to provide non-English speaking students with a meaningful education (Escamilla, 1998). In public schools today as much as 90 minutes a day consists of instruction in literacy and guided reading. The mainstream teacher must help English language learners to learn the social, cultural, and literacy skills to make them successful in American society. Current research (Baker, Dube, & Wilhelm, 2001, Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, King, 2001, and Lloyd, 2004) has found literature circles to be an effective way to integrate social, cultural, and literacy skills to help English language learners become more successful. The purpose of this project was to provide mainstream teachers with lesson plans that integrate the use of diverse strategies and literature circles to better meet the needs of English language learners.

Development of Strategies

Teachers do not need to make drastic changes to better meet the needs of English language learners in mainstream literacy programs. One way to effectively include English language learners in the classroom is the use of literature circles.
Literature circles provide students with more authentic discussion in the classroom while also allowing students to discuss what they are reading in more depth. Having multiple strategies and resources available provides teachers with the opportunity to better meet the needs of students. Teachers can evaluate which strategy works best and keep students motivated.

Resources Used in Developmental Stages

This researcher developed literature circle models to be used with third or fourth grade students reading at the fluency or extending level, guided reading levels L through Q (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). This classification is correlated to books classified on the Directed Reading Assessment (DRA), Levels 24 through 40. Reading levels of students were based on the ALT Test and Flynt Cooter Running Record scores taken two months prior to the time of implementing literature circles.

Specific literature circle models were designed to encourage students to read and understand a variety of materials. The books selected incorporate different genres, bilingual books, and books reflecting different cultural backgrounds. The books selected are primarily for native or dominant Spanish speakers in mainstream classrooms.

In literature circles English language learners familiarize themselves with comprehension strategies as they hear classmates discussing the strategies they used. The dialogue used in literature circles is internalized and becomes part of the independent thinking process applied to texts that are read alone (King, 2001). This
researcher utilized literature circle models to provide students with the opportunity to apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, and listening.

Literature circle models were designed based on the concept of gradual release of responsibility. Students began the school year listening to a teacher read aloud and watching the teacher model types of questions that should be asked. After four weeks, students started participating in guided reading groups. The second half of the school year students participated in guided reading and literature circle groups. The lesson plans designed by this researcher were implemented during the second half of the school year. First, students were introduced to the most structured type of groups, including literature circles with roles and structured literature circles. As students became more familiar with literature circles, the groups become less structured. After reading and discussing two or three books, most students were ready for basic literature circles. Struggling readers continue to use modified or structured literature circles.

Models were based on (a) the Colorado Model Contents standards for fourth grade reading and writing, (b) information obtained from current research, (c) principles of language acquisition, and (d) field testing.

Chapter Summary

Literature circles provide ELL students with the opportunity to further develop language skills and English language literacy skills. In order to facilitate literature circles, a teacher must be familiar with (a) curriculum and state standards, (b) current research, and (c) principles of language development. With the use of
literature circles, successful students will begin to ask higher order questions and will gain deeper meaning from their reading.
Chapter 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this project was to design a literature circle unit for the use of teachers with English Language Learners in the mainstream classroom. The reading level of fourth grade students, for which this unit was designed, was emergent to extending level. Students were split into two literature circles based on reading level. Students reading at the emergent or low fluency level were placed in a modified literature circle with four basic roles. Students at the higher fluency level and extending level were placed in a literature circle with roles and then moved to the basic literature circle structure.

The initial preparation for this unit takes approximately 6 weeks of teacher modeling and guided practice. After this preparation, the unit takes approximately 6 weeks to complete. As with any unit, this is dependent upon the success of each lesson. Students are given the opportunity to master and practice specific literacy skills.

Meeting the Standards

A necessary step in the preparation of curriculum is determining how the lessons meet the state standards. The Colorado Model Content Standards for Reading and Writing are included in Appendix A. Teachers can meet Standard 1 by providing students with various genres when offering book choices. The requirement of having students report back to the whole class at the end of the meeting promotes
the learning of the speaking skills referred to in Standard 2. Teachers can reach the goals of Standard 4 by asking students to search for specific topics during reading and discussions. Finally, it is possible to integrate various themes or compare books by one author during literature circles. This allows teachers to reach the goals in Standard 6.

Introduction and Preparation

The review of literature in Chapter 2 discussed the importance of preparing for literature circles at the beginning of the school year. Students should be trained in successful participation in peer discussion groups.

Teaching Goals

Before the introduction of literature circles to students, teachers need to be aware of their goals. The teachers goals may be broad and focus on several different skills, or they may be narrow and focus on more specific skills. In this unit, goals not only include literacy goals, but they also must include goals aimed toward English Language Learners and their success within the group. Goals provide the teacher with a focus and keep literature circles from becoming overwhelming.

Gradual Release of Responsibility

The components of a balanced literacy program vary from being teacher directed to student directed, and from being performed individually, to small group formats, to whole group format. This balanced literacy program allows for the gradual release of responsibility. In the gradual release of responsibility model, the
teacher is slowly turning over responsibility to students and allows students to reach a sense of independence.

It is important that the teacher establishes a routine of daily read aloud. This is the best way to get students to start asking questions and sharing their feelings about the reading. This also allows the teacher to model this processing skill. While reading to the students, the teacher should stop often and interject thoughts, questions, or reflections. This open sharing will also establish a sense of trust between the teacher and other classmates. It is also important to model how to ask higher level thinking questions during this preparation time. Prior to participating in literature circles it is necessary for students to know the types of questions they should be thinking about and asking while they are reading.

After about six weeks of modeling, depending on student ability level, students can continue to work on this processing skill during guided reading sessions also. During guided reading sessions, students are doing the reading, yet it is still important to stop often during the reading to interject. If students are reading independently, they should be encouraged to write down any thoughts, questions, or feelings they had during reading. It is then possible for them to share when they come together as a group.

