



School Libraries in Action

Educational Games & Literature Circles - Program

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Developing the Skills for Lifelong Learning through the use of Student Centred Games

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1. Rationale

Adapted from

Clover, B. (2005). *Multiple intelligences in secondary schools - one perspective*. Retrieved April 19, 2006, from <http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/conference/TILC/documents/2005/TILC%202005%20Brenda%20Clover.pdf>

Information Literacy is directly addressed by Overarching Outcome Three of the *Curriculum Framework* (Curriculum Council, 2005a) which states “students recognise when and what information is needed, locate and obtain it from a range of sources and evaluate, use and share it with others”. I see my role as a Teacher Librarian to assist students to become information literate by developing their skills which are used for inquiry based learning, rather than the traditional resource based learning. (The Department of Education and Training, 2005c)

Our aim was to develop a safe and supportive learning environment, where the students felt they were able to make contributions within in a group and classroom setting. We wanted the students to build the skills they required to work together and to be able to share their information and opinions with each other. Intimately we wanted to develop the skills and confidence for the students to work independently.

One definition of Literacy

“Literacy and numeracy are fundamental skills that are critically important to Australia’s future prosperity and position in the world. The promotion of strong literacy and numeracy skills amongst young people assists in countering educational and social disadvantage”.

Department of Education, Science and Training. (2006). *What is it? - About National Literacy and Numeracy Week*. Retrieved April 2006 from <http://www.literacyandnumeracy.gov.au/2006/about.htm>

What does the research say

Students who read often and widely, particularly fiction, are more successful academically than those who do not. When this reading habit is a part of the culture of the school, students’ literacy skills have been shown to improve significantly and even overcome social disadvantage.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2000). *Reading for Change: Performance and Engagement Across Countries*. Results from PISA 2000 - Executive summary (Online report) PISA (Program for International Student Assessment). Retrieved June 2005 from www.pisa.oecd.org/Docs/Download/ReadingExeSummary.pdf

Situation Analysis – Target Population

Schools – Teacher Librarians and Teachers

Literacy was a school priority for 2005.

It is a priority again for 2006.

Target group:

- state metropolitan senior high school
- approximately 180 students in year 8
- students enrolled from a diverse range of cultures and a wide variety of socioeconomic backgrounds.
- social problems within the area that affect the educational programs of the students.
- a teacher is timetabled to provide support to students who have been and are identified as having literacy difficulties; however this caters mainly for year eight and nine students.
- many are reluctant readers

Test results

- Use of the WALNA data
- MSE testing data

Graphical analysis

- Level of achievement with the English student outcome statements (Reading, Speaking and Listening)

Resources available:

- Teacher Librarian (limited contact time – one or two sessions a week)
- Classroom Teacher has the students for four sessions (my collaborative teacher had the students for eight sessions – English and Society and Environment)
- Determined use of other areas – Library, computer rooms
- We allocated one session a week for student centred games and one session a week for the meeting

- Resources used were the English class novels (a selection of five different novels were provided and the students chose from this)

Resources required: Time: Teacher Librarian to 'role model' with the class
Paper: photocopy paper (different colours)
Reading books: relevant reading books
Stationery: Post-it notes, pens, group folders

Cost: Extra funding? At this stage we were not able to access extra funding BUT it could have come from the following sources:

- Shared resources with the English Department
- Literacy Committee
- New Initiatives from the school Finance Committee

Collaboration After discussions with my collaborative teacher it was determined that

- Teacher librarian is responsible for setting up the program (more because I wanted to 'push it')
- Teacher librarian is responsible for the Overarching Learning Outcomes
- Classroom teacher is responsible for assessment and levelling of students with the English student outcome statements

2. Learning Outcomes – Literacy

Literacy Outcomes – Teacher Librarians and Teachers

Overarching Outcomes – Teacher Librarians

1. Students use language to understand, develop and communicate ideas and information and interact with others.

During the course of the unit, students will work and share information with other members of their team as well as members from other teams. They will use language in a variety of contexts (written, oral and visual) to exchange and formulate ideas.

Students play a number of different roles during the course of the unit where they will focus on further developing literacy skills. eg. conducting an oral presentation, summary writing, presenting research information, writing up bibliographic information, analysing text, writing focus questions, using and analysing language and vocabulary in different contexts.

