**Literature Based Differentiation Strategy: Concept Organized Literature Circles**

Anderson and Corbett suggest that students with learning disabilities can benefit from the use of literature circles within the classroom (Anderson and Corbett, 2008). Traditionally, literature circles have been organized around particular novels or readings, but circles can also be organized around concepts or ideas. The group members may be required to read the same book or piece of literature with accommodations for readability in mind or read different books on the same topic with differing readability levels, selected from a variety of materials about their chosen concept. Students can be presented with a matrix of concepts chosen by the teacher (i.e. “friendship,” “liberty,” etc.) and select the concept that they would like to explore through the group’s reading. A list of books concerning the concept is presented from which each participant can select or which the teacher might assign if differentiation by reading level is desired.

Students will form literature circles with those who have chosen the same concept/topic. Each literature circle is presented with a series of questions, based on their reading, which will be discussed.

A possible topic of discussion for literature circles is disability awareness and diversity. “ I’m Determined” is the Virginia Department of Education state directed project developed to help students with disabilities realize the power of self-determination. On the project website, a disability awareness booklist has been compiled, annotated with reading levels (grade level and Lexile level) and disability area discussed. The books listed could be used to create a concept matrix and discussion questions for targeted study of a number of disability areas. See the example below:

Websites That Review Adolescent/Young Adult (YA) Literature:

These websites can guide your selection of literature for this activity.

* School Library Journal ([www.schoollibraryjournal.com](http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com))
* Booklist ([www.booklistonline.com](http://www.booklistonline.com))
* Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA) ([www.voya.com](http://www.voya.com))
* Professional Journals that Include Reviews of YA Books:
  + Voices from the Middle ([www.ncte.org/pubs/journals/vm](http://www.ncte.org/pubs/journals/vm))
  + English Journal ([www.ncte.org/pubs/journals/ej](http://www.ncte.org/pubs/journals/ej))
  + Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy ([www.reading.org/publications/journals/jaal/index.html](http://www.reading.org/publications/journals/jaal/index.html))
  + The Alan Review ([www.alan-ya.org](http://www.alan-ya.org))
* Online Lists:
  + American Library Association ([www.ala.org/yalsa](http://www.ala.org/yalsa))

References

Anderson, P.L., and Corbett, L. (2008) Literature Circles for Students with Learning

Disabilities*.* *Intervention in School and Clinic*. 44(1), 25-33.

I’m Determined (Virginia State Directed Project). Children’s books related to disabilities. Available:

[www.imdetermined.org](http://www.imdetermined.org)

I’m Determined (Virginia State Directed Project). Literature Circles: Using reading activities to build

self-determined behavior. Available; [www.imdetermined.org](http://www.imdetermined.org).

Beers, K., Probst, R.E., Rief, L. Editors (2007). *Adolescent Literacy: Turning Promise into Practice*

Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.