By the second half of the school year, students will be ready for literature circles. A classroom community should be formed based on the previous sharing that has been done during reading. Students must be comfortable sharing their opinions and must be able to show that they value each other’s opinion.
Initial Discussions

The best way to train students about literature circles is to do them. Students learn to think critically about books by watching experienced literature circle groups in another classroom or through good modeling by their teacher. The teacher needs to model extensively how to develop questions, how to relate the reading to personal experiences, and how to find key or important events in the reading. Students need to be taught what higher level thinking questions are. The author would model examples of higher level questions as well as provide students with examples of question starters that would be higher level questions (Appendix B).

Models for Cultural Literature Circles

Selecting Books

The author selected books to meet the various different needs in her classroom. First, it is important to find books to match student reading level. In the classroom there is often a wide range of ability levels, for this reason it is important to provide two or three different leveled books. The author chose books that were somewhere between the fourth- fifth grade reading level and books that were at the second- third grade level. This met the majority of students’ needs. For the few students that were reading well below the second grade level, it is important to differentiate instruction so students can still participate in group discussion. Differentiation included the following strategies: (a) having students listen to parts of the book on tape, (b) reading with the teacher, and (c) partner reading.
Researchers (Au & Jordan, 1981; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991; Moll & Greenberg, 1990) have shown the importance of integrating students’ cultures into teaching. The most popular approach to including culture is through the use of culturally fair reading material. The author’s classroom is predominately Mexican-American. Books were carefully selected to include aspects of the culture that students would be familiar with. Appendix C provides an annotated bibliography of Mexican-American books that were selected for this particular lesson. When selecting a book it is important to make sure the materials do not illustrate cultural aspects that are too sophisticated for the students.

*Literature Circles in Progress*

The outlines that are presented here are only a couple of many possible options that can be used to design literature circles. These outlines represent the author’s opinion about how to put together literature circles in her classroom. Teachers should use these ideas to guide and structure their literature circles to fit their respective personalities and student needs.

Prior to meeting with literature circle groups, the other had each student put together a journal that would be used specifically for literature circles. Appendix D includes the following items: (a) literature circle expectations, (b) a description of the various roles, and (c) an assignment organizer. Students glue these items into the first few pages of their journal to help keep them organized.
A Model for Struggling Fourth Grade Readers

In today’s classroom, the needs and abilities of students widely vary. This is an ideal model for students who are functioning below grade level. Students should be able to attain many aspects of independent peer discussion. However, this model includes lots of modeling and teacher guidance. Many of the ELL students in the author’s classroom were struggling readers who lacked vocabulary to comprehend the books, therefore, this model also focuses on vocabulary. Figure 1 outlines one possible option for literature circles for struggling fourth grade readers.

Figure 1

An outline for Struggling Fourth Grade Readers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Time Allotted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>- Teacher gives book talk on 2 books</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Students vote on book using ballot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Students are given their first reading assignment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>- Teacher explains and models different roles</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>- Students partner read with other students reading their same book</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Students work on completing their given job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>- Students work on completing their job.</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Teacher meets with each student individually to make sure students are prepared for tomorrow’s meeting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>- Whole group meets</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 2 literature circles meet with the teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Other students’ work on literacy work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Group debriefs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>- Extension activity related to reading for the week</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this model students use partner reading as a way to help create independence, while still having someone to discuss text and comprehension strategies with. For students with special reading needs, the author recorded the book on tape and allowed students to listen to the chapter on tape. She then met with these students for a ten minute period to check for understanding. Students are expected to read one chapter a week and complete their given role. Roles will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. Extension activities are optional and should not be used continuously.

A Model for Fourth Grade Literature Circles

Students in the third or fourth semester of fourth grade should be accustomed to working independently. This literature circle model requires students to do their reading and complete their roles independently. The author had students work on literature circle reading and roles while she met with guided reading groups. Any work that was not completed during this time was expected to be homework. Figure 2 outlines one possible model for students reading at or above the fourth grade level.

Figure 2

An Outline for Students Reading at or above grade level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time Allotted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Teacher gives book talk over 3 books</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Students vote on book</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Students are expected to read between two to three chapters during the week. The roles that students were given will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. In this model students are more independent than students in the previous model. The author still would check in with students the day before the group meeting to check for understanding and to answer any questions students may have.

**Student Roles**

In the author’s classroom, each student was given a role that was completed during or after reading. Students in the struggling reader group had five roles that they rotated through. Students reading at or above grade level were given six roles through which they rotated. Each student was expected to come to the meeting with his or her role completed and prepared to discuss the results of that role. Appendix E includes examples of graphic organizers that were used to help guide students in their

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>- Students start reading assignment</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>- Students finish reading assignment</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Students start working on role</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>- Students finish role</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>- Groups meets and discusses assigned reading</td>
<td>45 to 60 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Teacher gives reading assignment and role for next week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Other students work on literacy work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Group debriefs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>- Extension activity, optional</td>
<td>30 to 45 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using ballot
work. Students glued the graphic organizer into their journal to help keep them better organized.

Figure 3 provides examples of roles used with struggling readers. These roles were used to help students with vocabulary, comprehension, and making connections. They were less complicated than the roles used for students on grade level, but they still encouraged independence and student led discussion.

---

**Figure 3**

*Roles used for struggling readers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Role</th>
<th>Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summarizer</td>
<td>- Write a 3 to 4 sentence summary of their reading for the week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Include only main events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Be prepared to read their summary to the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary Finder</td>
<td>- Chooses two new words from the reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Writes each word and its page number on an index card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Write the definition on the back of the index card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Be prepared to read and discuss the meaning of the words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Director</td>
<td>- Find at least 4 questions for the group to discuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Be prepared to lead the discussion using these questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- After answering the questions continue the discussion using</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>questions assigned by the teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Illustrator
- Jot down ideas of what they might draw as they are reading
- Draw a picture about the reading
- Show your picture to the group without making comments
- Other students in the group guess what part of the story you choose

Culture Collector
- Using a Venn Diagram compare and contrast the main characters culture with our culture

The author used roles that matched the personalities of her classroom. These roles were used to fit the goals the author had set prior to student reading. Students were expected to expand their vocabulary and comprehension while also noting differences and similarities between different cultures.

