

4.4 PowerUp! Book Clubs

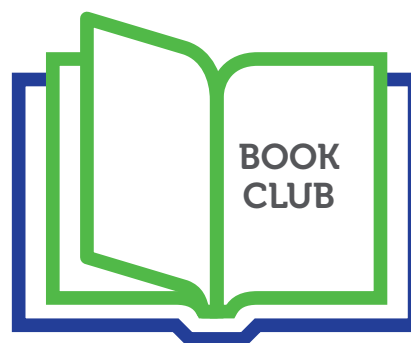
Book Clubs are a great way to get kids excited about reading and reinforce reading skills. It brings an air of playfulness and fun to the learning environment. Members are able to practice speaking and listening skills through informal group discussions about a book, build friendships through the connectedness of experiencing a common text, and engage in critical-thinking debates surrounding events in the story. The average age for beginning participation in a book club is second grade, but reading ability, self-control and on-task behaviors will be a better indicator of when a member is ready to participate.

Book clubs should have defining features to keep the experience youth-centered:

- Children select their own reading material that is within range of their independent reading level.
- Groups may elect to stay together throughout the year, agreeing on each book choice, or groups may change based on preference for various book choices.
- Different groups will likely read different books.
- Groups meet on a regular, predictable schedule to discuss their reading.
- Club members use written or drawn notes to guide both their reading and discussion.
- The members decide on the discussion topics.
- Group meetings aim to be open, natural conversations about books, so personal connections and open-ended questions are welcome.
- In the early stages of establishing a book club, children may each have a specific role to play in order to bring structure to the group and model conversation points.
- An adult serves as facilitator.

- When books are finished, readers complete a culminating project and are given a chance to share their work with peers or in an online-publishable format.

4.4.1 Setting Up Book Clubs During Power Hour: Book Selection and Group Formation



In many ways, the long-term goal of youth book clubs is to resemble adult book clubs – lively, casual, meaningful and engaging. An adult mentor is needed to establish expectations, guide the children as they select a book, and model conversation to reach this goal.

The first step in establishing a book club is for both the facilitator and participating members to understand how to establish a group and select a text that is within members' independent reading level. Every child progresses as a reader at a different pace. Second graders may be ready for a fourth-grade level text, yet some fourth-graders may need a third-grade level text to be successful. Research shows that when youth read books within a "zone of proximal development," significant growth with reading skills will occur. On the flip side, when a child selects a book that is too easy or too hard, limited growth occurs.

For selecting the "just-right" book, encourage Club members to use the "Five-Finger Rule." When deciding on whether a text can be read independently, a member should read a full page from the book. If there are more than five words the

reader can't decode correctly, the book is too hard. If the reader makes one (or no) mistakes, the book is too easy. Between two and four mistakes, the book is just right.

As an adult facilitator, perhaps the most challenging part of developing book clubs is finding a gentle and encouraging manner to steer members away from book choices that are not in the child's best interest, yet selected by peers. Club staff should consider the child's self-confidence and self-esteem. If a book level is just out of reach, then consider including the member in the group with the understanding that this is a "stretch book" – a challenge book that will require extra focus and motivation. At some point, the member will benefit most by joining a book club aligned with his or her reading level.

Clubs need to take into account the availability of books when providing choices to members. There are at least three avenues to acquiring books:

1. The facilitator provides members with a short list of texts with plot summaries. Members select a book and then visit their school or public library to check out a copy, or the book is provided from home. Be sure to provide a start date for the members so they know when to bring in the book.
2. The Club works in partnership with the local school to check out books from the school's leveled library. This is different from the school media center. A leveled library typically has five to six copies of a text, with the reading difficulty level identified in the text.
3. If there are e-readers or tablets available to members, Clubs may consider maintaining a small budget for acquiring digital e-books. Multiple licenses for a book title may be purchased under the local Club's book account and loaned to youth.

4.4.2 Book Club Group Size

The size of a book club can range from two members to a maximum of seven members. The ideal size is four to five members. The larger the group, the more proficient the readers should be. With young or struggling readers, the ideal size is two to three children. With a small group, these members may even be able to "buddy read" – whisper as they read together, with one youth reading a section of the text, then taking turns with a partner. This method provides developing readers with the support of a peer reading at the same level. Together, they can apply reading strategies to the text.

