

It's Lit! Curating Community & Connection through Cross-Grade Literary Circles in Middle School

Carolyn Mc Kinney and Rachel Nichols
Bala Cynwyd Middle School, Lower Merion School District

What Gifted Readers Need	Curriculum Models/Resources	Components of Cross-Grade Lit Circles	Social-Emotional & Affective Components
Learning opportunities that help them develop greater insights into the subtleties of literary selections	Ascending the intellectual demand of the core curriculum	Exposure to and close reading of “source materials” Pyramus and Thisbe myth and subsequent connections/allusions	“Discussions should be in a place where students feel free to become thoroughly involved and to voice opinions with passion” (Halstead, 2009)
Access to challenging literature which presents “advanced vocabulary, sophisticated themes, and abstract or metaphorical concepts” (Wood, 2008)	Schoolwide Enrichment Model Framework for Reading (Reis, et al., 2002)	Shakespeare in middle school Excerpts from <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , followed by selected YA texts; exploration of “star-crossed”	Sense of acknowledging, honoring, and nurturing gifted readers Students who are ready read even more (e.g., full plays) and have a peer community to discuss
Opportunities to discuss literature and foster metacognitive thinking during reading, critical analysis of text, relating literature to other cultural contexts or events, and consideration of multiple perspectives	Curriculum of Practice (Parallel Curriculum, Tomlinson, et al., 2002) Curriculum of Identity (Parallel Curriculum, Tomlinson, et al., 2002)	In-person and virtual discussions with (mixed-age) intellectual peers, both teacher and student led; thematic and character connections across texts, selves, and the world Multiple versions of Pyramus and Thisbe; “Star-crossed” YA selections; live performances of <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> and <i>West Side Story</i>	Considering other views--working with working with students who are on or even above their level Career inspiration for students (real world experiences meeting actors, speakers, etc.) Connecting across artistic forms taps into students’ other strengths, talents, and interests

<p>A balance between choice reading selections and teacher/peer encouragement to broaden their reading repertoire and consider a broader range of genres and styles than they may select on their own</p>	<p>Flexible grouping to work with other avid readers</p>	<p>“Star-Crossed” YA selections; further reading of Shakespeare</p> <p>Examination of nonfiction, including reviews and criticism</p> <p>Broad conception of texts with critical reading of non-print arts forms (theatre, musical composition)</p>	<p>Risk-taking--exploring topics or ideas</p> <p>“Merely providing books is not enough, however. Knowledge of gifted children, discussion techniques, and children’s literature will maximize the benefits that books offer.....bring[ing] gifted children and books together more effectively” (Halsted, 2009).</p>
<p>Opportunity to explore with depth and complexity</p>	<p>Schoolwide Enrichment Model Framework for Reading (Reis, et al., 2002)</p>	<p>Multiple sessions extended over a semester and into the following school year</p> <p>Students participate one semester to three years (or anywhere in between)</p>	<p>Continue to work with peer group through middle school (and into high school)</p>
<p>Self-directed learner</p>	<p>Self-selected; reading and discussion prep done in between sessions; engagement individually determined (fluid)</p> <p>“Placing highly able students motivated by performance with intellectually equal peers presents them with the opportunity to develop a more mastery-oriented and self-referenced approach to learning” (as opposed to a performance orientation) (Adams-Byers, et al., 2004)</p>	<p>Selection of as many “star-crossed” YA selections as students wished; further reading of Shakespeare; level of discussion involvement</p>	<p>Agency and autonomy-participation, roles in discussion, amount of reading</p>

Adams-Byers, J., et al., (Winter, 2004). Gifted students’ perceptions of the academic and social/emotional effects of homogeneous and heterogeneous grouping. *Gifted child quarterly*, 48(1), 7-20.

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Tomlinson, C. A., & National Association for Gifted Children (U.S.). (2002). *The parallel curriculum: A design to develop high potential and challenge high-ability learners*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Corwin Press.

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