

## **Book Club**

Coach: Mandy Young  
Ballard School  
Ballard School District  
Grade(s): 3-6  
Language Arts

### Description

Book Club is a student-driven, teacher directed reading program I use every year in my classroom. Based on the Olympic spirit, students can earn medals for reaching different goals within the program. Book Club is a community building experience with peers where kids choose, read, and discuss books together.

Book Club, in my classroom, is similar to the widely used practice called Literature Circles. Literature circles involve reading, study and discussion groups based around different groupings of students reading a variety of different novels. They differ from traditional English instruction where students in classroom all read one “core” novel, often looking to the teacher for the answers and the meaning and literary analysis of the text.

They highlight discussion, student response, free choice, and collaboration, "providing a way for students to engage in critical thinking and reflection" ([Literature Circles Resource Center](#) Schlick Noe, 2004). Well-run literature circles highlight student choice; occur over an extended period of time as part of a [Balanced Literacy](#) program; involve numerous structured and unstructured opportunities for student response and interpretation; and incorporate assessment and evaluation that includes self-assessment and numerous extension projects. Research on literature circles is conducted primarily by [Harvey Daniels](#) (1994, 2002, 2004), [Katherine L. Schlick Noe](#) (1995, 1999, 2001, 2003), Bonnie Campbell Hill (1995, 2001, 2003), and Nancy J. Johnson (1995, 1999, 2001); they are credited with most of the research and teacher resources around this approach to student choice and reading; however, numerous other researchers, including Kathy Short and Kathryn Mitchell Pierce (1990), Jerome Harste, Kathy Short and Carolyn Burke (1988), Katherine Samway (1991), Suzi Keegan and Karen Shrake (1991) have conducted research and classroom-based studies. This approach to reading and learning looks to some of the best practices and theory from [collaborative learning](#) and [scaffolding theory](#). [Reader-response criticism](#), [independent reading](#), and [student-centered learning](#) comprise most of the theoretical underpinning of literature circles. Literature circles are the domain of the classroom, both at the elementary and secondary level, and involve various types of [assessment](#) (including [self-assessment](#), observations and conferences) and [evaluation](#) ([portfolios](#), projects and student artifacts) by both the teacher and the student. Literature circles are a pedagogically sound alternative to teacher-centered discourse. They can be used at all grade and ability levels, and are often credited with instilling a love of reading and discussion in students. Furthermore, current research

indicates that peer collaboration has a positive effect on student learning and performance in Language Arts (Fall *et al.*, 2000), increases student learning, and also improves reading comprehension and content-knowledge (Klinger, Vaughn and Schumm, 1998, cited in Daniels, 2002).

### Strategy Team Meetings

Mandy has team members come in and observe Book Club in progress. The team interacts with Mandy's students during Book Club, they ask them questions about what they are doing, and watch a Book Club meeting. Team members will observe a medal ceremony to see the end result of a student's hard work. Mandy will meet with the team to discuss the materials, answer any questions they may have, and help them to create a similar program for their classroom.

### About the Coach

Mandy has taught 4<sup>th</sup> grade for 9 years, and in that time she has been running Book Club in her classroom for 8 of those years. Mandy believes that it is a well-organized, effective, contagious reading program for all levels of learners. Mandy has had the opportunity to be on the Math and ELA leadership teams for the past couple of years. She believes these experiences have helped her to be a more effective communicator with her colleagues, as well as her students. Mandy wholeheartedly believes in this program and is willing to share her ideas and enthusiasm with anyone willing to hear about it.