Figure 4 shows the roles that were used for students reading at or above grade level. These roles were used to meet the same goals as the roles used for struggling readers. Some of the roles used overlap with the roles used with struggling readers. However, the roles used for this group often involved more detail and involved higher level thinking skills.

---

Figure 4

*Roles used for readers at or above grade level.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Role</th>
<th>Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Director</td>
<td>- Find at least 4 questions for the group to discuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Be prepared to lead the discussion using these questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- After answering the questions continue the discussion using questions assigned by the teacher

**Illustrator**
- Jots down ideas of what they might draw as they are reading
- Draws a picture about the reading
- Shows your picture to the group without making comments
- Other students in the group guess what part of the story the illustrator choose

**Summarizer**
- Writes 1 or 2 sentences to summarize the chapter
- Writes 3 to 4 main events that took place in the chapter

**Vocabulary Enricher**
- Finds 4 to 5 important words in the chapter
- Writes down the page number and paragraph number
- Writes the definition
- Marks words that are used in an unusual way, repeated a lot, or are key in understanding the text

** Literary Luminary**
- Chooses at least two parts of the text to read aloud
- Jots down plans for how to present these to the group
- Is prepared to share with the group

**Travel Tracer**
- Jots down where the setting began, what key events happened, and where the setting ended for the day
- Illustrates or describes in detail the setting for the chapter
Culture Collector

- Using a Venn Diagram the student compares and contrasts the main characters culture with our culture

Literature Circles for this group are entirely student led. The author would often get the group started by deciding which role was going to be the first to share. After that, the students made the decisions as to who would share next. Students in this group often were assigned two chapters to read, if the author had enough students in the group, each student would complete the task for one chapter. However, often students had to complete the role for both chapters due to group size.

Extension Activities

Extension activities can be used on Friday after a group meeting. Extension activities can include a wide variety of concepts and skills. The author selected extension activities to help students better understand the Mexican-American culture. Activities were also selected to help improve students’ vocabulary.

Extension activities can be either independent activities or group activities. Independent activities included: (a) having students do research at the library, (b) using Venn diagrams to compare and contrast various aspects of Mexican-American culture and their own culture, and (c) graphic organizers to enhance comprehension of the book. Students worked on these activities during guided reading time. Usually students were given two days to complete the activity and turn it in. Group activities were structured differently. Students would meet in the group to complete a cooperative activity. These activities included: (a) vocabulary activities using a
student created word wall, (b) researching as a group various aspects of Mexican-American culture, and (c) writing reports on the chapters students had just discussed in the meeting.

Chapter Summary

The goal of the literature circle outline was to provide teachers of English Language Learners with resources and activities to address the needs of ELL students. This researcher used (a) the Colorado State Standards, (b) principles of balanced literacy, and (c) personal experience in the development of lessons. Many of the concepts and extension activities can be transferred to lessons designed for other books.

Presented in Chapter 5 is a discussion of the literature circle unit. Also, limitations to the project are identified as well as recommendations for future research.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

The population of English language learners in public schools continues to increase rapidly. It becomes the classroom teacher’s responsibility to provide these students with the literacy, as well as social and cultural skills necessary to be successful in American society. Although, educators agree that peer discussion is a valuable tool in teaching English language learners these skills, only 33% of educators use this tool in their classroom (Lloyd, 2004). Teachers need a reference of easily adopted lessons that provide students with the opportunity for peer discussion and essential literacy skills. Several Weld County District 6 teachers reviewed this project and offered ideas for improvement.

Purpose of the Research Project

The rationale of this project was to provide monolingual teachers of English with activities that can be used to promote social and cultural skills of ELL students while teaching essential literacy skills. This literacy unit was designed to support the Colorado State Standards for Reading and Writing: (a) Standard One, Reading Comprehension and (b) Standard 2, Oral and Written Communication. Also, it is designed to support findings that peer discussions provide ELL students with more authentic discussions thus improving social and cultural skills (King, 2001).
Evaluation

The researcher’s goal in the development of this project was to provide monolingual teachers of ELL students with easily adopted lessons for use in order to meet literacy needs as well as provide students with opportunities to have authentic peer discussions.

This project met this goal through the use the graphic organizers that allowed teachers to guide peer group discussions based around literacy skills and cultural needs. A teacher can adapt the choice of books or literature circle roles to meet specific skills and cultures in their classroom.

The research project was designed for ELL learners in a small group setting. The lessons require minimal advance teacher preparation and promoted literacy skills in a variety of ways. Students were encouraged to develop vocabulary by finding words that were unfamiliar, unusual, or that were essential to understanding the text.

Reading comprehension skills were developed by making connections. Students were encouraged to connect the text to their lives in the following ways: to happenings at school or in the community, to similar events at other times, or to other people and problems that students were reminded of. Also, comprehension skills were developed by means of the culture collector’s activities. Students compared and contrasted their culture to the culture in the text. Assessment drives instruction. The roles of students and graphic organizers used in the literature circle model were based on Bloom’s taxonomy. The discussion director encourages students to ask higher level thinking questions for discussion in the group. Mrs. Montoya modeled how to ask higher level thinking questions throughout the school year prior to starting literature circles.
Limitations

The use of roles during literature circles are utilized to help keep discussions focused on the text. The researcher did not include time in the literature circle model for the modeling of roles. The teacher may need to consider modeling each role prior to starting. Additionally, prior to starting literature circles students had been taught how to answer higher level thinking questions. However, there were other skills and strategies that needed to be focused on prior to starting literature circles. The teacher may want to consider modeling each role prior to starting literature circles. In her critique of the literature circle model, one reviewer suggested more opportunities for the teacher to meet with the literature circle group thus allowing students to clarify any questions they may have about the text or their role.

