

A Guide to **BUILDING BRIDGES – JOINING HANDS**



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www.buildingbridges-joininghands.com

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<https://www.lorenzoquinn.com/portfolio-items/building-bridges-venice-italy/>

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Introducing... *Building Bridges – Joining Hands*

“... Men hate each other because they fear each other. They fear each other because they don't know each other, and they don't know each other because they don't communicate with each other, and they don't communicate with each other because they are separated from each other.” Dr. Martin Luther King

Building Bridges- Joining Hands is a school- based initiative designed to unite students of diverse backgrounds through authentic learning opportunities. Building Bridges was inspired by a shared commitment to help create a “Culture of Kindness” in our schools and communities as we develop action plans for “living kind.”

The neo-Nazi demonstrations in Charlottesville, the hate-killings at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, and the attacks at two mosques in New Zealand in recent years were devastating and a clarion call for change. The media is filled with ways to prevent killings associated with hate and prejudice, but experts will agree, armed guards in schools and houses of worship are not the answer.

Building Bridges - Joining Hands is the “missing link” in education. Lesson plans are not enough to change minds and hearts. *Building Bridges* promotes meaningful interactions using technology platforms such as ‘Zoom’ to facilitate long-distance connections among schools and classrooms whose students may never have met or known others who represent cultural, religious, and ethnic groups different from their own.

We must begin conversations to learn about the hopes, fears, and perceptions of one another in order to find our commonalities and respect our differences. And we must start with the children. It is vital that children have the opportunity to meet and better understand others who may not look as they look, pray as they pray, or see the world differently, through a lens shaped by their life experiences.

A pilot study was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the initiative. Three schools in South Florida were involved: a Muslim Elementary & Middle School, a Catholic Private School, and a Jewish Day School. Students from two fifth grade classrooms in the Jewish school were paired with same grade level students from either a classroom in a Catholic School or Muslim School.

Our first video conversation involved “Boundary Breaking” strategies so that students could become comfortable with one another as well as with the video chat platform. Subsequent video chats were in the form of “Grand Conversations ” based on highly respected, award-winning children’s literature. The first Grand Conversation was based on the book *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio. The story, both heartbreaking and inspiring, resonates with children and adults alike. It is a story that asks us to find the best in ourselves and one another and discover connections to our own lives.

Observation and student comments helped us recognize the project’s impact. During their conversations, as they connected with characters in the books read, students shared their feelings

of being “different” and being looked at differently---- girls in the Muslim school wearing their *hijabs* (scarves), boys in the Jewish and Muslim schools wearing their head coverings. They began seeing their similarities, recognizing their differences, and acknowledging just how much they have in common.

To assess the impact of *Building Bridges - Joining Hands*, we collected pre- and post-data. At first, students were reluctant to “meet” students from their partner school. Within just a few weeks, they couldn’t wait for each Zoom conversation with their “new friends.”

At the end of only one semester, in response to the prompt, “When I began working on *Building Bridges*, I never imagined...” one student wrote, “ *I never imagined I would be making new friends from a different school and religion...one thing I learned was that just because we are different in some ways doesn’t mean we can’t be friends.*” At the beginning of the project, another student asked, “*Why would we want to meet them—they hate us?*” She no longer believes this!

Our data also included feedback from school faculty and administration. One principal wrote, “...*The discussions during the readings of the texts promote healthy and positive discussions among students and how best to cultivate moral decision-making skills...Hopefully, the Building Bridges program will expand to incorporate more schools in the endeavor.*”

One classroom teacher wrote, *Building Bridges is a great way to unite people of different diverse backgrounds that will allow them to know one another. Every grade now looks forward to fifth grade, since they know that they will be able to participate in this amazing program.*”

Building Bridges - Joining Hands has no boundaries. Easily integrated into any curriculum or subject area, the initiative is for all grade levels. To reach its potential, **it needs to be ongoing as students advance from grade to grade.** “Building Bridges” costs nothing. All that is needed is a book, short story, poem, article, etc. to start the conversation, a computer, and the dedication and passion to help create a world that appreciates differences and celebrates our common humanity.

Mission:

To create an outreach program to unite students of all ages representing diverse backgrounds, (cultural, religious, ethnic, etc.), through authentic learning opportunities that will allow them to know one another.

Vision:

To create a “**Culture of Kindness**”—a world of understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of all.

What Research Tells Us:

The following research supports the mission and objectives of “Building Bridges” and suggests additional insights gained:

[Use Project-Based Learning to Meet the National Educational Technology Standards](#)

[Is It Possible to Teach Children to be Less Prejudiced?](#)

[Classroom Video Calls: You Can Do This, Here's How](#)

[Israeli Schools Use Google Hangouts to Bring Jewish and Arab Students Together](#)[Hangout Bridges for Peace](#)

Building Bridges– Joining Hands

10 Easy Steps

Building Bridges - Joining Hands affords students the opportunity to meet and get to know students of diverse backgrounds (living near and far) as they discuss quality literature or other relevant reading material through video chats. Students are encouraged to discuss perceptions, understandings, and connections to their own lives in general. Ultimately, through repeated interactions, students realize how similar they are in terms of shared interests, values, etc., as well as learn to understand, respect, and celebrate the differences that exist among us.

As you navigate the following **10 Easy Steps** you will find information regarding resources, methodologies, and strategies to implement the initiative, addressing the following:

Cultural Competency

Communicating with School Leadership and Parents

Logistics and Technology: Facilitating group video conferences with students-
video conferences

Boundary Breaking Activities to Build Community and Friendships

Literature Selection Guidelines

Literature Circles: Strategy for Classroom Discussions

Grand Conversations

As with all curricular choices, please check that selected readings and strategies comply with your district and/or state guidelines and mandates.

Step 1: Cultural Competence

It is vital that teachers, school heads, and community leaders evaluate their own cultural competency and sensitivity. Cultural competence is the ability to effectively understand, communicate, and interact with people across cultures. Cultural competence encompasses being aware of one's own worldview, developing positive attitudes towards cultural differences, and gaining knowledge of different cultural practices and the world view held by those with whom you work and teach.

Academic experts from across the U.S. were brought together by the National Education Association to offer their thoughts concerning the vital importance of Cultural Competence in the video, ["Cultural Competence: What Does It Mean for Educators?"](#) Please take a few moments to view this outstanding video that discusses the rationale and need for educators to implement methods and tools to connect with all students and help close the student achievement gap.

So much of what is discussed in the video concerning Cultural Competence is addressed in the rationale for *Building Bridges* as we seek to connect students from diverse communities, allowing both students and their educators to know one another in terms of hopes, culture, values, and perceptions.

Therefore, it is critical that each participant in "Building Bridges" takes time to consider how and why cultural competence is a must if we are to build a better, kinder world.