4.4.3 Timeline and Structure

The following are recommendations for structuring a timeline for the book club:

Pre-reading

- Members are provided a choice in selecting a book to read or a group to join, and they are given time to acquire the book.
- A facilitator meets with the group to provide a summary of the book, and allows youth to "walk" through the book, looking at chapter titles, illustrations and the book jacket blurb. Use this time for members to meet each other, if necessary.
- The facilitator clarifies any misconceptions that arise without giving away details of the book.
- With new groups, book club roles are assigned. Children leave knowing how much of the book should be read before the first meeting date. They also understand the task associated with the role they have been assigned.
- NOTE: The facilitator does not need prior experience with the book and does not need to read the book with the members.

Weeks 1-3 (or longer as needed):

- Independent reading time should be offered for 15-20 minutes at least three times per week during Power Hour so that members can complete the agreed-upon pages.
- Groups meet on a selected day that remains consistent each week. Friday may be the best choice as homework demands are typically light. The age of the children will determine the length of time the group meets. Meetings may range from 20 minutes to the full hour of Power Hour. Consider providing snacks during the book club meeting.
- Each week there should be a discussion director, a member who will lead, but not dominate, the discussion. In this role, the director calls on other members to present the task for each role. This should create conversation and keep the group on track. Eventually, the roles can be eliminated as children begin to incorporate aspects of each role naturally into a discussion.

Culminating Project Week:

- Once members have finished the book, encourage them to construct a project that reflects a theme, character or significant event in the book. This is a time when members can explore creative expression and integrate technology. Be open to ideas. The group may want to work together by writing a script and acting out a scene related to the book, or creating a movie poster for the book using the digital design site [Glogster](#). Members may also choose an individual expression, such as writing a poem related to the book, writing a book review on a blog, or filming a newscast related to the book using a green screen and the Touchcast App. Be sure to provide a way for members to share their work with other members, parents, teachers, possibly making the work available to an online audience.

Post-reading: Let's Celebrate!

- Children have worked hard outside of the school day to read a book, engage in discussions and design a culminating project. Celebrate! Gather members to watch a movie version of the book, have a popcorn and PJs party or play Minute-To-Win-It games related to the theme of the book. There are plenty of fun ideas, and members can even design their own celebration. The important thing is to revel in the accomplishment of the kids.

4.4.4 Maintaining Book Clubs Throughout the Year

Because the book clubs are not taking place within a classroom, facilitators have several options on the maintenance of groups. In a typical classroom setting, book-club groups should be flexible to allow members to grow into a new reading level and to emphasize member choice in selecting a book. In the Power Hour format, facilitators may want to follow the classroom protocol in changing group assignments with each new book, but may also find that a group of members is flourishing because of the relationships being built and support that is offered. In this case, keeping a group together through several books may be worthwhile – assuming the group can agree on a new selection. Children may also ebb and flow between using their Power Hour extended learning time for book club participation and STEM-based projects. Ideally, structure the extended learning environment so that members can try new experiences.

Members who have participated in three to four book clubs may be ready to relinquish the task roles if other group members have the same level of experience. When this happens, a facilitator should remain part of the discussions until the group demonstrates an ability to have meaningful conversations about a book without prompting.

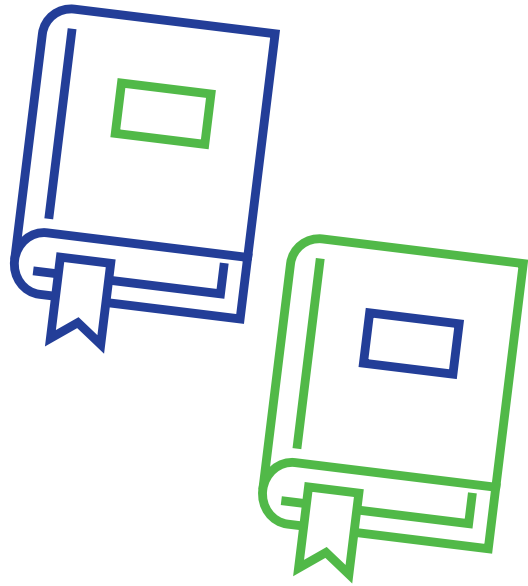
4.4.5 Book Club Resources

The following are descriptions of various book club roles.

