

## Book Clubs

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*Glenmary School  
Peace River, Alberta, Canada*

“**W**ay more fun than doing a book report” said one student at Glenmary School about the seventh and eighth grade book clubs. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) started the book clubs two years ago in response to increasingly complex reading tasks on required tests and low parent satisfaction with the amount of reading children do in their free time. The ATP chose book clubs to help support the school improvement goal of increasing reading comprehension.

Grade seven and eight language arts students were offered the chance to participate in a book club in lieu of doing a regular book report. Teachers and students selected books together, and the ATP bought six to eight copies of each. Groups of four to six students chose one of the available books to read and discuss. Students read the books on their own time. Then, each group met once a week for a total of three to five times (depending on the length and the complexity of the book) with a parent or community mentor to discuss the novel. For the final meeting, Panago Pizza provided free refreshments, and the group participated in a fun activity of their choice in the gym. Most of the groups held their meetings in the school during after school or evening hours, however one group met at the Peace River Municipal Library.

The school spent approximately \$500 to buy the set of books—a one time expense, since the books will be redistributed to future book clubs. The school’s Alberta Initiative for School Improvement funding purchased the books. If schools are interested in starting a

similar practice, the ATP suggests acquiring books through interlibrary loan in order to minimize costs.

Glenmary School is very happy with the outcome of the book clubs. The 50 students who participated had an opportunity to read and discuss books with peers in a supportive environment. Parents were pleased to see their children reading during their free time. The employer of one parent mentor was so impressed he gave each group member a gift certificate to be used at the local book store.

Glenmary seeks to expand the book clubs next year, and is considering the following ideas:

- Having each group make a final presentation about their book to their language arts teacher or entire class.
- Contacting the local bookstore about supporting the book clubs.
- Having more self-directed groups that choose and discuss books on their own in a setting of their own choosing.
- Having students join the adult book clubs that operate at the Peace River Municipal Library.
- Trying a “Book and a Movie Club,” where the last meeting could be used to watch a movie based on the book, when appropriate.

The school also hopes to find more parent and community mentors, so that any student who wants to participate in the book clubs is able to find a group to join.

*Sherry Davies Rhodes  
(780) 624-4918  
rhodes.s@bfcrd.ab.ca*