Students learn vocabulary in four levels (Reutzal & Copper, 1996). This begins with learning the definition and builds to the final level where students are able to use the word. In order to participate in social activities, students must have cultural background knowledge to help them understand the word. This includes the connotation and cultural setting that gives the word its meaning (Meyer, 2000). The teacher may want to consider modifying the model to include all of the levels of understanding the word. This can be accomplished by modifying the vocabulary finder’s job to provide examples of how this word is used in American society. This can be further achieved with extension activities that focus on antonyms and synonyms of vocabulary words found by the students.
Recommendations for Future Study

This researcher focused on the literacy needs of migrant Spanish speaking students that were learning the English language. In the United States there are a growing number of students who speak various languages and dialects. The structure of language and meaning of words varies greatly from language to language.

The methods of instruction that are used with these students must be appropriate. These methods must focus on the students’ background knowledge, cultural knowledge, and the students’ knowledge of language. Research into broader applications with students of varying cultural backgrounds is an area for further consideration.

Also, this researcher focused on students from a low socioeconomic background. These students lacked experiences to activate prior background and cultural knowledge. English language learners are found in any socioeconomic group. The methods and strategies used in higher socioeconomic groups is an area for further study.

Project Summary

One of the many challenges educators in the public school system face is the need to provide a meaningful education to all students, including English Language Learners (ELL). In order for ELL students to be successful in American society they must become literate in the English language as well as becoming familiar with cultural and social skills of American society.

Many teachers agree peer group discussion is a way to help ELL students become more familiar with social skills that develop cultural background. However, many teachers do not use literature circles in their classrooms because they are viewed as the
long way around to achieving better test scores. Teachers need a source of reference to make literature circles more effective and convenient in the classroom. The activities in these reference materials should be based on principles of second language instruction and balanced literacy. Furthermore, these activities must also be based on meeting state standards.

The literature circle models that are included in the research project were based on Colorado State Reading and Writing Standards. The educator bases specific instruction on specific literacy goals as well as the population to whom it will be presented. The children’s literature and extension activities took into account the student population.

Due to different abilities, experiences, and cultures in the classroom the individual educator may find it necessary to further customize the literature circle models that are included in the research project.

Further research into the use of literature circles with various cultural groups and into optimal teaching methods for ELL students is required. Activities based on this research must continue to be developed and made available as research continues.
APPENDIX A

Colorado State Content Standards

Reading and Writing
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MODEL CONTENT

STANDARDS

READING & WRITING

Adopted 07/13/95

INTRODUCTION

Colorado Model Content Standards for Reading and Writing

The ability to communicate clearly -- to read, write, speak, and listen -- forms the core of human culture. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills are essential tools for learning, for success in the workplace, for enriching and expanding our lives, and for responsible citizenship.
Language skills are particularly critical in the area of education. Through language abilities, students understand the academic content areas. Success in learning is grounded in students acquiring solid knowledge and skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The Colorado Model Content Standards set high expectations in these areas for all students. Reading and writing also have the power to bridge time and place. We remain in contact with people who lived before us through literature and other written records of human experience. We reach toward our future by knowing how to locate, read, and make use of an ever-increasing amount of information.

More than a year of public response and discussion has resulted in these model Reading and Writing standards. These standards express what each student in Colorado should know and be able to do in order to:

• become fluent readers, writers, and speakers;
• be able to communicate effectively, concisely, coherently, and imaginatively;
• recognize the power of language and use that power ethically and creatively; and
• be at ease communicating in an increasingly technological world.

For the benefit of Colorado students, educators, parents, and communities can now focus their attention and energy on creating the conditions under which all students can meet these expectations. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the education community to intervene at the earliest point in the child’s formal educational experience where, through careful observation, it becomes apparent that a child is not progressing in a manner which will lead to the meeting of these standards.

Colorado Model Content Standards

READING AND WRITING

1. Students read and understand a variety of materials.
2. Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.
3. Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.
4. Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.
5. Students read to locate, select, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources.
6. Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.

Colorado Content Standards Adopted 7-13-95 Reading/Writing - 4

STANDARD 1:
Students read and understand a variety of materials.
In order to meet this standard, students will
• use comprehension skills such as previewing, predicting, inferring, comparing and contrasting, re-reading and self-monitoring, summarizing, identifying the author's purpose, determining the main idea, and applying knowledge of foreshadowing, metaphor, simile, symbolism, and other figures of speech;
• make connections between their reading and what they already know, and identify what they need to know about a topic before reading about it;
• adjust reading strategies for different purposes such as reading carefully, idea by idea; skimming and scanning; fitting materials into an organizational pattern, such as reading a novel chronologically; finding information to support particular ideas; and finding the sequence of steps in a technical publication;
• use word recognition skills and resources such as phonics, context clues, picture clues, word origins, and word order clues; reference guides; roots, prefixes, and suffixes of words for comprehension; and
• use information from their reading to increase vocabulary and enhance language usage.

RATIONALE:
The goal for students at all levels is that they know and can use strategies--various ways of unlocking the meaning of words and larger blocks of text--to become successful readers.
strategies are applied in increasingly difficult reading material at each grade level. At all levels, students should be challenged to read literature and other materials that stimulate their interests and intellectual abilities. Reading from a wide variety of texts, both assigned and student selected, provides experience in gaining information and pleasure from diverse forms and perspectives.

Note: A reference list of sources of book lists can be found at the end of the Reading and Writing Standards.

None of these book lists have been endorsed by the Colorado State Board of Education.

COLORADO CONTENT STANDARDS ADOPTED 7-13-95 READING/WRITING - 5

GRADES K-4
In grades K-4, what the students know and are able to do includes
• using a full range of strategies to comprehend materials such as directions, nonfiction material, rhymes and poems, and stories.