Implementation

- Evaluate your school and classroom environment (walls, bulletin boards, etc.) and practices (curriculum, resources, literature, etc.) in terms of the ways in which they honor and include your students and their families. Do you express interest in your students' personal stories both in and outside of the classroom and demonstrate care of your students beyond academics? If done effectively, your students will be able to respond to the question **Do You See Me?** in the affirmative.
- Evaluate your classroom practices to determine if you proactively incorporate the prior knowledge and experience of your students, seek and respond to student feedback, incorporate student choice in the curriculum, have a well-developed empathy reflex, and engage in constructive disciplinary practices. If done effectively, your students will be able to respond to the question **Do You Hear Me?** in the affirmative.
- Evaluate your classroom practices to determine if you set clear and high expectations for your students, employ equal discipline and rewards, support students as they strive to succeed, engage in consistent and predictable assessment and empower different kinds of success. If done effectively, your students will be able to respond to the question **Will You Treat Me Fairly?** in the affirmative.
- Evaluate classroom practices to determine whether you understand your students' identities and experiences, interrupt exclusive or oppressive behavior, teach and discuss cultural power and difference, and encourage and practice collaboration. If done effectively, your students will be able to respond to the question **Will You Protect Me?** in the affirmative.

Questions to Consider

- How can we help our students “see” and “hear” those from diverse groups in society who may not be represented in the school community ?
- How do we instill in our students the importance of treating others fairly and make them feel safe?
- How do we build empathy?

See Appendix A: Cultural Competency- resources to help promote Cultural Competency to help you create and foster an inclusive environment in your schools

Step 2: Communicating with School Leadership, Teachers, and Parents

Discuss the *Building Bridges: Joining Hands* initiative, involving school’s leadership, faculty, and parents. Discuss its relevance-its “Mission” and “Vision,” and how it enhances learning and growth-both cognitive and affective. As appropriate, share findings from relevant studies included at the bottom of page 5 --“**What Research Tells Us.**”

To ensure that the mission and vision of “Building Bridges” are best met, it is important that schools be committed to involving students from grade to grade. It is this continuity that will create the greatest impact upon students’ interactions, attitudes, and actions.

Once your school’s leadership and teachers are committed to the program, share *Building Bridges-Joining Hands* (its mission, vision, etc.) with parents/guardians of students in those classrooms which will be involved.

- Distribute the “Parent/Guardian Letter” and “Permission Form” and be sure students return the “Permission Form” signed by the parent or guardian (required in most school settings).

See Appendix B: Parent/Guardian Letter and Permission Form - please edit to best meet your school’s guidelines.

Step 3: “Join Us,” Identify “Participating Schools, and Preparing for the Video Conferencing

To begin “Building Bridges,” the first thing needed is that your school access “Join Us” and identify a “Participating School” that best meets your school’s criteria: diversity, grade level, etc. In departmentalized grades, you may wish to pair with classrooms that focus on the same subject area(s).

***Educators interested in becoming part of the initiative should contact their school’s “liaison” determined by administration. This person will then access the website menu item “JOIN US” to sign-up the school and indicate the grade levels available. (Their information will then automatically be transferred to and posted on the “Participating Schools” list.**

*** Teachers will be able to access the list of “Participating Schools” to determine which school(s) and class might be the best partner and then reach out to the school’s contact person (liaison) who in turn will provide the name and contact information.**

For Video Conferencing to be successful, attention needs to be paid to classroom set-up and organization, the best utilization of technology (audio and video), student and teacher preparation, practice and more.

Once your partner school and partner teacher have been established, schedule a time to meet using the video conference platform—it’s good practice! Introduce yourself and school, discuss any questions, ask clarifying questions.

Together, determine a schedule for the virtual classroom “Grand Conversations” that can be consistently followed: How often will “Grand Conversations” be held? (It is suggested that you schedule them for a minimum of once every two weeks.) Try to be consistent with dates and times. Determine the length of time for the conversations based on student age/focus, etc.

Additionally, research, share, and select books, short stories, poetry, articles, etc. that meet the objectives for *Building Bridges*, support your general academic objectives and course content. and comply with your state’s guidelines. Be sure to order books well in advance.

Please note, that while “Building Bridges” was envisioned and field-tested using literature as the basis for the majority of the “Grand Conversations,” this initiative can be implemented based on readings from newspapers, textbooks, etc. that focus on a myriad of topics that reflect current and historical events with which both groups are involved.

Following each Grand Conversation have a short meeting with students and another separately with your partner teacher to discuss:

- What worked, what didn’t? What suggestions can be implemented to improve and enhance the outcome?
- What pages, chapters, etc. need to be completed before next Grand Conversation
- Date/time for next Grand Conversation

Step 4: Facilitating Group Video Conferences with Students: Logistics and Technology

Logistics and tips for using video conferences with groups of students:

- Ask students to share how, when, and why they have connected with people using video chat (other than their Zoomed in-class lessons).
- Ideally, children are seated far enough from the camera that their upper bodies can be seen on screen, and that their hand gestures and body language can be seen and used as a part of communication. Ideally, children's hands should be free of any distracting materials.
- Make sure your room is free of background noises and distractions. Space should be free of extraneous materials, supplies, etc.
- Video tape various organizational patterns/seating arrangements to determine which works best in terms of students being seen/heard during their video-chats and having easy access to the microphone or passing it to one another, if needed.
- Video-tape students reading a few short sentences or answering a question. Have students watch their clips to determine how well they could be heard, where to sit/stand in terms of the video screen, how to hold the microphone, how loud-soft to speak, pacing, etc.
- Have students create their own unique name tags with their names written in large bold letters. Be sure that the name tags are visible to students in the partner classroom-whether pinned to their tops or sitting upright on their desks.
- During the first few video conferences, remind them to say their names before responding and then again after responding to a question.
- Have students create a brief introduction about themselves to use when they have their first video conference with students in their partner classroom. Have them rehearse what they will say and videotape each so that they can determine what works/what doesn't and make any changes needed.
- Involve students in becoming familiar with and practicing the "Boundary Breaking " strategy – **described in Step 6 of this guide**. Students will be involved in using this strategy as the basis for the first video conference and it is suggested it also be used during the first 5-10 minutes of subsequent video conferences (when time permits), prior to the "Grand Conversation" based on the selected piece of literature.
- Involve students in "**Literature Circles**" to facilitate their discussion of literature (or other other reading selection chosen as appropriate) to prepare them for the "**Grand Conversations**" with students in partner classrooms. Both strategies are described in Step 7 of this guide.

Step 5: Literature Selection Guidelines

As with all curricular choices, please check that the selected literature (ie, books, short stories, poems) and/or other reading materials (i.e newspaper and magazine articles) comply with your district and/or state guidelines and mandates.

In developing *Building Bridges - Joining Hands*, we recognized the need to identify a common thread to bring together students from diverse backgrounds, cultures, ethnicities, etc. Acknowledging the impact of books on children, we decided to select quality children's literature as that thread. However, discussions can focus on other types of readings such as newspaper, magazine articles, that best tie into class objectives.

Literature goes beyond reading and language arts, cutting across all content areas and life experiences. Literature opens the door, allowing children the opportunity to travel to the corners of the earth, to explore and discover the known and the unknown. Literature gives children insight into human nature and motivation as they discover that others have often experienced joys, sorrow, and fears similar to theirs. Literature is the perfect vehicle for encouraging students to understand and value their cultural, ethnic, and religious heritages and those of others. Through literature, children face issues and problems on an individual basis and from a more global perspective.

With the wealth of books on the market, one of the challenges facing educators becomes, "How do we select the best of the best-- books that will touch the hearts and minds of their children-- books that will inspire them, books that will allow them to learn about the past in order to impact their future?"

