

CAPE Grant Review
JFK Elementary School
Jan 2008-June 2008

Principal
Jennifer Henderson

Second Grade Teachers and Staff
K. Mackay, S.Mathieson, J.Jaruszawicus, K. Rodgers, Y.Gunzburger, N. Marks

Parent Volunteers
Jim Casamento, Beth Boucher, Beth Magann, Lynn Giachetto, Sandy Wolicki,
Cynthia Harkness, Tanya Bollenbach

This is a review of the 2007/2008 Book Club for the Second Graders that was run at the JFK Elementary School in Canton by parent volunteers, via a CAPE Grant for \$2000.

The project goals were the following:

- To have three books read in a volunteer-run Book Club over the course of the 20 week period from December 2007 to April 2008
- To allow each second grade student the opportunity to participate in a Book Club during that time,
- To make reading fun and creative.

The project goals were achieved with regard to the number of books read and the length of the program. However, when the teachers met to determine that all students had participated, it was noted that there were approximately 15-20 students who still had not been in a book club. Therefore, Mrs. Gunzburger, our reading specialist ran the final four book groups. Some classes introduced over 5 books. Parent volunteers offered insightful feedback that is attached at the end of this summary.

At our year end meeting, we discussed spending the balance of \$232 on BookClub Achievement Certificates and Book Club bags. In addition, we felt that in lieu of the remaining ½ hour of Professional paid training, we would ask for materials and DVD's to support our sustainability for next year. We will also request book lists appropriate for 2nd and 3rd graders. All participants noted at this meeting that achieving independence and pride in reading books were major benefits to the students because of this grant.

With regards to sustainability, discussion resulted in the following:

- Proposed idea is to have a kickoff meeting/pep rally for the students next October to introduce Book Club and training

- This year's parent volunteers (along with the teachers) will train the trainers next September. There will be a letter to the parents introducing this opportunity and asking for volunteers.
- Preparedness is Very Important. A list of Book Club rules should be distributed and agreed to by each student and parents!
- Every grade level child will be given the opportunity to be in Book Club
- Consideration to the logistics of where to run the Book Clubs is an issue. Some locations were the library, literacy closet, upstairs bookroom and the cafeteria. The principal will need to be consulted re: space next year.
- We are committed to supporting and continuing Book Club

Thank you once again to CAPE for providing JFK with the opportunity to introduce and now sustain Book Club to our students.

Kind Regards

Please note, we have collected pictures for CAPE from our Book Club. Contact Cynthia Harkness.

Also, parent volunteers have provided in depth comments regarding Book Club. See below.

from Beth Magann

Overall, I, and the kids, had a very positive experience with the program. I think the kids definitely got more out of the book than they would read it on their own, and they had fun too. The "word wizard" in particular was successful -- they learned the meaning of at least two new words every week. We should continue to use books that are a bit of a stretch for the kids - we found there was more to be learned and discussed that way.

Ms. Jaruszawicus grouped the children and picked the book based on reading ability so we were able to run the book club groups for most all the kids, without any having to struggle. This worked out really well. This is definitely not a program only for advanced readers - almost all the kids can participate and get a lot out of it, provided the level of the book is appropriate.

I do think it would be helpful next year to create a flyer describing the program in detail, including the definitions of the roles for the parents. We had issues with kids being fully prepared and educating the parents might this. The kids constantly struggled with the Discussion Director role. They often came in with specific questions with a specific correct answer vs. open ended discussion questions. If the parents understood the role, they might better help with this at home while it's being done.

On a more logistical note, I would suggest we train more people and have alternates/subs available. Once/week might be too much of a commitment for some to sign up, but they might be willing to sign up as an alternate. All of us are parents and will have days when kids are sick, etc. It would be nice to have back-up so we stay on schedule.

I think that while we definitely want to include most all the children, we need to continue to stress that this is a privilege. Kids who don't behave, or are consistently not prepared, should not continue to participate. Our kids seemed to get that message well this year.

We all did things a little differently this year - when we assigned the roles, whether or not we used forms, etc. Now that we get the feedback, we should strive for some uniformity in the program this year. I assigned chapters to read and roles at the end of each meeting and it worked out well. The forms were helpful to offer some guidance, but did sometimes limit what the children wrote. Limiting it to 2-3 chapters a week worked out well, and the kids were generally good about not reading ahead.

Overall I think it's definitely worthwhile to continue. A side benefit is also that the teacher has a smaller group of children for 45 minutes as well, so even the kids not in book club are benefiting from more attention.

from Beth Boucher

I found that the term "book CLUB" presented a challenge for my class.

Everyone wanted to be part of the "club". My recommendation would be to change the name to "book review group" or something like that so that people do not feel left out of the club.

I had some not-so-confident readers that wanted to be part of the club- but were very nervous because the element of reading. They were very hard to keep engaged in the discussions -they were not as well prepared, nor did they really seem engaged in the book. They just wanted to be in the club.

I think there would be benefit to mixing the classes, but I think it would add a level of complication to the teachers and volunteers.

Especially when there are scheduling conflicts.