GRADES 5-8
As students in grades 5-8 extend their knowledge, what they know and are able to do includes
• using a full range of strategies to comprehend technical writing, newspapers, magazines, poetry, short stories, plays, and novels in addition to the types of reading material mentioned above. Students extend their thinking and understanding as they read stories about people from similar and different backgrounds.

GRADES 9-12
As students in grades 9-12 extend their knowledge, what they know and are able to do includes
• using a full range of strategies to comprehend essays, speeches, autobiographies, and first-person historical documents in addition to the types of literature mentioned above.

For students extending their English/Language Arts education beyond the standards, what they know and are able to do may include
• using a full range of strategies to comprehend literary criticism and literary analysis, professional and technical journals, and professional-level reading materials that match their career or academic interests.

COLORADO CONTENT STANDARDS ADOPTED 7-13-95 READING/WRITING - 6

STANDARD 2:
Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.
In order to meet this standard, students will
• write and speak for a variety of purposes such as telling stories, presenting
analytical responses to literature, conveying technical information, explaining concepts and procedures, and persuading;
• write and speak for audiences such as peers, teachers, and the community;
• plan, draft, revise, proofread, and edit written communications;
• use a variety of devices such as figurative language, symbolism, dialect, and precise vocabulary to convey meaning;
• organize written and oral presentations using strategies such as lists, outlining, cause/effect relationships, comparison/contrast, problem/solution, and narration; and
• use handwriting and at the most appropriate time, word processing to produce a product that is legible.

RATIONALE:
Writing and speaking are essential tools for learning, for success in the workplace, and for responsible citizenship. Developing a range of writing and speaking abilities requires extensive study, practice, and thinking. Students need frequent opportunities to write and speak for different audiences and purposes, and they need to be able to communicate expressively, informatively, and analytically. Growth in writing and speaking abilities occurs by applying skills to increasingly challenging communication tasks.

GRADES K-4
In grades K-4, what students know and are able to do includes
• generating topics and developing ideas for a variety of writing and speaking purposes (for example, telling a story, publishing a class newsletter, writing a letter to an adult, writing or orally presenting a book report, creating and producing a play, introducing a speaker or an event, narrating a presentation);
• organizing their speaking and writing;
• choosing vocabulary that communicates their messages clearly and precisely;
• revising and editing speech and writing; and
• creating readable documents with legible handwriting or word processing at the appropriate time.
GRADES 5-8
As students in grades 5-8 extend their knowledge, what they know and are able to do includes
• writing stories, letters, and reports with greater detail and supporting material;
• choosing vocabulary and figures of speech that communicate clearly;
• drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading for a legible final copy;
• applying skills in analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and explanation to their writing and speaking;
• incorporating source materials into their speaking and writing (for example, interviews, news articles, encyclopedia information);
• writing and speaking in the content areas (for example, science, geography, history, literature), using the technical vocabulary of the subject accurately; and
• recognizing stylistic elements such as voice, tone, and style.

GRADES 9-12
As students in grades 9-12 extend their knowledge, what they know and are able to do includes
• using fictional, dramatic, and poetic techniques in writing;
• conveying technical information in a written form appropriate to the audience;
• supporting an opinion using various forms of persuasion (factual or emotional) in speaking and writing;
• incorporating material from a wider range of sources (for example, newspapers, magazines, interviews, technical publications, books) in their writing and speaking;
• selecting a focused topic and drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading a legible final copy;
• writing in various specialized fields such as career and academic interest areas (for example, scientific, technical, business communications); and
• experimenting with stylistic elements such as voice, tone, and style.

Colorado Content Standards Adopted 7-13-95 Reading/Writing - 8
For students extending their English/Language Arts education beyond these standards, what they know and are able to do may include
• writing longer, formal papers using sources such as technical journals and government publications to support an original thesis;
• making oral presentations for audiences within or outside the school in a variety of media;
• using style books or technical manuals to become self-evaluators of their writing; and
• analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating a variety of written and spoken material.

STANDARD 3:
Students write and speak using conventional grammar,
usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

In order to meet this standard, students will
- know and use correct grammar in speaking and writing;
- apply correct usage in speaking and writing;
- use correct sentence structure in writing; and
- demonstrate correct punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

RATIONALE:
Students need to know and be able to use standard English. Proficiency in this standard plays an important role in how the writer or speaker is understood and perceived. All skills in this standard are reinforced and practiced at all grade levels and should be monitored by both the teacher and student to develop lifelong learning skills.

GRADES K-4
In grades K-4, what the students know and are able to do includes
- knowing and using subject/verb agreement;
- knowing and using correct modifiers;
- knowing and using correct capitalization, punctuation, and abbreviations; and
- spelling frequently used words correctly using phonics rules and exceptions.

GRADES 5-8
As students in grades 5-8 extend their knowledge, what they know and are able to do includes
- identifying the parts of speech such as nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, conjunctions, prepositions, and interjections;
- using correct pronoun case, regular and irregular noun and verb forms, and subject-verb agreement involving comparisons in writing and speaking;
- using modifiers, homonyms, and homophones in writing and speaking;
- using simple, compound, complex, and compound/complex sentences in writing and speaking;
- punctuating and capitalizing titles and direct quotations, using possessives, and correct paragraphing in writing;
- using prefixes, root words, and suffixes correctly in writing and speaking;
- expanding spelling skills to include more complex words;
- demonstrating use of conventional spelling in their published works; and
- using resources such as spell checkers, dictionaries, and charts to monitor their spelling accuracy.