Take time to research, preview, and discuss possible literature, or other reading materials, with the teacher in your partner school/classroom as you work together to determine those that will best meet your goals to build bridges and bring students together. Whatever books/materials you ultimately select, don't rely on someone else's review. Know the merits.

Consider:

- Themes (social justice, unity and inclusivity, welcoming new friends, bullying/anti-bullying, overcoming challenges (physical, mental, emotional); universal values (friendship, kindness, perseverance, peace, courage, learning from one another, respect for one another and self, compassion, providing aid/comfort to those in need, etc.)
- Current events
- Diversity: understanding, respect, acceptance, and appreciation....
- Relevancy: students can connect in some way to one or more characters or situations

To help facilitate your book choices, please reflect upon and consider the following: "Literary Criticism: Questions to Ask Myself When I Judge a Book" (Excerpted from Through the Eyes of a Child , Donna E. Norton, Pearson Publisher):

- Is this a good story?
- Is the story about something I thought could really happen? Is the plot believable?
- Did the main character overcome the problem, but not too easily?

- Did the climax seem natural?
- Did the characters seem real? Did I understand the characters' personalities and the reasons for their actions?
- Did the characters in the story grow?
- Did I find out about more than one side of the characters? Did the characters have both strengths and weaknesses?
- Did the setting present what is known about that time or place?
- Did the characters fit into the setting?
- Did I feel that I was really in that time or place?
- What did the author want to tell me in the story?
- Was the theme worthwhile?
- When I read the book aloud, did the characters sound like real people [authentic]?
- Did the rest of the language sound natural?

Literary Criticism: Multicultural Literature

- Are the characters portrayed as individuals instead of representatives of a group?
- Does the book transcend stereotypes?
- Does the book portray physical diversity?
- Will children be able to recognize the characters in the text and illustrations?
- Is the culture accurately portrayed?
- Are social issues and problems depicted frankly, accurately, and without oversimplification?
- Do nonwhite characters solve their problems without the intervention of whites?
- Are nonwhite characters shown as equals of white characters?
- Does the author avoid glamorizing or glorifying nonwhite characters?
- Is the setting authentic?
- Are the factual and historical details accurate?
- Does the author accurately describe contemporary settings?
- Does the book rectify historical distortions or omissions?
- Does the dialect have a legitimate purpose, and does it ring true?
- Does the author avoid offensive or degrading vocabulary?
- Are the illustrations authentic and non-stereotypical?
- Does the book reflect an awareness of the changed status of females?

Literary Criticism: Controversial Books:

- Know what might be considered controversial.
- Determine the author's viewpoint and weigh the positive influences against perceived negative influences.
- Be sure the book meets normal literary criteria (see above) and is not chosen merely for its high interest and possibly controversial topic.
- Know and be able to explain your purpose for using a particular book.
- Review and be able to discuss both sides of the censorship question.

See Appendix C: Award Winning Literature -- discover some of the best of the best

See Appendix D: Building Bridges Bookshelf – titles to consider for classroom conversations

Step 6: Boundary Breaking Activities to Build Community and Friendships

“Boundary Breaking” is an engaging interactive strategy to help foster a sense of community by bringing learners together through relevant, meaningful dialogue. “Boundary Breaking” helps students see themselves in others, recognize differences, and helps build relationships based on respect and appreciation of each individual.

During the first video-conference, once students have introduced themselves, explain the “Boundary Breaking” strategy and make it the main focus of this first meeting. In subsequent conversations based on reading materials (i.e. books, short stories, poems, news articles, etc.) , you may wish to involve students in the strategy for the first/last ten minutes of your video chat (if time permits).

Reminder: Check that name-tags are worn or visible on student’ tables/desks.

The following content is a modified version of BOUNDARY BREAKING- An Interaction Experience for Groups:

Procedure for Leaders/Facilitators:

1. When implementing this strategy through a digital chat platform, seat students in a semicircle to allow students in each school to see the faces of one another.
2. Read through the sample questions and select several you believe to be most appropriate and engaging for each Boundary Breaking Session. (You may wish to add your own questions and encourage students to offer suggestions as well.)
4. After a question is posed, each student must respond. However, if more time is needed to think, the student may “pass” at first, but be certain to come back to each one for an answer.
5. The leader should repeat the answer of each person as needed. (Some people do not speak loudly in this setting. Positive encouragement is essential). Keep all group members comfortable and informed.
6. Group members are encouraged not to repeat another person’s answer. If a response is repeated, ask the repeater to clarify what was meant and point out the differences between the two answers.
7. Questions are not to be explained (although in certain instances they may not have the vocabulary and it will necessitate some clarification. Keep the mood thoughtful.
8. The amount of time for each session may vary depending on the age of participants and their ability to stay focused, as well as the amount of time available.
9. At the end of each of the questioning sessions, it is important to involve students in the **Synthesis Set** (see details below) --this is where closure happens. Switch to the Synthesis Set while interest is strong and select several of the questions.

Directions to Participants:

Advise students of the following directions for “Boundary Breaking”:

“We are going to respond to a series of questions. Every answer you give is absolutely right. No one will question it. We will proceed around the circle, starting with a different person each time. If you can’t think of an answer at your turn, say “pass” and I’ll come back to you later. Simply respond to what you hear. You may choose to answer as you see fit—but you must answer. Try to think of a response that has not been given. If this is not possible, be prepared to clarify your response to find some difference between it and the other that was offered.

Please speak loudly so that everyone else can hear. Try not to change your answer once you decide what it will be. Stay as honest as you can.

While each member is answering, watch that person closely. We can learn a great deal from the look of a face, the movement of the hands, the nuance of head movement—and by what people do not say—or hesitate in saying. We are concerned with discovering good things about each other—and our own personal strengths/characteristics.

We must listen. This is not a debate! We are not here to disagree. We are here to seek the person that is each of us. Too often we defend our own little worlds without listening to all the hearts beating around us.

As you listen to the responses of others, keep a sheet with names of students in the partner classroom whose responses impacted you in some way. This will help you begin developing an understanding of each person in the group. If we do all this—perhaps a few of our invisible boundaries will melt—and we’ll know each other better.”

Sample Questions and Synthesis Set:

Sample Questions: Choose several questions as appropriate and select different ones each time you repeat this strategy. This list is only a beginning. You may wish to add your own questions and those suggested by students.

1. What is the most beautiful sound you have ever heard?
2. If you could build one thing, what would you build?
3. What is your favorite holiday?
4. What is the most important quality you look for in a friend?
5. What is your favorite thing to do when you have free time?
6. What one person has greatly influenced your life?
7. If you could spend the day with anyone today, who would it be?
8. What television show do you like the most?
9. What TV advertisement bothers you the most?
10. What will you hope to be doing ten years from now?
11. When do you feel most lonely?
12. Who has most influenced your life?
13. What would the perfect day look like to you?

14. If you were shipwrecked on a desert island, what one item would you most want to take?
15. If you were tape recording the sound of one animal, what sound would you choose?
16. What do people like best about you?
17. What is the most beautiful thing you have ever seen?
18. Who is one person from the past you would want to meet? What might you ask this person?
19. When you have free time, how would you like to spend it?
20. What is your biggest worry?
21. What is one thing you would like to do to change the world?
22. What is your favorite sport?
23. What is your greatest fear?
24. What is your strongest emotion?
25. What is the best advice you have ever gotten?
26. If you could live one moment/hour in time over again-what would it be? Would you do anything differently?
27. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would that be?
28. What emotion is strongest in you?
29. What is something you would like to learn about in school that you haven't learned yet?
30. What future discovery do you anticipate most?
31. What skill is most important in order to succeed?
32. What would you like to be doing ten years from now?
33. What is the best book you have ever read?
34. What is the best movie you have ever seen?
35. What is the greatest crime one person can commit towards another?
36. What is one problem facing our country that concerns you most?
37. What is the greatest value that guides your life?
38. What person has influenced your life most? In what way(s)?

