

## Organize a Student Book Club

### Overview

Book clubs are an excellent way to excite readers and stimulate young minds. Book clubs can improve a child's listening, writing, oral, and artistic abilities. Many children may not have access to books at home and clubs are a great way to provide vital resources to disadvantaged students and families. Help support the youth of your community by starting a book club at your local school, library, or community center. If you are unable to start a book club, think of other ways to serve the youth of your community.

### Suggested Age Group(s)

- Adults, teens and children

### Suggested Skill Level

- Moderate

### Supplies

- Books

### Project Instructions

#### 1. Identify Partners and Leaders

Call your friends, family, and coworkers and ask if they would be interested in helping plan and implement such a project. You can also ask school teachers, librarians, and community leaders to lend their support and ideas. This could be a great opportunity for a student to take a leadership role.

#### 2. Identify the Need

In order to establish goals and implementation of your book club, it is important to understand what your community or school needs. Find out if a book club already exists or if one existed in the past. If one did exist, find out why it ended. If one already exists, find ways to lend your support. If it is not possible to start a book club, consider other types of clubs that might benefit the youth in your community. Ideas might include math, history, technology, geology, or green clubs. You may also consider sponsoring a book drive.

#### 3. Set a Location

Contact your local school and let them know about your idea. Arrange a meeting with the school principal or another school contact and go over a plan for implementing a book club

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into the school. If the principal is welcoming to your ideas, find out the requirements for starting a school club. Many schools are open to extracurricular activities so the process shouldn't be too hard. If you cannot hold your book club at your local school, try contacting a local library or community center.

#### **4. Establish Goals**

It is time to set goals for your book club. Establishing goals can help you create a plan for implementing your book club. These goals can also help you create an overall message you would like members and potential members to learn. What would you like youth to gain from this book club? How will your book club benefit the community? How many members would you like to have? Be sure to remind yourself that your book club will positively impact young readers.

#### **5. Develop Your Plan**

As you continue to establish your book club, ask yourself the following questions in order to create a coherent plan:

1. Will the entire club read the same book or will several books be shared and read at different times?
2. Where can I access books?
3. What will a typical meeting look like?
4. Will I provide tutoring for students who difficulty with reading?
5. Will I implement technology into the club? (i.e. books on tape, movies, or music)
6. Will snacks and refreshments be provided?

#### **6. Define a Timeline**

Set a timeline for your book club. When will your book club begin and end? Will it run during the school year or will it be a summer program? Will the club meet daily, weekly, or monthly? Will the club meet after school, during lunch/recess, or on weekends? It is important to create a calendar in order to establish consistency.

#### **7. Hit the Streets**

Contact your local colleges and universities, places of worship, PTAs, student clubs, associations, and businesses and spread the word about your club. Talk to people in your community and ask them to support the cause. People can provide support by donating books, refreshments, or time. It may be beneficial to invite guest speakers to your meetings. People can also provide support by serving as tutors or reading buddies for students who find reading difficult. Book clubs can provide an opportunity for students to not only meet new friends and discover new books, but learn, too!

#### **8. Promote!**

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Recruit members for your book club. You may want to print fliers, publish in the school/library newsletter, send emails, and use social media to mobilize your networks. Use whatever medium you can to get the word out and engage people in your effort. You can do this yourself or with the help from partners and leaders you've found in the community. You may also reach out to youth in order to spread the word and provide advice on how to get your club up and running. Youth may know of new ways in order to recruit club members.

### **9. Empower Youth Leaders**

Youth voice is a key component in offering a high quality youth program. Young people should have an influence on the setting, activities, structures, and policy of the book club. Allow students to suggest books for the club and lead group discussions. If your book club is open to all ages, allow older students to tutor and guide younger students. Allow youth to initiate projects and programs related to books they read. Collect frequent feedback from your members in order for your book club to grow and meet their needs.

### **10. Reflect and Recognize**

- After your meetings, take a few minutes to reflect on the book club and the impact it has on your community. Contemplate ways to continue what works and fix what does not work. Here are some suggested activities:
  - Tell your family and friends about something you learned and how you will continue to help others.
  - Blog, draw a picture, write a poem, submit a letter to the editor
  - Write about your experience on your Facebook account, or Twitter feed.
  - If you are working with a group of volunteers to do this project, lead a group discussion with questions such as:
    - Why did you volunteer?
    - What did you learn about the needs of the youth and schools in your community?
    - What is the one thing that you will remember most about this service activity?
    - How can you continue to make a difference in our community?
- Last but not least, don't forget to thank your volunteers, partners, and club members. They deserve it!

### **Sample Agenda**

West View Elementary Book Club

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Grades 2-5

Tuesdays 3:30 – 4:30pm

- Meet and Greet (5 minutes) – Students and volunteers arrive, put away backpacks and coats, grab a snack, and meet in the discussion circle.
- Welcome and Introductions (10 minutes) – Introduce yourself, welcome new and old members, and, if necessary, ask for members to introduce themselves.
- Opening Discussion (15 minutes) – Students will share things they read during the last meeting and the time between the club meetings. Students can offer book recommendations, show pictures, and share news about books that they have heard. If a student did a project over his/her book, allow him/her to present.
- Reading Time (20 minutes) – Students will break off in pairs, small groups, or on their own to read their books quietly. Students who work in pairs or small groups can do shared-reading. Students can choose anywhere in the classroom where they are comfortable reading. This may be at a desk, on the floor, or on a classroom rug or beanbag chair. Students may also work quietly on a project they are doing over the book they read. A project might include writing a poem about the book, acting out a scene, writing an alternate ending, writing a journal/diary from the perspective of a book character, drawing a picture or comic strip about the book, or making a poster.
- Closing Discussion and Clean Up (10 minutes) – Bring students back together for a closing discussion. Allow students to share any thoughts about what they read today and projects they are working on. Use this time to remind students of any news or updates and when their next meeting will be held. Allow youth leaders to share anything they would like to share pertaining to the book club. As students leave the classroom, have them clean their space and put everything back the way they found it.
- Dismissal - Parents and guardians pick up students.

**Resources:**

Kidsreads

<http://www.kidsreads.com/clubs/>

VolunteerSpot

<http://www.volunteerspot.com/>

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Service Leader Toolkit

<http://www.handsonnetwork.org/volunteers/gethandson/toolkits>

HandsOn Action Centers

<http://www.handsonnetwork.org/actioncenters/map>

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