GRADES 9-12
As students in grades 9-12 extend their knowledge, what they know and are able to do includes
- using pronoun reference correctly in writing and speaking;
• using phrases and clauses for purposes of modification and parallel structure in writing and speaking;
• using internal capitalization and punctuation of secondary quotations in writing;
• using manuscript forms specified in various style manuals for writing (for example, indenting for extended quotations, precise placement and form of page numbers, appropriate line spacing); and
• refining spelling and grammatical skills and becoming a self-evaluator of their writing and speaking.

STANDARD 4: Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.
In order to meet this standard, students will
• make predictions, analyze, draw conclusions, and discriminate between fact and opinion in writing, reading, speaking, listening, and viewing;
• use reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing to define and solve problems;
• recognize, express, and defend points of view orally and in writing;
• identify the purpose, perspective, and historical and cultural influences of a speaker, author, or director; and
• evaluate the reliability, accuracy, and relevancy of information.

RATIONALE: Students use reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing to think and learn. By moving beyond a literal interpretation of text to an analysis of an author's, speaker's, or director's purpose and perspectives, students practice and improve their higher-level thinking skills. Students need to recognize and evaluate different points of view and to follow a line of reasoning to its logical conclusion. Students need to think about their writing and reading skills and work toward improvement.

GRADES K-4
In grades K-4, what students know and are able to do includes
• recognizing an author's point of view;
• predicting and drawing conclusions about stories;
• differentiating between fact and opinion in written and spoken forms;
• using reading, writing, speaking, and listening to define and solve problems;
• responding to written and oral presentations as a reader, listener, and articulate speaker;
• formulating questions about what they read, write, hear, and view; and
• using listening skills to understand directions.

Colorado Content Standards Adopted 7-13-95 Reading/Writing - 11

GRADES 5-8
As students in grades 5-8 extend their knowledge, what they know and are able to do includes
• recognizing an author's or speaker's point of view and purpose, separating fact from opinion;
• using reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing skills to solve problems and answer questions;
• making predictions, drawing conclusions, and analyzing what they read, hear, and view;
• recognizing, expressing, and defending a point of view orally in an articulate manner and in writing; and
• determining literary quality based on elements such as the author's use of vocabulary, character development, plot development, description of setting, and realism of dialogue.

GRADES 9-12
As students in grades 9-12 extend their knowledge, what they know and are able to do includes
• recognizing an author's point of view, purpose, and historical and cultural context;
• using reading, writing, listening, articulate speaking, and viewing to solve problems;
• knowing what constitutes literary quality based on elements such as the author's point of view, the author’s selection of significant details, theme development, and the author's reflection of events and ideas of his or her lifetime; and
• critiquing the content of written work and oral presentations.

For students extending their English/Language Arts education beyond the standard, what they know and are able to do may include
• applying principles of formal logic to written and oral texts.

Colorado Content Standards Adopted 7-13-95 Reading/Writing - 12

STANDARD 5:
Students read to locate, select, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources.

In order to meet this standard, students will
• select relevant material for reading, writing, and speaking purposes;
• understand the structure, organization, and use of various media, reference, and technological sources as they select information for their reading and writing;
• paraphrase, summarize, organize, and synthesize information;
• give credit for others' ideas, images, or information; and
• use information to produce a quality product.

RATIONALE:
In this age of information and technology, people need reading and information-retrieval skills that will enable them to access facts, images, and text from many sources. The sheer volume of data makes it necessary for information seekers to be able to wade through a maze of facts, figures, and images, and to identify what is useful and relevant. Knowing how to locate, evaluate, and make use of an ever-increasing amount of information demands a broader repertoire of reading strategies. This implies an expanded definition of literacy that includes reading for information in a technological age. Students need to become discerning consumers of information.

GRADES K-4
In grades K-4, what students know and are able to do includes
• using organizational features of printed text (for example, page numbering, alphabetizing, glossaries, chapter heading, tables of contents, indexes, captions);
• recognizing organizational features of electronic information (for example, pull-down menus, icons, key word searches);
• using organizational features to locate media or electronic information (for example, passwords, entry menu features, pull-down menus, icons, key word searches);
• taking notes, outlining, and identifying main ideas in resource materials;
• sorting information as it relates to a specific topic or purpose; and
• giving credit for borrowed information by telling or listing sources.

GRADES 5-8
As students in grades 5-8 extend their knowledge, what they know and are able to do includes
• using organizational features of printed text such as prefaces, afterwords, and appendices;
• using organizational features of electronic information (for example, microfiche headings and numbering, headings for accessing nested information in hypertext media, electronic media CD-ROM, laser disc), and library and interlibrary catalog databases;
• locating and selecting relevant information;
• using available technology to research and produce an end-product that is accurately documented; and
• giving credit for borrowed information in a bibliography.
GRADES 9-12
As students in grades 9-12 extend their knowledge, what they know and are able to do includes
• using organizational features of printed text such as citations, end notes, and bibliographic references to locate relevant information;
• evaluating information in light of what they know and their specific needs;
• using organizational features of electronic text such as bulletin boards, database keyword searches, and e-mail addresses to locate information when technology is available;
• using strategies to gain information from journals, research studies, and technical documents; and
• using available technology to access information, conduct research, and produce a carefully documented product.
For students extending their English/Language Arts education beyond the standards, what they know and are able to do may include
• understanding and applying knowledge of the structure, organization, and use of various media, reference, and technological information sources in their reading and writing as they meet academic, personal, and professional challenges;
• locating information appropriate for their reading and writing purposes such as career and academic interest, leisure time, and self-improvement;
• using information from various resources, both primary and secondary, as a vehicle for expressing their own thoughts, impressions, and ideas;
• giving precise, formal credit for others' ideas, images, or information; and
• planning and presenting multimedia presentations.

STANDARD 6:
Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.
In order to meet this standard, students will
• know and use literary terminology;
• read literature to investigate common issues and interests;
• read literature to understand places, people, events, and vocabulary, both familiar and unfamiliar;
• read literature that reflects the uniqueness and integrity of the American experience;
• read classic and contemporary literature, representing various cultural and ethnic traditions from throughout the world; and
• read classic and contemporary literature of the United States about the experiences and traditions of diverse ethnic groups.