Synthesis Set: Questions in the synthesis encourage students to consider the responses of others, help foster connections and encourage them to reflect on ways in which they relate to one another. After you have involved students in answering several "Boundary Breaking" questions (samples above) select one or two of the questions below. Remind students to answer these questions in the light of answers given by other students with whom they conferenced and to explain their choice, as appropriate. Encourage them to refer to the sheet they kept of names/responses. Depending upon time, you may wish to call only a few students to respond to each question.

1. Which person was most honest in giving answers?
2. Which person did you learn the most about?
3. What person do you want to know better?
4. Which person do you know the least about?
5. Which person had the deepest insights?
6. Which person is most sensitive to life?
7. Who enjoys life the most?
8. Which person's answer do you want explained?
9. Who has the most "soul"?
10. Which person will be a good leader?
11. Which person has the most promise?
12. Which person do you feel is most like you?

Step 7: Strategies for Success: Literature Circles and Grand Conversations

These are offered as strategies you may wish to

It is important that student conversation be rich in terms of reaching depths of understanding and discovering real life/world connections. The following two strategies are offered as suggestions you may wish to implement. "Literature Circles" and "Grand Conversation" are two strategies that have been extremely successful in helping to prepare students for their discussions with students in partner classrooms. Practice using them with short stories or specific pages/chapters in a book and adapt as appropriate for your specific reading choice, age group, and abilities.

Literature Circles

What are Literature Circles? What are their Benefits?

Literature circles combine best practices of collaborative learning and student-directed learning. They are not to be confused with book discussion clubs, currently popular in some circles. While both book clubs and literature circles focus on the discussion of books in small group settings, book clubs have a more loosely structured agenda for discussions and are not usually tied into literary analysis such as thematic or symbolic analysis. Furthermore, literature circles are the domain of the classroom, both at the elementary and secondary level, and involve various types of assessment (including self-assessment, observations and conferences) and evaluation (portfolios, projects and student artifacts) by both the teacher and the student. Literature circles are a pedagogically sound alternative to teacher-centered discourse. They can be used at all grade and ability levels and are often credited with instilling a love of reading and discussion in students. Furthermore, research indicates that peer collaboration has a positive effect on student learning and performance in Language Arts as well as improving student learning, reading comprehension and content-knowledge (Klinger, Vaughn, Schumm, 1998, cited in Daniels, 2002).

Note: With younger students, teachers may wish to read the story aloud and guide them to ensure understanding of significant aspects. Encourage questions and thoughts to naturally evolve as well as encourage them to make connections to the story, characters, etc.

Literature circles are...	Literature circles are not...
Reader response centered	Teacher and text centered
Part of a balanced literacy program	The entire reading curriculum
Groups formed by book choice	Teacher-assigned groups formed solely by ability
Structured for student independence, responsibility, and ownership	Unstructured, uncontrolled "talk time" without accountability
Guided primarily by student insights and questions	Guided primarily by teacher- or curriculum-based questions
Intended as a context in which to apply reading and writing skills	Intended as a place to do skills work
Flexible and fluid; never look the same twice	Tied to a prescriptive "recipe"

Schlick Noe, K.L.& Johnson, (N.J. (1999). *Getting Started with Literature Circles*. Norwood, Ma: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.

Key Features in Literature Circles

1. Small temporary groups are usually formed, based on book choice. **However, for the purpose of the “Building Bridges” initiative, students in the class and partner class will all be reading the same material.**
2. Groups meet on a regular predictable schedule.
3. Students may use notes they have taken to guide both their reading and discussion.
4. Discussion topics come from the students.
5. Group meetings aim to be open, natural conversations. **For purposes of “Building Bridges,” encourage students’ to share connections to their own lives/world.** The teacher serves as a facilitator, observer, listener, and often a fellow reader, alongside the students.
6. Students are given roles or jobs to complete for each group meeting.
7. The teacher should model how students should facilitate each role or job.
8. Evaluation is by teacher observation and student self-evaluation and should also include extension projects.
9. New groups form around new reading choices.

Implementation Considerations

Students begin literature circles by participating in mini-lessons on how to participate in a discussion group. To begin with, they may be given role sheets (See Appendix E) to assist them in taking notes on their reading and preparing for the discussion.

Discussion prompts can be given by the teacher to encourage a direction for the students' responses, such as "How does the setting affect the characters?" "What are alternative solutions to the character's conflicts in the text?" "What connections can you make concerning the character's situation(s)?"

Sticky notes are often distributed by teachers to assist students in recording their thoughts about text elements and to help them more easily access specific lines and/or pages in the book. As group discussions evolve and improve, ideally the role sheets should eventually be used only for redirecting the discussion when students get off-track. In fact, Daniels notes that "the goal of role sheets is to make the role sheets obsolete." (Daniels, 1994, p. 75)

Roles in Literature Circles :

The following is a list of roles that give a thinking task to each group member. Students divide the tasks among themselves in each group. As the groups reconvene each session, students switch roles, so that by the end of the literature circles "unit," each student will have the opportunity to participate in each role. The ideal is to eventually do away with the roles, although many teachers opt to continue using the roles to assist group on-task behavior. For our “Building Bridges” Grand Conversations, we focused on 4 of the roles (**indicated in blue.**) In your classrooms, during your Literature Circles, you may wish to use these roles and/or any others you would like to include-- divide students into groups accordingly.

***Discussion Facilitator**-This role involves developing a list of questions that the group might discuss concerning the section of the novel read prior to the meeting. Questions should be designed to promote lively conversation and insights about the book; they should be open questions. A person with this task asks questions of the group to prompt discussion; overall, the job

is to keep the group talking and on-task. Questions that a student might ask, for example, could be: "What was going through your mind when you read this passage?" or "How did the main character change because of this incident?"

***Literary Luminary** -This role involves locating a significant passage (s) of text that may be thought-provoking, funny, interesting, disturbing, powerful, or one that affected the student in a significant way. The quotation(s) is (are) copied down with page number(s). A student with this task can read the passages out loud or ask other group members to read as well. Commentary and discussion will be generated from these passages.

***Illustrator** -As the term implies, this job entails drawing, sketching, or painting a picture, portrait or scene relating to the appropriate section of the novel. Collages from magazines, images from the internet, and other media can also be used. The student with this role then shares the artwork with the group, explaining the passage(s) that relate to the art. Often students who do not like to write do very well with this role. The pictures usually generate interesting group conversations.

***Connector or Reflector**-This role involves locating several significant passages in the novel and connecting these passages to real life. The connections might relate to school, friends or family, home, the community, etc., or they might relate to movies, celebrities, the media etc. Students should also feel free to connect incidents or characters with other books that they have read. Of all the roles, this role is often the most personal in its focus.