3. Students recognise when and what information is needed, locate and obtain it from a range of sources and evaluate, use and share it with others.

During the course of the unit, students will study a variety of fiction texts from different genres. They will be looking at texts and the use of language to discover meaning.

During this process they will research author information from a number of different sources, they will have to evaluate information, formulate opinions, compromise and reach conclusions, and keep a record of the information they have gathered and how they have used it.

11. Students value and implement practices that promote personal growth and well being.

During the course of this unit, students will participate in sharing activities, problem-solving and decision-making processes, designed to encourage them to think about their world and to formulate opinions about specific issues from a point of knowledge. This process is designed to develop life skills that will allow them to become adaptable and flexible learners, willing to accept and adopt change as they move from the known to the unknown.

12. Students are self-motivated and confident in their approach to learning and are able to work individually and collaboratively.

During the course of this unit, students will work on individual research projects, share their information and conclusions with team

members, and work to meet deadlines. The unit has been designed to cater for students' individual learning styles and to encourage them to become independent learners, while also working in a collaborative environment.

Support Documents

Observation checklist –

1. The collaborative teacher and I discussed the progress of the students at the end of each session.
2. I kept a learning journal of what I observed to compare the weekly development of the social and group skills of the students.

Learning Area Outcomes – Teachers

This was covered by the English classroom teacher. The main focus for the teacher was on the **reading strand** and the **listening and speaking strand**.

3. Establishing Prior Knowledge – Literacy

Organisation of the Learning Environment

Classroom Environment

1. Set up the physical environment within the classroom that encouraged group work.
 - group the desks together for meetings
 - have a space in the middle on the floor for students to meet
 - move the desks to the side of the room for student centred activities, especially games
2. Sometimes we went to another classroom to ‘break down’ the ‘comfort’ factor and when we had to address a ‘bullying’ issue it was easier to remove the students from their current environment. We did an activity that allowed the students to identify how someone would feel in a certain situation and how that person could feel different if people had treated him differently. It was a very successful activity.
3. Students were able to visit the library during some of the preparation sessions, to do research about their authors, using the books and internet.

Support Materials

Student Centred Games

1. We used the educational student centred games identified in several different resources.
2. We taught one or two different games a week for the first month. This allowed us to have a repertoire of games depending on what we wanted to achieve in a session.
3. Students had the opportunity to ‘sit out’ on games if they did not want to participate, however they were not allowed to sit and communicate with other students, or to interfere. Eventually when the students felt comfortable they would participate in the games.
4. As a class we always debriefed as to why we played the games. What was their purpose, what did they learn from it. This is primary reason for playing.

Useful References for Student Centred Games:

Brandes, D. & Phillips, H. (1990). *Gamesters' handbook: 140 games for teachers and group leaders*. Cheltenham, United Kingdom: Stanley Thornes.

Brandes, D. (1990). *Gamesters' handbook two: another collection of games for teachers and group workers*. Cheltenham, United Kingdom: Stanley Thornes.

Brandes, D. & Norris, J. (1998). *The Gamesters' Handbook 3*. Cheltenham, United Kingdom: Stanley Thornes.

Sanderson-Green, A. & Sanderson-Green, M. (2003). *Yes let's: play games to ignite learning : an introductory guide to TheatreSports in the classroom*. Leedervill, W.A.: Papercut Media.

4. Guided Practice & Modelling

Adapted from

Clover, B. (2005). *Multiple intelligences in secondary schools - one perspective*. Retrieved April 19, 2006, from <http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/conference/TILC/documents/2005/TILC%202005%20Brenda%20Clover.pdf>

One of the core values of the *Curriculum Framework* (Curriculum Council, 2005b) is based on inclusively which is defined as “providing all groups of students, irrespective of educational setting, with access to a wide and empowering range of knowledge, skills and values”. With an increasingly diverse clientele within schools, (including my own school) the role of the Teacher Librarian has changed. The change has seen the need to provide curriculum support that enables staff to meet the learning needs of every single student. As Teacher Librarians we are highly skilled to provide this support to staff and students. The Australian School Library Association (2005) states “teacher librarians are uniquely qualified ... because curriculum knowledge and pedagogy are combined with library and information management knowledge and skills”. As a Teacher Librarian I see the need to use my distinctive skills to assist other staff to enable them to provide opportunities for all students to meet learning outcomes.