RATIONALE:
Literature records human expression in such forms as speeches, poems, novels, stories, nonfiction, essays, plays, films, biographies, and autobiographies by male and female speakers and writers. The study of literary traditions offers a perspective on enduring questions, a glimpse into human motives and conflicts, and a sense of the beauty and power of spoken and written language. In addition, literature transmits and transforms culture; it also enables students to think, communicate, and participate in society. The study of literature and writers of the United States honors the heritage and cultures of all people who live or have lived in America, and it thus helps students develop an understanding of our national experience. A comprehensive literature program fosters habits of reading that carry over into adult life.

Note: A reference list of sources of book lists can be found at the end of the Reading and Writing Standards. None of these book lists have been endorsed by the Colorado State Board of Education.

Colorado Content Standards Adopted 7-13-95 Reading/Writing - 15

GRADES K-4
In grades K-4, what students know and are able to do includes
• reading, responding to, and discussing a variety of literature such as folk tales, legends, myths, fiction, rhymes and poems, non-fiction, and content-area reading;
• reading, responding to, and discussing literature as a way to explore the similarities and differences among stories and the ways in which those stories reflect the ethnic background of the author and the culture in which they were written;
• recognizing the concept of classic or enduring literature, and reading and listening to classic works;
• using literary terminology such as setting, plot, character, problem, and solution; and
• using new vocabulary from literature in other context.

GRADES 5-8
As students in grades 5-8 extend their knowledge, what they know and are able to do includes
• reading, responding to, and discussing a variety of novels, poetry, short stories, non-fiction, content-area and technical material, and plays;
• reading, responding to, and discussing literature that represents points of view from places, people, and events that are familiar and unfamiliar;
• distinguishing the elements that characterize and define a literary "classic";
• comparing the diverse voices of our national experience as they read a variety of United States literature;
• using literary terminology accurately, including setting, character, conflict, plot, resolution, theme, foreshadowing, and figurative language; and
• using new vocabulary from literature in other context.

GRADEs 9-12
As students in grades 9-12 extend their knowledge, what they know and are able to do includes
• reading, responding to, and discussing novels, poetry, short stories, non-fiction, content-area and technical material, plays, essays, and speeches;
• using literary terminology accurately, such as theme, mood, diction, idiom, perspective, style, and point of view;
• identifying recurrent themes in United States literature; and
• developing and supporting a thesis about the craft and significance of particular works of literature, both classic and contemporary, from a variety of ethnic writers.

For students extending their English/Language Arts education beyond the standards, what they know and are able to do may include
• comparing and contrasting stories, novels, poems, and other forms of literature from different countries, time periods, or cultures;
• using novels, poetry, short stories, non-fiction, autobiographies, plays, essays, speeches, literary criticisms and analyses, and any other literature to explore academic, personal, or career issues; and
• understanding the common themes in the literature of the United States and in world literature.

REFERENCE LIST OF SOURCES OF BOOK LISTS
Note: None of these book lists have been endorsed by the Colorado State Board of Education.
Nilsen, Alleen Pace, editor, and the Committee on the Junior High and Middle School Booklist of the National Council of Teachers of English. Your Reading: A Booklist for Junior High and Middle School Students. 8th edition, Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1991.
Wilson, George and Joyce Moss. Books for Children to Read Alone: A Guide for Parents and...
Wilson, George and Joyce Moss. Tried and True: 500 Nonfiction Books Children Want to Read.
Available from American Library Association, 50 E. Huron, Chicago, Illinois 60611: Notable Books for Children (pamphlet); Best Books for Young Adults (pamphlet); Recommended Books for the Young Adult Reader (pamphlet)
Available from Children’s Book Council, 568 Broadway, Suite 404, New York, NY 10012
(A Annual book list).

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Colorado Model Reading and Writing Standards Task Force
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Janet White, Front Range Community College, Westminster

*Colorado Content Standards Adopted 7-13-95 Reading/Writing - 2*
APPENDIX B

Example Questions

Higher Level Thinking
## Literature Question Cards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What if... ?</th>
<th>Why did... ?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How did... ?</td>
<td>What would happen if... ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What caused... ?</td>
<td>What might... ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you feel if you... ?</td>
<td>What character traits might describe... ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you think ... ?</td>
<td>_______ ? Why is... ?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

Annotated Bibliography

Mexican-American Literature
Novels for Struggling 4th grade readers
2nd - 3rd grade level

Ada, Alma Flor. *My Name is Maria Isabel*. New York, NY: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1995. When Maria Isabel starts third grade at a new school, she learns to stand up for herself even as she tries to fit in.


Soto, Gary. *Que Monton de Tamales/Too Many Tamales*. Paper Star, 1996. Maria loses her mother's wedding ring while they are making tamales for the family's Christmas celebration.

Novels for 4th grade readers
4th grade level


Montes, Marisa. *A Crazy Mixed-Up Spanglish Day*. New York, NY: Scholastic, 2003. While working with her worst enemy on a project Gabi gets so mad she can hardly talk. She starts speaking a mix of English and Spanish that no one can understand.


Soto, Gary. *The Skirt*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1992. When Miata leaves the special skirt that she planned to wear in a dance performance on the school bus, she needs all her wits to get it back without her parents finding out.
APPENDIX D

Expectations

Description of Roles

Assignment Organizer
Literature Circle Expectations

1. Be Prepared
   - Read the assignment before the meeting date.
   - Finish the job you were assigned.
   - Come to the group with all of the materials you need.

2. Be an active listener
   - Your hands are still
   - You are looking at the person who is talking
   - Do not interrupt.
   - Ask a question or make a comment when they are finished.