***Investigator** (A great one to add if there are 5 students in each Literature Circle.)This role includes investigative work where background information needs to be found on any topic relating to the book. Historical, geographical, cultural, musical or other information that would help readers connect to the novel is often researched and shared with the group. The research is informal in nature, providing small bits of information in order that others can better understand the novel.

Summarizer-This role involves preparing a brief summary of the reading that was assigned for that day's meeting. The summary should include the main ideas or events to remember, major characters, symbols or other significant highlights.

Vocabulary Enricher-Also called the **Word Master** or **Word Wizard**, this role is to record important words from that day's reading. Words that are unusual, unknown, or that stand out in some way are usually chosen by the student. Their page number and definition are also recorded. Often students do not see this role as particularly stimulating; however, it can be a role suited to students who are still developing confidence in language or textual analysis.

Figurative Language Finder- This role includes the identification of various types of figurative language, including but not limited to simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, and idiom. This may lead to discussion about the author's craft - why the author chose to use those particular words or phrases, and whether they were effective.

See Appendix E: Literature Circle Role Planner

Assessment and Evaluation of Literature Circles

Teacher/Student Assessment and Evaluation may involve one or more of the following:

- **Self-Assessment-** Students should be involved in monitoring and recording their own level of response and engagement with their book and participation with their group as they meet each session. Often formal checklists are used for students to keep track of their progress.
- **Peer Assessment-** Students can also be empowered to assess participation of their fellow group members during the book talks. As with self-assessment, checklists or other rubrics can provide structure.
- **Observations-** On-going teacher observation and active participation in group discussions are critical in assessing student progress both individually and in the whole group. Daniels (1994) notes that most assessments should be formative, ensuring that students are provided with timely feedback to learn more effectively.
- **Conferences-** Face-to-face conversations between students and teachers can help to "access, track and monitor student growth" (Daniels, 1994, p. 160).
- **Portfolios-** Collections of student products, collected and assembled in a meaningful fashion, provide the opportunity for reflection, discussion, response to the book, and displaying a student's best work. Portfolios can take on many forms, ranging from writing, art, video/audiotapes, learning logs, student journals, personal responses etc. (Daniels, 1994).
- **Extension Projects-** Extension Projects can take the form of numerous creative and artistic student products, from book jackets to visual media or printed forms. Projects provide readers with "additional ways to revisit what they've read, continue the conversations (and the discoveries), and create even more meaning" (Schlick Noe & Johnson, Literature Circles Resource Center). More conversations about the books usually arise out of sharing these projects with the group and the whole class.
- **Student Artifacts-** Response logs, role sheets, and other such material that students have compiled over the course of the Literature Circle meetings can also be evaluated providing "a rich source of insight" (Daniels, 1994, p. 164) for the teacher to assess growth and progress of students.

Sources:

- Daniels, H. (1994). *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student-Centered Classroom*. Markham: Pembroke Publishers Ltd.
- Daniels, H. (2002). *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups*. Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literature_circle#Roles_in_literature_circles

Additional resources

The Nuts and Bolt of Setting Up Literature Circles- Edutopia article

Laura Candler's Sample Planning Guide

Overview of Literature Circles from Seattle University College of Education

Grand Conversations

Description: A Grand Conversation is a student-led conversation that takes place after participants have read a section of a book, an entire book, a poem, or other reading material. For young children, the teacher can read the book aloud. Grand Conversations are what the name implies-far more than a question/answer session.

Students lead discussions with their peers as they share thoughtful responses while the teacher acts as a facilitator. As facilitator, the teacher ensures that each student speaks at least once by responding to a peer's comment, making a comment or asking a question. Students learn that constructing meaning from books comes from what they bring to the story, their background experiences, as well as from the knowledge and experiences shared by their peers.

Objectives: To encourage students to read, respond, and reflect upon aspects of what is read and the reflections of other students in order to ultimately reach higher levels of understanding, acceptance and appreciation for all of humanity. Books can be selected from a variety of genres **such as** fiction, non-fiction, biography, poetry, etc.. and in some way address, even if peripherally, issues and values including, but not limited to: multicultural understanding; challenges, physical, (i.e., the book *Wonder*) **and** mental; diversity in terms of religion, race, culture, etc.; social justice, friendship; kindness; bullying; inclusion; courage of the human spirit; etc.

Guidelines for Holding a Grand Conversation:

- Before meeting with students in the partner school, practice holding several "conversations" based on a book chapter, short story, poem, etc. they are all reading.
- Help students understand that Grand Conversations involve more than simply questions/answers. They are what the name implies; they are conversations in which ideas and questions are suggested and lead to further comments and discussion. Model and practice ways in which students respond to one another's ideas in a positive, nonjudgmental fashion.
- Students can be taught sentence frames to use in Grand Conversations to reflect on ideas:
I agree (disagree) with what you said because _____.
When you said ____, it made me think about _____.
I first thought ____, but now I think _____.

Additional Resources: Grand Conversations:

- [The Having of Grand Conversations](#) - Scholastic blog article that uses movie scenes to demonstrate the power of collaborative, meaningful classroom discourse
- [Collaborative Conversations: Speaking and Listening in the Primary Grades](#)- from NAEYC
- [Grand Conversation Implementation](#) - What makes a conversation grand?

Step 8: Launching the Project: Preparation and Follow-up

Preparation: Several days prior to the Grand Conversation

- Confirm date and time with your partner teacher, and what specific chapters, pages, etc. are to be covered.
 - Distribute and discuss **Appendix F: Grand Conversation Template** which asks students to include (as appropriate to the reading)
 - One or two questions to help the group reach deeper meaning and understanding. Questions should be those that the reader pondered over while reading and for which there is no right or wrong answer. Questions may deal with such things as the actions/choices/motives of a character in the story, author's purpose, theme, etc.
 - One specific line or paragraph that especially impacted them. It might be something that made them angry or uneasy, something they wondered about, something that they identified with, something that was especially thought provoking, etc.
 - One way in which the reading connects to their life, community, our country or the world.
 - One piece of advice students would give to help _____ (name of character).
- Collect students' completed templates to make sure that all questions, reflections, etc. are relevant and appropriate. Discuss with students any changes that need to be made in advance of the conversation and provide assistance with editing as needed.
- The day before the Grand Conversation, remind students to bring templates with them the next day.

Preparation: Day of Grand Conversation

- Prior to the Grand Conversation, check to make sure that the technology- both audio and video - is working well in both your classroom and that of your partner facilitator/teacher.
- Check that desks/seats are set up in such a way that each student and each student's name tag, can be seen by students watching them virtually. Arranging seats in a semi-circle often works well.
- Check that students have their completed Grand Conversation Templates.

The Conversations Begin:

FIRST SESSION with students in partner school:

- Provide time for students to introduce themselves and tell a little about themselves (see introduction they were to prepare, described in **Step 4**).
- Use the majority of time during this first session for involving students in the **Boundary Breaking Activity** (See **Step 6**) in this guide..
- Since this is the first time they are meeting, have them give their names before asking or answering questions to help them get to know one another.

SUBSEQUENT SESSIONS with students in partner school:

- Before each Grand Conversation that follows, you may wish to spend 10 minutes to involve students in a very short-but effective Boundary Breaking Activity (See **Step 6**) to continue to enhance their knowledge of one another.
- Use the majority of session time to hold the Grand Conversations in which they discuss the literature and the questions, reflections, and connections they created.

