Effectiveness

No studies of book clubs that fall within the scope of the Adolescent Literacy review protocol meet What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) evidence standards. The lack of studies meeting WWC evidence standards means that, at this time, the WWC is unable to draw any conclusions based on research about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of book clubs on adolescent learners.

Program Description

Book clubs provide a reading framework designed to supplement or organize regular classroom reading instruction for students in grades K–8. This review focuses on Book Club (Raphael & McMahon, 1994) and Literature Circles (Daniels, 2002), but it uses the general (lowercase) term book clubs to embrace both Literature Circles and Book Club activities, as well as small-group discussion activities that closely resemble either strategy but may leave out one or more key elements of these originally conceived instructional paradigms. The book club framework aims to improve students’ comprehension skills and ability to interpret and think critically about text. In book clubs, small groups of students gather together to discuss a piece of literature in depth. The discussion is guided by students’ responses to what they have read, which might include events and characters in the book, the author’s skills, or personal experiences related to the story. Book clubs emphasize students’ autonomy in selecting texts and topics for discussion and social interactions among students over solitary experiences with texts. Although both Book Club and Literature Circles were developed for use in regular classroom instruction during the day, they also may be used during after-school programs.

1. The studies in this report were reviewed using WWC Evidence Standards, Version 2.0 (see the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook, Chapter III), as described in protocol Version 2.0.
2. The descriptive information for this program was obtained from publicly available sources: the research literature (Daniels, 2002; Raphael & McMahon, 1994) and the website (no longer active) of a distributor of components and materials for book clubs.
5. Other models of literature discussion groups are not included in this review, as no research is available on them (e.g., Routman, R. [1994]. The Blue Pages: Resources for teachers: From “Invitations.” Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann).
The WWC identified 284 studies of book clubs for adolescent learners that were published or released between 1989 and 2009.

Eleven studies are within the scope of the Adolescent Literacy review protocol but do not meet WWC evidence standards.

- Eight studies do not establish that the comparison group was comparable to the treatment group prior to the start of the intervention.
- Two studies have confounding factors, such as combining book clubs with other interventions, which makes it impossible to attribute the observed effect solely to book clubs.
- One single-case design study did not meet the minimum threshold of at least three attempts to demonstrate an intervention effect.

Two hundred seventy-three studies fall outside the Adolescent Literacy review protocol:

- One hundred thirty-one studies have an ineligible study design.
- One hundred eighteen studies do not have a comparison group.
- Thirteen studies are meta-analyses or literature reviews.
- One hundred forty-two studies are outside the scope of the Adolescent Literacy review protocol for reasons other than study design.
- Forty-nine studies do not measure the effectiveness of book clubs in a manner defined by the WWC.
- Forty-two studies do not evaluate the impact of book clubs on student literacy outcomes.
- Thirty-five studies feature a sample that does not include students in grades 4–12.
- Fifteen studies feature a sample that is less than 50% general education students.
- One study occurred outside the geographical area covered by the Adolescent Literacy review.

## References

Studies that fall outside the Adolescent Literacy protocol or do not meet evidence standards

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