3. Be respectful to others.

4. Have Fun!
# Literature Circle Role Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Summarizer</strong></th>
<th><strong>Vocabulary</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Complete the summarizer worksheet. Be sure to include only the important characters and events.  
2. Be prepared to read your summary to the group. (Practice in advance.) | 1. Choose 2 or 3 new words from your reading assignment.  
2. Write each word and its page number on the provided worksheet.  
3. Find the definition of the word.  
4. Be prepared to read the passage in which you found the word, the definition of the word, and how to use the word in a different sentence or context. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Discussion</strong></th>
<th>** Illustrator**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Create 3 to 5 interesting discussion questions.  
2. Try to think of questions that will get your group to dig into the book and share thoughts and opinions.  
3. Write each question on the worksheet. | 1. Jot down ideas while you are reading of what you would like to draw.  
2. Your drawing can represent feelings, thoughts, or a part of the book.  
3. After finishing the reading draw your picture.  
4. Share the picture. |
4. Practice presenting questions to the group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Chapters</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
<th>Meeting Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson</td>
<td>Chapters</td>
<td>Page Numbers</td>
<td>Meeting Date</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Book Title: __________________
APPENDIX E

Graphic Organizers for Student Roles
Connector

Name: _________________________
Book: _________________________
Assignment: p. ____ to p. ____

Connector: Your job is to find connections between the book your group is reading and the world outside. This means connecting the reading to your own life, to happenings at school or in the community, to similar events at other times and places, to other people or problems that you are reminded of. You might also see connections between this book and other writings on the same topic, or by the same author. There are no right answers.

Some connections I have found between this book and other people, places, events ........

1. __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

2. __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

3. __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

4. __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

5. __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
Vocabulary Enricher

Name: ___________________________
Book: ____________________________
Assignment: pg. ____ to pg. _____

Vocabulary Enricher: Your job is to look for new or important words in this week’s reading. If you find words that are puzzling or unfamiliar, mark them while you are reading with a sticky note. After reading write down the word, the page number you found it on, and the definition. You can find the definition in the dictionary or some other source. You may also find familiar words that stick out somehow. They could be words that are repeated a lot, used in an unusual way, or key to the meaning of the text. Mark these words and be ready to discuss them out to the group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Page #</th>
<th>Paragraph</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. _______</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. _______</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
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<td>3. _______</td>
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<td>______</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. _______</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. _______</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Definition:

1. ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

2

____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

3

____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

4

____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

5

____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
Your job is to develop at least four questions that your group might want to discuss about this part of the book. Don’t worry about the small details! For example, what the color the character’s shirt is. Your job is to begin by asking your questions and encouraging the group to have a discussion about them. The best discussions come from your own thoughts, feelings, and concerns as you read. After your group discusses the question you develop, continue leading the discussion with the questions your teacher assigned you to answer. Your not looking for right or wrong answers but working to help everyone understand what they are reading.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. _____________________________________________
   _____________________________________________
   _____________________________________________

2. _____________________________________________
   _____________________________________________
   _____________________________________________

3. _____________________________________________
   _____________________________________________
   _____________________________________________

4. _____________________________________________
   _____________________________________________
   _____________________________________________
Sample Questions
Discussion Director

1. What was going through your mind while you were reading?
2. How did you feel while reading this part of the book?
3. What was the main idea in this section of the book?
4. Can you summarize our reading assignment into one to two sentences?
5. Did this week’s reading remind you of any real life experiences?
6. What questions did you have when you finished reading this section?
7. Did anything in this section of the book surprise you?
8. What are one or two of the most important ideas?
9. Predict some things you think will be talked about next.
10. Was there anything in the book you didn’t understand?
11. How are you like or different from the character in the book?
12. Create a new ending to the book.
13. Compare this book to other books you have on the same topic.
14. How will you use the information you have learned in this section in your life?
15. Would you recommend this book to a friend to read? Why or why not?
Literary Luminary

Name ___________________________                        Date___________

Book Title ____________________________  Assignment: pg __ to ___

Your job is to find at least two parts in the text that your group would like to hear aloud. The idea is to help people remember some interesting, powerful, funny, puzzling, or important sections. You need to jot down plans how these parts will be shared with the group. You can read the passage aloud yourself, ask someone else to read them, or have people read them silently and discuss.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page &amp; Paragraph</th>
<th>Reason for Selecting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ____ ____</td>
<td>_________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ____ ____</td>
<td>_________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. ____ ____</td>
<td>_________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ____ ____</td>
<td>_________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Possible Reasons for Selecting a Passage to Be Shared

Important     Surprising     Funny     Confusing     Informative
Controversial Well Written Thought-Provoking Powerful
Interesting   Puzzling    Pick Your Own
Your job is to draw some kind of picture relating to the reading. It can be a sketch, cartoon, diagram, or stick-figure scene. You can draw a picture of something that the reading reminded you of, or a picture that conveys any idea or feeling you got from the reading. Jot down ideas of what you could draw as you are reading. Make your drawing on the other side of this sheet of paper or on a separate sheet of paper.

You need to show your picture to the group without commenting. One at a time the group must guess what your picture means and try to connect the drawing to their ideas about the reading. After everyone has had a try, you get to tell them what your picture means, the part of the book it came from, or what it represents to you.

Idea for My Drawing

1.
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

2.
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

3.
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

4.
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
Literature Circle Debriefing

Name: ____________________

1. How much did you participate in the discussion today?
   About the right amount   too much   too little   not at all

2. What was an important contribution you made to the discussion?
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________

3. What was an important idea expressed by someone else in the group during the discussion?
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________

4. What group strategies did your group use well? Pick from the list below.
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________

5. What group strategies did you struggle with? Pick from the list below.
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________

   Group Strategies
   Participating   staying on topic   paying attention   showing respect
   Listening   making eye contact   asking for clarification
   Being considerate of others’ opinions   taking turns   summarizing

6. Other suggestions, comments, goals for next week’s discussion:
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________