(See Appendix F: Grand Conversations- Student Template).

Enhancing Your Grand Conversations:

Consider ways in which you can help “bridge” understanding and connections among students to support and extend your discussions of selected literature as well as help them better know, understand, and appreciate one another. For example:

- If students are celebrating a special holiday, take some time to describe the holiday, its history, significance, traditions, etc.
- If someone in the class is celebrating a special occasion, allow time for the others to learn about it.
- If a child is out sick, perhaps the class can do a group call or zoom to check in on the child (at a scheduled time determined in advance with the family).
- Invite family members to share a story or memory relevant to your classroom discussions.
- Consider ways to connect “experts” whose knowledge will help facilitate and expand understanding of people, places, and topics relevant to classroom discussion

Reflections and Follow-up: After Each Grand Conversation

- Find time for you and your students to discuss the conversation-what they gained from it, what worked, what can be improved, etc.
- Discuss the Grand Conversation with your partner facilitator/teacher -what went well, what could be improved in terms of technology, student participation, and the ability of the Grand Conversation to promote awareness, understanding, acceptance, and celebration of one another. Determine what adjustments need to be made.
- Be sure to select the date/time for the next Grand Conversation as well as what specific reading (pages, chapters, etc.) the conversation will be based upon.

Step 9: Students and Teachers: Insights, Reflections, and Surveys

Student Survey:

- At the end of each semester, have each student complete the student survey. **(See Appendix G: Student Survey)**
- As a class, discuss students' Grand Conversations in general, for example:
 - ___ what they enjoyed most about them
 - ___ what they learned about themselves and others
 - ___ what worked-what didn't
 - ___ what they would do to improve subsequent Grand Conversations.
- Connect with your partner facilitator/teacher. Discuss student input and determine ideas and strategies to improve or enhance the experience.

Teacher Survey:

- At the end of each semester, share your reflections with school administrations and other teachers in your school who are involved in the project, as well as your partner school facilitator, to discuss ideas and suggestions for improvement. **(See Appendix H: Teacher Survey)**

Step 10: Moving Forward: Activities and Strategies to Continue the Conversation

For *Building Bridges – Joining Hands* to have maximum effect, it is suggested that students continue to be part of the initiative in each subsequent school years- growing in knowledge, understanding, and empathy.

At the end of the semester or school year, brainstorm ways students can continue to connect with new friends-whether in person or on-line. For example:

- Plan field trips with students from other schools in your area who represent diverse cultures, ethnicities, religions, etc., allowing them to meet one another-face-to face!
- Pen Pals – at random pair students
- Class Letters- students work together to write a letter to the class with which they were paired.
- Involve guest speakers from various communities, as appropriate, to continue the discussion of the book read (this can be in person or using Zoom or other platforms).

Join Us! Participating Schools!



Building Bridges- Joining Hands is an initiative appropriate for all schools (secular, faith-based, public, private) and all students (grades K-12). www.buildingbridges.com

While the *Guide to Building Bridges- Joining Hands* provide users with steps, strategies, and resources for educators to involve their students in successfully “building bridges,” the website also compiles a continuously growing list of schools /classrooms that want to “Join Us” and facilitates the pairing of “Participating Schools.”

We are reaching out to teachers, school principals, country administrators, and department heads (locally and nationally) as we work together to spread the word, generate interest, and “create a world in which we are all connected, respected, appreciated and celebrate our common humanity.”

Join Us---Help Create a Culture of Kindness--Here's How:

TEACHERS

- To become more familiar with the *Building Bridges - Joining Hands* initiative, please look through the website which includes an overview as well as a detailed “how to.”
- Once you have determined you would like to become part of the initiative, please discuss this with your school administrator to ensure you have the necessary permission/ support.
- Your school head will have designated a school administrator, staff member, or faculty member to serve as the “Point of Contact” (liaison) responsible for helping facilitate the pairing of teachers/classroom. Meet with your school’s liaison to share your interest in BB-JH as well as the grade level and subject area(s) you teach so that you can be paired with a classroom that best meets your criteria.
- Once the school liaison has found a match, you will be provided with the partner teacher’s contact information so that you can arrange a time to either speak by phone, zoom, or other platform . Sometimes you will find the perfect match immediately--but more often than not, it may require reaching out to several different teachers.
- Once your match partnering teacher is established, set up a time to discuss the “10 Steps to Building Bridges” together, determine meeting schedule (dates, time), how long and how frequently the “conversations” will be held, what book(s) and/or other types of relevant reading material (i.e. short story, poem, news article, etc.) will form the basis for for your classrooms’ conversations. **As with all curricular choices, please check that selected readings and strategies comply with your district and/or state guidelines and mandates.**
- After each conversation, teachers should arrange to discuss the conversation- what worked, what didn’t - as well as plan for the next meeting--date, time, focus of discussion, etc.
- A “Parent Permission Form” is included in this guide - see Appendix B. Please edit as you see fit to be sure it meets the specifications required by your school, or use a form the school provides. It is important that you have this form signed by each student’s parent or guardian before the student is involved in the initiative.

PRINCIPALS/SCHOOL HEADS AND SCHOOL LIAISONS

- Please discuss the *Building Bridges: Joining Hands* initiative with your school's teachers and department heads. You may wish to use the *Building Bridges – Joining Hands Power-Point Presentation* which is included on the website:
- **Please share our website** with your school's teachers and department heads. The website contains an overview of the initiative and a step-by-step *Guide to Building Bridges–Joining Hands*,
- Please designate a school administrator, staff member, or faculty member to serve as the “point of contact” (liaison) responsible for filling out the form provided on the “Join Us” section of the website so that your school can automatically be added to the list of “Participating Schools.”

It is important that the liaison keep an up-to-date- record of interested teachers along with their contact information, class grade level (s), and subject area(s) being taught.

Teachers, locally and nationally will be able to identify a partner teacher/school, contact the school's liaison, and together they can determine which teacher/classroom would be the best fit.

- You may wish to find/help teachers identify a partner school on your own whose school offers the diversity you are looking for. Ask people you know who may work with or have connections to schools-- locally, nationally, and even internationally whose students you would like to introduce to yours.
- If you would like additional help in finding a partner school/teacher, what follows are several suggestions:

Religious Based https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_religious_organizations

Public School Districts

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Lists_of_schools_in_the_United_States

Private Schools - Religious/ Non -Religious

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/non-public-education/organizations.html>

COUNTY/ CITY ADMINISTRATORS/ COUNTY/ CITY DEPARTMENT HEADS:

- Please introduce and discuss the *Building Bridges – Joining Hands* initiative at conferences/meetings with principals, school heads, subject area department heads, and teachers to generate interest. You may wish to use the *Building Bridges – Joining Hands* **Power-Point Presentation** included on the website.
- Please share our website which contains an overview of the initiative, and a step-by-step guide to *Building Bridges – Joining Hands*, as well as the procedure to follow in order to “Join Us” and become “Participating Schools.”

Thank you to you all. Together, we will create a “Culture of Kindness:

If you have any questions, comments, suggestions, please “Contact Us” at: info@buildingbridgesjoininghands.com

Your feedback is important to us!