Modelling & literacy

To create a collaborative approach with the students it was important that the students saw the ‘teachers’ working together. We role modelled what we wanted them to achieve. We team taught and we called on each other within the class to assist when we were providing the framework for the students learning.

As the Teacher Librarian I read all the books that the students were reading as part of their Reading Circles. The classroom teacher read all the books. I also read other information about the authors and current information that I was able to share with the students. This showed the students that I was interested and allowed me to help the students with focus questions.

For example two of the novels studied by the students were by Tim Winton, *Lockie Lenard* and *Lockie Lenard: Scum Buster*. During the course of the Reading Circles there was an article in The West Australian about Winton’s novel and how it was going to be produced into a film. The article said something to the effect that the producers were looking for a young surfer to play the part of Lockie. I shared this article with the entire class, which made the learning relevant to all the students. They were amazed to learn that Tim Winton was West Australian and that the books are based on the town that many of them had been too, Albany. Many weeks later several of the students asked me if they had found someone to play the character Lockie. At that stage I was unable to answer this question.

Guided Practice

Set-up the guidelines for the working as a member of a group.

Brainstorm the following questions.

1. What makes a good group member? Brainstorm the first one as an example on the board, so the students know how to do it. Use the ‘call-out’ method to get the responses from the students
2. What happens when someone is not a good group member?
3. What can you do to help the group if someone is not a good group member? (Write the answers on the same sheet as Question 2, but using a different coloured pen). For example if the issue is a student doesn’t read the book, some responses may be to help them, encourage them, speak to the teacher etc. At this stage you try to look for positive examples, rather than ‘yell at them’, get angry etc.

When there is conflict later on, you can remind students to look at the brainstorms they made at the start of the program, and encourage them to ‘solve it’ in a positive way.

We used a number of student centred activities to encourage the students to be able to work collaboratively, including the use of educational games.

Encourage the use of different Learning Styles and the use of Multiple Intelligences

Multiple Intelligences and Learning Styles

Adapted from

Clover, B. (2005). *Multiple intelligences in secondary schools - one perspective*. Retrieved April 19, 2006, from <http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/conference/TILC/documents/2005/TILC%202005%20Brenda%20Clover.pdf>

Taking a multiple intelligences approach towards the delivery and assessment of outcomes assists with meeting the different educational needs and learning styles of the students at our school within an outcomes focused environment. This is supported by the Department of Education and Training Talented and Gifted website (2005a) which states:

The model of multiple intelligences provides teachers, students and parents with the confirmation that different students have different strengths and they learn in different ways. Students' strengths and preferences affect not only the ease with which they learn but also how they can best represent what they know and understand.

This is further illustrated by Silver, et al. (2000, p.13) who makes reference to Wendy Ecklund Lambert, who allowed her students to "... create skits, water colour paintings, telegraphs, board games, eulogies, historical lectures, storybooks, ... and other demonstrations of their learning using various intelligences" when presenting their final assessment. Providing students with the opportunity to present what they have learnt in different formats allows them to demonstrate their knowledge at a greater depth. Allowing students to use their preferred learning styles with a focus on multiple intelligences enables them to extend themselves whilst still achieving learning outcomes.

To determine their primary intelligences the students sat a multiple intelligences test online (Learning Disabilities Resources Centre, 2001). This was easier than sitting and marking a test on paper, and it provided instantaneous results. Some of the terminology had to be explained to the students, but overall the activity was extremely successful. A majority of the students were amazed at their results and wanted to know more about 'what it all meant'. What surprised me was that most student's wanted to know '*is this good?*' with reference to their own results. I explained there was no good or bad, it was who they were and it was their individual intelligence.

Reference for online Multiple Intelligences test:

Learning Disabilities Resources Centre (LDRC). (2001). *Multiple Intelligence Inventory*. Retrieved August 20, 2005, from <http://www.ldrc.ca/projects/miinventory/miinventory.php>

References for Learning Styles and Multiple Intelligences:

Armstrong, T. (2000). *Multiple intelligences in the classroom* (2nd ed). Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Department of Education and Training Western Australia. (2005a). *The Education of Gifted and Talented Students in Western Australia: Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences*. Retrieved August 20, 2005, from <http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au/Gifftal/provision/provhowa.htm>

Ginnis, P. (2002). *The teacher's toolbox: Raise classroom achievement with strategies for every learner*. Crown House Publishing: Wales.

