

# ENGAGING LEARNERS



## STEP 2: LITERACY & LEARNING CENTERS

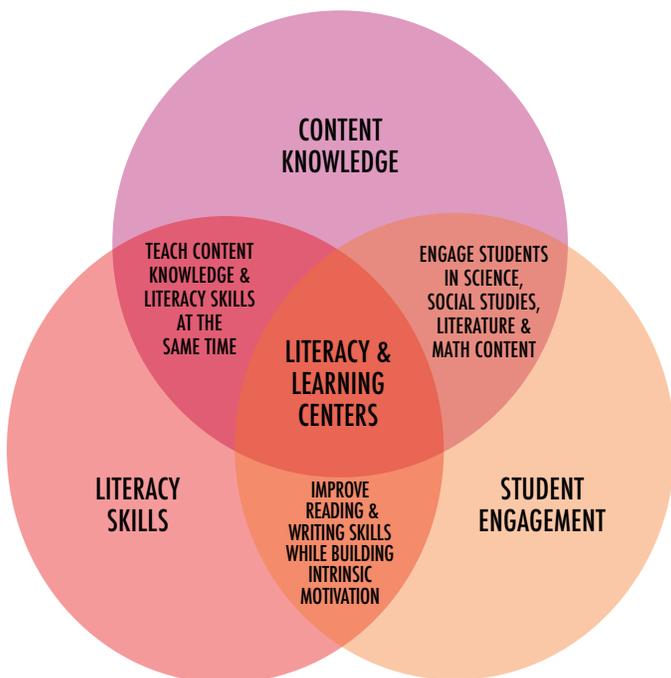
### COLLABORATIVE LITERACY & LEARNING CENTERS FOR 4-12 LEARNERS

Elementary schools have long used learning centers (also known as “rotations” or “stations”). But middle and high school teachers have unique challenges, so Dr. Katherine McKnight developed collaborative learning centers designed specifically for grade 4-12 learners.

Literacy & Learning Centers are an effective tool in middle school and high school classrooms, and they’re being used in districts all over the country. They can be used with gifted students, high-poverty students, students with special needs, ethnically diverse students, and English language learners. They’ve proven to be effective in *any* learning situation.

A Literacy & Learning Centers cycle:

- Consists of a mini-lesson, guided practices and centers
- Is built to develop clearly articulated learning goals and specific content knowledge
- Provides students plenty of individual and small group practice time.
- Works in conjunction with gradual release of responsibility
- Allows students to make choices
- Integrates formative assessment and individual attention into daily routine



# BENEFITS OF LITERACY & LEARNING CENTERS IN THE CLASSROOM

There are some tangible advantages to including learning centers in the grade 4-12 classroom. Students are more engaged when they work in centers. The combination of self-directed activity and short, specific task lends itself to the natural strengths of the developing adolescent. Students with special needs, in particular, report that they feel “safer” in these small groups. They are often able to learn from and with their peers while finding it easier to concentrate – especially in inclusive classrooms.

Benefits include:

- Help students focus with short, specific tasks that are **developmentally appropriate**
- Increase engagement with **peer-to-peer learning**
- Cover more content and skill development in **less time**
- Devote more attention and **personalized instruction** to students who need it
- Create a collaborative **classroom community**
- **Avoid discipline problems** with self-directed activities that provide the independence students crave with the guidance they need
- Capitalize on the adolescent’s need to be right with **evidence-based argumentation** projects
- Relate to your class in a **more natural, authentic** way as facilitator instead of lecturer
- Automatically **align instruction to standards/skills based assessment**

# TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL LITERACY & LEARNING CENTERS

## Give students a choice

Give students a choice, even a small one, in how to execute an activity. Letting students choose between two or three texts about the same content increases engagement and is a valuable step in gradual release of responsibility.

## Keep the team size small

Limit each group to no more than 5 students. It helps them stay focused and it’s more manageable. Come up with as many centers as necessary or set up multiple cycles (two of each center).

## Offer written instructions for each center

Try hanging signs on the wall at each center, taping handwritten instructions on each table, or displaying center instructions on the whiteboard for easy reference.

## End with a “makeup center”

End each cycle with a makeup center. Once students have completed their circuit of all the centers, allow five or ten minutes for them to revise or finish any work.

## Clearly label each center

Make sure students know where centers are located in the classroom. It helps to create a routine. Hang handwritten signs on the wall or on the side of tables– whatever works!

## Rehearse

Spend about five minutes the first day directing students. Let them practice moving between centers, listening for the timer, etc. Moving through learning centers is a simple process once students understand what’s expected of them.

*Help your students achieve two years of measured literacy skill growth in just one year!*

**Why Implement LITERACY & LEARNING CENTERS in the 4-12 Classroom? Because they work! Engaging Learners has a 100% SUCCESS RATE in achieving ACADEMIC GAINS with this unique centers-based approach.**

# IMPLEMENTATION STAGES

## Phase 1 – Consider Physical Environment

- Seating
- Movement
- Chunking 10-15 Minutes
- Written Directions
- Student Choice

## Phase 2 – Cognitive Load

- Introduce collaborative, higher order thinking activities
- Introduce activities promoting learning goal mastery.
- Introduce activities promoting content learning

## Phase 3 – Assessment and Feedback

- Teacher led center
- Formative Assessment
- Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)
- Descriptive immediate feedback

Want help implementing Literacy & Learning Centers in your district, school or classroom?

Contact Engaging Learners to discuss onsite professional development and collaborative guidance.

Subscribe to [engaginglearners.com/](https://engaginglearners.com/) tools for loads of sample center activities, teacher tips, classroom strategies and more! It's your source for lessons that have been specifically adapted to the Literacy & Learning Center model!

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## TIPS FOR TEACHERS

**As you walk from center to center or work in a teacher-led center yourself, answering questions and assisting students as they research and explore activities, you're likely to find yourself relating to you class in a more natural, organic way. Difficult-to-achieve differentiation will almost feel like it's taking care of itself as all students fully participate in the activities.**

**Literacy & Learning Centers provide a safe and engaging environment for students to learn because all of your classroom expectations and norms remain intact.**

**Teachers find that Literacy & Learning Centers enable them to re-purpose existing lessons to cover significantly more content and skill development in the same amount of class time.**

# CONTACT US FOR A FREE CONSULTATION

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## TEACHER TESTIMONIALS



**“I’m really impressed. There was so much more [student] engagement! I’m feeling like this is a game changer.”**

– Stephanie Allen  
7th Grade Teacher  
Kennewick, WA

**“Because of the increased reading time, centers, literature circles, and other tools I have incorporated into my classroom, I am seeing students’ Lexile levels increase by leaps and bounds!”**

– Elizabeth Knost  
English Teacher  
Andersom Community High School  
Anderson, IN



**“It turned middle school literacy instruction upside down and student engagement and success went up! Home run!”**

– Julie Mitchell  
Former Curriculum and Instruction K-8 Coordinator  
Farmington, NM