Appendices

Appendix A: Cultural Competency

Explore the programs and resources linked below to help create an inclusive learning environment:

- [No Place for Hate](#): “Create a school where all students thrive. Build a learning community of inclusivity, respect and equity. Every person in your school has a role ...” “No Place for Hate” is a program of the Anti-defamation League (ADL).
- [Creating an Inclusive Classroom](#) Homa Tavangar, Edutopia Classroom
“...Nine tips for building safety and inclusion in multicultural school settings.”
- [The Clover Model of Youth Development](#) The PEAR Institute
A sense of belonging is one of the four essential elements that people of all ages need in order to thrive, learn, and develop. It is also a fundamental part of establishing a welcoming and inclusive learning community. This strategy provides the support needed for teachers to create and sustain such an environment, not only for the students in their classrooms, but also to represent the diversity in society.
- [BetterLesson](#): A Framework for Nurturing Inclusivity: Explore issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion to create a culturally responsive classroom “.... When a classroom is truly culturally responsive, all students will be more engaged and ultimately more successful.”
 - [Integrating Inclusive Content](#) Students need an inclusive curriculum in order to enjoy a full learning experience.
 - [Windows and Mirrors](#) Students need to see themselves in the curriculum and learn about others in order to understand and appreciate multiple perspectives.
 - [I Wish My Teacher Knew](#) “I Wish My Teacher Knew” strategy is a resource containing the tools teachers need to build a strong foundation for the classroom.
- [Culture in the Classroom](#)
This Teaching Tolerance resource engages teachers in reflecting upon their possible biases and highlights the importance of respectful recognition of cultural differences in the classroom.
- [Diversity Toolkit: Cultural Competence for Educators from the NEA](#)
- [Communicating Cross-Culturally: What Teachers Should Know- Never stop learning!](#)
In highlighting ways that cultures differ, this article offers a very practical guide for increasing cultural competence and ultimately helps teachers understand and respect diverse students, guiding them more effectively toward academic and personal success and fulfillment.

Appendix B: Parent/Guardian Letter and Permission Form

Date: _____

Dear Parent/ Guardian:

I am pleased to announce that our school has agreed to be part of an important initiative, *Building Bridges - Joining Hands*, created to unite students of diverse backgrounds through virtual/on-line meetings using authentic learning opportunities.

Below is an overview of *Building Bridges: Joining Hands*. I hope you will share my enthusiasm and belief in its possibilities.

Thank you and best wishes,

Building Bridges - Joining Hands

Rationale: If hate can be taught, so can acceptance and appreciation.. Today, more than ever, we need to come together in mutual respect, understanding, appreciation, and celebration of one another.

The words of Martin Luther King have inspired the direction of *Building Bridges - Joining Hands*:

"Men often hate each other because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don't know each other; they don't know each other because they cannot communicate; they cannot communicate because they are separated." –Martin Luther King

Mission:

1. to create a multi-faceted, virtual/online, outreach program to unite students of different diverse backgrounds (i.e., cultural, religious) through authentic learning opportunities in order for students to get to know one another
2. to encourage communities to imagine ways they can bring kindness to the forefront of curriculum and develop action plans for "living kind."

Vision: To help create a "Culture of Kindness" -- a world of understanding, acceptance, and appreciation for all of humanity.

Building Bridges: To help meet the mission and vision described, we will be pairing students in your child's classroom with those of the same age/grade level with students from _____. Through virtual technology, students will "meet" and be involved in "Grand Conversations" to discuss quality literature through their questions, perceptions, and reflections.

Teachers in the partner classrooms will determine the books to be discussed as well as help facilitate the "Conversations."

Thank you for your cooperation and I look forward to our school participating in this project and working collectively to "build bridges."

PERMISSION FORM

Please return to your child's classroom teacher by _____.

Please respond with a "yes" or "no" as appropriate to the statements below:

_____ **I give** my permission for my child to take part in the "Building Bridges" Initiative. I understand that **no portion of this project will be taped.**

_____ **I do not give** my permission for my child to take part in the "Building Bridges" Initiative.

_____ I give permission to have my child's picture taken during the "Grand Conversations" to be used **ONLY** in professional writing or news articles regarding the project (**names will be confidential.**)

_____ I do not give permission to have my child's picture taken during the "Grand Conversations."

Name of Student: _____

Name of Parent or Guardian _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date: _____

Appendix C: Award-Winning Literature

The following list will provide you with some of the most outstanding literature for students of all ages- books that will inspire, books that will encourage discussion, books, that will touch them in some way, books that will be remembered - long after the last page is read.

As with all curricular choices, please check that books selected comply with your state guidelines.

The [American Library Association](#) offers a comprehensive listing of award-winning books including:

[\(John\) Newbery Medal](#) honors the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children.

[\(Randolph\) Caldecott Medal](#) honors the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children.

[The Coretta Scott King Book Awards](#) are given annually to outstanding African American authors and illustrators of books for children and young adults that demonstrate an appreciation of African American culture and universal human values.

[\(Pura\) Belpré Medal](#) honors a Latino/Latina writer and illustrator whose works best portray, affirm, and celebrate the Latino cultural experience in an outstanding work of literature for children and youth.

[\(Theodor Seuss\) Geisel Medal](#) honors the author(s) and illustrator(s) of the most distinguished contribution to the body of American children's literature known as beginning reader books published in the United States during the preceding year.

[\(Robert F.\) Sibert Informational Book Medal](#) honors the author(s) and illustrator(s) of the most distinguished informational book published during the preceding year.

[Children's Literature Legacy Award](#) honors an author or illustrator whose books, published in the United States, have made, over a period of years, a substantial and lasting contribution to literature for children.

Appendix D: *Building Bridges* Bookshelf - Favorites to Consider

The following sites provide a wealth of books for students of all ages—books that integrate important values and life lessons with memorable characters and stories worth telling. **As with all curricular choices, please check that books selected comply with your state guidelines.**

<https://www.goodnet.org/articles/25-childrens-books-that-teach-kids-meaningful-values>

<https://www.pinterest.com/cliforg/books-that-teach-meaningful-values/>

<https://www.pinterest.com/leeandlow/empathy-kindness-core-value-read-aloud/>

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/Books-to-Build-Character-Teach-Important-Values.aspx>

Titles to Consider - (Grades 4-8)

[*Bridge to Terabithia*](#) by Katherine Paterson (Grades 4-7)

Fiction

Values: Diversity, Power of Friendship

[*Hi-low: The Boy Who Crashed to Earth*](#) by Judd Winick (Grades 4-7)

Graphic Novel

Values: Friendship, Diversity, Acceptance, Finding Oneself

[*In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*](#) by Bette Bao Lord (Grades 4-7)

Fiction

Values: Diversity, Friendship, Facing Challenges, Starting Over

[*Number the Stars*](#) by Lois Lowry (Grades 4-7)

Historical Fiction --**Newbery Medal Winner**

Values: Courage, Friendship, Diversity, Honor Humanity, Being an “Up-stander”

[*The Wednesday Wars*](#) by Gary D. Schmidt (Grades 5-8)

Fiction -- **Newbery Honor Book**

Values: Courage, Friendship, Challenges of Growing Up

[*Wonder*](#) by R.J. Palacio (Grades 4-8)

Fiction -- **Carnegie Medal**

Values: Honesty, Courage, Self-reliance, Kindness, Facing Challenges

[*The One and Only Ivan*](#) by Katherine Applegate (Grades 3-7)