I would also like to suggest that there be different book levels already set up in each class if this program is to be modified to different

reading levels.

I did have a challenge with the kids that were better readers because their interests were peaked and they wanted to read further despite the limitations on the assignment. One group had 3 kids read through the entire book after the first meeting. In another group, I was able to adjust the assignments so that we could finish the book in the 5 weeks.

Another thing that I enjoyed was having the book club in the library.

We were able to incorporate other books/pictures that were discussed as words/topics in our group.

From Jim Casamento:

My sessions went very well, in large part because Mrs. Rodgers and Mrs. Mackay always had the kids well prepared.

I have had three different groups of kids and I did find that the sessions were easier to manage and more enjoyable when I had the more advanced readers. I don't think that any of my groups were below-average readers, but I can imagine that it would have been a struggle if I had.

My biggest learning was to just let the conversation go. As long as the kids are engaged in active discussion of a topic that interests them, I was OK if it strayed a little from the actual topic of the book. Every 7 to 10 minutes we would move to the next role and that would get us back on track if we strayed too far.

I was also very impressed with how many times I got stopped by the mother of one of the kids at an athletic field or other event just because the kid wanted to say "hi".

Balto: By far the most enjoyable book for me. I think that this was an excellent choice for advanced readers as it was rich in detail and offered a lot of opportunities for discussion. Would definitely be overwhelming for less advanced readers. It was also nice that it was about events that happened a while ago as this offered the opportunity for discussion about how things were different then.

26 Fairmount Ave.: An interesting book as every chapter is really a story in itself. Good for mid-to-lower level readers. Would not stretch advanced readers enough. Also about events a while ago which was nice.

The Birthday Flood: A little too short. Doing two chapters per week doesn't always leave enough things to discuss. Perhaps OK for kids struggling with their reading, but probably not a good choice for mid-level readers

From Sandy Wolicki:

1) Sometimes it was hard to keep the kids focused. They really seemed to enjoy being part of the book club, and in general they were good about it. Sometimes, though, they had the sillies. I want them to enjoy it and not feel like it is strict work; so I would personally let them digress a bit, but then I would rope them back to the book. I even found that some kids who were told to me to be more trouble makers in class actually behaved well during the book club meetings. I think the kids felt comfortable expressing their views in front of their peers and me (which I thought was good).

2) I think some of the kids wanted to keep reading the book, since they were enjoying it and wanted to know what happens next. One week, I told Jenny that she couldn't read the next chapter, but I promised her that she could read it

right after school on the day that we have book club. I don't want to stop her from reading, but I wanted her focused on talking about the section that was assigned for the current week. I felt badly pulling the book out of her hands, but I put a different one in them.

3) When discussing each role, I let the assigned person go through what he/she had, then I asked everyone if they had their own ideas. I was also prepared with information for each role so that I could share my thoughts and help them learn about things to consider. I did find, though, often the Word Wizard picked words that were new or that were thought to be "neat." I tried to explain how I liked words that were specially picked by the author. I don't know if 2nd graders are just a little young to think of those things, though.

4) As Susan Mathieson suggested, we told them at the end of each book club meeting what chapter(s) they were to read for the next meeting. The idea was for them to read that section over the next few days. Then they were given their roles, with the idea of re-reading the section but this time being able to think about the role. Our hope was that the first time reading would allow them to think about the content of the book and not have them worrying about the role. I can personally vouch for 2 kids in the class doing it that way, and it seemed to work. I have not polled the other kids to see if they actually did it that way, though. In the future, I think that the letter to parents that you had initially discussed sending to parents (but I don't believe was done) to explain the book club to them would be a good place to discuss how the process works; if different teachers want to do it differently, we could customize the letter.

5) As you know, we ended up keeping the book clubs to individual classrooms and not combining kids from different classes. I see the benefit of combining classes, but it did work out well having the book clubs specific to a classroom. The teacher had to deal with only 1 or 2 parents, and the parents had to deal with only 1 teacher; this was beneficial when the book club date had to change for a given week. Also, if a teacher were running a little late with the lesson prior to book club, the parent could just wait for it to be done knowing that there weren't other kids from other classes waiting.

6) I think it would be good to talk about the books that we used and share thoughts about the books themselves and how well they were suited for this activity. I personally used And the Winner is, My Teacher Turns into a Tyrannosaurus, The Saturday Morning Treasure Hunt; I will also be using The Magic Shoes for the last group. I think the discussion can also cover whether or not the books should be challenging for the reader. Do we want more effort placed on reading and understanding the book or learning how to think about the various roles? This might also be specific to the readers in the individual groups. I also found that the books that had more pictures made it more difficult for the Artful Artist to come up with his/her own ideas for pictures to draw. Even with books with less pictures, sometimes the kids would just copy a picture from the book. The more creative kids would draw something different, though.

7) I thought that the role sheets that were developed were good to help guide the kids. I found, though, that sometimes they thought that they had to have the exact number of items as on the sheet or that the Discussion Director had to have questions that started with Why, How, and If.

8) I did not take any pictures of the book club groups specifically, so I can't help out there, unless we do something between now and the end of the year.