BOOK CLUB ROLES	
Discussion Director	Your role demands that you identify the important aspects of your assigned text and develop questions your group will want to discuss. Focus on the major themes or "big ideas" in the text and your reaction to those ideas. What will most likely interest those in your group? You are also responsible for facilitating your group's discussion.
Illustrator	Your role is to draw what you read. This might mean drawing a scene as a cartoon-like sequence, or an important scene so readers can better understand the action. You can draw maps or organizational trees to show how one person, place or event relates to the others. Use the notes area to explain how your drawing relates to the text. Label your drawings so we know who the characters are.
Word Wizard	While reading the assigned section, watch out for words worth knowing. These words might be interesting, new, important or used in unusual ways. It is important to indicate the specific location of the words so the group can discuss these words in context.
Summarizer	Find passages your group would like to hear read aloud. These passages should be memorable, interesting, puzzling, funny or important. Your notes should include the quotations, along with the reasons why you chose them, and what you want to say about them. You can either read the passage aloud yourself or ask members of your group to read the selected text.
Connector	Your job is to connect what you are reading with what you are studying or with the world outside of school. You can connect the story to events in your own life, news events, political events or popular trends. Another important source of connections is books you've already read. The connections should be meaningful to you and those in your group.
Travel Agent	In a book where characters move around a lot and the scenes change frequently, it's important for everyone in your group to know where things are happening and how the setting may have changed. Even if the scenery doesn't change much, the setting is still a very important part of the story. Your job is to track where the action takes place. Describe each setting in detail, either in words or with a picture map that you can show and discuss with your group. Be sure to give page numbers.
Game Show Host	Your job is to encourage your group to use text evidence within your book that answers a text-dependent question. As you read, jot down five to six questions that have answers directly in the book. This is the time to ask "right-there questions," such as when an event occurred, where it took place or which character said a quote. Ask the questions of the group members, requiring members to share the page number where the answer was located.

4.4.6 Incorporating “Notice and Note” Signposts

As facilitators begin to feel comfortable with the format of a book club, he or she may find “teachable moments” throughout discussions and questions to further support reading skills. One of the most impactful strategies published in recent years comes from Kylene Beers and Robert Probst’s research, called “Notice and Note: Strategies for Close Reading,” and is easily applied to book club discussions. Beers and Probst found that six key features occur in most chapter and young adult books. These features have been labeled “Signposts” and often naturally cause a reader to pause and reflect. Skilled facilitators may find teachable moments to incorporate the signposts into book club conversations, deepening the discussion and critical thinking.



NOTICE AND NOTE SIGNPOSTS	
Contrasts and Contradictions	This is the point in the novel that a character’s actions contradict previous behavior and decisions made earlier in the novel.
“AHA” Moments	These are the moments when a character’s sudden insight helps the reader understand the reasons for plot movement or behaviors that a character is displaying.
Tough Questions	This is the point in a story where a child character stops to ask a trusted person or himself a tough question, such as, “I wonder what I should do about. . .”
Words of the Wiser	This is the time in the story where a wise character, typically an older adult, offers a life lesson to the main character, usually changing the character’s plan of action.
Again and Again	This is a word, image or event that is repeated throughout the story and causes the reader to wonder about the importance of the repetition.
Memory Moment	This is a scene that unexpectedly interrupts the story to recount an event that happened in the past that is vital to understanding something important about the character or the plot.

4.4.7 Alternative Formats

Not all book clubs have to follow the traditional format of using fiction books. Alternative formats include:

- **INFORMATIONAL TEXT.** A group of members may show a significant interest in an informational topic and may choose to read a non-fiction text. This is an excellent way to allow a wide-range of readers to be in a group together. As long as each reader is reading a book about the selected topic, the book does not have to be the same. Before the group gathers, members should meet and discuss which sub-topic to focus on the next week. For example, a book club that is reading about airplanes may choose to read about the history of airplanes during the first week, the components of flights the next week, and the future of flight in the last week.
- **DIGITAL MAGAZINES.** Members may form a group that follows weekly articles published by an online magazine. This works well with youth who struggle to get motivated to read. Consider starting a Sports Illustrated for Kids group or an ESPN group, where members independently read online articles throughout the week and then gather to share and discuss sports information learned online. Similar formats could be organized for children who enjoy reading about science, fashion or arts and crafts projects.

- **READER'S THEATER.** A reader's theater is a scripted play that members read; engage in discussions about character traits, feelings and motivations; and then act out. The primary purpose of a reader's theater is for members to practice speaking fluently with intonation and expression that matches the feelings of the character. Children should not memorize the script. This group may spend several weeks reading, discussing and then rehearsing before presenting the theater to a larger group. Reader's theater scripts can be easily found online through an internet search.