Fiction-- **Newbery Award Winner** (inspired by the true story of a captive gorilla known as Ivan)

Values: Loyalty, Friendship Compassion, Helping Others

[*Touching Spirit Bear*](#) by Ben Mikaelson (Grades 5-8 +)

Nautilus Award

Values: Courage, Kindness, Overcoming Bullying, Respecting Nature, Respecting Others

Titles to Consider - Read Aloud/ Group Discussion (K Grades - 2/3)

A Bad Case of Stripes by David Shannon

Fiction

Values: Be Yourself, Appreciation and Acceptance of Self

Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky by Faith Ringgold

Integrates Fantasy and History

Values: Freedom, Courage, Diversity

Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes

Fiction

Values: Diversity, Peer Pressure, Anti-Bullying, Kindness, Self-Confidence

Click, Clack, Moo- Cows That Type by Doreen Cronin

Fiction - Caldecott Honor Book

Values: Pursuing Justice, Kindness to Animals

Elephants Cannot Dance! by Mo Willems

Fiction

Values: Friendship, Be the Best "You" You Can Be

Grandfather's Journey by Allen Say

Based on author's grandfathers voyage from Japan to the U.S. and back again-Caldecott Medal

Values: Immigration, Diversity, Loneliness (challenges of moving to a new place)

Henry's Freedom Box: A True Story from the Underground Railroad by Kadir Nelson

Non-Fiction - Caldecott Honor Book

Values: Pursuing Justice, Freedom, Being an Up-stander

Mrs. Katz and Tush by Patricia Polacco

Fiction

Values: Friendship (intergenerational), Diversity, Kindness

Olivia by Cindy Osborne

Inspired by life, written by a grandmother with love and concern for her interracial granddaughter

Values: Diversity, Love of Self and Others, Honor Humanity,

Inside Out - Outside In: A Book about Tolerance and Diversity by Ruth Gordon

Fiction

Values: Diversity, Kindness, Respect for Others

The Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats

Fiction - Caldecott Medal

Values: Diversity, Love of Self (one of the first picture books to portray realistic, multicultural urban setting)

The Story of Ferdinand by Munro Leaf

Fiction

Values: Peace, Being Content, Kindness to Animals

What Luck! by Anita Meinbach and David Meinbach, M.D.

Fiction

Values: Perseverance, Determination, Courage, Belief in Self

Appendix E: Literature Circle Role Planner

Name: _____

Book Title: _____

Pages/Chapters this Literature Circle covers: _____

*Discussion Facilitator:



Your role involves preparing several questions that you would like your group to discuss. Questions are those with no “right” or “wrong” answers—they should be questions that help you get to a deeper understanding of characters (who they are, choices made, etc.), plot, setting, and story theme(s).

Questions should be designed to promote an engaging conversation as students discuss and explore different perspectives.

Sample Questions:

- “What did you read that made you feel a specific emotion (sad, excited, angry, relieved, etc.)?”
- “What prediction did you make that didn’t turn out as you thought it would?”
- “What did you think of _____ (insert character name) when he/she said (or did) _____?”
- “What advice would you like to give _____ (insert character name)?”
- If you were to recommend the book to a friend, what would you tell him/her?

My Questions:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Literature Circle Role Planner

Name: _____

Book Title: _____

Pages/Chapters this Literature Circle covers: _____

*Literary Luminary



Your role involves identifying several passages in the book that affected you in a significant way: made you look at life differently, “painted” a special picture in your mind, left you wondering about something, was especially funny, thought provoking, etc.

Site the quotation and have other students open their books to the page and paragraph. Read the passage aloud, explain why you selected it and involve the group in a discussion, encouraging commentary on the passage and how it affected them.

Passage 1: Page _____ Paragraph _____

I selected this passage because

Passage 2: Page _____ Paragraph _____

I selected this passage because

Passage 3: Page _____ Paragraph _____

I selected this passage because

Literature Circle Role Planner

Name: _____

Book Title: _____

Pages/Chapters this Literature Circle covers: _____

*Artistic Interpreter



As the term implies, your job involves either creating or discovering an artistic rendering such as a drawing, painting, collage, memory box, poem, monolog, piece of music/song, etc. to reflect a special mood, scene, character, theme. Share this with your class and explain its significance.

Procedure:

Share your work and allow others in the group to reflect upon what you have done. What do they see/hear and think in terms of connecting it with some aspect of the book? Share your thoughts in terms of what inspired your choice or creation.

Literature Circle Role Planner

Name: _____ Book Title: _____

Pages/Chapters this Literature Circle covers: _____

*Connector:



Your role involves reflecting upon ways in which the story (characters, plot, theme, etc.) connects with your own life, community and beyond. Select several of these connections to share.

Encourage others to expand upon the connection you have made and/or reflect on connections they can identify with from the story that relates to their own lives, community and beyond.

Sample Connections:

- friends, family
- community (school, neighborhood)
- events (past and present)
- history (locally, nationally, globally)
- book read, movies watch-choices made
- conflicts experiences

My Connections:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Appendix F: Grand Conversations - Student Template

Student Name: _____

Title of Book: _____

Author: _____

Chapters/Pages to be Read: _____

Directions: Please fill in each of the boxes with your responses.

<p>My Questions:</p> <p>List two questions that you would like to discuss-questions for which you don't really have an answer and would like to hear the ideas of other students.</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p>	<p>Literary Passage:</p> <p>Select a line or paragraph that affected you in some way (made you angry, was important to you, made you understand something more clearly, changed your thinking about something, etc.) Explain your choice.</p> <p>Page Number: _____ Paragraph: _____</p> <p>Line beginning: " _____ "</p> <p>I selected this passage because...</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>Connecting with My Life</p> <p>Often a person or event you read about will connect with something in your own life, your community, or the world. List one special connection and explain.</p> <p>When I read about _____</p> <p>_____ ,</p> <p>it made me think _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>"Building Bridges"</p> <p>If there was one piece of advice you would give to help _____ , what would you say?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

Appendix G: Student Survey

Building Bridges – Joining Hands

Date: _____

First Name and first letter of your last name: _____

Thank you for taking part in the *Building Bridges* project! After reflecting on this experience and how it affected you, please complete the following:

1. When I began working on *Building Bridges- Joining Hands*, I never imagined that I would ...

2. My “Take Away”: Something important I learned because of my involvement in “Building Bridges” that I would like to share with others is...

3. I would recommend that other students be part of *Building Bridges - Joining hands* because ...

Appendix H: Teacher Survey

Building Bridges – Joining Hands

Name and/or School Name: _____

Grade Level: _____ Subject Area (if applicable) _____

Many thanks for your support and efforts in facilitating the *Building Bridges – Joining Hands* initiative!” After reflecting on this experience and how it affected you and your students, please complete the following:

1. **My Take -Away: The most important “life lessons” students gained from their involvement in the *Building Bridges- Joining Hands* project were.....**

- _____
- _____
- _____

2. **What surprised me most in terms of the engagement of my students and the quality of their conversations over time was...**

3. **For other teachers who would like to implement “Building Bridges” in their classes, I would like to suggest the following in terms of selected readings, use of technology, preparation of students (anything else????)**

- _____
- _____
- _____

4. **The ideal length of time for each Grand Conversation would be _____.**

5. **An important insight I gained from this experience was...**

