

# DOINGWHATWORKS



## Presentation

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

### Literature Circles in Second Grade

Adlai E. Stevenson II Elementary School, Illinois • November 2010

Topic: Improving K-3 Reading Comprehension  
Practice: Engage Students With Text

#### Highlights

- Trish Weaver, second-grade teacher at Adlai Stevenson Elementary School, describes how her students discuss stories in literature circles.
- Students are asked to prepare for specific roles ahead of time, and a pretend microphone helps them manage turn-taking.
- This level of independent work has evolved from lots of modeling, practice, clear classroom norms, and supportive reminders like question starter signs.

#### About the Site

Adlai E. Stevenson II Elementary School  
Bloomington, IL

#### Demographics

52% White  
22% Black  
11% Asian  
9% Multiracial

5% Hispanic

47% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

7% English Language Learners

Stevenson Elementary has a coherent and consistent focus on reading comprehension. All teachers are on board and unified with a set of clear learning targets, and they help each child succeed through a variety of approaches:

- All teachers help students become effective members of their community through clear norms and expectations for behavior.
- Reading comprehension strategies are taught across the curriculum.
- Teachers use read-alouds, guided reading, and independent practice to teach comprehension strategies.
- Text structure is a focus of instruction.
- Text discussions are used to further students' learning and understanding in large-group, small-group, and partner formats.
- Staff are leaders within their school and in their district, supporting their colleagues' work in teaching reading.
- Staff use a number of sources of data to monitor student progress and adjust instruction accordingly.

## Full Transcript

Slide 1: Welcome

Welcome to Literature Circles in Second Grade.

Slide 2: Introducing Ms. Weaver

My name is Trish Weaver. I teach second grade at Stevenson Elementary School in Bloomington, Illinois.

Slide 3: Let's talk about text

Let's Talk About Text Day is usually on a Friday, and this is a time when the students get together in their small groups and usually about five or six students together.

Now today, I had literature circles as one workstation, question card stems as another, and then we had story sequence cards that they worked with.

The story that we were reading was called *Big Bushy Mustache*, and it was a story that was in our reading series, and I chose that particularly today because it did pose a problem for the kids that I felt like they could relate to. This boy had been given a part in a play at school and his disguise or costume was using this mustache. The teacher told them to leave their costumes at the school and instead he decides to wear his home because he was so excited. And of course on the way home he loses his mustache.

#### Slide 4: Keeping everyone on task

For the literature circles section, they had previously filled out a job sheet, and their jobs would be circle supervisor. It's important, I found, to have someone that knows how to keep the group going. And in doing that, I have talked previously with the circle supervisor, a student, and I gave he or she the tips on what to say to get everyone to stay on task.

#### Slide 5: Open mic

And of course in the beginning, when we first started this, that was a difficult task because they all did want to speak out at one time, so I have tweaked it a little bit. I have actually gotten microphones that are not real, but they look like a microphone. So it's the circle supervisor's job to hand off the microphone to one of the students that actually puts his finger up and that's the indication to the circle supervisor that they would like to speak.

#### Slide 6: Finding the feeling

There are several different types of jobs that students can have during a literature circle. We are in our beginning stages and so I have used some jobs that are a little bit on lower-level type, questioning types of activities, and I am looking for the evaluative type strategy today to see what their feelings were about the story.

I have chosen jobs that try to show me that they were being able to understand the story and give me their feelings about it. One of those types of jobs was called I Want to Share, and for that one, they would draw a picture of something that they wanted to share, and then there was a space that they could write about that and why they thought that that was something that was important to them. Another type of job was Book Review, where they could simply circle whether they liked or did not like this book or story. But then they also had to write down why they did not like that story or why they did like it. And again, they are encouraged to go back in the story, find the information, look at the pictures, and use that type of information and tell us why.

#### Slide 7: The teacher-facilitator

I was really more like a facilitator today. I got around to all the groups and I would sit in, first of all, and just listen to see what was going on and observe if they were being able to work cooperatively together. And then I would ask them a question or a follow-up question with where they were. And so I went back and forth several times to all the groups as they were in their discussions.

#### Slide 8: Encouraging independence

They were working independently, but it's because we have modeled it and practiced it before. In our guided reading group we would talk about the different jobs and practice it a little bit there. I also told them I can't be everywhere at one time. So when they have a problem, until I get back to their group, they need to talk about the problem and again still use positive language, but talk about it before I get back there and talk about what can be done. So in second grade, that's a very grownup idea, but they were getting better at it, because when we have had circles before, it did start out that there were disagreements and some students didn't get along and that all did happen.

As I have told them, that it's okay to disagree with someone, but there are ways to do that. I have a small acrylic stand at each of the group centers and actually it says ways to agree and disagree, and we have practiced that in our guided reading groups. And today it was much better, and I find each time that it does get better.

#### Slide 9: Learning from others

So I feel like talking about the text helps them become more positive in how they look at reading, because we have reluctant readers and we also have students that just don't like to speak up very much. So I find that it's kind of twofold in that way that it helps them to learn to speak and think about what they are needing to get across to other students and also to learn to listen, so that if they don't understand something, they can learn from others in their group.

#### Slide 10: Learn more

To learn more about literature circles, please explore the additional resources on the Doing What Works website.