Height, Y. (2005). *The multiple intelligences: an exploration through literature: cross curricular programmes: high interest novels*. Australia.

Learning Disabilities Resources Centre (LDRC). (2001). *Multiple Intelligence Inventory*. Retrieved August 20, 2005, from <http://www.ldrc.ca/projects/miinventory/miinventory.php>

Silver, H.F., Strong, R.W. & Perini, M.J. (2000). *So each may learn: integrating learning styles and multiple intelligences*. Alexandria, USA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Assessment Point

Anecdotal evidence of the student's development of the skills identified in the overarching outcomes was assessed and discussed at this stage. With the collaborative teacher we identified that most students had developed the skills we required for them to continue with the next phase of the program which was the introduction of the Reading Circles.

5. Action Planning & Scheduling

This section was used when the students came to the reading circles task in the further learning – it was not a part of the educational games which were designed to give students the skills to be good group members.

6. Evaluation & Debriefing**Debriefing**

We had discussions with the class about the student centred games which involved the use of reflection, metacognition and self-assessment. We used different questions to debrief at the end of each game/activity. Some of these questions included:

- What have I learnt?
- Why did we play this game?
- What happens when someone doesn't play the game properly?
- How do you feel when someone misbehaves?

The students responded in a critical and thoughtful manner. Their responses were genuine and they enjoyed being in control of their own learning.

We always encouraged the students to come and speak to us if they had any concerns. We were able to address these issues using some of the techniques we had modelled in class through the student centred games.

Most students enjoyed the games. To create a 'safe' learning environment we did not PUSH any students into playing the games, but eventually they saw how much fun everyone else was having and they joined in.

7. Further Learning – Individual Task/s

Organisation of the Learning Environment

This is where we introduced the Reading Circles. We kept reinforcing the skills we had developed through the student centred games.

I would like to acknowledge the works of Laura Chandler and Barbara Combes. I modelled my Reading Circles on examples provided by them.

Task Explanation (Establishing Prior Knowledge)

1. Explain our purpose of introducing Reading Circles. This was to encourage group work, to develop the skills to become critical thinkers and aware of what they read.
2. We identified what each role of the Reading Circle was and briefly what it involved.
3. We discussed how the meetings will operate.
4. Introduction of what assessment/s would be done at the end of the unit of work (linked to your choice through multiple intelligences)

Group Work (Action Planning and Role Play)

1. Discuss in detail what is involved with each Reading Circle role and what their input into the group will be.
2. Students were able to have some input into who was in their group.
3. Students chose their novel from a selection of novels from the English department.
4. Students allocate their roles within their Circle.
5. Students take on ownership of individual roles
6. The students have ownership of their group's work and the group folder

Time Frame (Schedules)

1. The class determined what day the meetings were held (after the teacher gave them a few choices).
2. The Circles decided who was responsible for what task and when does it need to be done by.
3. The Circles set deadlines for group members for reading the book.

The use of Templates

Scaffold the students learning. To assist the students I try to make the templates as simple and as interactive as possible.

1. Use of different coloured paper for each role to appeal to the different learners.



2. Use different fonts and a different picture on each literature circle role to appeal to the visual learners
3. A file with multiple copies of each sheet, to enable students to use these as required to encourage ownership of the learning.
4. Examples of questions to assist students to develop 'higher order' thinking skills.

Each group receives an A3 plastic document wallet (to keep their group work together).

Teaching at the point of need

We taught the skills as they were needed. For example it was important to teach the students about a bibliography and what information is needed to correctly record the details of a book. We did this after the students had selected their books and had selected their roles. This allowed them to see the relevance of the bibliographic details as they had to record the information on their templates each session.

Debriefing

As the final group debriefing as a class activity we did brainstorm on the board to ask the students:

1. What they liked about the Reading Circles?
2. What did they learn?
3. What could we do differently next time?

The students were very positive about the experience, and enjoyed being part of a group.

Some additional comments

- Students in the past who did not 'read' managed to complete their book.
- Students enjoyed the ownership of their own learning and took responsibility for completion of their own tasks.
- Students developed the skills to work as a group member. They were able to communicate effectively and were respectful of the opinions of other students.
- Students were able to locate information to share with other members of the group.
- Students enjoyed the familiarity of the Reading Circle meetings and the use of the templates.

Additional References

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