Abstract

In this study, middle school students used literature circles after reading short stories. My question was, *How can literature circles be adapted for optimal success in the middle school setting? What are the students’ attitudes, behaviors, experiences, and academic achievements like before and after literature circles are used?*

The purpose of this study was to share the experiences of a seventh grade class as they used literature circles to develop understanding and create connections to short stories. Additionally, I studied the strengths and weaknesses of the use of literature circles in the middle school setting.

Literature circles were facilitated by organizing students into groups of four to six after they had read a short story and completed a worksheet. This worksheet was based on specific aspects of the story. Observational data and student work were gathered and analyzed.

Findings included high student morale and engagement in literature discussions. Drawbacks included the time consuming nature
of literature circles, student over-dependence on worksheets, and difficulties switching from teacher-led settings to student-led settings.